

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES:  
THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	ii
<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
<i>Gospel Truth</i> .....	2
Gospel Truth Defined .....	2
Gospel .....	2
Salvation .....	2
Appearing .....	3
Life.....	3
Mercy .....	4
Ransom / Redeem .....	4
Hope.....	4
Faith .....	5
Grace.....	6
Summary.....	6
Gospel Truth Conveyed.....	6
Truth .....	7
Healthy.....	7
Faith .....	8
Charge.....	8
Entrusted.....	8
Summary.....	9
Gospel Truth Denied.....	9

Levels of Gospel Denial .....	9
Manner of Gospel Denial.....	10
Content of Gospel Denial .....	11
Summary.....	12
<i>Gospel Life</i> .....	12
Ministers' Gospel Life.....	13
Paul's Example .....	13
Pastoral Example .....	13
Leadership Requirements .....	14
Summary.....	15
Members' Gospel Life.....	15
Men.....	15
Women.....	16
Rich Men .....	16
Slaves.....	16
Summary.....	17
Gospel-less Life .....	17
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	18
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	19

## THE PASTORAL EPISTLES: THE GOSPEL-CENTERED LIFE

### *Introduction*

When one reads the New Testament, he cannot turn a page without seeing the story of Jesus Christ develop. Every part of the New Testament tells of his saving work. The gospels focus on his passion and sacrificial death; Acts describes the growth of his church through salvation; the epistles describe salvation's results in daily church life; Revelation proclaims the final triumph of the Savior. The New Testament's central theological message is *God's saving glory revealed in Christ*.

Paul's letters take up a specific aspect of that saving glory: *Christ's gospel revealed in the Church*. By explaining the doctrinal truths of the gospel (justification, substitution, resurrection) to churches across the Roman Empire, he ascribes to God "glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever" (Eph. 3.21). Each church is different, but each letter is based on the same thing: Christ's saving work in the gospel.

The Pastoral Epistles take up a smaller aspect of Paul's theological foundation and flesh it out. They do not contain many of his usual gospel themes: the cross, justification, forgiveness, and the blood of Christ are all scarce in the Pastorals. They do not, however, depart from Paul's foundation. They refine one aspect of it: the relationship between the gospel and life. The theological message of the Pastoral Epistles is this: *knowledge of gospel truth revealed in gospel life*.

## *Gospel Truth*

### Gospel Truth Defined

#### *Gospel*

Paul called the message that he preached *gospel*, or *good news* (εὐαγγέλιον). This good news contains “the glory of the blessed God” (I Tim. 1.11). It is the means by which Jesus “abolished death and brought life and immortality” (II Tim. 1.10). Paul reveals the contents of the gospel message: “Jesus Christ, risen from the dead” (II Tim. 2.8). The gospel message carries great import: it is worth suffering for (II Tim. 1.8). To Paul, the work of communicating this good news is so central to Timothy’s ministry that he uses the label *good-news-teller* (εὐαγγελιστής) to characterize that entire ministry (II Tim. 4.5).

The gospel message is much more detailed than Paul’s summary statement (II Tim. 2.8). In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul develops several key themes about gospel truth: its divine source, its unworthy recipients, and its glorious blessings.

#### *Salvation*

The gospel Paul preached is the announcement of God’s salvation (σωτηρία / σωτήριος). The source of this deliverance is God and he gives it through Christ. Salvation is only “in Christ Jesus” (II Tim. 2.10). It comes through faith in the Word of God (II Tim. 3.15) and by the grace of God (Tit. 2.11), further evidence of God’s initiative in providing salvation.

The Pastoral Epistles are the only letters in which Paul gives God the title *Savior* (σωτήρ); in all his other letters, Paul only calls Jesus *Savior*. In the Pastorals, he views both the Father and the son as the providers of salvation, preferring to call the Father Savior (I Tim. 1.1; 2.3; 4.10; Tit. 1.3, 2.10; 3.4), occasionally calling Jesus Savior

(II Tim. 1.10; Tit. 1.4; 3.6), and once combining the two (Tit. 2.13). Paul's point is clear: God grants deliverance through Jesus Christ. There is no other source of salvation.

As provider of salvation, God *saves* (σώζω) unworthy recipients. He saves sinners (I Tim. 1.15) and desires to save all men (I Tim. 2.4). His mercy is the basis of salvation and the Spirit's regenerating work is the means by which salvation is accomplished (Tit. 3.5). God saves men with the future in mind: "his heavenly kingdom" (II Tim. 4.18).

### *Appearing*

Paul's repetition of the words *appearing* and *reveal* (ἐπιφανεία / ἐπιφαίνω / φανερόω) also indicates the God is the initiator of the gospel. Jesus was revealed in human flesh to accomplish salvation (I Tim. 3.16); in Jesus' first appearing, God's saving grace was revealed (II Tim. 1.10; Tit. 2.11f). God then revealed salvation through preaching (Tit. 1.3); in this salvation, his kindness and love are revealed (Tit. 3.4). The salvation goal on which Paul focuses is also an event carried out by God's initiative: the second appearing of Jesus (I Tim. 6.14; II Tim. 4.1, 8; Tit. 2.13). From start to finish, God has scripted and initiated the gospel.

### *Life*

The primary gospel benefit that Paul presents in the Pastoral Epistles is *life* (ζωή). Believing on Christ results in eternal life (I Tim. 1.16); life and immortality are Christ's gifts through the gospel (II Tim. 1.10). Eternal life is a certainty for Paul: it is God's promise (II Tim. 1.1) and it is Paul's hope (Tit. 1.2; 3.7). Christians are not given permission to sit idly awaiting eternal life; rather Paul commands Timothy to exert himself spiritually in order to lay hold of eternal life (I Tim. 6.12, 19).

### *Mercy*

Eternal life generally sums up the gospel benefits given at no cost to the believer; *mercy* expresses the specific kindness God shows in dealing with sin. Paul does not use the word forgiveness in the Pastoral Epistles at all. Instead, he describes God's gospel response to sin as mercy (ἔλεος). Though righteous works cannot cover a man's sins, God chooses to save by mercy (Tit. 3.5).

### *Ransom / Redeem*

Another concept Paul uses in place of forgiveness is *ransom* (ἀντίλυτρον) or *redeem* (λυτρόω). Though all men are enslaved to sin, Jesus gave himself for all (I Tim. 2.6), and by his death, he purchased sinners back (Tit. 2.14). The concept of Jesus giving himself for sinners very clearly expresses the idea of substitutionary atonement in the Pastoral Epistles, even without frequent mention of justification as found in other letters.

### *Hope*

A second gospel benefit that Paul emphasizes is *hope* (ἐλπίς / ἐλπίζω). Hope does not mean mere optimism or wishful thinking, as in modern English usage. Paul's hope is a secure confidence that cannot be shaken. Paul bases his entire gospel ministry on the command of Jesus, his security (1 Tim. 1.1) and passes that same ministry baton to Titus based on the same confidence (Tit. 1.2). He confidently looks forward to the glorious return of Christ (Tit. 2.13) and to the attendant inheritance (Tit. 3.7). Paul offered himself and his fellow apostles as examples of full confidence in God's gospel (I Tim. 4.10) and, on that grounds, exhorted Timothy to instruct widows and rich members to do the same (I Tim. 5.5; 6.17).

## *Faith*

Having seen the tremendous benefits of the gospel, one could quite reasonably ask how sinful men can attain such blessing. Though condemned by sin (I Tim. 1.15) and unable to work their own righteousness (Tit. 3.5), men can appropriate the gospel with all its saving benefits simply by *believing* (πιστίς / πιστός / πιστεύω). Paul often uses the noun *faith* to refer to the Christian's trust in God.<sup>1</sup> Though he usually uses *faith* in a generic sense (e.g., in virtue lists with love and righteousness) or without specific referent (I Tim. 1.4, 5, 14, 19; 4.12; 6.11; II Tim. 1.5, 13; 2.18, 22; 3.10; Tit. 1.1), he does not refer to anything besides trust in God's ability to meet his salvific promises as revealed in his Word. This is what Paul articulates clearly in II Tim. 3.15: "from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through *faith* in Christ Jesus."

Paul uses the verb *believe* (πιστεύω, in the active voice) to describe the proper response to gospel truth.<sup>2</sup> From the start, people in the world responded to the gospel work of Christ with belief (I Tim. 3.16), and that belief generated good works (Tit. 3.8). Paul presented his own gospel experience as an example to future believers (I Tim. 1.16), and endured suffering because he believed the gospel (II Tim. 1.12).

The Pastoral Epistles contain more occurrences of the adjective *faithful / believing* (πιστός) than the rest of Paul's letters combined. Paul uses this word in three ways: the trustworthy message of the gospel (I Tim. 1.15; 3.1; 4.9; II Tim. 2.11; Tit. 1.9; 3.8), for

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<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Paul often uses the noun *faith* to refer to the creedal declaration of the gospel's content. That use will be discussed with Paul's language to describe the ministry of gospel truth below.



people who are believing the trustworthy gospel message (I Tim. 4.3, 10; 5.16; 6.2; Tit. 1.6), and for faithful behavior that grows from believing the trustworthy gospel message (I Tim. 1.12; 3.11; 4.12; II Tim. 2.2).

### *Grace*

Like faith, *grace* (χάρις) presents a contrast to human effort and works. Though the Pastoral Epistles do not contain evidence of the soteriological battles that Paul combated in Rome and Galatia, they certainly display the complete work of God as far superior to the broken inability of human effort. The foundation of gospel salvation is God's "own purpose and grace" (II Tim. 1.9); in fact, salvation comes with grace's appearance (Tit. 2.11). Grace justifies the believer (Tit. 3.7) and overflows to strengthen him for daily life (I Tim. 1.14; II Tim. 2.1). Grace is so vital to Paul's ministry that he begins and ends each letter by expressing his desire for the recipient to experience God's grace (I Tim. 1.2; 6.21; II Tim. 1.2; 4.22; Tit. 1.4; 3.15).

### *Summary*

Though expressed in different words and phrases Paul's definition of the gospel message is the same in the Pastoral Epistles as it is in his other letters. God initiated salvation through Jesus, sending Jesus to die as a ransom. This salvation contains eternal life, merciful release from sin, and a secure future. Sinful people cannot merit salvation, but God gives it by grace and they accept it by faith.

### Gospel Truth Conveyed

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<sup>2</sup> In the passive voice, πιστεύω refers to God's *committing* of the gospel to Paul's ministry and will be discussed below in conjunction with Paul's description of the ministry of gospel truth.

Paul uses a variety of words to the ministry of gospel truth, performed by himself, Timothy, and Titus. The first group of words here communicates the character of the gospel message that was given to Paul; the second group of words communicates the nature of the conveyance of that message to their ministrants.

### *Truth*

The most fundamental attribute of the gospel message is *truth* (ἀλήθεια). Paul uses the phrase knowledge of the truth to describe the initial acceptance of the gospel message (I Tim. 2.4; II Tim. 2.25; 3.7; Tit. 1.1) and the phrase to know the truth to describe the continued present belief in the gospel message (I Tim. 4.3). Through the gospel, God has designed the Church to display truth (I Tim. 3.15).

Faithful ministers carry out their work according to truth: Paul set this example (I Tim. 2.7) and taught Timothy to do the same (II Tim. 2.15). On the other hand, false teachers deviate from the truth of the gospel message (I Tim. 6.5; II Tim. 2.18; 3.8; 4.4; Tit. 1.14).<sup>3</sup>

### *Healthy*

Paul also describes the gospel message with a medical term: *healthy* (ὕγιαίνω / ὑγιής).<sup>4</sup> The Pastoral Epistles refer to words (I Tim. 6.3; II Tim. 1.13), doctrine (I Tim. 1.10; 4.3; Tit. 1.9; 2.1), speech (Tit. 2.8), and faith (Tit. 1.13; 2.2) as healthy. The implication is that accurate preaching of the gospel message is healthy for both individual believers and for the entire church. By contrast, deviance from gospel truth is harmful to the body.

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<sup>3</sup> This deviation will be described more fully below.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Friberg, “ὕγιαίνω” in *Analytical Lexicon of the New Testament* (2006).

### *Faith*

Besides using the word *faith* to refer to personal response to the gospel message, Paul also uses faith as a label for the gospel message itself. By referring to this body of truth as the faith, he emphasizes two things. First, there is only one creed of faith; aberrations are not valid (I Tim. 1.19; 4.1; 5.8, 12; 6.10, 21; II Tim. 3.8). Second, gospel truth merits more than mere intellectual assent or accurate understanding; it demands to be believed and trusted (I Tim. 1.2; 2.7, 15; 3.9, 13; 4.6; 6.12; II Tim. 4.7; Tit. 1.4, 13; 2.2; 3.15).

### *Charge*

Paul took his gospel ministry seriously because he had received it as a *charge* or *command* (παραγγελία / παραγγέλλω) from God. Paul committed his charge to Timothy (I Tim. 1.5, 18). Paul commanded Timothy (I Tim. 6.13) and told Timothy what to command to his congregants (I Tim. 4.11; 5.7; 6.17) and his opponents (I Tim. 1.3).

### *Entrusted*

Still, the gospel ministry is more than just a command to obeyed; it was also a responsibility with which God *trusts* his ministers. Paul writes of his own gospel deposit with the verb to be trusted with (πιστεύομαι). Related to faith (πιστίς), this word choice emphasizes God's expectation that Paul will minister the gospel message faithfully (I Tim. 1.11; Tit. 1.3). Paul uses *commit* (παρατίθημι) with reference to the passed-along gospel ministry that he gave to Timothy (I Tim. 1.18) and that Timothy should commit to other faithful men (II Tim. 2.2). The combination of these two words highlights both the divine source of the entrusted message and the human agency in propagating that same message.

### *Summary*

The gospel message is truth, producing healthy results in those believe it. The ministry of the gospel message is from God. God commands it and entrusts it to his servants.

### Gospel Truth Denied

Not everyone who hears the gospel message responds with belief. As Paul communicates the truth to Timothy and Titus, he also identifies opponents who do not accept the gospel message. Paul appears to present a spectrum of gospel denial from simple deviance to active corruption.

### *Levels of Gospel Denial*

The earliest stage of gospel denial is to *deviate from the truth*. Paul uses three words to express error. While not necessarily malicious or deliberate, this deviation still merits correction. One can err from gospel truth by wandering (ἐκτρέπω). This word implies stepping off of the right path (II Tim. 4.4). A similar idea is turning aside (ἀποστρέφω), involving an obvious change of direction (II Tim. 1.15; 4.4; Tit. 1.14). Paul also uses the word swerve (ἀστοχέω) to describe deviation from the truth, emphasizing the wrongness of the aberrant teaching (I Tim. 1.6; 6.21; II Tim. 2.18).

Not everyone turns aside unintentionally or accidentally, a possibility that the previous words allow. There are many false teachers who *willfully set themselves against the truth*. Some men blasphemed the truth (βλασφημέω), speaking evil of what is truly good (I Tim. 1.20; 6.1; Tit. 2.5). Other assume a debater's stance and oppose the gospel (ἀντιλέγω) with argumentation and rebuttal (Tit. 1.9). Still others may deny the gospel outright (ἀρνέομαι). This category illustrates the inherent overlap between belief and

behavior: this denial takes place when people's lives contradict the truth of the gospel (II Tim. 3.5; Tit. 1.16; 2.12). Paul soberly informs Timothy that believers are not immune to this sin (I Tim. 5.8; II Tim. 2.12).

The hardest form of gospel denial is visible in the lives of false teachers who *deliberately seek to corrupt others*. Paul calls this destructive influence upsetting (ἀνατρέπω) and grieves that it hurts entire families (II Tim. 2.18; Tit. 1.11). They teach a different doctrine (ἑτεροδιδασκαλέω) to their gullible followers (I Tim. 1.3; 6.3). The phrase lead captive (αἰχμαλωτίζω) illustrates the authoritarian intent of these teachers (II Tim. 3.6). They are following the true source of their teaching: the devil who snares (παγίς) men, holding them captive (ζωγρέω) to his will (II Tim. 2.26).

#### *Manner of Gospel Denial*

At its core, the false teaching present in Crete and Ephesus was *belligerent*. The synonyms used to indicate its combativeness are manifold. First, the false teaching is profuse, yet empty. Paul calls it empty speech (κενοφωνία - I Tim. 6.20) and vain discussion (ματαλογία - I Tim. 1.6; Tit. 1.10), emphasizing the worthlessness of the heresy.

The teaching style of the false teachers is sharp *debate* (ζήτησις). They are quick to question the truth (I Tim. 6.4; II Tim. 2.23; Tit. 3.9). Their debating plays out as series of word-wars (λογομαχία / λογομαχέω); they treat gospel ministers as sparring partners (I Tim. 6.4; II Tim. 2.14). Their teaching is marked by quarrel (μάχη - II Tim. 2.23; Tit. 3.9) and strife (ἔρις - Tit. 3.9). These false teachers deliberately set themselves opposite (ἐναντίος - Tit. 2.8) from sound teaching and argue with *contradictions* (ἀντίθεσις - I Tim. 6.20).

It is no wonder that their style is so belligerent: the attitude of the false teachers is one of *rebellion*. They are insubordinate (ἀνυπότακτος - Tit. 1.10) and disobedient (ἀπειθής - Tit. 1.16).

### *Content of Gospel Denial*

Paul does not write a comprehensive explanation of the heresy present in Crete and Ephesus. Unlike the serious distortions of his own teaching in Corinth and Galatia, he views this sect pejoratively:<sup>5</sup> foolish (μωρός – II Tim. 2.23; Tit. 3.9), uneducated (ἀπαίδευτος – II Tim. 2.23), silly (γραώδης – I Tim. 4.7), banal (βέβηλος – I Tim. 4.7; 6.20; II Tim. 2.16), useless (ἀνωφελής – Tit. 3.9), and vain (μάταιος – Tit. 3.9). As he writes about this worthless false teaching, he describes it with many of the same words and phrases when writing to both Timothy and Titus. It is therefore likely that both pastors faced similar heresies, or at least variations of the same core denial of the gospel. By collecting the scattered statements Paul makes about the false doctrine, it is possible to gain a general idea of the problem.

There were *Jewish legalistic elements* in the heresies faced by Timothy and Titus. To both pastors, Paul wrote about the heretics' fascination with myths (μῦθος) and genealogies (γενεαλογία). To Timothy, Paul linked these myth-lovers with false law-teachers (νομοδιδάσκαλος), indicating that this was a Jewish error (I Tim. 1.3-7). To Titus, Paul speaks outright against circumcisers (περιτομή) who devote themselves to Jewish myths and human commands (Tit. 1.10-14) and who quarrel about the law (Tit. 3.9).

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<sup>5</sup> Frank Theilman, *Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan: 2005), 409.

Other elements cannot be traced back to Jewish heresies. Some Ephesian false teachers were forbidding marriage and banning certain foods (I Tim. 4.3); others were claiming that the bodily resurrection was already past (II Tim. 2.18); others might have been practicing magic (II Tim. 3.7-8). In Crete, there was also an ascetic denial of certain “defiled” things (Tit. 1.15).

### *Summary*

There were varying levels of resistance among those who denied gospel truth. Some inadvertently deviated, some chose to deny the truth, and others propagated their denial to ensnare others. The gospel-deniers were belligerent and argumentative, but their heresy was puerile and worthless. This false teaching contained some Jewish legalistic and some ascetic elements, but it cannot be defined precisely.

### *Gospel Life*

Gospel truth always reveals itself in gospel life. Throughout the Pastorals, Paul ties these together explicitly. He instructed Timothy to guard both his life and his teaching (I Tim. 4.16) which is “teaching that accords with godliness” (I Tim. 6.3). He also taught him that the goal of the Scripture’s gospel truth is gospel life: competency for good works (II Tim. 3.16-17). Most of Paul’s explicit links between gospel truth and gospel life are statements like these in Titus: “the truth, which accords with godliness” (Tit. 1.1), “teach what accords with sound doctrine” (Tit. 2.1), “show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech” (Tit. 2.7-8), “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit. 2.10), and “let our people learn to devote themselves to good works” (Tit. 3.14). Gospel truth is always revealed in gospel life.

## Ministers' Gospel Life

Godliness starts at the top. Paul does not give laymen any exhortations that he does not also insist upon for ministers. He addresses gospel living for ministers by sharing his own testimony, setting qualifications for church leadership, and instructing his pastoral sons.

### *Paul's Example*

Paul shares his own example of gospel life in more detail in II Timothy than in either of the other books. The main aspect of Paul's example is *suffering* (πάσχω / κακοπαθέω / συγκακοπαθέω / πάθημα). He points to his own example of suffering for the gospel's sake (II Tim. 1.12; 2.9; 3.11) and calls Timothy to share in that suffering (II Tim. 1.8; 2.3; 4.5). Joyful suffering is possible only when one is *not ashamed* (ἐπαισχύνομαι). Paul calls Timothy to unashamed suffering for the gospel's sake (II Tim. 1.8, 12, 16). Beyond unashamed suffering, Paul puts his entire missionary career on display with gratitude that Timothy is following his example: teaching, conduct, aim in life, faith, patience, love, steadfastness, persecutions, and sufferings (II Tim. 3.10-11). Looking back on his service, Paul summarizes his example as one of faithful service based on love for the Lord's return (II Tim. 4.6-8).

### *Pastoral Example*

Not only did Paul demonstrate the gospel in his life, he instructed Timothy to do the same. The instructions he gives Timothy fall into two categories: personal godliness and ministry performance. The truth of the gospel will produce gospel life in both private and public.



In his personal character, Timothy was to “set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity” (I Tim. 4.12). His natural tendency was to be hesitant or to let people look down on his youth, but Paul does not allow those to serve as excuses for avoiding gospel-centered living. Timothy must resist pressure both within the church and without. Paul also commanded him to flee the sins of the false teachers, and to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness” instead (I Tim. 6.11).

In public ministry, Timothy’s example consisted of faithful instruction for his church (I Tim. 4.11; 5.1-3 6.17; II Tim. 4.2ff) and bold opposition to sin (I Tim. 1.18; 5.21; 6.12). In this way, his public ministry illustrates the theme of the Pastoral letters: gospel truth is revealed in gospel life.

The exemplary quality of Timothy’s life was no small matter. Paul commanded careful attention to both his personal life and his public ministry. The stakes are high: both his own salvation and the salvation of his congregants rested on his perseverance (I Tim. 4.16).

### *Leadership Requirements*

Paul instructed both Timothy and Titus regarding the ordination of new leadership. Though there are some variants between the two pastoral lists (I Tim. 3.17; Tit. 1.5-9), and differences between the lists for pastors and for deacons (I Tim. 3.8-13), there are common theme running through all the lists.

The primary characteristic for any church officer is *blamelessness* (ἀνεπίλημπος / ἀνέγκλητος). This is a general character qualification that governs the others. Thus, hospitality, gentleness, household management, dignity, verbal integrity, and the other

qualifications are all specific manifestations of the umbrella qualification: blamelessness. The qualifications address all aspects of life, including conduct, speech, deportment, motivation, family, and ministry ability. Ordaining men to these positions is a sober responsibility, not to be performed hastily (I Tim. 5.22).

### *Summary*

Paul and Timothy demonstrated unashamed suffering for the gospel's sake. Timothy and Titus lived out the gospel in their private lives and in their public ministries. The men that they ordained to ministry lived blameless lives in front of their congregations.

### Members' Gospel Life

Following the example of the apostle Paul and of pastors Timothy and Titus, the individual members of the churches were called to display their knowledge of the gospel through their everyday lives. I Timothy 2 and Titus 2 provide the fullest application of gospel truth to the lives of each category of church member. The over-riding character quality for every believer is *self-control* (σωφροσύνη / σώφρων / σωφρονέω / σωφρονίζω).

### *Men*

Self-control behooves old and young men alike (Tit. 2.2, 6). As lay leaders in the church, men must pray without hypocrisy (I Tim. 2.8). Older men are to lead in sobriety and dignity, demonstrating healthy faith, love, and faithfulness (Tit. 2.2). The men in the Ephesian and Cretan churches could also take the elder and deacon qualifications as patterns for their lives; there is certainly no indication anywhere that Paul intends lay people to be content with "less godliness" than leaders.

### *Women*

Older women are given the dual responsibility of maintaining their own gospel lives and training younger women to live out the gospel as well. The good repute of the Word of God relies on the successful transmission of godliness in submission, love, purity, and other qualities (Tit. 2.3-5). Women of any age are to demonstrate the gospel with modesty and propriety (I Tim. 2.9-10). Instead of drawing attention to themselves with their attire, they should call attention to the gospel with good works.

A special situation involving the women in Ephesus required Paul's special attention (I Tim. 5.3-16). The church was caring for the needy widows (as it should), but younger widows were taking the church's generous gift and using it to support lives of idleness and gossip. As Paul gives regulations for the widow's roll, he highlights more exemplary gospel qualities in older women: confidence in God, faithful prayer, good works, family experience, and compassionate service (I Tim. 5.5, 9-10). For younger widows, gospel life involves remarriage and raising godly families (I Tim. 5.14).

### *Rich Men*

Paul gives Timothy specific gospel application for the lives of the wealthy: do not trust wealth or be arrogant, but instead, be generous and do good works (I Tim. 6.17-19). Paul emphasizes two gospel realities as grounds for gospel life: contentment (I Tim. 6.6-10) and eternal life (I Tim. 6.19).

### *Slaves*

Of all the people in the church, slaves are instructed with the clearest link between gospel truth and gospel life. Their gospel life includes honoring their masters, serving faithfully, not arguing, and not stealing (I Tim. 6.1-2; Tit. 2.9-10). Their gospel truth

motivation is two-fold: “so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled” (I Tim. 6.1), and “so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Tit. 2.10). Perhaps it is because they live in the arena of greatest lowliness that they have the greatest opportunity to live the gospel under pressure.

### *Summary*

Every church member is to be self-controlled. Likewise, all members are to show *good works* (ἔργοις καλοῖς). Immediately following his individual instructions, Paul sums up the gospel life for all believers:

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

Because God’s grace has brought salvation for all, all believers are to be *self-controlled* and zealous for *good works*.

### Gospel-less Life

Just as the right knowledge of the gospel is revealed in rightly living the gospel, so also gospel denial results in gospel-less life. Though it is not his most edifying topic in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul spends time pointing out visible sins that demonstrate a lack of gospel truth. Several themes run through the various sin lists that Paul includes in these letters.

Those who deny the gospel *lack self-control* (II Tim. 3.3). Instead, they sin because of proud self-love (φίλαυτος – II Tim. 3.2). They are consumed by the hedonism of self-indulgence (σπαταλάω – I Tim. 5.6). In the end, however, their self-absorption is what destroys them: they find themselves self-condemned (αὐτοκατάκριτος – Tit. 3.10).

A second characteristic of gospel-less life is *enslavement to passion* (ἐπιθυμία). Before the gospel's influence, all men are slaves to passion (Tit. 3.11). The women targeted by the false teachers were led astray passions (II Tim. 3.6). Younger widows turn from Christ because of passions (καταστρηνιάω – I Tim. 5.11). In the last days, pet passions drive people to seek gospel-less teachers (II Tim. 4.3).

A third telltale sign of gospel-less life is *disobedience* (ἀπειθής). Again, this is the status quo for men before they respond to the gospel (Tit. 3.11). God initially gave the Law to address disobedience (I Tim. 1.8). False teachers exemplify disobedience to the point of reprobation (Tit. 1.16). Disobedience will be ubiquitous in the gospel-deficient last days (II Tim. 3.2).

### *Conclusion*

In Paul's letters, the gospel of Christ revealed in the Church quickly rises as his theological foundation. This fits into the overarching New Testament theme: God's saving glory revealed in Christ. Upon Paul's foundation, the Pastoral Epistles construct one room: knowledge of the gospel revealed by living the gospel. Throughout these letters, Paul repeatedly emphasizes the unbreakable link between gospel truth and gospel life. By defining the content of the gospel message, describing the ministry of that message, and warning about denials of the gospel, Paul gives Timothy and Titus a clear understanding of the life-changing truth of the gospel. By presenting the church leadership as gospel life examples, giving instruction for the church's gospel life, and identifying sins that reveal gospel-deprivation, Paul paints a picture of gospel life. Gospel truth and gospel life are inseparable: knowledge of gospel truth is always revealed by gospel life.

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