I & II TIMOTHY

We come now to three books (letters or epistles) written by Paul, addressed to Timothy (2 letters) and Titus (1 letter). We refer to three books of the Bible as the *pastoral epistles*. They contain directives to ministers with regard to the organization and doctrine of churches. 

- I Timothy concerns church organization
- II Timothy has to do with sound doctrine
- Titus is about maintaining a consistent Christian life

There are basically three forms of church government:

- Episcopal - which there is one person (or several) who are in charge at the top. An example would be the Roman Catholic church with its pope
- Presbyterian - or representative form in which the local church elects certain men from their membership, called deacons or elders
- Congregational- the people are the ones who made the decisions with the entire church membership receiving members, conducting business, etc.

In the Assemblies of God we are somewhat of a mixture of presbyterian and congregational polity (government).

We are not needlessly shackled to a definite form, with some churches in our fellowship being much more presbyterian in polity and others more congregational. The church government is important, however, as it enables the Body of Christ to move forward in “order.” There is nothing intrinsically wrong with order as long as it does not become more important than the Head of the Church who is Jesus Christ Himself.

Section One / I Timothy

Paul appeared on trial in Rome twice; the first time he was exonerated and set free. The second time he was convicted of crimes against Roman authority, certainly a false charge, and sentenced to death by beheading. It is believed that after his first trial there, Paul went westward to Spain and fulfilled a great work there. He then returned to Macedonia, northern Greece, where he wrote this first epistle (letter) to Timothy. Paul’s purpose in this first letter was 3-fold:
1. To encourage Timothy about his ministry and personal life
2. To urge Timothy to defend the purity of the Gospel
3. To give Timothy instructions concerning various church problems in Ephesus

False Teachers

In Matthew 24, Jesus warned that the church would historically be seduced by the teaching of men and women who were phony. We see it today in proliferation, in my opinion. Note how Paul warned Timothy:

1 Tim. 1:3-7 [The Message]

On my way to the province of Macedonia, I advised you to stay in Ephesus. Well, I haven’t changed my mind. Stay right there on top of things so that the teaching stays on track. Apparently some people have been introducing fantasy stories and fanciful family trees that digress into silliness instead of pulling the people back into the center, deepening faith and obedience. [4]

[5] The whole point of what we’re urging is simply love—love uncontaminated by self-interest and counterfeit faith, a life open to God. [6] Those who fail to keep to this point soon wander off into cul-de-sacs of gossip. [7] They set themselves up as experts on religious issues, but haven’t the remotest idea of what they’re holding forth with such imposing eloquence.

False teachers were subverting the true gospel, not by denying it, but rather by ADDING TO IT. Those “endless genealogies” Paul mentioned in verses 3 and 4 was a continuation and fictitious extension of Judaism.

Timothy was ministering in Ephesus, Turkey - a major city given to crazy philosophies and wild religions. Remember, one of the ancient seven wonders of the world was there, the temple to Diana. “Be warned,” he writes to Timothy, “of these seducing religions.” In verses 9-10 Paul warned of spreading legalism. We do not have a long list of do’s and don’t’s which we must meticulously follow; we are rather MOTIVATED BY LOVE FOR CHRIST JESUS.

Paul’s Gratitude to Jesus

1 Tim. 1:12-13 [The Message]

I’m so grateful to Christ Jesus for making me adequate to do this work. He went out on a limb, you know, in trusting me with this ministry. [13] The only credentials I brought to it were invective and witch hunts and arrogance. But I was treated mercifully because I didn’t know what I was doing—didn’t know Who I was doing it against!
Satan so often attacks ministers, saying they are not worthy. Well, he is right about that, we are not. It was the MERCY OF GOD that put us there.

1 Tim. 1:15 (KJV)
This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Why did Jesus come to this Earth? To seek and save the lost. Then....why are you and I still here following salvation? To do the same! As Jesus said, (John 20:21) Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. We are here and sent forth to do what? SAVE SINNERS!

Chapter Two / I Timothy

This fascinating chapter deals with public prayer in churches and the place of women in the church.

1 Tim. 2:1-2 [The Message] The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. [2] Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation.

If the followers of Christ today would pray and intercede to God for our national leaders as they do kibitzing about them, America would be far better off! The book of Romans teaches us to pray for those in authority over us: Romans 13:1-7 [The Message] Be a good citizen. All governments are under God. Insofar as there is peace and order, it's God's order. So live responsibly as a citizen. [2] If you're irresponsible to the state, then you're irresponsible with God, and God will hold you responsible. [3] Duly constituted authorities are only a threat if you're trying to get by with something. Decent citizens should have nothing to fear.

Do you want to be on good terms with the government? Be a responsible citizen and you'll get on just fine, [4] the government working to your advantage. But if you're breaking the rules right and left, watch out. The police aren't there just to be admired in their uniforms. God also has an interest in keeping order, and he uses them to do it. [5] That's why you must live responsibly—not just to avoid punishment but also because it's the right way to live.

[6] That's also why you pay taxes—so that an orderly way of life can be maintained. [7] Fulfill your obligations as a citizen. Pay your taxes, pay your bills, respect your leaders.

Paul deals with those who pray to anyone other than God through Jesus Christ in verse 5:
1 Tim. 2:5  [The Message]  ... that there's one God and only one, and one
Priest-Mediator between God and us—Jesus,

With all kindness I say that to pray to anyone other than Jesus is a complete waste of your
time. God bless the saints of past church history, but they cannot help you. God bless
the memory of the Virgin Mary, but she can't help you either. There is only one
mediator between you and God - one go-between - and that's Christ Himself.

How To Pray In Public Places

Paul helps us with some generalities for the men: 1 Tim. 2:8  [The Message]  Since
prayer is at the bottom of all this, what I want mostly is for men to pray—not
shaking angry fists at enemies but raising holy hands to God.

Prayer is the most basic communication there is. You don’t have to lower your voice nor
do you have to yell. We raise our hands in supplication and surrender to God.

Now Paul writes about women and praying in public: 1 Tim. 2:9-10  [The Message]
And I want women to get in there with the men in humility before God, not
primping before a mirror or chasing the latest fashions [10] but doing something
beautiful for God and becoming beautiful doing it.

It is not a woman’s apparel or appearance that appeals to God. It is the sincerity of the
heart.

What about a woman speaking or teaching in church? 1 Tim. 2:11-15  [The Message]
I don’t let women take over and tell the men what to do. They should study to be
quiet and obedient along with everyone else. [12] [13] Adam was made first, then
Eve; [14] woman was deceived first—our pioneer in sin!—with Adam right on her
heels. [15] On the other hand, her childbearing brought about salvation, reversing
Eve. But this salvation only comes to those who continue in faith, love, and holiness,
gathering it all into maturity. You can depend on this.

Paul deals here with a sociological issue more than a spiritual one. In that day, women
led in mystical religions, many of them sexual in content (such as Corinth and Ephesus)
and they became sex orgies. To guard against any outside thinking perhaps Christianity
was “more of the same,” Paul admonished women to be on their guard lest anyone’s
attention be turned from Christ Himself.

Chapter Three / I Timothy

4
This chapter deals with leadership in the local church. Paul first deals with pastors and/or superintendents:

1 Tim. 3:1-6 [The Message]

If anyone wants to provide leadership in the church, good! [2] But there are preconditions: A leader must be well-thought-of, committed to his wife, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he's talking about, [3] not be overfond of wine, not pushy but gentle, not thin-skinned, not money-hungry. [4] He must handle his own affairs well, attentive to his own children and having their respect. [5] For if someone is unable to handle his own affairs, how can he take care of God's church? [6] He must not be a new believer, lest the position go to his head and the Devil trip him up.

*Bishop* (the word Paul uses in chapter 3) means “overseer.” In the New Testament people called their pastors by several names: presbyter....elder....bishop....overseer or minister. They weren’t called “reverend.” No one should be labeled such.

1. Blameless - a good reputation in town.
2. Committed to his wife
3. Accessible
4. Hospitable
5. Good father
6. Good leader in his own home

In the King James, Paul writes that a bishop should be the husband of ONE WIFE. Some take that to mean that those who have gone through a divorce can not ever be a pastor or church leader. That is NOT the intent of that verse. Paul lived in a time of polygamous relationships. “Can’t be,” writes Paul, “a man can only have ONE WIFE.”

**Deacons**

At First Assembly here, we use the name Church Council members. Why? It’s consistent with the rest of our fellowship nomenclature: We have:

1. National - the General Council of the Assemblies of God
2. Area - District Councils (We are in the Peninsular Florida District Council – all the English-speaking AG churches in Florida, south of the Suwannee River - 340 churches)
3. Sectional Councils (in our area that’s Lee and Collier County - 18 AG churches)
4. First Assembly Church Council
Council members qualifications: 1 Tim. 3:8-12 [The Message]

The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. [9] They must be reverent before the mystery of the faith, not using their position to try to run things. [10] Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. [11] No exceptions are to be made for women—same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not overfond of wine. [12] Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs.

One of my choice mentors, Leonard Ravenhill, used to state, “A person is not qualified to be a deacon just because he owns a Texaco station and 2 hotdog stands!” Referring of course to the fact that while deacons (council members) deal with many material issues involving the church, they must be spiritual people.

(Not Given To Much Wine)

So...is that a license to drink alcoholic beverages? No. I like Dr. McGee’s statement in this regard: I take this just as it is: the Bible teaches temperance and that is important to see. I do not think the Bible teaches total abstinence because there weren’t many medicines in those days and wine was used as a medicine. The problem we encounter with alcohol in our day is the way it is used as a beverage, and I feel that the church should teach total abstinence because the abuse of alcohol is so prevalent. I do not believe that a Christian should use alcohol as a refreshment or drink.

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Chapter Four / I Timothy

This chapter is prophetic in speaking of “apostasy” in churches in the last days. That word means falling away from true faith to either no faith at all or a perverted one.

1 Tim. 4:1-2 [The Message]

The Spirit makes it clear that as time goes on, some are going to give up on the faith and chase after demonic illusions put forth by professional liars. [2] These liars have lied so well and for so long that they’ve lost their capacity for truth.

Paul warned the believers in Ephesus, Turkey, earlier that there would come “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” He emphasizes this truth again in II Timothy 3:1 when he warns of coming perilous times. He warns us that times are NOT going to get better and better but rather worse and worse. Just yesterday, a leader of HAMAS warned that the goal of that demonic organization is not just the destruction of Israel but the Islamic taking over
the entire world.

These apostate churches will portend to be very spiritual. I always am skeptical of people who come across as super-religious or spiritual. They usually don’t amount to a whole lot when push comes to shove in reaching the world for Christ.

So what should church leaders do in light of this hellish encroachment on churches?

1 Tim. 4:6-8  KJV

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. [7] But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. [8] For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

I must say I particularly say “amen” to verse 8, “bodily exercise profiteth little.” But then I am reminded that Bible scholars believe Paul walked over 8,000 miles in his missionary journeys, so I guess he got in all the exercise he needed without going to a gym. But here Paul is telling church leaders to be sound in biblical doctrine. It takes some gumption to stand up for truth in these days. God blesses those who do.

1 Tim. 4:11-12 KJV

These things command and teach. [12] Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

We are seeing a rise in love for God among youth in many parts of the world. Thank God for it because from them, should Jesus delay His return, they will be the future leaders of the church.

Chapter Five and Six / I Timothy

These chapters concern the role of church leaders. The first six verses deal with older people, the respect and concern the church leaders and laity should have for those with some years on them.

Verse 8 comes down to this generation which has so many people who feel “entitled:”

1 Tim. 5:8  KJV  But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.
The Bible is not kind to “deadbeats.” If a person can work, and is offered work, and
doesn’t work - well, God says he’s worse than an infidel.

Throughout this portion of I Timothy, Paul instructs those of us in the church as to our
behavior. It should be on the highest level as a testimony to the world.

1 Tim. 5:17-18  [The Message]
Give a bonus to leaders who do a good job, especially the ones who work hard at
preaching and teaching. [18] Scripture tells us, "Don't muzzle a working ox," and,
"A worker deserves his pay."

I know of no church in our fellowship more generous to its leaders than First Assembly.
All of us who labor for the Lord among you in full-time ministry thank you from the
depth of our hearts.

Note verse 22:  1 Tim. 5:22 KJV  Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be
partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.  In chapter 4 Paul taught about
credentialing ministers by the “laying on of hands.” Verse 5:22 does not mean “hitting"
somebody, but rather not giving ministry to someone unprepared.  A young Christian,
new to the faith and the Bible, usually has no business being given a teaching or
preaching role until he or she is firmly grounded in scripture and solid theology.

In chapter six, I call to your attention verse 12:  1 Tim. 6:12  KJV  Fight the good
fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast
professed a good profession before many witnesses.  In II Timothy 4, Paul gave
witness to the fact shortly before his execution that he had fought a good fight.  Don’t be
surprised if you get wounded from time to time.

II Timothy

Chapter One

Here is a basic “calendar” of Paul’s last days:

58 A.D.  Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21)
61 A.D.  Paul arrived in Rome to stand trial before Nero following a nearly year-long
voyage from Caesarea to Italy  (Last chapters of Acts)
64 A.D.  Following his first trial before Nero he was released and continued
evangelizing - perhaps as far as Spain, and certain back to Macedonia where he
wrote I Timothy and Titus
67 A.D. Time of Paul’s second arrest
68 A.D. Paul was convicted and imprisoned where he wrote II Timothy and then he was
executed by beheading

Right away in this 2nd epistle to young Timothy we learn of the extent of Paul’s love for
him and his family:

2 Tim. 1:1-6 KJV

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life
which is in Christ Jesus, [2] To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and
peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. [3] I thank God, whom I
serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have
remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; [4] Greatly desiring to see thee,
being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; [5] When I call to
remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy
grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. [6]
Therefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in
thee by the putting on of my hands.

Paul wrote this from the Mamertine Prison in Rome, deep in the bowels of a dungeon far
below the imperial palace. (See next page for picture and description)

It seems to me, reading this chapter, that Paul’s greatest suffering while in the Mamertine
was the loss of friends and co-laborers. “Greatly desiring to see thee....”

He notes the spiritual pedigree of Timothy: his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice
apparently were Godly people. He counseled Timothy to “stir up the gift of God” that
was within him. Everyone of us has a gift from God. Whether it lies dormant or is used
and flourishes is up to the recipient of the gift.

No fear! 2 Tim. 1:7 KJV For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of
power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

I am often asked if I have fear in the places of the world I visit or minister. The only
place I ever felt the slightest discomfort was Damascus, Syria, over 40 years ago. But
it was only a fleeting sensation and I ended up having a wonderful time there. It is a
shame that so many people miss out on great victories or experiences of life because of
what they consider to be fear.

Here is a verse that has challenged just about every Christian who has come along: 2
The Mamertine dungeon cell where Paul spent his last days and wrote II Timothy. This was the holding cell for capital prisoners - those who were going to be executed. The ancient historian Sallust wrote that it was 12 feet below the ground and “neglect, darkness and stench make it hideous and fearsome to behold.”

Tim. 1:12 KJV For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. This verse is very similar to what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Paul lauds one of his faithful co-laborers, Onesiphorus (an Ephesian), who, like Luke, visited Paul in the dungeon (an act of great courage).

Chapter Two

In chapter 2, Paul lists seven figures of speech that describe the work of a follower of Jesus Christ.

In verse 1 Paul calls Timothy “my son.”
In verses 3-4 Paul speaks of “a good soldier.” I find it somewhat darkly amusing that we used to sing songs like ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS; and now we sing songs that proudly proclaim I’M DANCING ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP. I suspect God would prefer us as soldier rather than ballet dancers.

In verse 5 Paul refers to the believer as an athlete, striving for mastery. (Illustration story of Al Rosen of the Cleveland Indians.)

In verse 6, Paul refers to us as a farmer - or husbandman, who tills the field, sowing the good seed of the Gospel.

In verse 15 Pau calls us teachers/learners: 2 Tim. 2:15 KJV Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Just this week, another fellow, not connected to the church at all but who attends here frequently, came to my office to inquire, “Pastor Betzer, where did you learn all these things?” Simple answer. I read. And read. And read. That’s basically how we learn.

In verses 20-21 we are referred to as a vessel. Paul challenged us to be vessels of honor.

And finally, in verses 24-25 we are referred to as servants. Be a help to people - one of the greatest witnessing tools available to us.

Chapter Three

Here Paul gives us a vivid description of the last days prior to our Lord’s return. It is not a pleasant picture:

2 Tim. 3:1-7 New American Standard But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. [2] For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, [4] treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; [5] holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. [6] For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, [7] always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

I hear it week after week from visitors who attend here, “Pastor, we enjoy coming because we are fed the Word of God which we don’t get much of in our church.”
always want to ask them, "Then... why do you go there? Would you keep going to a restaurant that has menus but no food?"

What is the antidote to apostasy? 2 Tim. 3:14-17 KJV But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; [15] And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [16] All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

[17] That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

That means the Old AND New Testaments.

Chapter 4

Paul's last will and testament!

He opened with a charge to young Timothy:

2 Tim. 4:1-5 KJV I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (saved and resurrected believers) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom (at the Judgment Seat of Christ / I Corinthians 3); [2] Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; [4] And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. [5] But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Paul's legacy:

2 Tim. 4:6-8 KJV For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

On several occasions I have stood in that very dungeon where Paul wrote this - and one occasion journeyed north of Rome to Three Fountains where he was beheaded. It would seem a sad ending to his life; however Paul disabused that idea immediately when he
wrote that was about to receive a crown from the Lord himself! No “feeling sorry for himself” here; only awaiting glory!

They marched Paul to the third milestone on the Ostian Way to a little pinewood in a glade, probably a place of tombs, known then as Aquae Salviae or Healing Waters, and now known as Tre Fontane (Three Fountains) where an abbey stands in Paul’s honor. At first light the soldiers took Paul to the pillar. The executioner stood ready. Soldiers stripped Paul to the waist and tied him, kneeling upright, to the low pillar which left his neck free. Some accounts say the lictors beat him with rods; a beating had been the usual prelude to beheading but in recent years not always inflicted. If they must administer this last, senseless dose of pain to a body so soon to die, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation...or sword? I reckon that the sufferings of this present time at not worthy to be compared with” — the flash of a sword — “the glory.”

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Next week: Titus / Philemon and Hebrews