

## Mid Week • 1 Timothy 3

### INTRODUCTION • ACTS 20

As we begin this chapter, let's recap it's historical setting.

Paul left his young assistant Timothy in the city of **Ephesus** to **oversee** the church there.

For some reason unknown to us, Paul had had to head west into Macedonia but saw problems in Ephesus that he didn't feel comfortable leaving alone.

So he told Tim to stay and work things out.

In chapter 1 we discover that part of the problem was false teachers who were misapplying the Law of Moses.

Paul told Tim his task was to preach and teach the gospel of Christ, refuting these false teachers and their error.

In chapter 2, the apostle told the young pastor that the men of the church needed to take leadership in the arena of prayer and labor in the task of praying for the salvation of the lost, specially those in positions of influence.

The last half of chapter 2 is devoted to defining the role of women in the congregation.

Now in chapter 3, Paul goes on to define the character of elders **and deacons**.

It seems that there were some serious problems among the elders in Ephesus and this chapter was meant as a prescription for correcting the abuses of leadership that were taking place.

We need to understand this chapter against the backdrop of Acts 20, in which Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders about this very thing.

Paul was on his way back to Jerusalem, where he knew he would be arrested.

He stopped at the port of Miletus and sent a messenger to Ephesus, not far away, and summoned the elders to meet him.

He had some important words to impart to them.

**<sup>17</sup>From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. <sup>18</sup>And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, <sup>19</sup>serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; <sup>20</sup>how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup>testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup>And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup>except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. <sup>24</sup>But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.**

**<sup>25</sup>"And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. <sup>27</sup>For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. <sup>28</sup>Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. <sup>29</sup>For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup>Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. <sup>31</sup>Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.**

Paul is being moved by the Holy Spirit at this point as he foretells the arrival of dangerous wolves who will come into the flock of God from without.

The task of the elders was to **protect** the **flock** from these spiritual carnivores.

But even more shocking was the prophecy that **false teachers** would rise from *their* **own ranks**.

In 1 Timothy we realize this is exactly what happened.

So now, Paul addresses Tim on how to set the elders straight.

As Tim has to appoint *new* men to fill the roles of those elders who have fallen, Paul gives him the criteria by which he's to select them.

### CHAPTER 3

<sup>1</sup>**This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.**

As I mentioned Sunday, the phrase that begins v. 1 is repeated in the pastoral epistles six times - 1:15; 2:3; 3:1 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8 –

Interestingly enough, the pastorals are the only place we find it!

We know these were the last letters Paul penned – and what we find in this phrase is that by that time, about 64 AD, a standard body of teaching had been formalized as the basics for Christian instruction.

People of the ancient world were much more careful about **memorization** than we are today.

A lack of printed material encourages that.

When people don't have bibles of their own, they tend to become much more concerned about committing scripture to memory.

And part of the task of pastors in the early church was to reduce their teaching down to short, memorable sentences the congregation could commit to memory.

Most people of the ancient world had committed their entire family history to memory and would faithfully transmit this to their children from generation to generation.

Schools taught by memorization because students didn't have text books.

Homes didn't have encyclopedias. Books and scrolls were rare!

In fact, the common person lived their entire life, NEVER EVEN TOUCHING A BOOK OR SCROLL!

So when Christian met, they were taught the basics of the faith in a manner that **committed** them to **memory**.

When Paul uses the phrase, "This is a faithful saying" he is referring to these accepted basic teachings. One of those that he puts his apostolic seal of approval on is this: "If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work."

Whether or not this is the exact form the teaching took isn't certain – but the point is that it's an honorable, commendable, noble thing for a man to aspire to being an elder.

As we saw on Sunday, it's not the **office** of elder that Paul is speaking of here – it's not the **position** for the **position's** sake – what's desired is the **work** of the elder.

Paul uses a word for "man" here that refers specifically to a male as opposed to a female.

In chapter 2 the apostle bars women from being elders or pastors.

By way of distinction, he goes on now to say that while women cannot be elders, men can, and it's a good thing for a man to *aspire* to eldership.

The word "**bishop**" translates the Greek word **episkopos** – which means "**overseer**."

In Titus 1: 5 & 7 we see that the elder and the bishop are the *same thing*.

"**Elder**" translates the Greek word **presbuteros** – which means "**old man**."

*Overseer* speaks of the **task**, while *elder* refers to the **character**.

The Overseer's task is to **administer** the needs of the **congregation**.

In order to do this well, he needs to have a proven **character**.

So Paul gives a list of character traits Timothy needs to look for in overseers to make sure they can do the job.

Before we get in to the list of traits Timothy is to look for in selecting elders, I think it important that we realize that if we think perfection in these traits is demanded, we miss the point.

Besides Jesus Christ, there isn't a man alive who perfectly meets the criteria given here.

Some people might stand out in one, two, or even three of these things, but not all 16 of them!

So then, how are we to understand this list as a set of criteria for selecting elders?

Well, let's look at the Apostle Paul's example.

As we read the book of Acts. We discover that when Paul would arrive in a new city, he would enter the synagogue, if there was one, and preach the gospel.

As converts were made, he would take them aside and begin to instruct them, discipling them in the ways

of the Faith.

Paul never knew how long he would be able to stay in a particular locale.

In Thessalonica he only stayed for about 3 weeks while in Ephesus he spent 3 years!

So the entire time Paul was working with a group, he was keeping an eye out for those men the Lord was raising up to take on the task of leadership for the new group.

When it came time to leave, if home-grown leaders were available, he would appoint them to carry on after his departure.

If there weren't any that had risen to take on the task in a responsible manner, Paul would leave one or two of his team behind to carry on the work till such leadership did surface.

In Acts 14:21-23 we read this . . .

**<sup>21</sup>And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup>strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." <sup>23</sup>So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

So the question is – how spiritually mature could some of these new elders have been in the cities Paul had only been able to spend a few weeks or months in?

Paul didn't look for **perfection** in the things he lists in vs. 2-7 here – he looked for those who stood **head and shoulders** above the rest, and who could be counted on to provide an **example** to others – even though they themselves had a long way to go.

Their spiritual maturity, as compared to Paul may be weak, but in comparison to the majority of people among whom they lived and worshiped, they went deeper in the things of God.

Paul's comments in v. 1 also show that the elder must have a mindset that wants to *keep pressing on to greater spiritual maturity* – which is pictured for us in the list of traits found in these next verses.

So no matter how mature the entire congregation becomes, the elders are always at least *one step ahead of them*.

So – let's consider Paul's picture of spiritual maturity

**<sup>2</sup>A bishop then must be blameless,**

The only way to understand these traits is by looking at what the Greek words themselves mean.

First of all, Paul says that the elder, the overseer, *must be* blameless.

"**Must**" is a Greek word signifying **necessity** – in other words, here is one trait that is a prerequisite, a requirement.

*Blameless* is literally, "not able to be **held**."

It's a semi-legal term referring to a lack of **evidence** that would cause someone to be held under **arrest**.

Some translations render this as "above reproach."

The elder needs to be free of sinful conduct that would result in his character being called into question.

Certainly he could be *accused* of something, leaders often are, but there must not be any evidence in support of the accusation.

If charges against him come, they need to be quickly dismissed because there is simply nothing to substantiate them!

Make no mistake, Satan concentrates his attacks on leadership.

Because leaders are better known because of their position, when they are brought into reproach, it not only harms the reputation of the leader but it brings dishonor to the Church and the cause of Christ.

Now, this brings up an important question – what about leaders who fall?

It happens doesn't it?

Good, godly men and women have stumbled and fallen to reproach; they have been the brunt of blame.

Yet their gifts and past calling as leaders bore tremendous fruit.

What about them? Can they be restored?

One word here is critical in answering that – it's the word "be." "A bishop then must be blameless."

The verb is in the tense that speaks of a *present state*.

The elder isn't someone whose never sinned or ever in his past had something that was cause for reproach.

It means that at present, he is free of behavior that is improper. And enough time has passed that there's reasonable evidence to conclude he is living now in a manner that is above reproach.

So, can an elder who's fallen be restored? Yes! Given the evidence of sincere repentance and enough time to prove his lifestyle is free of reproachable behavior, he can be restored to the role of elder.

Actually, the restoration of a fallen elder can be a powerful testimony to the grace, mercy, and forgiveness of God.

Instead of making excuses, rationalizing sin, and blame-shifting, if the elder who's fallen *publicly* admits his error, repents, and then places himself under the discipline of other elders - he can turn what the devil meant for harm into a wonderful testimony and example of restoration.

The extent of our sin determines the extent of our repentance, and since an elder is a leader, and so visible to the entire congregation – his repentance must be public, prompt, and sincere.

#### **the husband of one wife,**

Literally this is “A **one woman** man.”

I like that because it captures the real heart of what is being described here as a character trait – loyalty!

I've been surprised to find that the commentaries generally miss this nuance to what Paul says here.

We need to understand this against it's cultural backdrop.

Many men in the Roman and Greek world not only had a wife but a mistress as well.

Besides that, they would frequent the ritual prostitute-priestesses found in most cities of the Roman world.

It was generally thought that a man married a woman of noble birth to raise legitimate heirs by, but when it came to pleasure, he maintained a mistress, who might, as a matter of fact, have several lovers herself.

Apart from the Jews, marital fidelity was a novelty.

Most people thought it an impracticality – much like today!

But Paul nukes this idea for believers and says that the elder, the spiritual mature person is a one-woman man.

He is **loyal** to his wife – he understands the **sacredness** of the marriage **covenant** and so he gives himself to his wife in a solemn commitment that zealously excludes any other person or thing that might vie with his affection for her.

Paul is not saying that a man *must be married*.

This is not a requirement for **marital status**; it's an issue of **moral character**.

He must be **loyal**!

Friends, there are two covenants – two relationships that are utterly exclusive – they tolerate no competition.

These two covenants are unlike any other and stand head and shoulders above all others in terms of their sacredness:

First is our relationship with God, and second is marriage.

God even intends us to understand our covenant with Him as like a marriage.

That's why he calls idolatry, the worship of other gods “adultery.”

Marriage between a husband and a wife is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The elder is called to be an example of fidelity to the Lord – he takes seriously his covenant with Christ, and that loyalty is demonstrated first and foremost in his loyalty and commitment to his wife.

There's a direct correlation between how a man treats his wife and how he treats God.

If a guy allows himself to entertain the thought of being with someone other than his wife, it's indicative of a heart that wavers in it's commitment to Jesus.

I think it's safe to say that every man is *tempted* to lust after a woman who has an attractive figure or face.

But there's a vast difference between the initial temptation and that fleshly or demonic suggestion to linger on the temptation – the first look isn't sin, but the second probably is!

Martin Luther put it well, “You can't keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making their nest in your hair.”

Good godly men know the temptation to lust after a woman.

But good, godly men refuse to give in to the temptation – they resist and overcome.

The guy who has a problem with women is disqualified from being an elder!

### **temperate,**

The word literally means “wineless” but by Paul’s time it was understood not in the literal sense but metaphorically.

That he means it that is way is clear from v. 3 where he deals specifically with wine.

Metaphorically, *temperate* meant **alert** and **watchful**; vigilant and clear-headed.

It spoke of being free of the **passions** that would pull someone away from their duties.

The temperate person exercises care that they don’t get so caught up in any one thing that it results in their losing sight of what’s important.

Every so often you hear about someone who gets so excited about some new craze, some new hobby or sport that they end up spending all their time and money doing it.

They neglect their other responsibilities, like work and family life.

We think of people like gambling addicts, or alcoholics, drug addicts.

But sometimes it can be something that appears harmless on the surface, like a sport; skateboarding, skiing, bowling, softball.

Some people are addicted to soap operas or game shows.

Anything that exerts an influence on the mind that demands sole attention to the exclusion of God and the priorities He places on us, is intemperate.

The next trait is related to this . . .

### **sober-minded,**

Some translations render this as *prudent*, which is probably better than sober-minded.

The point is that he must have a **serious** and **mature** attitude and be **responsible** in his work.

He has a good sense of priorities and understands that life is not just about pleasure and fun.

He understands that life is to be lived for the glory of God, not his own selfish ambitions.

So he takes seriously his work, his family life, and his task as an elder.

Remember that all Paul writes here were things Tim was to look for in men he was considering for eldership.

Tim didn’t appoint men to be elders and *then* they exercised these traits.

These traits *commended* men to eldership. They needed to be in evidence before being selected to be elders.

This quality of being prudent is one that needs special attention today because it speaks to the weakening sense of *commitment* that is taking place in our culture and the church.

The fact of the matter is, most of the work of the local church is done by the congregation in a volunteer capacity.

Whether it’s teaching Sunday school or working in the library, ushering, greeting, leading worship, outreach, whatever, most of the work is done by volunteers.

While there’s a small group of people in most churches who understand the need to be *prudent* in their work and commitment, it seems most refrain from any commitment other than attendance and if they do sign up for something, have no qualms about backing out or failing to show up.

Now, let me say this – I find that while we do have a bit of a problem with this here at Calvary, generally we are super blessed to have so many people, I think way higher than the average, who take the call to minister seriously and pour themselves in to their work!

Those Sunday School teachers who work with our kids on Wednesday and Sunday are doing a fantastic job or preparation!

So many are so diligent to prepare and serve.

**Prudence** – being serious about what’s important and being **responsible** with what’s been **committed** to is an important part of spiritual maturity!

### **of good behavior,**

Because of time, I'll be briefer with the rest of these.

This word is *kosmios*, meaning “**orderly**.”

It's the same word that's translated as **modest** in 2:9 and that's the way we ought to understand it here.

The elder is careful about himself so that whether it be his manner or his dress he doesn't draw attention to himself.

He has no lust for fame or power – he maintains the mindset of a **servant**.

### **hospitable,**

One of the most valuable and expected virtues of the ancient Middle East was hospitality.

What few inns that existed tended to be dangerous haunts of muggers and thieves.

So it was left to people to open their homes and offer shelter and food to strangers.

This word *hospitality* literally means “the love of **strangers**.”

It spoke of the care of the needy that presented themselves to you as you went about your daily life.

If you were on your way home late one afternoon and you saw some travelers on the road, hospitality demands that you approach them and offer them lodging.

If you were doing business in the marketplace and discovered through conversation that someone was homeless due to circumstances beyond their control, hospitality meant that you offered assistance.

Hospitality among Christians is a frequently mentioned virtue that marks genuine spiritual maturity. [Romans 12:13 Hebrews 13:2 1 Peter 4:9]

In a practical sense today, hospitality means to exercise practical care for the needy.

### **able to teach;**

Some translations give the sense by the words, “apt to teach.”

The elder is one with an **aptitude** toward teaching.

He possesses the ability to instruct others; they actually learn and gain understanding of the Word of God as he shares.

Whereas all of the traits mentioned so far are moral qualities, this speaks of a spiritual gift given by God and honed by practice and purpose.

Fundamental to the elder's task of oversight is instruction in the Scriptures.

It's primarily as he provides direction for the Church **that shares the counsel of God**.

So he must have the ability to communicate the truths of scripture in an understandable manner.

### **<sup>3</sup>not given to wine,**

“**Given**” is the key to understanding what Paul is saying here.

It speaks of one who is **addicted** to wine – a drunk, an alcoholic.

Literally, it means one who “lingers at wine.”

Paul never would have said that the elder cannot drink *any* wine for the simple reason that wine was the form most people took liquid.

It was weak wine, but wine nonetheless – they did this because the water was unsafe to drink.

Wine was safer due to the purifying effect of the alcohol in it.

In 5:23 Paul tells Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach problems, so clearly he's not prohibiting the drinking of wine.

But Paul warns them off the mindset that thinks it's okay to tilt back more than the proper number of glasses of wine just so that they can cop a buzz!

To seek drunkenness is sin and would bring the elder into a state where he would not longer be temperate, sober-minded, and of good behavior.

### **not violent,**

This one's easy enough to understand – he's not a **giver** of **blows**.

He doesn't resort to violence when he's frustrated, tired, or doesn't get his way!

While this applies specifically to physical violence it also fades into the realm of the verbal as well.

The man whose gained mastery of his **fists** may still fail in the mastery of his **mouth**!

Words can be used to inflict as much if not more damage, than a punch.

**not greedy for money,**

Simply, the elder must not be in the ministry for the **money** he can get out of it.

That would mean he was a mercenary, a stinking hireling – and at the first sign of trouble, when he calculates that his income does not match the bother of ministry, he's gone.

**but gentle,**

The elder is one who refuses to **force** himself and his way. He's not **aggressive**!

He's careful to be sensitive to those around him and chooses his path with care.

**not quarrelsome,**

Because he's a child of God, the elder tends to be a **peacemaker** rather than a **troublemaker**.

He refuses to engage in quarrels for argument's sake.

He's a contender for truth, but he is not going to get caught up in the word games so many of the immature like to engage in so that they can manipulate other and show off their superior wisdom.

Spiritual maturity is free of the need to always **prove itself right** and **win** every **argument**.

**not covetous;**

Greed, while not evident when you first meet a person is eventually manifest in the choices he makes and how he's willing to sacrifice *relationships* in the pursuit of *wealth*.

Money becomes more important to him than people.

While we're called to be good stewards and must exercise wisdom in our income, saving, and spending, we must realize that God always values **people** above **things**.

Now Paul uses the home as the practical proving ground for the leadership qualities of the potential elder . . .

**<sup>4</sup>one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence**

**<sup>5</sup>(for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);**

Is he a good steward with his marriage children, and household?

Do his children demonstrate obedience to him; do they follow his lead?

**<sup>6</sup>not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.**

A man, thrust too soon into the office of elder can easily fall prey to pride, and pride was Lucifer's downfall.

The novice is one who hasn't been tested – he's been a believer for too short a time to see if these traits are genuine or only feigned.

It's possible that Paul writes this from personal experience.

Some of those he had ordained to eldership among the churches had fallen away, in Ephesus for sure, and maybe in other places as well.

So he cautions Tim to let new believers be tested – let time pass.

Don't lay hands on anyone too **hastily**.

**<sup>7</sup>Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.**

The final quality elders need is a good reputation outside the church.

It's amazing how often people live double lives.

When they go to church they look like Ben Born Again or Sally Saved.

But when they're away from church, in their own home or at work, they're more like Robert Reprobate or Deanna Debauchery.

Spiritual maturity isn't **two faced**; it means to have **integrity**, so that what you are in the **dark** is what you are when the **light's** on.

Paul ends the list by reminding Timothy that the devil is just looking for opportunities to attack leaders of the church – so pick men that when the attack inevitably comes, will provide no evidence to support the charge.

Now Paul gives a list of qualities to look for in selecting *deacons*.

The word *deacon* means *servant*.

While elders were entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the flock, deacons were appointed to minister to the daily and practical needs of the congregation.

We see the first implementation of deacons in Acts 6.

When a controversy arose in the early church over the distribution of food to the poor of the fellowship, the apostles found themselves caught up in waiting on tables.

This was distracting them from the more urgent work of teaching and prayer.

They realized there was a need to delegate the task of food distribution to people who were better suited to that task than they – so they selected 7 men and called them *deacons*.

Paul well knew that the elders could get bogged down and distracted from their ministry of oversight and teaching if they had to take care of the practical and physical needs of the flock.

So he told Timothy what things to look for when selecting deacons.

**<sup>8</sup>Likewise deacons *must be reverent*,**

*Semnos* is the Greek word – it means “stately.”

Deacons need to be steadfast and settled, not flighty and fickle, jumping from one thing to another, and pursuing whatever strikes their fancy for the moment.

**not double-tongued,**

The word is *dilogos* – “two-words.” It means that the deacon doesn’t say one thing to one person and something else to another.

We all want others to like us, but we mustn’t yield to the temptation to tell people what they want to hear. Then Paul mentions two things we’ve already examined . . .

**not given to much wine, not greedy for money,**

**<sup>9</sup>holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.**

The “mystery of the faith” Paul speaks of here is the whole Gospel package.

The deacon must hold this precious message in such esteem that his lifestyle reflects it’s power and influence in his life – he must not profess to be a believer but deny the Lord in his conduct.

**<sup>10</sup>But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.**

How can you tell a person is a deacon? He deaks!

The Apostle tells Timothy that an investigation needs to take place in which a man’s reputation is checked.

If he meets the criteria given here, and he demonstrates a servant’s heart, then he ought to be recognized as a deacon.

**<sup>11</sup>Likewise, *their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.***

A wife’s behavior and demeanor reflects on the quality of her relationship with her husband and his leadership in the home.

A shrewish, irreverent, busy-body more than likely isn’t married to the reverent, temperate, man of integrity described in the rest of these verses.

Before a person can be effective in ministry in the church he or she needs to be effective in their ministry at home.

**<sup>12</sup>Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.**

This repeats what Paul said about elders.

I must tell you that there are those commentators who see v. 11 as referring, not to the wives of deacons, but to *deaconesses*.

Note that the word “their” is in italics, which means the possessive pronoun is not in the original text.

The word “wives” can mean simply “women” and the conjunction that starts the verse seems to some to imply that Paul is now referring to a new group – deaconesses.

In Romans 16:1 we do read of Phoebe, a deaconess in the church of Cenchrea.

And in 112 AD, Pliny, a Roman governor, sent a letter to Emperor Trajan, giving an update on activity in his province.

How to deal with the growing movement called Christianity occupies a big part of this famous letter and in it he mentions a couple of women deaconesses who had become well known.

Regardless of whether or not there is an actual biblical reference to women deacons, since deacons are called to *serve and minister* to practical needs rather than exercise oversight in the congregation, there's nothing that ought to preclude them serving as deaconesses.

Their role isn't one of leadership so much as it is as assistant to the leaders.

Paul then says . . .

**<sup>13</sup>For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

Two rewards are promised to deacons who are faithful in their calling to serve; one before man, the other before God.

1) They get a good standing before man – meaning they carve out for themselves a place of respect and influence.

It's a fascinating thing to realize that the people who end up going down in history as truly great people, are those who have sought to serve rather than those who have sought to exercise power over others.

The power hungry end up becoming, not great, but *infamous*.

The great, the ones we laud and heap praise on are those who give themselves to the betterment of others.

They don't seek after fame or recognition –they're too busy serving to promote themselves.

True servants never advertise their service.

And yet it's these people who inspire a sense of awe in us.

We see in them a depth and reality of human experience that stirs our souls.

If you grab a secular history book and flip through it's pages, you'll find pictures of and articles on world rulers, emperors, kings, presidents, tyrants and dictators.

But all these will burn to ashes.

A totally different record is being kept in heaven.

God is not impressed with an Alexander the Great, a Rameses, or a Napoleon

His history book has pictures and articles on people like Richard & Myrienne Reese, Jon & Diane Good, Dee Darrow, Bob & Kay Rolfes, Norm & JayBea Summerfield, DJ Roundy, Marsha O'Hearn.

I'll tell you someone whose getting a whole chapter – Charley and Caryn Trigg!

Put President Clinton and Charley Trigg in front of us and tell me, who would you rather be more like?

The answer to that proves what Paul writes here doesn't it?

2) The second reward those who serve well get is boldness in the Faith.

The greater the spiritual depth, the more consistent the lifestyle in the things that honor God, the greater confidence there is in one's relationship with the Lord.

**<sup>14</sup>These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;**

**<sup>15</sup>but if I am delayed, 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 ground of the truth.**

Paul was still training Timothy in his role as pastor of the church.

But he was concerned that his return to Ephesus would be delayed, so he wrote these important instructions so that Tim wouldn't be without his assistance, at least in word.

Note carefully how Paul describes the church – it is the house of God, the pillar and ground of truth.

**That needs to be the text of a sermon – so I will leave it till I have an opportunity to treat it more fully.**

**<sup>16</sup>And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:**

**God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.**

It's clear from the way this is written that this was a hymn of the early church.

It's uniformity, rhythm, and structure all mark it as a song.

As I mentioned at the outset of the study, early Christians committed the basic teachings of the faith to memory.

One of the most effective means for doing this is to use music and put words to song.

We all know the power of memorization through music as we are able to sing praise songs without looking at the word after singing them only a couple times.

Take just the lyrics and try to memorize the words and forget it but put them to music and it's easy.

What we find here was a hymn – one which communicated the basics of the faith.

Like the song we sing – Lord We lift Your Name On High.

You came from heaven to earth – to show the way.

From the earth to the cross- my debt to pay.

From the cross to the grave, From the grave to the sky, Lord I lift Your name on high.

But this verse seems a bit out of place.

Why put this doctrinal statement *here*?

Well, consider the context and it all falls into place.

Paul has just told Timothy the reason he was writing was to provide guidance for how he is to conduct himself as pastor in the Church.

Then he says, without any dispute, above anyone's gainsaying – here's what it's all about; here's the essence of your ministry –

God became man – Lived a perfect life – Was witnessed by angels – Preached to the world – Believed in by the elect – Ascended into heaven.

In Luke 24:46-47, this is what Jesus told the disciples they were to go forth and preach:

**<sup>46</sup>Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**

Paul had faithfully preached that message everywhere he went, and now he is telling Timothy he must do the same.

Paul knew the importance of going back to the *fundamentals* – especially when the church started to drift as Ephesus was.

Vince Lombardi, the Hall of Fame coach of the Green Bay Packers, was notorious for his emphasis on the fundamentals of the game.

His teams won championships because they could block, tackle, and execute basic plays better than anyone else.

After one game, frustrated by the Packer's poor performance on the field, Lombardi, held up a pigskin and said, "Gentlemen, this is a football!"

Like the Packers and like the Ephesians we need to regularly be reminded of the foundational truths of our faith.

The Church today offers a bewildering variety of highly specialized ministries, everything from bible study recovery groups for the recently divorced to bowling leagues for blind bowlers.

On top of that is the incredible depth of the scriptures themselves.

There are endless topics and studies we could dig in to.

But all too often we lose sight of the forest because of all the trees.

We lose our grip on the foundational truths, the fundamentals that tie all the minutiae together.

Ephesus had begun to slip away from the core of the Faith, the basic truths that gave Christianity its edge, it's

advantage.

So Paul tells Timothy to major on the basics – to keep these ever before the people he was leading.

## **CONCLUSION**

This season is an annual reminder of one of the most important and foundational truths of the Christian Faith – Because of His great love, God sent His Son, Emmanuel, God with Us!

Thanks to John MacArthur for his insights with the foregoing.

Page - PAGE 13

“Feed My Sheep”

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