

1 Timothy

Book Study

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

1 Timothy

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Doctrine vs Disputes (1Timothy 1:3-7)

"As I urged you...remain in Ephesus that you may charge some not to teach other doctrines, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith." (vs3-4)

Recently we observed that the course of these VW study mailings was at a sort-of "doorway"; a crossroads. Considering that, with the makeup of the subscriber base, that perhaps it was time to begin considering more local "church" topics; things for Christian growth. In the past we've done book studies on Romans, Ephesians, Jacob, 1John, etc. While those deal more in Salvation and Christian living, it was seeming appropriate to now consider some "church" books. How does the church function? What about church leadership? etc. The primary books on that are the two Timothys and Titus. Titus is written more to ones who are already more mature ministers. So, the two epistles to "youthful" (4:12) Timothy seem appropriate, as many of you, having come out of the organized so-called "church", find yourselves alone... perhaps feeling like you're floundering, wondering 'what' to do with yourselves.

So now, once we get past the epistle greeting, what is the first thing off Paul's pen? DOCTRINE. But not -just- doctrine. Remember, he is writing to Timothy, a young minister. He is exhorting Timothy regarding what he is to teach and exhort. And he exhorts to "charge" those teaching other doctrines. Now, to the Galatians, Paul labels those teaching other gospels as being "accursed". (Gal1:8-9) The very first topic of this epistle is - DOCTRINE-. What is the predominance of today's so-called "church" doing? Tearing down the "walls" of doctrine. What does Paul exhort Timothy to do? To 'charge' those thus-engaged.

What does "charge" mean? To "impose a duty or obligation" Assigning responsibility. In practical terms: confronting, exposing, exhorting, commanding and demanding. The word "charge" is not merely "suggesting" that "it might be -better- 'if' you did so-n-so." No! IT IS YOUR DUTY BEFORE GOD TO BE FAITHFUL TO GODLY DOCTRINE. It is not a sit-around-in-a-circle feel-good therapy session. No! It is like a military officer giving a stern command in the heat of battle. After all, we are in spiritual warfare. (Eph6:10,12) We are to be "...strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

Oh, but isn't that sooo "judgmental"? Yup! Jesus said, "judge righteous judgment". (Jn7:24)

Now, Paul goes on to define what he is talking about. What, exactly, constitutes "other doctrine"? Fables and endless genealogies. (vs4) To Titus in the very first chapter he speaks of "Jewish myths". (Tit1:14) Do we have such today? Well, one such could be summed up in what we have

observed at various times as various factions of the "Hebrew roots" movement. We won't go into it now. Do we have any other myths today? Well...anything that is not found in Scripture, which a group calling itself "church" may cling to, for which they espouse a historical background and 'traditions'; any such things would be myths. Now, while we typically think of "fables" as being "stories" as often told to children, another definition is "lie". And where do these lying myths come from? Oh yes, the 'genealogy' of the "church fathers". One group will trace their mythical genealogy back to Peter. Another will do so back to John the Baptist. And both of these will often lament when a True Believer wants to stick -ONLY- to the Scriptures. Recently I received a forward from somebody discussing catholic dogma, and one was expressing to the other how pitiful (or sentiments to that effect) it was that some people insist on adhering only to the Scriptures, when there is available all this 'rich' heritage of catholic tradition and edicts of all these various great popes and other men.

But as anybody who has talked "religion" with any unbeliever knows, any extra-Biblical discussions usually always end up in 'arguments'. Paul uses the word "disputes". (vs4) There is no "edification" going on, because it is not God's wisdom. God's wisdom comes from the pure doctrine of Scripture. Anything else is man-made. Man-made ideas will always be in conflict with God. Essentially, Paul is condemning anything that resembles things like the Alpha Course, where the sole purpose is to discuss many -different- ideologies all-inclusively. As a young minister, Paul is exhorting Timothy to guide people AWAY FROM such discussions.

Next lesson we'll come back to the "commandment" (vs5), but notice that Paul says that those who engage in these disputes have "deviated" from God's commandment. (vs6) When they engage in their 'dialogues', their discussions are NOT 'Godly'. There is a path towards God, but these have turned aside from that path (that's what "deviate" means).

What's more, while they claim to be teachers of the Bible, it says that they "understand neither what they say nor the things which they strongly assert." (vs7) Any of you who have ever dialogued with the intellectual unbelievers understand this. But also, due to their apparent levels of "education" and ability in spinning out words, a Believer might become intimidated by them.

When VW was yet a monthly snail mailing, along the way the Lord opened the door for me to get a modem...and due to the advice of a cousin at the time, I signed up for CompuServe. CompuServe used to have these religion forums...I assume they still do? I know there are chat-rooms all over the place, hosted by various entities. Until I discovered exactly -what- a "website" was, I spent a lot of time in the so-called "Christianity" forum. There were many posting things in that forum that were "other doctrines". (Some of you on this list remember those days!) My purpose for spending time there was to try to witness. After awhile, the section leaders started filtering out my posts. Some of you experienced the same thing; you know

what I'm talking about. There were some who would post these lengthy treatises of man-made "wisdom" that many others on the forum would Oooo and Aaah over. But if some of us who were Christians would reply with Scripture, we would get chewed up by them and spit out. The section leaders would allow those posts; but they would not allow our Scripture-based responses. They had nary-a-clue as to what we Believers were trying to say, because they were all puffed up with human wisdom, philosophizing -about- God's commandment, rather than -proclaiming- it. The Lord used that time to teach me what "disputes" were all about, and about their futility. If a person will not accept God's doctrine, "godly edification" (vs4) is not possible. And so, about the time it seemed that the forum monitors had totally banned/filtered any of my messages from getting posted, is about when VW's website got started. That door closed, and this other opened.

Any more, I will no longer engage anybody in fruitless dialogue. Some used to try. They would come along, pretending to be "seeking". And then, as the e-mails were exchanged, it became apparent that they had utterly NO INTEREST in Truth; and I would cut off further communications. This is what Paul exhorts Timothy to teach. Later Paul is going to exhort Timothy, himself, about not wasting time with false knowledge. (6:20) But as this epistle begins, it is clear that the first order of business is to stay away from false doctrine. Why?

If all our time is taken up with "disputes", what time is left for "edification"? The Christian life is also called The Faith. We are exhorted to "...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.." (Judas1:3) We are not to spend all our time speculating about the false, but edifying one another "in faith". (vs5)

Part of the "contending" is in steering away from what is false. We, as generic Believers, are to stay away from the false. And the opening bell of the pastor's duties in ministry is to steer others away from the false. If a child is stuffing its mouth full of candy, when it is supposed to be eating the meal; the parent must first pull the candy away, and then replace it with the good food. If a pastor is to minister God's Word to the flock, preaching the Word (2Tim4:2), but they are spending their time in "other doctrines", his first order of business is to steer them away from the false (charge them), thus making their minds and hearts available, paying attention, and open to hear the "commandment". (vs5)

Law (1Timothy 1:5,8-10)

"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.." (vs5)

Jesus gave the commandment: "that you love one another". (Jn13:34) But what does the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (Jn13:23) say is the definition of "love"? "..this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.." (1Jn5:3)

So, what does 'conscience' have to do with anything? Those of us who remember back to childhood, having grown up in an environment where parents expected obedience, and if there was disobedience there were consequences...remember back to those times when the parents left for awhile, with the parting comments to "be good" while they were gone, or we were left with certain duties or chores to be completed by the time they returned? What happened if there was either misbehavior or the chores were not completed? Was it a 'happy' reunion as the parents returned? Well, the 'conscience' said that one had not lived up to expectations. Perhaps there would be a "hiding out" or being overly engrossed in something "else" (you know, hope to divert their attentions), or that one mysteriously did-not-notice the parents had returned. After all, if there is no communication, there can be no recrimination for the misdeeds. Certainly, indications of a NON-pure heart!

Now, while I never would have 'dared' to try this myself, I've known of some children who, when faced with the consequences of their misdeeds, facing punishment, suddenly in cherubic voice would proclaim, "I love you mommy!" Such a proclamation, it is hoped, will suddenly soften the impending wrath, and possibly even dismiss it altogether. After all, how could a parent NOT suddenly "melt" under such a revelation of devotion! Some parents are gullible. But others are not, and I've heard replies, "I love you, too...but you're still getting the spanking."

Is such a proclamation of love, in the context of disobedience, from a pure heart? Certainly not! Does it represent a "sincere faith"? The answer should be obvious.

What is the purpose of commandments? or the Law? If a person typically drives a prudent speed in a residential area, no law is necessary. But how many times have you seen some horrendous behavior, and somebody will exclaim, "Somebody should make a law...!!" What are they saying? The behavior was considered unacceptable, and the perceived way to curtail similar future behavior is to have a law outlawing it. Until people started driving too fast and recklessly, speed laws were not necessary. And if a person typically drives safely, any speed laws don't bother them, because they are within those bounds. A law is posted in order to curtail the activities of the ones being a hazzard.

In the first couple of chapters of Genesis God did not give a law saying, "You shall not murder". Nobody had yet murdered. But one of the reasons for Noah's flood was because "violence" filled the earth. (Gen6:11) And after the flood, God sets down the law about the shedding of blood and murdering. (Gen9:5-6)

Notice all the things for which there is the Law: murderers, prostitutes, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, etc. (vs9-10) One who murders does not love his victim. One who prostitutes seeks self-gratification at the expense of others. Liars do not consider those they injure with their lies. So God said in the Law, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev19:18) And here is the Law by which your love can be proven and judged.

A pure heart is not going to murder. A pure heart is not going to hate; it is going to love. 'Ever notice how, if you are in the company of those who live lives of immorality, but you do not participate in their "lifestyle"...you don't even have to verbally overtly condemn them. Your mere abstinence from such activity, and joking about it, sets you apart...and they become angry with you. Why? They accuse you of condemning them, even though you may not have said a single word. Why? Their hearts are not pure. They are not possessed of a "good conscience". The only way they can attempt to salve their conscience is to try to shift blame, like Adam did: God asks, What have you done, and he does the only 'manly' thing he can...The -woman- made me do it. So, too, with the ungodly who are breaking God's Law...shift the blame. Stop judging me! Judge not lest you be judged! Don't poke at the twig in my eye... If you point at me, remember you have 3 fingers pointing back at yourself. BUT... you never said a word to them!

Now, remember the previous lesson? The "other doctrines", the disputes and "idle talk"? (vs3,4,6) Why are they "dialoguing" under the premise of the "walls" being torn down? Because they are not being obedient to God's Law. Just like a child will try to change the subject when punishment is due, so, too, the unregenerate try to "change the doctrine" when their own consciences convict them that they are not living up to God's Law. If there is no Law, there is no guilt. Right? (Rom4:15,5:13) If there is no guilt, there is no punishment. The "Law" or "Doctrine"? Two different words for the same thing. Thus, when you see people engaged in "tearing down walls of doctrine", what they are inadvertently admitting to, is the fact that they are "disobedient" to God's Law. Please notice that another Biblical term for "being saved" is "obedience". "...obedience of faith.." or "...obedience to the faith.." (Rom1:5,16:26) These who tear down walls of doctrine are actually admitting to "not being saved". If there is no doctrine of right and wrong, if one does wrong, there is no guilt. If we can change doctrine into saying there is no eternal conscious punishment in the Lake of Fire, even if we know our conscience tells us we are sinners, we can delude ourselves into thinking there are no consequences. God is a "God of love"...just like... "I love you mommy!" God, I love You...thus, even though I'm being disobedient, You surely won't punish me, because I have proclaimed my

love for You. Law...Schmaw...what does all that matter! Love is all that matters.

But such love is not 1) pure, 2) from a good conscience, nor 3) from sincere faith. (vs5) It is a lie. And "...all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone..." (Rev21:8)

This is why, going back to the previous lesson, we dare not deal on -other-doctrines. What happens if you look at a wrong map, or look at it upside down? You will end up in the wrong place. What happens if you stop and ask directions, and the person tells you to "turn left" instead of "right"? You will end up in the wrong place, and not get to where you are intending to go.

How does one get to Heaven, and escape the Hell of the Lake of Fire? If the person is given some "other doctrine", they will end up in the Lake of Fire. What is it which brings us to God's presence through Christ? The Law.

"Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal3:24)

See Also Addendum: Q/A "Law vs Works"

Gospel committed to Paul's Trust (1:1,11-16)

"..according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust." (vs11)

The next two studies in this series are about how God's ministers - become- ministers. Throughout the epistles to Timothy there will be other mentions of this subject, addressed from other angles and in other contexts, and we'll address them again when we come to them at those times. If we are addressing a bit less-mature Believers, how are "babies" (1Pt2:2) fed? "..precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, there a little" (Is28:10) So, that's what we'll do. We'll take things more-or-less in order as they are written.

How did Paul become an apostle? Right after Jesus had ascended back to Heaven, what were His parting words? Stay in Jerusalem and "wait" (Ac1:4) for the Holy Spirit's coming. But what did they do? At the suggestion of Peter, they took it upon themselves to choose a replacement for Judas, picking Matthias. (Ac1:16~) But how had the original 12 been chosen? Who chose them? Jesus did. And how did Jesus choose them? After being "all night in prayer to God" (Lk6:12-13) They were chosen by God, not by a straw pole. Now, a bit of time later, Jesus again makes a choice, and commissions S/Paul to be an apostle to the Gentiles. (Ac9, 1Tm2:7, 2Tm1:11)

If you go read Acts ch9, you will notice how when Saul is knocked to the ground, with whom is he conversing? Jesus...directly. The apostles were directly chosen by Jesus, by name, verbally.

Back in the 70s, when the hippy form of charismania was infiltrating the churches, and bringing their trance/meditative and rock music with them, which over the decades has evolved into today's so-called "worship music", there were always a couple of arguments the 'hippies' (Ed: using the term loosely generically to describe those who rebelled against authority) used against the pastors. 1) The pastors just "don't know" music (Attitude: Like -we- do), so they are "not qualified" to -judge/condemn- it. 2) What is so great about the (position of) pastor, anyway? They set themselves up there, all exalted; they think they're better than us; they pretend to be holier-than-thou and judge us. We're no worse than them. We know the Bible just as well as they do. We don't need anybody who 'thinks' they know the Bible better than us, -teaching- us... we'll just sit around sharing our opinions -about- the Bible, what it "means to us", and make the Bible "more -personal-" to us.

I was reminded of those attitudes from back then, recently, while going through Numbers. In the wilderness, Israel had the same problems. Miriam and Aaron murmured, "Has Jehovah indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" (Num12:2) Notice it says, "And

Jehovah heard it." We'll come back to God's conversation with Miriam and Aaron in a minute. But once God was finished talking, and the cloud had lifted, Miriam was leprous; judged by God.

God did not 'immediately' judge those of the 70s in the same way, but has allowed their error to develop to what it has become today. God apparently has other purposes in mind, to be fulfilled in their proper time. But we can be sure that God "heard it", and "hears it" even today! When, in due course, you who are of this same rebellious heart are receiving God's judgment, just remember that you were warned! Remember that what happened to Israel was recorded in Scripture as "examples" (1Cor10:6-11) to us, so that we don't follow in the same ways of rebellion. And if Israel was judged as they were, "of how much worse punishment" will today's pretenders be "worthy" of? (Heb10:29)

But Israel rebelled similarly again. This time Korah collects a group who gather against Moses and Aaron with similar taunts: "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah?" (Num16:3) Now, if you read this whole chapter, you will see how, as their challenge is met by God, and they all go into the tent to offer their incense, that God lashes out at them all and burns them, killing them; and Korah who refused to come to the tent, he and those with him where they lived, the earth opened up and swallowed them alive. And if this wasn't enough judgment, the VERY NEXT DAY, more of Israel come facing Moses and Aaron, complaining against God's judgments, and thousands more get killed in the plague. And it is in the context of this that in ch17 is the account of Aaron's staff that buds, producing almonds...as God "puts to rest the murmurings of the children of Israel, with which they grumble against [Moses]" (Num17:5)

A bit later in this epistle Paul will speak of the "double honor" that is due those who minister the Word. (5:17) That speaks of, among other things, financial support. But also, elders -do- have a special place from God. He also exhorts about being careful about "accusing" elders. (5:19) We'll cover that in depth when we get there. But this is to let us understand that, when God chooses a special minister to proclaim His Word, such a person is, indeed, "special". God says to Ezekiel, when the people see God's Word fulfilled, that what? "...they will know that a prophet has been among them.." (Ezek2:5, 33:33)

So, before it is realized that Miriam has been judged with leprosy, what knowledge does God impart to Miriam and Aaron?

"If there is a prophet among you, I, Jehovah, reveal Myself to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream...Not so with My servant Moses! He is faithful in all My house. I speak with him mouth to mouth, even by appearance, and not in riddles; and he looks upon the form of Jehovah.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Num12:6-8)

So, those today who have "visions" and as a result proclaim themselves to be "apostles"...does the fact that they had a vision make-it-so? Remember that John warns to "...not believe every spirit, but test the spirits.." (1Jn4:1) because satan and his demons come along pretending to be "false apostles" and appear to be "ministers of righteousness" (2Cor11:13-15) But they are recognized because of "their works". They are proclaiming "other" doctrines/gospels (vs3, Gal1:8-9) Many of them end up on prime-time news with sexual and financial scandals. Many of them are proclaiming doctrines of demons (1Tm4:1) and bringing the world into the so-called "church".

In Deuteronomy ch13 God is quite forceful regarding what should be done with those who proclaim visions, even doing supportive signs and wonders which successfully come to pass, in order to draw God's people away from God; to teach other doctrines and go worshiping pagan deities: such a person was to be "put to death" for speaking "apostasy away from Jehovah your God...to thrust you out of the way in which Jehovah your God has commanded you to walk. Thus you shall put away the evil from your midst." (De13:5) Please notice, in spite of whatever your translation may say, the correct word there -is- "apostasy". Is that not what we see today? And notice God's 'editorial' regarding what the false prophets are doing. Are they being "loving" as they seek to "dialog" with us? No! Their whole purpose is to (notice the word) "THRUST" us away from God's commandments...Doctrine. Was God's attitude towards them to "love on them" and be careful "not to offend"? In Israel's theocracy, the judgment was "death" by -stoning-. (vs10) So, folks...if they label you derisively as being "hateful"... REJOICE! They should be shuddering in fear, and being grateful that they are not living under the O.T. covenants and taken out and stoned to death for leading the unsuspecting away from God's Law...Doctrine.

Today, here and there, there are, yet, 'some' men-of-God. Many of those the hippies rebelled against in the 70s were men-of-God. How did they become men of God? In some cases they were "commissioned" by church boards and denominations. We'll discuss that next week. But if they are true men of God, even if they receive a commissioning by a 'board' of elders, or some other group, the individual will also have received a call from God, personally.

How does that call come?

From God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Even if it is the group, if they are making a Godly choice, it is based on "...ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said.." (Acts13:2) How did the early apostles "minister to the Lord?" They gave themselves "continually to prayer and to the ministry of

the Word" (Ac6:4) How is a Believer "sanctified"? By "the Word of God and prayer" (1Tm4:5)

What sort of people does God choose for ministry? Well, Moses, who spoke with God "mouth to mouth" had murdered an Egyptian. Paul, writing this epistle had been a "blasphemer, persecutor, and an insolent man" (vs13) Is a minister a "pious" person? Translation: walks around with a halo hovering over-head, following him around; his hands placed together, fingers pointed upwards; and he is in a continual state of "swoon" just so that others know -just- HOW HOLY he is? No. It is -GOD- who calls the minister, for GOD's glory. It is GOD's grace and mercy that takes a sinner, saves him, and in some cases calls him to be a minister-of-the-gospel. Other than for God's call, a minister is a nobody.

You see, Paul was an example. People knew him as the persecutor, but when he got saved and people saw his "changed life", he says, "they glorified -GOD- in me" (Gal1:24) You see, if somebody like Paul could be saved, then -anybody- can be saved. God is not looking for perfect people. Jesus did not come to "call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mt9:13) Paul personalizes it this way, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (vs15)

And so, the minister is chosen and commissioned by God. What is the minister's call? The "gospel of..God" is "committed to" -trust-. (vs11) What is a trust? "Custody, care, charge." In Numbers the various priests and Levites were "charged" with their holy duties regarding God's tabernacle and sacrifices. Here is another matter in which the NKJV is in gross negligence to God's Word (why I was thoroughly disgusted with the NKJV while going through Numbers recently): it has these Levites "attending to the needs of.." -people- (Num3:7,etc) when God's command was that they "keep the -charge- of.." their assigned duties. God's minister is not called to be a "people person", but to keep the "trust/charge" of the "gospel", God's Word... yes: "doctrine". (Tit2:1) Yes, certainly ministers, as "shepherds" of the "flock" (1Pt5:2) will be caring for people's "needs". But notice that the early apostles would not be side-tracked by humanitarian concerns: "it is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables"; but chose out seven men to oversee the physical needs, in order that what?

"..we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." (Acts6:2-4)

Charge committed to Timothy (1:2,18-20)

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having thrust away, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck..." (vs18-19)

Now, while Paul's call to ministry was given directly by Jesus Christ, Timothy, on the other hand, was commissioned by other ministers. These "prophecies" that were "previously made" included the "laying on of [Paul's] hands" (2Tm1:6); and the hands of the "eldership" (4:14)

Before this ministry began, to which the Lord called me directly, apart from any denomination or hierarchy; throughout my life I engaged in various ministries. In the first case I was a Bible school student, and when I got back to the dorm from my afternoon job, there was a message that a pastor of an area church had been looking for me. He wanted me to come and direct the choir at his church. W-w-w-well I c-c-can't do that! I don't know enough about "how to" direct a choir. "I am a youth". (Jer1:6-7) I wasn't even yet 20. But it was pretty much understood by everyone that I was a musician, and he convinced me that the Lord would enable me to also direct the choir... which I did. Toward the end of my second year of Bible school, I got back to the dorm from my job one evening, and there was waiting for me a pastor of a church a couple hundred miles away. Based on the word of one of his church members, who also happened to be a fellow-student, whom I did not know personally previously, they recommended to him that I would be qualified to fill a position at his church in ministry...and so, he came the distance just to meet me, introduce himself, and ask me to come work in his church. Which I did that following summer. And throughout my earlier adult life, there were many other similar cases. Most things I did in "ministry" were things that those in charge (pastors, elders, etc) recognized God's Holy Spirit in me, and asked me to do this or that. And the interesting thing I often found in these cases, was that in many of the cases, these were "Baptist" churches, which had pretty strict guidelines in their constitution/by-laws about the people who would be serving, that they needed to be "members" of their church for certain specified periods of time. But in pretty much -every- case, I was asked to minister without that "membership" stipulation. In some cases, later I would join in membership. But my "call" would come separate from membership. The call would come because of God's Holy Spirit showing forth through me, them recognizing the fact, and commissioning me to the task.

This is how Timothy found himself in the ministry. In the second epistle we will see how he has been slacking for various reasons of timidity (likely: opposition?), and like that first pastor encouraged me that God would give me ability, so, too, Paul encourages Timothy to "stir up" the gift God had given him. (2Tm1:6)

Do we find any other passage to validate what we are observing here? The group of apostles and teachers are at Antioch, and as they are gathered together in prayer before the Lord, the Holy Spirit makes it clear to the whole group that Barnabas and Saul are to be commissioned for a missionary journey. (Acts13:2) But did they do like many mission organizations do? Setting agendas, itineraries and schedules? No. They "laid hands on them" (remember: these are still primarily 'Jewish' Believers, and they did a lot of laying on of hands in the O.T. rituals, so this is a Levitical carry-over), and then "sent them away". (vs3) And who was it who set their itinerary and agenda? The Holy Spirit. (vs4)

So, you see, S/Paul was called by Jesus Christ, -directly-. But he also was sent out by a group... on that particular occasion. Did that group send him out every time? No. But even though it was the 'group' sending him, he went out by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, a minister may be called by certain groups of people, as a congregation may call a pastor or some other minister. A minister may be commissioned by certain elders, as Timothy was. But whom does a minister serve? Is a pastor the "employee" of the congregation? No. He serves at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Whether a minister is called -directly- by God, or through the exhortation of an elder, the "charge" is the same. It is the same God we serve. It is the same Holy Spirit who directs. And it is the same Gospel that is committed to the minister's "trust" and "charge".

And yes, the ministry is a "warfare". (vs18b) In spite of whatever enticements others may bring along, the minister is to maintain his charge with "faith and a good conscience". (vs19a) And part of the warfare is because of some who have "thrust away" their faith. They have "suffered shipwreck". Paul names some names. I could also name names from my past. Some of the very ones who "called" me, later would be proven to be "shipwrecked". And if you consider what sorts of things cause shipwrecks...usually storms or warfare...the process whereby they become shipwrecked is a 'violent' one.

No, the christian life is not a bed of roses. Jesus promised "affliction". (Jn16:33) And for the minister, the warfare is often even more intense. It is, indeed, "waging war". But it is our "charge". And so, we must be "faithful". (1Cor4:2)

Glory to God (1:17)

"Now to the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen." (vs17)

As I've shared at other times in the past, my getting up on time in the morning is aided with a clock radio. The station it is tuned to is the local Moody station. I listen to it because there is nothing else more suitable to tune to that time of morning. And so I take advantage of my 'forced' listening to keep tabs on some local current "church" events. There are sometimes interviews with certain leading persons. It allows me to be aware of what is going on in the so-called "conservative" church arena. There are the other 'wilder' area 'religious' stations that are called "the spirit", "positive life radio", etc. But I have yet, to hear, for quite a long time on this Moody station, any music that is God-honoring. There is one this one announcer likes to play frequently: ratta-tap clink chunk slap kaboom tap tap tap tap "We have come to worship, we have come to worship, we have come to worship..." The question is: WHAT-WHOM are they worshipping? Or WHY? They don't say. They are just "worshipping".

In stark contrast, notice how Paul worships: He doesn't even say that he "is worshipping". The attention and focus is the "King eternal" and the "God who -alone- is wise". Worship of God involves acknowledging God's attributes; things which are above our finite humanity. God is incorruptible, where Isaiah bewailed his "unclean lips" (Is6:5) Where today's worshippers are busy filling 'self', true worship acknowledges "honor and glory" to God "forever and ever".

What is the context of this worship of the Almighty? Acknowledgement of his own worth-LESS-ness, of having been a "chief" sinner (vs15) and understanding God grace and mercy in Salvation. The basis for worship in Rev5:9 is that the Lamb was "worthy" to open the seals (of judgment) of the scroll -because- of His having "redeemed us to God by [His] blood" It's like that woman pulled into the closed shop as the dust cloud was enveloping the area on 9/11, screaming/crying to the shop owner, "Thank you! Thank you! You saved my life! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

Those who are busy 'worshipping', to fill "self" have not experienced Salvation from sin, and it's punishment...thus, it is not in them to understand the awesome God, to rightfully ascribe honor and glory unto Him who is Eternal!

Lifting up Holy Hands (2:1-8)

"Therefore I exhort...that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men..." (vs1)

While I realize that we -could- delve into all sorts of Scripture to make for a complete series on the subject of "prayer", for now, let's keep things simple, and stick just to this passage. And recently we also considered how, if there is sin, that God will "hide" Himself. But Paul is speaking of "men" praying, "lifting up holy hands". (vs8) So let us assume we are addressing Believers who are in good standing with God.

What are these different things that are done in prayer? Supplication is "to ask for humbly or earnestly, to make humble entreaty, to beseech". This is the "ask anything in My name" (Jn14:13-14), the God who will "avenge His elect who cry out day and night to Him" (Lk18:7), "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Mt7:7)

When people think of "prayer", this likely occupies 90% of what they do. But it is also a kind of prayer that people should, likely, beware of most...because...God may actually answer the prayer; and then, what of the consequences? This is the kind of prayer the world thinks of, as they continue along living their own lives, and then when trouble strikes, only 'then' do they think of God: God, I'm in this mess; help get me out of it! Supplications tend to be for "me" or "us" and -our- needs. I must admit that, even though I know this is a legitimate kind of prayer, and the Psalms is full of David 'supplicating', I find myself not doing too much of it. I have learned that God has a plan and design for my life; and when you have certain kinds of things happen 'to' you that are out of your own control, what is left is to "wait upon Jehovah" (Ps27:14, Is40:31) for Him to work things out. Just sharing my own heart here, I tend to not so much ask "for" things, but ask "what's next, Lord?" But, indeed, supplication is one form of prayer.

We'll come back to "prayers" in a few moments.

What is "intercession"? "Entreaty in favor of another; to mediate a dispute." In response to a prior lesson on the "call" of God's ministers (ch1), one person e-mailed asking if ministers don't also "pray" for those to whom they are called to proclaim? Indeed they do. Now, while we do have the cases where God told Jeremiah to "do not pray for this people...for their good" (Jer7:16, 11:14, 14:11) because Israel had rebelled "for the last time" prior to exile, we also see Moses on multiple occasions, on his face before God, seeking God's mercy on Israel's behalf, lest God would annihilate them as He was threatening. (Ex32:11, Deu9:18-20,etc) Intercession is a self-less kind of prayer, where "..in lowliness of mind let each esteem others as surpassing himself.." (Php2:3) Thus, this attitude will not allow for "prayer -preaching-" will it! You know... what we speak of

occasionally... where one is actually 'judging' another, so they go to "prayer" and the one "prays" for the other, that they will see the error of their ways, and see things the way 'they' see them. No! When Moses entreated for Israel, he was "prostrated" before God for 40 days (Deu9:18,25). It is with "lowliness" of mind.

"Giving of thanks". What do we give thanks for? What was the -premise- for praise in the O.T. What expression repeats over and over? "Oh, give thanks to Jehovah, for He is good! For His mercy is eternal." (1Ch16:34) In fact, the whole Ps136, every verse ends with the proclamation of God's Eternal Mercy. What does God's "mercy" have to do with? Our salvation. The fact that God does not simply squeegee us out of existence. "Through Jehovah's kindness we are not consumed, because His compassions never fail." (La3:22) (Many translations use "mercy" instead of "kindness" in that verse.)

OK...so we "lift holy hands"... So, therefore we also "praise" and "worship", asking Jesus to "fill us"... Right? Uuh, let me look again... Well, I don't see it. Do you? Do we need to say anymore on that, that we haven't already many times in the past?

So, back to "prayers". While the dictionary's first definition speaks of what we have already addressed, "reverent petition"; it's #2 definition (American Heritage Dictionary) says, "...act of communion with God..". I assume the dictionary is put together by the unsaved; and yet, they have an understanding of prayer that most so-called Christians don't. And yet, this is likely -the- MOST IMPORTANT kind of prayer! It is what Paul says, "pray without ceasing" (1Th5:17)

Does this mean we go about our lives with the continual thoughts, "help me, help me, help me" or "help John, help Susan, help Jack, help Jenny"? "Give me, give me, give me...gimme gimme gimme gimme that thing!" ?? No!

It is a CONTINUAL LIVING "in His presence". There is a oneness that we have with Jesus and the Father through the Holy Spirit. (Jn15-17) The Believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Those who are -seeking- to be "filled", by the very act of them 'seeking' it, thus by associative context saying they don't have it, are unwittingly proclaiming that they are NOT REALLY SAVED. Anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit is "not His". (Rom8:9) A person doesn't typically seek something they already have! Otherwise, why seek it? Prayer and the Holy Spirit are inextricably linked. The Holy Spirit is the 'agent' of prayer. (Rom8:26-27) When we don't have the 'words', the Holy Spirit communicates on our behalf. As we are all "members" of Christ's "body", and Christ is the "Head" (Col2:19, Rom12:5, 1Cor12:27, Eph4:15); if we can use a crude example, it is like the Holy Spirit is the 'nervous system', providing the inter-communication. This is also how we can tell when another is a True Believer or not, through the "witness" of the Spirit. (Rom8:16) And, for those occasions where we have

trouble knowing for sure, just like when something has 'numbed' the nervous system and a hand cannot 'feel' some other part, so too, the Holy Spirit can be "quenched" (1Th5:19), and sometimes it is hard to tell about another so-called "member". What causes such quenching? What causes God to "hide" Himself? (De29:29) Sin.

Now, while 'individuals' are in communion with the Lord, Believers are also 'jointly' in communion with God. They often get together with others when there are others physically near-by -to- "assemble" with. (Heb10:25) And when they get together, part of what they do jointly is to "pray". They do so in audibly spoken words. Such prayer is a bit different from the 'individual' Life-of-Prayer. As Jesus prayed audibly, He says, "I know that You always hear Me", speaking of His continual communion with the Father, but then says, "but because of the crowd..I said this.." (Jn11:42) As Paul prays before the unregenerate in the storm, it says he "gave thanks to God in the presence of them all". (Ac27:35)

So, when Believers are together, what sort of things do they pray about? One of the things is 'politics'. The -leaders- of the nations we live in. (vs2) To what end? "..that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.." To what end? The -desire- for "all men to be saved and to come to a full true knowledge of the truth". (vs4) What? Not "irresistible grace" -only- for those who have been "predestined"? No! God's -desire- is for "all" to be saved... to "come to repentance" (2Pet3:9) The 'just' God requires the "blessing and curse...life and death" but since He has endowed humanity with free will, He pleads, "Therefore -CHOOSE- LIFE..." (De30:19)

Now, while we know that when persecution arose, and as the Believers were "scattered" and they were "preaching the Word" (Ac8:4); how can in-depth 'teaching' occur? When there is not the fear of persecution, and where the people can spend time teaching/learning. (Ac18:9-10) If people are having to continually dodge bullets and whips, only the "milk" of how-to-be-saved can be imparted. (Heb5:12) Only the "rudimentary principles" can be given. As an unbeliever sees a Believer being persecuted/martyred, they can be saved in simple faith as the man on the cross next to Jesus who merely understood, "remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Lk23:42) But if "solid food" is to be imparted, for spiritual growth, that takes "time". Teaching of Doctrine.

One of the blessings of the nation of the United States of America has been that it is a "free" society. While "freedom-of-religion" may not be a Godly concept, because it allows paganism, it does allow freedom for God's children to freely proclaim the Gospel. I dare say that, throughout history, there has likely never been a time or nation from which more missionaries have been sent around the world, than from America and Canada.

And notice he gives a little nutshell of the Gospel. The Man Christ Jesus, our ransom, and Mediator. (vs5-6) Jesus came "in the flesh" (1Jn4:3), shed His precious blood to redeem us (Rev1:5,5:9), and is now our Mediator/Advocate before the Father. (1Jn2:1-2)

And, just in case anybody thinks I periodically speak too much about God's call upon -my- life to this ministry, well, I don't think I do it nearly as much as Paul did repeatedly. This Gospel which he has just summarized, he says, "for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle...a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." (vs7) And notice, if anyone wants to doubt Paul, he insists, "...I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying.."

So, yes. There is nothing wrong with "lifting up holy hands" to God. (vs8) But do it for the right reasons. It should not be a limp, rest the elbows on the ribs, palms upward, falling limp, dreamy closed eyes, with the heart's desire, "fill me, fill me, fill me... here where -I- sit...because I want your power". But the lifting of the hands in a physical gesture of "reaching" unto God in corporate, united, purposeful yieldedness to God's will. We may 'supplicate', but we do so with the attitude, "Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven". (Mt6:10)

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Prayer vs Fellowship with 'Jesus'?

Women Professing Godliness (2:9-15)

"..in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in appropriate apparel, with propriety and moderation...Let a woman learn in silence with all subjection" (vs9,11)

This lesson touches on two topics regarding Christian women. 1) Attire and 2) Leadership. What a Godly woman -looks- like, and what she -does-

What is this passage saying? That women should not wear jewelry, cosmetics, and that she should wear a gunny sack? The "church of Ephesus" teaches this (or used to during my growing-up years).

Let us not forget that God made Adam, "then Eve". (vs13) He made Eve to look 'different' from Adam. God made woman with a "beautiful figure". (Gen29:17, De21:11, Es2:7) Yes, folks, that's the terminology in those verses. God also speaks of the "bride adorned for her husband" (Rev21:2), adorned "with her jewels" (Is61:10); and Rebecca was given jewelry by Abraham's servant (Gen24:47), and God speaks of His relationship to Israel in terms of how He clothed and bedecked Israel with fine clothing and jewelry. (Ezek16:10-13) So, obviously "beauty" isn't the issue.

So, why does Paul say what he does? Why does he not address -man's-'looks'? Well, what makes up likely 50% of all advertising? Women, and all the products to help them feel and look "beautiful", sensual and alluring. And the advertisements aimed at men? How many of them use the sensual alluring woman to entice them? While modern media makes an effort to try to show the (pretend) "equality" of sexes, by showing sexy men alluring women, the reality is that women have been made into objects of allure...even starting at young childhood. e.g. Jon Bonet Ramsey, who at 5-6 years old was made up to look like, and taught to cavort around like a hussy. And what was the "wages of sin" for her? Death. (Her murder still supposedly "unsolved")

What is Paul speaking of here? Let me simplify by throwing out a couple of names. A few years ago it was Tammi Faye Bakker (sp?). Remember her? Face sooo plastered up with makeup that I'm sure it would take a putty knife to scrape it all off at night, and you could probably have used her eyelashes to hook a rubber band on to 'shoot' it across the room; or maybe put some bait on one of them, and stick her face in the water to catch a fish with it! (Sorry! 'just couldn't resist that one!) And today, it is Jan Crouch, with, among other things, her 'hair'!

What is the Christian woman's goals in her looks? To compete with the "red carpet" at the Oscars, Emmies, Grammys? See how many millions of dollars worth of jewels she can dazzle people with, while also being as cleverly skimpily un-dressed as she can get away with, and still call it

"being dressed"? Or is she a "Godly" woman, "with good works"? (vs10) What is "proper"? Yes, perhaps wear jewelry, but in "moderation". Yes, wear a nice dress, but one that is characterized by "propriety"...and that didn't cost mega-bucks because it was a one-of-a-kind Versace, etc.

Now, hand-in-hand with the above names (Tammi Faye and Jan)... in what other way are they examples to this discussion? "I do not permit a woman to teach or to usurp authority over a man, but to be..." What? "...IN SILENCE." (vs12)

The "loud" -makeup- and "loud" -hair- go along with a "loud" -MOUTH-. Just like the "evil woman"... with "the attire of a harlot" and being "boisterous and stubborn" (Pr7:10-11)

And that other phenomenon today called "worship dance", where women dress sometimes suggestively, and move about the stage provocatively, and the people give standing ovations. (A few years ago, my report on attending a Chuck Missler meeting, where a bluegrass-type band that he had brought along with him, the female singer, at one point also 'danced' with the "dirty-dancing" type music the band played...where she was moving her body around in a slow gyration, as if having sensual thoughts within herself, wishing for a man to come along and 'take' her right there on-the-spot. During that segment I -stormed- out, and only came back into the room when the band was finished, and Missler began to speak. Apparently Missler had seen nothing wrong with it!) Sorry to be so verbally graphic, but it is being done openly, blatantly in the so-called churches... thus, we are forced to address it.

Another context in which Paul says women should keep quiet is in the subject of charismania and "tongues". "...Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be in subjection..." (1Cor14:34)

These above-named women... are they also not in the charismatic movement. Adam "was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (vs14) Now-a-days the men are leading equally in charismania. But years ago, in so-called church meetings, it would be the vocal women who would be first to stand up and jabber off in what they call "tongues". It would be the pastor's 'wife' up front, who would work the congregation up into fits of ecstasy...from which, in such an 'emotional' state, the next step is tongues and demon-possession.

I don't profess to understand exactly what-all happened between Eve and the serpent. But she was the perpetrator to Adam. And Paul makes it quite clear that because of that, the woman is not to dominate and "USURP authority" over the man. Apparently, if Eve had remained under the authority of Adam, she would have kept pure.

Sorry, ladies, if all this offends you. Many become upset and angry when anybody proclaims what Scripture says...as they excuse why it's OK for women to preach to men, and teach men. But what can be clearer than this passage? And, if you are one of these women, don't be angry with -me-. It is not -me- saying it. It is God's Word. And, if you don't agree with it, then tell me, please tell me...what else could this passage possibly mean? Over the years I've heard a lot of argumentativeness and whining...but have never heard a viable alternative to the very clear words of this passage. Just as homosexuals refuse to acknowledge Rom1:27 & Lev20:13, today's women preachers refuse to recognize this passage. A woman "professing godliness" will be obedient and "be in silence" in the church.

And, let's back up to the previous lesson a minute. It spoke of prayer. It traverses into this lesson. It ends by saying, "I desire therefore that THE -MEN- pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands" (vs8)... as we spoke in the last lesson, the joint verbal praying that is done when Believers are met together. That was addressing the -MEN-. And now, in this lesson, "..in like manner also, that the -WOMEN-.." (vs9)

- 1) stuff for the 'men' (vs8)
- 2) stuff for the 'women' (vs9)

People have asked once in awhile about women praying out loud during prayer meetings. In the past I haven't been exactly sure. But I think, seeing these two lessons back-to-back in this fashion, it is pretty clear. Paul is also addressing 'public' -prayer-. Perhaps this explains an older tradition that I recall from back in the 50s and 60s, where when it came time to "go-to-prayer", that the men and women would split up into separate groups. That way, women could pray out verbally, without doing so 'over' the men. After all, it is most appropriate for women to minister to each other. (Tit2:3-4) When Miriam led out in song, she did so with "the women". (Ex15:20)

So... what does he mean, that the woman "will be kept safe through childbearing.."? (vs15) Well, if the wife has children, and is keeping the home; well, here's how he says it, "I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary for reproach" (1Tim5:14); "no opportunity" suggests that, if she is busy being a home-maker, she won't have -time- to be getting into trouble, dabbling about in things where she ought not.

Is she limited to -just- the home? Well, of course not. The "woman of strength" (Pr31:10) is praised for her industry. As we have said before in our studies from Eph ch5, if the husband and wife agree together, she might even be the bread-winner. In many families these days the woman has the career, and the dad is the stay-at-home dad, taking care of the house and kids.

You see...Paul is not suggesting that the woman "can't do anything". Nor is he saying, as some who argue assert he is saying, that women are "less-than" men in value, worth or importance. He makes that quite clear, that "in Christ" there is no gender gap. (Gal3:28) But there is a difference in role and hierarchy. The chain of command: God - Christ - Man - Woman. (1Cor11:3)

The main question is the woman's heart: Is she a woman "professing godliness"? If so, she will have no problem understanding these things. Yes, there may be struggles, when confronted by the world's onslaughts. But that is just the challenge for her, as to how she is going to put her Godliness to "good works". (vs10)

Qualifications of Overseers (3:1-7)

"This is a faithful saying: If a man aspires to the position of an overseer, he desires a good work." (vs1)

Taking the church offices in order as they appear in this epistle, Scripturally there are 1) Overseers (vs1), 2) Deacons (vs8), and 3) Elders (5:17). We won't try to describe each in detail here, but let's understand each in synoptic form.

By the very understanding of the word, "overseer" is just as it seems. One who "oversees". One who is in charge of the coordination and oversight of a group. A leader. Such a person may not necessarily do all the work, but also knows how to delegate to other leaders under him. Not that, using the word "under", of the others, means he's more important; but it is a chain-of-command thing.

Deacons, by definition, are those who "serve" -under- someone who is over them. If one was speaking of secular matters, a deacon was a servant to the king. In terms of "church" things, by definition, a deacon is one who would tend to the needs of the poor, distributes moneys that are collected, a waiter who serves food and drink, etc. The "seven" who were chosen in Acts ch6 to "serve tables" (vs2) were, by definition, "deacons". (Typically, over the years, baptist churches have tended to call the Scriptural "deacon" position their "trustees". In other words, the typical baptist office of "trustee" is the same as what Scripture calls, "deacon". I don't know the history of why baptists call them trustee. Perhaps one of you baptists could enlighten us?)

Elders, by definition, are those who are "older". In terms of the church, elder can indicate both physical age, as well as spiritual age. While Paul exhorts Timothy not to let people get to him because of his physical "youth" (1Tm4:12), he was 'spiritually' elder because he had known the Scriptures since childhood. (2Tm3:15) So, even though Timothy might have been a youth, he would have been a spiritual elder to an older man who only 'recently' had been saved. When we get there, we will see that elders have more the 'spiritual' oversight of the group, ministering the "Word". (1Tm5:17) (Again, referencing baptists, what baptists typically call their "deacons" are Scripturally actually "elders")

So, just to clarify, since there are likely more baptists than all other fundamental denominations combined: baptists have Pastors, Deacons, Trustees. In Scripture by similar hierarchy, they are called: Overseer, Elder, Deacon. Does that clear that up? Good!

Overseer is also called "shepherd" (1Pt2:25,5:2); which is what a "pastor" is. By definition, a "pastor" is one who leads the sheep to "pasture" to be fed. But by definition, a pastor is not necessarily responsible for the

building upkeep, keeping tabs of finances, fixing the broken window pane, mowing the lawn, etc. And yet, in so many congregations, that's what they think his job is. But no...by definition, his duty is to "feed the flock". (Ac20:28, 1Pt5:2) How is that done? By teaching the Scriptures. Notice that Eph4:11 speaks of "pastors and teachers". Some 'experts' claim the Greek suggests it should be said, "teaching pastors". The apostles didn't want to get bogged down with "serving tables" lest their primary mission of "ministering the Word" should suffer. (Ac6:4)

Now, also, being an 'overseer', the pastor is not the only top dog. When Timothy was commissioned, he was not to hoard his 'position', but was also to train others to teach. (2Tm2:2) When we get to 1Tm5:17 we will notice that "elders" is in the 'plural', and that elders also minister the Word. Yes, a congregation may have -a- pastor who oversees the entire group, but there are also others who share in the leadership, oversight and ministry.

Now, there are some groups that don't believe in the concept of -A- pastor, but only have a board-of-elders where all the men are 'equal' in rank, without a so-called "pastor". They are of the belief that no ONE-MAN should have such a position. Well, this passage is pretty clear, that it -is- Scriptural for there to be such a position. But, this passage also gives the qualifications that such a person should be possessed with. Don't be mistaken, the "position" of -pastor- is a "good work". (vs1)

The pastor must excel in four areas: 1) Personal conduct, 2) Conduct of his household, 3) Spiritual qualifications, 4) Testimony before the world. It says he is to be "blameless" (vs2). This does not mean he goes about with a halo hovering overhead, eyes turned heaven-ward, and hands together pointed upward, with swooning sounds of piety; but it means a person whose faith is manifested in -action-, in -all- areas of his life.

Notice the first thing that tops the list. "Husband of one wife". Notice about Israel's kings, God exhorted that they were not to "multiply wives" for themselves. (Deu17:17) This was written where some societies allowed a man to have more than one wife. Notice what happened when Solomon had so many wives; his wives turned his heart away from God. (1Ki11:4) Perhaps God 'permitted' men to follow the custom of the day, and have more than one wife...but one who would minister His Word should be "blameless". God had created them "male and female". (Gen1:27) Notice it does not say, "male and female[S]". God did not bring Eve to Adam, along with her sister. A man shall leave father and mother and "cleave to his wife...and the -two- (not: three or more) shall become one flesh" (Mt19:5)

And then notice several interrelated characteristics. (Please read the passage for yourselves, so we don't have to needlessly take up space to quote everything) He is one who has a cool and level head. He is not picking fights. He is not hot-tempered. He does not over-indulge the bottle. You see...many who get drunk, also tend to get into brawls. And one who

is drunk is not "fair-minded" (vs3) because a drunk is not able to think straight. Now also, along with being "fair-minded" is one who is "well-ordered". He can keep track of things, keep things sorted out. Such a person also tends to be a better teacher, because he can plan out and organize his thoughts and present the Truths in an orderly fashion. He can get along with people. And notice what closes up the first mini-list: "not loving money". (vs3)

What are likely the two greatest sources for downfall for many ministers? The things which open and close this list: Women and money. If the pastor has a good marriage with -one- wife, he will not be scouting around for an affair, or other such things. And one good reason for a congregation to have deacons being responsible for the money...so the pastor doesn't need to be encumbered with it. For some, the acquisition of money is their major downfall. With my brief background of having worked in "christian" (religious) radio a bit, years ago, I'd have to say one of the things I used to despise the most about all the various Bible programs the station would play daily was all the time these Bible -teachers- would spend raising money. For a half-hour program, so many of them would spend totally up to 10 minutes talking about money (I think Falwell was the worst of the lot!) And some of the more 'famous' ones who have fallen in the sight of the world were shown to have had extravegant lifestyles, with limos, gold-plated appliances, and all sorts of things. Just watch some of them on TV, clutching that microphone...and count how many expensive rings they have on their fingers! But what happens to the ministry of the Word? It suffers, or is essentially non-existent! A pastor is supposed to "shepherd" the flock; not "fleece" them! If he is after money, then he should not be in that position!

Then... his household. You know what it is said of "preacher's kids" (PKs): either they are -real- good, or -real- BAD. Usually, preachers' kids are not in-between. I still have this visual memory of this one pastor's daughter from my growing-up years. The pastor was about as solid a Bible teacher as you would find anywhere; but the image I find hard to erase from my memory is of his daughter in one of the Sunday school rooms one time, with boys around her, taking certain inappropriate liberties with her, of which she was encouraging them in. Samuel was likely one of Israel's greatest prophets, but his own children did not "walk in [his] ways". (1Sam8:5)

Now, if a pastor's children are rotten, it does not mean he cannot minister (Samuel did; and also see the next paragraph). But see Paul's reasonings: if he cannot control his own children, how should he be expected to care for the congregation properly? If it is a matter of him not knowing 'how to' control his children whom he knows, what makes him think he is qualified where other people (whom he does not know as well) are concerned? Guiding in people's spiritual growth is an extraordinary task, full of responsibility for the eternal destiny of souls. If he cannot command the "respect" of his own children, he cannot lead a congregation, either.

However, notice one detail that is missing here. His 'wife'. While he may be married to 'one' wife, it does not give her qualifications for him to be able to minister. While the woman is supposed to be subject to her husband, not all women are; and when they are not, it is not necessarily the fault of the husband that she (an adult) is not. Eve went independent of Adam...but Adam was not judged for not keeping Eve in check, she was answerable for her own disobedience. And, to be 'fair' to the above-mentioned pastor whose daughter was playing around with the boys...the pastor was a Godly man, but his wife...well, that's another story; and children are raised by -both- parents. Notice that Hosea was called to be married to a promiscuous woman; and when she ran off to do her own thing, God told Hosea to go after her, and take her back. (Hos3:1) And yet, for her infidelity, Hosea was "faithful". He was the "husband of one wife". And even though his wife sinned, God did not take Hosea out of the ministry because of it...but rather, used it as a sign to Israel.

This next, now, is rather important, and may likely be one of the NUMBER ONE causes and problems with today's apostate "church". It says, "not a new convert, that he not be puffed up with pride and fall into the same condemnation as the devil". (vs6) During my childhood and youth it seems like there was a proliferation of various 'famous' people who claimed to get saved...and IMMEDIATELY were pushed onto the platforms of the churches "giving their testimonies". But it did not stop there. They did not go to "Tarsus" (Ac9:30) and to "Arabia" (Ga1:17) like S/Paul to be trained by the Lord, and grow; but -continued- "ministering". Those like Pat Boone went off charismatically. The Lowell Lundstrums, who had been doing barroom music as unbelievers, when they "got saved", continued playing barroom music, adding "christian" words to it, and brought the barroom to the "church". And there are sooo many others; it is not our purpose to list everybody...but to say that so many from Hollywood type backgrounds, or professional sports, would make "claims" to salvation, and immediately were thrust into the "church" spotlight, without first being "proven" or "tested" (vs10) to see if they were -really- converted (2Cor13:5); and then, if they truly were saved...to have time to grow. Babies freshly born do not feed grownups; it goes the other way around. Yes, they cry, announcing the fact that they have life; but then, they first become weaned, and then grow and learn, and -then- they can start feeding others. As they become an older brother/sister, they may learn to feed a younger sibling baby that comes along, under the supervision of the parent...but they don't have their own children until they become adults. And yet, in the "church", all these "babies" were thrust out there, not being fed to maturity themselves, but were feeding others. And, if they were not being fed, the question becomes: WITH WHAT were they feeding others? They were not proven; and in many/most cases if they had been tested, it would have been known that they had not really been saved. But the pastors did not do their jobs. Instead of -leading-, they turned their pulpits over to others who were not qualified in the Word of God. You see, the pastors were "greedy"...for the notoriety of having a "famous person" at their church. And -that's-

where a lot of today's false doctrine originally snuck into the church! Pastors did not have the courage to stand up to the 'famous' people, and exhort them that their doctrines were in error. OK...enough on that. Is not the Word clear on this matter.

When a pastor is grown and mature in the Lord, he knows the Word. In the same passage where the kings were not to multiply wives, the following verse says the new king, when he took to the throne, was to take a copy of God's Law, that the priests had, and physically copy/write down an entire copy for himself, so he could have it, read it, and obey it. (De17:18-20) Working on the VW-Edition as I am, I can tell you that such a detailed word-by-word studying of God's Word is totally different from simply going down to the local bookstore and buying a printed copy. You see and understand things that so-easily get missed and overlooked, when merely 'reading' the Scriptures. Now, for Israel, the king essentially was their de-facto "overseer". And he was required to hand-write the Scriptures. How many pastors know the Word that well? Sadly, many of them know their commentaries, and the writings of the so-called "church fathers" better than they do the Scriptures!

Finally, a pastor should also have a good testimony before the world. It is one thing to proclaim righteousness to the congregation, but is he doing as some have been caught on video tapes...being seen at the local strip clubs? Is he teaching 'honesty' to his flock, but is he swindling the local 'whoever'? Is he known as the neighborhood grouch? Or is he known for helping people in need? Etc?

Yes, being a pastor is a "good work"; but he needs to walk-the-talk which he proclaims to others; otherwise, he cannot "lead", but must "drive" the congregation like cattle. And, unfortunately, that's why so many fundamental pastors are so "legalistic", because their own lives are full of sin; but they see what God's Word says and they must preach it. But they cannot "lead", because their own lives are not right before God. When you drive cattle, you must whip them and throw stones at their back-sides to keep them moving (or like we did on my uncle's farm, when we would drive them on foot, if you weren't a very good 'aim' at throwing rocks; shoot at their backsides with BB guns). What does the pastor wish to present to the Lord: sores, welts, and BBs stuck in the hide? Or a flock well-nourished, and eager to follow God's Word? When God calls (as my uncle used to do), "Come sheeep!" they come running, bleating, eagerly gathering around to be fed the yummy oats from the bucket?

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Long Male Hair & Ministry

Qualifications of Deacons (3:8-13)

"Likewise..." What does "likewise" mean? In the same way, in the same manner. In the same manner as 'what'? Well, in the context, what precedes this word is the discussion about 'overseers'. Overseers are supposed to be "blameless". (vs2) And so are deacons.

But, what does it matter? After all, the deacons are 'only' in charge of mowing the lawn, doing cleanup work, managing the money, taking care of the physical maintenance and upkeep of the facilities, and seeing to the needs of the poor, and social concerns. Wouldn't this be a good way to get that unsaved person 'involved-in-the-church'...so that hopefully, sometime down the road, being under the influence of being around Christians, they will also one day become a Christian? And if we give them a 'job' like this, that will 'keep-them-coming' so we can preach to (rrrr...'at') them...?

When the first group of seven deacons was selected, what qualifications did the apostles require? "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this need..." (Ac6:3)

Paul says they "...must be reverent...holding the mystery of the faith.." (vs8-9) One of their jobs might be the handling of the moneys, thus they are to be "not greedy for money". It is not enough that they are bankers or accountants by career, and have the 'appititude', but they also must be saved, holy and spiritual. They not only are saved... holding the mystery of the faith; but they, too, are not 'new converts', but are to "also first be tested". You see, not only is it wrong to have unbelievers in these what are typically considered as 'more-servile' positions, but they are to be tested, proven, mature Believers. Notice about Stephen, the first martyr, that while he was chosen as one of those first seven deacons to "serve tables", what else was he doing? He was also doing "signs and wonders" and also spoke "by the Spirit". (Ac6:8-10) We won't look up the references now, but this is how Israel was commanded by God to do regarding the temple service. When the tabernacle was dismantled in the wilderness for travel, and pieces carried by the many burden-bearers, it was only those of the tribe of Levi who did all the physical work. Nobody else was even to 'approach' the work, on the pentalty of death. "And when the tabernacle sets out, the Levites shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. The stranger who comes near shall be put to death". (Num1:51)

Well, what about that other common scenario that one sees all the time. There is this person who is presumed to be saved, but they have all sorts of personal problems, and they tend to blow-their-tops in a hot temper. But hey...let's ask them to do these little chores that carry labels with them. Kinda "nurture them in" by "getting-them-involved" so we can "help" them. Well...sorry. The deacon (server) "must" also be "temperate". Such

positions are not for the purpose of helping the person in that position grow. Certainly, they will grow. But to be in the position in the first place, they need to already have a level of maturity.

Thus, the deacons are also "first-tested" to be "found blameless". (vs10) Just like the overseers, the deacons are to be "husbands of one wife" and "ruling their children and their own houses well". (vs12) You see, their qualifications are essentially on the same high plain as the pastors. Now, it is not said that they need to have the abilities to teach, like the pastor is...because, well...their assignments are things other than teaching. And yet, they need to be of the same high spiritual calibre as the pastor.

Just as the position of "pastor" is a "good work", the position of "deacon" is also one of "good standing". Those who carry out their assignments "faithfully" (vs11) also receive a special reward.

Deacons are like stewards. "Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." (1Cor4:2)

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Testing

Conduct in the House of God^(3:14-16)

"..I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of truth." (vs15)

During the 60s and 70s, when today's more "hang-loose" mentality about worship originated, there was a hippy mentality that despised any sort of "reverence" for any kind of physical location, such as a 'church' building. They would just-as-soon 'party' in the sanctuary, as at Pizza Hut. I don't remember if "Pizza Hut" existed back then...but you get my meaning; to them, there was no distinction between the sanctuary and any 'secular' location. Nothing was sacred or holy to them. Now, some others of that same era, who might not have been hippies, nevertheless encouraged them in their frivolity and promoted a theology of the "temple of the Holy Spirit". (1Cor6:19) Since we are the "Church", and the Holy Spirit resides in each believer, and each believer is called a "temple", we no longer need to show reverence in a particular building location...that such reverence was part of the "Law" which was "done away with" in Christ. (2Cor3:14)

But please notice that so far, in ch2-3 here, these discussions are about the 'group' of Believers, when they 'meet' together to have teaching of the Scriptures and prayer together. When we observed in the previous chapter about women being "in silence" (2:11-12), somebody queried about Priscilla (along with her husband Aquila) explaining the Scriptures to Apollos. (Ac18:26) Please notice in that situation, Priscilla was not standing up in the meetings where Apollos was preaching, raising objections and proclaiming to the group (like many do today), but it says her husband and her "TOOK HIM ASIDE and explained to him the way of God more accurately". They did not do this in the context of the -group- 'meeting'. When Paul exhorts for women to be quiet in 1cor14:34, again, that is the context of the -group- 'meeting'. While it is true that many charismatics claim to speak in tongues in 'private', the greatest manifestations of it occur when the -groups- are met, and they have been emotionally pumped up into their states of ecstasy...and that's where the women go wild and get carried away in things that are -not- of God's Holy Spirit. But we digress...

Notice that the pastor is to be "temperate" (vs2), the deacons are to be "reverent" (vs8); as are women to be "reverent" and "temperate". (vs11) Again, the context...when the -group- is meeting together. There is an 'attitude' that accompanies the group meeting. Yes, there is singing and praise which we can know from many Scripture passages; but there is also an attitude about God's holy temple... "...Jehovah is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." (Hab2:20)

And Paul in the passage makes clear what he is talking about. He does not confine his comments to "church". The word "church" can have several

meanings. The basic meaning is a "gathering" or "assembly". Some will confine their understanding of this word and think everything in the N.T. is -only- about the "-local- church". But from the context, it is quite clear that the word, based on its context, also speaks of the "-universal- church". Christ "gave Himself for the church". (Eph5) If one limited their understanding to be merely "local", then, the question would be, -which- of all the 'local' assemblies is truly Christ's church? Well, believers in Jesus Christ are scattered around the world, as the 'great commission' has been obeyed, to "go into all the world" (Mk16:15) Jesus would not have given such a command if His church was to only be some "local" group somewhere.

So, Paul also clarifies his comments by saying "-house- of God". A specific 'location' where believers meet, where they are doing according to the things he is exhorting. An 'individual' does not have an overseer or deacon; he is an individual. These 'positions' are related to 'groups' of believers. How do groups of believers behave together, and order themselves? And so, there is an order of decorum and conduct when believers are met together before the Lord.

And as Paul does periodically, he inserts little snippets or nuggets of aspects of the Gospel here and there. Here is a little nugget, summarizing Jesus Christ (vs16). Please read it in your Bibles:

Jesus was the visible manifestation of the "essence" of God (Jn14:9, Heb1:3) as He came "in the flesh". (1Jn4:2-3) When He was immersed and was coming out of the water, the Holy Spirit came upon Him. (Mt3:16) When did angels see Him? They announced His birth (Lk2), strengthened Him after satan tempted Him (Mt4:11), and when He was in agony prior to crucifixion. (Lk22:43) And let's not forget that satan and his demons are fallen angels. Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection is likely as much in testimony against them, as it is for man's redemption. I expect we will be informed more on that when we are with Him. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was not confined to Israel, but has been spread throughout the world; and it is He whom people must "receive" (Jn1:12) for salvation through faith. (Eph2:8) And Jesus went back up to the Father (Acts ch1), where He "lives forever to make intercession for" Believers. (Heb7:25)

See Also Addendum: *Q/A -Advocating Church Buildings?*

The Latter Times (4:1-5)

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, being devoted to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons..." (vs1)

Lest anybody think we are 'harping' on a particular theme out of context, please notice that these verses follow-right-along, right after the previous chapter. We are taking this book study in-order as the verses come along, one-after-the-other. Some people don't like so much, all this "discernment"-stuff-. They want more 'positive' things to help them "grow". But please notice that after the previous chapter discussing the qualifications of leaders, and conduct in worship; and following this section will be exhortations regarding what makes up a "good minister" (vs6); and the next chapter speaks of how to rebuke/exhort people in the assembly; sandwiched in the middle is this section on what is often called today, "discernment". Why is this so?

While Paul was evangelizing and leading people to saving faith in Christ, and in the process was also establishing new churches all over Asia Minor, another primary activity Paul did was to "warn" the Believers. As he is leaving the area as a 'free' man for the last time, knowing he would be in chains next time he went back that direction, he gathers all the church leaders and reminds them, "I did not cease to -WARN- everyone night and day with tears." (Ac20:31) In that context he was warning how 'wolves' would be springing up within the church and wreaking havoc. When we see the relentless nature of satan's enticements; very much the same way an unscrupulous young man keeps wearing down the girl's inhibitions, and giving her drinks, until he can boast that he got her into bed to rob her of her virginity, and if she is to remain 'pure' she needs to stick to her guns against him; it is -NECESSARY- to be continually on-the-alert against satan's messengers and error.

Notice the introduction to this topic: "the Spirit -EXPRESSLY- SAYS". This is a very specific 'pointed' topic. In other words, while a lot of things may be spoken, this subject is important. Thus, 'Pay attention now, put your pencils down, get your eyes out of whatever you're reading. If you were visiting with your neighbor, stop for a minute and give me your -undivided-attention. Listen up! I want to make sure you UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING.' And this is one reason we repeat these things so often. You-all can pick up your Bibles and -read- for 'growth'. You'd BETTER NOT be relying solely on these mailings! Your growth only comes as you are in God's Word, and listening to His Holy Spirit. That's where your primary learning comes from. But many of you don't heed the warnings. So, we repeat...in order to verbally grab you by the shoulders and shake you a bit. If you're turned away, walk around and get in your face. If this was public speaking, the voice would be raised, and pulpit be pounded on a bit to emphasize the matter.

OK...so, what is the Holy Spirit emphasizing?

First of all, He is speaking about the times in which we live, now. John makes mention during his time that with all the antichrists that exist we know "it is the last hour". (1Jn2:18) Some often confuse prophecy when they read about the "-day- of the Lord". (Jer46:10, 1Th5:2, 2Pt3:10, etc) They think that, since the word "day" is in the 'singular', preceeded by the word "the", they assume that all the different things that are referenced as "the day of the Lord" are one (single) calendar date. We won't go into it now, but in actuality, the Day of the Lord began with the birth of Jesus as a 'human' baby, and will end after the Millennial rule and the present heavens and earth are burned up, and the new heavens and earth have been established.

Thus, it becomes easier to understand how some of these things were already beginning during the 300-400s AD, and could be called the "latter times", or "day of the Lord". We are presently living in a certain aspect of the Day of the Lord. But there are also different times within that "day". Now, compared to the century during which the Church had its beginnings, to those of that time who wrote the Scriptures, any of the centuries that have followed could be considered "latter times". Thus far, the world has experienced 1900 years of "latter times".

While we, today, look at world events and see how the Lord's return is "imminent", if you read the writings of various ones throughout the centuries, there were "wars and rumors of wars" along with famines and earthquakes. (Mt24) Many of them thought the Lord's return was "imminent" to their day, too. While we can read this passage and see how it applies specifically to today, today's characteristics did not come about suddenly one morning, and voila! here we are!

Let's take a look...

Departing from the faith: began even during apostolic times. That's why the epistles to Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, etc exist. And it continued with the Roman empire taking up the label "christian". They departed from the Scriptures and attached "christian" labels to paganism. Instead of the Scriptures, they had their "councils", "edicts" and "catechisms"; and after enough time passed, those edicts became "traditions".

There was an element that saw catholicism's errors, so they "protested", branched out, and created yet another form of theology. Rather than "councils", now the world had what today are called the "church fathers". The "great men of God". They created a "dead" theology of "sola fide" (faith only). But it was -dead-, just as "faith without (authenticating) works is dead". (Jac2:20,26) These theologies were created by "deceiving spirits". And because they were "protesting" Rome's errors, it was assumed they were correct. Something fighting error 'must' be right. Right?

But they were still in error; only, now going another direction. And yet, they retained many of Rome's trappings.

Now while all these "great men" produced -books-, it created an atmosphere of 'academia' regarding theology. In order to be qualified, a person had to go to seminary and do a bunch of "book-learning". They learned everything these "men of god" had produced, and could argue all their arguments. And thus, a certain segment saw that in all this intelligentia, there was something missing. It was all "intellectual" learning, but no "spirit". So, a new change came about: an emphasis on the "spirit". Being "spirit-filled". But there, they reverted back to paganism's religions of the "east", in mind-altering techniques, and meditative awareness.

Each time a new theology came out, it was deceptive. People could be led to believe that their predecessor's -errors- were being "corrected", thus, it would be assumed it was of God. But it -ALL- comes from the "deceiving spirits". From the inception of catholicism, through the reformation, to today's charisma; it -ALL- is "doctrines of demons".

In purporting to correct errors, but introducing their own errors, each new thing was "speaking lies". (vs2) In claiming to be "new revelations from God" it was "hypocrisy". And as was shown on TV last night (12/27/02) about Benny Hinn, claiming to be doing "God's" work, but not one single person claiming to have been healed, really being healed; and all those millions of dollars going into an extravagant lifestyle that would make the likes of Elijah and John the Emmerger blush; how can somebody like Hinn continue doing what he does, unless his conscience has been "seared"!

Catholicism requires a totally ungodly vow from their priests, of "celibacy"; and see the scandals that presently rock the catholic church! As Paul says, "forbidding to marry". (vs3) And growing up in catholic country during high school, as I did, I know well their 'hypocrisy' every Friday, when they would eat -fish- 'meat', instead of -meat- 'meat'. As I understand it, I think they don't eat 'meat' on Friday because of "Good Friday"? And yet "Good Friday" is also a false doctrine. And their hypocrisy -substitutes- one kind of meat for another, so they have the pretense that they are keeping a certain ritual that they've made for themselves. But God created meat "to be partaken with thanksgiving" (vs3)

It's not a choice of Catholicism, Reformation Theology or Charisma being "better" or "worse" than each other... they are -ALL- in error to their individual various degrees, and originate from "deceiving spirits". Catholicism cannot guarantee a person getting to Heaven. Protestantism claims to guarantee it and says once you have it, you can't become minus it. Charisma says you must have "manifestations" to prove it. They all have the Bible. They all name the name "Jesus Christ". They all speak of Heaven and Hell. But they are -all- WRONG! Catholicism says you must 'work' to get to Heaven, but you'll never be sure until you get to the pearly gates and meet Peter, and he makes the determination as to whether or

not to let you in. Protestantism says you are saved "by faith-alone", and your life following such a profession doesn't matter. It doesn't matter that your life didn't actually -change- to 'prove' what happened in your heart; if you -repeat- a certain "prayer", -they- 'guarantee' your salvation, just because you repeated those words. Charismania totally empties themselves, and invite and become 'spirit-filled' with demons. Catholicism rests on "church tradition". If there is a difference between the Bible and tradition, they will choose to follow tradition. Protestantism views the Bible through "lenses" of the writings of the "great men". They twist the Bible to conform to the teachings of those great men. And Charismania often throws the Bible out altogether; claiming that their spirit-fillings circumvent the Bible with "new revelations", and if they have a choice between their emotional "worship" times or being fed from Scripture, they choose the flesh every time..

You see, NONE of them follow God's Word, the Bible. They pay lipservice. But when push comes to shove, they rely on tradition, church fathers and spirit-fillings.

Now, as True Believers into Jesus Christ, we (I think) have tended to want to give these people the benefit-of-the-doubt, thinking they perhaps don't know any better. That they are merely 'deceived', but with a little cajoling or coaxing, that perhaps we can, with a few simple reasonings from Scripture, exhort them to 'see' the error of their heart, and convert. But as I've had it demonstrated again recently, it is not a trivial thing with them. A person I had known for around seven years, claiming to be a non-charismatic, and for everything seemed to be a Bible believing follower of God; I had never really investigated a particular organization he was affiliated with, because -he- seemed to be solid. Recently I had occasion to actually visit the website of this organization he holds in high esteem, and discovered a -charismatic- 'core' to their beliefs. When I challenged him on it, rather than answering the question, rather than allowing himself to be "tested" (as we learned a few lessons ago), claimed they were not like the Benny Hinn type organizations, aloofly refused to discuss the matter further, and closed off fellowship. And, I cannot remember how many Believers I've communicated with who say they see the errors of charismania, but are staying with the groups in order to be a "light" amongst them, in hopes of 'rescuing' one or two.

This recent loss-of-fellowship I've just shared adds to the list. I've shared other situations in the past. And many of you also know, from your own experiences, that they cannot be trusted. They function under the deceiving spirits, as they also, in turn, deceive others. "..deceiving and being deceived.." (2Tim3:13 KJV) "..leading astray and being led astray.." (VW) In this deception, by definition, THEY LIE...!! And who is the "father" of lies? (Jn8:44)

All this is not a 'casual' thing with them. We have seen it in our experiences dealing with them. Do not be deceived by them. Our opening

verse tells us the motivation of their hearts...which is why a Believer should not count on 'winning' them. They are "-DEVOTED-" to their deceiving spirits. It's even more than "giving heed" as KJV says. As one looks at the definition of the word, they not only "give attention to" what they are about, they "apply" themselves, and "cleave" to it. They are "addicted". And this last definitive word pretty much sums up what some of their leaders proclaim over their congregations, that they get "-DRUNK- in the spirit".

Remember it was the catholic church that led the inquisitions, torturing Believers, trying to get them to recant their faith. The protestants also engaged in warfare, and also persecuted Believers and Jews. Catholicism made converts at the tip of the bayonet. Reformed theology has catered to the intellect. Charismania has appealed to the flesh with emotional gratification, and lied their way into the church at the most basic level of the 'spiritual'...that place that is harder for flesh-and-blood to 'see'. They have been much more clever at pretending to be the real thing, appearing as "ministers of righteousness". (2Cor11:15) But when discovered, become every bit as irate as the other two. BECAUSE... of their 'devotion' to their 'spirits'.

Don't try to mingle with them to convert them. Their conversion won't likely happen. This passage only explains of their existence, and of their TRUE NATURE. They are of satan! Elsewhere Paul exhorts what to do about them. "Come out from among them and be separate..." (2Cor6:17) For all their labels as being "christian", this passage explains clearly that they are of darkness! "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph5:11)

This is the Holy Spirit's -EXPRESS- message on the matter as to His nemesis, the anti-spirits! Pay attention! Take heed!

See Also Addendum: Q/A -How to Escape God's Wrath?

Good Minister (4:6-16)

"If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have followed." (vs6)

What are "these things"? The expose of those "devoted to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons". (vs1 from the previous lesson) What?? Is not a pastor supposed to give his congregation 'pleasant' things? Be a "people person" and help build up their self-esteem, and encourage them in their "worth" before God? Why... talking about "these things" is so -judgmental-; so "negative". We've got so much "negativity" in the world; can't you preach a more "positive" gospel?

You see, the pastor has blood on his hands. He has the blood of each of the sheep charged to his care. One of his responsibilities is to warn against the enemy. If the enemy comes and takes the people away, they will die in their own sin; but if the watchman didn't warn them when he saw the enemy coming, God says, the sinner's "...blood I will require at the watchman's hand" (Ezek33:6)

Now, notice what goes hand-in-hand with warning. The shepherd is to "feed" the flock. Right? With what does he feed them? "...NOURISHED in the WORDS of FAITH and of the GOOD DOCTRINE.." (vs6) Do you see why (as we learned in the previous lesson) we stay away from the "doctrines of demons"? The demonic doctrines are actually doctrines of "no doctrine". To them, Scriptural doctrine is a "wall". The only way they can infiltrate into the congregation and into hearts, is if the walls are torn down. And indeed, in their songs they sing, "walls come down, walls come down", as they militantly persuade people to abandon Biblical Doctrine. They know that if a Believer is well-grounded in Scriptural Doctrine, they don't have a chance infiltrating. So, a faithful minister warns against the false, and nourishes with God's Word.

What are the pastor's duties? To run soul-winning campaigns? Head up building programs to build a bigger/better building? To go canvassing the neighborhoods to invite the world in, to "grow-a-church"?

Paul exhorts... "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (vs13) Yes folks, you who are part of a congregation large enough to have a paid full-time pastor...yes, folks, he -should- be spending a lot of time in his study... doing what? Preparing that which he is going to teach you from God's Word. I used to hear it said, in the days before computers and Bible-search software, that any half-way decent Sunday morning sermon, or evening Bible study, requires at least 8 hours of preparation. I would suggest to you that it actually takes up more than that, of his actual preparation time, and the amount of time that the Lord is laying the "burden" (Jer23:33~) on his heart. A true man-of-God does not

punch a clock, go into his study, flip on the "switch" and start preparing. God's 'burden' upon his heart is continually on him during his waking hours, even while he's doing other things, until he has prepared the message and delivered it. And another thing I've heard said: the amount of physical/emotional energy expended in preaching a typical half-hour sermon is equivalent to about an 8-hour shift at some other regular job. Thus, typically, if your congregation wants God's unadulterated Word coming to you, it would not be unreasonable at all if his -only- duty was to prepare, and then stand in front of you to preach and teach...given a typical congregation, and how many times he usually speaks before the group. As the early apostles said, "...but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word." (Ac6:4) Oh, of course, your pastor will do other things, counseling people, and all the things a pastor does. But his -primary- duty is to minister God's Word to you. To warn you against the wolves, and give you doctrine so you can grow.

Also, something a pastor should -not- do, is get himself embroiled in debates. I know... there are some out there who will make every effort to get on TV talk shows, radio debate programs, and will demonstrate their 'prowess' in the art of argument and debate...assuming it to be a "witnessing" tool. And indeed, perhaps there may be such times. Paul took part on the Athenian Areopagus with his "To the Unknown God" message. (Ac17) But he should not (and this goes for all Believers) get embroiled in "profane and old wives fables" (vs7) That's all we'll say on this for now, because Paul restates this at the close of the book, and we'll consider the 'nature' of these arguments in greater detail then. People like to ask, "What do you think about...?" some far-outlandish concept. Don't waste your time with it. Stick with God's Word and Godliness.

Now, what about a pastor's -personal- time? Timothy was young. For a time in the building where my store is, over in another section of the building a local pastor rented space for his office. A younger man, of the age having small children. And I happened to notice he had exercise equipment in his office. I've noticed in the past that some pastors who were of such an inclination, would get together with some of the young men of the church and go to a fitness gym and work out, and lift weights. What about such things? Some people have taken this passage and twisted it a bit, to suggest that any kind of striving to keep in "shape" physically is "sinful". Look at the words carefully. Notice that Paul does not say "not to" exercise. But he speaks to 'priorities'. Indeed, exercise does have benefit. It profits a "little". -BUT- "godliness is profitable for all things". (vs8)

About a year ago I came to the conclusion that I had a little bit of a blood pressure concern, after visiting those machines next to the pharmacy. Not -real- severe...just a 'little' elevated, right on the border of concerns. So, I did a little reading up on the matter (my unequal yoke had left all her former nursing books when she left), bought myself a pressure tester so I could test myself in the 'calm' of my home at rest, and started into a

regimen of diet, exercise and aspirin. My pressure came down. But then, sometimes when the stress of certain spiritual warfare situations with VW would come along, I would discover the blood pressure would be a bit elevated. Now, I could approach this in two ways: I could go see a doctor (which I'm sure many of you would be chiding me to do, in your minds) and have him prescribe something, or, realizing that these times of elevation resulted when Satan was attacking, I could trust the Lord in the matter. Guess what I'm doing. Now, just because I'm trusting the Lord, doesn't mean that I have stopped exercising. I still go for walks almost daily. For awhile I had stopped taking the daily aspirin, and sensed the pressure was higher again, and so have resumed that. The Lord hasn't allow me to prosper enough financially to afford medical insurance, so I can do as many do...run to the doctor every time they have a sniffle or headache. I've never been one to do that anyway, when I was younger. I have come to realize that a little "responsibility" must be exercised to take care of ones self...for what purpose? To be able to strut around like a manly man? No...to be in reasonable health, so that I can fulfill my mission on this earth, that God has given me to do...to be engaged in "Godliness".

As Paul says, "...having the promise of life that now is and of that which is to come.." If anybody needed health insurance, it was Paul, for all the times he was beaten and stoned in persecution. And yet, he had the "promise of life". What was the source of that "promise"? The same source that exhorted me almost 12 years ago, when at the depths of despair, I thought I might truly die of heart failure due to a broken heart, or due to the sorrow of my heart, might be inattentive sometime and be in an accident... The Lord assured me of His protective hand, to preserve me until He would be coming, so that I could do His work. No, I'm not going to go see Benny Hinn... I've got something better; the Lord's "promise of life".

Thus, when adversity comes and as a by-product, elevates my blood pressure a bit, my life is in His hands; just as Paul put his life in God's hands through his "labor..and reproach". (vs10) We "trust in the living God, who is the preserver of all men, especially of those who believe." After all, it is in God that we "live and move and exist". (Ac17:28) He is the One who breathed the breath of life into Adam, and His child isn't going to die until He says it's time.

Now, you see...this whole sub-topic is related to the minister's heart. Is the (young) man desiring to look like a "stud", or is he serving God? What is his motivation? And this then brings up another matter. What about the pastor's family?

As Moses is blessing the tribes of Israel just prior to his death, notice what he says of Levi, the tribe that was Israel's "pastor". God's minister is a "Godly man". (De33:8) And notice his relationship to his family. Due to his dedication to the ministry before God, his relationship with parents is, "who says of his father and mother, I have not seen them". He doesn't have time to be able to spend with siblings. His own family gets neglected: "..or

known his own children.." (vs9) Why? "For they have kept Your Word and guarded Your covenant." Their duty has been to "..teach Jacob Your judgments, and Israel Your Law." (vs10)

Yes, his children are to be exemplary (3:4), but quite often, it seems, the better a man-of-God is in proclaiming God's Word, quite often his own children seem to get neglected, and turn out 'bad'. Notice that, for all his greatness as a prophet, Samuel's sons were corrupt. (1Sam8:3)

Thus, if I may share a personal observation: a person aspiring to the position of Overseer should take great care in choosing his wife. She needs to be a Godly woman...not to serve as "assistant pastor", as so many congregations seem to expect of her... they hire the pastor, and also expect his wife to be doing all this and that, too. But I dare say the position of "pastor's wife" is even harder than that of pastor. She needs to be an exceptional woman. She needs to "understand" her husband's heart for the "burden" of God's Word. One reason I don't seek a wife is because it would be 'hard' on any woman who would live with me. (1Cor7:32-33) My mind/heart are -continually- on this ministry. While this is being written I'm supposedly on winter "vacation", but the burden does not allow me to take time -totally- 'off' to do 'nothing'. Frequent are the times that, after I've just settled into bed, the 'burden' gets me up to turn the computer back on and do some writing. When the 'burden' is heavy, I cannot socialize. And a pastor's wife is one who needs to understand this about her man-of-God. If he is serving the Lord faithfully, she does -NOT- have her husband's full heart. The Lord does. She needs to understand this. She has to be of such devotion to the Lord, herself, that she can sacrifice some of her 'personal' desires, so that her husband can serve the Lord. Since I'm not a woman I can only speculate on this, but I suspect that God's call upon a woman to be a "pastor's wife" would likely be similar to His call upon the man who becomes a pastor. Her ministry is specialized and specific, just as his is. Only, her ministry is not what most congregations think it should be: it is not to them, but to her husband, in a manner that only a -Godly- woman would be able to understand and bear.

Paul describes a pastor's heart to Timothy, "Attend to these things; give yourself -ENTIRELY- to them.." (vs15)

As we close this section, please notice that Paul repeats the Godly minister's primary duties three times. 1) Words of faith and good doctrine (vs6), 2) Reading, exhortation, doctrine (vs13), 3) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. (vs16)

What is the common thread? -DOCTRINE- That is the Godly minister's #1 responsibility. 1) The Salvation message includes doctrine. 2) Growth involves doctrine. 3) Personal living is based on doctrine

And what is the result? "..for in doing this you will deliver both yourself and those who hear you." (vs16)

Dominion and Purity (5:1-2)

"Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger ones as sisters, with all purity." (vs1-2)

In this place we see the word "rebuke", and then again later in vs20. This is a word which has several meanings and shades of meanings, and while both places seem to be translated into English best with the word "rebuke", the Greek words are different in the two places. When we get to vs20, that will have to do with discipline, shaming, convicting, finding fault, punishing, etc.

But right here, the word has more to do with beating up, chiding, chastise with words. vs20 has more to do with judgment and "finding fault", where here it has more to do with the actual "punishment"; the 'action' perpetrated upon another person. And as I was seeing the definitions, I also sensed an "attitudinal" thing. 'How' the overseer interacts with those committed to his charge.

I'm reminded of a TV commercial that is running periodically recently (I don't recall 'what' they are selling...but the 'skit' they act out is always cute, and applies here): the (young) policeman commands the older black lady in the car, "Step out of the car now!" whereupon she starts slapping him wap-wap-wap across the face, "Di'n't yo' mama teach you no manners??" (or words to that effect)

Now, while that commercial causes me to chuckle everytime I've seen it, it speaks to what these verses are about. This is warning against being like that 'young' prosecuting attorney a year ago, for you who remember my day in court over the traffic ticket, for which I was not guilty. The young attorney was of an attitude of self-importance, throwing her weight and self-assumed power around...until the judge was then sitting on the bench. The 'young' court clerk, before the judge was in the room, of a similar hoity-toity 'power-tripping' attitude; but after the judge was in the room, very sweet and 'helpful'.

There are many who get out of seminary and Bible school, with their newly-acquired 'letters' behind their names: you know, MABS, ThM, DivD, ThD, PhD, etc. They've got their 'degree', and now they KNOW-IT-ALL! Or, so they think. Some, getting into the pastorate, assume their new position also comes with certain 'power'. In the catholic church the priest is almost 'like' a god, in terms of the absoluteness of his so-called apostolic "authority". I've known baptist churches in my past where the pastors pretty much assumed themselves to be similarly empowered, with their title "reverend". The non-catholic liturgical churches call them variations of, "The most eminent reverend" etc.etc.

And sadly, many pastors who actually preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ also will sometimes tend to behave with 'power'. Not -God's- authority, but their own sense of self-importance. "You have to listen to me, because I'm -THE- pastor!" And so, because of this abuse (yes, it's "abuse"), it causes some to bend over backwards the other way, and try to claim that Scripture does not teach a "one-man pastor" doctrine. "Why should one man have that kind of 'power' over others?" Well... he shouldn't.

Notice Peter's words on the same subject:

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers (a different word from "elder"), not by compulsion but willingly, not eager for dishonest gain but with a ready mind; not exercising dominion over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (1Pt5:2-4)

The pastor does not "drive" the flock; but 'leads' by example: "become an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (4:12) And notice that verse is the very same context: a younger pastor over an older congregation. Are they looking down upon your youthfulness? Well, don't be "lords" (1Pt5:3 KJV) over them; but prove God's gift upon you by leading and showing yourself to be a good example for them to follow. It's just like parents and their children: it doesn't do much good for a parent to "punish" the child for something they, the parents, are guilty of; because the children are "imitators". (Eph5:1) If a parent is to punish a child, they should be sure, first of all, that they themselves are not guilty of the same offenses.

Now, 'how' a person interacts with father, mother and brother are pretty self-explanatorily understood, I should hope. So let's look at the "sisters, with all purity" a moment:

For all that is wrong with Billy Graham (which we won't go into right now), there is one thing about his reputation that more men-of-God should take notice of. Graham may take things to a 'bit' of an extreme; but I should think over-caution is better than lacking it. Graham's reputed interaction with women is that he will never be alone with a woman behind closed doors. He would not even ride an elevator with a woman, where it was just -a- woman and himself. I don't recall, now, if this also applied to riding in a car somewhere?

Years ago I heard it said that there are "three things" which become the downfall of God's ministers, and bring them to ruin. I don't now remember what the 'third' one might have been (I can think of several possibilities that I might come up with); but two of them were (and these I remember clearly): 1) sex, and 2) money.

If you are a man-of-God, reading this: take DILIGENT HEED to this next little bit. Remember carefully Paul's words, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." (1Cor7:1) Ever since the so-called "hippy revolution", there has been a societal predisposition to "hugging" everybody in sight. "Group-hug, group-hug!" People no longer merely shake hands...but they are also hugging...not only same gender, but also men-with-women...those not married to each other. It has become the 'norm' and pretty much 'expected' social behavior. But then, see the depths of society's depravity with the likes of Brittany Spears, Christina Aguler???, Saturday Night Live, etc.etc. By those standards, merely 'hugging' might seem 'tame'. But we are called to the highest standards! Not the world's gutter swill system!

Man-of-God... keep yourself pure. Keep your relationships pure. Paul says, with -ALL- purity. And here is my recommendation: Don't hug a woman you are not married to, even in a 'group' setting. Why? What happens when you happen to be speaking with the same woman on some other occasion, and as you say 'good-bye', you hug (when nobody was around); but as you finish hugging, somebody happens around the corner, and see you in the embrace? Do they know it was an 'innocent' hug? Or will they suspect something more?

Also, don't forget that satan loves nothing better than to bring down a true man-of-God. I've heard of cases where a pastor was "set-up". The accomplices would prepare ahead of time, a young woman would appear to "accidentally" stumble and end up on the pastor's lap; and just at the same moment, somebody else would snap a picture; and the picture would appear in the newspaper with appropriate scandalous headline. Even though it was a false-accusation, we all know how easily lies become "truth" in people's minds, when repeated often enough, and given enough press. Such a scandal ruins that man's ministry in that location.

Also, DO NOT FORGET how men and women are created. Remember, Paul says, "...with ALL PURITY". When a man and woman embrace, particularly in a 'private' moment, there are those God-created hormones, that become excited with touch. (Remember Paul also says, "it is good...NOT TO TOUCH a woman") And satan and also our own personal lust (Jac1:15) has a strange way of moving those hormones up to the heart, soul and mind, to totally alter one's own perception of what is right-and-wrong. Some have been known to explain FROM SCRIPTURE why their 'affair' was "God's will". If you don't want to get bit by the snake, you stay away from it.

What about the pastor having a secretary? Just the two of them, alone, in the building? Not a good idea. There is always the potential for 'sparks' to begin smoldering. And then, too, even if there are no sparks between the two, not everybody else judges with "righteous judgment" (Jn7:24), but according to the KJV misunderstanding, they look at "appearances" (1Th5:22 KJV), not discerning that there is no "form" of evil going on. (1Th5:22 VW) But there can become the perception, particularly amongst

the unsaved: "Those two are in that building behind those doors, all alone together...what do you suppose they got some hanky-panky going on on-the-side...ha, ha, ha!" And so, even though nothing is going on, "...the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you..." (Rom2:24)

Thus, dear man-of-God: we must be in "all purity", not only in "righteous/form", but also in "appearances". We even have to be 'careful' with 'friendships', lest they be misconstrued. Other than the periodic direct-come-ons that have come via e-mail (on a couple of occasions where some have even sent photos right-off-the-bat) which I have had to deal with more severely; I also have to be careful with 'friendships' when dealing with females via e-mail. I readily respond to questions of spiritual matters. But if a woman begins to become a bit too 'familiar' or use more 'intimate' language, there's been some cases where I've had to just stop replying to their notes. Why? To not lead anybody on. So that God's Word not be blasphemed. To not have any 'question' as to whether things are 'pure' or not.

Men: if you are counseling a woman, either arrange it so your wife is in the same room with you, or at least near-by. I've heard of some men who will always leave the door 'open' when they are with a woman. If you're not married, then make some sort of arrangements to have some older 'mother-figure' of the church in the vicinity so that there can be no doubts by anybody as to your purity.

And also, men...NEVER FORGET that there are some women out there, whose sole reason for living (their 'mission' in life!), is to try to purposely ruin God's ministers. They have many tactics. Likely, one of the most effective is to come in for counseling, and begin crying, which gains your sympathy (since God's minister is a 'caring' sort). And then, sympathy, comfort and consolation little-by-little become worked around into empathy, and then if you give her a hug for 'comfort'...pretty soon those aforementioned hormones kick in, and she's... Gotcha!! Beware!

Younger women can usually get by on their looks. Older ones will also add the "ministry" dimension; they are busy being so-called "ministers", themselves, and they propose to "join-you-in-ministry". Remember, men... God called -YOU- to ministry...not the woman/wife who is with you. You will not find in Scripture any prophetic 'call' where the prophet's wife was also part of the call. Such women are more like is seen in the next lesson: "...wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not...for some have already turned aside after Satan." (vs13,15) Such a woman is a "Jezebel" "...who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and lead astray My servants to prostitute themselves to sexual immorality.." (Rev2:20)

I think that's enough on that subject!

Paul's words? The man-of-God's relationship with "..younger ones as sisters, WITH ALL PURITY."

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Attracted to Others?

Social Concerns & Welfare (5:3-16)

"Honor widows who are truly widows" (vs3)

This word "honor" is one which is also used of "financial support". We will see the word in vs17 regarding the support of ministers. We see it when Jesus speaks of the Jews' hypocrisy regarding "corban" and the "honor" (support) of parents. (Mk7:10-12)

In the O.T. the tithe system was for the support of Levites, widows and orphans. (De14:27-29) The tithe was Israel's income tax. Thus, we can also understand how it is proper for a society to have provisions for its poor with a welfare system. Jesus did say, "for the poor you have with you always.." (Mt26:11) Even on the night in which Jesus was betrayed, when Jesus tells Judas to go and "what you do, do quickly" (Jn13:27), the rest speculated that perhaps Jesus intended for him to "give something to the poor". (vs29) Giving to the poor was apparently such a 'regular' thing with them, even from out of their meager means, that it was a 'natural' thought to come to their minds. As Paul was visiting with the church elders in Jerusalem, verifying the Gospel God had given to him, making sure he had been preaching correctly, they encouraged him, and exhorted that he should "remember the poor"; something he said he was "eager to do". (Ga2:10)

But in this passage Paul lays out some general guidelines regarding 'who' should receive benefits. As such, it would also seem right that when government agencies disburse tax monies for welfare, that it is only right and proper that they have guidelines. Now, Paul is not speaking about the state, but about church congregations. But they are certainly wise guidelines even if secular governments were to follow them.

Now, to the Thessalonians, he chides them; because apparently they had some lazy individuals. So he exhorts, "..if anyone does not desire to work, neither shall he eat." These people were lazy, and being buzybodies. The rule is "that they work in quietness and eat their own bread." (2Th3:10-12)

Now notice the wording: if anyone does not "desire" to work. In other words, there is work to be had, to do, but they are simply sluffing off. He is not saying where there is drought, or high unemployment, where there is no job to be had. A person who is laid off should not feel guilty for not working, and drawing unemployment benefits, if he is truly desirous of working, when there is no work to do. God does at times send drought. When Egypt was experiencing those seven years of drought during Joseph's time, I suspect most people were 'idle'. How does one do work that does not exist?

Also, if there is 'family' to care for the disadvantaged, notice that family is supposed to care for each other. (vs8,16) If family can care for family

members in times of need, don't burden others who are without family. The tithe in Israel was not for everybody. It was for the tribe of Levi, because God did not give them inheritance of 'land' to farm, by which to sustain life; they were like pastors and their families whom churches support from the offerings, and house in their parsonages. And for widows and orphans. In Israel, if a woman was widowed, the dead husband's brother was to take her in...thus, alleviating the need for her to receive from the tithe. But when there was no "brother" to take her, she was on her own. She received from the tithe. The same for orphans; if there was no uncle to take them in, they were without family. They received from the tithe.

But just as today, back in Paul's day there were those who "worked" the system. They had family; they had children who could support them; but they partook of the congregation's welfare system anyway. Paul lays out the qualifications for receiving the dole: a widow who had been a faithful wife to 'a' husband (vs9), was a Godly woman and when she was in better circumstances had given to others. (vs10)

But if the widow is young, and flirting around; she is taking advantage of others' benevolence. (vs11) Her husband is dead, and immediately her eyes go wandering and lusting for attention... as Paul says, "...they have set aside their first faith". (vs12) They had pledged to be true to 'only' their husband, but once he died, they were on the prowl again. And with nothing to do, going around being busybodies and gossips. (vs13) Does this not describe many on welfare today! How many so-called "single mothers" today live off the welfare system, continually getting pregnant and having more and more children, while remaining unmarried. And the more children they keep having, the more they drain from the system. Such people should not be granted welfare. If they want to be fooling around, having children...then, GET MARRIED, and have legitimate families. "...bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary for reproach.." (vs14)

In other words... Christians should live holy lives. Be pure and honorable. Provide one's own income, and eat and live from out of the work of one's own hands, not holding out the hands for the dole, to receive something-for-nothing; in effect, 'stealing' from others when one is perfectly capable of providing for one's own needs.

But if there truly is need, then they should be provided for. From nation to nation, how that is done varies. In Paul's time it seems that the congregations supported each other.

In Acts, as the church was getting its start after Pentecost, the believers pooled their wealth and lived under a sort of 'communal' system. (Ac2:44, 4:32) Some of the more "hippy" persuasion of the early 70s set up these "Christian" communes, where they lived in larger houses, and the people who had jobs contributed to the needs of the group. Such a thing might seem wonderful at first glance. In fact, after mentioning financial matters

some months back, a subscriber suggested that a bunch of us related to this ministry should set up a commune. Well, the problem with that is, that too often, human nature starts getting in the way. Ananias and Sapphira exhibited dishonesty and greed. (Acts5) And we have addressed a few years ago the communal cult organization "The Family" who were also into a sort of "christian" sex, where the women were so-called "ministering" to the men...whether married or not.

This is why Paul exhorts that each should eat what he earns with his own hands. And also that men should have "one" wife (1tim3:2) that is their "own", and wives should have their "own" husband. (1Cor7:2)

In countries that don't have a social welfare system, it seems to have tended to be the case that religious organizations would do the works of "charity". In today's more global climate, it seems to be the case that governments take up the challenge with tax monies. In some countries (particularly the eastern ones), over the centuries the families tended to be "extended", such that several generations lived under one roof, thus the livelihood and home care was shared amongst all the family members. Thus, the care of the needy was a "family" concern. Today, more, people tend to be more isolated, and government cares for people.

Whatever situation a person lives in, the guidelines are the same. If a person is able-bodied; work and 'earn' a living. Take care of one's own family. Those that are able, help contribute for the sake of the poor. And if a person truly comes into a state of need, well, their prior works of goodness, contributing to others in need, eventually comes back around and provides for their needs.

In this regard Paul says in another context: ".but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack; that there may be equality. As it is written, He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack." (2Cor8:14-15)

Support for Ministers (5:17-18)

"Let the elders who lead well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the Word and doctrine." (vs17)

Remember from the previous lesson, that this word "honor" is related to 'financial' support. The fact that Paul says "double" honor, somehow I really doubt he means that pastors should receive double "wages", because leaders are to be those who are not "greedy for money" (3:3), and in the next chapter he will be saying, "and having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (6:8), as he also speaks of God supplying our "needs". (Php4:19) The church did not have the same reputation for 'physical' blessing and wealth, as Israel did.

In the next lesson we will see that people should not 'jump' to accuse elders. (vs19) Also, the younger ones are to "be subject to your elders" (1Pt5:5) Paul does speak of giving "honor to whom honor is due". (Rom13:7) While we learned that pastors are not to usurp dominion over the flock (5:1), and Jesus taught that those who are leaders are "servants" (Mk10:43); there is, nevertheless, a certain 'honor' that God's messenger receives. Notice: "he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel" (2Kg5:8); and as Elijah is praying fire down on the altar before the prophets of Baal, part of his prayer is, "..LET IT BE KNOWN this day THAT You are God in Israel and I AM YOUR SERVANT.." (1Kg18:36) And again: "..they will know that a prophet has been among them.." (Ezek2:5) When the youths were taunting the prophet, Elisha curses them, and 42 of them get mauled by bears. (2Ki2:23-24) So, there is a certain level of 'respect' that God's ministers command.

Thus, I suspect this word "double" means more something like, "..in addition to the honor/respect.." shown the ministers, 'double' to that respect by also "honoring" them with financial support. Because, clearly, the context is speaking of financial support.

When Jesus sent the disciples out to preach, He tells them, "In whatever place you enter a house, stay there till you depart from that place" (Mk6:10) The context is, not going fully-supplied with food. What is given, eat it, because "..a worker is worthy of his food.." (Mt10:10)

Notice who Paul is speaking of: the "elders"; but "especially" those who teach the Word and doctrine. The way most churches are set up, that's the pastor. Oh, but...all he does is get up there and 'talk' to us. What's so difficult about that? Well, remember a couple lessons ago, speaking of how much time is required for a pastor to 'prepare' for those 'talks', if he is taking his duties seriously. If he is spending the equivalent of "full-time" to prepare to teach the congregation, when is he going to also have time to work to earn living expenses?

In the early church, they went from house-to-house in ministry. (Ac2:46, 20:20) The apostles did not wish to get bogged down in matters of physical living, in order that they could "give [themselves] continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word" (Ac6:4) How would they live, if not by the support of those to whom they were ministering?

Paul illustrates from the O.T. "Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the altar?" (1Cor9:13) And if you were to read Exodus-Deuteronomy, there are sections in all those books that deal in the priestly ministry, the way the sacrifices were to be prepared. And then, there are also detailed descriptions of the portions the priests were to take for themselves; which portions they could eat, and share for meals with the rest of their families, and the animal hides/skins they could keep for their own use.

Now, the Corinthians were terribly carnal; but they were likely the most wealthy of all the Christians Paul ministered to (as history would bear out regarding Corinth, due to its location, and the nature of trade and commerce that passed through there); and yet, they seem to have also been the most stingy with their wealth. In both epistles to them Paul spends a great deal of space speaking of their financial giving, and support.

So he reasons with them: "If we have sown spiritual things to you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things"? (1Cor9:11)

You hire somebody to come and fix your plumbing, you 'pay' him, because -plumbing- is WHAT HE DOES. That is how he earns his living. If you go to a merchant to receive whatever the nature of goods and/or services, you 'pay' them, because that is what they do; that is how they earn their living; and you are needing what they provide, and are benefitting from their service. And so, if the Lord has burdened some to minister the Word of God to help the flock grow in Him, by the same reasoning, should not those who provide such 'service' be supported by those receiving the benefit?

And so Paul concludes: "Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel." (9:14)

But...it's -MY- money! How dare you tell me what I should do with what is -MINE-! Mmmm?

Well, as David was stock-piling materials so that his son Solomon could build the temple, notice his words of blessing over all the offerings: "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things are from You, and out of Your own hand we have given to You... O Jehovah our God, all this abundance that we have

prepared to build You a house for Your holy name is out of Your hand, and is all Your own." (1Chr29:14,16)

It is NOT "my" money, or "your" money. It all comes from God. The wealth is 'in' God's 'hands'. We are merely exercising stewardship over it.

In case any should wish to balk at the idea of paying a teaching pastor for more than that "hour" he stands up there on Sunday morning, notice from the O.T. "..Moreover [Hezekiah, the king] commanded the people who dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion for the priests and the Levites, that they might grow strong in the Law of Jehovah.." (2Chr31:4) "..grow strong in the Law.." ?? That's "preparation" time, folks. That's, even, if you will... supporting a young man from the congregation to go to Bible school (if one even exists, anymore, that honors God?!) and receive training, so he can become an effective minister/man of God. I can tell you, first-hand, what an uplift it was when I was going to Bible school, and perhaps the finances were getting a bit pinched, and just at those times when I wondered just 'how' I was going to pay the next installment of my tuition, when I might go to my mail box, there would be a notice from the school's business office saying that somebody had contributed anonymously to my account. And I can attest to the Lord, that this happened more-than-once, such that I came to understand that it was the Lord providing.

So yes: "the laborer is worthy of his wages" (vs18) and, "those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (1Cor9:14)

But lest any of you should think this study is geared to entice you to give to 'me' (remember, we're taking these verses in-order), the Lord has set me in a place to be like what Paul says, "But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so with me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my exulting void." (1Cor9:15) Paul sometimes also made tents. (Ac18:3) I make signs and banners. And being self-employed, when the phone isn't ringing with orders (which is a lot), I am able to devote time to VW. I live a 'simple' life. It's all I need, because soon I will be joining many of you on our way up into the clouds to "meet the Lord in the air"...to "always be with the Lord". (1Th4:17)

Accusations and Rebuke (5:19-22, 24-25)

"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear." (vs19-20)

For anybody who has been an adult a few years, who can forget the public wailing and theatrics of Jimmy Swaggert (sp?), swooning his 'repentance' for his sexual misconduct. Who can forget Jim Bakker (sp?) in prison; a broken man. And we are periodically continually reminded of Tami Faye (his ex-wife), who has obviously never repented, but while having been dethroned from her lofty position with the AOG, is still living in sin, as she periodically appears on depraved TV programs, either acting or hosting, and also openly promoting/endorsing homosexuality. These, and others, have been investigated and judged; either by so-called 'church' governing bodies, or government law enforcement agencies. Their corruption was so blatant that they were dethroned in very 'public' ways.

A few lessons ago we observed Paul's exhortation to ministers to be "with all purity". (vs2) An overseer is to be "blameless", not a drunkard, not getting into fights...with a well-ordered life. (3:2-4,7)

So, your pastor; a Godly man, with well-ordered life, living in purity, a meek man, continually faithfully proclaiming God's Word; it appears that he lives what he preaches... Along comes somebody with an accusation against him, whatever its nature... what does the congregation do? Kick him out, tar-n-feather him, and ride him out of town on a rail?

Remember from a few lessons ago, understand that there are many of God's enemies whose sole purpose it is to attempt to discredit God's servants. They discredit God, discredit God's Word, and discredit God's servants who proclaim "Thus says Jehovah". As we are seeing recently with the flair-up of anti-war protests (by a stark minority), when expanded and glorified by the media, the likes of the reporter Andrea Mitchell can close her so-called "news" coverage (as she actually did) by proclaiming that the anti-war sentiments are "globally -OVERWHELMING-".

So, this 'lone' individual makes an accusation, gets some gossip started, and by the time the rest of the congregation has 'heard' it, and the story has mutated a few times in the telling, they are under the assumption the pastor is 'guilty'. Even better yet, remember that 'picture' taken of the female on the pastor's lap? See?? He's "guilty". What further proof do we need? Kick him out! (While being blind to the fact that this man-of-God is proclaiming God's Word, and the individual who started the rumor has been under conviction of the Holy Spirit because of the Word being proclaimed; but rather than repent, is lashing out at God, via God's servant...)

The congregation has heard the 'gossip', but if any of them were asked, "What did -you-, yourself, SEE or HEAR?" ...well, I didn't see/hear anything. This is what 'they' are saying. And if 'they' all are saying it, it must be so. Aaah yes...the proverbial "THEY"!

"THEY" is not a "witness". THEY saw/heard nothing. THEY is only a product of gossip. Paul says to -NOT- acknowledge such an accusation. There will 'always' be taunts leveled against any great man, leader or minister-of-the-Gospel of Christ. It comes with the territory of being in such a position. Don't give it any credibility to make it grow by watering it. Stop it dead in its tracks. If you hear the gossip, don't repeat it; and rebuke the one perpetrating it.

However, if there is truly some error/sin that the pastor/leader is involved in, it will be known/witnessed by more-than-one person. And Paul says to "rebuke" them before all. But let's back-up here a minute...

Is the 'public' rebuke the first step? Yes and no. Let's see if we can understand a complete picture here. Jesus gave instruction in this. If there is a difference between two people, the one is to approach the other alone, privately, first. If the offending party will not hear, the person is to take a couple 'witnesses' to confront the person. If the person still refuses to hear, -then- he is to be adjudged before "the church" (congregation). And if he refuses the congregation's reprimand, he is to be ousted from the fellowship. (Mt18:15-17)

If a man-of-God has the presentation before all as being a 'righteous' man, and an accusation arises, is it not best to confront him privately first, to ascertain validity and truth? If he is called on the carpet 'publicly' first, when there is no wrong-doing in him, what does that do to his perception by the rest? It stabs a knife into the fellowship, and the witness of Jesus Christ before the world. A sort of 'cloud'. Supposing somebody stumbles upon that aforementioned 'picture', and were to broadcast it to the entire group, but did not take the time to ask the pastor about it, to be informed that it had been a set-up; and if they then check with others (witnesses) who were at the gathering where the incident happened, would understand it was a set-up; that the woman had -purposely- 'stumbled' and ended up on his lap, and an accomplice had snapped the picture.

However, if when these witnesses and those investigating the matter 'privately' first, discover that there is, truly, fault in the pastor; notice that Paul does not allow for 'negotiations' like Jesus taught when merely private individuals are at odds with each other. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit and the congregation publicly, their judgment was swift and final. God struck them down dead, on-the-spot. (Ac5) When the prophet from Judah disobeyed God, the prophet from Israel opened his mouth with direct condemnation from God, and the man was killed by the lion. (1Ki13) When Aaron and Miriam whined against Moses' God-given authority, Miriam was struck with leprosy. (Num12)

When King Uzziah presumed upon himself to perform incense-offering functions in the temple that were only for the priests, God struck him with leprosy, right-on-the-spot. (2Chr26)

Remember, we have observed that God has called His ministers to the highest standards. When Ananias and Sapphira were struck down dead, it says that "...great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things." (Ac5:11) When a minister is found to be guilty through due-process, he is not to be quietly ushered out a back door, but -rebuked- "in the presence of all..." for what purpose? "...that the rest also may fear.." (vs20) Oooh, so judgmental and harsh! you say? Indeed! God is holy and righteous, and is not to be mocked. (Ga6:7) Whatever sins have been done in secret in the dark, are exposed to the light and "proclaimed on the housetop" (Lk12:3)

Oh, but... Don't you know (just) who you are talking to?!?! Who do you think you are to condemn me! Don't you know my qualifications, and all the exploits I've been doing for God? Why...I went to Blah Blah Seminary, and have X, Y and Z behind my name; why... I'm on regular speaking terms with Dr.Hoity-toity So-n-So, PhD... and you are going to expose meeee!? Well, yes. "...keep watch over these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality." (vs21b) Notice who is in the 'gallery' of these proceedings: God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels. (vs21a) Compared to God, Dr. Hoity-toity PhD is 'nothing'. There are some who, when faced with the awesome task of bringing up charges against a so-called 'great' man, who makes ample sure you realize just how great he is and how small (he thinks) you are, will cave due to the 'intimidation' factor. But Jacob reminds us that these so-called 'great' (who are usually also rich) people are the very ones who drag the more 'lowly' sort into court. (Jac2:6)

So... how is it determined if a minister is in sin? Not to be picking on anybody... but since he was already run through the meat-grinder, let's make some past observations. Not making further condemnations; just observing what has already been, in the same way various ones are recorded in the Scriptures. I've not heard what his situation is today. Jim Bakker. While he was on prime-time so-called "christian" TV, alongside Tami Faye, raking in their millions, and conning their viewers and supporters; there were -many- of us who saw their perversity, error and sin. "Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment..." (vs24a) There was NO QUESTION in our minds of their error. It was "clear" to us. But for many others, it took government prosecution and imprisonment for it to dawn on them what the Bakkers had been doing. "...those of some men follow later." (vs24b) There are some like Benny Hinn, where their error is blatantly up-front. There are others who appear to be solid teachers of God's Word, but it takes time to "later" finally discover certain specifics about their beliefs. e.g. Does Dave Hunt believe in "repentance" or not? That's regarding false doctrines. Regarding actual sin in one's life, many sin openly, and their congregations apparently see nothing wrong with it, because they are "loving" and "accepting" of people.

Others manage to hide their sin for a good-many years (often also from family), until one day somebody gets wind of their past, investigates, confronts, and kicks them out...and they find themselves moving out-of-town 'fast'.

A "good" man's works are "clearly evident". (vs25a) And the sin of a sinner will, eventually, sooner-or-later, come out. No matter how cleverly a person thinks they have hidden it, it -WILL- become exposed. They need to "...recognize that your sin will find you out." (Num32:23)

Thus, we begin to understand better the reasons for not appointing a "new convert" (3:6) to positions of authority and leadership. Here Paul speaks of "lay hands". (vs22a) From the Jewish background, when priests were appointed to their posts, hands were laid on them. And it seems that the early church (Jews) did so, as well. If the proper amount of 'time' is given to prove a man's true heart, then, there is less likelihood that the one so-ordained will fall into sin, needing rebuking; because, if a man's heart is not pure, and time reveals that fact, he will not have been appointed in the first place.

And notice where the blame falls when an appointed leader is exposed for his sin. It falls on the one who appointed him. The exhortation to "not lay hands hastily", is coupled with "share in other people's sins". (vs22) If you appoint a person to ministry, and they in turn lead others astray; it is the same as if -you- were leading them astray; BECAUSE, -you- appointed somebody who was not spiritually qualified.

We can blame all those Hollywood celebrities that rose up, claiming to have been "saved", and proceeded to introduce false doctrines into the churches. Yes, they are guilty. But greater guilt rests upon all those pastors who opened up their pulpits to them. It is the shepherd's responsibility to keep the wolves out. The shepherd's duty is to "watch" (Ac20:31); to stand guard. Guard your pulpit against false prophets. Guard your platforms against satan's entertainment. When you don't take heed to your duties, God requires the blood of the sheep "at the watchman's hand" (Ezek33:6); at -your- hand! Remember, Paul is writing to Timothy, here; one who was appointed as being 'in charge' of others; 'appointing' teachers. (2Tim2:2)

And finally, again, the exhortation... "keep yourself pure". (vs22b)

A Little Wine (5:23)

"No longer drink only water, but use a little wine on account of your stomach and your frequent infirmities." (vs23)

A few weeks ago somebody, whose mailing list I'm on, sent out a mailing presenting his view of wine from Scripture...and Ooooh Boy! Did he ever get the 'hate' mail for it; also calling him a drunk and a wino. I'm not going to spend a great deal of time on this topic. This verse pretty much speaks for itself.

The argument those of the '1st Church of the Pharisee' from 'Ephesus' (Rev2) give, to explain away why they think a verse such as this doesn't really mean what it says, is in wrangling about definitions. Is "wine" -wine-, or is it "grape juice"? Over the years I've read many fanciful "explanations" of how the ancient peoples would supposedly mix unfermented grape juice with water, to kill the bacteria to make it safe for drinking. While it might be the case that the acids in various fruit are potent, it is also the case that many organisms thrive on acids. But nothing kills germs quite like alcohol.

When Jesus speaks of the new/old wine in wineskins, He is obviously talking about a 'fermentation' process. (Lk5:37-38) When Jesus made water into wine, that wine was not grape juice, judging by the reaction of the "master of the feast", the terminology he used assures us he was speaking of real wine. (Jn2:10) In the O.T. when people would go to Jerusalem for the various feasts, if they lived a great distance away from Jerusalem, God's commands were for them to take the money representing the value of their own sacrificial animals with them to Jerusalem, and purchase what they needed for sacrifice and feasting once they arrived. In amongst the things they could choose to purchase for worship and feasting was, "...wine or strong drink.." (De14:26) You see, the question with God is not whether or not a person drinks a fermented drink, but whether one becomes a "drunkard" with it. (Pr23:21,26:9, Mt24:49, 1Cor5:11, etc) Jesus, Himself, obviously drank -real- wine; otherwise the taunts would not have labelled Him as a "wino"; because He was "eating and drinking". (Mt11:19)

So, without getting carried away on this topic, notice Paul's exhortation to Timothy. Timothy apparently had some intestinal infirmities. Why? The passage doesn't say. If Timothy was yet young, and struggling with acceptance by those older than himself, such that Paul needed to encourage him in the next epistle to "stir up the gift of God" (2Tim1:6) and get back into the ministry God had called him to, perhaps his infirmity was related to nerves and emotions? This is merely a random speculation on my part. In reality...who knows? The passage doesn't say.

Not to speak of PB, but a personal example may help here. You who know my testimony know that my unequal yoke left one day, 12 years ago. In

the aftermath of that whole situation, it sooo ripped out my heart, that I spent two (yes, "2") years with severe intestinal upheavals every-other-day. As time passed, and I was beginning to be able to see straight again, but the digestive system was still on-the-blink every-other-day like clockwork, it finally dawned on me one day how long this had been continuing, and I got to thinking that if I allowed the situation to continue, I could eventually end up with severe health concerns. I was suspecting that a human body could take only so-much of that kind of abuse before it would start being in deep trouble. So, based on Paul's words to Timothy here, I decided to try out this exhortation. And -immediately- the problem cleared up. Ever since, at my evening meal, I do as Paul says to Timothy, "a -little- wine".

If anybody wishes to condemn me, you're welcome to try. But this is God's Word...and it 'works'...without having to see some doctor who might prescribe who-knows-what. Besides, medicine recently is exhorting that a little wine is also a good preventative against heart disease, etc.

Sorry if this sounds like I have a 'chip' on my shoulder, but I know how many of the 'bible-belt' pharisees are on this topic. So if anyone wishes to be "contentious" (1Cor11:16) over this, please keep it to yourself, or lay out your pharisaical heart before the Lord. I will not 'engage' you. Don't be like Clinton, wrangling what the "definition of 'is' is". God's Word is clear, and easy to understand. There are no 'hidden' meanings that can only be defined with a 'cultural' understanding, explained to us by some snippity 'elite' who claims to know-it-all. It means exactly what it says.

See Also Addendum: Q/A -Spirits? & Q/A -Wine is Sin?

Bondservants (6:1-2)

"Let as many bondservants 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." (vs1)

There is a mentality amongst many, that the notion of slavery is, somehow, anti-christian. Quite a bloody war was fought in this country in the 1800s over the issue of slavery. Some of the founding documents of the United States proclaim that each person was "created equal" and has certain "inalienable rights", that among those are included "liberty". (Isn't it interesting that, while "liberty" was proclaimed, some of those very people who drew up those documents, at the time, 'owned' slaves.)

While Paul does exhort a person having the option to become free, and desires to do so, to take advantage of it; he also exhorts, "Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it.." (1Cor7:21) In the O.T. when a person came into financial hardship and had to 'sell' himself into the service of his creditor; at the time of Jubilee when he might have otherwise had the release to go free, due to his wife and children (whom he had acquired while in slavery, yet 'owned' by his creditor) whom he loved, and perhaps also his love for his master, he could opt to become a 'permanent' bondservant. God's law made a provision for such a person: they would pierce his ear with an awl, and in that manner he was 'marked' as a permanent servant. (Ex21:6, De15:17)

Thus, notice that Paul here does -not- exhort slaves to protest and stage work-stoppages, and otherwise rebel against their masters. He does not exhort them to 'run/escape' at the first opportunity. Let's remember that he and Silas practiced what he is preaching here: When God sent the earthquake, released their shackles and opened the prison doors, they did not flee and escape as they could have done. When the guard came, expecting that they would have fled, Paul calls out saying "We are all here" (Ac16:28) When Onesimus fled from Philemon and came to Paul and got saved, notice (if you read the epistle) that Paul sends Onesimus 'back' to Philemon.

Now, while there may be some slaves against their will; everyone, pretty much, is subservient to an extent whenever they are employed by another. The whole thing of 'slavery' was 'economic' in nature. The slave-owner used the slave labor to aid in acquiring wealth; but also housed, clothed and fed the slaves. In 'free' societies, if a person wants to survive and have housing, clothes and food, one must work to earn money to get those things. So, again, as a slave is at the mercy of the master, an employee is also at the mercy of an employer, to be hired and receive wages. In both cases there is a 'subordination' to the one providing the means of

sustenance. Thus, this lesson can also apply to all who work as employees.

Give "honor" to the master/employer. Honor is not a 'worship', but a 'respect'. All people may be created 'equal', we are all of "one blood" (Ac17:26), and there is no difference in God's sight regarding salvation. (Col3:11, Ga3:28) But just as there is a hierarchy of God, Jesus, Man, Woman (1Cor11:3)...there are also those who are in positions of authority to whom we are to be "subject" and give proper "honor". (Rom13:1-7) And one of those hierarchies is the master/slave (employer/employee) relationship.

If you work for somebody, the employer 'owns' the business he/she runs. They have it in their mind what it is they wish to accomplish. Does a person criticize their "wealth", because they are not distributing their wealth to all, equally? Is wealth sinful? Those of leftist mentalities seem to think so. But, if they didn't have the wealth, they would not have sufficient capital to invest into the business of which you are now partaking as an employee. It is not wealth that is sinful, but the "love" of money. (vs10) There are many with simplistic minds who condemn anything that smacks of wealth. But consider: if that wealth did not exist, you would be unemployed. So, remember that your employer is doing you a favor by giving you the job. He is not obligated to hire you...he could just as easily hire someone else, and let you remain 'on-the-street'. So, be grateful, and work diligently. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Ec9:10) "...as to the Lord" (Col3:23)

Now, supposing you are blessed to be working for a fellow-Believer. Do you waltz into the CEO's office, from your assembly line, sit down, plop your feet up on his desk, and, "How ya doin' brother/buddy?"? Meanwhile, production is suffering because you are not at your post on the "line"!

"And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved." (vs2a)

So, in speaking of these things, have we left-off talking about "spiritual" matters, and are now indulging the flesh and world... since the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.." (2Cor10:4) ??

Paul says, "..Teach and exhort these things.." (vs2b)

Wranglings of Men (6:3-5)

Oh, but... my employer (from the preceding lesson) is a mean-spirited person, is a scoundrel, lives an immoral life. He doesn't -deserve- my 'respect'. I'm going to come-and-go as I please. If he wants productive work out of me, he's gonna have to clean up -his- act first. Hmph!!

Or... Paul spoke of 'bondservants', not 'employees'. That lesson didn't apply to me. Therefore, I can 'milk' the system for all it's worth, take lots of sick leave even though I'm perfectly healthy, take lots of bathroom breaks even though I don't really need them, and find ways to walk around with my coffee cup in my hand, going from place-to-place "looking" busy, talking with everybody, "looking" important...but not actually -doing-anything, nor being productive.

Paul says, "If anyone teaches otherwise...he is proud, understanding nothing, but is sick with disputes and arguments over words..." (~vs3-4)

A person might wrangle over words and definitions, like former president Clinton wrangling over the meaning of the word "is", when working 'angles' to wriggle out of accusations of wrong-doing.

I'm a "Christian"... that makes me special. I'm a child of God. I'm above all these others...even my boss. If I am characterized by such heavenly nobility, I shouldn't have to work as hard as the rest of them. Thinking that "...godliness is a means of gain.." (vs5) I've prayed and asked the Lord to shower me from the "windows of heaven" and "pour out a blessing" (Mal3:10) for me, because I've been repeating the "prayer of Jabez" (1Chr4:10) ...therefore, I have "faith" to "belieeeeeeve" (said with a quiver in the voice) that God will give it to me. So...Why should I bother working? God is going to just dump it into my lap because I have "named and claimed" it in "Jeeeezzusss' name"! Well...Paul has a succinct answer to that:

"If anyone does not desire to work, neither shall he eat." (2Th3:10)

See how simple Truth is?

But there's many who call themselves "Christian" who do just this sort of thing... regarding many topics. If a person twists Scripture enough, one can persuade himself of all sorts of things: that polygamy is condoned, that women should be pastors, that a person needs a special manifestation that one is spirit-filled, that sensual provocative dance is worship, that pagan drum beats brings one closer to God, that Biblical doctrine is divisive, that one doesn't need to repent to be saved, that there is a special incantation-like 'power' in the ritual of prayer, that God wants everybody to be wealthy, that the way to bring people into the kingdom of God is to entice them with more of their own worldly entertainment but don't dare

Preach Christ to them lest they be chased away. Well, the list could go on-and-on; but you get my point.

But pretty much everybody who militantly proclaims 'whatever' their false teaching is, who "teach otherwise", do so via "arguments over words". They do not proclaim the "simplicity that is in Christ" (2Cor11:3), but are corrupted away by their "corrupt minds". They are "destitute of the truth". The word "destitute" means to be "utterly lacking" or "devoid" of Truth. And yet, in their ignorance, they are "proud".

Now if somebody comes along to them, proclaiming "thus says the Lord" from the Scriptures, they wrangle away the simple words of Scripture, "twisting" them "to their own destruction". (2Pet3:16) Rather than hearing and receiving God's -clear- Word, they "slander" the messenger, stirring up "strife". Rather than receiving the Scriptures -straightforward-, that Jesus taught "yes, yes..no, no" (Mt5:37), which His earthly brother Jacob reminds us that our "yes" should mean "yes", and our "no", "no" (Jac5:12); they instead speak with forked-tongue out of both sides of our mouths, "yes and no" (2Cor1:18) But they don't consider it to be dishonest. They are "conjecturing", you see. Don't you think it 'really' means this? Or, Do you really think God intended that? Remember, that was satan's very first argument to Eve, "Has God indeed [really] said?" Oh no! "God knows..." that all sorts of wonderful things can be yours...if you (essentially, at truthful face value) disobey Him. (Gen3:1,5)

What is the Believer to do when confronted by such double-talking wranglings and conjecture? Dialogue with them? Participate in "debates" with them? Try to find a "common-ground" with them? Agree on the essentials, and agree to disagree on the non-essentials? Please, pray-tell... And I've asked this before... Somebody tell me -WHAT-, exactly, from God's Word is "non-essential"??

Paul exhorts in a few places, what these people are doing is: causing "divisions and snares, contrary to the doctrine which you learned.." (Rom16:17)

What is the Believer to do regarding them?

Have no fellowship with their "works of darkness, but rather reprove them." (Eph5:11) "...turn away from them.." (Rom16:17b) Is there any question about this? No conjecture necessary...

"From such withdraw yourself." (vs5b)

Necessities of Life (6:6-11,17-19)

"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is evident that we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." (vs7-8)

For all of Paul's scholarly mind, he also has a habit of addressing little snippets of topics, all spread and scattered throughout a discussion. He doesn't cover topic "A", conclude it, and then move cleanly to topic "B"...but sometimes comes back to "A". And thus he does in this chapter. Variations of topic "A" he addresses three times in this chapter. He began with "bondservants" (vs1) Now, he is talking about necessities vs love of money (vs6), and will again speak of the rich. (vs17) Since we already addressed "bondservants", let's combine the latter two topics into this one study.

Let's open this discussion from a sideways sliding start here. Consider this question:

WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR A PERSON TO BE HAPPY?

As most of you probably know, Oprah has somewhat become the nation's New Age 'worship' leader and seems to have shifted to also being a pied piper of the gods of feel-good-ism. Dr.Phil has, since, branched out from under Oprah's sponsorship, started his own program, and has become the nation's collective 'therapist'. Every once in awhile I tune in to hear what kinds of things he is telling people, and how he purports to help solve people's problems.

The other evening he had a video clip from Jay Leno (the nation's laughter guru/comedian) asking a question similar to (I forget his exact words): Is happiness a 'right', or is it 'earned'? Whereupon, Dr.Phil did his own little comedic poking fun at such a 'stupid' question, concluding, essentially, that happiness originates from 'within'. That a person's happiness is, essentially, a creation from within one's own will. (He had a fancy psychobabel term for it, that I forget now, but that was the basic gist.) Dr.Phil approaches personal happiness with psychology. The few times I've seen/heard him, I've never once heard him mention God as a solution to anything, or the repudiating of one's sin and confession.

How many people think that money-based things create happiness? A contestant spins "the wheel" and chants, "big money, big money!" A different contestant picks a key, goes over to the safe, hoping they have picked the 'right' key, kiss and stroke the safe almost in a state of 'worship' hoping the 'money-gods' are on their side, and when the safe opens, revealing all the cash...they go wild with ecstasy, and you would have thought they were now the "happiest person" in the whole wide world!

For all the cute little expressions such as being born "with a silver spoon" in one's mouth, there is one universal truth which Paul states: "We brought nothing into this world". We, each one of us, was born buck naked... just us and our skin. We did not arrive carrying our portfolios, stocks, bank accounts and all the world's goods. Just 'us', from head-to-toe. And equally profound: "IT IS EVIDENT... we can carry nothing out." (vs7) When we traverse into the after-life, whether God's presence or judgment, we do not stand within a 'matrix', carrying our briefcase, sitting in our luxury vehicle, towing all our earthly possessions to have with us on the 'other-side'. There again, it is just 'us', head-to-toe...at the mercy of the living to either cloth our dead bodies, or not; or to bury them or not.

So, what's the deal with wealth? Wealth is all part of this earth. Gold and diamonds are dug from the ground. Houses are built with materials that come out of the earth. We are clothed with the produce of the earth. Food grows from the ground. But to attain a hoarded abundance of it all, people get themselves into all sorts of temptations and lusts. (vs9) In pursuing wealth people tromple (tromp + trample) over each other: they envy one another, steal, murder, lie, cheat. Some of those who seem to clamor after money the most are sales people, with the mentality, "that person has 'my' money in their pocket...I need to figure out how to get it out of their pocket, and into mine." And in their pursuits, sales people are some of earth's biggest con artists and liars.

Is wealth, itself, evil? Is -money- 'evil'? Is it sinful to own a mansion, or drive a fancy car? If that were so, then God could be accused of foisting evil upon Israel and Solomon and tempting them to sin, because some of God's "blessing" to Israel in the O.T., when they were obedient to Him, was material prosperity and wealth. But we know that God does not "tempt anyone". (Jac1:13) Abraham, the "friend of God" (Jac2:23), was wealthy beyond imagination in the time and culture in which he lived. And Abraham is mentioned in Romans and Hebrews for his righteousness and faith. After Job had experienced his time of testing, and repented before God, God blessed him with overflowing prosperity, doubling everything he had before satan had been given the green light to attack him. (Job42:10+) Obviously, 'possessions' is not the problem.

Notice: "...the -LOVE- of money is a root of all evils.." (vs10a) Notice the wording carefully. It is not "money" that is condemned, but the "LOVE -of-" money. Is the love of money the 'only' evil that exists? No. It is "a" root of evil. There are many sources of evil; of which, the love of money is one of them.

Where does "love" come from? From out of the heart. As Jesus proclaimed, "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.." (Mt15:19) And we know that all actions begin with thoughts. Our bodies don't move and speak, but what the brain first sent the signals to the muscles. And the heart 'operates' the brain. But apart from God, "...the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.." (Jer17:9)

A young woman says she loves a man; but don't dare get her makeup, manicure or hair mussed up; if she is forced with a choice, she will be more concerned about her own personal appearance, than the man she is with and claims to love. A man claims to love his wife; but don't get between him and his toys! A pastor claims to love the Lord and the congregation; but what's with that huge building program; brow-beating the people with guilt trips into giving money they can't really afford, in order that he can have this nice building, that everytime somebody comes to visit, first thing he does is take them on a "tour" of the building -he- built; it is 'his' church. And being so busy with the building program, what happened to his teaching? Well, there hasn't been 'time' to study/prepare, because you know, "I'm busy building this great building"

A busy executive who rarely spends any time at home with family, what sort of "sorrows" (vs10) does he gain? Rebellious children who grow up getting into trouble with the law, having emotional problems. He never spends time with his wife, they grow distant, and end up in divorce. Or, since he spends so much time at work, he finds another woman with whom he is spending time (working) to be unfaithful to his wife with. And so, he supports his mistress, has divorce expenses, child support, medical expenses to 'fix' the problems his avarice has caused...and what has happened to all that wealth he thought he was making? It gets all spent up, fixing the hurts and sorrows of his sinful heart, of lusting after the money.

When a "christian" pursues a love of money, he has an added dimension. If all the time is spend acquiring money, and all the aforementioned things go wrong...what begins to go wrong even before all those other things? What is the very first thing that will leave his life? His time with the Lord. There just no longer is any time to read the Bible. If there is a group of people they fellowship with, well, he will send his wife and kids, and he will "try" to get there...but, "If I don't get back on time...go without me..."

Well... these things barely skim the surface of all the evil things that can result from the "love" of money. But notice Paul exhorts Timothy, "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." (vs11)

Notice a little thing here: Paul calls 'youthful' Timothy a "man of God". To be a man-of-God does not one have to be like a Moses, Elijah, Daniel, etc? Doesn't one need to be 'famous' or 'great'? Doesn't one need to be gray-haired, going bald, walking with a cane, and speaking with a trembly voice due to old age? (Actually: there's many old blow-hards that should keep their mouths shut, because they know no more about God than the coffee table over there! And yet, due to the concept that old age supposedly automatically means "spirituality", many people give them an ear. The only thing many old people have to offer is a firmly hardened rebellious heart against God, in false doctrine!) What are the

characteristics of a "man-of-God"? The things listed in vs11 already quoted in the preceding paragraph.

The man-of-God is exhorted to "flee these things", the evils and corruption that result from the "love" of money. Does it mean that the man-of-God needs to, of necessity, be 'poor'? Some also teach this error. Paul says, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in everything I am taught both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to lack." And he introduces this with, "...I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content." (Php4:11-12)

Wealth is OK. Poverty is equally OK. Along with the apostle, I can attest that I've experienced times (in the past) of relative overflowing; but equally understand (like now) times of near-poverty. In both cases I have had food to eat, clothes to wear, and a roof over my head. And I can also attest to the fact that I am happier and more 'content' now, than I've ever been at any other time in my life, including those times when there was more. Why? We'll get to that in a moment... However... 'How much' one has is not in question.

Riches are not evil. But notice a 'cousin' to the "love" of money is a certain haughtiness. Those who have been blessed with wealth are exhorted to "not be high-minded, nor to trust in the uncertainty of riches.." (vs17) Is it not the rich who usually have a snooty nose, being continually served. They don't really care about people, but if something needs a cure, they throw money at the problem. If someone is injured (in whatever way), the solution is 'money'. Sue the person for huge sums of money. Send one's representative and "buy-them-off". Don't personally go, meet the person, and (heaven forbid!) 'apologize' for any wrong-doing, and actually take a role in showing any sort of 'care' for the 'individual' person!

Notice also, if all a person has is riches, notice Paul's assessment of it all. The "UNCERTAINTY" of riches. What is anything worth? If a person has a house full of gold and jewels, but there is no food, of what use/value is all that wealth? You say you have a "portfolio" of stocks, bonds, certificates, etc. What is their 'value' based on? I have never understood the Stock Market. For those recent years when it was all sky-rocketing with no apparent end in sight, I always wondered how so much wealth could be generated...just by trading. Well...as it turns out, it wasn't -really- 'worth' all that much after all, was it. Consider that 'gold', that upon which man places so much value, will be the material of the 'streets' of the New Jerusalem; to be walked on! (Rev21:21)

So, while a person may be rich (which is not intrinsically a sin), what should their focus be on? Their wealth? Or, the "living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (vs17b)

Riches are only 'incidental' to the eternal scheme of things. A person's love for God will manifest itself in -doing- 'good', making a person "rich in good

works...storing up...a good foundation for the time to come..." Laying up in store for "eternal life". (vs19) Like Jesus taught, "...but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not dig through and steal." (Mt6:20)

And here we get back to our opening thoughts. Where are our minds and hearts? Are we clamoring for earth, stockpiling earth's wealth? What happens when we die? Jesus told of the wealthy one who trusted in his riches, and God confronts him with his time-to-die: "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have prepared?" (Lk12:20) Solomon, one of the richest men in history, muses regarding all the labor one does: "...I must leave it to the man who shall come after me...And who knows whether he shall be wise or a fool? Yet he shall have rule over all my labor in which I have labored, and acted wisely under the sun." (Ec2:18-19) When we die, "...we can carry nothing out." (vs7)

So, if riches is not the answer to happiness and fulfillment, WHAT IS?

"Godliness with contentment is great gain." (vs6) If we come in naked, and leave the same, wherein is earthly contentment? "And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." (vs8)

Are you eating to fulfilled nourishment? If you have a family, is your home in harmony? Do you have clothes to wear? What more does one need? In terms of earthly needs, that's all one needs.

However, the reason people pursue wealth, and lust after it, is because they lack one thing. Notice Paul says, "-GODLINESS- with contentment is great gain." They pursue wealth because they have "no hope and [are] without God in the world." (Eph2:12b) Now, while God does give certain ones a knack for gaining wealth, if you see somebody who calls themselves a "Christian" who is 'obsessed' with getting rich, you know they are lying. They are certainly lying to you, and to God; and quite possibly also to themselves.

There were several who came to Jesus, saying they wanted to follow Him. But when He exhorted them to get rid of their wealth, giving it all away to the poor, and they were unwilling, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mt19:23-24)

Why? Because of the -HEART-.

What motivates the heart? What does a person -really- "love"? A person can only truly love -one- person/thing. As close a bond as marriage is, if that marriage is #1 in one's life, one's love for the Lord may be in doubt; at least, it is not what it should be. As Jesus lists all the things of the world

one must 'leave' in order to follow Him fully, including family, houses, lands, possessions; notice He also includes "wife". (Mt19:29) For all her claims to loving you and God, you don't -really- know her heart the way God does. (Heb4:12-13) She may be an unequal yoke. And if she is #1 in your life and unsaved, your heart is loving the world... not God. (For you who have read my testimony, you know how/why I am able to make these comments. And I assure you, they are true!)

"No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. It is not possible to serve God and mammon (money)." (Mt6:24) What/who is in control of your life, God or money? If you are lusting after money, do not fool yourself: you are not 'in charge'... money controls you; you are enslaved by it.

So... What are the choices? Uncertain riches, or eternal life. (vs19) Godliness with contentment, or many sorrows. (vs6,10) You see, for all his psychobabel about telling people to seek inwardly, to nurture and forgive self, the thing Dr.Phil leaves out of his discussions is "God".

Well...in typical Paul-ine fashion, this study has gone 'over the river and through the woods' and back across the bridge again, speaking of various things related to this topic. But when it all boils down to the simple nitty gritty, as with -all- things spiritual, it comes down to the -HEART-. For all the angles and subtopics by which one might look at this subject, in reality, it is very simple. Does a person love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul "exceedingly in every way"? (Deu6:5) ...or not?

If a person is looking for "happiness", we know that without God it is impossible, because, "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked (the one without God)." (Is57:21)

If you wish to hoard up riches, remember the expression, "You can't take it with you." The only riches you will have to "carry out" (vs7) will be those which you have stored in Christ; the "...riches in glory in Christ Jesus.." And until that day, as for what we 'need' here on this earth, Paul says, "And my God shall supply all your need.." (Php4:19)

Thus, if a person wants Godly contentment leading to eternal life, what does one do about the allure of earthly riches and the corruption which begets them?

"..flee these things and pursue righteousness.." Amen.

The Good Fight of Faith (6:12-16)

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...keep the commandment without spot, blameless until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.." (vs12,14)

Notice that this exhortation to "fight" follows on the heels of the exhortation to "flee" the lusts of the love for money. It is part of the same context. And notice, also, that it is sandwiched into the context which follows: the "appearing" of Christ.

What sort of "fight" is this? Does Paul here say anything about setting up campaigns for "prayer warfare"? Mobilizing prayer warriors? (Anybody, please show me where such an expression is even to be found in the Scriptures!) Are we to take over governments? Are we to set up "christian nations"? Are we to judge and make war?

Notice that Paul describes/defines Jesus Christ: the "only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (vs15) And notice that it is Jesus Christ who "judges and makes war" (Rev19:11), and when Jesus makes war, - THAT- is 'when' the world will become "Christian", as "The kingdoms of this world [will] have been made those of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Rev11:15)

Notice also the context of Christ's reign. It is in the context of "the - APPEARING- of our Lord Jesus Christ.." (vs14) Let's repeat an observation we've made on other occasions. Christ's return and judgment involves two separate events: 1) His APPEARING, and 2) His KINGDOM (2Tim4:1) Those who have been recipients of God's grace and have been redeemed are looking for "the blessed hope and glorious -APPEARING-" of Christ. (Tit2:11-14) In this study, Paul exhorts Timothy regarding the "good fight" which we are engaged in "until the -appearing-" of Christ. When Christ appears, that signals the beginning of 'judgment' and God's "wrath". It begins the seven-year period of time where satan puts up his final gasps and struggle of rebellion against Christ, and Christ defeats him, to bind him a thousand years (Rev20:2) to set the stage for Christ's - KINGDOM- rule of peace. Since we are encouraged that God has not appointed us for "wrath" (1Th5:9) which is focused at the world of unbelievers (Rev3:10), we understand that Christ's "appearing" is also the event where the second stage of the First Resurrection raises those who are "dead in Christ" (1Th4:16), and then at the sound of the Shout and Trumpet blasts, those just raised, along with "we who are alive and remain" go up to meet the Lord in the clouds (1Th4:17), where He has come to "appear". Scoffers who call this the "rapture cult", taunt that Believers wish to "secretly" slink away. But the "only Potentate" is making His appearance. The more I think on these Scriptures, the more I am thinking that the world will see Him at this event. It won't merely be people suddenly "disappearing" with "no clue" as to what happened to us...but

Christ is going to make a major declaration, announcement and challenge to the world and satan with His appearing, and the taking up of the resurrected and live Believers of the Church age. Or, if it is the case that this shout/trumpet is for those being taken up to the Lord, and the matter of "every eye shall see Him" (Rev1:7) is only for His Second Coming where He comes like lightning (Mt24:27), for sure His "Appearing" will be seen by satan and his demons, and the host of the heavens... since, that is where the struggle is, between God and satan who has been in rebellion against God.

So, notice the nature of -our- "fight". Do we take up arms and 'attack'? Well, the "man of God" is exhorted to "flee" the lusts of the world. That famous warfare chapter explains that our warfare is against "the world's rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph6:12) And those pieces of armor are for defensive protection against satan's onslaughts. The only piece that might be considered "offensive", the "Sword" of God's Word (vs17) is that by which we proclaim to satan, "Go away, Satan!" (Mt4:10) as we are promised, if we "resist" him, "he will flee from you". (Jac4:7)

Yes, the Christian life is a struggle! Don't let anybody suggest to you, for one minute, that: Once you are saved, everything is all tranquil and peaceful, peachy-keen and hunky-dory. Jesus promised, "in the world you have affliction" (Jn16:33); and also explains that He came to introduce a "sword", not peace, as Believers are hounded and beset upon by unbelievers. (Mt10:34) Satan is like a roaring lion, out after prey. (1Pt5:8)

But the fight is a "good" fight. Why? What are we laying hold upon? "Eternal life!" (vs12)

So, if we are exhorted to "flee" the lusts, does that mean the Christian life is full of 'lists' of all the things we CANNOT do? What are we to be engaged in? "...that you KEEP THE COMMANDMENT...WITHOUT SPOT.." (vs14)

A person has a car, and he gets out there and washes and waxes it. The process of washing "takes-away" -dirt-. Oh, but...isn't that so 'negative' and 'judgmental'? What's wrong with that dirt? Isn't it 'divisive' to remove the dirt from the car? Aren't all things in creation at "one" with each other? Shouldn't the car and dirt be "united"? Let's find some "common ground" between the two. What's wrong with having dirt on one's car? (Is this argument not self-answering?) Well... the dirt is off, and the wax goes on...and some 'rubbing' takes place. The dirt might be gone, but there are signs of oxidation in the paint...so rubbing works the oxidation out. Well...now...you've REALLY gone off the deep end!! I mean! Snort! Hmph! Isn't a 'clean' car good enough? Why do you need the oxidation off, too!

You say this line of reasoning sounds stupid? (I used to have an uncle who might have said so...that's another story!) Silly! Nobody thinks it

strange for a person to clean and wax their car. They want it to look the 'best' it can. In different words, it is also called, "Taking care of" the car. Such a person is also going to change the oil periodically, and take care of other maintenance issues.

But for a Christian to remove the dirt of sin, is viewed and taunted by many as being "judgmental" and "prudish". But don't forget, those who say such things are speaking from their worldly -nature- as "swine", wallowing in the mire. (2Pt2:22) They "think it strange that you do not run with them in the same overflow of dissipation, blaspheming." (1Pt4:4)

But the one who is waiting for Christ's appearing; waiting for Him to be "revealed" (Hint: "revealed" or, -Revelation- of Jesus Christ; you know...all those things written in the last book of the Bible); we are exhorted, "And everyone who has this hope in him purifies (washes/waxes) himself, just as He is pure." (1Jn3:3) Why?

It's the MARRIAGE; the WEDDING. The groom dresses up in his tux all spiffed up, and the car which he has diligently washed and polished is all ready, waiting for his bride, to drive her off to their honeymoon. (And all the way to the wedding, every time he has stopped at a rest stop, or service station, he has been getting the polishing cloth out to wipe off any bits of dust that have clung to the car during the drive; because he wants everything "perfect" for his bride.)

And the bride? She's been getting herself up "perfect", too. Every hair in place, makeup 'just' so, jewelry adjusted; checking herself in mirrors from every angle; "covered..with the robe of righteousness." (Is61:10) She is the "glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but [is] holy and without blemish." (Eph5:27)

Empty Philosophy (6:20-21)

"O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and empty babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen." (vs20-21)

Now, Paul! See here! What kind of 'encouragement' is this? Don't you know, when closing a speech or teaching, you're supposed to end on a "positive note"!? Have the person going home "feeling good" about themselves, and "uplifted"; batteries all charged up. Give them a "blessing" and praise. What's with all this "negativity"?? You're always speaking as though you have this 'chip' on your shoulder, criticizing everybody all the time. Just because you've experienced a "few rotten apples" along the way, doesn't give you the right to be so 'judgmental' against everything all the time. You need to take a lesson from Billy Graham from the 60s how he used to close his weekly Sunday radio "Hour of Decision" broadcasts with, "...and the Lord bless you...REAL GOOD!" Now see what kind of "motivator" just a couple of positive, kind words can be? After all, consider all the millions that have heard him preach, and he's never been whipped, beaten and stoned like you have...he must be doing something right! C'mon, Paul...lighten up, already!

Paul's ministry was characterized by "warning" people "night and day with tears". (Ac20:31) When we understand Jesus' words that only a "few" are making it to Heaven, and that the "broad way" is -filled- with people on their way to destruction (Mt7:13-14), it should be easy to also deduce that -MOST- all teachings, ideas and philosophies that exist in the world, belong to those headed to "destruction". Should it not then also be obvious that, if they did not have their erroneous beliefs, they would NOT be headed to destruction? Thus, again... -MOST- beliefs and philosophies that exist are in ERROR. Did you get that? Please re-read that last sentence another time... -MOST- beliefs and philosophies that exist in the world are IN ERROR. If they were not in error, the people holding to them would not be on the "broad way" headed to "destruction".

We are told that the "just shall live by faith". (Hab2:4, Rom1:17) If somebody is "straying" concerning the faith, that is a direction -different- from the one leading to Eternal Life.

What is "knowledge"? Traditionally it has been assumed to be the reason we go to school, to 'learn'. Once something is learned, that which has been learned becomes knowledge. Books contain "information", but it doesn't become "knowledge" until the books are read, digested and understood. In the world's education systems, the higher one attains, that process by which one gains knowledge becomes more and more a process of "reasoning". Logic. Books are written by -people-. The professors who teach are -people-. Professors typically dispense

knowledge with a combination of methodologies: repeating what books say, giving some of their own ideas, and also interpreting what books say.

Once a person has attained to the world's ultimate education, one receives a "PhD". That's a Doctorate in -PHILOSOPHY-. According to the dictionary, a simple definition of Philosophy is: "Love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means, The investigation of causes and laws underlying reality; Inquiry into the nature of things based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods; The critique and analysis of fundamental beliefs as they come to be conceptualized and formulated; The synthesis of all learning." And could it not be said that the basic 'engine' of philosophy is logic.

Logic, in its purest form, is claimed to be like math; postulating premises and data, running these elements through formulae not at all unlike algebra, and coming to a 'conclusion': If A is true, and B is true, then we deduce, after going through the scientific steps of logic: therefore C is the outcome.

However, man's logic and reasonings regarding God are like the example given when I took the basic college course in "Logic 101", where somebody had devised a formula, where, after many algebraic calculations (set up similar to the way logic is) had been calculated, the final outcome proclaimed that: 2 plus 2 equals 3.999. That outcome was false, because, as anybody knows: 2 plus 2 equals 4.

But regarding spiritual things: the existence of God, the creation, evolution, heaven, hell, existence of satan, eternity, etc. man, in his own depraved wisdom spends his time in "profane and empty babblings" which "contradict" Truth. He feels "wise" because he has the ability to spin words, devising complex and intricate formulae to explain away the Most High, in order to elevate himself to a state of god-hood, and when he is all finished, he concludes that 2 plus 2 equals 3.999. He sees the 'evidence' of "creation" (Rom1:20); he counts the blocks and sees the overwhelming evidence that there are "4" blocks; but wrangles about with his logic, "professing to be wise" declares that he sees "3.999" blocks, because that's what his contrived 'wisdom' tells him he is 'supposed' to (and wants) to see. But, having blinded himself (Jn9:41,12:40), he has become "foolish". (Rom1:22)

A small child, when faced with the evidence can count, "One - Two - Three - Four" and concludes, "There's -Four-". But man in his "higher education" and "wisdom" declares, "3.999". To believe "Four" would be to acknowledge the Most High, and they want none of Him, so they "twist" the Truth "to their own destruction". (2Pt3:16)

That which calls itself "christian" is no better. Their so-called education spends time in seminaries, reading the writings of -people-, lectured and explained by -people-, and during the years my father was in seminary he

told how they would sit around discussing/arguing as to "how many angels can sit on the head of a pin". (Where is such a topic or concept even remotely alluded to or suggested in the Scriptures??) But they come away with their educations, having studied the "great men", and conclude on many doctrinal matters that: 2 plus 2 equals 3.999

What did Jesus say? "Truly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of Heaven." (Mt18:3) Notice the words there, "BY NO MEANS". How many children understand complex logic? As they lay out their blocks, and count "2 blocks" plus "2 blocks", put them together and count, "one...two...three...four" How many blocks are there? "Four!" Unless you see God's Word for the "simplicity" that is in Christ (2Cor11:3); if you spend all your time wrangling about words (vs4-5), pretending to have "knowledge"; Jesus is quite emphatic, "BY NO MEANS" can you get to Heaven!

So, what is the "man of God" (vs11) to do? Engage these intellectual snobs in "dialogue"? Debate them? No! "Avoid" it.

Back when I was a 'youth' and would hear fellow-students arguing/debating all sorts of things, I found myself 'admiring' their 'intellect', somehow secretly wishing that I could be as "wise" as they were, too. I always saw things more black-and-white, and my mind simply did not run in the same 'circles' theirs did. Well, today, I can tell you HOW THANKFUL I am that I was never as "smart" as they were! The Lord, knowing my true heart, kept me from it.

People periodically send me lengthy treatises of what they obviously think to be some great words of wisdom and understanding. Most of the time I don't bother replying. Most of the time, also, when I start reading and see the 'direction' it is going, I don't typically waste my time 'wading' through the entirety of their "empty babblings". Once in awhile somebody will re-send it and/or ask me if I received it, wanting acknowledgment. And if I rarely reply to the query as only I can do, they will then either be "hurt" or hoity-toitied, attributing to me a super-snotty attitude, wherein I'm not 'condescending' to 'stoop' out of the clouds of my alleged 'superiority'. (These things, they 'attribute' to me)

But you see, if it is not Godly wisdom, derived from the 'simplicity' of the Scriptures, for them 2 plus 2 is coming out 3.999. It is a "straying concerning the faith".

Believers have "received Christ Jesus the Lord" and we "walk in Him" and are "established in the faith" (not worldly carnal wisdom 1Cor2). And so the warning is, "Beware that no one rob you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ." (Col2:8)

The world thinks that, if we stick -only- to the Scriptures, that which was "committed to [our] trust" (vs20), that we are terribly "narrow-minded". We are not branching out, exploring our potential, 'growing' and reaching "to the stars"...and attaining, ultimately, to 'god-hood'.

But notice what is actually happening to the one who is sucked into such a system of worldly 'wisdom': The world is "robbing" the one who had put their trust in Christ! Philosophy does not 'add' to the Believer and 'expand' his understanding; it 'ROBS- FROM' him! Note this well! At one point he may have had a clear understanding of sin, repentance, redemption, forgiveness, faith, the Blessed Hope, and Eternal Life. But when the world gets in there and starts mucking around, the clarity of the simplicity of Faith in Christ becomes clouded, doubts arise, and one becomes turned away from Christ. And if they are not careful, and choose to reject Biblical Faith in favor of the world's 'wisdom', such a one is in danger of turning their back upon God, and "drawing back from following Jehovah" (Zeph1:6); and to "draw back (from Eternal Life) to destruction". (Heb10:39)

Notice also "how close" 3.999 is to 4; but it 'is' -not- "4". In similar fashion, so many of these things people argue about are "close" to Truth, and indeed 'contain' much truth; but in the end 'are' -NOT- Truth. "4" represents God and Eternal Life. "3.999" represents MISSING Eternal Life with God, as Maxwell Smart used to say on the 60s TV series "Get Smart", "by -that-! much!!" When "Max" used to squint at his fingers by which he was indicating how small "that" was, we used to laugh. But regarding your eternal soul, it is no laughing matter! "...there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.." (Mt13:42)

Timothy is warned to "Guard!" what was entrusted to him. There's plenty of time later, once we are with the Lord, for praise, feel-good, getting batteries charged up, fellowship, being uplifted and being positive. But right now, we are the "few" surrounded by the "many" on their way to destruction... and they are all reaching out, clamoring to 'grab' a-hold of us, to pull us (Believers) along down with them, as they are swirling round-and-round down the drain.

"Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul is not pleased with him." (Heb10:38)

Amen!

Addendum Section: © 2002

"Do It" and the Law

READER QUESTIONS:

Your latest post "Do It" is very timely for me. I have really been struggling with so much of the OT that we so often seem to say that was only for the Jews, or Israel. We tend to think that all the "laws" of the OT are no way to salvation.....which they are not, since faith in Christ is our only way to salvation.....but are the OT "laws or instruction" just the perfect explanation of the way that our Lord wants us to live, because He knows what is best for us therefore gave us all that direction.....not just Israel, who were a called out and separated people. Doesn't he also want us today to be a called out and separated people?

VW ANSWER:

Yes. Peter reiterates in the N.T. from the O.T. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also become holy in all conduct, because it is written, Be holy, because I am holy. (Lev19:2) And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, behave yourselves throughout the time of your sojourning in fear.." (1Pet1:13-17) The word "holy" means, literally, cut apart...separated.

If you read the N.T., except for the animal sacrifices, which the writer of Hebrews reviews could "never" make the observers of it "perfect" (Heb10:1), the rest of the Law is upheld in the N.T....things like not stealing, committing adultery, murder, etc. Paul reviews the Law's summary, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Gal5:14, Lev19:18) and then reviews the difference between God's law, and the works of the flesh. (Gal5:18-26)

Indeed, he says, "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal5:25) Those you mention are busy trying to be "spirit-filled", but seem to see no need to "walk" in the "fruit of the Spirit" (vs22-23)

No...the Law does not save us...it shows how sinful we are. (Rom5:20) And it gives "teeth" to God's judgment against sin. (Rom5:13) But on the other hand, when we are saved, we are saved "unto good works" (Eph2:10) What is the measure of "good works"? Among other things, that which Paul lists in Gal5:22-23 as being the "fruit of the Spirit", which, by definition, is opposite of those things which the Law condemns. (Gal5:19-21) If a person claims to be "in the Spirit", but does not walk Christ-like, it proves the person to be a fake. (1Jn2:4) Unless one's faith results in

works, if there are no works...the works which result from a "live" Christian... the lack of those manifesting works shows the person to be "dead". "Faith apart from works is dead". (Jacob2:20,26) "Death" equates with being "unsaved". When we were unsaved we were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph2:1,5, Col2:13)

READER FURTHER QUESTIONS:

I know His word has plainly shown that we can't or won't uphold all of His law or instruction, but does He want to empower us by the Holy Spirit to grow in grace and begin living a life patterned like His law, which I believe Christ did?

I seem to hear more and more pastors/teachers all the time talking about "Doing It", following God's word, His example, upholding His commandments.....but I often wonder does that still have an unspoken postscript.....oh well not that part of His word, because that was done away with, or that was only for the Jews.

This has really been hard for me, and I would appreciate a response and any insight if you have the time.

VW ANSWER:

It's not so much a matter of "jews"...but whether it was before or after Jesus' death on the cross. The O.T. sacrifices looked ahead to Christ's death, because He hadn't died yet. But once He "fulfilled" the Law, there is no more need for the symbolism. "Christ is the end of the Law..." (Rom10:4) In this case, the word "end" indicates that which comes along and "finishes up" the Law. As Jesus said that He had come to "fulfill" the Law. (Mt5:17)

But, just because Christ died and fulfilled the Law, doesn't mean that we now have freedom to break all the Law's tenets. No. He died to "set us free from" the Law and the sin which the Law defined. (Rom8:2) In other words, we are no longer bound to sin...we are no longer "slaves" to sin. (Rom6:16~~)

When today's preachers proclaim messages that God accepts us "just as we are" ...by context...sin-and-all...they are proving that they, themselves, are still under sin's bondage; otherwise they would not be preaching that way.

Hymenaeus and Alexander (1Tim1:20)

READER QUESTION:

I have a question from 1 Tim 2:20. [sic 1:20] in this passage of scripture Paul is referring to Hymineus and Alexander which he says, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that "they may learn not to blaspheme." can you explain this please.

VW ANSWER:

Well, we are not told the -specific- nature of their apostasy...other than that they have become "shipwrecked" regarding the Faith...and, perhaps also...their conscience? So, whatever the nature of their "blaspheme", we are not told.

But Paul uses the same terminology regarding what to do with them, that he uses regarding those involved in sexual immorality in Corinth, where he says to "...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (1Cor5:5)

This subject seems rather timely...based on some e-mails that have come to VW within the past week. Please notice that in 1Cor 5:5 Paul is consigning the sexually immoral over for satan's 'thrashing'. And here in 1Tim he uses the very same terminology regarding those who "thrust away" the Faith. Now, if a person thrusts away Faith (one of the definitions of "doctrine"), what's left? False doctrines. The teaching of something "different". An "other gospel", for which, its -MESSENGER- is called, "accursed". (Gal1:8-9)

Does Paul encourage "graeeeesss" towards such people, to engage in 'dialogue' and "be-loving-to-our-brothers"? No! Turn them over to satan. For what reason? So that they can "be taught" not to blaspheme. Whatever H&A's specific sins may have been...generically we can understand from this passage that, teaching false doctrine and believing something "different" is tantamount to "blaspheme". There is no 'graeeeesss'.

Now, I said this topic was "timely". I'll just share one of the examples. I know you-all experience them, too. And it seems to encourage some, who might be 'alone' where you are, to realize it is happening to others, too (I've also gotten several of those e-mails from you subscribers this past week, saying that you're going through some of the same struggles...just realize in your 'aloneness', you are not alone, you have the Lord Jesus in your hearts through the Holy Spirit) ...when I share some things:

This past week I received a couple of e-mails from somebody proclaiming a renewed urgency for "survivalist" preparations. We no longer have "Y2K" to be in a panic about. And these people had no specific belief about the Rapture...'whatever' you may happen to believe about it...be prepared to

"survive". Their reasons for seeking to survive were because of the coming judgments. Back during the Y2K panic, we spoke how Christians should be "wise" in everyday preparations, anyway, as a 'normal' matter-of-course. One never knows when 'anything' might happen...power outages, earthquakes, or any other events that might render any local economy to be on-the-blink for awhile...so it is always wise to have certain essentials "on-hand" to last a period of time...for 'whatever' the emergency may be. But these were writing like all the survivalists of the Y2K panic era. Claiming to be "Christians". And yet, even though condemning the USA's apostasy and proclaiming its imminent demise, not proclaiming the need to Repent and get saved...but of stockpiling food, water, and such things.

Now...to keep this short... A 'couple' e-mails came in short succession, one-after-the-other. The two were 'different', but contained mostly the same info, from note-to-note. It began looking SPAM-ly. And so, I replied to one of them, chiding the senders for not proclaiming the Gospel (since they claim to be Christians), and a few other choice comments, as I am known to do to some of these...asking, then, for them to take VW's address off their list.

OK...to-the-point... they replied, chiding me for my "unloving" -attitude-. Words to the effect that I shouldn't be chopping "brothers" to pieces, but that I should understand that different people have differing views. They then answered a couple of points I had made, and then stipulated that, If I would reply with a better 'attitude', that they would then be willing to "discuss our differences". Needless to say, I have not replied, nor will I.

You see...what Paul says about our attitudes towards those proclaiming false doctrine is contrary to today's world mentality. The world is busy "stopping HATE". Trying to eradicate "hate speech". And you see...if we stick to God's Word firmly, without wavering, and do like Paul teaches... "Shun a man of heresy after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is corrupt and sinning, being self-condemned." (Tit3:10-11) the world considers -that- to be "hate"!

Well, yes... "Do I not hate them, O Jehovah, who hate you? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies." (Ps139:21-22)

Years ago when my unequal yoke had just left, one of those proclaiming graeesss continually, encouraged me one evening to read Ps139... I suspect, he hoped it would help boost my self-esteem, and help me feel loved. But when I saw him the next time, sharing what the Lord was impressing upon my heart from these two verses, he was totally taken aback. As I think back on that incident now, I really think he didn't know quite what to make of the fact that those verses of 'hate' were included in such an otherwise 'loving' chapter of 'self-affirmation'!

But yes... I hate what God hates. God is a "jealous Mighty God" (Ex20:5) when it comes to any "other gods". Any false doctrine that is not Scriptural, is from a different spirit than God's Holy Spirit. Following false doctrines is every bit the same as idolatry; it is a following of another god... the one that came up with that false doctrine. "...doctrines of demons.." (1Tim4:1)

If a person with false doctrine is truly a "Brother" (in Christ), and we turn them over to satan's thrashing (which seems to be something God allows satan to do...note Job -1:12,2:6 & Peter -Lk22:31), their "spirit will be saved". (1Cor5:5) If they are not a "Brother", then, rejecting/shunning them, sending them to satan, sends them to the one who is their master anyway. And they will "die in their sin". (Jn8:21) But we will have remained "pure" (1Jn3:3) before the Lord. Over and over the Scripture speaks about us being "holy" unto the Lord. (1Pt1:16, 2Pt3:11,etc) And remember, the word "holy" means to be "separated from"... -NOT- 'joining' in together with the world and false doctrine.

If we refuse to be holy, God will allow satan to thrash us, so that we might be "taught" to not blaspheme. Ever wonder why it seems that satan is given so much lee-way over you (or someone you know)? If you are trying to be "ecumenical" and displaying "graeesss" to others proclaiming false doctrines...perhaps 'that' is why? Think about it!

Prayer vs Fellowship with Jesus? (1Tim2:1-8)

READER QUESTION:

Now for my question. I am confused on how to relate to Jesus. I know that Jesus taught the apostles to pray to the Father. How then do I go about building a relationship with Jesus? Do I include Jesus in my prayers, or do I just pray to our Father in Heaven and hope for Jesus to intercede on my behalf?

VW ANSWER:

Perhaps you recall the recent study "Lifting Holy Hands" from 1Tim2:1-8 (171) where we spoke of prayer being a "communion" with God. When we get to John ch16 (January,03 article?) we will address the Holy Spirit in more depth.

But notice that Jesus says "...Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.." (Jn16:7) Also, notice in Rom8:26-27 that it is the Holy Spirit who actually carries our prayers to God, through Jesus Christ.

However, first of all, none of this will be a reality for you if you have not received Christ as your Savior (Jn1:12), having responded to His call (Jn6:44) in repentance. (Ac2:38, Rom2:4, 2Pt3:9) It is not enough for you to have "moved" from one religion/denomination to another, if you have not been saved. Eternal Life with God does not carry the labels Catholic, Charisma, Protestant, Baptist, etc. Eternal Life is "in His Son". (1Jn5:11,20) If you read 1cor ch2, you will see that the "natural man" is NOT ABLE TO understand God's spiritual things. And that, also, certainly includes "prayer"...because, prayer, being of the Holy Spirit, can only happen for a person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9)

A person who is truly saved by Jesus Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit will -know- prayer, and as Jesus promised, He -does- "come" to the person, through the Holy Spirit. And when that is the case, prayer isn't so much a bowing on one's knees and uttering "words"...but of being in Christ's 'presence' through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Yes...we are to bow our knees "...to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". (Eph3:14) But when God makes His presence known to His child, it is not so much that I pray to the Father, but have fellowship with Jesus...or wait to be filled by the Spirit. But when one is in God's presence, one is in -God's- presence...Father, Son -and- Holy Spirit. Just in the same way that when we fellowship with a fellow-human...we do not typically think of differentiating that: Now I am interacting with this person's soul, but yesterday we had a spiritual relationship, and perhaps, tomorrow...physical. No. When we interact with people we do so with the -entirety- of their being; body, soul and spirit. There is not really a

distinction to our minds. In the same way, when we are in fellowship with God, we are in fellowship with -all- of God...because, after all, "...Jehovah our God, Jehovah is One." (Deu6:4)

"Testing"

VW EDITORIAL/ADDENDUM:

In response to the December article on "The World's Hate" there were more-than-the-usual number of responses, from people who have been through the struggles of dealing with the 'foxes in the henhouse'. And more specifically, in the past two studies in 1Timothy, the qualifications of pastor/overseers and deacons, the exhortation that leaders should not be "new converts" (3:6), and that they should "first be tested". (3:10) We spoke of their qualifications, and the reasons... but did not address anything to do with "how to" test, or the pitfalls to watch out for from the "foxes/wolves".

I don't know that the Scripture gives any specific 'outline' for how to ascertain the verity of another's claim to Faith in Christ. There is no "form" printed in the Bible that, if we have the other person fill-in the blanks, based on the person's answers, once they get to the end of the form, if they answered all the questions correctly, we are assured of their salvation. Even though there are some pharisaical types who do this sort of thing, such is not found in the Scriptures. And I suspect that is because anybody can "lie" and answer the questions with the "right words". Foremost, we know that the Holy Spirit "witnesses" to the matter. (Rom8:16) And so, I'm not going to presume to give such an outline, either.

However, some informal observations are in order:

Just because somebody proclaims or promotes the Gospel, does not make them a Believer. The 'spirit-filled' girl followed Paul and Silas, proclaiming, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." (Ac16:17) Now, one might have thought that such 'agreement' and 'support' would be welcome, and she would have been one of the 'mature' believers in their evening Bible studies. But no! Paul was "greatly disturbed" (vs18) over it because it was of satan, and cast the demon out. How did he know it was of satan?

How does anyone know when such a situation is a 'demonic' scenario? Remember, the Believer is indwelt by -God's- HOLY Spirit, and there is a witness to things that are of God. And equally, contrarily, there is a witness when things are -not- of God, but of satan. And in accordance with Jesus' description of the Spirit, that "you..do not know where He comes from and where He goes..so is everyone who is born from the Spirit" (Jn3:8), so is this matter of the "witness". Many people who speak of "feeling" the spirit are likely 99% of the time feeling demons or mere -emotions-. Certainly, when God's Holy Spirit is at work, there is a 'feeling'...but it is not an "emotional" feeling. Certainly, in some situations, the working of the Spirit may 'elicit' emotions. But the actual -work-, itself, is -NOT- an 'emotion'

(but notice that charismania tells its followers to "feel-the-spirit", as they mantracize and work themselves up into 'emotional' states). And beyond that, there are no words known to me to convey an understanding of the matter to anybody who is not saved. If you are a Believer, you know what I'm talking about, because that is part of the characteristic of being a Believer...having God's Holy Spirit. And if you don't, by definition, you are not saved. (Rom8:9) You "cannot" understand it, because it is "spiritually discerned" (1Cor2:14), and you are of the world.

Let's look at two scenarios: First one, a person makes a "claim" to having been saved. Do you take their -word- for it, at-face-value? Yes and no. Certainly, when a baby is born, it is going to cry, announcing to the world its arrival into the land of the living. And spiritually, when a person is saved, they will also, "confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus". (Rom10:9) But how does one ascertain what they "believe in [their] heart"? Because true Salvation is a matter of the "heart". (Rom2:28-29)

Jesus said, "You will know them from their fruits...every good tree produces excellent fruit, but a corrupt tree produces evil fruit...from their fruits you will know them." (Mt7:16-20) He goes on to make a disclaimer regarding Rom10:9... it is not enough to proclaim, "Lord, Lord" (vs22) How do we know what's in the heart? By what comes out of the mouth, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt12:34) And you will know them by their deeds, because "faith without works is dead" (Jac2:17,20,26) because we were not saved in order to remain "JUST-AS-WE-ARE". That doctrine is one of today's major-big-time scourges of apostasy of the so-called "church"! No! We were saved "UNTO GOOD WORKS". (Eph2:10)

Thus: If a person claims to be saved, but his mouth still spews forth swill, that's a pretty good sign that he is not saved. Just like a good spring does not send out foul water (Jac3:11), so, too, a saved tongue does not remain in the gutter. Ditto regarding deeds and actions. If a person's preponderance is of the flesh, it can be observed that he still has retained the "nature to sin". (1Jn3:9)

[Except for the cases where a Believer is being "carnal", immature or backslidden. Please see: Aug'97 commentary "Twelve Kinds of People"]

Now, one reason Paul speaks of the "new convert" is because of the "changelings" we have spoken of in the past. You know, from Sci-Fi... those creatures whose natural state is a conglomerate of a sea of gelatinous sludge, but they can take on the shapes of both inanimate objects, as well as living creatures. However, by their nature, they can hold those foreign shapes for only 'so-long', before they must revert to their slime state for rejuvenation, before they can take on the foreign shape again. It is the same with those we call the "pretend" [c]hristians. The wolves who come into the church. They can manage to -pretend- being 'righteous' (2Cor11:13-15) only so-long...and then, eventually they -WILL-

revert to their natural state in some manner or another. "...according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having been washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2Pt2:22)

So, when a person newly makes a -claim- to being "saved", receive them, and begin nurturing them in the Lord and His Word. But also be on guard. And as we learned in 1Timothy ch3, do -NOT- 'yet' put them into service. Give it 'time'. Time for them to grow to maturity; and time to 'prove' that they are, indeed, (true) believers.

And then... as I've been reminded again recently, these 'pretenders' have all sorts of tricks up their sleeves. Let's speak of one scenario (something which actually happened): Some pretenders initially on the mailing list, and e-mailing all sorts of "supportive" comments, making (e-maily) 'loud' proclamations, like the 'spirit-filled' girl at Philippi. They send a check, and in connection with it, make 'suggestions' that a little more "love" is needed in the teaching from VW, to not be so 'harsh'. I mentioned this to you-all last summer: I returned the check, saying that I will not be 'bought' to submit to the whims of the enemy, contrary to God's call. They become unsubscribed.

Then, recently, I hear from them again...this time, -apologizing- for the past, making (e-maily) 'loud' accolades as to how I had been 'right' back then about what I had been trying to warn them about (about 'another' issue... not the "love" and "check" thing), and re-subscribe. So now, they want to send a check again, hoping I will keep it this time...

Let's take a break here, and let me explain that, in my spirit, in spite of their loud acclaims... IN MY SPIRIT I -know- that 'something' is -still- NOT RIGHT with them. You see, that "witness" of the Holy Spirit.

OK...knowing what the Holy Spirit is telling my spirit, I am, thus, not 'comfortable' about accepting the check... so, suggest that they 'wait' awhile. Let's just make sure that things are being done for the right reasons; without flair and announcements; "...do not let your left hand know what your right hand does..." (Mt6:3), etc. (And for you who know how I can be 'strong' often, I think you would have agreed, had you read it, that my 'suggestion' to them was done very 'gently')

You see, the 'suggestion' was my "test". If they were truly Believers, and were truly repentant about the past, the Spirit would witness with their spirits that this was a good thing for right now. But what happens, instead, is that they get angry, unsubscribe (again), whining and complaining that 'certain' (me) Christians don't "forgive one another". Now, not only am I lacking in "love", I'm also "unforgiving"...according to them.

First of all, their apologies for the prior anger, words and issues was not due me, but the Lord. (I am merely the messenger) And for all their apologies and 'loud' accolades for how -I- was 'right', and praising -me- up-

and-down, their true spirit was "tested". If they had been truly repentant over the past, they would not have blown up 'now'.

Jesus said, If a brother sins against you, and repents... forgive him. (Lk17:3-4) However, if repentance is accompanied by whining, complaining, further anger and self-justification... the words and acts following the -claimed- 'repentance' prove the repentance to have been false. It was not real. While I received these people back with grace for a couple of e-mail exchanges, my spirit 'knew' between-the-lines that 'something' was not yet right. So, I kept my spiritual 'eyes' open; wondering, waiting...so that they might be 'proven' over time, one way or the other. (I expected the 'time' to be, in this case, perhaps, 'months'...but it all happened within less-than-a-week!)

It's like... how often do you hear somebody saying something like, "I'm sorry, will you forgive me? ... but -YOU- DID such-n-such, too. Are you going to apologize to me now? Hmm? Hmm?" You see, such an apology is NO APOLOGY! The person does not -really- see that what they did was wrong; but in their mind, some of the blame resides with the person to whom they are supposedly asking forgiveness.

I've shared [anonymously] about this recent experience, as I do from time to time other things that I have seen over my lifetime. From time to time some passer-by (at the website) will e-mail, trying to strike up dialogue, pretending to be a (true) Believer. If they are a pretender, I will usually know it from their very first note; or if I'm not 'sure', I will be suspecting it. Then, as a couple of exchanges happen, I will become sure. I will have either 'baited' them with a "test" comment/question, or their own words will reveal their true heart. So then, the "test" will have verified for my own spirit that, indeed, I was hearing the Holy Spirit correctly...and it will provide 'evidence' to show the person 'why' I close communications with them. In practically every case I have been able to show the person their own words, and how their spirit does not agree with Scripture. Yes, they often get angry. Some (particularly the charismatics) will even begin swearing and cursing, and sometimes start spamming me with obscenities, once their facade has been exposed back to themselves. (Yes, I make use of the e-mail's "filter" options periodically)

So, you see...when considering a person for church 'office', -time- not only verifies for the congregation as to the person's true spirit, it also provides 'evidence' when they express the desire to serve, and you have to answer 'why' they cannot. And when they become angry (if they are not saved, they will get angry), you will have their own words and deeds to show them. (Yes, a book -is- judged by its cover, because what is inside the book is the basis for its cover.)

Now, if they truly -are- saved, but are just having a slow growth, and are rejected for service, their saved heart should understand...as we studied in those lessons...even the janitor needs to be of high spiritual calibre. If they

are a (true) Believer, they will understand. If they are not, their anger/wrath (Eph4:31, Col3:8) will prove (to everybody) their true heart. You don't put an unqualified person in the cockpit of a 747 jet; neither do you put the unsaved, young or backslidden person into ministry (either to teach or sweep the floors). The training to become a pilot takes 'time'...both for training, and 'testing' to verify his 'qualifications'. Same, and even more important because it is people's eternal souls at stake, for Church leaders.

The individual specifics will vary from person to person, and between different situations. But the overall pattern I think you will find to closely resemble what I've just shared here. When others communicate their own experiences with me it seems to follow a similar pattern: 1) They experience things which they wonder about, 2) In their spirit/s they 'know' something is not right and there is turmoil, and 3) given 'time', the nature of the problem becomes revealed through Scripture and further manifestations from the ones they are questioning; or if it is a church, situations will arise where they either leave of their own accord, or are asked to leave because their Scriptural views are not lining up with the group's false doctrines and practice.

It is the Holy Spirit who guides "into all truth". (Jn16:13) And the proof-of-the-pudding is from the Scriptures. (2Tim3:14-17) Is the person talking and behaving like a Christian? Or are they like the world? No, works does not save us (Eph2:9), but it is the 'gauge' as to whether or not a person is saved. Dogs bark, ducks quack, pilots fly airplanes, Believers do righteousness, and sinners sin... "As the proverb of the ancients says, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked." (1Sam24:13)

Advocate church building? (1Tim3:14-16)

READER COMMENT:

...I see that you advocate church buildings....

VW ANSWER:

Where/how in the world would you attribute such a thought to me from this lesson!? The lesson was not about "whether or not" a group should have a building. It was about 'conduct' when a group of Believers is together.

The Scripture context of the passage spoke of "house of God". (vs15) So, since the study was about "conduct", not "location", I continued along the same context as the passage under consideration, using its example 'in passing'. Period.

[Ed: The person who submitted this topic should be understanding the 'tone' of those two paragraphs. This is not the first such...!]

However, since this matter has been brought up, and isn't addressed in this particular epistle, (for the rest of us) let's branch out, for a moment, to this -different- topic, and consider "location".

What, exactly, -is- the "house of God"?

In the O.T., except for a few places that actually say "temple" (1Sam1:9, 1Ki6:5, etc), the PREPONDERANCE of the references to God's -place- for worship is called the "house" and/or "house of Jehovah" etc. (1Sam3:15, 1Ki6:1-2, etc)

However, both the wilderness tent/tabernacle and Solomon's temple were not buildings where the 'congregation' entered. Only the Levitical priests did, after being sanctified/cleansed for service. (Not going to give all the references here; this is not intended to be a detailed study of this subject. Just a quick 'glance') The people were around outside in the courtyard and beyond where the animals were sacrificed. The animals would be sacrificed, and then the people and the priests would 'eat' of the sacrifices (1Chr29:22, 2Chr30), while other Levites played instruments and sang praises to God. (2Chr29, 35:15) [Ed: they didn't actually have that much 'congregational' singing back then; it was done by the Levites whose full-time 'job/occupation' it was to learn the songs and sing during the sacrifices. (1Chr9:33,15:16-22,etc)

When the scribes read and taught the Law to the people (2Chr30:22), it was as they were gathered around the temple (outdoors) for sacrifices/feasts; and they were typically 'standing' as the Law was read to them. (De31:11, Neh8, etc) And like in the days of Jehoshaphat, they sent priests throughout the land to teach the people the Law. (2Chr17:7-9)

They didn't seem to have some mega-building, with raised platform, where the people all gathered weekly to sit on pews and hear the preacher preach. Now, when we get to the N.T. the temple was still off-limits to anybody other than the priests...but they had synagogues where people would meet to be taught the Law. But that tradition is not found from Moses in the Scriptures.

Now when we come to the N.T. -church- we find them meeting in many different places. The day of Pentecost started out in the "upper room" (Ac1:13) As the Church grew, as people were saved, their fellowship went "from house to house". (Ac2:46) When the early (Jewish) missionaries went around, they went first to the synagogues (Ac13:14) in keeping with Christ's mandate "to the Jew first" (Ac13:46, Rom1:16, 2:9-10) But as Paul greets the churches, they seem to be meeting in people's homes. The "church that is in their house" (Rom16:5, 1Cor16:19) Now, Paul also makes use of a public building to teach, in the "school of a certain Tyrannus" (Ac19:9)

So, when the lesson speaks of conduct in the "house of God", where is that? If it's a small family-sized group, they may meet in somebody's home. If the group should grow, perhaps they would rent some building? If the group was big enough to pay a full-time salaried "overseer" or "elder", they might also be big enough to build their own building? This will vary from group-to-group, as the needs and guidance of the Holy Spirit dictate.

But wherever the -physical- 'location' is, it is a "house" (building or room). Along these lines, please note that the Holy of Holies (not a pagan "oracle" as KJV says 1Ki8:6,etc), being a 'room' within the temple, is also called "house". (1Ki6:16-17, 2Chr3:8) If they happen to meet outdoors (as many European middle-ages Believers had to, as they hid from their catholic and protestant persecutors), they are in the "house" of God's creation. But nevertheless, -wherever- they may be meeting, that -place- for that -time- represents God's presence amongst the group of Believers. I know this passage is a bit out-of-context, but it is true of what we are saying, nonetheless, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt18:20) For that time they are meeting, that home living room that might otherwise be bustling with children playing, for the meeting time becomes the "house of God". It is a place of reverence. Not because of the 'place', but because of 'Who' is there...our Heavenly Father through the Holy Spirit.

Also notice that Moses didn't set up "sunday schools". He commanded, "And these Words which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deu6:6-9)

Whaaaat?!? No 'crosses' and pictures of 'jesus' for your children's bedrooms so they can "feeeeeel" His presence?!? (Sorry...'just couldn't resist! We were finished with that topic last week...) Notice also that Scripture nowhere suggests "bribing" children to learn Bible verses by rewarding them with prizes. It is a (pardon today's overworked expression) -LIFESTYLE-. It is a FAMILY LIFESTYLE of having God's -WORD- close to our hearts, before our eyes for constant reminder, to be in our daily thoughts. Children immitate their parents. Sending them for a half-hour of sunday school is not going to do much for them, if your own lives (as parents) are in the world's gutter. They will grow up learning to follow God, if they see you following God, loving His Word, living by it. All this does NOT go on at -that- 'building' OVER THERE someplace. It happens in the nitty-gritty of daily life, day-in and day-out.

How to Escape God's Wrath? ("Latter Times" 1Ti4:1-5)

READER QUESTION:

I was surprised to learn that Reformed theology is doctrine of demons. How then can I escape the wrath of God?

VW ANSWER:

[Editor: First of all, please understand that the lesson from 1Tim4 addressed "reforma[TION]" theology, not "reform[ED]" theology, which includes things like 5-point Calvinism, etc. Since this person responded to the study he did, I am answering it as though he had said "reformation"; the point where the Reformation broke from Rome and became protestantism, and eventually became all the protestant denominations that exist today.]

So now, to the answer...

As John the immerser was chiding his hearers, "Offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt3:7) what was his message? "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven has drawn near" (vs2)

The turning point for Martin Luther, as I understand it, which became the basis and battle-cry of the Reformation was, "..the just shall live by faith.." (Rom1:17) And starting from there, the whole doctrine of "sola fide" (only faith) came into existence.

But you see, while that verse is the very foundational core of the Reformation, that is not actually a 'salvation' verse. It is a verse which describes -how- a "just" person 'lives'. Rom1:17 and Hebrews ch11 fit together, regarding how a "just" person, by definition one who is "saved", lives. Rom1:17 does not say, "..one -becomes- just by faith..", but rather, the just person "lives by" faith.

Now, before you-all get too 'excited' here, let's look at this again; please hear me out. Romans ch4 speaks of Abraham being justified by faith. (4:3) But notice that hand-in-hand, practically in the same breath, it speaks of his manner of living with regard to his expectation for receiving a son from God, even though both he and Sarah were so old. (vs17-22) And once Isaac was born, he had to 'do' to demonstrate his faith, by (beginning b) offering Isaac in sacrifice. (Jac2:21)

The just shall "live" by faith. What is "living"? Those things we -do-. We breathe, eat, work, sleep; and are either 'obedient' to God, or 'disobedient'. (1Jn2:3-4) If a person steps out onto a foot-bridge, he -demonstrates- his 'faith' in the bridge's ability to hold his weight. It's like the great tight-rope walker years ago (I forget the name), who was impressing people by walking across the Niagara Falls. And it was announced that the next day he would push a wheelbarrow across on the tightrope, with a 'person' in

the wheelbarrow. Well, as the situation unfolded, there was a young man who was thoroughly impressed with the man's abilities, and the man comes to the young man and asks, "Do you believe he can do it?" (The young man has never seen the person up close, so doesn't recognize that he is actually speaking with the person) Oh, why certainly I believe he can! I'm the man: will -you- be my passenger in the wheelbarrow tomorrow? True faith will see the young man in that wheelbarrow. Abraham may have been justified by faith, but his faith was not alone (sola fide); it was "tested" when he offered up Isaac. (Heb11:17)

John proclaimed "repent"; and then, what? "..bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.." (Mt3:8) And notice that, even before the Reformation, he was answering the "Abraham" -argument-... "..and do not think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham (who "believed-only") as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." (vs9)

When the "wrath of God" is mentioned, what is the -context-? The one "believing..has eternal life" but what? "..the one -DISOBEYING- the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (Jn3:36) The wrath of God is related to "ungodliness and unrighteousness" in supressing God's truth. (Rom1:18) It is related to sexual perversion, uncleanness, lust, idolatry, etc. (Eph5:3-6, Col3:5-7)

Repentance involves -turning- away from these things, and the sinful nature in which we were conceived and born. (Ps51:5, Lk18:13)

Again, let's repeat: Paul summed up the salvation message, and in so-doing he claimed that he had given 'everything' needful, that he had "KEPT BACK NOTHING that was helpful". What was that message? "...repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ac20:20-21)

While it is true that we are "saved by faith" (Eph2:8, Ac16:31), we don't even get to "faith", until we have first repented. Otherwise, why should we even -be- 'saved'? By definition, "salvation" recognizes one's state in utter hopelessness and inability (Rom5:6); recognizing that we, indeed, have "no hope" and are "without God" (Eph2:12) which we need saving out of.

The problem with "sola fide" is that people predominantly by-pass "repentance". They are their own little gods, with certain measures of self-worth, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness...and by their so-called "faith" they want to do like the Japanese used to want to do when my father was missionary there back in the 50s. They had all their myriads of gods, and wanted to 'add' Jesus 'along with' all their other gods. In actuality, they think they already have God; after all, they were born in a "christian nation" and grew up "in the church"! So now, they only merely want to have a "relationship" with Jesus. They want to make "commitments" and "promises". But they do not want to forsake their sin. They have convinced

themselves that God accepts them "just as they are" (sin and all); so their so-called "faith" is merely a little feel-good added to their existence.

But you see... and this, now, more directly addresses your question... Jesus commissioned the gospel message to be proclaimed: "...repentance and remission of sins.." to be "preached in His name.." (Lk24:47)

The thing that separates between man and the holy God is "sin". (Is59:2) It is because of 'sin', that God's wrath is due mankind. What is necessary is not a 'relationship' with Jesus, but to get rid of the sin. In the O.T. they did not have a 'relationship' with Jesus (that they were aware of). Their intercession with their prayers and sacrifices was to God the Father. True: their sacrifices were a 'type' of what Jesus would be doing on the cross when He gave Himself (Gal1:4, 2:20, Eph5:2, etc) But they did not close their prayers with "...in Jesus' name.." The sacrifices had to do with "sins committed in ignorance" (Lev4:2, Heb9:7), etc.

But... don't you just want to "believe in Jesus"? Well, sure, the demons also believe in Jesus, for all the good it's doing them! (Jas2:19) The demons in people were continually calling out to Jesus, "I know who You are; the Holy One of God!" (Mk1:24) "...have You come to torment us before the time?" (Mt8:29)

Salvation comes when a person, first, acknowledges their sin, and understands their hopeless situation; knowing they have been rebellious against God. And then, as the Holy Spirit "convicts" them of their sin (Jn16:8), as the Father is drawing them to Jesus (Jn6:44), it is at 'that' point where -faith- "receives" Jesus and the salvation He offers. (Jn1:12) Jesus cannot be our "buddy/friend" (Jn15:14) if He has not been our "Savior" and "Redeemer".

Notice the man blind from birth is first 'healed', and -then- Jesus finds him and asks, "Do you believe into the Son of God?" (Jn9:35) Who is He, Lord? It's Me. "I believe!" (vs38) Jesus did not start out offering to be the man's "friend" (like the song: what a friend we have in Jesus); but first 'healed' him of what was ailing him, and 'then' introduced Himself to the man, and received his homage.

Now notice one final thing... since this question starts out referencing Reformation theology. If we understand that Rom1:17 is not a "salvation" verse, notice also, "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul is not pleased with him. But we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the preserving of the soul." (Heb10:38-39)

Not only do they have a salvation which didn't arrive there through repentance; once they have 'received' this so-called "salvation", they claim to not be able to "lose" it. But notice that the "walking by faith" is related to NOT "drawing back..to destruction". True salvation is not "lost"; it is -

secure- (Rom8:35-39); because it is a "gift of God" (Eph2:9); and nothing can "snatch" what is God's out of His hands. (Jn10:29) But being a "gift", people are known to sometimes 'return' gifts, due to rejecting the giver. Thus, a person once having "tasted the Heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit (by definition: "saved" -Rom8:9)(Heb6:4) can "draw back to destruction". They throw away their "faith" by which they were "living".

Otherwise, why would Hebrews speak of "holding fast...firm to the end"? "...but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we HOLD FAST the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope FIRM TO THE END." (Heb3:6) Or why would Paul have spoken of "CONTINUING IN THE FAITH" and not "moving away" from the "hope of the gospel"? "...if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard.." (Col1:23) Notice the correct verb tense from John (where emphasized in the following), "These things I have written TO YOU WHO BELIEVE in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may CONTINUE TO BELIEVE in the name of the Son of God." (1Jn5:13)

Doctrine is either true or false. True doctrine comes through the Holy Spirit. (Jn16:13) Paul exhorted Corinth to "...all speak the same thing.." (1Cor1:10) If there is false doctrine, it did not come from God's Holy Spirit. There is only one other kind of spirit. "We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the SPIRIT OF TRUTH and the SPIRIT OF ERROR." (1Jn4:6) If it is error, and such error is not the Holy Spirit, the only other kind of spirit that exists is satan and his demons. Thus, the errors are "doctrines of demons". (1Tim4:1)

But as we see the state of the world right now, for some of you this may be the last message you hear from God's Word before it is too late for you.

The person asked, "...how can I escape the wrath of God?"

When Jesus came the first time, the voice in the wilderness proclaimed: "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruits worthy of repentance.." (Mt3:7-8) The message has not changed, as the world appears to be at the very threshold of the Lord's coming again...

When Jesus chided those who had been in unbelief, He condemns them "...because they did not repent." (Mt11:20) "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mk1:15), that Jesus died, to wash away sin in His own blood (Ac20:28, Re1:5) and rose again for our sin. (1Cor15:3-4) Nineveh was praised because they "repented at the preaching of Jonah". (Lk11:32) The warning is, "unless you repent, you will likewise perish." (Lk13:3,5) Since God's wrath comes upon SINFUL man, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins

may be blotted out." (Ac3:19) You want Eternal Life? "..Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life." (Ac11:18) "..but declared first to those in Damascus... and...to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." (Ac26:20) Don't you know that "...the kindness (grace -Eph2:8) of God leads you to repentance?" (Rom2:4) The only reason it is taking what seems like "so long" for the Lord to return, is His kindness, not wishing to destroy mankind, but "..that all should come to repentance" (2Pt3:9)

If you do as many Reformation Theologians hold to, -only- 'believing', but 'refusing' (God knows your heart!) to repent...that is a doctrine of demons: be very much assured of this truth...

You -WILL- suffer God's wrath!

Attracted to others ("Purity" 1Tim5:1-2)

READER QUESTION:

Despite my efforts... I periodically find myself attracted to other women...I'll leave out the specifics. What exactly am I supposed to do with that? Jesus spoke of pulling out the offending eye and adultery committed in the heart, but I confess I have a difficult time with this sometimes. I absolutely know that fancying someone else is sinful, lustful, etc., but how am I supposed to handle such thoughts? This seems to be more of an issue the older I get.

VW ANSWER:

Indeed! A good question. And I wish I had a pat answer...but I don't. I understand your question, because I've been there, too. And I suspect most men deal with this. If they don't at some time or other, there is likely something hormonally 'wrong' with them.

[Ed: Oh..now...don't anybody go bristling up at that last comment. God created all living beings, and man, with a certain 'drive' towards being "fruitful". (Gen1:28) One of the "wonders" that is beyond full understanding is "...the way of a man with a virgin.." (Pr30:19)]

[Note also: While this question comes from an 'individual', This subject is so 'universal' to mankind, I'm going to expand out and address several related issues... so, while I may address certain things, or raise certain issues, it should not be construed to suggest that I am saying they are the problems the questioner has. These are 'generic' comments to 'all' men (and women, where applicable), approaching this question from a couple different angles.]

Job (a married man) said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I look intently upon a virgin?" (Job31:1) This does not say that men are to 'shield' their eyes from seeing a beautiful woman. Rachel "had a beautiful figure and beautiful appearance" (Gen29:17) and it is not suggested in the context that it was wrong for her to appear beautiful, or for others to notice that fact. In De21:11 God gives the law regarding a man seeing a woman taken captive in war, with a "beautiful figure", whom he sees and desires to have as a wife. When Jesus makes the statement He does, notice that He doesn't speak merely of -looking- at a woman, but looking "to lust". (Mt5:28)

Paul speaks of these things as "gifts". "...each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that." (1Cor7:7) And in that same context, he speaks of one's ability to "exercise self-control"; and suggests it is better to be married, than to "be on fire". (vs9) He opens the chapter telling married couples to be intimate and "not deprive one another". (vs5) Furthermore, Scripture is quite clear that "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but prostitutes and adulterers God will judge." (Heb13:4)

For a married man, the message is clear: "Drink waters out of your own cistern, and running waters out of your own well. Should your springs be dispersed abroad, like streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth, as a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and always be intoxicated in her love. For why, my son, will you be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a foreigner?" (Pr5:15-20)

In other words, married men: Be with your wives. Have steamy hot intimacy with them. Be "intoxicated" and "ravished" with them. And if you don't know what this is about, read the Song of Solomon. Yes, that book is in the Bible. It is from God. It is the way He created them "male and female" and "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen2:25) Be with each other and fully satisfy each other. Do not be ashamed in it, and 'enjoy' God's "gift" to you.

I dare say that many roving male eyes are related to lack of spousal intimacy; not just in the bedroom, but in life in general. If a man's place of comfort is in his "corner" on the "housetop", because below is the "contentious woman" (Pr21:9), in many respects, emotionally for him, it is as if he was 'single', and not married at all; so his eyes wander, wishing for that companion who might "complement him". (Gen2:20) As well, much of the roving flirtations of married women start with lack of fulfillment with their husbands.

If you have walls between yourselves, start 'talking' to each other, figure out what those walls are, and tear them down. Perhaps some confession, repentance and forgiveness is in order for whatever things are in your pasts? So, be 'honest' with one another. Do not merely -pretend- to be 'honest'...but be -truly- honest. If one or both of you have deep, dark, unspeakable incidents in your past that have erected barriers around, those barriers need to come down. Some of them may have been of your own doing; others may have been done 'to' you. Nevertheless, they are there. And as long as they are in place, there will -never- be total intimacy. And don't think that keeping it 'hidden' is 'protecting' your spouse from hurt; the hurt is 'already' there, because the secret keeps -you- from fully giving yourself to your spouse. (I won't go into details, but please believe me...I know whereof I speak in this regard.) And so then, when the one makes themselves vulnerable to the other, the other needs to put pride aside, and receive the one doing the confessing/exposing. Hosea was commanded by God to go retrieve his wife who had been unfaithful to him. (Hos3:1) If you do so, you will be like how God is towards Israel and others of His own who are unfaithful, and then return in repentance. And when you have covenanted with each other, covenant 'exclusivity' to each other. (Hos3:3)

Otherwise, for the married person whose spouse refuses to 'negotiate' and/or give themselves... Job's words are the clue: "I have made a -

COVENANT- with my eyes..." A 'contract'. Something which involves "self-control". (1Cor7:5, Gal5:23, 1Tim2:15, etc) A contract is something wherein the party 'binds' themselves to whatever it is they are covenanting. If a distraction comes into view, or those idle thoughts play with the mind... bring to remembrance that 'contract', and remember the 'fine print' of the 'terms' of that contract.

And one final thought in this regard. Paul likens marriage to the Believer's relationship with Christ. (Eph5) And John equates "love" and "fidelity". (1Jn) If a Believer truly 'loves' Christ, they will "keep" His commandments. (Jn14:15) For this discussion, Keeping Christ's commandments, by definition, is the opposite of having roving eyes into the things of the world. One has "laid aside" all the sin of the world and is looking -only- to Jesus (Heb12:1-2); just as a person has "forsaken all others" to cleave -only- to one's spouse. That is related to the "love" one has for one's spouse. I probably shouldn't tell on myself, again: but, there was -one- 'true love' I ever had (in my whole life), during my college days. There were several different girls over the years that I was friends with; and there was even the one I married (my ex-unequal yoke, whom I truly loved.). But none of them all did I 'love' the way I did this one particular person. I was head-over-heels for her. If her heart had not been divided, and eventually she chose the other path, I would have asked her to marry me; and when she chose her other path, she broke my heart. But all that to say... While she and I were friends, and I thought a relationship was beginning, due to my love for her, I had ABSOLUTELY NO DESIRE to look at other girls. NONE! My heart was -solely- hers.

How does a person keep from sinning? Well, how strong is one's love for Christ? How does one keep one's eyes from roving? Again, how strong is one's love for one's spouse? And if the spouse is unsaved and/or of a "contentious" sort (Pr21:9), the strength of one's love is proven against the odds, isn't it. God's love for us sent His Son to die (Jn3:16), "while we were yet sinners" (Rom5:8)... and we "love Him because He first loved us" (1Jn4:19) Even if (speaking to men here) the wife is "unlovable" for whatever reasons: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church (when she was unlovable) and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." (Eph5:25-27) If your wife is an unequal yoke, how do you know but what your love and devotion to her will show her Christ's love and she will be "saved"? (1Cor7:16) If she has many hurts and barriers from her past that tend to repel you, or leave you with that 'empty' spot in your soul that you can't quite explain or fill, how do you know but what your love and care of her, in spite of her 'distance' from you, won't heal and salve those hurts, and she will 'learn' to love?

Whatever the case, men, you that are married: God has given you a 'headship' (1Cor11:3) that comes with a responsibility. And you don't have

an 'out'. It's like one of my uncles used to say to one of his sons, if I'm remembering the words correctly as told to me:

"There are some things that you -JUST-GOTTA-DO-"

Spirits? (A 'Little' Wine 1Tim5:23)

READER COMMENTS:

I've heard 'pastors' say that alcohol is called spirits because it is demonic. But I think perhaps they just want to have it seem that those 'belonging' to 'their' congregation are all righteous holy-rollers who abstain from 'demon-alcohol'. This reflects well upon themselves, perhaps they think.

VW ANSWER:

Alcohol, by itself, if I remember back to high school chemistry, is a carbon-hydroxide derivative. It is merely the result of chemical reaction of the materials that go into its makeup; the various carbon 'chains' that make up the different kinds of alcohols. Like Paul said about "meats"...meat is meat, whether it was offered to idols or not, it is still meat, created by God. (1Cor chs8 & 10) The "earth is the Lord's and it's fullness" (1Cor10:26)

And notice in the study I emphasized the word "little". Paul says, "A -little-wine". How many medicines also contain alcohol? For that matter, most mouth washes contain a certain percentage of alcohol. And I sure hope those pharisees use some before they meet with people. (smile)

However, there is also the aspect, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whoever goes astray by it is not wise." (Pr20:1) Now, is it the "wine" that is bad, or is it the "drunkard" who uses it? Often one sees the expression, "...glutton and a drunkard.." (De21:20) ...as the first comment (above) also spoke of "over eating". It's not just the drinking, but the complete package that creates a "drunkard". 'Why' is the person becoming drunk?

Do demons actually 'inhabit' wine? We know that when Jesus cast out the "legion", they received permission to enter the pigs. (Mk5:9+) I've always wondered what became of those demons after the pigs were drowned? The passage doesn't say.

However, one thing is sure. One who is "drunk" is not in control of his own mind. (And this applies to drug use, as well) And what did Jesus teach about an "empty house"? (Mt12:44) The spirit joins up with "seven other spirits" and they take up residence. In teaching against what people often call "tongues", Paul speaks of the faculties of one's "mind" in singing, praying, worship. (1Cor14:14-15) As Believers we are to be of "sound mind". (2Tim1:7, Tit1:8, 2:12, 1Pt4:7, etc) When one is drunk, they are -NOT- of sound mind. They are out-of-control. They are -lacking- "self-control". (Ac24:25, Gal5:23, 2Tim3:3, 2Pet1:6)

Some people when drunk, get "happy". Others get downright mean, violent and demonic. What happens, spirit-wise, when a true Christian gets drunk? I don't know. It's not something I've ever done, and don't ever intend on doing. Depending upon the 'heart' that leads a person to get

drunk, is it possible for a Believer to throw away their salvation by opening their mind to demons? God does not share space with demons, and a Believer is one who, by definition, is indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9) And Paul speaks, in a different context, about not fellowshiping with demons. A Believer cannot partake of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. (1Cor10:20-21) Thus, if a Believer becomes drunk...at what point has the person opened the door, letting the Holy Spirit 'out', making way for demons to come 'in'? I don't know of a specific Scripture that addresses this...but as I muse on the matter, it makes my skin crawl with shudders. It's a scary prospect! It is something the Believer in Jesus Christ should beware of, and not take lightly. Just as NO Believer should ever submit to hypnosis (because it looses the mind to the control of another), so, too, a Believer should never get drunk. It's simply TOO DANGEROUS. What are the consequences? Too many unknowns. One never knows where that "line" is. DONT TAKE THAT CHANCE!

But in terms of the other comments (not included here) about some TV personalities suggesting that Jesus "wouldn't have" made real wine (opposite of today's "What Would Jesus Do/Drive?" craze)... well, the self-righteous pharisees of Jesus' day, who boasted how they didn't break any of God's commandments, "...who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.." (Lk18:9), continually condemned Jesus because they surmised that "the Messiah" -wouldn't- "break the sabbath" like Jesus did -continually-. "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." (Jn9:16)

Things don't change, do they. Many of these same people say that the church has "replaced" Israel; in these things... Indeed they have!

Long Male Hair and Ministry? (1Tim3:1-7)

READER QUESTION:

please address the topic of men with long hair. i have shoulder length hair and have been a christian for almost 30 years. my pastor will not let me be placed in leadership unless i cut my hair. please advise. thanks

VW ANSWER:

Typically, such attitudes seem to come from two sources. Many of these types of pastors also tend to have a "military" background, where the close-cut haircut is the -only- 'decent' appearance to their minds. And they also glean from 1Cor11:14 speaking of "nature", long hair and "dishonor". Now, I will readily confess that I do not yet fully understand that chapter by Paul. There are several things he says in that passage that don't 'seem' to conform to things we might read elsewhere in Scripture.

The notable thing about Absalom was that his "long hair" is what finally caused him to get caught in the tree branches, and captured/killed, when he was fleeing from David's forces. (2Sam14:26 & ch18) And God's command regarding Samson was that he was not to cut his hair. (Jug13:5) Now, especially, since God 'commanded' that Samson's hair not be cut, it should be obvious that a man having long hair is not the problem. And Absalom was not condemned for his long hair.

If I were to suggest anything on this topic it would be God's exhortation "A woman shall not wear anything that is fitting to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garments, for all who do so are an abomination unto Jehovah your God." (De22:5) The matter of cross-gender confusion.

I remember back in the late 60s, early 70s, sometimes walking behind people, seeing somebody ahead of me with the most 'gorgeous' long flowing hair, thinking in my mind, 'what a beautiful -girl-!...only to pass them (as I was walking faster), and get around to their front to find a full-faced BEARD! The whole "unisex" -thing- that was being pushed back then. Men should be men, and women women...and there should be no questioning or mistaking 'what' a person is seeing.

I have a relative whom I have seen once in awhile, rarely. Every time I've seen him, I've noticed he has long hair, tied back in a pony tail...but whatever angle one would see him from, there is no mistaking that he is a 'man'. One of my customers runs a nutrition store (for you in the Spokane area: I was noticing yesterday that he is appearing in his own recent local TV ads), and is a body-builder (his arms likely larger/stronger than my legs!), and has long hair, tied back in a pony tail. Many of the macho body-builder and wrestler types have long hair. But there is never any mistaking them for 'women'...they are -obviously- 'men'.

Other than what Paul says in 1Cor ch11 (which I don't rightly fully understand), I don't see any Scriptural basis to condemn a man for having long hair. But Scripture is quite clear in many passages about keeping the genders distinct. A man being a man, and a woman being a woman. About men not being like women, such that two men are together, etc. But, just as men's and women's clothing are different, their hair is also going to be different.

And, since we're on this subject (I hope you don't mind, I'm going to use this for a Q/A item), there is the subject of women's hair, which I think we've addressed in the past. The same pastors that say men's haircuts should be, essentially, 'military' style, also say women's hair should be "long"...and they define "long" as being at least 'shoulder-length', if not longer.

There, too, I don't see anything in Scripture that exhorts the getting out of a tape measure to determine if it is long 'enough' or not. Again, a woman should appear like a woman. There are many women's hair styles that work better for some women that are only a few inches long...not even reaching the shoulder...-but- there is no mistaking that they are "women's" hair styles. And, if a person were to 'judge' a woman by her hair length, what of the poor woman who had cancer, and lost -all- her hair from the chemo-therapy? Is she suddenly less-pleasing to God?

However, it should be clear that those of the lesbian -alternative- "lifestyle", who crop their hair, and wear 'male' clothing, are an abomination to God, along with men who get themselves up in "drag".

Let men be men, and women be women. That's the way God created them, "male and female He created them". (Gen1:27)

Wine is sin? © 1999

QUESTION:

Do you have any detailed information pertaining to Jesus Turning Water into Wine in John 2, The Marriage feast at Cana. As you know many unsaved try to use this verse to justify their drinking.

ANSWER:

I looked briefly at the website, and realize we've never addressed this subject head-on. The Romans 14 'article' for next February (now at the website) touches on this a little, in terms of "offenses" and causing a weak brother's "stumbling".

The wording of Jn2:10 indicates that Jesus made -real- "wine". "Every man first sets on the good wine, and when they have drunk freely, then the worse. You have kept the good wine until now." When they have "drunk freely" their senses are dulled, because it's -real- wine; with alcoholic content. Thus, they don't notice the wine is of less quality. This "master of the feast" who was responsible for knowing what's going on, recognized Jesus' wine to be of 'high quality'. WINE. Not watered-down grape juice. Or, water with juice 'added'.

While O.T. 'Nazarites' were not to drink wine. (Nu6:20, Jud13:7, Am2:12) When their vow was over, they could again drink wine. Furthermore, the whole levitical system of sacrifices and offerings in the O.T. included wine.

In the N.T. Paul exhorts Timothy to drink wine for his digestive problems. (1Tm5:23)

What Scripture teaches against, is being "drunk". (1Sam1:13-15, Hab2:15, Lk12:45, Eph5:18, 1Th5:6-8) It is accurately said of liquor, when it is called "spirits". When a person is drunk, they are bereaved of their senses. They are no longer in control of their spirit. (1Cor14:32) And when they are thus "empty" of their -own- spirit, other spirits come in. (Mt12:43-45) That is why -drunkenness- is sin.

But to drink a little wine is not sin. Even Jesus drank. (Mt11:18-19)