



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Bible Study

SEPTEMBER

2011

MORNING & EVENING SERMONS

1 Timothy

Timothy was one of Paul's faithful associates. When problems arose in a church, Paul knew he could depend on Timothy to handle the situation. In the letter 1 Timothy, the first of the so called Pastoral Epistles, Paul encourages his younger colleague in his role as pastor. He advises Timothy on worship, leadership, integrity and gender issues. With confidence the aging apostle passes the torch of faith and exhorts Timothy to be one of Christ's representatives on earth.

Let us explore together some of the key passages of 1 Timothy so as to mine not only historical insights into the early church, but also guidance and encouragement for pastors and lay leaders today. In the process, we as a congregation may not just understand our leaders' roles and responsibilities but also learn how we may support and encourage them to fulfill their calling as our leaders in the body of Christ.

4 SEP 2011	DEALING WITH FALSE TEACHERS AND THE LAW 1 TIMOTHY 1:3-20
11 SEP 2011	CONCERNS IN PUBLIC WORSHIP 1 TIMOTHY 2:1-7
18 SEP 2011	GENDER ROLES 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15
25 SEP 2011	LEADERS & THEIR ROLES 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-13

GENERAL SURVEY

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

INTRODUCTION

Paul the Apostle urges Timothy to deal decisively with certain people over false teaching. Earlier in Acts 20:17, when Paul called the elders together and warned them about 'savage wolves' that would devastate the church, that warning had come true. The teachers of the law had just turned out to be false teachers in disguise. In order to counter them, Paul restated the importance of knowing the true Gospel and who is the one true Saviour. Paul gives examples of 'wrecks' in the faith which must serve as warnings to us. Leaders are guardians of the truth and the flock under them should be warned by them. How should our leaders be encouraged to nourish and grow in the truth? And how should they apply the right use of that knowledge? And how should each leader be fighting the good fight?

1 Tim 1:3-11: Be on guard against falsehood and false teaching

- 1a. What were the reasons why Paul urged Timothy to stay and remain in Ephesus instead of leaving and taking up a new assignment? (See vv. 4-11)

- 1b. If Timothy had left the church in Ephesus, what could some possible consequences be? (John 10:12-13)

- 1c. What lesson/principle could you draw from this advice from Paul to Timothy? Have you ever been tempted to give up your service to God, or to move on from the specific areas of service you are currently involved in?

2. In Acts 20:28-30, Paul warned the Ephesian elders to watch over the flock and safeguard them from false teaching. In this passage, these false teachings were already happening. 'Paul... mentions the possibility of people from within the church adopting perverse teachings and seducing the congregation' (Acts, I.Howard Marshall, 1980)
 - 2a. What could be some possible false teachings among us today? (1 John 2:15-16; Rom 13:13)

 - 2b. How can one be both mindful and be on guard against such wrongful teachings? (v5; 1 John 2:22; 4:1-12)

3. *1 Tim 1:12-17: The abounding grace of God*

Paul considered himself 'the worst of sinners', and yet he received God's grace of salvation and Christ's commission to preach the Gospel. How do you see yourself and God's grace in your life? How can we have the courage to receive His grace and move on in obedience to Him despite our sinfulness? How would you serve God in response to His grace and mercy on you?

Note:

“Paul’s understanding of how Christ had dealt with him is the secret behind his determination to serve others... In other words, no matter how badly others may have treated Paul, they could never have treated him with the same degree of spite and hatred with which he had treated Christ. Once we realise that Jesus had served us even to the depths of our meagreness, our selfishness, and our sin, nothing we encounter from others will be able to exhaust our determination to serve others for His sake.” – Oswald Chambers

4. Paul sees God as ‘the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.’ (v17). Our daily life reflects our understanding of God, and how we desire to worship and serve Him. Do you share the same view as Paul about God’s attributes? What attributes of God do you see? How does your ministry and life reflect this claim?

1 Tim 1:18-20: Fight a Good Fight

5a. What did Paul specifically instruct Timothy to follow?

- 5b. What is Paul’s perspective of a good fight (1 Tim 6:12; 2 Tim 4:6-8)? Would you fight a good fight for the Lord? How can we learn from Paul?

DISCIPLESHIP AND FAMILY POINTERS

Read and study the hymn, *Immortal, Invisible* by Walter Chalmers Smith (Hymn No. 25, *The Hymnal*).

- List down the attributes of God mentioned in this hymn.
- Which of these attributes do you find meaningful in your own experience of God?
- Do any of these attributes seem new to you?
- How does knowing God’s attributes make a difference in our life?
- Why not commit this hymn to memory, and worship God with this hymn?

*Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.*

*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
Nor wanting, nor wasting, Thou rulest in might;
Thy justice like mountains high soaring above,
Thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.*

*To all life Thou givest, to both great and small;
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish, but nought changeth Thee.*

*Great Father of Glory, pure Father of Light
Thine angels adore Thee, all veiling their sight;
All laud we would render, O help us to see:
'Tis only the splendor of light hideth Thee.*

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INTRODUCTION

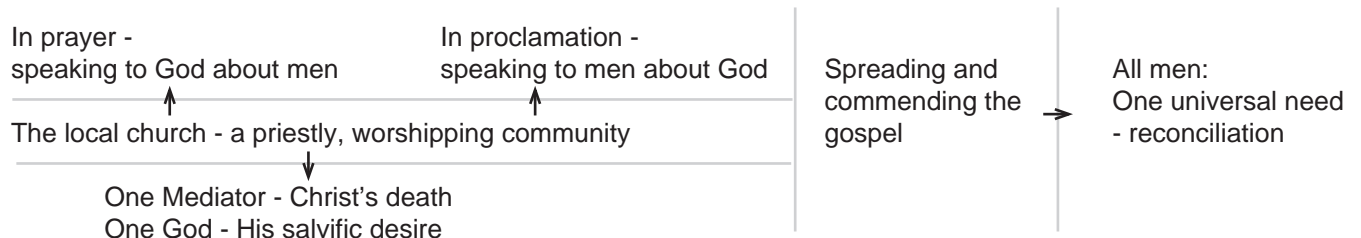
We are frequently challenged to understand the essence of worship. It is not just to know the why's and how's in worship but also the what's. When we gather to worship, what constitutes the various elements of it? Do we teach enough so that when we worship God publicly, we do so with understanding and purpose? Paul tasks Timothy on this here. He talks about the different kinds of prayer to be made at worship and who we should pray for and why. These prayers are fundamentally about the God we worship and who He is concerned for. Our primary focus in worship should therefore be God's focus. This shapes our attitude, our understanding, our every activity and our approach in worship. The issue of prayer in worship is not a shift to an unrelated topic, but flows from Paul's charge to Timothy in chapter 1 to counter false teaching and uphold the true gospel.

1. The scope of the church's prayers: All people (vv1-2).
Paul's first important (first of all) item concerns prayer. He piles up several terms (petitions,...thanksgiving) to stress its importance in the church's worship. The main focus, however, is that the church's prayers should be made for everyone (its repeated emphasis in vv4,6). The example of praying for secular authorities (v2a) is quite remarkable given Roman Emperors such as Nero, who was infamous for cruelty to and persecution of Christians.
 - 1a. What does Paul mean by praying for everyone? Does he mean absolutely every single person?
 - 1b. What prevents you from casting your prayer nets as wide as you can? Are these barriers personal, cultural, racial, economic, national etc.? What can you do to include in your prayer life a conscious desire and habit to remember the salvation of our society and the world?
 - 1c. What does v2b say about (i) the normal environment and (ii) Christian behaviour which form the purposes of praying for authorities (cf. Rom 13:1)? What implications do they have for the gospel?
 - 1d. Praying for those who are good to us is not difficult. But how should we respond to those who have used us, rule over us unjustly, ill-treat us? What is it that the Lord teaches and models for us that we should factor into our response (Mt 5:44; 23:34)?
2. The basis of the church's prayers: God's desire and Christ's death for all people (vv3-6).
The universal focus of our prayer delights God, because it is quite simply His own focus as well. God's desire for man's salvation was testified in human history by the sending of his Son to pay the ransom price. Also, note the contrast: our prayers for (and outreach to) all humanity are fundamentally rooted in the one God and the one mediator.
 - 2a. Why should (i) having one God, lead to praying for everyone's salvation? (Isa 45:20-23; Rom 3:29); (ii) having one mediator lead to praying for everyone's salvation? (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). In contrast, what attitude does our non-Christian society exhibit towards religions in general?

- 2b. How would you answer the following questions arising from these verses: (i) Does God's desire for all to be saved mean the same as saying that all will be saved? (ii) Can prayer be acceptable to God without knowing the truth of the gospel?
- 2c. Our prayers for others typically concern issues of healing, career, relationships, peace, stability, crisis recovery. Why not commit to use them as starting points for praying that God will use their prosperity as well as their adversity for their salvation?
3. The purpose of the church's prayer: gospel proclamation to all people (v.7).
- 3a. In our preaching / teaching (through whatever appropriate channels), what do we really proclaim each time? In our outreach, what do we really proclaim each time?
- 3b. How do you as an individual contribute to extend 'the testimony given in its proper time' (i.e. Christ's death being itself a testimony of God's grace and desire for all people to be saved)?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

1. The church prays so that the gospel may be proclaimed to save others. It prays for a conducive environment and adopts a godly lifestyle so that the gospel can spread and be commended to everyone winsomely. In so doing it continues the apostolic mission to bring and teach the gospel to the Gentile nations. All this is in line with God's desire and Christ's death as a substitute-ransom. It is driven by the conviction that there is only one God with whom all of us must reckon, and only one way by which we can be reconciled with Him. Let us be driven by that same conviction in keeping with what we have learnt about God.



2. Prayer and evangelism begin in the spirit of corporate worship. In worship the church acclaims the uniqueness and glory of God and Christ, and shares in Christ's priestly, mediatorial role in interceding for the nations. Our prayers are like offerings of incense to God (Rev 5:8; 8:3-4). New converts are offerings sanctified and acceptable to God (Rom 15:16). While every Sunday provides us with a few minutes to join in the pastoral prayer for the nations, will you join with others regularly to make the church a 'house of prayer' (Isa 56:7; Mk 11:17)?
3. The Straits Times recently ran an article titled 'Budding Faiths' (9th July 2011), with the caption *New and old spiritual movements have set up shop here in recent years in a bustling marketplace for the soul*. Is Christ reduced to just one of many options for attaining salvation? Is truth (v.4) just a relative matter of 'what's true for you but not for me' and 'we are both right'? For Christians who believe 'in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord', there can be no other solution to sinful man's predicament save what God has already provided in Christ Jesus. It is this truth we must contend for unwaveringly in a pluralistic society, no matter what inter-faith dialogues we may engage in, or what definition of 'religious tolerance' we are told to embrace. It is this truth that calls for fervent, committed prayer in the battlefield (hardly a marketplace!) for the soul.

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

How about using the Daily Prayer Guide and commit as an individual, family or group to pray regularly for our nation (Wednesday) and the world (Thursday)? Using the church bulletin's prayer pointers is another way. Prayer is one aspect of the overall kingdom strategy of bringing the gospel to all people and nations. It may be useful to remember the Three 'I's':

- I-Information (what we hear in the news or what others share)
- I-Intercession, praise and thanksgiving
- I-Involvement (what we can do to be God's instrument for answering our prayers)

GENERAL SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Still continuing on public worship, Paul shifts his attention to the roles played by leaders in worship. He turns now to the appropriate behaviour of men and women whenever the church gathers for worship. His concern is directed at attitudes to prayer; outward adornment of women; and then to the position of female leaders in comparison with male leaders in worship. The key issue for Paul is clear: it is about attitude and being in the context of Scripture rather than about cultural and traditional understandings. Still, how should we as a church resolve them and practice sound biblical comprehension of Scriptural demands within the framework of culture and tradition?

Questions concerning the role of women in church can be contentious. This study, therefore, attempts to outline the differing views which alternative readings lead to, but the scope of the study can only hint at the issues which various commentators consider pertinent. If you would like to explore 1 Timothy in more detail a good, general commentary is the place to start. The NIV Application Commentary on 1&2 Timothy / Titus by Walter Liefert is clearly written and it's in our Church Library. Liefert sets out his understanding clearly but he is also very careful to explain alternative interpretations.

1. *The Purpose of the letter*

The background to this letter is important to lead us to a proper understanding of its message. Reading letters like this is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. What does 1 Timothy tell us about the circumstances in which it was written?

To whom did Paul write this letter (1:1-2) and where was the recipient (1:3)?

Read what Paul explains as his reasons for writing in 1:3-7. What can we deduce from these verses about the situation? There are further clues elsewhere in the letter: see 4:3, also 6:3-10. What is the most important thing for Paul (1:11)?

2. *The men (v8)*

How are the men to pray?

Why do you think Paul feels it necessary to mention that 'anger or disputing' are wrong while praying? Could this provide some clues about the problems at Ephesus?

3. *The women (vv9-10)*

In the same way as Paul gives instructions about the men's behaviour he proceeds to tell Timothy how women should be dressed and then contrasts this with a metaphorical type of clothing:-
Are these restrictions intended to prevent an ostentatious display of wealth or a style of dress which is sexually suggestive? What do you think had been happening at Ephesus?

Why does Paul need to make these comments? (Many commentators have observed that these constraints were not specifically Christian, but were in line with the standard moral expectations of Greek culture.)

4. Paul forbids women from speaking (vv11-12)

What exactly does Paul say? How does this compare with 1 Cor 14:34-35?

The proper behaviour of women in the church at Ephesus is clear. 1 Timothy 2 is supported by 1 Corinthians 14. These restrictions were in line with the standards of both Greek and Jewish society at that time. So why did Paul need to say these things? Did this conflict with the views some Christian groups had of their newly found freedom in Christ (see Gal 3:27-28)?

So why would Paul be keen to enforce traditional, non-Christian society norms on the church in Ephesus? Note that, elsewhere, Pauline letters affirm traditional norms relating to the household hierarchy, including that of slavery (e.g. Eph 6:5-8).

5. *Adam and Eve (vv13-14)*
Why does Paul say that women should be quiet? What aspects of the story of Adam, Eve and the serpent does Paul use here? Read Rom 5:12-14: who is blamed there for the trespass which led to sin entering the world? Why is there no mention of Eve in the Romans passage? So who IS to blame for the trespass? Discuss.

6. *Saved through childbearing (v15)*
Discuss what 'saved through childbearing' might mean. How does this compare with Paul's more generally understood view of salvation (see Rom 10:9-11)? A clue to the significance of this passage could be to compare it with the false teaching that is mentioned in 1 Tim 4:3.

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

There are other restrictions on women's behaviour elsewhere in the Pauline letters. Read 1 Cor 11:2-16. To what extent do you think restrictions regarding head covering are required today? Paul presents a detailed argument which is much more forcefully and extensively presented than that in 1 Tim. Yet today very few churches require this. Can we be honest to Scripture if we adopt a similar approach to the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2?

For Reflection: 'We should seek ways in which women can communicate the kind of honourable public attitude displayed in 1 Cor 11 (and 1 Tim) through means that are meaningful and do not alienate the very people we wish to reach.'
Walter L. Liefeld.

For nearly 1900 years the interpretation of this passage caused little concern to the majority of churches and individual believers. The wide-ranging restrictions placed on women by society in general mirrored those outlined in this passage and elsewhere in Scripture. However during the 20th century women have attained everything from voting rights to casting off bound feet and have risen to the top in business and politics (e.g. Margaret Thatcher, Angela Merkel, Hilary Clinton). Many churches, but not all, have moved in a similar direction: The Church of Scotland and Britain's United Reformed Church have no restrictions on the roles women may assume and in both women have occupied the most senior position. The Church of England still has restrictions : women may not become bishops and, at the present time, this is a hugely divisive question within that church. ORPC imposes no restrictions on women as elders, deacons or ministers

'Two major approaches can be identified. One approach views the text as a major piece in a continuum of biblical teaching that women, while equal to men in worth, are intended from the beginning to be subordinate to them. The other is that any subordination of women is contrary to God's ideal, was caused by the fall of Adam and Eve, was reversed in the church through the sacrifice of Christ, but has been perpetuated by erroneous interpretations of Scripture' NIV Application Commentary, Walter L. Liefeld.

Paul is passionately concerned about one thing: THE GOSPEL. For Paul, two things can get in the way of the good news and its acceptance: (i) incorrect doctrine and (ii) inappropriate behaviour. 1 Timothy addresses both issues, but this passage is concerned with behaviour.

The 'Big Picture' question presented by this passage is : in what ways does our behaviour as a church or as individual believers undermine and make it difficult for us to proclaim the gospel?

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

Discuss as a group what sort of behaviour (i) helps us to proclaim the gospel or (ii) gets in the way of the gospel. List types of behaviour as follows:

	Appropriate (helps)	Not Appropriate (gets in the way)
In church		
At work		
At school		
At home		
At the hawkker centre		
Driving (if you drive)		
Or on public transport (if you don't)		

GENERAL SURVEY

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INTRODUCTION

Paul's teaching on church leadership is laid out clearly in this chapter. There is no doubt that it is God's explicit will to have leadership providing proper governance within the church's structure. Their oversight within the church is critical for the growth and proper function of the body of Christ on earth. As in his teaching on order in the family, so there is to be order within the church. The relationship between the leaders and others in the congregation had brought about various extreme views in the understanding of their roles. It is not to be a power struggle relationship but rather a close symbiotic relationship between leaders and congregation. Hence, Timothy and Titus were given specific instructions how leaders' roles were to be exercised by highlighting their character and the criteria for appointing them.

1. Overseer/Bishop (Greek: episkope – someone who supervises/ inspects – someone who makes sure that things are done correctly. In Titus 1:6-7, Paul uses both 'elder' and 'overseer' to refer to the same position.)
 - 1a. Should people set their heart on becoming an overseer (v1)? Why?
 - 1b. What is the role of overseer/elder? (see 5:17; Titus 1: 9, Acts 20:28, 1 Peter 5:2)
 - 1c. What sort of person should become an overseer/elder (vv2-7)? Why?
 - i. What characteristics and qualities are required? (vv2-7; Titus 1: 7)
 - ii....and what should the overseer's family be like? (vv2, 4; Titus 1: 6)
 - iii. Should a 'recent convert' become an overseer? (v6)
 - iv. Why does the overseer' reputation outside the church matter? (v7)
 2. Deacon (Greek: diakonos – servant, waiter, minister, messenger.)
 - 2a. How did the office of deacon come about? (Acts 6: 1- 6)
 - 2b. What sort of person should take up this post? Why?
 - i. What characteristics and reputation are required? (vv8-9)

ii. Women/wives (v11)? Note the NIV footnote. When reading the Bible in English we should always take into consideration footnotes which set out alternative translations because it means that the translators are uncertain of the most appropriate translation. In this instance Greek has one word which can mean 'woman' or 'wife'. English, in contrast, has two words with different meanings. Often the context makes it very clear what is meant – but in this case it is unclear. So NIV gives an alternative translation; NRSV does the same.

So, is it possible that some deacons in the early church were women? Read Romans 16:1. What are we told about Phoebe? (here, likewise, take note of the translator's footnote)

2c. Being a deacon involves commitment, dedication and hard-work? What is the reward for a deacon who serves well (1 Tim 3: 13)

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

When we choose our church leaders, what criteria do we use?

In our modern management orientated society, we often look at the ability of the person. In many cases, church leaders are chosen for their skills rather than for their character and moral standing.

While ability is important, even more important is the character of the person – not just of the person but also of his spouse. Paul was very concerned about these issues and less concerned about specific skills except where these really matter (e.g. ability to teach).

How about us? How about our congregation? Are we concerned about the character of our leaders?

Are we concerned about how well they manage their family? To Paul this was important – a church should be more like a family than an organisation. To Paul, a person who could not manage a family should not be managing a church.

Are we choosing leaders with the right characteristics and reputation?

FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

The most appropriate thing for groups to do is to pray for ORPC, that suitable men and women with the characteristics described in 1 Timothy 3 will be moved by God's Spirit to offer themselves for the challenging role of serving as deacons and, in due course, elders.