

Protecting The Most Valuable Treasure On Earth

The book of 1 Timothy is both wonderful and very surprising. The very best and over-arching reason for studying the book is that the message is from our God. He wrote the book through Paul to teach believers how to conduct themselves in the church. We are given guidelines about prayer, the role of women, and the qualifications of elders and deacons. We are told how to show respect to those who are older and younger, and how to care for widows and elders. Most of the last chapter is warnings about fleeing the love of money and instructions to the rich. At the beginning and the end of the book Paul urges us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 1:18; 6:12). That command is like bookends to the message.

It is surprising that Paul never provided any instructions about music in the church or the order of the worship service. He never urged Timothy or us to have a Men's Ministry, a Women's Ministry, or Sunday School classes. It may surprise

some that he never commands us to have an evangelism ministry to the community, to give for missions, to enjoy times of fellowship, or give to the church. Paul did not provide instructions about many things that some believe are important.

But the greatest surprise is that Paul spoke about one topic more than any other and he did it seven times from the first to the last chapter of 1 Timothy. Repeatedly, he warned us

about false teachers and false doctrine. With each new warning, he addressed new topics related to false teachers and their false doctrines. He warned Timothy and us in the first chapter, the fourth chapter, and in the sixth chapter of the book. Almost the entire fourth chapter is given to deceitful spirits, doctrines of demons, false teaching and how to correctly teach Scripture. Warnings about false teaching and false doctrine is like a red ribbon woven through 1 Timothy. That red ribbon is wrapped around each topic Paul presents in the book.

Then in the last two verses of the book (1 Timothy 6:20-21), Paul summarizes this central theme in his letter to Timothy and to us with,



O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” — which some have professed

and thus gone astray from the faith. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 (NASB)

The Greek word for “guard” is *phylasso*. It has the idea “to protect.” That is, Timothy was to protect something that Paul said was entrusted to him. But what was entrusted to Timothy? The word “entrusted” gives us the answer. The Greek word for “entrusted” is *paratheke*, and A. T. Robertson says

it was a banking term.¹ The word referred to the deposit of one's money or treasure in a bank. That is, Timothy was to protect the treasure called the Scriptures. He was and *we are to be protecting the most valuable treasure on earth*, called the Scriptures, against the errors of the false teachers.

That is, 1 Timothy 6:20-21 challenges every believer to protect the most valuable treasure in this life. That treasure is the Word of God. Without it no one will know how to be saved. Without it no one can know God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Without it we cannot identify the doctrines of demons. Without it we cannot understand God's plan for the future. Without it we will not know the truth. So, Paul challenged Timothy and all of us to "protect the Treasure"—the Scriptures. How do we do this?

First, Paul told Timothy to protect the treasure called the Scriptures against false teachings by identifying them and stopping the false teacher (1 Timothy 1:3-7). But some

others. The Holy Spirit and Paul would not be happy with the many different interpretations of what Paul wrote about the role of women in the church (1 Timothy 2:9-15). It is obvious that all of the different views cannot be correct, but surely one is correct. The Lord and Paul would not be happy that the standards for selecting elders and deacons in a church are lowered (1 Timothy 3:1-13). Paul would not be encouraged that some are teaching that we must follow the Mosaic food laws after Paul called such teachings the doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-3). So, Paul told Timothy "to point out these things to the brethren" and stop them from teaching the erroneous doctrine.

Third, we protect the treasure called the Scriptures by working hard at studying it so that we teach and understand the truth (1 Timothy 4:6-8, 11-13, 16; 2 Timothy 2:15). Paul wanted every believer to be nourished on sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:6-10). So, Paul commanded Timothy to read,

The church of the living God – the pillar and support of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

churches allow them into the church. This can occur through the one teaching from the pulpit, a Bible class, or a book that a group uses for a Bible study. Paul knew that everything that might be taught in the church might not be truth. Yet sadly, some Christians eagerly accept new and different teachings as if they had gone to a candy store and are enjoying the different flavors. Their internal alarm does not sound or ring when someone may be teaching error. Instead, they eagerly "eat up" the new teachings. They look for an exciting class or new Christian book. If the author quotes Scripture, they assume it must be biblical. Sadly, they are not like the Bereans (Acts 17:10-11).

Second, we are to protect the treasure called the Scriptures by warning believers about false teachers and false teaching. God is not pleased if we are politely quiet and do not warn

exhort, and teach the Scripture in 1 Timothy 4:13. We can be confident the apostle would not be very happy today that some teachers want to improve upon Paul's supposedly "boring" message and make it more interesting and acceptable. Those who want to improve upon Paul's message have distorted his instructions. They may be distorting his message and if so, they can become false teachers!

Amazingly, Paul told Timothy to "take pains with these things"—the reading, exhorting, and teaching. Then in 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul urged him to "pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching." He did not tell Timothy to pay attention to the organization of the church, counseling, or any other task in the church. The command for the rest of the congregation is obvious. Pay close attention to yourself and diligently study the treasure that is the Scriptures or the Bible! Then we will more and more know the Treasure and be able to identify false doctrine, and those who teach it.

¹ A.T. Robertson, 1 Timothy. Word Pictures in the New Testament. Baker Book House, 1931. vol. IV, p. 596.

Fourth, we must evaluate the quality of anyone who is teaching (1 Timothy 6:3-4). This is Paul's last step in protecting the treasure called the Scriptures. In 1 Timothy 6:3 Paul gives us an important measure of the quality of the teaching. He said that if the teaching does not result in godly behavior within the church (1 Timothy 6:3), then those who are teaching are conceited and understand nothing (1 Timothy 6:4-6). Some even ignore what our Lord taught. When that is happening, it will be apparent to one who knows the Word. But Paul introduces another criteria. He says that men who have depraved minds and are deprived of the truth will produce teaching that results in spiritually shallow Christians! The spiritual health of the congregation is almost always a reflection of the pastor's teaching and those teaching the church. When the teaching produces immature believers, it is defective. It has distorted Scripture in some way because it fails to produce mature believers. Immature believers may learn to control themselves on the outside and look like Christians just as unbelievers can and do, but transformation did not occur. Eventually, their spiritual immaturity will be revealed.

We must remember that a milk diet of the Word leaves believers as spiritual infants (Hebrews 5:11-14). Failure to teach the Scriptures in depth results in shallow, immature family members, friends, and saints in the church. They will not become more and more like Christ unless they are studying on their own.

Paul wrote these words in 1 Timothy 3:15,

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:15 (NASB)

Notice, the church is “the pillar and support of the truth.” The church is to protect the treasure called the Scriptures!