

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL STUDY IN THE FIRST BOOK OF TIMOTHY – PART TWO – NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE AND QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TWO

Paul begins this letter as he so often did with his claim to be an apostle of Jesus. He was not concerned about title or rank. An apostle is a special messenger. He was Jesus' agent and no-one else's. As such his message came only from the Lord who was also his hope, his unshakeable confidence that the Lord would be his wisdom, his strength, his protection, and meet every need he had. He wants Timothy to have the same faith in the same God. Three simple greetings sum up what would bring that about in Timothy's life. First grace, God gives limitlessly according to our need, the only condition being our willingness to receive by faith. Second mercy, our standing before God without sin is in no way our own work. It is the result only of Jesus' death for us on the cross to which we need to return over and over. Third peace, the war with God is over that resulted from our rebellion. We can remain at peace with Him, ourselves and everyone else.(1:1,2)

Once again Paul had requested Timothy to take on a particular responsibility in their shared ministry, the tough job of caring for the Ephesian church.(Acts 19; Rev.2:1-7) Timothy had presumably checked with the Lord in his own heart and then willingly accepted the task. There were many issues to deal with but the key to all of them was teaching. It is no good trying to correct problems of behaviour unless those we speak to first know the Truth. Proclaiming the Truth means at times answering untruth which takes many forms.(Rom.16:17; II Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6) Christian truth is based on the historic fact of the whole Bible culminating in the life of Jesus. No guessing about what may or may not have happened is needed. All kinds of myths were around in Paul's day, including the fanciful stories about the Greek or Roman gods. Modern examples are evolution based on wild guesswork not science, the founder of Mormonism saying he met an angel who directed him to buried messages, or the claim that Jesus and His disciples were homosexual. Present day obsession with genealogies leads some to spend their lives searching their ancestry to establish their identity, or to the movement which began in the 1930s claiming that the British people were descended from the lost 10 tribes of Israel. We do not need to guess the Truth. We can know and then believe. The result will be the love of God in action which begins with a clean heart and a clear mind, not an intellectual position.

Wrong teaching begins with us wandering off the path to play games with words about matters we do not understand. The ambition to control the minds of others, to our own gain and at huge cost in confusion in the lives of those we mislead, is powerful.(Tit.1:10-16) Paul recognised that clinging to the Truth and rejecting error must be his starting point – and ours!(1:3-7)

One of the most important questions which a Christian leader needs to work out for himself or herself is just where does the Law fit into ministry? Is the Law the way to be right with God or has it been replaced by grace? Paul preached salvation through grace alone yet he was the first to recognise the place of the Law. Its purpose is to show us where our problem lies. What it reveals is that the problem in our relationship with God is rebellion, the

determination to be our own boss. The result is ungodliness, the lack of God and therefore the ability to be His people. The symptoms of this disease are violence, immorality and dishonesty. We rate these symptoms rather than recognising the disease of rebellion against God which causes them. The gospel of the grace of God is the only treatment which works. Returning to the Law only reminds us of how sick we are. It is like a doctor doing yet more tests or x-rays, when the patient already knows the diagnosis, instead of prescribing treatment which cures.(1:8-11)

Paul uses his own story to illustrate his point. His amazing ministry had definitely not been based on his performance according to the Law. Judged by the Law he was among the worst of criminals.(Acts 8:1-3; 22:3-4; 26:9-11) The greater the crime, the greater is the mercy needed to forgive it. He had experienced the ultimate in grace, mercy for the worst crimes. He had known the love of God totally undeserved. All he had ever been able to do was to say thank you and receive it. He still recognised himself as the worst of sinners but God had given him the unspeakable privilege of calling him to a life of serving Him. His salvation and the fruitfulness of his ministry were all God's doing.(1:12-17)

Paul's secret would need to be Timothy's secret which he and the other elders had recognised from the beginning of his ministry. But it would be a battle! Finally he warned him to learn from the mistakes of others who would have to learn the hard way.(1:18-20)

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER TWO

1. What four words are used here for prayer? How are their meanings different? How does the sequence of instructions Paul uses lead to an effective experience in prayer? For whom are we to pray? What will be the outcome of praying in this way? How did this match Paul's own life? How does it match our experience?(2:1,2)
2. What is God's plan for every member of the human race? How does He want to bring this about? In what way was Jesus' coming to earth central to this plan? How does the Lord want to use us to accomplish His plan? Where does prayer as described in verses 1 and 2 prepare us for our part in His programme?(2:3-7)
3. How are men to pray? What male behaviour so easily gets in the way of them praying effectively?(2:8)
4. How are women to pray? What two issues in female behaviour hinder them listening to God? Is this a dress code for Christian women? Are women to remain silent in church?(I Cor.11:1-16) If not what is the warning here? Are women not allowed to teach men? If they are, what again is the warning? What was the significance of the reference to Adam and Eve? Does verse 15 mean that having babies saves women? If not what important promise is being made here? How does it relate to what Paul has been saying about prayer?(2:9-15)