

# A Study on 1 Timothy

## Week 12 | 6:11-21

### Overview | Living in light of Christ's return

This is the second half of the last section of the letter. Paul reiterates what he wrote about in the first half of this section regarding wealth and he picks back up on themes that have been prevalent throughout the whole letter. He is concerned with the godliness of the church, the purity of its doctrine, the avoidance of the controversies associated with false teaching, and ultimately with the witness of the gospel.

This section has a simple flow to it:

- Instructions toward godliness (6:11-16)
  - A doxology (6:15-16)
- Instructions toward the rich (6:17-19)
- Instructions toward guarding the doctrine of the church (6:20-21a)
- Final blessing (6:21b)

"...whereas the false teachers have lost sight of the future and therefore live only for this world and for the satisfaction of their immediate desires, Timothy is to keep his eyes firmly on the future reality of the appearing of Christ such that this should encourage him and shape the way he lives in the present (Macleay, p. 247)."

### Instructions toward godliness | 6:11-16

Paul instructs Timothy but the application is for the church as a whole. There are four commands that help frame this section: flee, pursue, fight, and take hold of. These commands highlight the need for active response and anticipation to the threats against the faith.

First, they are to flee from "these things." This is in reference to the temptations, snares, and destruction that come from greed and love of money. The idea of fleeing is one of running away from a dangerous situation. "The tone is that of an emergency. Both flight and pursuit, however, require not only a conscious decision but also a sustained, lifelong effort; the emergency ends only with the appearance of Christ (Towner, p. 141)."

As they flee they are told to pursue a godly lifestyle. (The best way to flee from sin is to actively move in the other direction pursuing obedience.)

- Righteousness – a life lived in accordance with God's values and laws; moral uprightness
- Godliness – a general term used to describe the Christian's overall spiritual life in relation to both God and man
- Faith – one's trust in God and belief in the gospel
- Love – the outworking of one's faith through the Spirit
- Steadfastness – the enduring, long-lasting perseverance of the faithful servant of Christ
- Gentleness – the patient disposition toward hostility that does not return evil for evil, violence for violence, etc.

"Fight the good fight of the faith" – Paul has no problem comparing the lifelong call to persevere in the faith to a fight. He did that earlier in chapter 1 – "wage the good warfare (1:18)." There are all sorts of things that wage war against our allegiance to Christ. These are summed up elsewhere as the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph. 2:2-3). We cannot stay neutral and we cannot let our guard down.

Perseverance requires a diligent, constant battle against those things and entities that seek to dilute the truth, distract God's people, and destroy the church.

Part of the battle strategy is to "take hold of the eternal life (v. 12b)." For those who believe and have been called by God we are commanded to take hold of that which we have been called to. Timothy had proven this calling by making a public profession of his faith. This probably refers to either his baptism or ordination but the meaning is the same; as he has publicly made known his faith, he must hold on to it and persevere in it (following in the footsteps of Jesus himself who made a similar confession before Pilate, knowing that it is God who called him and keeps him).

The fourth command relates to the purity of the doctrine of the church. Paul instructs Timothy to "keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach." In referring to "the commandment" he is speaking about the general Christian faith summarized in the commandments. To keep it unstained is to guard and protect the truth from error. This is the task of the church until Christ comes back.

At this idea, Paul breaks out into the second doxology of the letter (see also 1:17).

- He who is the blessed and only sovereign – There is only one who is sovereign; God alone. This sovereignty is not derived from anywhere but is rather inherent to the godhead.
- King of kings and Lord of lords - This is in direct contrast to the practice of emperor worship. God is over all authorities.
- He alone has immortality – This also speaks to an inherent trait that God alone possesses. The cult practices surrounding emperor worship included the belief that the emperor was immortal after death.
- Dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see – The imagery of light to describe God is used throughout the Bible. It helps describe his holiness.
  - God's glory was seen as a devouring fire on top of Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:15-17).
  - God is light and in him is no darkness (1 John 1:5).
  - No one can see his face and live (Ex. 33:20).
- To him be honor and eternal dominion – The proper response to these truths is worship.

#### **Instructions toward the rich | 6:17-19**

Whereas in the previous section (6:9-10) Paul warned those who desired to be wealthy, here Paul focuses on those who already are wealthy. He lays out a case for how one can be wealthy and godly.

- Don't be haughty – This prideful attitude was at the center of the false teachers' conceit and arrogance (6:4-5). It has no place in the church and those with riches need to be especially wary of this temptation.
- Don't set hope on the uncertainty of riches – Paul reminds them that the false sense of security and peace that wealth can create is just an illusion. It can easily be taken away.
- Rather they are to set their hope on God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy – This echoes what he said about being content with whatever circumstance God has us in (6:6-8). It also is a direct attack on the false teaching that had instructed the church to abstain from certain things (4:3).

Those who are wealthy have an incredible opportunity to demonstrate gospel generosity.

- Do good and be rich in good works – Paul wants the mindset of the wealthy to be others-centered. Rather than a love for money being the motivator, good works and benefiting others is driven by a love for Jesus and his church.

- Be generous and ready to share – A practical outworking of those who have been blessed with riches is to be disciplined in their own desire for more and to be ready to share in the burdens of their brothers and sisters in Christ. When God blesses someone with riches he bestows on him/her a great opportunity to bless others.
- The motivation for generosity is the gospel. The result is “storing up treasures as a good foundation for the future.” We are told here and elsewhere in Scripture (Matt. 6:20) that there will be rewards for our obedience and faithfulness in eternity. This should be a great encouragement to the faithful saint.
- “So that they may take hold of that which is truly life.” – By demonstrating a life that is characterized by generosity motivated by the gospel, the wealthy are taking hold of the that which is truly life; a life lived with eternity in mind and the present as a place to practice those eternal values. “In the case of wealthy Christians, by exchanging temporary material wealth for spiritual wealth, they may exchange this fleeting life for eternal life (Towner, p. 149).”

#### **Instructions toward guarding the doctrine of the church | 6:20-21a**

The final instruction Paul has for Timothy is similar to how he started the letter when he told him to “hold the faith and a good conscience (1:19).” Here he tells him to “guard the deposit.” Timothy is to guard that which has been entrusted to him which is the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Two things have been prevalent in this call to guard the gospel: 1) teach the truth and 2) refute error.

This error is once again described:

- Irreverent babble – This describes words without meaning that border on taking that which is holy and profaning it.
- Contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – They were being puffed up in their knowledge but as Paul said previously, they understood nothing.
- By professing this false faith some have deviated from truth – This was what was at stake. False teaching had led some to abandon the faith. Timothy must help restore truth to the church so that people could be led to the gospel in truth and so that godliness might be the resulting behavior.

#### **Final blessing | 6:21b**

“Grace be with you.” – “The ‘you’ is plural in Greek, which means that Paul’s final benediction is a wish not merely for Timothy but for the entire church. It is also an indication that he intends this letter to be read before the entire congregation. Paul desire the entire congregation to be sustained by the unmerited favor of God (Duguid, Hamilton Jr., Sklar, p. 451).”

#### **Resource List**

*Teaching 1 Timothy* by Angus Macleay (Primary Source for class)

*1 Timothy* by Philip Graham Ryken

*Let’s Study 1 Timothy* by W. John Cook

*Word Biblical Commentary: Pastoral Epistles* by William D. Mounce

*1-2 Timothy & Titus* by Philip H. Towner

*ESV Expository Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* edited by Iain M. Duguid, James M. Hamilton Jr., Jay Sklar

*Commentary on 1 Timothy* by John Calvin

*ESV Study Bible*