

The Final Words of First Timothy – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul exhorts Timothy to be careful in regards to both riches and knowledge
2. aim – to cause us to seek the true riches of the knowledge and grace of Christ Jesus in all things
3. passage – 1 Timothy 6:17-21

b. outline

1. The Charge to Warn the Rich (1 Timothy 6:17-19)
2. The Charge to Guard the Deposit (1 Timothy 6:20-21a)
3. The Final Salutation (1 Timothy 6:21b)

c. opening

1. the **end** of the letter
 - a. previously, **9** distinct divisions in **33** sermons
 - b. **(so now)** as we come to the end, it seems appropriate to *summarize* what we have learned
 1. **repeated twice** – once in fine detail (to help understand the first pericope of the epilogue), **(now)** in lesser detail (to introduce the final pericope of the letter)
2. the **main point** of the letter **(as given in sermon #1)**:
 - a. **1 Timothy is a letter to the church at Ephesus, through Timothy, in which Paul commands believers to pursue a life of godliness**
 1. false teachers are the primary occasion for the letter
 2. the **pivot** verse of the letter **(read 3:14-15)**
3. the **summary** of the letter – **that Timothy was to ...**
 - a. the charge to Timothy **(1:1-20)** – *confront* those teaching false doctrine in the church
 1. **the church of Jesus Christ is defined by her doctrinal boundaries (indicative)**
 - b. the need for prayer **(2:1-15)** – lead the people back to the elemental activity of *prayer*
 - c. the qualifications of leadership **(3:1-13)** – establish proper *leadership* in the face of heterodoxy
 - d. the mystery of godliness **(3:14-16)** – teach why the church *exists* and its central intention
 1. **the church is to be a repository of the truth of what God is actually doing in his world**
 - e. the good servant of Christ **(4:1-16)** – *do his job* of teaching and toiling towards holiness
 - f. the family of faith **(5:1-16)** – address *conflict* in the church that would naturally arise in such toil
 - g. honor those who rule well **(5:17-25)** – *honor elders* and properly address their instances of sin
 - h. godliness with contentment **(6:1-10)** – teach that contentment is a *vital characteristic* of godliness
 - i. fight the good fight of the faith **(6:11-16)** – set the *expectation* of godliness within the people
4. the **conclusion** of the letter
 - a. **IMO**: the epilogue of the letter begins at **6:17**
 1. **6:17-19 repeats** the **problem** in the church – the “rich” (powerful) exerting their influence over the church to lead believers away from the true contentment of godliness in Christ
 2. **6:20-21 repeats** the **antidote** in the church – guard the deposit entrusted to the church in order to lead believers back to a life of true contentment of godliness in Christ

II. The Charge to Guard the Deposit (1 Timothy 6:20-21a)

Content

a. the uniqueness of the statement

1. a majority of the significant Greek words in the two sentences are (almost) unique to 1 & 2 Timothy
 - a. “the deposit entrusted to you” (*parathēkē*) = only **here; 2 Tim. 1:12, 14**
 - b. “avoid” (*ektrepō*) = only **1 Tim. 1:6; 5:15; here; 2 Tim. 4:4** (and Heb. 12:13)
 - c. “irreverent” (*bebēlos*) = only **1 Tim. 1:9; 4:7; here; 2 Tim. 2:16** (and Heb. 12:16)
 - d. “babble” (*kenophōnia*) = only **here; 2 Tim. 2:16**
 - e. “contradictions” (*antithesis*) = only **here**
 - f. “falsely called” (*pseudōnymos*) = only **here**
 - g. “swerved” (*astochēō*) = only **1 Tim. 1:6; here; 2 Tim. 2:18**
2. which probably means that Paul intended to say something *profound* to Timothy – using words that were so *unique* that they would stand out to Timothy in his memory after having read them

b. the content of the statement

1. it is obvious that the English noun “*deposit*” frames the entirety of the two sentences
 - a. it is the *antecedent* to the verb (“*guard*”) – guarding this deposit is the *point* of the two sentences
 - b. it is the *opposite* of the “*knowledge*” that Paul pejoratively speaks of by comparison
 - c. it is the *culmination* of the substance of entire letter – it is obviously a tangible thing in the church
2. **three questions:** a) what is the **substance** of this deposit [what is it?]; b) where is this deposit **held** [where is it?]; c) how is this deposit to be **guarded** [how is to be nurtured and protected?]
3. the **substance** of the deposit
 - a. **highly unlikely:** the church itself – the “deposit” of the church at Ephesus given to Timothy to oversee (*i.e.* for Timothy to guard the church by just being an overseer of its existence)
 1. unfortunately, a view of the church held by too many pastors – that they are just *care-givers* to an organization fundamentally designed simply to “keep itself going”
 2. true, Timothy was left by Paul at Ephesus (**1:3**) to support the church, but *not* to support its traditions and heterodox beliefs and practices – he was to do *far more than that*
 - b. **unlikely:** the personal faith of Timothy – the “deposit” of faith that Timothy had *personally* received from Paul and was to guard and protect *within himself* (*i.e.* as an *individual* believer)
 1. unfortunately, a view of Christianity espoused by many, particularly those who believe that faith does not need to be expressed or exhorted *in a communal setting*
 2. true, Timothy was to toil towards his own godliness (**6:11**), but he was *also* to push the entire church to pursue godliness, to “*put these things before the brothers*” (**4:6**)
 - c. **likely:** the entirety of the revelation of God that had been given to the church by the apostles regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ (*i.e.* the “*whole counsel of God*”)
 1. all of what makes up the Gospel – from the nature of the Triune God, his purposes in creation and redemption, the person and work of Christ, the nature of fallen man before his Creator, and the entirety of how the purpose of God is worked out in time and space
 2. or, the entire revelation of Scripture – its *explicit* teachings and its *implied* realities
 3. **LOW:** the *exact opposite* of what Paul condemns in the rest of the sentence (**and letter**)
 - a. “*irreverent babble*” = words that are worthless (from God’s perspective) and nothing more than empty talk – inconsistent with God’s true revelation and filled with spiritual poison
 - b. “*contradictions*” = that which is *contrary* to what God has *actually* revealed – spiritual “truths” that are not revealed by God, but are made up by men to satisfy their “desires” or “plans”
 - c. “*falsely called knowledge*” = understandings and teachings that are not true, but *appear to be so* because they contain enough truth to convince the gullible and weak-minded
 - d. **the deposit given to the church is a robust set of biblical doctrines – the fullness of theology passed down by the Spirit to the church through the apostles (orthodoxy)**
4. the **location** of the deposit
 - a. **obviously:** not a doctrinal statement on a piece of paper in a filing cabinet in the pastor’s office
 1. *i.e.* how many churches address doctrine: we have a doctrinal statement on our website, but we don’t actively teach its content to our people – we focus on *practical* or *experiential* matters
 2. *e.g.* which is why **Mother’s Day** preaching is “essential” to many ...
 3. *e.g.* which is why it is possible for many “Christians” to be absolutely *illiterate* on basic biblical concepts (like the Trinity) or even *heretical* on a number of matters (like sexuality; **see below**)
 - b. the location of this deposit *is in the minds and hearts of the people of the church (in you!!)*
 1. true, theology itself does not save – a **simple** faith is all that is needed to be saved – a childlike trust in the promise of God to save those who will come to Christ and believe in him
 - a. and we must be careful *as reformed believers* not to confuse theology with faith
 2. but, a **simplistic** faith is *deadly* – a faith *limited* to that “initial” understanding; a faith that never “grows up” beyond a **childish** stand in regards to deeper things
 - a. **key point of 1 Tim.:** a growing understanding of the substance of this faith (doctrine and theology) is *essential* to ward off apostasy (**see 4:11**) – **a disciple is a learner!**
 - b. *e.g.* Mayor Pete Buttigieg (South Bend, IN) – insists that he is a “Christian” (Episcopalian) even though he is openly homosexual and has “married” a man – contra Nancy Pearcey (Facebook, 5/8): “evangelicalism forgot that winning souls involves winning the mind”
 1. going to a “church” that abandoned *sola Scriptura*, he now has a simplistic “form” of Christianity *in his mind* that is *exactly contrary* to true Christianity – *e.g.* utterly inconsistent with Jesus’ own words in **Matthew 19**
 - c. “*some have swerved from the faith*” = wandered away; lit. abandoned truth (**1:19**)
 - c. **the deposit given to the church is embedded in the minds and hearts of the disciples of Jesus – the fullness of truth must reside in the thoughts of those who claim this Christ**

5. the **guarding** of the deposit
 - a. **literally**: *keep in custody* (i.e. as a jailor would hold a prisoner) – actively work to hold the doctrines of the faith in the minds and hearts of the people
 - b. **step #1**: deepen an understanding of the **simple truths** – i.e. what does it mean to be saved, can I *be confident* that I am a Christian, how does a Christian *truly follow Christ*?
 - c. **step #2**: introduce an understanding of the **deeper truths** – i.e. what is the “*whole counsel of God*,” how do the historical realities of this world connect to the larger picture of who Christ is and what he has done (or is doing), what is a true *biblical worldview*?
 1. i.e. **catechize** the people (children!) so that they are able to “give an answer” when confronted with the *relentlessness* of secularism attempting to *dissuade* them from believing the truth
 - d. **the deposit given to the church is guarded by an active teaching ministry – the fullness of truth must be taught, explicitly and consistently, to foster a contentment in godliness**
 1. **the antidote to false teaching (→ apostasy) is true teaching (→ godliness)**

III. The Final Salutation (1 Timothy 6:21b)

Content

a. Paul’s salutation

1. **note**: the word “you” is actually *in the plural* (i.e. **you all**) – which proves that the letter was actually written *to the whole church* (through Timothy), not just to him (i.e. why it was saved by the church)
2. “*grace*” (in this context): good will; favor; kindness – i.e. a wish by Paul that God would grant (by his choice to do so) the good will or favor or kindness necessary to accomplish all that he commanded
 - a. not just “have a good day!” – rather, an explicit desire that God would *complete* all that he had been inspired to write to this church – that God would grant Timothy (and the church!) a successful guarding of the deposit entrusted to them
3. **may God grant to us, as a faithful church of Jesus Christ, all the grace necessary to grow ourselves and our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that we may be found steadfast and faithful in loyal allegiance and obedience to him when he returns**

b. the ordination and installation of Roger Townley