

Timothy, I #3 Ch. 3-4

by Chuck Missler

The sermon emphasizes the importance of integrity, blamelessness, and good character in leadership, particularly for pastors and elders.

Duration: 51:21

Scripture: Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Timothy 4:12-13, Revelation 2:1-3

Topics: "Timothy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine and teaching in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He compares it to the instruments used in instrument flying, where cross-checking multiple instruments is crucial for survival. The speaker challenges the notion that making a decision for Christ is the climax of one's faith, stating that it is actually just the beginning. He also discusses the requirements for elders or bishops, including not being given to excessive drinking and exhibiting qualities such as patience and non-greediness. The sermon encourages believers to live out their faith through their attitudes and conduct.

Transcript

We are studying the Pastoral Epistles. We're in 1 Timothy and we're in chapters 3 and 4 tonight. Paul wrote three epistles, first and second letters to Timothy and also to Titus, that are known as the Pastoral Epistles.

And many of us probably have a tendency to give them a short shrift, skip over them, because all those instructions are about how you organize churches and what you should do, what you should be to be qualified as a pastor. Let me ask you a question, it's a trick question, be careful. How many of you are in a full-time ministry here? Praise God, okay, good for you.

So these Pastoral Epistles have to do with all of us. It's interesting how, we'll be conscious in the next couple of chapters, we're going to talk about leadership. It's interesting how everything, anything, rises or falls as a function of its leadership.

That's true of your family, that's true of your churches, yes, and it's true of our nation. That's all I'm going to say about that, aren't you glad? We're in 1 Timothy chapter 3, first seven verses are about pastors. Paul says, this is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

This idea, this is a true saying, or this is a trustworthy statement. Paul says that five different times in the Pastoral Epistles. It's just his way of emphasis, actually.

But we're going to encounter a number of terms, the term bishop, the term pastor, the term elder. Frankly, in the New Testament, they're really used as synonyms. That comes as a surprise to many, because obviously, in the early church, those terms evolved to mean something very specific, but the word bishop actually means overseer, one that oversees the ministry, both in terms of presiding over it and also teaching it and so forth.

And the word elder, Presbyterian, from which we get the word Presbyterian, the denomination, but the word elder simply means old man. He's an elder, you know, what did you expect? And then, of course, the term pastor really means shepherd. But all the greats of the early church had, you can find passages virtually where each one of these is used of those.

You'll never find Paul spoken of as a bishop, which should give us pause. And it's interesting, J. Vernon McGee points out that none of them ever allowed themselves to be called reverend, because that, you know what that actually means? The word reverend means terrible, that which incites terror. And it's a name which applies only to God.

Only God is reverend. I mentioned that in passing. And you have to yield to the custom of our time.

And people have that label, fine, because it communicates the well-being of the ministry. I'm not here to, you know, disparage that. I'm just asking you, please don't ever call me reverend unless you're mad at me.

Now, Paul founded a number of churches, but he never spoke of himself as a bishop. In the early church, the bishops never had authority over other bishops. That's something that evolved in later history.

And there also, in 1 Timothy 5, we'll discover, and elsewhere, there usually was a plurality of elders serving in a particular assembly, not just one. We have a tendency to have one senior pastor sort of runs things, maybe a few assistants. And that's a style of organization that's common today.

But in the early church, it was really a plurality of elders over the ecclesia or the assembly. And now, one of the things that fascinated a number of the commentators, John MacArthur and others have pointed out, what is the most important quality of the leadership? Intelligence, personality, vision, administrative skills, decisiveness, courage. I go on with a long list.

All of those can be very useful, obviously, but there's one quality that's absolutely indispensable. It's called integrity, integrity in leadership, leadership in general, not just pastors, but especially for a moral leader or an ethical leader, integrity. I mention that because we sort of take that for granted.

That's tragic because it's not to be taken for granted today. It's fact rather rare. And I'm going to sound a little cynical, perhaps, and I'll throw this out just as a challenge.

Having a 30-year executive career in many industries, the auto industry, the semiconductor industry, the computer industry, I won't go through the whole list. My biggest shock going from that world into a full-time industry is the lack of integrity that you very often encounter at a higher frequency and in more surprising ways than I did in the secular rough-and-tumble world of the auto industry or of the semiconductor industry. Those are tough terms, but there is an ethic within the trade, which you quickly learn, that works.

And there's an integrity, a predictableness, a character to it. Anyway, let's go to verse 2. Paul continues, and he's writing this letter from Macedonia. Timothy is the pastor at Ephesus.

Paul had spent a lot of time at Ephesus. Ephesus had some special problems anyway, and Timothy's having a tough time dealing with some of them. So this letter is counsel to Paul's protegee, and he continues then about what the requirements are for a bishop or an overseer.

And for our purposes in the Spiritist letter, that's like an elder, as we would think of an elder in a church. Bishop then must be blameless. Ooh, wow.

The husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality. I like that part. Make a note of that.

And apt to teach. Apt to teach. You know, it's interesting.

There are some very relatively successful pastors that are not particularly teachers, but that's unusual, because the pastor or the bishop or the elder or whatever should be a teacher, including in a lot of other things. But in this list here, and by the way, we're going to go through 16 of these things. I'll try to go quickly.

Blameless. That means nothing to take hold upon, above reproach. Now, make no mistake.

If you're in a position of leadership or hold an office anywhere, count on the fact that you're going to get blamed for things. You see, all you can do is endeavor not to deserve them. You just want to strive to try to assure that they're not justified or true.

But you count on the fact that's probably one of the grieves of office, of whatever you're doing, is that you know you'll be blamed for things, and often quite unjustly. But what it's talking about here, being blameless. In other words, above reproach is what it's talking about.

A husband of one wife. Now, sorry girls, but all the adjectives here, all the adjectives in this passage are masculine. By the way, husband of one wife, I do not believe this is alluding to being remarried after the wife's death.

Genesis 2.18, 1 Timothy 4.3, we'll touch on some of these things. Some hold that Paul was not married. There's some evidence of that in some of his letters.

And yet, most scholars believe that he was, he had been married, but that his first wife died. He could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin, which there's some evidence to believe that he was, without having been married. So Paul's estranged.

And sometimes we, as he makes some of his comments, it's clear that he wasn't married then. I mean, how could you be married to someone who spent most of his ministry in prison? In prison. He's in the can all the time.

But Paul, Paul was a type A. And, but the general scholastic view is that she probably passed away, and he didn't remarry, probably for no other reason than the pace at which he conducted his career as an apostle for Jesus Christ. But incidentally, as an aside, the Bible does not forbid remarriage after divorce. Matthew 5 and 19, our Lord permits remarriage when a divorce is caused by adultery.

And Paul gave us a second occasion when the unbelieving spouse initiates the divorce, 1 Corinthians 7, verse 15. But in this list here, it all says one has to be vigilant. The term actually means temperate or sober.

And temperate in all things, we'll find out in the second letter that Timothy has emphasized. The way the NIV deals with that, keep your head in all situations. Good advice.

The word sober really just refers to, not talking about alcoholic practices, it's dealing with a serious attitude, being earnest about your work, knowing the real value of things. Sober in that sense. Of good behavior, the word actually means orderly.

It's the same Greek word that was translated modest with respect to women's apparel in the previous chapter. And given to hospitality, the Greek term actually means loving the stranger. Loving the stranger.

We can relate to that. It's pretty straightforward. Apt to teach is also in this list.

By the way, many scholars believe that the term pastors and teachers in Ephesians 4, verse 11, grammatically, it implies they're both the same person. That's why you'll hear the term pastor-teacher. Some argue, and I can't rebut it, that there are pastors and there are teachers.

Pastors are often thought of in terms of the administrative head and specialist teachers helping them or something. That's certainly a pattern that seems to be prevalent. But the scriptural view tends to be that the pastor is also apt to teach.

And he's automatically a teacher. In fact, he's not only a teacher, but he should be a continual student in the Word. And that's not... When we're talking about pastors here, we have a tendency to think, well, those guys.

No, no, all of us. Yes, we have some pastors among us, but that's not... It's addressed to every one of us, because every one of us should be, in a sense, a shepherd of our family, of a whole Bible study, or whatever. And it's tragic, in a sense, that we so emphasize evangelism.

Not that we shouldn't evangelize. Don't misquote me or misunderstand me. But we tend to regard a commitment to Jesus Christ as the climax.

We have our citywide canvas with brochures, and we bring in special speakers and have a crusade or whatever, or a special series in the church to get people to make their decision for Christ. And we have the call-out. And 5,000 people auditorium, and several hundred or whatever come down and make a decision.

And we celebrate that. And that's great, but it's misleading. It's not the climax.

It's the beginning. It's the beginning. I often ask an audience, how many of you are saved? And most of the hands will go up.

And they'll say, good. What have you done with it? The question is, the real issue is not life after death. It's life after birth.

What have you done? The Lord has called you. What He's begun, He finishes. If you've really saved, if you've really made that decision, it will show up in your attitudes, conduct, and following.

Now, to teach and to preach is the primary task of elders. And there's a whole series of verses, several dozen of them. They'll be listed in the notes.

I won't take you through that now. And Timothy had clearly had a gift for teaching, as will be evident in chapter 4, and also in the second letter, chapter 1. Then verse 3, the other requirement of the elder or the bishop is not given to wine. No striker, not greedy or filthy looker, but patient, not a brawler, not covetous.

This not given to a wine has caused a lot of controversy. What the word in the Greek means, it describes a person who sits long with the cup and thus drinks to excess. That's the exegesis of the passage, what the word language really means.

Paul advised Timothy to use a little wine for health reasons. That'll come up in chapter 5. That tells you something. That means they were not abstainers.

In the Passover ritual, they do put some water with their wine, and some people have built a career on that. If you read the rabbinical writings, you discover that the rabbis speculate, why do we put water in the wine at Passover? And there's all kinds of commentaries and conjectures as to why they think they do that. The answer is the New Testament.

When he hung on the cross, what happened? Water in the blood, right? And it's all prefigured in the Passover, interestingly enough. But getting back to this other issue, you can't make a case that total abstinence was required of believers in the scripture. However, some of the Corinthian church guys got drunk after the love feast that was associated with the Lord's And Paul deals with that in his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 11.

There are many Christians that do include table wine with their meals, but they usually do it in private, if at all, in view of the admonitions in Romans 14. Because the conduct that is encouraged among Christians is not to let another brother stumble. And there are people that prefer, in fact, may be better advised to be totally abstinent from wine.

So many abstain this in public to avoid stumbling a brother. That should be commended. So there's nothing wrong with abstaining from wine.

The argument can be defended for someone that enjoys a gourmet meal, which in many cases would be relatively incomplete without some appropriate accompaniment. But again, it's in moderation and it's probably in private rather than so you don't cause someone to stumble. And by the way, J. Bernard McGee argues this aggressively too, that the scripture does not teach total abstinence.

And yet at the same time, total abstinences can be encouraged for lots of other reasons. That's why in many, many churches, you have the strange situation that you have the Lord's Supper with grape juice. You can't defend that in terms of the original Lord's Supper because the sacramental wines in the Jewish community are well understood.

And that was, of course, obviously what was used that evening. But to avoid stumbling and to avoid the issue, most churches duck that issue. And that's fine.

One can make too much of these, some of these things. Not a striker is one of the requirements. That is not contentious, not looking for a fight.

See, when a leader is wronged, he must have no thought of retaliation. I wish I could step up to that. There are several people if I meet, I'm going to have a lot to repent of right afterwards.

And that's a weakness. That's wrong. I'm saying that a little flippantly in my tongue, in my cheek, in part.

I hope it isn't my cheek. I mean, that's just kidding around. Not greedy of filthy lucre.

1 Peter 5.2 talks about pastors should not pursue money for money's own sake. And remember, it's not money that's evil. It's the love of money that's evil.

Money becomes one of the first pieces of idolatry. It's very easy to worship money. And that's a that's a trap.

We'll talk more about money when we get to chapter six. And we'll also talk, then I'll mention it now just to keep keep us in focus here. One of the things that's useful, I think, is to think of a portfolio concept of your life and especially of your giving.

What do I mean by a portfolio concept? If you're a professional manager, managing assets, say a portfolio of stocks or whatever securities for others, either public or for a special client, what you want to do, what you try to do is conduct your decisions and your commitments in such a way that at the end of the period, either the quarter of the year or whatever, you want to be able to may have made those decisions that put you in good stead then. If the market's down, you want to lose less than most people. If the market's doing well, you want to earn more than other people.

But the point is, whatever it is, if you're a decision theorist, you're going to use the savage principle minimax the regret. But I won't get into all that here. What you really want to do is you want to put yourself in your mind's eye at the end of the period and try to make those decisions that'll make put you in the best stead at the end of the period.

It's interesting how this applies to your giving because you don't give necessarily where there's need. There's more needs around than you can possibly address. I mean, there's no end to that.

So where do you give? Well, where you want to give is where the Lord wants you to give. You want to be in those actions that the Lord is in. There are lots of, quote, worthwhile things around that the Lord isn't necessarily in.

So as you pick those, the ones you want to pick are the ones at the end of the day where He'll say, a good and faithful servant. There are a lot of ministries around. The Lord would like to shut down if His supporters would let Him.

I first got this insight. I was sitting on a board of a prominent Christian ministry and they were constantly, in part, one of the board situations, there was always somebody there with some project from some ministry where they needed some help. I was fascinated as I learned that the really sharp guys would ask questions.

They had no doubt about it being needful. What they were trying to find out is, is the Lord in this project or not? They wanted to invest where they knew the Lord was in it. Now, they didn't telegraph that because then everybody would, you know, position themselves.

But I found out over some time that was really what they were doing. They wanted to put their commitments where there was evidence that the Lord was really in this project. And I thought that's very interesting.

What a neat way to conduct our lives is to prioritize in terms of what the Lord would have us do. Moving on then, the next of these attributes was patient. Gentle is actually a better translation.

Not a brawler. Be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. This is all in verse 3. Not covetous.

By the way, you can covet things other than money that can be just as deadly. Popularity. The size or outreach of your ministry.

Denominational advancement. You can make the list, rungs in a ladder, what have you. Verse 4. One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.

I won't ask for a show of hands how many qualify. Ruleth means preside over. It's like a loving shepherd.

1 Peter 5 deals with that. Verse 5. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? See, the church is also part of our family, the family of God, the household of God. Verse 6. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he shall fall into the condemnation of the devil.

The word not a novice, the word actually means one newly planted. An immaturity can include vulnerability to pride. And that, of course, would lead to serious stumbling.

And that's one of the arguments against bringing some shining star along too fast. You can destroy him doing that. Scripture says pride goes before his destruction and the haughty spirit before stumbling.

Proverbs 16, 18. Verse 7. Moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without. That is the unsaved.

The kind of elder you really want is one that has a good reputation in the secular world. He's respected in his community, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. What do you mean by good report? Does he pay his bills on time? Does he have a good reputation among those with whom he does business? Does he manifest a wholesome character in his ethics? I'm constantly bewildered why it is, and this is well known within the business community, why it is that there are men that have outstanding ethics.

They might be cheating on their wife for all I know, but in business, when they give you their commitment, you can count on it. They're strong. And if there's a Christian in business, everybody gets nervous.

And that's not a little cynical sideshow, that if you talk among seasoned businessmen and Christian businessmen, they'll tell you that it's tragic, but somehow a top-tier financial executive will be slow to give a commitment, but once given, you can bank on it. You can bank on oral contracts. You deal with a Christian, and you make a commitment in a meeting, and a week or two later, you meanwhile have banked on that and started to write checks or whatever, and you meet him later, and he says, you know, I've been praying about that.

The Lord's led me to go down path X rather than path Y. Well, now wait a minute. We agree, you know, I mean, you see, it starts to unravel. So, and they're well-intentioned.

This isn't malicious people. I've always felt there's a lack of training or a lack of something, but it is a tragic issue that, I don't know, I can't say it's the majority of situations, but it's certainly too prevalent, more prevalent than it should be. Okay, get on to verse 8. We're starting now to talk about deacons.

Now, the word deacons simply means servant, and in the New Testament sense, there wasn't a distinction between deacons and the rest, but because of Acts 6 and some other things, deacons have come to denote a second tier, people who would help serve under the elders in most churches. The word deacons is a translation of the Greek word diakonos, which means servant. The usage of the word is usually traced from Acts 6, where a number were designated as assistants to the apostles.

But by the way, Paul and Apollos were called deacons, so it wasn't like it was an office or a rank. It was just a role of being a servant. But in modern church concepts, deacons are not given the authority of the elders, yet they still must meet certain qualifications according to Paul, and he goes through this.

Grave, worthy of respect, worth imitating. Not double-tongued, that is, does not gossip, not a sycophant, he's forthright. Not given to much wine, the same as before.

Not greedy of filthy lucre, reliable to handle money. Verse 9, holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. It means he's doctrinally sound.

Now, the word mystery, you should understand, we use the term mystery in English a little differently than the Greek does. Mysterion, the Greek word, what it really means, it's truth once hidden, but now revealed. It's sort of like if I disclosed to you a password that you didn't know before.

That's a mystery. It implies it was hidden before, but now you know it. The concept of mystery here doesn't mean it continues to be hidden.

See, we use the term mystery, it's still a mystery, unsolved. We sort of think of an unsolved mystery as sort of the term. That's not the way it's used in the Greek.

There are a series of mysteries in the Scripture. You can dig them out. Mystery of incarnation, 1 Timothy 3. There's the mystery of indwelling in the believers, Colossians 1. The mystery of unity between Jews and Gentiles in the church, Ephesians 1 and 3. The mystery of the saving gospel, Colossians 4. The mystery of iniquity is prominent in 2 Thessalonians 2. And the mystery of the harpazo, or the rapture, in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Verse 9 says a deacon should be holding a mystery of faith in a pure conscience.

He should be sound in doctrine. And sin is still sin. It's interesting how the society continually tries to redefine sin.

Well, those ideas are out of date now, because of. You can label it almost all the commandments of some variation of that extent in our culture. No, sin is still sin, despite society's attempts to redefine God's laws.

What defines sin is God, and God has not changed His mind. Now, a deacon who does not know his Bible is an obstacle to growth in the local assembly. Just because he's a popular businessman, a generous contributor, or whatever, it doesn't mean he's qualified to be a deacon in the assembly, in the ecclesia.

Verse 10, let these also be proved, and let them use the office of deacon being found blameless. This is really an application of Matthew 25 to remember what the Lord says, thou hast been faithful over a few

things, I'll make thee ruler of other. The whole idea of a deacon is he should have some experience before in that role, and that role presumably will qualify him to be an elder.

That's the concept, I think. Joseph was a servant for 13 years in Egypt before he became prime minister of the largest empire at that time. Moses cared for sheep for 40 years before being called.

And Joshua was Moses' servant before becoming his successor. And David tended sheep. When Samuel called him to be anointed as king of Israel.

So that's the pattern all through the scripture. An untested Christian is an unprepared Christian. I don't know how many of you are pilots, but there is a concept among flyers that you really don't know what kind of a pilot you are until you've made a real forced landing.

Not a practice one on training, a real forced landing. Everybody does sooner or later, and once you do that, you know how you... up until then, you don't know how you're going to react under a real emergency. You're up there and you've... something goes wrong.

You're not... it's not a test now. It's not the instructor playing a game. What do you do? Do you panic? Or do you coolly go through the proper procedures and recover? You won't know.

No matter how you train, you won't know until it happens. Just thought I'd share that with you. Next time you fly, you can ask your pilot... never mind.

Verse 11, even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Wives, of course, are all of our most precious assets. And I think I've used this line here before, but I have to use it again.

I've been married to a 20-year-old for 40 years. One of the great blessings I enjoy is my wife, and she's my counselor. What a wonderful asset.

Says they should not be... they should be grave or serious, not slanderers. Now, the word slanderers here is an interesting word. It's diabolos.

It's one of the titles of Satan. Diabolical. It comes from that Greek root.

Because Satan, one of his titles is the slanderer. Verse 12, let the deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children, their own house as well, just as before. Verse 13, and they that have used the office of deacon well, purchased to themselves a good degree and great boldness in faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

The word degree is actually a military term in the Greek. It's a rank or rung in a ladder. By the way, another observation, elders were called out from their local assemblies.

They were not imported from other places. Kind of the basic concept in the early church. Now, verse 14, we start talking about believers in general, right? Up until now, we've been talking about ranks within the assembly.

These things, I read in these, it says, hoping to come unto thee shortly. Verse 15, but if I tarry long, thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. It says house of God.

It's actually... household would be a better translation. We are born again into a family, and I want to point out something to you. Many people miss this, and let's turn to John chapter one.

John's gospel opens so eloquently. We're all familiar with that, how it opens up, in the beginning was the word, the word was with God, the word was God, the same was the beginning with God. He really, he's written a role here.

Then he gets down to verse 11. He says, and he came unto his own, speaking of Jesus Christ, of course, he came unto his own, his own received him not, but as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. It's very interesting if you do a very careful study of that term, sons of God, you discover that in the Bible, it's generally used of a direct creation of God, a direct creation of God.

In the Old Testament, Benaiah Elohim is the son of Elohim, is a term used only of angels, only of angels, never of believers there in the Old Testament. Angels are direct creations of God. Adam was a direct creation of God, as exemplified in the genealogy in Luke.

He was a son of God. His children were sons of him, not of God. There's a subtlety there.

And when you're sensitive to that subtlety, that a son of God, that term is reserved for a direct creation of God, you come to this verse with that insight, recognizing we're dealing with 66 books that are an integrated message. The Holy Spirit uses words very precisely. It says, but as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.

So that's what chapter 3 will be all about, the born again. He's actually born into his forever family. Very, very exciting issue.

1 Peter 1 deals with all of that too. Now, see, the body must be fed. A church does not grow by addition, it grows by nutrition, and on the word of God, of course.

And, of course, the word church is ecclesia in the Greek, really means assembly. But what it refers to are the political assemblies in the Greek cities, in Acts 19, it shows up, where business was transacted by qualified citizens. That's what ecclesia was.

It's where the business was transacted by qualified citizens. The term actually means those called out, and it was used as a commercial term in the Greek. But, of course, in the New Testament it's used, with maybe one exception, it's used, what you and I think of as the mystical church.

So this whole letter is where Paul's trying to teach Timothy how to conduct himself as a leader in the local assembly. So the best counsel for all of that is, of course, in these three letters, the first of which we're in the middle of. He used the term pillar.

You have to understand that Ephesus was the famous, one of the seven wonders of the world, was the Temple of Diana, great Temple of Diana. It had 127 pillars, that each of them were a gift of a king, were made of marble, studded with jewels, and covered with gold. Incredible things.

So the idea of a pillar was very conscious to anyone in Ephesus. The pillar, and he speaks of the ground or bulwark. As you look at what he said there in verse 15, the church is to be both a pillar, holding it up, and a bulwark of the truth.

He's speaking idiomatically, of course, to make sure it doesn't fall. Now, it's interesting, in Isaiah 59, we have a similar phrase. It says, And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

That's the dire circumstances heralded by Isaiah in chapter 59. Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off, for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Does that describe our nation? Is there justice in our nation? Boy, you go through any of the major, any of the major trials in the last five years.

The guilty go free, the innocent get condemned, and the highest office of the land are above the law. Why? Whose fault is it? I believe Paul would lay the responsibility at the feet of the silent pulpits in America. I think the decay of our nation is derived from the failure of the pulpits in this country.

Verse 16, And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. Now, you may have noticed that verse has six verbs in it, and they all happen to be in the third person singular aorist, but the point is, the uniformity and the rhythm and the parallelism in that verse causes most scholars to infer, we don't know this for sure, that this was actually a quote from a hymn of the early church.

Because of the way it's structured. One of the earliest creeds in any case, but it sounds like it's been organized like a hymn. He was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the spirit, beheld by the angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

It's a whole, just a proclamation of the resurrection of our Redeemer. Someone has pointed out that Jesus, after his resurrection, was only touched by loving hands, and only seen by loving eyes. That gets to me, I like that.

Anyway, we can make chapter four, I thought we might. Let's jump into chapter four. How to be a man of God, in effect.

Now, one of the things, Timothy's at Ephesus, and Paul is writing to him from Macedonia. I think it's useful for us to go back and recall an event, the last time that Paul visited the elders of Ephesus. He actually didn't go to Ephesus, he went nearby, had them meet him at the harbor, and he gave them, the elders at Ephesus, a farewell address.

We find that in Acts chapter 20. Let's start about verse 17. From Miletus he sent unto Ephesus called the elders of the church.

That's from Miletus. He's calling the elders over to Miletus, which isn't that far away, but that's where the port put in, that's where he could make it. And when they were come to him, he said unto him, verse 18, you know from the first day that I came to Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and trials, which befell me by the lying and weight of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. I've been warned not to, but he's going anyway. Verse 23, except that the Holy Spirit witnesses in every

city, saying that the bonds and afflictions await me.

In other words, Paul's been warned, every place he goes, the Holy Spirit's telling him, don't go. Paul went anyway. That tells something about Paul.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching, and the kingdom of God shall see my face no more. This is his farewell.

Wherefore, I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. By the way, that's a key phrase. Remember that phrase.

He declared unto you all the counsel of God. Most of us pick up little hobby horses and develop those. No, that's dangerous.

There is a value, in fact, a security and a protection in the whole counsel of God. The churches that are well taught are typically taught by pastors that go verse by verse through the whole Bible, on some format. Some preach from a Sunday morning, but Sunday night they go through verse by verse, a chapter, or two, or five, or whatever.

Survey it through, depending what speed. But somehow, during the week, on the weekend, the churches that are healthy doctrinally are typically ones that the pastor, in front of the congregation, takes the congregation through the scripture, verse by verse, end to end. And there'll be places that he'll, if he's honest, he'll admit, I'm not sure about that, it's confusing, whatever.

That's fine. But you go through the whole thing. The whole counsel of God.

Anyway, verse 28. Now here's where, here's the warning that Paul gives the Ephesians, the Ephesian elders. Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers.

The word overseers is bishops, in effect. To feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, get verse 29 here, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch and remember, for the space of three years I cease not to warn everyone day and night with tears. For three years, day and night with tears, Paul hammered this theme.

And he goes on. Very, very key passage. Well, these grievous wolves had arrived.

Timothy is there now. Timothy is facing exactly what Paul dealt with. Now, it's kind of interesting.

He's going to counsel Timothy here to be guarding against false teaching. And the Ephesian church apparently did a good job at that. Because they did it so much, they blew their report card.

I'm going to skip ahead from Timothy while we have this fresh in our mind. I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 2. Jesus Christ wrote seven epistles. The book of Revelation, the two most important chapters, two most practical, two most important chapters, chapters 2 and 3. We have seven letters.

They're highly structured. They're report cards in effect. Revelation chapter 2, the first of the seven is the letter to the church at Ephesus.

These things say, he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. Those are idioms pulled from chapter 1. I won't get into that here. I know thy works, he says.

These letters say, I know thy works. Here comes the report card. I've been watching you.

I know your works. And thy labor and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them who are evil. And thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not.

I found them liars. In other words, they apparently heeded the things that Paul predicted next. But also he's going to warn Timothy about the next few verses when we get back to Timothy.

And you have borne, and hast patience, and from a namesake hast labored, not fainted. Then that heavy word, verse 4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. They became so committed to pure doctrine, they weren't loving anymore.

The king or anyone else. You've been to churches like that. Head trips.

Boy, they know their verses. They know their this, that. But do they love the lost? Do they love each other? And he goes on.

Remember therefore from where thou art fallen, repent, and do the first works, or I will come to thee quickly, and I will remove thy lampstand out of its place, except thou repent. Where is the church in Ephesus today? Lampstand is removed. Go to Ephesus.

Fabulous place to visit. Great ruins. Incredible.

No, really. We just did that. We went on a cruise.

We went to Israel, then we went to Patmos, then we went to Ephesus before we went to Istanbul. And it's worth a visit. Incredible what they've uncovered there.

But it's ruins. It's not a witness anymore. Not a beacon in the darkness of a hurting world.

No, not anymore. Right on with doctrine. Right on with doctrine.

Not that one should dismiss that. That's important. But again, it's balance.

Let's get back to 1 Timothy chapter 4, first verse. It says, now the spirit, but actually it should be translated, it's in that verse, but it should say, but the spirit speaketh expressly that in a latter time some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons. Wow, what a weird phrase.

Think about that. Doctrines of demons. See, the apostasy of the church had already begun at the time that Paul was writing Timothy.

By the way, this is the only place the word demons appears in the pastoral epistles. Seducing spirits. The word seducing means wandering or roving.

It's planus in the Greek. It actually means vagabond. It's the same word from which we have planets.

Your stars move systematically. Planets seem to wander to the ancients. That's why they call them planets.

We now know how they operate, but at the time it seemed very strange. Wandering. Seducing spirits.

Wandering spirits. And doctrines of demons. See, Satan is an imitator.

That's his basic strategy. He has his own ministers and doctrines. Paul deals with those in 2 Corinthians 11, plus other places.

And he had just warned. We just read in Acts 20 where he warned that these false teachers would arise from within the church. Church's most brutal attacks come from inside, not from outside.

When they're attacked from the outside, the church gets healthier. When the church is under persecution, it prospers spiritually. We may not like it.

It's uncomfortable. The history of the church is one of spiritual growth when it's under persecution. It's when it's rich and fat and lazy that it decays into materialism and everything else.

You shall know them by their fruits, by their hypocrisy. From here we could digress into a whole bunch of things. Jude in 2 Peter talks about apostasy and all of that.

I have to recall, not this last trip, but an earlier trip. We often will go in and out of Athens. And while we're there, go to Corinth and some other places.

I'd always wanted to see the Oracle of Delphi, because I'd read about it so much just in secular literature. And I remember as we trekked up to this pagan shrine, seeing some of the monuments and things going up there, and seeing an inverted cross with a serpent on it. And it hit me, something that we get, we so extol Greek art and architecture in our society that we sometimes can be blindsided here.

These were places that they did sacrifices to demons. Almost everything that we venerate in Western civilization turns out to have at its roots, strangely, some form of demon worship. That's obviously not the way it's cast, but that's what actually happened.

And I have to share with you, it was on that trip that I actually got sick. I actually had the bus stop and I got very ill. Partly because we had come there just from Egypt.

And when we were in Egypt, we went to Cairo, and the Cairo Museum is fantastic. You know, all the mummies, and it is one of the world's great museums. We had good guides.

It was very, very instructive. We also went outside the city in the buses. One thing we learned in the museum is, you know, the Egyptians have all these different things they worshipped.

One thing, you come out of that museum, although you're educated about the pharaohs and stuff, you realize they had a culture of death. But they also worshipped all kinds of creatures. You know what the top of the ladder of their various gods they worshipped was the scarab.

Have you seen scarab in jewelry? You know the scarab? Do you know what the scarab is, actually? It's a dung beetle. And because when there's feces on the ground from a camel or something, almost from

nowhere these things show up. And they looked at them, they inferred on them a symbol of creation.

That's the way they rationalized. But the point is they worshipped the scarab beetle. Well, as we were driving out the highways to another site that we're going to look at, on the side there were these towns that were really in misery, poverty.

But along the side there was like a levee. It looked white with some gray in the middle. And the white was not cement, as you look more closely.

It was trash. And the grayness was sewage. And you begin to realize these people weren't just poor, they were in big trouble.

And as we were driving, it hit me like a ton of bricks. See, the scripture says that we become like the gods we worship. This was not an underdeveloped country.

This isn't some backwoods empire. This was an empire that ruled the world at one time that worshipped the scarab beetle. And where are they now? They're living on the top of the sewage, like the dung beetle.

I was stunned as I obviously didn't bring all this out on a trip. I'm not going to insult the guides. But when we got to Athens, we shared all this.

The Bible means what it says. It says what it means. Now let's keep moving here.

I got a little distracted. Verse 2, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having the conscience seared with a hot iron. The hypocrisy of liars is the actual translation.

Seared or cauterized in a sense. See, the apostate is not just wrong doctrinally, he is wrong morally. His personal life became wrong before his doctrines were changed.

Believing and behaving always goes together. Now following this comes things that happen when you deny God's Word. Verse 3, forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received at the thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

See, both are contrary to Scripture. Forbidding to marry is not scriptural. Yet so many of these cults and groups cling to that.

Abstaining from meats. Be cautious of any teaching that tampers with God's institution of marriage. Marriage is the means by which God communicates His most intimate truths.

Not just because He sanctified marriage as a practical aspect to our life here, but also as a mechanism to communicate. Adam and Eve, how Paul deals with that in Ephesians 5, the lessons that are hidden there. Ruth and Boaz, Christ and His bride.

All through the Scripture you'll find the Gentile bride and the Redeemer as a model of what God is trying to communicate to us. And so be careful. There's something far more there than just a practical social institution.

There's deep theological roots to the whole institution of marriage. Verse 4, for every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused if it be received at Thanksgiving. All foods are clean.

Jesus said that in Mark 7. Peter says it, learns it in Acts 10. And Paul emphasizes it in 1 Corinthians 10, Romans 14, Colossians 2, elsewhere. Why? Because it's sanctified, verse 5, by the Word of God in prayer.

So if you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, Timothy, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. This is also where I was going to emphasize this whole idea of sound doctrine, on the whole counsel of God. If you're a pilot, flying instrument flying, you quickly learn there are six basic instruments that tell you things.

And almost everything you need to know is communicated by at least two instruments. But the tendency you have when you fly of those six is to fixate on one of them. One of the secrets to learning instrument flying is to do what they call cross-check.

What you need to do for your survival is constantly look at all six and be comparing what they're telling you, because one or a pair by themselves can be deceptive, and this leads you. And the thing you're fighting is fixating on a particular instrument. One of the things in your training in flying is to learn what they mean by cross-check.

You develop patterns where you're constantly trying to absorb what's going on in all six. Same thing with the Scripture. You get into doctrinal error by fixating on just one thing.

That's where the whole counsel of God, comparing Scripture with Scripture, the whole thing, that's your protection. And, of course, every Christian ought to feed daily on the Word of God. Let's move to verse 7. But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

Exercise thyself. You know, it's interesting, he uses an athletic metaphor. You know, Paul had spent three years in Ephesus.

They had a Colosseum there, where even the Olympic Games were held from time to time. Seated a hundred thousand people. And the Greek or Roman athlete knew he had to refuse certain things, he had to eat certain things, eat the right food, he had to do special exercises, get continually, continually in training, and Paul's implying we should be too.

He says, for bodily exercise profiteth a little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of life that now is, and the end of that which is come. He's not disparaging physical exercise. He says it profits a little.

You misunderstand that. It profits only for a little while. I was doing physical life here, and only a portion of that.

But your spiritual exercise is eternal. That's his point. He's not demeaning physical exercise.

A lot of people misunderstand that. That's the great purpose in life, shaping the Christian character and conduct by truth. We are to be as devoted to godliness as the athlete is to his chosen sport.

Think about how an athlete is committed to a sport. We should have that same commitment to our Lord. Verse 9, this is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, for therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially those that believe.

These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word and in conversation, that is, in behavior. Conversation here is used in the old English sense.

It really means a walker in behavior, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity. Let no man despise thy youth. The word there in the Greek referred to someone that was under 40.

This is an aside, okay? I thought that would throw that in. Verse 13, till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Give attendance to, that means to devote yourself, to be absorbed in.

Exhortation, actually the term really comes, means encouragement. There are 22 references to teaching and doctrine in these 13 chapters, by the way. Are you further along spiritually today than you were a year ago? Think about where you were a year ago.

Wherever that was, are you further along? That's the key. It's called growth, continual growth. Verse 14, neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery, or the elders.

Timothy started his ministry, they laid on hands, he received a spiritual gift, gift of teaching, I believe. But for some reason he neglected to cultivate this gift. And in 2nd Timothy, the second letter, Paul's going to take that up.

We're not to be passive, we're supposed to actively cultivate. He says, verse 15, meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. The word profiting is really progress, it's a military term.

It means pioneer in advance. It was really used to describe the soldiers that were sent out as an advance guard, to head the troops, to clear away obstacles and such, making it possible for the others to follow. That's the idiom that's being used here.

See, no pastor can lead his people where he himself has not gone before. Many pastors are going through dark times, in part for the training. So they will be able to minister to those that are in dark times.

That's not necessarily, but one of the reasons we often go through trials. Because it shapes our character, but it also prepares us to minister to people in those dark times. Verse 16, take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine continuing them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

And this is, of course, the same warning that Paul gave the Ephesian elders back in chapter 20, verse 28. And I don't normally do this, but I came across a poem that's anonymous, but it sort of fits the situation. I thought I'd share it with you.

When God wants to drill a man, and thrill a man, and skill a man, when God wants to mold a man and play the noblest part, when he yearns with all his heart that creates a great and bolder man, that all the world shall be amazed, watch his methods, watch his ways. How he ruthlessly perfects whom he royally elects. How he hammers him and hurts him with mighty blows, converts him into the trial shapes of clay, which only God understands.

While his tortured heart is crying, and he lifts beseeching hands. How he bends but never breaks, when his good he undertakes. How he uses whom he chooses, and with every purpose fuses him, by every act induces him to try his splendor out.

God knows what he's about. Kind of neat. Let's stand for a closing word of prayer.

Borrow hearts. Well, Father, we thank you that you brought us together. We do come before your throne, Father, confessing our sins, particularly our sins of ingratitude, our sins of indolence.

We confess our lack of commitment, lack of priorities. Oh, Father, we confess it as sin and ask you to help us to repent of that. We do ask you, Father, that we might grow every day in grace and the knowledge of Lord and Savior.

Draw us into your word and feed us, Father. Help us too, Father, to acquit ourselves as your devoted servants. Help us, Father, to commit our devotion to you as an athlete would before the Olympics.

Help us, Father, to reprioritize our entire lives around your word and around what you have called us to. And, Father, we bring before your throne this evening those among us that are going through dark times, that are going through a particularly rigorous portion of our training. Father, we would just ask that the lessons not be wasted.

We pray, Father, that you would give us discernment in our decisions and resolve in these commitments as we commit ourselves before you, pleading the blood of Jesus Christ. Indeed, Father, we come before you in the name of Yeshua, our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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