**1 Timothy Commentary**

**1 Timothy Chapter 1**

1Tm 1:1

**“by the command of.”** The Greek is κατά ἐπιταγή, and it is a technical phrase that means “by the command of; by order of.” A. Nyland writes that this expression is strongly attested in the papyri, and “shows the person is under divine injunction.”[[1]](#footnote-30949) The Greeks used it of commands by people, but especially of commands by oracles and gods.[[2]](#footnote-20799) The specific phrase κατ᾽ ἐπιταγὴν appears in Romans 16:26; 1 Corinthians 7:6; 2 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Timothy 1:1; and Titus 1:3.

1Tm 1:2

**“my true child.”** Although the Greek omits the word “my,” and some commentators try to assert that Timothy is “a” child and not “my” child, it is clear the “my” is implied. As Hendriksen and Kistemaker point out, “The omission of the possessive in such a case is not at all unusual.”[[3]](#footnote-28142) That Timothy was considered Paul’s spiritual child is clear (1 Cor. 4:15 and Gal. 4:19). The Greek noun translated as “child” is *teknon* (#503 τέκνον)**.** In this context, “child” is a term of endearment. The more legal term would be “son.” Paul referred to Timothy as his child several times (e.g., 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2).

**“in the faith.”** The Greek reads, “*en pistis*” (ἐν πίστις), which is a difficult phrase to translate easily into English. It means, “in” as “in the sphere of, in the realm of, in respect to, when it comes to.”[[4]](#footnote-25957) The phrase “in the faith” is a way of saying “in the Christian Faith;” it is Timothy’s faith in, and loyalty to, Christ and the things of God, including the entirety of the Christian Faith. Also, we must keep in mind that “faith” here is a noun, not a verb. This verse is not talking about the action of faith. Some people in the Word of Faith movement have tried to make this into a verb, as if Timothy was a true child of Paul’s by virtue of his great faith but that is not what the text is saying.

**“Grace, mercy, *and* peace.”** Here Paul uses the figure of speech asyndeton, which does not have the “and” between mercy and peace. Paul also uses it in the opening of 2 Timothy (2 Tim. 1:2).

[See Word Study: “Syndeton.”]

1Tm 1:4

**“to pay attention to.”** This is more than just “noticing” the myths; it is getting involved with them in some way,

**“genealogies.”** The Jews had a great interest in genealogies, but now there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, and any Jewish believers needed to leave arguments about genealogy behind and fulfill their calling as an individual member of the Body of Christ. See commentary on Titus 3:9.

**“by trust.”** The Administration of the Sacred Secret, the Administration of Grace, is furthered by trust, not by doubts, speculation, and arguing. The word “God” is in the genitive case, and the next phrase, starting with the article in the accusative case (which is not translated into English), becomes like a genitive of apposition.[[5]](#footnote-24260)

1Tm 1:5

**“goal.”** The Greek is *telos* (#5056 τέλος), end, finish; here well understood as “goal” (cf. HCSB, NASB, NIV).

**“sincere trust.”** Also in 2 Timothy 1:5 (cf. 1 Pet. 1:22, sincere affection).

1Tm 1:9

**“but for *the* lawless and rebellious.”** Lawless, rebellious, ungodly sinners are the reason that society needs laws, and has always had them. Laws allow the godly people to keep the lawless and ungodly people accountable to righteous standards and punish them when they break the law, and by so doing keep society relatively safe. When ungodly sinners obey the law, they do so not because they care about others, but because they do not want to be punished for breaking the law. The Bible says that laws are not made for righteous people, because righteous people don’t need laws to keep them from taking advantage of others. Laws are made for the lawless, so they will fit into society better.

It is said that we cannot legislate morality, and that is true. Genuine morality comes from the heart, and laws do not change the heart. However, we can to a large extent legislate moral behavior because most ungodly sinners fear the consequences of breaking the law; so laws are indeed made for the lawless. Since the reason that ungodly sinners obey laws is they fear the consequences of breaking the law, it is imperative that a society that wants to stay godly and safe must enforce the law. Any given society will be godly to the extent that the people are willing to make, and enforce, godly laws.

Note that here, as elsewhere in the Bible, words such as “lawless,” “rebellious,” and “unholy” are used. These are God’s terms and express His point of view. God is the creator of the heavens and the earth, and humankind, and His Son Jesus will be the judge on Judgment Day and judge by God’s rules. Humans are fallen creatures living in a fallen and evil world, and human laws are often ungodly and/or unenforced. We find out what is evil, sin, godless and godly by studying the Bible.

1Tm 1:10

**“kidnappers.”** The Greek word is *andrapodistēs* (#405 ἀνδραποδιστής), and it is challenging to know exactly how to translate it into English in this context because it refers to a person who unjustly reduces free people to slavery, so “kidnappers” and “slave traders” are equally valid translations.

*Andrapodistēs* can refer to a kidnapper who “kidnaps” and thus enslaves, another person for “personal use” or for sale; or in the Greco-Roman world it referred to a slave trader, whether the person himself enslaved the others or was involved in the buying and selling of others. In today’s culture of worldwide sexual slavery and even enslaved workers, that Paul would mention this in the opening of Timothy shows that modern culture has not advanced beyond the activity of the ancient culture, the sin is just not as out in the open.

**“doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse “doctrine” seemed better than “teaching” because any sound teaching was built upon the foundation of sound doctrine.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

1Tm 1:11

**“the glorious good news.”** The Greek literally reads, “the good news of the glory of the blessed God,” but the genitive phrase “of the glory” is attributive, and thus adjectival, with “glory” describing the good news.

1Tm 1:12

**“I give thanks to.”** This same opening formula is in 2 Timothy 1:3. There it is in a prayer to God, while here in 1 Timothy 1:12 it seems to clearly be in a prayer to Christ.

1Tm 1:13

**“an insolent man.”** Friberg says this: “insolent person, violent aggressor, especially of one who takes a superior attitude and mistreats others out of his own revolt against God’s revelation of truth.”[[6]](#footnote-20230) That describes Paul before his conversion very well. Saul was an insolent and violent man. “Saul laid waste the church; entering into every house and dragging off men and women, he committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). He was “breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1) until he met Jesus and became a follower of Christ.

1Tm 1:15

**“this statement is trustworthy.”** This is the first of the five “trustworthy statements” found in the pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 1:15; 2:15; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). Interestingly, they only occur in the pastoral Epistles. Here and in 1 Tim. 4:9 Paul adds the phrase “and deserving of full acceptance.” “Statement” is translated from *logos* (#3056 λόγος), which here does not refer to the Bible as the Word, nor as Christ as the Word of God, but is used idiomatically to mean a “dictum, maxim or weighty saying.”[[7]](#footnote-23884) This statement is said to be *pisto*s (#4103 πιστός), that is “worthy of belief or trust, trustworthy, faithful, dependable, inspiring.”[[8]](#footnote-29914) When the Bible says, “this statement is trustworthy,” sometimes it is referring to the statement that was made immediately before (1 Tim. 2:15; 4:8-9; Titus 3:7-8), and sometimes it refers to what is written next (1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 2:11).

**“sinners, of whom I am the worst.”** The word “worst” is the word “first” in Greek, but the “first” sinner means the worst sinner. This expresses the true feelings (but not the true fact) of a humble human. We are sometimes all too aware of our shortcomings, but we must learn to use those feelings to magnify the grace of God in our lives. It seems as though we see Paul become more and more in touch with how he sins, indeed, how much we humans sin in life. During Paul’s third missionary journey, while in Ephesus, Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth and said he was the “least of the apostles” (1 Cor. 15:9). Some years later, when Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he seems even more aware of his shortcomings, and wrote that he was “less than the least” of all the believers (Eph. 3:8). This, of course, expresses his feelings, not the fact of the situation. What is likely a year or two later, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy that he was the “first in rank” of sinners, i.e., the worst sinner. Again, he expresses his feeling, not the fact, but feelings are very powerful. Also, Paul verbalizes that his being a sinner highlights the mercy of the Lord, as indeed it does. None of us deserves the salvation and hope God gives us, but God loves us and gives it to us because of who He is, not because of who we are.

These verses about Paul highlight some of the value of feelings, and also reveal the danger that feelings can harbor. Feelings can be valuable when they bring us to our knees and magnify to us the mercy and grace of God—and if we realize they are not true. Feelings can be dangerous if we fail to see that we may feel like the worst of sinners, but that is not really what we are. People can get mired in their feelings and become despondent and hopeless, which is a terrible and dangerous place to be. We all sin, and Christians who are humble and self-aware have a growing thankfulness for the grace of God in sending His Son and granting us salvation and everlasting life.

1Tm 1:16

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

1Tm 1:17

**“King of the ages.”** Some Trinitarians propose that this “King” is in reference to Jesus and thus Jesus is the “only God.”

However, 1 Timothy 1:17 is referring to God the Father for a few reasons.

1. In the very same verse, Paul says that this “King of the ages” is invisible. This is only true of God the Father (Col. 1:15), not of Jesus.
2. In the very same verse, Paul says that this King is immortal or incorruptible. This is only true of God the Father (1 Tim. 6:16), because Jesus died (Rom. 5:6-8).
3. In the very verse, Paul describes this “King of the ages” as the “only God.” For this to be in reference to Jesus would be almost unthinkable, because even Trinitarians will admit that Paul almost exclusively uses “God” or “*Theos*” in reference to the Father. So, to call Jesus the “only” *theos*, in exclusion of God the Father, would be unthinkable for Paul. Additionally, John calls God the Father the “only God” twice (John 5:44; 17:3). Jesus and the Father cannot both be the only God.
4. 1 Timothy 6:15-16 is also referring to God the Father, because it says that He is immortal, invisible, and dwells in unapproachable light, which are things said of the Father, not of Jesus. Yet, 1 Timothy 6:15 calls the Father the “King of kings,” which would give more credence to the idea that Paul would be calling God the Father, the “King of the Ages” in 1 Timothy 1:17.

Also, Paul begins 1 Timothy 1:17 with *de* (in Greek) or “now,” which often indicates a change in subject, so it is certainly grammatically possible that he is now talking about the Father, whereas in 1 Timothy 1:16 Paul was talking about Christ.

God the Father can rightly be called “King” (because he reigns over Jesus in the everlasting kingdom; 1 Cor. 15:27) or “King of the ages.” Likewise, Jesus can also be called “King” or “King of kings” (Rev. 17:14), and even Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12) and Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 26:7; Dan. 2:37) can be called “king of kings.” The title is not exclusive to either Jesus or God, because they both rule in their own right.

1Tm 1:18

**“this command.”** This is the command that is primarily set forth in 1 Timothy 1:3-4: “stay at Ephesus so that you can instruct certain people not to teach a different doctrine, nor to occupy themselves with fables and endless genealogies, which give rise to speculation, rather than *furthering* the administration of God by trust.” However, the command is also explained and clarified in the whole of 1 Timothy 1:3-17.

**“the prophecies previously *spoken* over you.”** Timothy was publicly ordained and prophesied over, something that is clear from 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6 (see commentaries on 1 Tim. 4:14 and 2 Tim. 1:6). Those prophecies would further identify his ministry, and most likely give him encouragement and direction in his life. By those prophecies he is to fight the good fight. There is a huge lesson in this. God has called each person to a specific “ministry,” that is, a way of serving in the Body (“ministry” means “service”). As the illustration of the human body shows (1 Cor. 12:12-27), each part of the Body serves a different function. This makes perfect sense. If a person in the Body of Christ did not have a ministry, it would be the same as saying God had no way for that person to serve, which is absurd; every believer has a way of serving in the Body of Christ. Timothy must fight the good fight by serving in the area where he was called, not by trying to serve in areas where he was not called.

**“so that by *remembering* them you can fight.”** The phrase, “so that by remembering them you can fight” is very non-specific. The believer fulfills their own ministry “by” the prophecies in many ways. The prophecies can give general direction and also specific guidance (1 Tim. 4:14). They give encouragement in the battle, and they remind the believer of the Lord’s support in their life. They quell doubts that arise in heart of the believer and are a reminder of how helpful believers can be to each other when they all walk by the spirit of God.

Focusing on the commands of God and what He has done is an important key in living a godly life. “Remember” comes up many times in the Old Testament, such as Israel remembering that they were slaves in Egypt, remembering the covenant, and many more.

**“fight the good fight.”** There is a war going on between Good and Evil, between God and the Devil. “The good fight” for any particular Christian, is the fight that that given individual is supposed to be engaged in according to their calling and ministry. The first decision for the believer is to get involved in the fight. Too many Christians will not stand for God or stand for the truth because it creates controversy. But of course it does! What better way is there for the Devil to get people to not stand up for the truth than to cause a scene or cause problems when they do stand up for the truth? Martin Luther could have backed down on the truth; thank God he did not. He stood firm and said, “Peace if possible; truth at all costs,” and because he stood for truth, the Church has much more truth today than it did in 1517 when Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the church in Whittenburg.

Once a Christian makes the decision to get involved, the next decision is where to get involved. What cause? The Devil is very crafty (cf. Gen. 3:1), and knows that a distracted believer is an ineffective or partially ineffective believer. So the Devil stirs up many and various “fights” and “causes” for people to get involved in that take the time, energy, and resources of the believer but which in the end will not really accomplish any of God’s purposes.

For example, as 1 Timothy opens, Paul tells Timothy to instruct others not “to occupy themselves with fables and endless genealogies, which give rise to speculation” (1 Tim. 1:4). Certain people “have turned aside to fruitless discussions” (1 Tim. 1:6). 1 Timothy 4:7 says, “avoid worldly and old wives’ myths.” 2 Tim. 2:16-17, 23 says, “shun worldly, empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their word will spread like gangrene; avoid the foolish and ignorant investigations, knowing that they breed fights.” Titus 1:14, says, “do not pay attention to Jewish myths and *the* commandments of people who turn away from the truth.” Titus 3:9, “avoid foolish questionings, and genealogies, and strifes, and fightings about law, for they are unprofitable and pointless.”

There have always been godly causes and ungodly causes to get involved in, so each believer must evaluate any cause that they are thinking about spending their time and money on because on Judgment Day, God will evaluate how we have spent our resources.

Some translations take “the good fight” as “fight well” (cf. NIV) but that is not the meaning of the text. There are “good fights” that further the kingdom, and “worthless fights” that just waste time, money, and energy. The word “good” is an adjective that modifies “fights,” and the phrase, properly translated, is “good fight.”

1Tm 1:19

**“concerning the faith.”** The Greek noun *pistis* (#4102 πίστις), whose meanings include “trust,” “faithfulness,” and also “the Christian Faith” occurs twice in 1 Timothy 1:19, but with different meanings. The verse says “maintaining trust (*pistis*: one’s personal trust)…which some have rejected and have caused a shipwreck concerning the faith” (*pistis*: the Christian Faith). The two different meanings of *pistis* would not confuse a native Greek speaker living at the time of Paul. The fact that the first *pistis* refers to one’s personal trust and the second *pistis* refers to the Christian Faith fits both the sentence and context. We learn from 1 Timothy 1:19-20 that there were quite a few people involved in rejecting the teachings of Paul and Timothy and thus their personal trust (*pistis*) in what had been taught. Furthermore, some of those who rejected what had been taught were notable leaders, thus the mention of Hymenaeus and Alexander in verse 20, who Paul had removed from the congregation due to the injurious things they were saying, which would cause harm to both the Christian congregation itself and also the way outsiders would view the Church.

William Mounce writes: “Did Paul’s opponents abandon their personal trust in God or in the Christian faith, and did they shipwreck their personal faith or the Christian faith? To reject personal faith is the same as shipwrecking one’s personal faith, so that combination seems unlikely… Within the overall context of the PE [Pauline Epistles] it seems that Paul is saying that the opponents rejected their personal faith and as a result have brought the Christian faith into reproach, interpreting *nauagein*, ‘to shipwreck,’ in the sense of bringing the church under reproach. See the similar construction of *pistis*, ‘faith,’ with a preposition in 1 Timothy 6:10, 21 and 2 Timothy 2:18; 3:8, where *pistis* is the Christian faith. The metaphor [of a shipwreck] is not used elsewhere in the NT…but was common in secular Greek…”[[9]](#footnote-23631)

Andreas Kostenberger agrees and writes, “Since the phrase ‘concerning the faith’ in its two other occurrences in the letters to Timothy refers to ‘the faith’ in an objective sense as to its content rather than to personal faith (cf. 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 3:8) it’s likely that in the present instance, too, ‘the faith’ rather than the false teachers’ personal faith is in view.”[[10]](#footnote-11032)

1Tm 1:20

**“of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander.”** Hymenaeus and Alexander were apparently leaders and instigators of this group that spoke injuriously against the Faith and caused a shipwreck of it.

**“whom I handed over to the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. For more information on it, see commentary on Mark 1:13.

[For information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

One of the uses of “the Adversary” in the early Christian world was the same basic use as the Muslims today say “the Great Satan,” to refer to things outside their religion that are considered evil. Thus to “deliver someone to the Adversary” was to kick that person out of the Church, to excommunicate the person.[[11]](#footnote-22810) Once the person was excommunicated from the Church and had to get along in the “world” (the realm of the Adversary), the person would hopefully realize the world generally was evil and selfish, and treated people badly and without the love of God. Thus, the person would “learn” not to speak injuriously, or defame, others. When the person learned his lesson and repented of his evil actions, he would be allowed back into the congregation.

**“to blaspheme.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. In this case, people such as Hymenaeus and Alexander would have been speaking against Paul, those who taught what Paul did, the doctrine itself, and perhaps even God, the source of the doctrine. Hymenaeus was saying that the resurrection was past (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**1 Timothy Chapter 2**

1Tm 2:1

**“prayers…be made for all people.”** When the country a person lives in prospers and has godly government, the people in that country do well. So God has always told His people to support the country in which they live. When Israel was carried into exile in Babylon, God told the people to pray for Babylon: “Seek the welfare of the city to which I have caused you to be carried away as captives, and pray to Yahweh for it, for in its welfare you will have your welfare” (Jer. 29:7).

1Tm 2:5

**“one mediator between God and humankind, a man.”** This is one of the great and clear texts in the debate as to who Jesus really is. If Jesus were God, this would have been a wonderful place to say it. Instead, Jesus is clearly called “a person” using the Greek word *anthrōpos*, “person, human, man.” The lexicons state that it is “man” in contrast with animals, plants, angels, and of course, God. The Greek text reads that there is one mediator between God and “humankind,” or “people” (the noun is plural in Greek; *anthrōpōn*, ἀνθρώπων), and that mediator is “a person” or “a man” (the noun is singular; *anthrōpos*, ἄνθρωπος), Jesus Christ. Although Trinitarians say that the referent to Jesus as “a man” is only referring to his human nature, that is their theology adding things; the Scripture never says that.

Actually, Jesus cannot be God or a God-man in this verse. The whole point of a mediator between people and God is that “God” cannot be the mediator. The mediator in this verse is “between” God and the people. If the mediator is God, then he is not between God and the people. In this verse, the mediator is playing part of the role of the priest, one who stands between the people and God. In fact, Jesus is called our High Priest in the New Testament (e.g., Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:5, 10; 6:20; 9:11). Both as our mediator and as High Priest, Jesus cannot be God or a God-man. The priest is a person who stands between God and people, and we learn from 1 Timothy 2:5 that this is also what a mediator does, which is why the verse specifies that Jesus is “a man, Christ Jesus.” That is the simple truth of Scripture, that Jesus was a man, a flesh-and-blood human being.

If Jesus were a God-man, this would be one of the many places to say it, but Scripture never says it, ever. Instead, Jesus is stated to be a member of the human race, just as the Old Testament prophecies foretold he would be.

This verse is commonly translated in English Bibles as, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, THE man Christ Jesus,” but there is no definite article, no “the” in the Greek text before the word “man.” Adding the “the” before “man” could possibly distort the verse a little, as if it were saying that Jesus was “the man” in a slang way, as in the phrase, “You are the man!” William Mounce writes that the lack of the definite article (“the”) before the Greek word *anthrōpos* (man, human) is “emphasizing the quality of being human; i.e., it was as a human being that Christ gave himself for all humanity…ἄνθρωπος [*anthrōpos*] is anarthrous, designating not identity (“the Son of man”) but quality (i.e., that which makes a person human).”[[12]](#footnote-28145)

Mounce’s analysis of the grammar is correct: 1 Timothy 2:5 is pointing out that Jesus is “a man,” “a person,” a human being. Romans 5 shows that it was a person who sinned and got mankind into the mess it is in, and it was a person, Jesus, who got us out of that mess.

Another valuable thing taught by 1 Timothy 2:5 concerns the proper understanding of what happens to a person when they die, and thus, that today, the only mediator between people and God is Jesus. Although the traditional Christian teaching is that the soul (or “spirit”) of a person lives on after the body dies, the proper biblical teaching is that when a person dies they are dead in every way, body, soul, and spirit, and they are awaiting the resurrection. Sadly, the orthodox Christian teaching that dead people are actually alive in some form has led to a number of false teachings and practices in the Church. These false practices and beliefs include people trying to contact the dead, which is strictly forbidden by God (cf. Deut. 18:9-14), or of thinking that the dead have come to contact them (which would mean that dead believers would be deliberately disobeying God, which is an untenable belief).

However, another false doctrine that stems from the belief that dead people are not really dead but alive in heaven or “hell” is the doctrine held by some Christians that dead people are praying for the living and interceding for them before God. But 1 Timothy 2:5 makes it clear that there is only one mediator between God and humankind, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither the Mother Mary, nor any well-known “saint,” nor anyone else, is interceding for the living before the throne of God. Doctrines like that come from the false belief that when a person dies they are not really dead, but alive as a spirit. Right now, the only human in heaven is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he is our mediator between us and God as 1 Timothy 2:5 says, and he is interceding for us (Rom. 8:34).

Also, the partial sentence in 1 Timothy 2:5 is only the first part of the sentence. The whole sentence is in 1 Timothy 2:5-7, and there is more important information about Jesus Christ in verse 6 (see commentary on 1 Tim. 2:6).

[For more on Jesus being a fully human man, see Appendix 6: “Jesus is the Son of God, Not God the Son.” For more on the difference between Holy Spirit and holy spirit, see Appendix 7: “What is the Holy Spirit?” For more on dead people being dead in every way, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

1Tm 2:6

**“who gave himself *as* a ransom for all.”** This phrase is a continuation of 1 Timothy 2:5, which stated that Jesus Christ was “a man,” a human being. But as the whole sentence is read, we see that Jesus Christ is “a man, Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” This is important for a proper understanding of who Christ was, that He was “a man” and not “a God-man.” It is often taught by Trinitarians that Jesus had to be God in order for his death to atone for the sins of humankind, but that is not the testimony of Scripture. Scripture testifies that it was the man Jesus who died on the cross. As 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, it was a human man who paid the ransom for everyone (cf. Acts 2:22); it was not “God” who paid the ransom. Trinitarians admit that “God” did not die on the cross but they say it was the human nature of Christ (the “man” Christ) that died on the cross. But if the death of the “human” part of Christ could atone for the sins of all humankind, then Christ could indeed have been fully human—just like Adam and all of us humans—and he could die on the cross for the sins of humankind. If the death of the “human” nature of Christ could pay for the sins of humankind, then Christ did not have to be God to pay for the sins of humankind, Jesus Christ the fully human man could die and pay for the sins of humankind (see commentary on Matt. 27:50).

**“proper time.”** Technically, “its own” time, but the meaning of the phrase is the proper or right time.

1Tm 2:7

**“herald...apostle...teacher.”** Paul describes himself the same way in 2 Timothy 1:11.

**“in faithfulness and truth.”** The Greek ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀληθείᾳ (*en pistei kai alētheia*), is literally, “in trust and truth.” The Greek phrase can be understood in different ways, and the scholars differ. Major suggestions include: “in faithfulness and truth;” or “in the sphere of trust and truth;” or as a hendiadys, “in the true faith.” The phrase *en pistei kai alētheia* likely refers to both the content of the message and the character of teacher, especially since it is being contrasted with Alexander, Hymenaeus, and those people with them, who were not faithful to the truth but rejected it.

In light of the contrast between Paul and the false teachers, the word *pistis* seems to be describing Paul’s manner in which he taught the Gentiles (i.e., “in faithfulness”), but this word can also relate to the content of Paul’s message that he taught about being faithful to the Good News. And to bolster his position against the false teachers, Paul tacks on that his teaching is not in error, but contains “the truth.” Thus, here in 1 Timothy 2:7, Paul states that he is a teacher of the Gentiles “in faithfulness and truth.”

[See Word Study: “Hendiadys.”]

1Tm 2:8

**“lifting up…hands.”** It was an ancient custom for people to lift up their hands to God for supplication, help, and praise. Like a small child lifts up his hands to a parent for help, we need God’s help and lift up our hands to Him for help and praise. The following categories are not strictly delineated: 1) Help and support: Exod. 9:29, 33; Ezra 9:5; Job 11:13; Ps. 28:2; 44:20; 68:31; 88:9; 141:2; 143:6; Isa. 1:15. 2) Praise and recognition: 2 Chron. 6:12; Ps. 134:2. Lifting up hands was not just an “ancient custom.” It is an outward expression of recognizing God, and there is no reason not to practice it today, just as this verse in Timothy says.

**“pure.”** The Greek word we translate “pure” is *hosios* (#3741 ὅσιος), not *hagios* (#40 ἅγιος), which is the usual word for “holy” (and occurs over 230 times in the New Testament). *Hosios* occurs 8 times in the New Testament and means “devout, pure, dedicated, holy. When used of people, it is used of those who observe their duty to God and fulfill their obligations to Him. *Hosios* has a range of meanings and can also refer to things that are generally used in worship to God and are “pure” (“pure hands” 1 Tim. 2:8), or “sacred” (Acts 13:34, “sacred promises”). *Hosios* also sometimes refers to the outward standard of that which constitutes holiness, and in those cases, because English does not have a good equivalent for *hosios*, “holy” may be the best translation even though an English reader cannot tell it from *hagios*.[[13]](#footnote-19678) (cf. BDAG). *Hosios* is also used to refer to the inner nature of God and Christ, which is pure and devout.

God says, “lifting up pure hands” for a reason. God expects the worship, respect, and obedience that is due Him as our Lord and Creator. When people live in willful, persistent sin God is not inclined to help them. That is why God tells us He sets His face against the proud, that is, those who ignore Him, but gives grace to the humble, that is those who obey Him (James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). It is clear in both the Old Testament and New Testament that if a person lives in disregard of God and His commands, that person will not receive the blessings of God (cf. Deut. 31:16-18; Prov. 15:8; Isa. 1:11-15; 58:1-9; 59:1-8; 66:1-4; Jer. 7:21-29; 14:10-12; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 3:9-12; 6:6-8; Rom. 2:13-16; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5). If we willfully ignore God, then we ask for His help in vain. “When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood” (Isa. 1:15 ESV). God says to lift up pure hands because it is when our hands are *hosios* and we have done our duty to God that our prayers are most effective.

[For more on *hosios* and how it differs from *hagios*, “holy,” see commentary on Titus 1:8.]

1Tm 2:9

**“modesty.”** The Greek is *aidōs* (#127 αἰδώς, pronounced eye-'dōs). It is used only here in the NT, and it means “modesty,” and “a sense of shame.” “The Greek words [*aidōs* and *sōphrosunē*] have a long history behind them, and have no exact equivalent in modern speech. …[*Aidōs*] implies (1) a moral repugnance to what is base and unseemly, and (2) self-respect, as well as restraint imposed on oneself from a sense of what is due to others.”[[14]](#footnote-16739)

If a woman is modest and has a “sense of shame,” it will prevent her from acting in a shameful, or immodest, way. There have always been women who refuse to be modest and flaunt their bodies in some way to get attention. It was a general custom in the ancient world, as in many parts of the world today, that women covered their bodies so completely that even today’s modestly dressed woman who showed her arms and some of her leg above the knee would be considered immodest. Reading 1 Timothy 2:9 all the way through shows that in the Roman culture, “modest” often meant not wearing expensive and gaudy jewelry or an expensive and lavish hairdo. That does not mean, however, that being “modest” in the Bible did not also include showing off too much of oneself, just as we think of being immodest today.

The Roman world had plenty of nudity and scantily clad women. Frescos of women bathing in the public baths depict some swimsuits that look like they were only recently designed. Furthermore, although there were certainly Roman bathhouses that had different facilities for men and women, plenty of them allowed for co-ed bathing, and typical of sin, what often started off fairly innocently often became very risqué. There is some historical evidence supporting the occasional bathing of nude men and women together, and several imperial decrees against co-ed bathing were issued by different emperors, one of whom was Hadrian who reigned from 117-138, not long after the New Testament was completed.

Over 700 years before Christ, Isaiah rebuked the immodest women of his generation, stating, “...the daughters of Zion are haughty, walking with heads held high and seductive eyes, going along with prancing steps, jingling their ankle bracelets” (Isa. 3:16 HCSB). It was common for women who had the means to do so to wear necklaces, bracelets, etc., but a modest woman would be careful not to draw attention to herself by jingling her ankle bracelet.

It is clear from studying history that “being modest” differed in different times and places. That does not mean, however, that being modest is something that is completely arbitrary and any culture can decide for itself what is “modest.” God created people, and He authored His Word to help us know and love Him, and love one another. Furthermore, God created the sexes and sexual attraction to be a blessing to individuals, families, and society as a whole, and the same God who tells people to be modest also forbids sexual immorality. Each person will stand before the judgment seat of God and give an account for the way they have lived. A generally reliable way to think about your clothing is that if you, as a dedicated believer, would be uncomfortable wearing a certain outfit in the presence of Jesus Christ, then you should likely not wear it in public.

**“good judgment.”** The Greek is *sōphrosunē* (#4997 σωφροσύνη), which generally means “soundness of mind, reasonableness, rationality,” but when this clear thinking is applied to circumstances it comes to signify the “practice of prudence, good judgment, moderation, self-control.”[[15]](#footnote-16944) *Sōphrosunē*...“was one of the four cardinal virtues of Platonic philosophy...Primarily it signifies (as in Aristotle) a command over bodily passions, a state of perfect self-mastery in respect of appetite. It...was equally opposed to asceticism and to over-indulgence.”[[16]](#footnote-27740)

Here Paul is declaring that women must be reasonable about their dress, they must exercise good judgment when deciding what to wear. Also expressed is the idea of moderation...not being too far one way or the other. The word does not simply emphasize the action of being proper (“propriety” NIV); rather it points to the underlying wisdom that causes one to implement such discretion (cf. “with decency and good sense” HCSB).

**“pearls.”** Pearls were very expensive in the ancient world, and very highly valued.

[For more on pearls, see commentary on Rev. 18:12.]

1Tm 2:11

**“A woman.”** The Greek is *gunē* (#1135 γυνή, pronounced goo-'nay ). It is the feminine singular noun for woman or wife. The Greek word for woman and wife were the same. Here the context suggests that the meaning is “woman.”

**“must learn.”** The Greek verb translated “learn” is *manthanō* (#3129 μανθάνω), and it means “learn, be instructed.” It is in the imperative mood, active voice, present tense, which are all important to its meaning here. The imperative mood is the mood of command (or exhortation; hence the number of versions that read, “Let a woman learn”). We pick up the imperative mood by “must,” since in English, “let” comes across more as a permission, like “allow,” than a command and exhortation. Women are to learn, they are not to remain ignorant about the things of God.

This verse was very important in light of the first-century culture, both Semitic and Greco-Roman, because women were very limited when it came to education. Although there was some encouragement for women to get a limited education in the Jewish culture, most women, whether Jewish or Greco-Roman, had either a very limited education or none at all. It was not at all like the men, particularly the men from more well-to-do families, who got an advanced education (thus the need for the *paidagōgos* (#3807 παιδαγωγός) the trusted slave who escorted boys safely to and from school; Gal. 3:24).

In this verse, Paul shakes his culture to the core and writes that women are to learn! Of course, they are to learn in quietness and submission, but that is how the men learned too. The verse is not saying that somehow men can learn and be raucous and aggressive in the classroom, but women have to be quiet and in subjection. Paul’s point is that the women were to learn just like the men. The present tense active voice emphasizes that the women are to “be learning.” The women are to “be learning” just as every Christian is to be constantly learning and growing in the things of God. Education in the things of God is not to be like it often was in the culture—study for a few years and then stop. We all, men and women, must press ourselves to continually grow in our knowledge of God. It is true that in the Greek text, the verb *manthanō* (“learn”) only occurs once, and we place it twice in the REV, but given the importance of capturing the meaning of the verb in its full conjugation, and given the fact that this verse has been misread and misunderstood for generations, we felt the doubling of the verb was justified.

It is a common Christian myth that Paul was somehow against women. Of course, given the way his writings have been mistranslated and misinterpreted, it certainly could seem Paul was against women. However, when we properly translate this verse and others like it, we can see that the New Testament was a Magna Carta for women, giving them rights and privileges they had never had before.

[For other verses in the NT that elevate women’s position in the culture, see commentaries on 1 Cor. 7:2; 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2; 5:14 and 1 Pet. 3:7.]

**“without causing a disturbance.”** In this context, the Greek phrase, *en hēsuchia* (ἐν ἡσυχία; #2271), does not mean “without noise; being quiet; being silent;” it means without causing a disturbance, or “making a fuss.”[[17]](#footnote-25452) The Greek word *hēsuchia* (#2271 ἡσυχία, pronounced hay-soo-'key-ah) has two different meanings, and the usual meaning that has been assigned in this verse is not the product of scholarship, but rather the product of the traditional orthodox Christian position when it comes to women. The two meanings of *hēsuchia* are presented well in the BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon*:

1) A state of quietness without disturbance, without any fanfare; of a quiet scholar’s life with implied contrast of being engaged in public affairs; harmonious peace; living in a way that does not cause disturbance.

2) A state of saying nothing or very little.

Anyone who really understands the learning process knows that students learn best when they are fully engaged in the lesson and there is dialogue and interaction between the students and teachers, and among the students themselves. That kind of “active classroom” is every teacher’s dream. In contrast, no teacher wants a classroom where there are constant interruptions and disturbances by unruly students, or the opposite, a classroom where all the students just sit and say nothing and never interact with the teacher.

Due to the long-standing Christian tradition that women are inferior to men (and thus supposedly cannot be clergy or teach; cp commentary on 1 Pet. 3:7), translators of most English versions have chosen definition 2) above, and thus English Bibles have read that women, if they do learn, must be “silent” during the process. Any teacher will attest that making the student be silent during the lesson only retards the learning process, so if that is the case, why would Paul write the women “must” (imperative!) learn, but be silent while doing so? That inconsistency has been ignored by the Church. The phrase “without causing a disturbance” (*en hēsuchia*; ἐν ἡσυχία) is defined by “in subjection,” which is not about being silent, it is about being in control of oneself (see commentary on “in all subjection” below). The woman who is learning is to be under control and not cause a disturbance. If the text were trying to say that women should be silent, the word *sigē* (#4602 σιγή, pronounced sĭ-'gay), which means “silent, without any noise,” would have been a better choice than *hēsuchia* (cf. Acts 21:40; Rev. 8:1).

Women make up at least one-half of almost every Church congregation, and it is a real victory on the part of the Devil to establish a tradition that disqualifies that half of the congregation from learning the deep truths of God or presenting those truths from a woman’s perspective and with her insights. The Christian world, and Christian women, need to become aggressive in learning about God and not worry about not asking questions and/or speaking up in the process.

Since the Greek phrase is *en hēsuchia*, other translations could be considered, translations such as “in a non-disturbing way;” or “in a harmonious way.” However, due to the difficult nature of the subject and the general misunderstanding of the verse in Bible versions and commentaries, the REV went with “without causing a disturbance” which captures the sense of the Greek very well.

**“in complete subjection.”** The word “subjection” is the Greek noun *hupotagē* (#5292 ὑποταγή), and it means to be in subjection, be in submission to. It is used in 1 Timothy 3:4 of a man having his children in subjection, which many versions translate as “under control.” The phrase “in all subjection” defines “without causing a disturbance” (*en hēsuchia*) and is a reason we know that *hēsuchia* refers, not to being “silent,” but to not causing a disturbance. The woman who is learning is to be under control and not cause a disturbance.

1Tm 2:12

**“I do not.”** In explaining this verse, it is important to note that more literature has been written on 1 Tim. 2:11-12 in recent years than on any other passage in the Pauline Epistles.[[18]](#footnote-10063) If anything, this should alert us to the fact that the standard orthodox translation, that women should not teach men and should be silent in the Church, is not something the Greek text clearly says. There are well-known and highly educated scholars who take totally different positions on how these verses are to be translated and interpreted. Also, the fact that there is so much disagreement about these verses shows us that no interpretation is free of problems: there is no “easy translation and clear meaning” of this passage of Scripture. There is no interpretation posited by any scholar that has not been criticized by other scholars who take opposing viewpoints, and we realize that not everyone will agree with our interpretation of this verse, but we set it forth as the best explanation we know.

The best answer we have found to the difficult grammar and the difficult context of 1 Timothy 2:12 are solutions set forth in works such as *I Suffer Not a Woman* by Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, and *The Source New Testament* (text and notes) by Dr. A. Nyland. Although the Clark Kroegers offer several translations[[19]](#footnote-10880), and these differ from Nyland’s translation, the gist is the same. Paul was writing to Timothy, who was based in Ephesus. Between some types of Gnostic doctrine, and some of the types of the “mother goddess” worship of Asia Minor, it was being taught in the culture surrounding Timothy that a female god created Eve before Adam, or that God created Eve before Adam. It is typical of converts to Christianity that they blend Christian beliefs with their past pagan beliefs (this is referred to by scholars as syncretism, and is how orthodox Christianity picked up many of its modern beliefs and practices, such as “Easter Sunday”). Syncretism could have certainly been occurring in Ephesus, and would have been a very important reason why Paul would tell the women to learn, but forbid them from teaching things from their pagan past such as that a woman was the origin of men.

Added to the above historical context is that *authenteō* can mean “originator” or “author,” and when linked to the word “teach,” can refer to a person teaching that woman is the originator of man. The translation given by the Clark Kroegers that they feel is the most likely is: “I do not allow a woman to teach nor to proclaim herself author of man.”[[20]](#footnote-24108) However, they also say the verse could be translated “I do not permit a woman to teach that she is the originator of man...” (p. 191), or “I categorically forbid a woman to teach [anyone] to maintain that she is responsible for the origin of man” (p. 192). Nyland translates the verse: “I most certainly do not grant authority to a woman to teach that she is the originator of man....”

Given the historical context of 1 Timothy, the difficult vocabulary and grammar of the verse, and the “reason” for the verse in the first place, which is 1 Tim. 2:13-14, we felt that the best understanding of 1 Timothy 2:12 was the general understanding of Nyland and the Clark Kroegers, that Paul was forbidding women to claim feminine origin of man

[For more information and full commentary on this verse, see Appendix 11: “The Role of Women In The Church.”]

1Tm 2:13

**“For Adam was first formed, then Eve.”** This is a wonderful and logical explanation of why women should not claim to be the originators of men (see commentary on 1 Tim. 2:12). It is certainly what Genesis teaches. The orthodox conservative teaching that this is the reason women cannot teach men in “formal church settings” does not make sense. For one thing, since women not teaching men would be linked to their creation (thus, a “creation ordinance”), then women not teaching men should be the standard for all teaching situations, not just in the Church. Why would the fact that women were created after men only restrict women from teaching men in formal church settings? If being created last restricted them in one setting, it should restrict them in every setting, including schools and universities, in work-related situations, etc.

Another reason the standard orthodox explanation falls short is that the New Testament is clear that there is neither male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Men and women are “one” in Christ, and that means that they must be “one” in the Church. We should pay careful attention to the fact that, due to the differences in the sexes, God has placed the man as the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23), and the woman as ruler of the home (see commentary on 1 Tim. 5:14), but that relationship exists in the marriage, not in the Church. No man in the Church is head over my wife, and similarly, my wife does not rule in any home but her own.

When it comes to primacy in the Church and who is to teach whom, the Bible does not direct us to who was created first. There are several biblical standards for who should be teaching others in the Church. For one thing, the Bible says that Christ appointed equipping ministries in the Church (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers; Eph. 4:11-13), and these ministries, which are given to both men and women, are to do their job and equip the believers, and that includes teaching them. Also, the Bible tells us, “And God has set some in the congregation, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, *various* kinds of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). Again we see no mention that being a man or woman makes a person “first” or “second,” but rather if a person has a gifting, particularly a gifting that elevates the person in the function of the Church, he or she must do what it takes to fulfill that gifting. Another order of primacy in the Church is that the wise and knowledgeable are to teach those who are inexperienced. This often shows up as the elders are to teach those who are younger because generally, the younger ones need the instruction, but there are exceptions. For example, Timothy was a powerful and experienced man of God in spite of his youth, so Paul wrote, “Let no one look down upon you because you are young.” Paul also told Timothy to set a good example to the believers, read the Scripture publicly, encourage, and teach (1 Tim. 4:12-13).

The biblical mandate is that each Christian is to fulfill his or her ministry and make disciples, and that has nothing to do with whether or not Adam or Eve was created first. There is also a biblical mandate to teach the truth and refute error. In that light, it is important that Paul did not ignore the erroneous teaching that women created men, but instead, he directly confronted it. This sets a good example for us. There are some things we are unsure of biblically that get discussed and argued back and forth in churches. But when the Bible is clear about something, then especially leaders are called to support that truth and stand against error, and this section of Scripture in Timothy is a good example of Paul doing that very thing.

1Tm 2:14

**“and Adam was not deceived.”** Adam was not deceived by the serpent [the Devil]. Eve was deceived, and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil before Adam did (Gen. 3:6). The fact that Adam knew exactly what he was doing—breaking a command of God—and did it anyway, meant that Adam sinned deliberately. That is surely one reason the Bible attributes the Fall of mankind to Adam, not to Eve or even to Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12-15).

The conservative orthodox Church gives this verse as part of the reason that women cannot teach men, but that cannot be correct. While it is bad for Eve or anyone else to be so misinformed or confused that they can be deceived into sinning, it is much worse to sin intentionally. We never hold gullible children who get talked into sinning as responsible as the evil people who convince them to do wrong. Similarly, if we are considering a man for service in a church, we never hold someone who unknowingly made a mistake in his past as guilty as someone who knowingly sinned against God. If this verse is indeed part of a reason about who should teach whom, in light of the scope of Scripture about doing wrong, we would ordinarily conclude that women would be allowed to teach and men would not.

It seems clear that 1 Tim. 2:12 is about women teaching what they had learned in their culture, that a female god created Eve first (and the man sinned), and that 1 Tim. 2:13-14 are part of the refutation of that error.

**“deceived… thoroughly deceived.”** There are two different Greek words for “deceive” in this verse, and most versions translate them both as simply “deceived.” However, this covers up the interesting fact that Eve’s word has the intensifier *ex* as a prefix, indicating that she was *thoroughly* deceived. Adam is said to have not been “deceived,” *apataō* (#538 ἀπατάω), while Eve was “deceived wholly,” “thoroughly deceived,” *exapataō* (#1818 ἐξαπατάω). There is a variant reading within the Western textual tradition that has *apataō* twice, however, the most favorable manuscripts include *exapataō*.[[21]](#footnote-14698) Eve was confused and thoroughly tricked by the Devil. In contrast, Adam sinned knowingly.

**“fell into transgression.”** The Greek literally reads, “has come to be in transgression.” This emphasizes that Eve changed states of being; it portrays her coming into a fallen state, into the *sphere* of transgression, as this is most likely a dative of sphere.[[22]](#footnote-14561)

1Tm 2:15

**“but she will be saved through childbearing.”** That this verse refers to “the” birth of the Child, i.e., Jesus Christ, has been set forth as a possible interpretation of this verse for many years by an impressive list of scholars.[[23]](#footnote-29289) Katherine Bushnell translated the verse: “And she will be saved by the Child-bearing [i.e., the bearing of Jesus Christ],....”[[24]](#footnote-32055) Since that time, various translators have followed suit. In 2004, Ann Nyland (*The Source New Testament*), translated the verse, “and she will be saved by means of the Birth of the Child....” The New English Bible gives “saved through the Birth of the Child” as a marginal reading and thus a possible translation of the text.

It has been argued that the noun translated “childbearing,” *teknogonia* (#5042 τεκνογονία) is the act of childbearing, not the product of childbearing, but the word is rare and unclear enough that that claim cannot be clearly substantiated, thus the many scholars who think it does refer to the birth of “the child.”

The text note on this verse in the “First Edition” NET version says, “This verse is notoriously difficult to interpret....” There are several reasons for that, the obvious one being that women are not saved through childbearing; they are saved through faith in Christ. This difficulty becomes even more obvious in light of the scope of the New Testament, because in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul writes that he wished every person was unmarried, like he was (1 Cor. 7:8), and he says that because the woman who is unmarried cares about the things of the Lord, while a married woman cares about how to please her husband (1 Cor. 7:34). God cannot contradict Himself and is not the author of confusion, and He would not tell women that it would be good to stay unmarried in one place in the New Testament but then say that they would somehow be “saved” through childbearing in another place.

Most orthodox commentators agree that the “salvation” being referred to in this verse cannot be eternal life salvation because that salvation does not come through giving birth. However, although they word it differently, the essence of their argument almost always somehow gets around to an assertion that the “salvation” the woman experiences refers to, or is closely tied with, “daily sanctification,” i.e., the fact that on a day to day basis, having children helps with a woman’s holiness or helps her understand her true place in society and the Church (cf. text note on this verse in the NKJV Study Bible, Thomas Nelson, publisher). Kostenberger and Schreiner write: “Paul, then, probably highlighted childbearing by synecdoche as representing the appropriate role for women.”[[25]](#footnote-16681) But explanations such as these cannot be right, because, as we just saw above, Paul said it was easier for a woman to care for the Lord if she were unmarried. The Bible cannot contradict itself. 1 Timothy 2:15 cannot say that a woman is somehow more godly, more balanced in life, more fulfilled, or fulfilling her role in a more natural way if she has children than if she does not, when 1 Corinthians 7:34 says that an unmarried woman is in a better position to concentrate on how to please the Lord than a married woman is. There must be another explanation for the verse.

To properly understand the verse, we must once again realize, as we have for this whole section, that the context and historical context are vital to the proper interpretation of the verse. For one thing, the word translated, “she will be saved” *sōthēsetai* (σωθήσεται; from the root *sōzō* #4982 σῴζω; to be saved or rescued) is singular, and normally would refer back to Eve, the subject of the sentence from 1 Timothy 2:14. We can clearly see that if we remember that the original text had no punctuation, and read it in versions such as the REV: “Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being thoroughly deceived, fell into transgression, but she will be saved through the birth of the Child....” Eve, like everyone else, will be saved through the birth of the Christ. Furthermore, although this is not a conclusive argument, it is noteworthy that as it is used in the Epistles of Paul, *sōzō* (“saved”) always refers to everlasting life salvation, not some kind of earthly wholeness or holiness; the lone exception would be this verse. This adds to the evidence that this verse is speaking of Eve and her everlasting salvation.

Some commentators have taken issue with the tense of “saved,” saying that if the verb referred to Eve, it would not be “she will be saved.” However, in fact, no person is “saved” at this time (see commentary on Eph. 2:8). Everyone’s salvation will occur at the time Christ raises us from the dead and gives us new, everlasting bodies. Until then, what people have is the hope of salvation.

In light of understanding this verse in the context and historical setting, it has been postulated by the Clark Kroegers that some of the Gnostic teaching of the culture where Timothy lived had to do with women not being able to be saved if they did not give up their femininity and “choose the salvation of masculinity.”[[26]](#footnote-30518) Although this is possible, it is less likely because the verse opens with the singular verb, which naturally refers back to Eve. Nevertheless, the verse is difficult to interpret, and this must be allowed as a possible interpretation.

A major argument against 1 Timothy 2:15 not referring to the birth of “the Child” is that if that is what Paul wanted to say, he could have said it more directly.

In summary, we agree with the conclusion of Charles Ellicott, who concluded that the “childbearing” referred to the birth of Christ. He wrote in 1864: “...when however we consider its extreme appropriateness, and the high probability that the Apostle, in speaking of woman’s [Eve’s] transgression, would not fail to specify the sustaining prophecy which even preceded her sentence;—when we add to this the satisfactory meaning which *dia* thus bears—the uncircumscribed reference of *sōthēsetai* [“will be saved”]—the force of the article (passed over by most expositors),—and, lastly, observe the coldness and jejuneness of [the interpretation, “childbearing” referring to women’s natural birth of children], it seems difficult to avoid deciding in favor of [the interpretation “‘by the childbearing,’ i.e., by the relation in which woman stood to the Messiah”].[[27]](#footnote-10907)

**“if they continue.”** At this point in the sentence, the verb changes from singular to plural. The problem is that since earlier the text was speaking of Eve, there is no clear indication as to who the “they” are. Interpretations vary from “Adam and Eve” to women in general. The fact that salvation in the verse is tied both to the birth of the child and continuing in faith seems to be a natural reference to Adam and Eve, since salvation in the Old Testament was not a one-time event based on the New Birth, as it is after the day of Pentecost, but rather in the Old Testament salvation was based on faith (Rom. 4:1-3), but that faith had to continue through the lifetime of the person (Ezek. 33:11-20).

**“good judgment.”** See commentary on 1 Timothy 2:9.

**1 Timothy Chapter 3**

1Tm 3:1

**“This statement is trustworthy.”** When the Bible has the descriptive phrase, “this statement is trustworthy,” sometimes it is referring to the information that was made immediately before (1 Tim. 4:9; Titus 3:8), and sometimes it refers to what is written immediately afterward (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:11). Although commentators argue about where the phrase should go, it seems that it best fits before the statement in 1 Timothy 3:1.

1Tm 3:2

**“an overseer must.”**[[28]](#footnote-17584) It is not optional that ministers be of good character. All the attributes in the list that follow, with the exception of being skillful in teaching, are character issues. They, more than any other sector of Christianity, represent Christ both to other Christians and to the world. It is important that a minister be able to function well in his office, but if he does so without also taking on the character of Christ, at the Judgment he will be disappointed (see commentary on Matt. 7:23). This list is above and beyond the character and actions of all Christians, such as the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5, etc.

**“above reproach.”** The Greek word is *anepilēmptos* (#423 ἀνεπίλημπτος) literally, “That which cannot be taken hold of.” *Anepileptos* is used of a wrestler that is so completely prepared that he cannot be grabbed and thrown by his opponent. A leader is to exhibit positive qualities that set an example, and carefully avoid behaviors that can be used against him or the ministry. As well as sinful or illegal actions, reproachful behavior includes unwise behaviors that the Adversary can use against a person. God is holy, and wants to be in relationship with people who take holiness seriously. Furthermore, through the ages unbelievers have mocked God because His people have behaved badly (cf. Rom. 2:24). God wants Himself, His leaders, and His ministry to have a good reputation so they are attractive to outsiders.

**“the husband of one wife.”** This character issue is also spoken of in Titus 1:6 (and in 1 Tim. 3:12 it is mentioned in reference to deacons). In the first century, the Greco-Roman culture was monogamous. The Jews were usually monogamous due to their custom at the time, but polygamy still occurred. Thus, a primary meaning of the verse is “not a polygamist.” However, there are other cultural overtones that must be considered in the interpretation of this verse.

Not only must a minister not have more than one wife (see commentary on 1 Cor. 7:2), he must not have more than one “woman.” In part due to the fact that it was considered strange and abnormal for a girl not to marry, the Greek word for “wife” and “woman” are the same word: *gunē* (#1135 γυνή, pronounced goo-'nay). English words like “gynecology,” literally, “the study of women,” come from *gunē*. So while the most proper interpretation of the phrase is “husband of one wife,” it has overtones of a leader being a “man of one woman.” In the Greco-Roman culture, men usually had more than one “woman.” For example, any slave was the sexual property of the owner, and so for the men of the house to have sexual intercourse with the household slaves was not only accepted, it was more or less expected. Furthermore, it was the common custom that if a family had the financial means to afford an extra bedroom in the house, in Roman society a man and his wife would usually sleep apart, giving the man ample opportunity to be with the slaves. Thus, Jerome Carcopino writes: “…slavery degrades and besmirches marriage if it does not wholly stamp it out.”[[29]](#footnote-21711) Also, prostitution was common in the Roman world, and a man visiting prostitutes was not considered wrong in the society. Christianity introduced good sexual morality into the Roman world.

Thus from the culture of the time and from the scope of Scripture, it is clear that another primary meaning of this verse is that the Christian leader must be a “one woman man.” He must be faithful to his wife with his heart and eyes. Being an adulterer or having mental obsessions about other women is not acceptable behavior for a Christian leader, nor is ogling women and making inappropriate comments about their size or shape.

This verse is not forbidding singles, divorcees, or women from being leaders, even though it is written from the point of view of a man. When women are ordained, the application of this verse would be the “wife of but one husband.” Women leaders are not to be flirts, immodest dressers, teases, or sexually immoral.

Another thing that is clear from the grammar and the context is that the traits mentioned in this list refer to present behaviors, and do not include past behavior. To understand this, let us take the example of alcohol use, which comes up later in the list. A person is not disqualified from being a leader if he abused alcohol in his past. This is true for all the character traits in the list. The leader must be above reproach **now**, not violent **now**, not a novice **now**, and so on. It is well-known that many of the best pastors are people who led troubled lives in the past. Paul was certainly violent at one time in his life, but that did not disqualify him from being an apostle and great leader. Thus, “the husband of one wife” is not forbidding a divorced person from being a minister, but rather is saying that he cannot be the husband of more than one wife now.

Many commentators disagree with that conclusion, asserting that the verse is saying that a divorced person is not eligible for leadership, a point they often substantiate by the writings of the Church Fathers. However, there are some Church Fathers who agree with our conclusion. Also, we must keep in mind that the later Church Fathers taught that women were inferior to men, and even believed that sexual intercourse with a woman had a deleterious effect on a man’s spirituality (which became a major reason that a few centuries after Christ the Roman Catholic Church decreed that priests must be celibate and forbade them to marry). Furthermore, 1 Corinthians 7 gives examples of when a divorced person can remarry, and there is no stipulation such as, “you can remarry, but you will not be able to be a leader if you do” (1 Cor. 7:15, 27-28). Thus, Timothy and Titus are not forbidding divorcees from being in leadership.

God does make provision for divorce, although He does not like it, and would prefer that couples work out their problems. However, there are times that cannot happen and divorce occurs. Israel was so obstinate and set on sin that God finally had to divorce her and send her away (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8). The Churches that assert that going through a divorce disqualifies a person for ministry cannot have God as their pastor! On the other hand, if anyone thinks that God is qualified to pastor a church even though He has gone through a divorce, then His ministers who go through divorce can also be qualified to minister.

This is one of the verses in the New Testament that elevated women in the family, Church, and society, and stood against the cultural degradation of women. It is a common Christian myth that Paul was somehow against women. Of course, given the way his writings have been mistranslated and misinterpreted, it certainly could seem Paul was against women. However, when we properly understand this verse and others in the NT about women, we can see that the NT was a Magna Carta for women, giving them rights and privileges they had never had before. By specifically saying that Christian leaders were to have only one woman in their life, it elevated the importance of women considerably.

[For other verses in the NT that elevate women’s position in the culture, see the commentaries on 1 Cor. 7:2; 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:12; 5:14 and 1 Pet. 3:7.]

In spite of the fact that verses such as 1 Timothy 3:2 elevated women, it produced significant challenges for both men and women. For the men, it clearly separated them from their non-Christian friends. The average man in the Greco-Roman culture would have thought it strange indeed not to fulfill one’s sexual desires by having sex with one’s slaves and also with prostitutes. For a Christian leader to be completely sexually monogamous caused a division, and some suspicion, between him and the non-Christian Romans around him. Christian leaders are expected to stand out from the rest, and stand against immorality even if it costs them “acceptance” in the society.

For Christian men to be monogamous in their marriages also placed the women in a difficult position. At the time of Paul, the average lifespan of a woman was in the low 30s, around age 32. This was in large part to the fact that between five and ten percent of the women died in childbirth (also, some died as a result of an attempted abortion, trying to avoid the risk of childbirth). This fact was not lost on the women of the time, and thus many of them preferred their husbands to have sex with their slaves or a prostitute rather than risk their lives in childbirth. Thus the demand that Christian leaders be completely monogamous required a lot of commitment on both the part of the husband and the wife.

**“clearheaded.”** (cf. also 1 Tim. 3:11). “Clearheaded” is the Greek word *nēphalios* (#3524 νηφάλεος) and the base meaning is temperate concerning wine. That developed into the further meaning of temperate, watchful, vigilant (all of which apply to leaders, and all of which tipsy people are not). The temperate person has a clear perspective, is watchful, and has a proper orientation in life. In English, the word “clear-minded” can refer to general sober behavior as well as one’s relation to alcohol. Since the fundamental meaning of the Greek refers to being temperate in relation to wine, “clearheaded” was a good translation.

**“sensible.”** The Greek word is *sōphrōn* (#4998 σώφρων). It means sensible, self-controlled. “Sober” (KJV) or “sober-minded” (ESV) is too often taken as “serious,” as if the person could not laugh. That is not the meaning here. *Sōphrōn* is used of one who follows sound reason. Thus there is no arrogant elevation or pride about himself, and no unreasonable self-hate or self-degradation. It also involves the restraint of passions (Cf. Titus 1:8).

**“respectable.”** The Greek word is *kosmios* (#2887 κόσμιος), and means orderly, decent, and refers to one who is modest, well-behaved, respectable, and orderly in life. It refers to a person who quietly fulfills his duties and is not disorderly, rude, arrogant, or exhibiting other self-important behaviors.

**“given to hospitality.”** The Greek word is *philoxenos* (#5382 φιλόξενος), which literally means “love to strangers.” We felt “given to hospitality” (REV) was a better translation than “hospitable” (NIV) which seems too much like “friendly.” It is more than “friendly,” because it involves opening your home and life to others. Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon points out that the meaning includes being generous to guests, and Friberg’s lexicon says, “kind to strangers.”

The Roman world was vulgar and dangerous, and it was important for Christians to open their homes and lives to one another for mutual support, protection, and even outreach. Every Christian is an ambassador for the Lord (2 Cor. 5:20), and one of the ways we win people is by being “given to hospitality.” For more on hospitality, see commentary on Romans 12:13.

**“skilled in teaching.”** The Greek word is *didaktikos* (#1317 διδακτικός), and means “skilled in teaching.” It is important to note that this is the only thing on the list of qualifications for an overseer that is a skill or ability. Everything else on the list involves one’s personal character. Character counts with God! However, it is important for those who are going to oversee others that they learn to teach well. This requires meekness, because teaching does not always come easy to people, and many people think they are far better at it than they are. It is very important that teachers receive feedback about their teachings to be the best teachers possible. Being skilled in teaching also requires grounding in the Word of God. The overseer must be grounded in Scripture to the end that he or she can teach the truth and refute error (Titus 1:9).

1Tm 3:3

**“not an excessive drinker.”** The Greek is *me paroinos*, (*me* is “not,” and #3943 πάροινος, addicted to wine, a drunkard), which means not an excessive drinker or drunk (cf. 1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7). Thus, not an excessive drinker. Since Ephesians says not to get drunk, drunkenness is wrong for any Christian. Thus, this does not specifically refer to drunkenness. There are times when drinking in any amount causes behavior to become less godly, more sarcastic, and quick-tempered, *etc*., or it may just be a bad example at the time. Especially among leaders, all alcohol consumption should be watched closely. One reason for this is that Christian leaders can be called upon at a moment’s notice to pray, prophesy, heal, witness, etc. (cf. Proverbs 31:4-7). This requirement should be taken in the “wider” sense as well as the “narrower” sense. God mentions alcohol here, but surely no one would suggest that because other “mind-effecting” substances were not mentioned, that they are okay with God. Since the Christian minister is to be available to serve at any time, in the larger scope of Scripture, this directive applies to any “mind-affecting” substance. For example, a Christian leader would not get “high” on drugs just because God did not specifically mention it in Timothy or Titus.

**“Not violent.”** The Greek is *me plēktēs* (*me* is “not” and #4131 πλήκτης ), and it means “not ready with a blow,” i.e., not contentious or quarrelsome. The leader is not one who puts others down with words or fists. A leader is not a bully or “hard” leader, and does not have a belligerent attitude because of his or her position.

**“reasonable.”** The Greek word is *epieikēs* (#1933 ἐπιεικής), which is an adjective (occurring in Phil. 4:5; 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; James 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:18). The noun is *epieikeia* (#1932 ἐπιείκεια; occurring in Acts 24:4; 2 Cor. 10:1). R. C. H. Lenski writes, “[I wish] that we had a good English equivalent for this noble term!”[[30]](#footnote-15019)

The concepts of “moderation, forbearance, gentleness, and sweet reasonableness” all touch a side of the full meaning of this word. The meaning is yielding, not insisting on one’s legal rights to the end that the legal rights become moral wrongs. Too strictly enforcing rules and not understanding that there are often legitimate exceptions turns “right” into “wrong.” Thus, Ecclesiastes encourages people to not be excessively righteous (Eccl. 7:16).

Richard Trench writes: “*Epieikeia* refers to the sort of moderation that recognizes that it is impossible for formal laws to anticipate and provide for all possible cases and that the asserting of legal rights can be pushed into moral wrongs, so the highest right can in practice prove to be the greatest injustice.”[[31]](#footnote-25128) As to the accusation that someone would be overly “reasonable” or yielding to evil, Lenski writes, “Only perverted reason would think that “yieldingness” might include a yielding of truth to error, of right to wrong, of virtue to vice and crime”[[32]](#footnote-29407) There are times when the “rules” obviously need to be bent to minister the grace of God effectively. This word covers exactly that situation—the true leader is “reasonable,” not rigid.

**“not quarrelsome.”** The Greek word is *amachos* (#269 ἄμαχος), meaning not always wanting to pick a fight. Leaders must be positive and constructive in their thoughts and actions. The world wants to set Christians against each other and divide us. Yes, there are Christians who are wrong in what they do or teach, but the true minister of God points that out without unduly dwelling on it or unnecessarily denigrating someone.

**“not a lover of money.”** The Greek is *aphilarguros* (#866 ἀφιλάργυρος) from “*a*” which is “not;” *philos*, which is “like” or “love,” and *arguros* “silver.” It is not loving money. The godly overseer has a good perspective on money. God is his sufficiency, not money. It can be easy for the shrewd overseer to “pump” people for money, and a godly overseer never does this.

1Tm 3:4

**“one who is leading his own household well.”** The minister’s family is always to be his or her primary responsibility. Running a family is difficult, and requires a lot of time and energy. Running the church is not to be an escape from family responsibilities, or an excuse to put them on a back burner. The minister is attentive to his own family such that things are not out of control in his household. A leader will generally lead people the way he leads the people in his house. If he is a dictator in his house, he will usually eventually be one in his ministry, and if he provides no effective leadership in his house then that will probably show up in his ministry also.

**“having *his* children in subjection.”** This point is made about the children of leaders here and in Titus 1:6. Children that are disobedient, disrespectful, or generally out of control reflect on any person’s ministry. The way a person deals with his children will almost certainly be the way he deals with people in the Church. However, care must be taken not to go overboard with this with older children. In the Bible times, a girl was usually married and on her own by her mid-teens and a boy by the late teens. It is common to see children who were well behaved until 14 or 15 become rebellious at 17 or 18. Just because an older teen is rebelling against parental authority does not mean the parents are disqualified for the ministry, although it might, depending on the circumstances. On the other hand, there are men and women who just cannot seem to handle their smaller children, and the chances are that if they allow themselves to be pushed around by a self-willed child, they will be pushed around by strong-willed people in the Church.

1Tm 3:5

**“indeed.”** The Greek word is *de*. In this context, “indeed” is a good translation, as it is in Wuest.[[33]](#footnote-11061) Many versions translate it as “for,” and a couple do not translate it at all (cf. HCSB; NIV).

1Tm 3:6

**“not a new believer.”** The Greek is *me neophutos* (*me* is “not,” and #3504 νεόφυτος), and it means not newly planted, not a neophyte. There are many temptations and hardships in Christianity, and even more so in Christian leadership. A leader should be one who has been tested and stayed faithful over a period of time, and in hard times. There is just no effective way to do this quickly. Many prospective leaders do well as long as they are contributing and not leading, but begin to abuse their authority or do not stand up to the pressure when given leadership. Other people lead well for a short time, but have no longevity. There is simply no way to tell how a person is going to do over time, except that he is tested over time. Thus, ministers are not ordained when their ministries are first noticed in the Body, but rather after they have been functioning in their ministry for a period of time.

**“conceited.”** In this context, “conceited” means to have an inflated opinion of one’s own worth. The word occurs in 1 Timothy 3:6; 6:4; and 2 Timothy 3:4.

**“the condemnation of the Devil.”** The Greek is ambiguous, and can mean the same condemnation that the Devil fell into, or it can mean the condemnation that the Devil puts upon people. The scholars are divided.

**“Devil.”** The Greek word is *diabolos* (#1228 διάβολος), which literally means “Slanderer,” but *diabolos* gets transliterated into English as our more familiar name, “Devil.” Slander is so central to who the Devil is and how he operates that one of his primary names is “the Slanderer.”

[For more information on the names of the Devil, see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

1Tm 3:7

**“he must have a good reputation among those who are outside.”** Sometimes a minister will treat one group of people well, but others with disdain or disrespect. Ministers need to be people who manifest the fruit of the spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23), such that they are well thought of by people outside their immediate “group.” This discourages “cult” mentality and encourages evangelism.

**“the Devil.”** See commentary on 1 Timothy 3:6.

1Tm 3:8

**“dignified.”** From the Greek word *semnos* (#4586 σεμνός). See commentary on Philippians 4:8, “honorable.”

**“double-tongued.”** It is to say one thing to one person and another thing to another person regarding the same matter. Other translations might be, “two-faced, deceitful, hypocritical.”

**“not indulging in much wine.”** In this context, “wine” is a synecdoche of the part for all kinds of things that cause drunkenness or mental stupor.

[See Word Study: “Synecdoche.”]

**“not eager for dishonorable gain.”** This also appears in Titus 1:7 of overseers. The Greek is *me aischrokerdēs* (*me* is “not,” and #146 αἰσχροκερδής) and means, “not eager for dishonorable gain.” This refers to all kinds of gain, not just money. Of course, it does refer to money, and historically, there have been many ministers who have laid guilt trips on people, or bullied them, or threatened them to get money. However, the phrase also refers to other dishonorable gain, such as gaining popularity by adulterating the Gospel to attract more people to the congregation.[[34]](#footnote-15058) Greed for money, power, recognition, etc., can cloud the mind and ruin the ministries of Christian leaders.

1Tm 3:9

**“holding *on to* the sacred secret of the faith.”** The Administration of Grace (Eph. 3:2), God’s Sacred Secret (Eph. 3:9, Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible), is one of the greatest things God has ever done for humankind. God sent His son to die so that over and above the gift of everlasting life available to all mankind, we in the Church can be part of Christ’s very Body. We Christians have the gift of holy spirit sealed in us, nine manifestations available to us, are joint heirs with Israel, and more. What we have is so awesome and amazing that had Satan known it, he would not have crucified Jesus (1 Cor. 2:8). Yet today the Sacred Secret is practically unknown. The NIV does not even hint at the fact that ministers are to hold the Sacred Secret, translating it by the phrase “deep truths.”

The administration of the sacred secret is very important to the Lord, and leaders are charged to keep hold of it. To be “holding” it means more than just knowing about it. “Holding” is the common Greek word *echō* (#2192 ἔχω), which means to have or to hold. Here, as in Philippians 1:7 and John 14:21, it means “to have in one’s heart, to keep in mind” (cf. Thayer’s Greek-English lexicon). Leaders are to teach about it, and should also hold the Sacred Secret by walking in the power available to them and setting an example by boldly operating the manifestations of the spirit.

[For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Eph. 3:9.]

1Tm 3:10

**“they must also first be tested.”** Having strong leadership is very important in maintaining order and godliness in any society or group. Because of that, it is important that leaders be tested to see if they are up for the task. Usually that comes in the form of some kind of mentorship or apprenticeship when the prospective leader is being trained under a strong leader. We see a good example of what happens when a leader is not properly tested in Exodus chapter 32, which records the record of Aaron and the golden calf. Aaron had done a great job as Moses’ aide and assistant when Moses was in Egypt, so it seemed like he would do a good job when Moses went up Mount Sinai to meet with God. However, no one expected Moses to be gone for 40 days and 40 nights. In that protracted absence, the people became very concerned and anxious about being able to go into the Promised Land, and so they came to Aaron to have him make an idol that would lead them into the Promised Land. This involved breaking the covenant that the people had made with God only about a month earlier. Unexpectedly, Aaron gave in to their demands. The result of Aaron’s weakness was widespread sin among the people, with consequences that included the death of some 3,000 people. Of course, it is impossible to know how a leader will act under pressure until they are alone under pressure, and if at that point they are weak and fail, like Aaron did, then they need to be removed from office.

**“blameless.”** The Greek is *anegklētos* (#410 ἀνέγκλητος), which means “without legal charge.” It is very important that a minister lives according to the laws of the land. A minister is not to risk getting caught breaking the law and thus bringing a charge against himself and also besmirching Christianity.

1Tm 3:11

**“women *deacons*.”** There is great debate as to whether the Greek word *gunē* (#1135 γυνή) refers to the wives of deacons or women deacons because the word means either “woman” or “wife.” The answer is not crystal clear by any means, however, there seems to be more evidence that Paul is referring to women deacons.

Let us address the two strongest reasons why one could understand this verse to be referring to the wives of deacons. Firstly, “It would be awkward to discuss deacons in vv 8–10, switch to a different topic in v 11, and then return to deacons in vv 12–13 without a textual clue that the topic has changed….This suggests the topic has not changed.”[[35]](#footnote-13862) Mounce is saying that the subject, deacons, would be consistent throughout the entire passage. Paul would be remarking on how deacons should be living (1 Tim. 3:8-10), how their wives should be living (1 Tim. 3:11), and how their families should be living (1 Tim. 3:12), but all of these things ultimately relate to the qualifications of deacons. Whereas in the alternative view, Paul would be changing subjects from the requirements for male deacons to the requirements of female deacons, and then back to the requirements of male deacons. This would be admittedly quite strange.

Secondly, in the very next verse, the same Greek word γυνή (“woman/wife”) is used, and it refers to the deacon’s wife (1 Tim. 3:12) and in verse 2, to the overseer’s wife. This lends credibility to understanding *gunē* as “wife,” not “woman.”

Now, let us address the reasons for understanding this verse to be referring to women deacons. Perhaps the strongest piece of evidence that this verse is referring to women deacons is that Paul does not list any requirements for the *gunaikas* (women/wives) of overseers (1 Tim. 3:1-7)*.* In other words, if Paul meant “wives” here in 1 Timothy 3:1 and listed qualifications that they needed to possess, why do the “wives” of overseers not also need a certain set of qualifications? Overseers are in a more prominent leadership role, so one would expect that their wives would need even more qualifications than the wives of deacons, yet there is not a word said about the wives (or women) of overseers.

The fact that these “women” have very similar standards as the “[male] deacons” strongly suggests that both sets of requirements, 1 Timothy 3:8-10 and 1 Timothy 3:11, are referring to the same role, deacons. In comparing the two, “dignified” occurs in both lists (1 Tim. 3:8, 11), “not double tounged” (1 Tim. 3:8) parallels with “not slanderers” (1 Tim. 3:11), “not indulging in much wine” (1 Tim. 3:8) parallels “clearheaded” (1 Tim. 3:11), and “not eager for dishonorable gain” (1 Tim. 3:8) more loosely parallels “faithful in all things” (1 Tim. 3:11). So, the standards are eerily similar between “deacons” and “women.” Yet, as an illustration, one would not require the same educational standards from the wife of a lawyer as the lawyer himself, but one would require the same educational standards from a woman lawyer as a male lawyer because they are both functioning in the same role. This supports the theory that 1 Timothy 3:11 is referring to women deacons, not just the wives of deacons.

Another piece of evidence that lends credibility to understanding this as “women deacons” is that the feminine form of “deacon” had not been used or even invented yet. This is seen quite clearly “in Rom. 16:1, Phoebe is called a διάκονος, the masculine form of the word.”[[36]](#footnote-26380) Yet, if Paul wanted to communicate about wives, he could have specified “wives of deacons,” rather than just saying “women.” Although to be fair, Paul could also have specified “women who are deacons,” but he did not.

Lastly, Lenski points out that the qualifications for these “women” if it were referring to “wives” would be quite odd because they have nothing to do with caring for the household, however, the absence of “household” qualifications would make more sense if the qualifications were for a role in the church. He argues that these “women deacons” being referred to are single, because Paul would not want the wife to be drawn away from her duties at home.[[37]](#footnote-14973) This makes sense of why the qualifications in regard to managing family well are reserved for only male deacons (1 Tim. 3:12), not for these “women/wives” (1 Tim. 3:11). It would be quite contrary to the culture for Paul to mention “caring for one’s household well,” as a qualification for male deacons but not their wives, who would most assuredly be spending more time at home caring for their family. All of these points support interpreting *gunē* in 1 Timothy 3:11 as referring to women deacons.

Another piece of evidence that lends credibility to understanding this as “women deacons” is that the feminine form of “deacon” had not been used or even invented yet.

This discussion is relevant because how one understands 1 Timothy 3:11 shapes women’s roles in the Church. Some who think that “wives” are being referred to in 1 Timothy 3:11 do not allow women deacons because there is no direct and clear evidence of that anywhere else in scripture besides Romans 16:1 (which they interpret Phoebe as a “servant” not “deacon”), whereas those who understand this verse to be referring to “women *deacons*” obviously allow women to hold this role in the Church.

**“dignified.”** From the Greek word *semnos* (#4586 σεμνός). Also used in 1 Timothy 3:8. See commentary on Philippians 4:8, “honorable.”

1Tm 3:13

**“that is *rooted* in Christ Jesus.”** The Greek texts read, “the faith in Christ Jesus,” and the word “in” (*en*; #1722 ἐν) here refers to a relationship. The phrase could be translated as “the faith in connection with Christ Jesus,” or “the faith connected with Christ Jesus,” or something similar. The point is that it is the Faith—the Christian Faith—that is connected with Christ, not some other faith, such as the worship of the Roman gods. For more on *en*, see commentary on Ephesians 1:3.

1Tm 3:16

**“beyond all question.”** Because the thing in question is agreed upon by all, it becomes, by extension, “unquestionable” or “undeniable,” but the root idea is that it is by agreement of all. In this case, the facts about Jesus were, in the first-century Christian world, by consent of all. It is possible, and believed by many scholars, that there was a well-known hymn with these lyrics.

**“sacred secret that leads to godliness.”** The Greek is a simple genitive: “sacred secret of godliness.” The Greek word *mustērion* (#3466 μυστήριον) is translated as “sacred secret” because *mustērion* refers to a secret in the religious or sacred realm. The “sacred secret” in this context refers to Jesus Christ and all that he accomplished and all that is available through his name and belief in him, and therefore, the “godliness” that Paul has in mind is what comes from believing in the truth about Jesus Christ. The phrase is likely a genitive of destination (“the sacred secret that leads to godliness”), where the genitive is specifying that understanding the truth about Jesus Christ and following his example will lead a person to live a godly life. Also, it is grammatically possible that the genitive could be a genitive of source (“sacred secret from which godliness springs”). Where the “sacred secret” is the point of origin from which comes godliness.

[For more information on the “Sacred Secret” and the Administration of Grace, see commentary on Eph. 3:9.]

**“he.”** There are some Greek manuscripts that read, “God appeared in the flesh.” This reading of some Greek manuscripts has passed into some English versions, and the King James Version is one of them. Trinitarian scholars admit, however, that these Greek texts were altered by scribes in favor of the Trinitarian position. The reading of the earliest and best manuscripts is not “God” but rather “he who.” Almost all the modern versions have the verse as “the mystery of godliness is great, which was manifest in the flesh,” or some close equivalent.

Bruce Metzger writes, quite technically, about the change from “which” to “God” in some Greek manuscripts:

The reading which, on the basis of external evidence and transcriptional probability, best explains the rise of the others is ὅς [“who,” “which”]. It is supported by the earliest and best uncials (א\* A\*vid C\* Ggr) as well as by 33 365 442 2127 syrhmg, pal goth ethppOrigenlat Epiphanius Jerome Theodore Eutheriusacc. to Theodoret Cyril Cyrilacc. to Ps-Oecumenius Liberatus. Furthermore, since the neuter relative pronoun ὅ must have arisen as a scribal correction of ὅς (to bring the relative into concord with μυστήριον [mystery]), the witnesses that read ὅ (D\* itd, g, 61. 86 vg Ambrosiaster Marius Victorinus Hilary Pelagius Augustine) also indirectly presuppose ὅς as the earlier reading. The Textus Receptus reads θεός [God], with אe (this corrector is of the twelfth century) A2 C2 Dc K L P Ψ 81 330 614 1739 *Byz Lect* Gregory-Nyssa Didymus Chrysostom Theodoret Euthalius and later Fathers. Thus, no uncial (in the first hand) earlier than the eighth or ninth century (Ψ) supports θεός [God]; all ancient versions presuppose ὅς or ὅ and no patristic writer prior to the last third of the fourth century testifies to the reading θεός. The reading θεός arose either (*a*) accidentally, through the misreading of ΟC as ΘC, or (*b*) deliberately, either to supply a substantive for the following six verbs, or, with less probability, to provide greater dogmatic precision.” [in other words, to more directly support the doctrine of the Trinity].[[38]](#footnote-16969)

When properly translated, 1 Timothy 3:16 actually argues against the Trinity. It all fits with what we know of *the man*, Jesus Christ. If Jesus were God, this section of Scripture would have been the perfect place to say so. Instead of saying that “he was made known in the flesh,” we would expect to see some phrase such as, “God was incarnate,” or “God came in the flesh,” or “he came as true God and true man,” *etc*. But nothing like that occurs. Instead, the section testifies to what non-Trinitarians believe—that Jesus was a man, begotten by the Father, and that he was taken up into glory.

**“revealed.”** The Greek verb is *phaneroō* (#5319 φανερόω), and it is in the passive voice. It means, “to become manifest, to be revealed, to become known, to be made known, to appear: to be plainly recognized, to be thoroughly understood (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon). Jesus Christ was the plan of God, and he “became flesh” at his conception. Until then, what people knew about Jesus was what they read about the promised Messiah in the Bible, and frankly, they misunderstood a lot. They did not know there would be a virgin birth (see commentary on Luke 1:34). They did not understand how his ministry would unfold, so his mother and relatives thought he was out of his mind (Mark 3:21). Whenever Jesus spoke of his death or resurrection, even the apostles and disciples who were close to him were confused and did not know what he meant (see commentary on Luke 18:34). Similarly, they did not understand what Jesus was talking about when he spoke of his ascension into heaven (John 14:5; 16:17-19).

It was when Jesus was “in the flesh” that he was finally made known and more clearly understood, and even more so after his resurrection. The meaning of *phaneroō* includes his appearing in the flesh, that is, his going from the plan of God to actually existing as a person, and it also includes his “becoming known” for who he really was, instead of there being a lot of vague and even false ideas of who he would be as the Messiah.

Trinitarians teach that Jesus’ appearing in the flesh refers to the incarnation, but the word *phaneroō* does not have to refer to that. It can simply mean that Jesus was unknown before, and then appeared (via divine conception) and became known.

**“vindicated in the spirit.”** Being “vindicated” (vs. being “declared righteous”) is the correct translation of the Greek in this context because the resurrection proved Christ to be the Messiah; it did not put Jesus into a right relationship with God. Jesus did not need to be “declared righteous,” because he was always in a right relationship with God. But it was important for him to be vindicated because of all the false claims of his opponents, who tried to undermine his claim to be the Son of God. The phrase, “in the spirit” refers to “in the realm of the spirit” in the fact that he was raised as a spiritual being. 1 Peter 3:18 juxtaposes the realm of the flesh and the realm of the spirit in the same way.

**1 Timothy Chapter 4**

1Tm 4:1

**“distinctly says.”** In contrast to the Christian prophets, the pagan prophets and oracles often stated their prophecies in a way that could not be clearly understood or could be understood in different ways. That may be a reflection of the confusion and lack of knowledge of the future that exists in the demonic world itself. The Christian prophets, on the other hand, gave much more distinct prophecies about people and the future.

**“some will fall away from the faith.”** To “fall away” from the Faith, the Christian Faith, is to abandon the teachings of Christ. The context gives us more detail and says that they will pay attention to deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

**“paying attention.”** The participle can also be causal, so many versions translate it by the word “by” (cf. NRSV, “by paying attention;” cf. CJB, ESV, RSV). The point is that the people’s involvement with evil draws them away from the Christian Faith, and as they are drawn from the Faith, the “dark side” becomes more and more attractive.

**“things taught.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse, bringing *didaskalia* into English as “things taught” seems better than either “teachings” or “doctrines.” The phrase “things taught” includes anything taught by demons, whereas “doctrines” was too limiting.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

1Tm 4:2

**“liars.”** The Greek noun is *pseudologos* (#5573 ψευδολόγος), those who speak (logos) lies (pseudo). It is important that we understand that these people are “liars” from God’s perspective, that is, they are not speaking what is actually true. This verse is not saying that the people themselves know they are lying. Many of them are very sincere and believe what they say is the truth, but it is not. It is because people often speak “lies,” falsehood, without knowing it, that Christians must be so schooled in the truth of God. Sincerity is no guarantee for truth, and Christians must not be deceived by sincerity.

1Tm 4:4

**“For every creation of God is good.”** This is a hyperbolic statement to highlight the freedom that God gives us to eat the good things in His creation in contrast with demonic teaching that seeks to restrict people from the goodness of God’s creation. In this context, “good” refers to foods that are acceptable in God’s eyes. However, not all foods are equally good to eat for health and well-being. A person must rely on wisdom and experience to determine what foods are “good” to eat. This verse is by no means saying that everything in God’s creation is “good” to eat without any other considerations. In fact, some things that would normally be considered “good,” like some species of fish, are poisonous and should never be eaten.

1Tm 4:6

**“doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse, we felt bringing *didaskalia* into English as “doctrine” was better than “teaching” because sound “doctrine” is the fundamental basis for sound teaching, and “good teaching” could be read to mean that the person was a good teacher, but that is not what the verse is saying. The verse is relating the quality of the doctrine being taught, not that the person is teaching well.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

**“closely followed.”** This same word occurs in 2 Timothy 3:10, where it refers to closely following (see commentary on 2 Tim. 3:10).

1Tm 4:7

**“But avoid worldly myths and old wives’ tales.”** In Christian culture, the women often hold together the social fabric of the church. In the Greek culture, it was older women who kept many of the myths alive by passing them down (Cf. Robertson).

**“in godliness.”** This phrase can have two different meanings, both of them important. The first and most basic is that we need to train ourselves to be godly (cf. NIV). We do not “just become” godly. We have to work at it, one thing at a time. The phrase also means, train ourselves “in” godliness, that is, even when we are godly in some aspect of our lives, our training to be like Christ goes on. We are never totally where we want to be.

1Tm 4:8

**“bodily training is profitable for some things.”** Bodily exercise is of some good, and that is correct. In the biblical culture, most people got plenty of exercise, and many were actually hungry or even starving. In the Greek culture, those who exercised did so to excel in some area, such as running, wrestling, javelin throw, etc., or they exercised as a form of religious asceticism, to purify themselves in some way (Cf. Col. 2:23). In any case, bodily training was profitable for a little while, and it is contrasted with godliness, which profits for all time, both in this life (for a little while), and in the life to come.

**“has a promise.”** Being godly in this present life taps into many promises that God makes to those who love and obey Him. In that sense, “a promise” is a collective singular for the fact that there are many individual promises, but they are summed up as “a promise” much in the same way as God has given us many laws, but they are summed up by the statement that God has given us “a law” (cf. Rom. 9:31; Gal. 3:21).

**“the present life and *also* for the life to come.”** The “life to come” is the life in the age to come.

[For more on “the age to come” see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.” For more on what the next age will be like, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth.”]

1Tm 4:9

**“This statement is trustworthy.”** See commentary on 1 Timothy 1:15.

1Tm 4:10

**“who is the savior of all people, especially of those who believe.”** God is the ultimate savior of all people. He is the Author of the plan of salvation, and He sent the Christ and then later raised him from the dead. This verse in Timothy has caused some confusion because people have taken it to mean that God saves everyone, which it does not say. It simply says God is the savior for everyone, meaning that if anyone is going to be saved, then God is going to be the one to save them, which He does via His Son, Jesus Christ. The second part of the verse, “especially of those who believe,” is added because believers are the ones who have accepted God’s offer of salvation and thus will actually be saved. It helps to keep in mind that biblically, we are not “saved” yet. We are said to be saved (cf. Eph. 2:8) because it is promised to those who trust in Christ. But in fact, what we have now is only the promise of salvation. That is why Romans 13:11 says our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed, and why the helmet is called the “hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). It is why Romans 10:9 says that if you confess and believe, you “will be saved” (future tense).

1Tm 4:12

**“in speech.”** That is, in what you say.

**“in conduct.”** That is, in how you conduct yourself; how you live your life.

**“[in spirit.]”** There are later Greek manuscripts that add “in spirit” to the text, but as can be seen from the readings in the early manuscripts, it was a scribal addition. Philip Comfort writes: “The addition of ‘in spirit’ found in the majority of late witnesses [i.e., late manuscripts], is an obvious scribal expansion, perhaps influenced by 2 Tim 1:7.”[[39]](#footnote-17140) Scholars now have over 5,700 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, although almost all of them are parts of the New Testament. Nevertheless, those, along with manuscripts in other ancient languages such as Aramaic and Latin, and also along with quotations of verses in the writings of the early Church Fathers, generally allow modern textual scholars to determine what was added to the original text by scribes. Through the centuries various scribes added to the text of the Bible, but thanks to the work of archeologists, historians, and language experts, most of those changes have been discovered and omitted from the modern versions that rely on modern Greek texts (the New King James is an exception, it is translated from the same basic texts as the King James was).

**“faithfulness.”** The Greek noun we translate as “faithfulness” is *pistis* (#4102 πίστις), which has several meanings, including “faithfulness, reliability,” (Prov. 12:22 LXX; Matt. 23:23; Rom. 3:3; Gal. 5:22); “oath, troth” (3 Macc. 3:10 LXX); “proof, pledge” (Acts 17:31), and “the Christian Faith” (Gal. 1:23). As it was used in the everyday Greek-speaking world, both “faithfulness” and “trust” were very common meanings of *pistis*. However, in the New Testament, *pistis* means “trust” much more than it does “faithfulness.” Nevertheless, we agree with the NET Bible, that in this verse, *pistis* should be translated “faithfulness.” Gene Green writes, “But when viewed within the frame of moral virtue, *pistis* means “faithfulness” or “reliability.”[[40]](#footnote-24347) We feel that in this list in Timothy, Paul is exhorting Timothy to be an example in his faithfulness, something that could be clearly observed by the believers around him.

Of course, *pistis* means both “faithfulness” and “trust,” and the Greek-speaking people reading Paul’s letter in Greek could see that Paul was exhorting Timothy to be an example to the believers in both faithfulness and trust, but that is difficult to express in English without amplifying the text.

[For more on “faith” and “trust,” see Appendix 2: “‘Faith’ is ‘Trust.’”]

1Tm 4:13

**“give attention to.”** Paul is exhorting Timothy to make sure he takes some time to be involved in various aspects of Christian ministry, including reading the Word of God to people, many of whom could not read, and also teaching and exhorting the people. The Greek word translated “give attention to” has been variously translated by different English versions: “devote yourself to” (NIV); “focus on” (NLT); “attend to” (NAB).

**“to *public* reading.”** The context of this verse indicates that Paul meant public reading. At a time when often only a small percentage of the people could read (perhaps 10%), it was very important to read the Bible to the people in the congregation. This was why there was public reading of the Scriptures in the synagogue, as Jesus did in Nazareth (Luke 4:16ff). Several Scriptures mention public reading: Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27. Revelation 1:3 says “he who reads and those who hear” are blessed. “He” would read, because one person would read, and “those” would hear, because usually more than one person would be being read to. This is an example of how a strictly literal translation of the Bible can be misleading. When the average modern Christian reads the phrase, “give yourself to reading,” he does not think of public reading out loud, because almost no one does that today. Instead, he thinks of dedicating himself to his own personal study. Of course, we have to study the Bible to understand it, so personal study is very important, but it is not what this verse is talking about.

**“teaching.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: it is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. Interestingly, we use “teaching” in English in the same way. If, in the middle of the day, someone calls a friend who is a schoolteacher, she may hear, “I can’t talk now, I’m teaching.” In that context, “teaching” is being used as a verb,” the teacher is in the act of teaching. If, on the other hand, the two are walking out of church, one might say to the other, “What did you think of the teaching?” In that context, she is using “teaching” as a noun, and what she means is, “What did you think about what we were taught?” It is the context that determines whether *didaskalia* is the act of teaching or the subject matter that was taught.

*Didaskalia* is used 21 times in the NT. One of the problems we have in translating from the Greek to English is that in almost every use of *didaskalia*, we have to separate the act of teaching from what is taught (the doctrine). Most English versions use “teaching” for the act of teaching, and “doctrine” or “what is taught” for the subject matter that is taught. But in Greek, there are times when the Scripture verse can easily refer to both the teaching and what is taught (this is a kind of amphibologia.)[[41]](#footnote-16406) A good example is Titus 1:9, where we encourage with “sound *didaskalia*.” In that verse, both “teaching” and “doctrine” fit perfectly, because we encourage with sound teaching (not all teaching is “doctrine”), and we encourage with sound “doctrine.” The Greek reader instinctively sees both meanings in the word, but that is not true of English, where we usually have to make a distinction.

In this verse, “teaching” is preferable to “doctrine” because it fits better within the list of active practices: public reading and exhortation.

[See Word Study: “Amphibologia.”]

1Tm 4:14

**“which was given to you *and then confirmed* through prophecy.”** The individual gifts that any Christian has are given by Christ (Eph. 4:7-12), and God places people in the Body of Christ where it pleases Him (1 Cor. 12:18). Often, the gifts that a person receives are then recognized by the Church through prophecy.

The word “through” is from the Greek preposition *dia* (#1223 διά) which has many different meanings according to the context, one referring to attendant circumstances.[[42]](#footnote-32243) In this case, it seems clear that the prophecies did not confer the ministry, but were a public recognition that Timothy had the gift of teaching due to the ministry that Timothy had already demonstrated in his life.

[For more information on Timothy’s ordination, see commentary on 2 Tim. 1:6.]

1Tm 4:15

**“Keep cultivating.”** The Greek word translated “keep cultivating” is *meletaō* (#3191 μελετάω), and it means “to improve by care or study.”[[43]](#footnote-19474) In context, it can be translated as “to practice, cultivate.”[[44]](#footnote-29484) Paul is exhorting Timothy to press into his gift and to continue to develop his aptitude for his ministry. By Paul’s subsequent exhortation to Timothy to “give yourself wholly to them,” we see that Paul is making sure to emphasize the fact that Timothy’s devotion to ministry is of great importance, both to Timothy personally and to the Body of Christ.

**“these things.”** The phrase “these things” refers back to 1 Timothy 4:13, which gives some of the “things” involved in the outworking of Timothy’s gift.

**“so that your progress is obvious to all.”** It is important that ministers grow in godliness, and it is also important that the Body of Christ sees the effort that the ministers make to be godly and the progress they make in their own lives. The “so that” is a result clause, i.e., with the result that your progress will be obvious to everyone.

1Tm 4:16

**“teaching.”** The idea of the text is, “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching,” meaning, “Pay close attention to yourself and to the teaching that you do.” The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt bringing *didaskalia* into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because the subjects the verse is speaking about need to be covered by more than just “doctrine,” i.e., more than just is written down as commands, but “sound teaching,” which involves logic and logical deductions from all God has given us. Of course, sound “doctrine” is the fundamental basis for sound teaching.

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

In this verse, Paul writes about “the teaching.” From the Greek grammar alone it is uncertain whether Paul is specifying whether Timothy is to pay close attention to what he teaches or whether Timothy is supposed to be paying attention to what is being taught. If Paul intends the phrase to refer to Timothy’s teaching, then it could be translated “your teaching.” It seems that Paul’s encouragement is for Timothy to continue in teaching, but it does not appear to necessarily mean Timothy’s teaching alone. The fact that Paul ends by saying, “those who hear you,” suggests that Paul is speaking primarily to Timothy about his teaching. A leader is not just responsible to God for what he teaches in his church, but also for what everyone teaches in his church.

**1 Timothy Chapter 5**

1Tm 5:2

**“the younger women as sisters—with all purity.”** Any time a man, and perhaps especially a young man, tries to correct a young woman, there is the possibility of accusations of sexual impropriety. It is important for men to work with women in a way that ensures purity. Although it is grammatically possible for the phrase “with all purity” to modify the entire list of older men, younger men, older women, and younger women, the emphasis seems to be on making sure of the purity of the relationship between men in leadership and younger women.

1Tm 5:3

**“Honor.”** This “honor” included financial support, as we can see from the next verse.

**“who are truly widows.”** In the eyes of the Church, a genuine widow is one who has no family to support her, not just a woman whose husband is dead.

1Tm 5:4

**“let them first learn to show godliness.”** The advice in this verse is that if a person is a widow but has children or grandchildren, do not take money from the Church to support the widow, but instead let those children or grandchildren support the woman and thus repay in some sense the widow for all that she did when she was raising them. The “widow” here is said to be a woman because generally in the culture the widow in need was a woman, and furthermore, men could almost always find work to do that would sustain them).

**“parents.”** The Greek word does not strictly mean “parent,” but means more like “ancestors,” i.e., those family who have gone before you, including, parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., any ancestor that was still alive and needed support.

1Tm 5:6

**“she who lives for pleasure.”** The same concept is in James 5:5.

1Tm 5:7

“**And command these things.”** In 1 Timothy 5:1-6, Paul has been giving advice to Timothy. But here in 1 Timothy he commands Timothy not to keep these instructions to himself, but to communicate them to the entire church.

1Tm 5:8

**“for his own.”** Generally, this refers to one’s own family, extended family, or relatives, but in some contexts it can refer to fellow believers (cf. Acts 4:23; 24:23).

**“he has denied the faith.”** In this context, “the faith” is the Christian Faith and all that entails about loving one another and giving to others.

1Tm 5:10

**“hospitality.”** The Greek word here is *xenodocheō* (#3580 ξενοδοχέω). It is partially comprised of the Greek word for “stranger or guest friend,” *xenos* (#3581 ξένος). The word designates hospitality, particularly to those who are not immediately within one’s private circle: “to receive and show hospitality to a stranger, that is, someone who is not regarded as a member of the extended family or a close friend” (Louw-Nida). However, this does not necessarily refer to “total strangers,” as a *xenos* could very well be an acquaintance.

**“washed the feet of the holy ones*.”*** Washing the feet of people who came to visit, particularly if they came from a distance and would have had dirty and tired feet, was an ancient custom and a fundamental part of showing hospitality. We see it in Genesis all the way through the New Testament. The ordinary way that a person’s feet were washed was similar to the way that a person’s hands were washed after eating: a bowl was placed under the feet, then water was poured over the feet into the bowl, and then the feet were dried with a cloth. Often the water used was scented or perfumed in some fashion. It was considered the most hospitable to wash a guest’s feet, and that would certainly be the case if the homeowner had a servant, but it appears that sometimes the water and towel were provided and the person washed their own feet. In a household with servants, it was the job of the lowest of them to wash the feet, and thus when Abigail, who had been the wife of Nabal, wanted to express her humble and deep thanks to David, she said, “Behold, your servant is a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord” (1 Sam. 25:41).

The need for foot washing was nearly universal in ancient towns. The streets were covered with garbage and sewage, and since ancient cities usually had very narrow streets, many of them were shaded most of the day. Furthermore, the weather in Israel and much of the ancient Near East was such that there was a rainy season and a dry season, and in the dry season, which usually lasted in Israel from late April to mid-October, garbage and sewage in the streets could pile up for months. Gregory Aldrete writes about the city of Rome and other larger cities which had very large problems, but the same basic problems as other smaller cities and towns. Aldrete writes:

“The streets of Rome were breeding grounds for numerous disease-causing organisms due to the widespread presence of human and animal cadavers in various states of decomposition as well as the copious quantities of raw sewage deposited in the streets.

“The normal course of events produced enormous numbers of dead bodies, many of which were not properly disposed of. The truly impoverished who could not afford to join a burial club or who lacked nearby family members to cremate or bury their bodies, along with Rome’s large population of homeless and beggars, simply lay where they dropped or else were thrown into the Tiber [River] or into open pits just outside the city. It has been estimated that the city of Rome produced perhaps 1,500 such unclaimed [human] bodies per year [and many animal bodies as well].

“A number of literary anecdotes vividly illustrate the presence of both bodies and scavenging animals in the streets of the city. The poet Martial describes the gruesome death of a beggar whose last moments are spent trying to fend off the dogs and vultures that have gathered to feed on him (Martial, *Epigrams* 10.5).

“Although Rome possessed some sewers, their purpose was more to provide drainage than to actually carry away waste. While latrines were sometimes present in buildings…most often they were not, suggesting that people relieved themselves in the streets or in chamber pots. Unfortunately, most city inhabitants appear to have emptied their chamber pots by simply dumping them out the windows of their dwellings. Much of Rome’s garbage and sewage seems to have ended up in the streets. This was no small problem since, at its height, Rome’s human inhabitants were producing about 50,000 kilograms [over 55 tons] of excrement each day. … Rome’s animals certainly also contributed to the general level of filth. Thus the streets of the city probably more closely resembled open sewers than our modern notion of roadways.”[[45]](#footnote-19513)

Aldrette’s description of Rome’s streets more closely resembling sewers than roads was true of many cities, and we can see why foot washing was considered a job for the lowest slave in the household. We can then also see why if a woman had done service tasks for visitors, including washing the feet of the guests, she could be seen to be worthy of financial help from other believers.

**“diligently pursued.”** The Greek is *epakoloutheō* (#1872 ἐπακολουθέω), and it can mean to follow after, or follow closely after (if it is used that way here, it would be idiomatic, like a disciple following closely after the teacher), however, it is more likely that in this case, it takes on the meaning of “devote yourself to” or “diligently pursue.”

**“all kinds of good works.”** The Greek is more literally, “every good work,” but it is idiomatic and refers to doing all kinds of good works. No person could be devoted to “every” good work, there is not enough time in a person’s life to accomplish that.

1Tm 5:11

**“they desire to marry.”** It is not wrong for a young widow to desire to marry. However, if the widow has made a commitment to Christ and accepted money to live off of from the Church because of that commitment, it is wrong for her to then ignore her commitment and marry.

1Tm 5:12

**“incur judgment.”** The woman would “incur judgment,” meaning that she would be judged by other Christians as being unfaithful to her commitment to stay single and accept help from the Church.

**“former pledge.”** The Greek text is perhaps more literally, “first faith,” but here the Greek word “*pistis*,” which is usually used as “faithfulness” or “trust,” is being used of a pledge or promise.

1Tm 5:14

**“manage the household.”** The Greek word translated by the phrase “manage the household” is *oikodespoteō*, (#3616 οἰκοδεσποτέω). It is a compound word built from *oikos* (house, household), and *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης), which means, “lord, master, owner.” God is referred to as a *despotēs* in Luke 2:29 and Acts 4:24, and Jesus is in 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4; Revelation 6:10, and likely in 2 Timothy 2:21, and it was common for Greeks and Romans to refer to the gods as *despotēs* because they were thought to have great power and use it in their own best interest. In 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18, a *despotēs* is a slave owner. When *oikos* and *despotēs* are combined into *oikodespoteō*, the word refers to one who is to rule a household or manage family affairs. This is a very powerful word, and it has been largely ignored by the Church, which has historically been committed to the teaching that the man is the head of the house, and the woman must obey him unconditionally.

To get the truth on any subject, we must be careful to listen to what God is teaching us in the Scripture, because Scripture does not contradict itself. The Word of God does say that the husband is to be the head of the wife (Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3). However, it also says that there is neither male nor female in Christ (Gal. 3:28), and that we are to submit to each other (Eph. 5:21), which indicates that there must be spheres of responsibility in the Church and in the family. 1 Timothy 5:14 lays out part of the sphere of responsibility of the woman, in that she is to rule the house. The man has responsibilities, among other things, to provide for and protect the family, and to lead it spiritually. A man who lets his wife or family go without spiritual leadership is not acting as head of the woman and family.

It is noteworthy that the text says the woman is to “rule” the house, using *oikodespoteō* (house despot) and not using *kurios*, “lord” (thus, “be the house lord”). Richard Trench writes: A man, according to the later Greek grammarians, was δεσπότης [“despot, tyrant”) in respect of his slaves...but κύριος [“lord”] in regard of his wife and children; who in speaking either to him or of him, would give him this title of honor; ‘as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord’”[[46]](#footnote-27073) (1 Pet. 3:6). R. C. H. Lenski clarifies what Trench wrote, and says, “Oxen are under a yoke and are driven by the will of their owner. That, too, is why Paul does not use κύριος but δεσπότης to designate their master. ...‘lord’ is one who exercises dominion, ‘δεσπότης’ (from which our ‘despot’ is derived) is one who exercises domination.”[[47]](#footnote-17684)

In most ancient societies, men were outside the house working during the day, while women were at home with the children, taking care of them and the house. In that context, it was clear the woman was to “rule the house.” However, this verse does not say “rule the house while the man is at work” or otherwise gone. God has placed it in the hearts of women to care about and oversee the house in a way that most men do not (there are always exceptions), and God has given women the authority to rule that matches their desire to have their house a certain way. Thus, it is not unusual for women to want certain furniture, certain colors, and specific ways for things to be done in the house. It is godly for the members of the house, including the husband, to submit to those desires. Of course, the authority to rule the house comes with responsibilities. Just as God and Christ are also *despotēs*, and have a responsibility to do things in a way that provides for the welfare of those in their care, so the woman has the responsibility to run the household in a way that cares for those who live in the house, and interweaves graciously with the responsibility of the husband to be the family head.

It is worth noting that the full impact of this verse has sometimes not been seen due to the way that *oikodespoteō* is translated. Translations in some of the English versions such as “guide the house,” “keep house,” or “be the mistress of the house,” do not really communicate forcefully enough the authority and responsibility of the wife when it comes to her house.

**“the Opposer.”** The Greek word translated as “opposer” is *antikeimai* (#480 ἀντίκειμαι), and it refers to someone who is in opposition, or an opposer. This is one of the many names for the Devil. God uses many different names to describe His arch-enemy, the Devil. The very next verse, 1 Tim. 5:15, uses a different name, the Adversary. The Opposer is a very good name for the Devil—the Slanderer—because he always opposes God.

[For more on the names of the Devil, including “the Opposer” and “the Slanderer,” see Appendix 8: “Names of the Devil.”]

1Tm 5:15

**“the Adversary.”** The Greek word for Adversary is *Satanas* (#4567 Σατανᾶς), which has been transliterated as “Satan” in most versions. This causes the meaning of the word, which is important, to be lost. See commentary on 1 Timothy 1:20.

1Tm 5:16

**“has widows *in her household*.”** In this context, the woman who “has widows,” means that these widows are part of her extended family and would be considered “in her household” in biblical times. We see from 1 Timothy 5:3 that those who are “truly widows” have no children or grandchildren.

1Tm 5:17

**“double honor.”** The Greek word translated “honor” is *timē* (#5092 τιμή), and it has a double meaning. It can refer to “honor” in the sense of esteem or reverence but also money and compensation. There has been a lot of discussion about which meaning Paul intended here. Most commentators acknowledge that the word “honor” can be taken financially, and thus be a reference to “double pay” of some sort. However, it does seem that if the phrase was about extra pay of some sort that there would likely be in the text some idea of what was being doubled, for example, double the pay of a deacon, double the pay that the Church gives to widows, or something. But the phrase simply reads “double honor,” suggesting that Paul is saying that elders who lead well are to be given “double honor,” meaning extra respect, not “double compensation.”

**“in *proclaiming* the word.”** The Greek is simply, “in Word,” and in juxtaposition with “teaching” refers to communicating the Word. That is why most English versions have “preaching.”

**“teaching.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt bringing *didaskalia* into English as “teaching” was better than “doctrine,” because the subjects the verse is speaking about need to be covered by more than just “doctrine,” i.e., more than just is written down as commands, but “sound teaching,” which involves logic and logical deductions from all God has given us. Of course, sound “doctrine” is the fundamental basis for sound teaching. Good teaching does not just happen. It is the result of diligent study and prayer. It is a “labor of love.”

[For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13.]

1Tm 5:19

**“except on *the basis of* two or three witnesses.”** There are two primary ways this verse has been interpreted. The first, but least accepted, is that an accusation should not be received against an elder except “in the presence of” two or three witnesses. In other words, before Timothy (or any other leader), could hear an accusation against an elder, he would have to gather two or more witnesses to make sure the case was heard accurately. This does not seem to be what the verse is saying. The issue does not seem to be how clearly the case is heard, but rather, how decisively the case is made, which leads us to the second and far more prevalent translation of the verse, including the REV. It was standard practice in Jewish law that there had to be two witnesses to any act before it could be conclusively adjudicated (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28).

This is to prevent malicious accusers from tearing the Church apart. If an elder does something offensive, the individual wronged is to go to the person and work out the problem. If there is no solution, he or she is to take others (Matthew 18:15-17). At that point, there would be witnesses. This is to be a general practice. It is not to be a law that allows for unrighteousness to continue. The Bible is not against common sense, and one of the requirements of leaders is that they are to be “reasonable,” and we write in the commentary on 1 Timothy 3:3 above:

“The concepts of “moderation, forbearance, gentleness, sweet reasonableness” all touch a side of the full meaning of this word. The meaning is yielding, not insisting on one’s legal rights to the end that the legal rights become moral wrongs.”

If a leader had case after case where usually credible people said that they were spoken or acted against one on one by a certain individual in leadership, but that the leader had denied what he had done when the wronged person went to him to rectify the situation, and again when the individual went back to the leader with witnesses about both the original problem and the denial, then “reason” would dictate that the accused leader must be doing something wrong, or so many people would not witness to the same fault in his life. Leaders are to have a good report among the people, and when that ceases to be the case, the leader will cease to be effective and should step out of leadership, or be removed by others.

1Tm 5:20

**“*will be afraid of the consequences*.”** Some of the consequences would be the shame of public rebuke, the consequences of the sin itself, and the consequences meted out as Church discipline.

1Tm 5:21

**“chosen angels.”** The “chosen angels” are all the angels who remained faithful to God and did not participate in Satan’s rebellion against God. They are “chosen” by God because they chose God, in the same way that Christian believers are “chosen” because they chose God (cf. Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12).

The Greek word translated “chosen” is *eklektos* (#1588 ἐκλεκτός) which in theological circles is referred to as “elect.” There are long-lasting debates about the meaning of “elect” between Calvinists, who believe humans cannot make the free will choice to be saved, and Arminians, who believe that humans can make the free will choice to be saved. Calvinists teach that God “elects” people to salvation and then, because of “irresistible grace,” they believe. Arminians believe that people see the value of being saved and then choose to believe God and be saved, and God then responds by choosing them for salvation. The REV is translated from an Arminian perspective.

Paul believed and taught that angels watched Christians (1 Cor. 4:9). Given that, we should ask why Paul would use the term “chosen angels” here and not just “angels” as he does in other verses. It is likely that here in 1 Timothy 5:21, Paul used the term “chosen angels” because Timothy was in Ephesus, which was a hotbed for magic and demonic activity (cf. Acts 19:12-30). Ephesus would have been a place where the spiritual war between Good and Evil was openly on display, and “evil angels” (demons) were very active. No doubt that among new Christians a common question would be, “Where do demons come from?” The biblical answer is that the demons were angels who decided to follow Satan and join in his rebellion against God. In contrast, the “chosen angels (“elect angels”) chose to follow God in the same way that “elect believers” elected to follow God and Christ.

There are things that are sometimes wrongly assumed about the “elect angels” that are not stated in the Bible and/or are unhelpful to believe. For example, it is sometimes said that “elect angels” means “holy angels,” but if Paul had meant to say “holy angels” it seems he would have, besides, it is a given that angels are holy, so there would be no need to say that. Also, it is sometimes taught that the “elect angels” are the ruling angels, such as the archangels. Again, however, if Paul wanted to say “ruling angels” it seems he would have. More to the point, however, is that Paul does not use the word “elect” to mean “ruling.” The “elect” Christians are not the ruling Christians, all of them are “chosen” (“elect”) Christians because they chose (“elected”) God.

Lenski writes: “This mention of angels should be combined with all the other passages in which Paul indicates his view of the world. To him angels were spectators of what happens in the church (1 Cor. 4:9), ranged under Christ (Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10); present in the services of the church (1 Cor. 11:10). …The [Greek] word *eklektoi*, which is here applied to angels is certainly to be understood in the same sense as when it is applied to God’s ‘elect’ among men.”[[48]](#footnote-14277)

It is also sometimes taught that the “elect angels” are the souls of dead believers who have died and gone to heaven, and thus these “angels” are different from the angels that God originally created. However, that is an assumption; the Bible never makes that statement. Furthermore, when a believer dies they do not become an angel. In fact, the dead believer is dead in the ground awaiting the Rapture or the resurrection of the dead.

In the context of 1 Timothy 5:7-21, which is about faithful and unfaithful elders, it makes sense that Paul charged Timothy in the presence of the “chosen angels” because they were the angels who stayed faithful to God while other angels did not. Faithful elders and leaders should be encouraged by the faithful angels.

[For more on Calvinism and its belief that God chooses who will be saved and who will not be saved, see Appendix 9: “On Calvinism and Predestination.” For more on the dead being dead until Jesus raises them from the dead, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”]

**“out of.”** This is not the Greek word *ek* but *kata*. The Greek way of speaking was to say, “do nothing *according to* (*kata*) favoritism (or “partiality”) but we would not normally word it that way in English. So the REV reads, “doing nothing out of favoritism,” which fits better with modern English usage. The “favoritism” spoken of in this verse refers to the honoring and rebuking of elders (1 Tim. 5:19-20). We are not to pay double honor only to ministers we particularly like, nor are we to overlook the sins of those in leadership whom we are well disposed toward. Instead, the solemn charge of honoring and rebuking is to be kept without favoritism or prejudice.

1Tm 5:22

**“and *thus* share *responsibility* for the sins of others.”** Compare NASB and NET translations. The laying on of hands describes the implementing of a leadership position in the Church; this verse falls in the context of eldership and moral requirements for leaders (see commentary on 1 Tim. 5:24). We are instructed not to lay hands on anyone *too hastily*, lest we share in the responsibility for their sins (cf. NASB’s translation); that is, if we establish a morally corrupt leader by neglecting the requirements laid out in chapter 3 or not first testing them to be proved beyond reproach (1 Tim. 3:10), then we heap upon ourselves a portion of the responsibility for the damage they will cause the people of God and the name of Christ. This is reminiscent of the spiritual Watchman God speaks of in Ezekiel 3:17-21; 33:2-9. In order for a watchman to “keep pure” and not share in the other man’s transgression, he had to speak what God had commanded him to say to the one in sin. If he did not speak against their sin, but let them go merrily on their way, then God charged the Watchmen also with the blame. So it is with elders who lay hands on those to put them into leadership positions. If they do not hold to the requirements of 1 Timothy 3 and rebuke those who sin (1 Tim. 5:20), they share in the sins of that leader.

1Tm 5:23

**“Do not continue to drink *only* water.”** At first glance, 1 Timothy 5:23 does not seem to fit into the context. Paul is speaking of choosing leaders in the Church in 1 Timothy 5:22, and continues that thought in 1 Timothy 5:24, so why add this verse about Timothy’s health? Paul ends 1 Timothy 5:22 with “keep yourself pure,” and that is a lot easier to do if you are feeling well. Being sick often leads to people taking short-cuts, not paying attention to detail, not diligently doing necessary tasks, etc., and Paul is continuing to coach his disciple Timothy on how to be a good leader as well as show by personal example how a good leader looks out for the people under his care.

It was customary to drink wine in the Roman world, so it is worth asking why Timothy apparently did not drink it, particularly when the water-only diet was obviously hurting his health. The answer seems to be apparent from reading Ephesians. Timothy was in Ephesus, and the Ephesian church had a problem with drinking. Of the seven Church Epistles, Ephesians is the only one that mentions being drunk: “And do not be drunk with wine, which leads to reckless actions….”

Timothy had apparently tried to set a good example to the Ephesians by not drinking wine at all, in spite of the ill effects it had on him. Paul corrects him, and tells him to go back to drinking some wine. This should be a good lesson for leaders. It often happens that leaders want so badly for their congregation to live righteous lives that they abstain from things that never needed to be abstained from in the first place, but so many people were being abusive that the leader thought abstinence was the best course. While there are situations in which that is the case, it is usually better to teach people to obey God, which includes moderation in most things, and allow them to be responsible before the Lord for their own lives. It is often better to set the example that moderation is both godly and possible than to simply abstain.

1Tm 5:24

**“The sins of some people are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them.”** The context of this verse most clearly starts in 1 Timothy 5:22, when Paul is instructing Timothy about choosing leaders in the Church. Some people who want to be leaders are visibly sinful, and so when it comes to making a judgment about whether or not they should be a leader, the decision is relatively easy to make. 1 Timothy 5:24 teaches a great truth especially helpful for leaders in the Body of Christ to understand—for this is in the context of eldership (1 Tim. 5:17-25). Paul is talking about the administering of leadership roles in the church, and he has already laid out the moral requirements for leadership positions (1 Tim. 3:1-14). Here in chapter 5, he is addressing the protocol for when a practicing elder fails to meet the mark (1 Tim. 5:19-21) and what to look for when admitting new people into leadership by the “laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 5:22). All leaders are to be held accountable to the same moral standard: “observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of partiality” (1 Tim. 5:21). Thus, the word “judgment” here in verse 24 does not refer to God’s Day of Judgment but rather the judgment we must make about others when considering their qualifications. R. C. H. Lenski points out that, as with any leader who picks others to serve, “Timothy is obliged to render [judgments] when he is accepting or rejecting applicants for the eldership.” Only with all this context in mind can we see the application of this verse for leaders.”[[49]](#footnote-30470)

**“but with some people they are revealed later.”** Some people’s sins go out before them, like a trumpet declaring them unfit for representing the Church in a leadership role, but with others, their sins are revealed later, sadly, often when they are already in a position of leadership. The genuine character of a person cannot stay concealed forever, even if they can fool some people for a short time. Eventually, if someone is an ungodly leader it will come out into the open, and in such cases, the other leaders must “reprove them in the sight of all” (1 Tim. 5:20).

It is essential for the health and growth of the Christian Church that when leaders are chosen to lead the flock of God, these men and women are well-qualified, spiritual, Christ-like people. Weak, self-willed, and sinful leaders hurt the Church both directly, by hurting God’s people, and indirectly, by making Christianity a laughingstock or object of ridicule to others. Leaders have such a huge impact on the Church that it is irresponsible for one leader to bring another person into leadership in the Church too quickly, without doing due diligence about the person. Thus, the Word of God exhorts leaders not to lay hands hastily on anyone, because if a leader does that, he is partly responsible (he “partakes of”) the sins of the other (1 Tim. 5:22).

**1 Timothy Chapter 6**

1Tm 6:1

**“All who are slaves, *being* under the yoke.”** By using the common understanding of “under the yoke” referring to slavery, Paul removes any ambiguity in the Greek word *doulos*, which can refer to a slave or a servant. Also, he obviates the undesirable position of being a slave and encourages people to be godly in spite of their ungodly position in life. Literally, oxen are “under the yoke” and are driven whenever and wherever the owner wants, and that was also the undesirable position of a Roman slave. Paul makes no explanation or excuses for why some people are born into high society while others are born into slavery or are enslaved for other reasons. He simply instructs people to make the best of their situation so they are rewarded in the future.

**“masters.”** The Greek is *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης), meaning master or lord, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cf. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9). It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4; see commentary on Luke 2:29). Wives are to be the “house despots” (see commentary on 1 Tim. 5:14)

**“doctrine.”** The Greek word is *didaskalia* (#1319 διδασκαλία), a noun, and it has two primary meanings: It is used of the act of teaching or instruction (as if it were a verb), and it is also used for what is taught, i.e., the doctrine or material that was presented. In this verse we felt “doctrine” was better than “teaching,” because the subject is about what is taught, not the way it is taught. Unbelievers mock Christians because of their beliefs and doctrine. For more on *didaskalia* see commentary on 1 Tim. 4:13).

**“blasphemed.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation. In this context, the *blasphēmeō* is directed toward God and God’s doctrine. Therefore, the English word “blasphemy” is appropriate.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

1Tm 6:2

**“masters.”** See commentary on 1 Timothy 6:1.

**“brothers or sisters.”** The Greek plural “brothers” can refer to either men or women; women could and did own slaves. Thus, a slave could be owned by a Christian man or woman.

1Tm 6:3

**“doctrine.”** See commentary on 1 Timothy 6:1.

**“sound words.”** The Greek word is *hugiainō* (#5198) and it means “healthy” or “sound” (“correct, free from error”). In this context *hugiainō* refers to words that are correct and free from error, but because of that they are “healthy” words, they produce health and healing to those who hear them and heed them. The Bible is full of “healthy words,” which is why regularly reading a good translation of the Bible leads to healthy thinking and then to a healthy life.

**“and with the doctrine that leads to godliness.”** This is similar in syntax to Titus 1:1 (see commentary on Titus 1:1). An alternate translation might be, “and with godly doctrine,” meaning that the false and different doctrine does not agree with godly doctrine. Some versions of the Bible are translated that way. Note that “godliness” is not subjective; that is, we do not get to decide what is godly behavior. God created the heavens and earth, and humans, and He decides what godliness is. We conform to His standards, we are not able to make our standards be genuine godliness. We would just be fooling ourselves and suffer for it on the Day of Judgment.

1Tm 6:4

**“conceited.”** In this context, “conceited” means to have an inflated opinion of one’s own worth.

**“knowing nothing.”** In this context, “knowing nothing” actually means “understanding nothing.” A person can know a lot of facts, but unless they are connected into a big picture and applied in life, it seems the person “knows nothing.” Also, the Word of God teaches us that “The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge,” (Prov. 1:7), and if a person does not use his respect for, and even fear of, God as the beginning point of his knowledge, then he can end up with lots of worldly knowledge but annihilated in the Lake of Fire.

[For more on annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”

**“slander.”** The Greek noun is *blasphēmia* (#988 βλασφημία, pronounced blas-fay-'me-ah) and was used of someone speaking against another. The primary meaning as it was used in the Greek culture was showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmia*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“evil suspicions.”** When a person’s doctrine is wrong, then they look with “evil suspicions” upon others. A person who cannot look on others with a sound mind and godly thoughts because he does not have a sound mind, ends up looking on others with evil suspicions. We are familiar with this among unbelievers. The Roman unbelievers looked upon the Christians with evil suspicions because they thought the Christians were bringing the wrath of the gods upon Rome due to their refusing to worship those gods. But misinformed Christians do the same thing, and look with evil suspicion upon other Christians who do not worship, or dress, or pray, or believe like they do.

1Tm 6:5

**“robbed of the truth.”** The Greek word translated as “robbed” is *apostereō* (#650 ἀποστερέω), and it means to rob, defraud, or deprive.

The truth was available to these corrupt people, but they let “the Thief” rob them of it by lies and deceit, usually because truth and obeying God were not a high priority for them, whereas wealth and influence were more attractive. The people were “robbed, defrauded,” but they let themselves be due to ungodly desires. Often, people want so badly to be recognized or be different from everyone else that they are easily led into error. To many people, “doing what others have done” is not the path they want to take, even when doing what others have done means following someone else in the way of truth. For those people, doing “godliness” their way is a way to gain financially and in other ways as well. The truly godly person is concerned about obedience, truth, and others, and lets gain come if it does, but it certainly is not a goal.

**“godliness is a means of *procuring* gain.”** The Greek word *porismos* (#4200 πορισμός), translated “gain” in 1 Timothy 6:5, predominantly refers to material gain, such as money or wealth, but also has an extended meaning that can refer to any advantage or benefit. In the context of the false teachers and people who are opposing Timothy, Paul may have in mind the growing influence and reputation and power that some people in the Church were trying to obtain. True “godliness” is not “a means of procuring gain,” so it is clear that when Paul uses “godliness,” he is speaking in terms of the assumption in the minds of the corrupt people, who saw that acting like a “godly” leader in the Church as a way of getting personal gain. For example, they could make money by teaching in the Church, regardless of whether their teaching agreed with the sound words of Jesus Christ. Paul also dealt with this perspective in Corinth when he referred to people who peddled the word of God for profit (see 2 Cor. 2:17).

1Tm 6:6

**“is great gain.”** The Bible says a lot about being content and not laboring to get rich (cf. Prov. 23:4; Luke 12:15; 1 Tim. 6:8-10; Heb. 13:5. See commentary on Prov. 23:4).

1Tm 6:7

**“and we are not able to carry anything out of it.”** The common vernacular saying is, “You can’t take it with you.” If no one can take anything with them when they die, which is the case, then how do we get anything in the next life? The answer is that IF we have earned any reward, we will be repaid by God and the Lord Jesus when we get to the next life. There are many verses that speak of a person getting what they deserve at the Judgment, be it good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; e.g., Job 34:11, Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 32:19; Ezek. 33:20, Matt. 10:41-42; 16:27, Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; Col. 3:23-25; 1 Thess. 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:19; Heb. 11:24-26; 1 John 2:28; 2 John 1:8). The Fool works to build wealth in this life; the Wise Person works to build rewards in the next life.

Everyone should want lots of rewards when Christ returns, so wisdom dictates that we live today in such a way that we receive those rewards in the next life.

1Tm 6:8

**“clothing.”** The Greek word more technically means “covering” and can refer to shelter, but in this context, “clothing” seems to fit the context best. Often the poorest people had only a heavy outer garment and used it for shelter from the elements as well as considering it clothing.

1Tm 6:9

**“are determined to be rich.”** The Greek word translated “are determined” is *boulomai* (#1014 βούλομαι, pronounced 'boo-lo-my), and it means to have a purpose, an intent; to plan, to desire something. It means more than *thelō*, “want,” but to combine that desire with purpose. Thus, here it refers to people who are determined to be rich. There are a number of verses in which God warns people about making it a goal to be rich (cf. Prov. 23:4; Luke 12:15; Heb. 13:5. See commentary on Prov. 23:4).

**“ruin.”** The Greek word translated “destruction” is *olethros* (#3639 ὄλεθρος), which occurs four times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:3; 2 Thess. 1:9; and 1 Tim. 6:9). The word means *desolation* or *destruction* (see commentary on 1 Corinthians 5:5, “destruction”).

**“destruction.”** The English word “destruction” is the translation of the Greek word *apōleia* (#684 ἀπώλεια), which is a very strong and usually irrevocable destruction. Both *olethros* and *apōleia* refer to destruction, with *apōleia* being the stronger word, so 1 Timothy 6:9 is a strong warning for Christians not to get ensnared in “get rich” schemes that usually involve some form of immorality and ungodliness.

1Tm 6:10

**“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.”** It is often said that “Money is the root of all evil.” That is not what the Bible says. First, it is not money, but the love of money that is the problem. Second, a proper understanding of the Greek text shows that it is not “the root of all evil,” but rather “a root of all kinds of evil,” and many modern Bibles understand the verse that way (cf. ASV, CJB, CSB, ESV, MOUNCE, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV). Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, “The one who loves money will not be satisfied with money,” and that is the truth.

1Tm 6:11

**“But you, O man of God.”** Paul wrote the epistle of 1 Timothy to Timothy, but the lessons in it apply to all Christians. All Christians are to pursue righteousness, godliness, trust, love, endurance, *and* meekness.

1Tm 6:12

**“fight.”** The Greek verb translated as “fight” is *agōnizomai* (#75 ἀγωνίζομαι), and it is also used of the “contest” in the sporting games like wrestling, running, javelin throwing, etc. That explains why some English versions do not have “fight,” but have “contend” or some similar word (e.g., CEB, Darby, LSV, NAB, NET, REB).

The Greek word *agōnizomai* is a verb and, as most Americans learn in grade school, a verb implies action. The Christian does not fight the good fight by being alone and contemplating God throughout their life. We fight by getting out in the world and confronting evil and spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ. In this case, as Lenski says, the verb is a “durative present,”[[50]](#footnote-11649) meaning something like “fight and continue to fight.” The fight for the Christian Faith and the fight between good and evil never goes away, so the Christian must prepare for that and not tire in the battle.

**“life in the age *to come*.”** This is the everlasting life that begins with the new Messianic Age, the Millennial Kingdom.

[See Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

**“confessed the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.”** When Jesus confessed before Pilate (1 Tim. 6:13), he told Pilate who he was. Similarly, the “good confession” of Timothy was likely nothing more than the confession he made before witnesses when he confessed Christ as Lord. The event is not recorded in the Bible or history, but it was a common thing for people to openly confess Christ as lord, so Paul simply states it as a matter of fact, not anything that needs documentation.

1Tm 6:13

**“I charge you.”** The words themselves and the fact that the Greek verb is imperative show the seriousness of this charge. Paul charges Timothy to keep the commandments and live above reproach, which at that time in that culture, Timothy could only do at the risk of his life. Jesus led the way, now Paul charges Timothy “in the presence of God...and Jesus Christ” to follow Christ and fight the good fight of faith.

**“God, who gives life to all things.”** This is not just a nice reminder of the Genesis record of God creating the world. Timothy (and Paul) are both facing the very good possibility of death. In that circumstance, it is good to be reminded that God “gives life to all things,” including the dead, and that which is sown in weakness is raised in power, and that which is corruptible when it is sown is incorruptible when it is raised (1 Cor. 15:42-43). Believers need not fear death; Jesus conquered death. Like the song says, “Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over his foes.”

**“who *made* the good confession in his testimony before Pontius Pilate.”** The Greek literally reads, “who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate. The point that Paul is making is that when Jesus was before Pilate, he gave a testimony that consisted of a “good confession.” Jesus spoke the truth to Pilate. Jesus knew he would be crucified, but there was always a possibility that Pilate might believe the truth and Jesus would have been crucified by someone else—everyone can make the freewill choice to do what is right.

Jesus’ “good confession” was that Jesus told Pilate who he was—that he was the King of the Jews (Matt. 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3; John 18:33-37; 19:11). Robert Yarborough writes, “Before Pilot, Jesus stated clearly who he was (Luke 23:3), at great peril to his life, humanly speaking. Now at Ephesus, Timothy has the opportunity to state clearly who he takes Jesus to be, whatever threats and loss he might face in doing so. Paul ‘draws a parallel between Jesus appearing before a hostile ruler and Timothy (and Paul) bearing witness before hostile people inside and outside the church.’”[[51]](#footnote-25293) Paul did make a good confession and was martyred, and it is more than likely that Timothy was too. The official persecution of Christians started by Emperor Nero in 64 A.D., lasted over 250 years.

1Tm 6:14

**“until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** We do our best for God until we die or the Lord returns and Christians are in the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

1Tm 6:15

**“He will bring about.”** God is the “he.” God will bring about the return of Christ at its proper time.

**“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”** In this context, these titles refer to God, not to Jesus Christ. However, some titles are given to both God and Christ, and sometimes to others as well. For example, the title “King of kings” refers to God here, to Jesus Christ (Rev. 17:14; 19:16), to the Persian king Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:12); Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 26:7; Dan. 2:37).

[For more reasons why God the Father is being referenced, not Jesus Christ, see commentary on 1 Tim. 1:17.]

1Tm 6:16

**“who alone has immortality.”** Only God inherently has immortality, and those who are immortal now, like Jesus Christ, received it from God. When Jesus was born on earth he was not immortal, which is why he died on the cross. 1 Corinthians 15:53 says that for humans (the ones who are saved), immortality comes when they are raised from the dead, and that is what happened to Jesus as well.

**“who lives in unapproachable light.”** God is so glorious that as He appears to humans, He is almost always surrounded by a cloud of brilliant light, which is referred to as the “glory” of God (or, “the glory of Yahweh”).

1Tm 6:17

**“set their hope on riches, which are uncertain.”** The Greek is more literally, “to have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches.” Paul is speaking about instructing those who already have riches. Therefore, his point is that the rich should not place their hope in their riches because money is uncertain, meaning, you might have it one day and then lose it the next. Money does not provide a certain foundation to put your hope in.

The phrase “the uncertainty of riches” does not read well in English because no one would set their hope on “the uncertainty” of riches, people would set their hope on the riches. The phrase “uncertainty of riches” is an attributed genitive, and means “uncertain riches.”

1Tm 6:19

**“*thus* storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming *age*.”** The “coming age” is the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ rules the earth. There will be all kinds of different positions and jobs in the Millennial Kingdom, and a person will be rewarded based on what he or she has done in this life; how godly and obedient they have been. The coming Judgment and the giving of rewards for good works is not a “pop quiz,” an unexpected event. There are literally dozens of verses all over the Bible that speak about people getting what they deserve—good or bad—on the Day of Judgment (e.g., Job 34:11, Ps. 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Jer. 32:19; Ezek. 33:20, Matt. 10:41-42; 16:27, Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Col. 3:23-25; 1 Thess. 4:6; 1 Tim. 6:19; Heb. 11:24-26; 1 John 2:28; 2 John 1:8).

[For more information on the future Millennial Kingdom on earth, see Appendix 5: “Christ’s Future Kingdom on Earth,” and also see commentary on Matt. 5:12; 6:1; 1 Cor. 9:26, 27. For a much more complete explanation of the Millennial Kingdom and rewards in the future, see John W. Schoenheit; *The Christian’s Hope: The Anchor of the Soul*. For more on rewards in the Kingdom, see commentary on 2 Cor. 5:10, “good or evil.” For more on the order of events immediately before and after the Millennial Kingdom, see commentary on Matt. 25:32. For more on how the future will unfold from this present age to the Millennial Kingdom to the Everlasting Kingdom, see commentary on Rev. 21:1.]

1Tm 6:20

**“guard that which is entrusted *to you*.”** This guarding occurs in the mind. It is like Proverbs 4:23 says, “More than anything else you protect, guard your heart, because from it *flow* the issues of life.”

1Tm 6:21

**“you all.”** The “you” is plural, thus “you all.”

1. Ann Nyland, The Source New Testament, 406n2 and note on Rom. 16:26, 306n17. [↑](#footnote-ref-30949)
2. William Mounce, Pastoral Epistles [WBC], note on 1 Tim. 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-20799)
3. Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, the Pastoral Epistles, and Hebrews, 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-28142)
4. Cf. Lenski, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, 491-92; Hendriksen, 54; Meyer’s Commentary: Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews, 62; Walter Lock, Pastoral Epistles [ICC], 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-25957)
5. Cf. Robertson, Grammar, 776; and the explanation by Lenski. [↑](#footnote-ref-24260)
6. Friberg, Analytical Lexicon, s.v. “ὑβριστής.” [↑](#footnote-ref-20230)
7. Thayer. [↑](#footnote-ref-23884)
8. BDAG. [↑](#footnote-ref-29914)
9. W. Mounce, The Pastoral Epistles [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-23631)
10. A. Kostenberger, 1-2 Timothy and Titus. Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-11032)
11. Cf. A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, 4:113, on 1 Cor. 5:5; also see R. C. H. Lenski’s commentary on 1 Tim. 1:20, Interpretation of St Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, 533-536. [↑](#footnote-ref-22810)
12. W. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-28145)
13. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “ὅσιος.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19678)
14. J. H. Bernard, The Pastoral Epistles, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges. [↑](#footnote-ref-16739)
15. BDAG, s.v. “σωφροσύνη.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16944)
16. Bernard, The Pastoral Epistles [CGTSC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27740)
17. Ann Nyland, The Source New Testament, 410; cf. Richard &amp; Catherine Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not A Woman, 68, 103-04. [↑](#footnote-ref-25452)
18. W. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles [WBC], 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-10063)
19. Richard and Catherine Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman, 103, 191-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-10880)
20. Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman, 103, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-24108)
21. Tischendorf, Critical Apparatus. [↑](#footnote-ref-14698)
22. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-14561)
23. Cf. W. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles [WBC], 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-29289)
24. Bushnell, God’s Word to Women,151. [↑](#footnote-ref-32055)
25. Kostenberger and Schreiner, Women in the Church, 3rd ed., Kindle, 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-16681)
26. Richard and Catherin Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman, 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-30518)
27. Ellicott, The Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul, 38-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-10907)
28. For the translation, see R. C. H. Lenski, St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, 579; Kenneth S. Wuest, New Testament, 493. [↑](#footnote-ref-17584)
29. Carcopino, Daily Life in Ancient Rome, 101, 164-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-21711)
30. Cf. Lenski’s note on Philippians 4:5, St. Paul’s Epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, 875, 877. [↑](#footnote-ref-15019)
31. Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-25128)
32. Lenski: note on Philippians 4:5, Ephesians and Philippians, 876. [↑](#footnote-ref-29407)
33. Wuest, The New Testament, An Expanded Translation, 493. [↑](#footnote-ref-11061)
34. Zodhiates, Word Study Dictionary, 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-15058)
35. William D. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles [WBC], 203. [↑](#footnote-ref-13862)
36. Mounce, Pastoral Epistles, [WBC], 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-26380)
37. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, 599. [↑](#footnote-ref-14973)
38. Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, 641. [↑](#footnote-ref-16969)
39. Philipp Comfort, New Testament Text and Translation Commentary, 664. [↑](#footnote-ref-17140)
40. Gene Green, Jude and 2 Peter [BECNT], 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-24347)
41. Cf. Bullinger, Figures of Speech, 804. [↑](#footnote-ref-16406)
42. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “διά.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32243)
43. BDAG, s.v. “μελετάω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19474)
44. BDAG. [↑](#footnote-ref-29484)
45. Gregory Aldrete, Daily Life in the Roman City, 97-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-19513)
46. Richard Chenevix Trench, Trench’s Synonyms of the New Testament, Wm. B.. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1969, a reprint of the 1880 edition, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-27073)
47. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon, 694. [↑](#footnote-ref-17684)
48. R. C. H. Lenski, St. Paul’s Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, 686-87. [↑](#footnote-ref-14277)
49. Lenski, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, 691. [↑](#footnote-ref-30470)
50. R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon, 716. [↑](#footnote-ref-11649)
51. Robert W. Yarbough, The Letters to Timothy and Titus [PNTC], 327. [↑](#footnote-ref-25293)