

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
October 10 – 16

Monday, October 10 – 1 Tim 1: 12 – 20

Sometimes we think it is important for us to cover up our sin so no one can see it, and so we won't disgrace Christ. But Paul takes just the opposite approach. As you read these verses notice how Paul describes himself: a blasphemer, persecutor, and a violent man (verse 13), and the worst of all sinners (verse 16). So often we fail to see the truth about ourselves like Paul does about himself. Paul wrote these words about himself many years after he was saved and his life had been transformed by Christ's love, but Paul hadn't forgotten that love or even begun to take it for granted. Paul reveled in that love everyday of his life. He never forgot what he was before Christ and what Christ had done for him. He also wasn't afraid to be honest about his sin or try to cover it up. He was open about his faults, and his openness allowed Christ's power and love to be displayed in his life for all to see. When we downplay our sin or try to cover it up, we also downplay and cover up what Christ has done for us.

Look at the result of Paul's willingness to own his sin. In verse 14, Paul says that knowing his deep sinfulness also allows him to see how abundantly the grace, love and mercy God poured out on him. As you look at verse 17, you also see that Paul's realization of his sinfulness makes him very aware of God's greatness and it causes Paul to pour out praise to God.

In verses 18-20, Paul encourages Timothy, first by urging Timothy to use Paul's instruction to fulfill the prophecies that were made concerning his ministry, to hold onto his faith and fight the good fight, and second by urging Timothy to not follow the example of those who have twisted or forsaken their faith.

Tuesday, October 11 – 1 Tim 2: 1 – 15

Chapter 2 is a passage of Scripture that has become a point of contention in the modern church, because it deals with the role of women in the church. In our modern culture Paul's words seem very out of step and there is an urge to just reject them. But before you do that please consider carefully the argument that Paul makes.

Paul starts this section by urging Timothy and those in his church to pray for everyone in authority over them. This may have been very hard for these people to do because those who were in authority over them were not believers but were pagans and idol worshippers who frequently persecuted Christians. Imagine praying for a leader like that. Next, Paul urges that we do our best to live quiet and peaceful lives—to not be troublemakers, because by behaving well people see Christ in us.

Next, Paul gives specific instruction for behavior in the church. First, men are to lift their hands in prayer without anger and disputing. Rather than fighting

about things, Paul is urging to pray instead. Second, in verses 9-10, Paul urges women to dress and behave modestly—their good works ought to be the thing that people notice about them rather than their stylish dress. Finally, Paul gets to what has caused much consternation in our churches today. Paul states very clearly that women should not teach or have authority over men. The question is, why does Paul say this? Was it because there was a specific problem with women in Timothy's church? Was it because of the way the culture was when Paul lived? If either one of those is the case then what Paul says in these verses doesn't matter to us today. But if you don't stop at verse 12 and you continue to read verses 13-15, you see that Paul's argument is not based on a specific condition in Timothy's church or cultural considerations, but rather is based on the fact that Adam was created first and Eve succumbed first to Satan's temptation. The fact that the basis for Paul's argument goes all the way back to creation, convinces me that Paul intended for this to be a lasting instruction for the church. You may think otherwise, but let me encourage you to think based on what the Bible teaches rather than what the culture teaches.

Wednesday, October 12 – 1 Tim 3: 1 – 16

In chapter 3, Paul deals with the leadership of the church and lays out the qualities the church should look for in a leader. Notice that Paul talks of two separate and distinct offices of leadership in the church the office of bishop (overseer or elder) and the office of deacon. Many of the qualities are self explanatory, but there are a few that I think would be good to elaborate on. The first of these is found in verse 2 that they must be men who are above reproach. What does this mean? It certainly doesn't mean that they are sinless, but it does mean that there are not ongoing patterns of sin in their life that would bring disgrace to the cause of Christ. If there is a major failure in their past (like there was in Paul's life) it should be out in the open and dealt with. Don't read too much into the verses that talk about the deacon and elder's wife and family. Some people take these verses to mean that those who hold church offices must be married with children, but that is not the case (Paul wasn't), rather Paul wants to make sure that if a leader in the church does have a family that they are leading their family well before they try to lead the church. In verse 6, Paul says that an elder must not be a recent convert, and in verse 10 Paul says that deacons are to be tested. In both instances, Paul is urging the church to look for leaders in men who have proven themselves to be up to the task.

Finally, notice in verse 15 why Paul wrote all of these things in chapters 2 and 3. It is so people will know how to conduct themselves properly in the family of God.

Thursday, October 13 – 1 Tim 4: 1 – 16

Now Paul turns his instructions to deal with matters that pertain directly to Timothy, but there is sound advice in these verses for all believers. In verses 1-8, Paul deals with those who would have other things come in and

take the place of the Gospel Paul was probably dealing with an early form of the heresy of Gnosticism. All Gnostic teaching claimed to have its roots in secret knowledge that had been passed on from Jesus' disciples to the Gnostic heretics. That is probably what Paul is referring to in verse 7 when Paul talks about godless myths and old wives' tales. Some Gnostics also held the view that things of the flesh were necessarily evil—things like marrying and eating certain foods (verse 3). Paul points out that these things are things that are taught by hypocritical liars with faulty consciences (verses 1-2). What Paul is teaching us is that God created everything and as He created everything He decreed that it was good (Genesis 1), so, therefore, there is nothing evil in and of itself if it is received from the hand of God with a grateful heart (verse 5) and put to proper use. There is nothing evil in and of itself. What makes something evil is how we use (or misuse) it. What is important is that we train ourselves to live godly lives (verse 8).

Pay close attention to what Paul says in verse 10 (he refers to it as a trustworthy saying in verse 9). Christ is to be the only thing that we put our hope in. Christ is to be the center of our lives.

Paul closes this exhortation to Timothy with an encouragement for Timothy. First, to set a godly example for those he is ministering to, and to make the most of the gifts that he has been entrusted with.

Friday, October 14 – 1 Tim 5: 1 – 16

Finally, Paul gives Timothy practical advice on how to care for various groups within the church. He starts with instruction on how to treat just about everybody in the church. If you summarized Paul's instructions in verses 1 and 2, it would be this: treat everybody in the church just like you would treat members of your own family (Paul is assuming we treat our families well). Next, Paul deals with how to care for widows in the church. In this period of time most women were outside of the economic mainstream, so if there was not a man to provide for their needs they often became very poor, so Paul teaches Timothy how the church is to care for the various groups of widows in the church. If they have family, then it is the family that should provide for her needs. If they live for their own pleasure, the church is not to care for them. Rather than looking to the church to provide for their needs younger women were to look to get married and return to raising a family. It was only the older widows who were willing to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the church who were to receive the permanent care of the church.

Saturday, October 15 – 1 Tim 5: 17 – 6: 2

In these verses, Paul deals with two very different groups of people, elders in the church, and slaves. The double honor that Paul refers to in verse 17 is the combined honor of leading the church and being paid for their leadership. Elders are also to be given the respect of not having spurious accusations leveled against them. For an accusation to be made against an elder in the church, Paul says that there must be more than one accuser. But with all of this honor also comes a responsibility to live a life that honors Christ, so Paul

tells Timothy that if an elder does sin they should be rebuked publicly as a warning and an example to others. Paul also exhorts Timothy, and the leaders of the church, to show partiality to no one (verse 23), and to be very careful about who they ordain to the offices of the church (verse 22).

Paul then turns his attention from those who would seem to be the most important in the church to those who might seem to be the least important—those who are slaves. In most of the Roman Empire slavery was not like it was in early America. Slaves could earn their freedom, and often times were more like servants or personal assistants than they were field workers. But it still wasn't how most people wanted to live their lives. Notice in 6:1 Paul refers to it as the yoke of slavery, so the idea of being in bondage was still very much there. Paul urges slaves to show their masters proper respect. This was to be even more true if the master was a fellow believer in Christ. If the master was a fellow believer in Christ there would be a temptation to not give a master the respect they were due, because one of the things that Christianity teaches is that no matter what our station in life is, we are all equal in the family of God. Paul says that slaves in this position should actually serve their masters even better because they are serving a fellow believer. While we no longer live in a time of slavery, what Paul teaches here has great implications for how we relate to those who have charge over us in the work place.

Sunday, October 16 – 1 Tim 6: 3 – 21

In these verses Paul refutes some of the teachings that have become mainstream in the Christian church in America. Godliness—living a life that is pleasing to God, is not to be done for financial gain. Paul teaches, in these verses, that we should be content with having our basic needs met because our treasure is not here on earth but in heaven. Those who desire worldly wealth are tempted in all kinds of ways that end up being very harmful to them. Those who love money will find themselves pursuing that rather than pursuing Christ (verse 10).

Notice in verse 11 that Paul tells Timothy to do two things which seem to be the opposite of each other, but actually work together to lead us down the path of godliness. On the one hand, Paul tells us to flee from the path of chasing after the thing of this world and at the same time pursue the path of righteousness. Run from evil—run to righteousness. Paul's advice in verses 17 and 18 is a very good example of what he means. If God does bless us with prosperity, run away from putting your hope in that wealth, and run to give away what God has blessed you with so that you lay up for yourself treasures in heaven.