

December 17

1 Timothy 1-6

It is very clear that Paul's relationship with Timothy is a very special one. He calls him "my true son" and several verses later he again says Timothy is "my son."

Two "trustworthy sayings":

- "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -- of whom I am the worst." That memorable verse tells us something about Christ and it also tells us something about Paul. Jesus came to earth -- "To save sinners" -- and about coming to "give his life as a ransom for many."
- "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task." Then follows the list of qualifications.

Before we move to another topic, did you notice that Paul says the wives of church leaders ought also to be examined before their husbands are given the responsibility of leading God's people. They too must be worthy of respect and trustworthy and they must not be malicious talkers.

Paul clearly assumes that the leaders of the churches to whom he writes and with which his apprentices will deal with are men. Paul, though he clearly saw women as equal before God and as having legitimate ministry gifts, still believed that men should have the final authority within the local congregations. Paul's insistence on male leadership was not rooted in the customs of his society but in a theological understanding.

According to the Genesis account it was Eve who was first deceived by the serpent, Adam chose quite consciously to follow his wife in disobedience and bore full responsibility for his actions. Adam's sin was Adam's fault, not Eve's, even though she made a wrong choice first. Interestingly enough, the scripture traces the sin nature that all people inherit back to Adam, not Eve!

Third trustworthy saying:

- physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." If they are correct, it is the only place where Paul uses the formula after rather than before the truth he wants to emphasize. Something to keep in mind...our physical bodies will only last for seven or eight decades, spiritual fitness will profit us both in this life and the next -- for all eternity. Be wise to not only keep your bodies in good physical condition, but make it a priority to keep yourself in good spiritual fitness.

Probably the most well known verse in the passage we read today is also one of the most often misquoted verses in the whole Bible. In chapter 6, verse 10, Paul tells Timothy that "the love of money is the root of all evil." He did not say that money is the root of all evil. If he had we would all need to take a vow of poverty, but that is not

what Paul said. Money is a tool and like most tools it can be used for good or evil, but the love of money is an unmitigated evil. Guard your hearts and remember that Jesus once said you cannot love both God and mammon. It will be one or the other!

This passage in 1 Timothy is the most detailed one in the New Testament dealing with the subject of caring for widows and orphans. It is apparent that there was a very well developed system. Paul mentions a "list" or a roll. The widows on the list were supported by the church. To be eligible she needed to be over 60, without relatives capable of caring for her and deemed worthy by virtue of her faithfulness to her deceased husband and her life of righteousness. In a day when government may be forced to cut back on "entitlement" programs, it may again become necessary for the western church to find a method of caring for the widows. There was no expectation that every person would be cared for without regard whether or not they were deserving or willing to work hard. "Welfare" as we know it simply did not exist. Next, family was expected to care for family. Paul's instructions make it clear enough that some were trying to evade their responsibilities to care for widowed relations. Christians, do whatever is necessary to care for your families.

Did you notice Paul's command with regard to Timothy's public ministry? He is to devote himself to the public reading of scripture -- that is first and presumably the most important thing; then, to preaching and to teaching. Now the public reading of scripture would be even more important to the early church than to us because first of all books were rare, very few would have access to them and secondly many of the saints would be illiterate. They would need to have the scripture read aloud to them to hear and know the word of God. Reading the scripture to God's people and then preaching and teaching it to the people of Christ is the number one most important thing that a pastor can do.

At the end of his letter, Paul reminds Timothy that we are waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he attaches a marvelous benediction. God is the blessed and only ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever.