

- ***READ I Timothy 1:1,2*** The text seems to indicate (1:3) that Paul writes this letter to Timothy while the young preacher is laboring with the church that is in Ephesus. It is during this letter that Paul speaks to a wide range of issues that any preacher might experience during his time working with a local church.
- It is during this letter that Paul plainly informs Timothy that these things being written to him were the instructions that would aid him in helping for those who make up this local church (and by extension all local churches) to be sure that they are conducting themselves in a manner that is befitting of those who make up God's Household, the church of the living God. More specifically, Paul writes these things so that they might be exactly what God would have them to be as the pillar and foundation of the truth. The Lord's churches are to be places where truth is to be upheld and defended because the God we serve is Himself the Truth. (**John 14:6**)
- This letter seems to coincide very nicely with the very church-focused letter that Paul himself wrote to Ephesus not long before he penned this particular letter to Timothy. Perhaps this is a follow-up letter that was meant to clarify any confusion that might have come as a result of the original letter of Ephesians. The first three chapters of I Timothy do an excellent job of laying the groundwork for what a church ought to be focusing on if it desires to be that true pillar and foundation of truth in whatever community in which it finds itself. This evening, we are going to work backwards from chapter three to chapter one to see what big subjects are addressed as being important and therefore key to making sure that the church is operating as God would expect for His household to operate.

Paul's Instructions On How To Be The Pillar and Foundation of the Truth

I. Capable leadership must take the lead. (3:1-13)

1. The direction of the Lord's church is strongly dependent upon those who would serve in positions of local leadership. It is God's design per **Ephesians 4:11** that local groups of those who make up the body of Christ are to be lead by individuals who are capable and willing to serve as evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Then here in **I Timothy 3**, we are also informed of the all important work that is done by those who serve as deacons.
2. This is not the first time that Paul addresses the role of elder/shepherd/overseer/pastor with those brethren in Ephesus for we can look back to **Acts 20:17-38** and see Paul's farewell address to these brethren concerning their responsibilities towards those that they were to be on guard and protect from those who might come in and cause trouble among the flock. These instructions shed light on why it is that the particular things mentioned in **I Timothy 3** are necessary in order for someone to serve in this capacity. Those descriptions of **I Timothy 3:1-7** give us the description of a man who is capable of protecting and leading a flock of God's people. He is able to do so because of his experience as a strong disciple, husband, father and community member. He has wisdom and discernment that allows him to lead the flock in such a way that it maintains its commitment to being a pillar and foundation for the truth of God's Word.
3. Further, those who serve as deacons have responsibilities that allow for the overseers to be busy about their work of watching over the church. However, those who serve as deacons are not simply those who have the ability to take care of operational needs. No, they themselves are to be men who have proven themselves as capable and trustworthy to take care of the needs of the church so that the congregation can continue to function in a smooth manner. While not exactly parallel, I do believe that this working relationship closely resembles that which can be found in **Acts 6:1-7**. Those men in that text were set over a task that allowed for the Apostles to devote themselves fully to the work of the ministry of the Gospel. When a church has leaders who are capable, trustworthy, and hard-working then the groundwork has been laid for the church to thrive.

II. Men and women must embrace and fulfill their God-given roles. (2:8-15)

1. However, there is also a great deal of responsibility that falls at the feet of all of those who make up God's people. In **2:8-15**, we read of the responsibility that has been handed down to the men and women that make up the local churches of God. Paul's instructions are two-fold. First, the men are to pray while lifting holy hands that are free from anger and argument. Secondly, women are to dress in appropriate ways and not teach or have authority over men.
2. Paul's instructions to men (*aner* **2:8** as opposed to *anthropos* **2:1**) focus on their need to lead the worship of God in a pure, holy, and dignified manner. We might get caught up on the the instructions concerning the

lifting of holy hands, but we need to recognize that this was written in reference to the common practice of their time when men of all sorts (pagans, Jews, & Christians) lifted their hands when they participated in religious activities. For Paul to say that the hands they lift up must be holy is to draw their minds to their need to live in a holy manner so that they might worship and lead worship in a holy manner.

3. Additionally, Paul instructs for the female disciples to make sure that they are not turning the coming together for worship into a fashion contest that distracts for the true purpose of being together. Therefore, Paul instructs the ladies to dress in modest or appropriate apparel while remembering the true purpose of coming together. They were to focus more on showing good works that signal to others that they are profess to be worshippers of God. **(2:9,10)**
4. Further, Paul then instructs for the ladies to remember that their role within the church is not within leadership. I know that this is completely and totally politically incorrect to say, and that goes even for some of the denominations that have been on the more conservative end of the religious spectrum. There has been a strong push over the past several months for well known and established denominations to open the door for women into positions of leadership, but the text we are considering this evening gives no room for such a door to be opened. Notice the two reasons behind why women are not to be in positions of leadership: 1) Adam was formed first. 2) Eve was the one who was initially deceived. Many would like to make this a cultural argument, but these reasons have nothing to do with culture. Instead they are founded in fact and reality. **(2:11-14)**
5. Sadly, many will take these conclusions and leave with the thought that people holding to this understanding are sexist, chauvinistic, and even misogynistic, but that couldn't be further from the truth, at least from my perspective. Many people want to equate differences in role with differences in value, but that just isn't true. Women are just as valuable to the church as men, and Paul even speaks to their importance when he speaks of their role in childbearing and living faithful, loving, and holy lives. None of us guys would be here without a woman, and that is true for even our Savior. **(2:15)** Therefore, whether male or female...each disciple has a key role to play within the local churches of God, and our holding firmly to those Divinely-given roles allows for His churches to stand strong upon the truth of His Word.

III. All disciples must be people of prayer. **(2:1-7)**

1. We continue to expand the scope of the roles within God's household of His churches by considering Paul's instructions for all people to be people who are relying heavily upon God through the blessing of prayer. Paul not merely suggests, but he in fact urges for all of the Lord's people to offer up petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings on behalf of everyone. The easy understanding is that Paul wants for all disciples to be people who offer up all sorts of prayers on behalf of others.
2. When Paul states "everyone"...he means everyone. That even included those who the recipients might not have been very fond of in the form of the kings who ruled over them. However, we know that this is not the only time that God's inspired writers had instructed Christians to either pray for or show respect towards pagan rulers. **(Romans 13:1 & I Peter 2:13,14)** All of this was to be done in hopes that those who rule over us would allow us to continue to live tranquil and quiet lives where we are able to worship and teach freely and without fear.
3. But there also seems to be a hope that our prayers might lead to the salvation of those who are in need of God's grace. It pleases our God when we pray for others and those prayers should also be for their soul's salvation. It was the whole reason for God sending His Son to this earth to live and die. Jesus died not only as our perfect sacrificial Lamb, but He was also raised so that He might serve as the mediator between ourselves and God. When we are consistent and habitual in our prayers to God for others and ourselves, we are showing God that He is our focus and we want for Him to be present and active within our lives whether we be active in prayer or active, like Paul, in the heralding and teaching of the Gospel of truth. We want for Him to be with us as we work to properly function and work as the pillar and foundation of the truth.

IV. All disciples must embrace God's grace as they fight for the wellness of their faiths. **(1:12-20)**

1. As we move back into **chapter 1**, it becomes all the more apparent the importance of our habitual prayers before God because Paul addresses some individuals who had failed to keep their faith strong and thriving. But before we get there, let's take notice of the attention that Paul pays to the importance of the transformative grace of God in his life.

2. Paul willingly acknowledges that it was only by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Jesus that he was able to be washed clean of his past sins and made into a great servant for the Gospel and the kingdom. He was confident that anyone who came to rely up on the transformative Gospel and grace of God could be changed into something new and redeemed because of the power of God found there within. Paul believed this to be true of Timothy, and he encourages the young preacher to make sure that fought the good fight with faith and a good conscience.
 3. Though Paul had great confidence in Timothy, he still felt the need to encourage him in this manner because there were some who had failed to embrace God's grace. Paul begins by reminding Timothy of some unknown to us prophecies that had been made concerning the ministry of Timothy. Paul then further emphasizes the need for continued faithfulness by bringing to mind a number of men who had failed in their faiths. *"Some have rejected these (faith and a good conscience) and have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander..."* Not only do we find Paul's positive encouragement to Timothy, but we also find these negative encouragements. If Timothy was to be successful in his service to the church then he had to embrace God's transformative grace and stay firmly founded in his faith. We likewise must allow the grace of Jesus to teach us how we ought to live before Him as His people. **(Titus 2:12-14)** Only in living with this embracing of the grace of God can we continue to be a part of His household.
- V. All disciples must commit themselves to holding to God's pure Gospel and put aside anything useless and contrary to it. **(1:3-11)**
1. Finally, as disciples we must make sure that the sole focus of our teaching and attention is given to the pure message of the Gospel and not false teachings or useless discussions. It seems very clear that some false teachers had made their way to Ephesus, and while we might not know the exact teachings they had brought, we can tell that these teachings were not beneficial to the disciples in Ephesus. What had been brought in is described as *"false teachings", "myths and endless genealogies", "speculations", and "fruitless discussion."* **(1:3-6)**
 2. Paul sets these teachings up against what should have been the focus of their attention. They should have been focusing on *"God's plan, which operates by faith."* Paul additionally states that *"The goal of our instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith."* **(1:4,5)** While these false teachers were busy stirring up speculations about things they had no clue about, one example being the Law **(1:8)**, Paul was busy making sure that the truth and the Gospel were being promoted and held onto at all cost, and he demanded that Timothy make sure that this was taking place for it was the whole reason that Paul had wanted him in Ephesus in the first place. **(1:3)**
 3. These opening statements of Paul should firmly impress upon us the realization that the church that Jesus gave His life for isn't the place to go to simply speculate about this or that. While there might be times where we might discuss that which is unclear, we ought to be all the more focused on that which we can know is right and true in the Word of God for it is that truth that will set us free and help us to lead lives that are pleasing to God. The Lord's churches should be places where people can come and hear the Word of God accurately and simply taught so that those desiring to learn can learn. If we will embrace this as our goal (since it was Paul's goal), then I feel confident that we are on the right track to being the pillar and foundation of the truth that Paul, and by extension Jesus. expects for us to be.

Paul wasn't all that confident that he would be able to join Timothy in Ephesus, but he wanted to make sure that Timothy was still aware of that which would help him to organize and lead the brethren in such a way that they would be well equipped and able to function as God's household, His church, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. It is through these instructions that Timothy would be able to teach these brethren about the leadership structure, responsibilities, focus, and goals of the Lord's people in Ephesus. Thankfully, we also come to know of God's expectations for us, so may we take these considerations and use them to guide us as we strive here at Pleasant Plains to be of the same kind as those in Ephesus...a pillar and foundation of the truth here in Jackson.