

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

Having underlined their own relationship with God and therefore each other, Paul reminds Timothy of his first responsibility in leadership, to present the Truth and answer error, which can take many subtle forms. He sets out the ultimate test of Truth received, that the love of God is shown. He explains the place of the Law, the misuse of which is involved in most false teaching. He illustrates his point from his own testimony. He had preached the Law but broken the Law. There could be only one answer for Paul, the grace of God. Everything worthwhile that followed in his life and ministry must be God's work alone. But still he saw himself as the chief of sinners, not because of hidden scandal in his life but because his teaching reminded him of his own failure above anyone else's. He warns Timothy he is in for a battle in Christian ministry, mentioning two casualties of war whom they both knew well.

It is one thing to hear the Truth of Jesus Christ but the Truth needs a response. Our first reaction is in prayer. Paul uses four words for prayer, each of which has a slightly different meaning. Together they make a powerful combination. 'Entreaty' is the word for 'beg' which is what we do when we realise we have nothing of ourselves. 'Prayer' means literally to 'desire on behalf of' and it speaks of the process of God changing our thinking, feeling and planning to be like His. 'Petition' often translated 'intercession' means 'to stand between' or mediate, and describes getting serious about our involvement with God and someone else in need so that he or she meets Jesus. 'Thanksgiving' remembers that everything worthwhile comes from God and is done by Him. If we pray like this we have opened ourselves up potentially for the needs of the whole human race, and even leaders. Paul's own experience was that when he prayed the Lord took him all over the Mediterranean to thousands of ordinary people and a whole series of leaders right up eventually to the Emperor. Often this programme was dangerous and one day it would be fatal. Prayer prepared him for any outcome so he had a tranquil and quiet life inside that showed in godly and dignified behaviour even in the face of the worst his enemies could do to him.(2:1,2)

What drove Paul on was the awareness that God wanted to reach and save everyone. He realised as he prayed that God did not simply sit in heaven wishing people on earth would be saved. He came here as the Son of God to mediate or intercede at the cost of His own life.(Rom.8:26,27) That is real intercession. Paul had willingly accepted that calling. What about us?(2:3-7)

Just what stops us receiving the Truth in prayer with the same exciting results Paul showed in his life? In the rest of the chapter Paul dealt separately with the hindrances in men and women. He is not placing one above the other but simply demonstrating how different we are. First he deals with men. Men so readily get into conflict which can easily become physical. Thus our hands become unholy, belonging to our purpose to harm someone else, not to God.(2:8)

Just as men communicate with their fists, women make two equally damaging mistakes. First they use outward attractiveness to get their way. Paul is not banning good clothes, going to the hairdresser or wearing jewellery. His question to the ladies is ‘who are you are trying to impress?’ Peter expressed a similar idea,(I Pet.3:1-6) explaining that it is the heart which matters.

The other instrument used commonly by women is the tongue. Does verse 14 mean that women were to be silent in male company? The word quiet is quite different from the word silent. Paul has already used ‘quiet’ in verse 2 to describe what prayer will produce in the hearts of all of us, male and female. Quiet is an inner calm, instead of agitation. The lack of quietness causes men to hit out and women to speak out. Submissiveness is likewise something which Paul urges on all of us, men and women.(Eph.5:21) It is about respect, valuing another person more than ourselves. Verse 15 is therefore discouraging women from taking command with their words. It does not mean they cannot teach at all.(I Cor.11:5) The key again is the repetition of the word ‘quiet’.

Paul refers to Adam and Eve to illustrate his message. Adam’s mistake in Gen.3 was to listen to his wife instead of God over the forbidden fruit. The problem happened when Eve took command. Eve was not meant to remain silent in the Garden of Eden! The chapter concludes with another frequently misunderstood verse. Women are not saved by having children, but through having children. Childbirth until recent times was painful, fearful and often fatal for pregnant women. Trusting the Lord who loves us, keeps a quietness inside a woman throughout the whole experience of giving birth. This in turn partly relieves the pain, keeping the woman focussed on the Lord and the baby she loves.(2:9-15)

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER THREE

1. What kind of picture does the title overseer produce in your mind? What might motivate us to seek this role? What should be true of his example as a husband and father? Why is this relevant to being an overseer? What personal qualities should he have? Consider why each of these qualities would make such a big difference. Why is the ability to teach vital to being an overseer? Why cannot a new Christian be an overseer? Why should he have a good reputation outside the church as well as inside? Are any of us ‘above reproach’?(3:1-7)
2. What qualities were required of a deacon? Comparing the list for an overseer to that of a deacon what attributes are left out? Why might these not be so necessary for a deacon? Can a woman be a deacon?(3:8-13)
3. What was Paul concerned that Timothy might do in Paul’s absence? Why does Paul see the structure of the local church to be important? What line by line were the key beliefs of the church concerning Jesus Christ? How is each one important in keeping leadership strong and the church healthy?(3:14-16)