



ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Bible Study

NOVEMBER

2011

MORNING & EVENING SERMONS

## BACK TO TIMOTHY

During November we continue to study the Pastoral letter 1 Timothy.

Firstly we look at a passage which addresses the question of leadership within the church. Leaders do not serve in a vacuum - they serve within the body of Christ.

We then hear Paul's advice to Timothy on the problem of false teachings. The church ought to be able to know the truth, stand firm on it and then commend it to those around. Paul points out to Timothy that his authority came from God and the example he sets and all that he does should shine through and lift the church to the level of proper discernment of truth and falsehood.

Paul turns next to certain 'groups' within the church: widows, elders and slaves, emphasising the church's responsibility to various segments of society including those in 'full-time ministry'.

Wealth and material possessions often distract us from being truly God's people. There are many challenges in today's world, as in the world of Paul and Timothy. Paul gave instructions to Timothy specifically based on biblical teaching, denial of which will lead us to an erroneous understanding of our relationship with material possessions.

SERMON DATE **6 NOV 2011**

LEADERS & CHURCH SERVING TOGETHER

1 TIMOTHY 3:14-16

SERMON DATE **13 NOV 2011**

DEALING WITH TRUE & FALSE TEACHING

1 TIMOTHY 4:1 - 5:2

SERMON DATE **20 NOV 2011**

RESPONSIBILITIES TO SOCIETY

1 TIMOTHY 5:3 - 6:2

SERMON DATE **27 NOV 2011**

RESPONSIBILITIES ON MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

1 TIMOTHY 6:3-21

**GENERAL SURVEY**

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

**INTRODUCTION**

From the qualifications of the elders and deacons, Paul turns to the church in which these leaders serve. Leaders do not serve in a vacuum. They serve within the body of Christ. This is where the understanding of leadership finds its worth and context. Without the church, leadership is worthless. How should God's household conduct itself and provide the context for leaders to fulfill their calling and work out their ministry? This section takes a deeper look into this context and helps the church find its true identity as the church.

*I. 'How': Godly conduct that is mandated for the church (vv.14-15a).*

1. In 1 Tim. 1:3, Paul's purpose in writing was to encourage Timothy to continue the pastoral ministry in Ephesus faithfully, especially in combating false teachings. Here, he gives a second and related purpose that very much sums up the letter both before and after this passage.
  - a. What is this purpose? What are some groups of believers whom Paul mentions? (e.g. 2:8-9; 3:1,8; 5:4; 6:17)?
  - b. What is one reason why Paul is so concerned with the church exhibiting proper conduct that is 'above reproach' / 'without blame' (1 Tim. 3:2; 3:10; 5:7; 6:14)? (See 5:8, 6:1; c.f. Tit. 2:5, 8,10).
2. In the church today, who takes up Timothy's role of ensuring proper conduct among believers? How can they perform that role responsibly and pastorally? Do members have an attitude of submission towards and support of their leaders in this role?
3. What areas or challenges do we as believers and churches face today wherein we might fail to live above reproach and thereby cause the name of the Lord and His teaching to be slandered?

*II. 'Why': Godly conduct in keeping with the nature and identity of the church (v.15b).*

1. What images did Paul use to reflect the church's corporate nature and identity?
2. What implications drawn from these images challenge our conduct in our relationship with God, His children, and with the truth? (Phi. 2:12-16; Eph. 2:19-22; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Jude 1:3 may shed some light).

### III. 'Who': Godly conduct in connection to the mystery of godliness (v.16)

1. Discussion of conduct, church and truth (vv.14-15) is aptly concluded by the theological climax (of the whole letter) in v.16 - the 'mystery of godliness'. It is of such great significance that Paul describes it via what is possibly a creedal hymn used by the early church. Some explanatory notes:
  - 'Mystery' here denotes something formerly hidden or unknown but now revealed to all (c.f. 3:9; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:9).
  - 'Godliness' is a key trait in the Pastorals (2:2,10; 4:7-8; 5:4; 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:12; Tit. 2:12). It denotes the attitude of reverence and devotion to God and the outworking in conduct that befits that attitude. It describes 'the wholeness of Christian existence as the integration of faith and behavior'. (Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*).
  - a. What (or more precisely, who) is this mystery? What is its content and focus? (v.16b)
  - b. And since it is the mystery of 'godliness', how does Paul connect it to the kind of conduct he is insisting in v.15?
2. ORPC is a confessional church, i.e. we confess our faith through formally adopting statements of faith that we believe faithfully reflect the Bible's teaching but which nonetheless remains secondary to the Bible. In solidarity with Christians across denominational lines, we confess the Apostles' Creed every month. As a Reformed church, we also adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as a faithful expression of the Bible's teaching on important issues. What is the intention of 'confessing' a statement? Does it serve any purpose / value for the church's leaders, members and children today? Are they a piece of heritage that is good to preserve but otherwise outdated and out-of-relevance?

## DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

1. Christians are urged to conduct their lives in godliness - i.e., in a Christian way of existence that befits their united identity as God's family, as a covenant community where the true, holy and living God dwells and fellowships, and as the body which upholds and commends the gospel to the world.
2. The hymn of v.16 helps us see godliness from a Christo-centric perspective. Godly conduct is rooted and spurred on by the gospel, the once-hidden message now revealed and centred on the person and work of Christ. It is, however, not a set of propositions to merely believe or recite. Godliness is vitally relational because it points us to Christ and is drawn out from Christ by virtue of our union and communion with Him in love, faith and obedience.
3. 'It takes two hands to clap and one hand to slap', as the saying goes. While it is reasonable and legitimate (1 Tim. 3) to ask which godly and gifted deacon, elder, pastoral staff and senior minister can arise and lead the church, it is just as important to ask ourselves to which leader, pastor, senior minister can we be a godly and gifted congregation in which he or she can rejoice in serving (Heb. 13:17) and advancing God's kingdom together. It takes all the hands the church has to build and grow the work and witness of the church to the glory of our Lord. It only takes one hand to slap the unity and witness of the church and cause the name of our Lord to be shamed.
4. To confess a creed is not merely to recite it, but it is an implicit, rallying call to affirm and uphold the truth of what we confess and let its doctrinal and ethical implications impact our Christian living.

## FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

Take for example what The Westminster Confession of Faith has this to say concerning Of the Communion of Saints (Chapter 26, Sec 1, with scriptural support). Notice the Christological foundation just like in 1 Tim. 3:16.

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: (1 Jn. 1:3; Eph. 3:16-19; Jn. 1:16; Eph. 2:5; Phi. 3:10; Rom. 6:5-6; 2 Tim. 2:12) and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, (Eph. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Col. 2:19) and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. (1 Thess. 5:11, 14; Rom. 1:11-12, 14; 1 Jn. 3:16-18; Gal. 6:10)

As members or leaders of ORPC, how have we carried out our obligations towards God, the leaders whom He has appointed, the members He has placed under our charge and our fellow members? Can we sense the 'ought-ness' in these obligations? Does mention of obligation or duty come across as legalistic, rigid and unloving? What are some of the ways in which we can speak the truth to one another in love with the intention to help and not to hinder, discipline and not to destroy. (Eph. 4:15)?

**GENERAL SURVEY**

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

**INTRODUCTION**

The church is the pillar and foundation of truth based on Christ, and that truth ought to transcend into the milieu in which it lives and bears testimony to it. As such, that foundation should prevail and uncover falsehoods and correct them. The church ought to be able to know the truth, stand firm on it and then commend it to those around. Here Paul pointed out to Timothy that he was the pivotal point of the church's ability to understand who they were. His authority came from God and his example and all that he did should shine through, lifting the church to the level of proper discernment between truth and falsehood.

1. We should not be surprised that there are false teachers and false teachings going on in the church. This is nothing new. Throughout church history, we have had false teachers and teachings. In 1 Tim. 4: 1 – Paul warned Timothy about such teachings.

How does Paul describe such teachers? What is Paul's attitude to such teachers? (4:1-2)

2. Paul lists two issues of his day as examples of such teachings.

- a. What were these false teachers teaching? (v.3)

- b. What was wrong with these teachings? What is the correct approach? (vv.4, 5)

- c. Can you give an example of a false teaching that is going around today? Can you explain what is wrong with this teaching?

3. How do we protect ourselves from such false teachings?

- a. What should our attitude be to such speculations and teachings? (v.7)

- b. Just as physical training can be good for us, what sort of training should we do for our spiritual life? (v 7-8)

- c. Training for life.
  - i. In whom should we put our hope? (v.10)
  
  - ii. To what should we devote ourselves? (v.13)
  
  - iii. What should we not neglect? (v.14)
  
  - iv. What should we watch out for ? (v.16)

4. How should we handle people who spread false teaching? (Rom. 16: 17-18; 1 Tim. 4: 7; Mt. 18: 15- 19)

## **DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS**

There are false teachers and false teaching both inside and outside the church. There has always been such teachers. They are still around today. We should expect and be concerned about their existence. Therefore we need to know our faith. We need to understand what it means to be a Christian. We need to know the scriptures. For it is only through good Bible knowledge that we can see false teachings for what they are.

## **FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS**

Paul tells us that godliness can only be achieved through training. Of course we know that children must be trained in subjects like maths, science and languages. Adults often voluntarily train because they want to achieve some objective; maybe running a marathon, or playing a musical instrument to a high standard. But how much effort do you put into training to be godly?

As a group or family discuss as openly as you feel able what your training priorities are. How do YOU train to be godly? Are you putting as much effort into this as other types of training? What can you do in practical ways to be more godly, and thereby to move into a closer relationship with God?

**GENERAL SURVEY**

Topic:

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**INTRODUCTION**

Having dealt with Timothy's relationship with the church and in particular to certain segments of the church (5:1-2), Paul turns next to the widows, elders and slaves. This indicates Paul's strong reference to the church's responsibility to various segments of society including those in 'full-time ministry'. There is also an interesting inter-play between ministry which is what we give, and support being what we receive. For those who serve, what is expected of them? For those who support, what is expected of them?.

In this section of the epistle, Paul provides very specific instructions to the church in dealing with widows, elders (leaders) and slaves. In the midst of these instructions, he sneaks in a personal note to Timothy providing us with insight into his personal touch and relationship with the younger Timothy. Although we now consider the institution of slavery to be wrong it was simply part of the way society was structured in New Testament times, so Paul applies Christian principles in teaching slaves how to treat their masters whether they are Christians or not - principles which continue to apply today.

1. Instructions about widows (5:3 - 16).
  - a. What is the criterion that qualifies a 'widow' for church provision? (vv.3-10)
  
  - b. Why does Paul advise against registering the younger widows? (vv.11-16)
  
  - c. How ought the widows to be cared for? (vv.3,9)
  
  - d. Are we, at ORPC, providing sufficiently for our widows? Are we aware of specific needs they might have, whether it be financial or a lack of involvement (spiritual or otherwise) in our Christian community? Discuss.
  
2. Treatment, discipline and appointment of elders (5:17-22)
  - a. What labour is to receive double honour? (v.17) Why?
  
  - b. What does Paul prescribe when dealing with charges against elders (c.f. Deut. 19:15)? (v.19)
  
  - c. For leaders that continue to sin, what are Paul's instructions? (vv.20-21) Do you think that this approach is still appropriate today? Discuss.
  
  - d. In v.22, 'the laying on of hands' seems to refer to ordination. Why is Paul arguing against haste in selecting leaders?

- e. Discuss the challenges in ORPC in developing leaders.
3. It is striking that Paul inserts a personal note to Timothy here (v.23). After the personal note, Paul goes back to describe (vv.24-25) the care needed in selecting leaders.
- a. The suggestion 'a little wine' shows Paul accepts the medicinal value of wine in moderation, but more importantly what information about Timothy demonstrates Paul's intimate knowledge of Timothy?
  - b. Reflection: Paul's personal note to Timothy is based on personal knowledge of the younger partner in the ministry. Do we likewise, develop a personal relationship with, and a knowledge of, those we care and pray for?
- Vv.24-25 are reminders to take care in screening for leadership positions. Discuss how these verses are to apply in the ORPC context.
4. The duty of Christian slaves (6:1-2). Slavery was an established part of the New Testament world. However, some of the lessons that are applied here can be applied equally to our workplace and our relationships with those we work for.
- a. How are Christian slaves to regard their masters? What higher principle is at work here? (v.1)
  - b. How are Christian slaves to treat Christian brothers who are their masters?
  - c. Are there principles here that will differentiate the Christian slaves from the rest?
  - d. In your context, how would these principles apply (e.g. at work)? Discuss.

## DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

- Are we taking proper care of widows who are part of our ORPC family? Are there needs in ORPC that you are aware of? What about the wider circle of God's people?
- Are we providing sufficiently for our leaders? Especially for those who labour in preaching and teaching (v.17)?
- When we care and pray for others, are we superficial or personal (v.23) in our counsel? Do we truly understand their needs?
- Although we are no longer slaves, as we could well have been in Paul's time, many amongst us might describe ourselves as 'slaving away' - yet the principle of serving our fellow Christians and glorifying God's name remains. What challenges are pushing you against these principles? Share with a praying partner and commit them to the Lord.

## FAMILY/GROUP MOMENTS

Discuss as a group or family how many widows you know who are members of the ORPC congregation. In what ways could you show practical help or simple loving kindness to any of these people? Do they need help getting to and from church? Are they lonely and would welcome a visit or a trip out for lunch?

**GENERAL SURVEY**

Topic:

Key Verse:

Main Person/s:

Key Ideas and Questions:

**INTRODUCTION**

Wealth and material possessions are often things that distract us from being truly God's people. There are easily as many challenges faced in our world today as in the world of Paul and Timothy. Instructions Paul gave to Timothy were specifically based on Biblical teaching, any denial of which leads us to an erroneous understanding of our relationship with material possessions. Paul's charge was directed at covetousness and contentment, wealth and generosity, and discipleship of material possessions with specific instructions which Timothy in turn would pass on to the churches he was pastoring.

'Theirs is an endless road, a hopeless maze, who seek for goods before they seek for God'. Bernard of Clairvaux.

## 1. False Godliness (vv.3-5)

- i. What is the result of not agreeing to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ? (v.4)
- ii. What does having 'an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words' lead to? Is this still a problem today? What effect can this have on inter-personal relationships, particularly within the church?
- iii. What is the underlying motive of these false teachers? What do they hope 'godliness' will lead to?

## 2. True Godliness (vv.6-8)

- i. What is godliness linked with? To what does this type of godliness lead?  
Note: the Greek word for 'contentment' used here has the root meaning of self-sufficiency and is the opposite of greed.
- ii. If we are truly godly, what will we be satisfied with? (v.8) How do you match up to this? Are you happy with just food and clothing? If not, does this affect your own godliness in your own walk with God?

## 3. Do you want to get rich? (vv.9-10)

- i. What are the dangers of wanting to get rich? What are some of the foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction?
- ii. Is this warning aimed at those who are rich already or those who want to get rich?
- iii. 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil'. List at least three different evils associated with the love of money
- iv. Why can eagerness for money endanger your faith (v.10)? What are some of the griefs that can come from the love of money?

