



### *Pastoral Letters to Timothy and Titus*

It is impossible to present Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, the so-called Pastoral letters, without dealing first with their authenticity. For over a century, many specialists have deemed it proven that they were not Paul's but that they were written after the death of the apostles Peter and Paul, under the cover of their authority, to deal with the problems of a new generation of Christians.

However, all the hypotheses attributing these letters to a disciple of Paul writing long after him also raise serious objections. We will more readily accept their authenticity if we notice that they contain many medical terms which lead us to discern the collaboration of Luke, the physician (Col 4:14). Luke was with Paul when he wrote the second letter to Timothy (4:11). On the other hand, these letters are not only meant for Paul's assistants. They could be a type of circular letter that Paul wrote upon their request in order to help them to structure and to discipline the communities.

These three letters are addressed to pastors of souls, more precisely to two close collaborators of Paul and this is why, as a whole, they are called Pastoral Epistles. Like Paul, his delegates Timothy and Titus were like itinerant ministers. Although they did not enjoy the title of apostles (they were more like evangelists: 2 Tim 4:5; Acts 21:8 and Eph 4:11), they had authority over the local churches and they were particularly interested in the guidelines concerning the choice and responsibilities of their ministers or pastors.

So the organization of the Church is based on two types of ministries. The first, with Timothy and Titus as examples, extends the mission of the apostles and it enjoys apostolic authority. The others remain involved with the community that presented them to exercise their responsibilities (see Acts 6:1-5 and 1 Tim 5:22). Whether they are called *episcopos* (overseers), *presbyters* (elders) or *deacons* (in charge of serving), these ministers who perform a special role for the proclamation of the Word and the Eucharist, continue to belong to their families and the community.

We will have to strive to understand this complementarity, considering the evolution of the Latin Church. Within a few centuries, it unified these very different ministries within the framework of a hierarchized clergy. See the commentaries on Numbers 4:1 and Hebrews 9:1 on this topic.

The choice of the people responsible for the churches was not the only objective of these letters. They provide guidelines for the life of Christian communities as they no longer expect an imminent return of Christ and they have to learn how to persevere. They also insist on fidelity to the *tradition* of the apostles. For the Greeks, the Christian message was just

as difficult to accept, as it was for the Jews, and even people of good will heard the message (and distorted it), just as we do, through their own way of thinking. Some wanted to do better than the apostles, to choose what fit or did not fit the perspectives of their own culture. In the end, some people were taking the liberty of teaching their own doctrine. People are quick to replace the imitation of Christ by eloquent speeches!

Therefore, the successors of the apostles had to defend the doctrine—this term comes up more than once—that they had received and Paul reminds them that the cult of the Word of God goes hand in hand with the fidelity to the message received from the apostles.

**1** From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by a command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, <sup>2</sup>to Timothy, my true son in the faith.

Acts  
16:1;  
Tit 1:4

May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy and peace.

### False teachers

<sup>3</sup>When I left for Macedonia I urged you to remain in Ephesus to warn certain persons not to teach false doctrine <sup>4</sup>or to concern themselves with fables and endless genealogies. These give rise to discussions rather than promoting a better service of God through faith. <sup>5</sup>The aim of our warning is love which comes from a pure mind, a good conscience and sincere faith.

Tit 1:14;  
3:9

<sup>6</sup>Some have turned away from such a motivation and have strayed into useless discussions. <sup>7</sup>They claim to be teachers of the Law when, in fact, they understand neither what they say nor the things they speak about.

Rom  
1:20

<sup>8</sup>We know that the Law is good, as long as it serves its purpose. <sup>9</sup>The Law is not for the righteous, but for the lawless and for the wicked and sinful, for those who do not respect God and religion, for those who kill their parents, for murderers, <sup>10</sup>for those who indulge in unlawful sex and homosexuality, for kidnappers

1Cor 6:9;  
Gal 5:23

and exploiters, for liars and perjurers and for all that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup>to the Gospel of the God of glory and happiness, which was entrusted to me.

2Cor 4:4

<sup>12</sup>I give thanks to Christ Jesus, our Lord, who is my strength, who has considered me trustworthy and appointed me to his service, <sup>13</sup>although I had been a blasphemer, a persecutor and a rabid enemy. However he took mercy on me because I did not know what I was doing when I opposed the faith; <sup>14</sup>and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, together with faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Acts  
9:15;  
Gal 1:15

Rom  
5:20;  
1Cor  
15:10

<sup>15</sup>This saying is true and worthy of belief: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first. <sup>16</sup>Because of that I was forgiven; Christ Jesus wanted to display his utmost patience so that I might be an example for all who are to believe and obtain eternal life. <sup>17</sup>To the King of ages, the only God who lives beyond every perishable and visible creation—to him be honor and glory forever. Amen!

Lk 15:2;  
19:10

6:16;  
Rom  
16:27

<sup>18</sup>Timothy, my son, I command you to fight the good fight, fulfilling the prophetic words pronounced over you. <sup>19</sup>Hold onto faith and a good conscience, unlike those who, ignoring conscience, have finally wrecked their faith. <sup>20</sup>Among them are Hymeneus and Alexander whom

2Tim 4:7

2Tim  
2:17;  
1Cor 5:5

• **1.3** In this first chapter we have a mixture of various topics: it practically repeats what Paul said in other letters where the commentaries have already been given.

We will note only what refers to false prophets. Since the apostles who had seen Christ were dead, some people forgot that all of faith is based on what Christ taught. Instead of reading and actually living the Gospel, certain people began to discuss and work out religious theories. See Introduction to Colossians.

*The aim of our warning is love which comes from a pure mind (v. 5). Timothy must be firm in eliminating these discussions that weaken the Church and prevent development of the love that saves people. Even bloody wars came out of sterile religious arguments. The center of the paragraph is doubtless verse 15: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The new masters remain with their theories instead of facing the reality of sin. It is the reality of our sin that makes the grace of God a grace, and our salvation a true salvation.*

I have delivered to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

**2** • <sup>1</sup>First of all I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone, <sup>2</sup>for rulers of states and all in authority, that we may enjoy a quiet and peaceful life in godliness and respect. <sup>3</sup>This is good and pleases God. <sup>4</sup>For he wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. <sup>5</sup>As there is one God, there is one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, <sup>6</sup>who gave his life for the redemption of all. This is the testimony, given in its proper time, <sup>7</sup>and of this, God has made me apostle and herald. I am

Rom  
13:1;  
Tit 3:1

Rom  
3:29;  
2P 3:9;  
Jn 17:3

Mt 20:28;  
Is 53:11;  
Gal 4:4

Heb  
9:15;  
Gal 2:7;

not lying, I am telling the truth: He made me teacher of the nations regarding faith and truth.

<sup>8</sup>I want the men in every place to lift pure hands in prayer to heaven without anger and dissension.

<sup>9</sup>Let women dress with simplicity and modesty, not adorned with fancy hairstyles, gold, jewels and expensive clothes, <sup>10</sup>but with good works, as is fitting for women serving God.

<sup>11</sup>Let a woman quietly receive instruction and be submissive. <sup>12</sup>I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men. Let them be quiet.

<sup>13</sup>For Adam was created first and then Eve. <sup>14</sup>Adam was not deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and fell into sin. <sup>15</sup>But she will be

Eph 3:1

1P 3:2

1Cor  
14:34

Gen 2:18;  
1Cor 11:8

Gen 3:6

• **2.1** Heading the rules for every category of believers, we find rules for the community assemblies with two outstanding points:

- praying for rulers;
- the behavior of women in church.

*I urge that petitions be made (v. 1).* Paul wants Christians to be in solidarity with their compatriots, loyal toward their nation and praying for them. In spite of its sins and superstitions, the pagan world was religious. Religion accompanied their every action. This explains why, some years later, Christians were persecuted as rebels and traitors because they did not worship the emperor, nor his gods. Perhaps this insistence on prayer for rulers is due to the fact that the paragraph was written when there already was some suspicion about Christians: it was necessary to remove these suspicions.

Faithfulness to Christ does not prevent loyalty to the nation unless the nation becomes an idol, and this happens when, in the name of the nation, people are asked to obey its rulers blindly. We cannot give up criticizing their errors, nor stop considering as our brothers and sisters those who do not agree with us.

We should *pray for rulers*. Does that mean that we cannot look for more honest and better rulers? Of course, we can: see Romans 13.

Verses 9-14 concern women, and to understand why the letter is so strict, we must recall that there was a lot of talk about freedom in the Church, and there were abuses.

On the other hand, we always have a hard

time accepting the demands of the Gospel when society teaches us something different. Jesus' attitude regarding women was revolutionary and liberating, and at the beginning, the Church followed his example (see 1 Cor 7). Before long, they went back to the usual way of giving a very limited place in society to women and that applied also in their religious assemblies.

In the whole history of the Church there was a great respect for the dignity of women and there were many initiatives favoring them; yet there were few periods when women enjoyed equality with men. In many places women were more emancipated during the Middle Ages than closer to our times, in the 19th century. Likewise, in urban societies dealing with business, in the world and in the Church, women occupied a place very different from that granted them in more closed societies.

In fact, the Church alone does not change the world and society until people have learned to know the human reality better.

This passage, reminding us of 1 Corinthians 11:1-10 and 14:34, opposes women's emancipation with the same biblical arguments commonly used by the Jewish masters.

*God wants all to be saved.* Paul repeats in his own way the passage from the last words of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel: the Gospel must be preached to everyone, to all the nations. Perhaps only a minority will believe but this evangelization is necessary so that all humanity may reach the goal fixed by God.

saved through motherhood, provided that her life be orderly and holy, in faith and love.

### Regarding overseers and deacons

Tit 1:6

3:12;  
Tit 2:6;  
2Tim  
2:24

**3** <sup>1</sup>If someone aspires to the overseer's ministry, he is without a doubt looking for a noble task. <sup>2</sup>It is necessary that the overseer (or bishop) be beyond reproach, the husband of one wife, responsible, judicious, of good manners, hospitable and skillful in teaching. <sup>3</sup>He must not be addicted to wine or quarrelsome, but gentle and peaceful, and not a lover of money, <sup>4</sup>but a man whose household is well-managed, with obedient and well-mannered children. <sup>5</sup>If he cannot govern his own house, how can he lead the assembly of God?

<sup>6</sup>He must not be a recent convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the same condemnation as the devil. <sup>7</sup>Moreover he must enjoy a good reputation among the outsiders, lest people speak evil about him and he fall into the snare of the devil.

Phil 1:1

<sup>8</sup>Deacons, likewise, must be serious and sincere and moderate in drinking wine, not greedy for money, <sup>9</sup>they must keep the mystery of faith

with a clear conscience. <sup>10</sup>Let them be first tried and, if found blameless, be accepted as deacons. <sup>11</sup>In the same way the women must be conscientious, not given to gossip, but reserved and trustworthy.

Tit 2:3

<sup>12</sup>A deacon must be husband of one wife, and must know how to guide his children and manage his household. <sup>13</sup>Those who serve well as deacons will win honorable rank, with authority to speak of Christian faith.

<sup>14</sup>I give you these instructions, although I hope I will see you soon. <sup>15</sup>If I delay, you will know how you ought to conduct yourself in the household of God, that is, the Church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth. <sup>16</sup>How great indeed is the mystery of divine blessing!

Eph 2:19

Jn 1:14;  
16:10;  
Rom 1:4;  
1P 1:12;  
Mk 16:19;  
Acts 1:9

*He was shown in the flesh  
and sanctified by the Spirit;  
presented to the angels  
and proclaimed to all nations.  
The world believed in him:  
He was taken up in glory!*

**4** <sup>1</sup>The Spirit tells us clearly that in the last days some will defect from the faith and follow deceitful

Mt 24:23;  
Acts  
20:29Rom  
16:25

• **3.1** Here Paul deals with leaders, bishops and deacons (see commentary on Tit 1:6 and Phil 1:1).

• 14. This short paragraph reminds us that, if indeed we are in charge of the Church of God, we are neither its founders nor its masters. The Church was born through a merciful intervention of God, when he decided that his Son should identify with the human race, as is expressed in this short poem.

Here we use *divine blessing* (v. 16) for a word that we translated elsewhere as "piety" or "religion" (see 2:2; 4:7; 6:3; 5, 6; 2 Tim 3:5 and Tit 1:1). In those years, the word was mostly used to mean a loving attitude toward the Father and neighbors, characteristic of

true believers who simply imitate God's example.

The Church is the *pillar and foundation of the truth*. We must understand this phrase as referring to the concepts of that time: from above, from a world in which everything is truth, God lowers his Truth to the earth, as a column or a visible sign on which we can lean. In spite of all the infidelities of the Church, God uses it to preserve true knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in the world. Without this knowledge, people cannot be free, nor can humanity reach its maturity.

• **4.1** After the death of the apostles, new masters who tamper with the faith appear in the Church.

2Tim 3:1; 1Jn 2:18 spirits and devilish doctrines, <sup>2</sup>led by lying hypocrites whose conscience has been branded with the stamp of infamy.

Col 2:16 <sup>3</sup>These persons forbid marriage and condemn the use of certain foods which God created for those who know the truth, and which the believers receive with thanksgiving. <sup>4</sup>Everything created by God is good, and all food is lawful; nothing is to be rejected if we receive it with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup>for it is blessed with the word of God and prayer, and made holy.

Gen 1:31;  
1Cor  
10:31;  
Rom  
14:14;  
Mt 15:11

<sup>6</sup>If you explain these things to the brothers and sisters, you will prove to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished by the teachings of faith and the sound doctrine that you have

followed. <sup>7</sup>Reject irreligious fables and old wives' tales. Train yourself in godliness. <sup>8</sup>Physical training is of limited value; godliness, instead, is useful in every way, holding promise for the present life and for the life to come. <sup>9</sup>Here you have a sure doctrine you can trust. <sup>10</sup>We toil and endure because we trust in the living God, the Savior of all, especially of those who believe.

2Tim  
2:16

2:3

### Advice to Timothy

<sup>•</sup> <sup>11</sup>Command and teach these things. <sup>12</sup>Let no one reproach you on account of your youth. Be a model to the believers in the way you speak and act, in your love, your faith and purity of life. <sup>13</sup>Devote yourself to

Tit 2:7

One of the numerous errors of these people is to despise all that comes from the body: they condemn marriage, forbid meat and wine. Concerning marriage, see the Introduction to Colossians. For those who said matter comes from evil powers whereas souls come from God who is good, having children was to imprison in an evil body souls which later would have to be saved. This is why they condemned, not sexual relations but marriage and procreation. In this contempt of the body and of a nature created by God, there is nothing Christian (see Col 2:23).

*In the last days* (v. 1): these are the days beginning with Jesus' resurrection and stretching to his second coming (Heb 1:2; James 5:3).

*The Spirit tells us clearly.* The prophets of the Church often predicted that people would come to preach their own theories, and not authentic faith.

*The believers receive with thanksgiving.* From the beginning, it was the custom in Christian families to give thanks to God at the family meal.

*Train yourself in godliness* (v. 7). Here we have another danger. Contrary to teachers who despise life and want us to live as strange characters, there are others who are totally absorbed in external things. In the Greco-Roman world there was much enthusiasm for sports and races. Without despising the body we are asked to check if we give each part the importance it deserves and the time corresponding to it.

<sup>•</sup> 11. Faced with all these false teachers, Timothy must be an example of a true apostle.

*Let no one reproach you on account of your youth.* Usually, in the Christian communities and in the Jewish ones, the leaders were older men. This is why they were called "elders" or "presbyters" (which means the same thing). Timothy, who is visiting the church on behalf of Paul, has authority over these elders, even though he is much younger than they are. The example of his sincere faith and profound knowledge of the Bible will be his strength.

*Do not neglect the spiritual gift* (v. 14). If someone was named to a ministry or an official position in the church, this was considered as a spiritual gift: for example, presbyters, deacons, bishops, prophets. While other gifts, such as healing the sick, came directly from the Holy Spirit, ministries were received through a laying on of hands. An apostle or a prophet would lay his hands on the candidate to transfer to him the authority that he had received in a similar way. Thus, in the Church, every leader receives his authority from Christ through a succession of people going back to the apostles.

On this occasion the prophets present would also address the candidate with exhortations and warnings (see 1:18).

*Devote yourself to reading, preaching and teaching until I come.* This counsel is always valid. To be steadfast in reading and study is what costs most in the majority of liberal pro-

reading, preaching and teaching, until I come.

2Tim 1:6

<sup>14</sup>Do not neglect the spiritual gift conferred on you with prophetic words when the elders laid their hands upon you. <sup>15</sup>Think about it and practice it so that your progress may be seen by all. <sup>16</sup>Take heed of yourself and attend to your teaching. Be steadfast in doing this and you will save both yourself and your hearers.

### The widows in the Church

Lev 19:32

**5** <sup>1</sup>Do not rebuke an older man; on the contrary, advise him as if he were your father. Treat the young as your brothers, <sup>2</sup>the elder women as mothers and the young girls as your sisters, with great purity.

<sup>3</sup>Take care of widows who are really widows. <sup>4</sup>If a widow has children or grandchildren, they should first learn their family duties and give their parents financial help. This is correct and pleases God.

Lk 2:37

<sup>5</sup>A true widow is one who, in being left alone, has set her hope in God, praying day and night to God and asking him for help. <sup>6</sup>On the

contrary, a widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. <sup>7</sup>Warn them about this that they may be blameless. <sup>8</sup>Those who do not take care of their own, especially those of their household, have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers.

<sup>9</sup>Let no one be put on the list of widows unless she is sixty years old and has been married only once. <sup>10</sup>She must be commended for her good works and the education of her children. Has she offered hospitality to, washed the feet of the saints, helped the suffering and practiced other good deeds?

Jn 13:14;  
Heb 13:2

<sup>11</sup>Do not accept younger widows; they may have other desires than for Christ and want to marry; <sup>12</sup>then they deserve condemnation for breaking their first commitment. <sup>13</sup>Besides they form the habit of being idle, going from house to house. And it is not just idleness! They become gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not.

2Thes 3:11

<sup>14</sup>So I want young widows to marry and have children, to rule their

Tit 2:8

fessions. Very few people are courageous enough to persevere in study once they have passed their examinations. This is so, even in the Church. The “pastors,” clergy and lay, are constantly tempted in thinking such and such an activity is pastorally useful, that leisure is “relaxing” even at the cost of postponing study and meditation on the Word. The Church is always lacking people able to express their faith creatively—a gift that springs from spiritual knowledge and habitual contact with the Word of God: smiles, goodwill and psychology cannot replace this charism.

• **5.1** From the beginning, women had their own unique role in the Church. Some of them, called widows occupied an official position.

Paul sees three kinds of widows: some did not need help from the Church because they had relatives; others did need Church assistance. Finally, there were some, with or with-

out the help of the Church, who were in charge of certain functions.

*They deserve condemnation...* (v. 12). This means that by leaving her position and marrying, the “widow” of the third category broke a commitment she had made publicly. The “widows” were dedicated to the service of Christ in the same way as religious women of today.

*A true widow is she who has set her hope on God.* We should read what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 concerning the greater freedom celibates have to serve the Lord. Every baptized person is called to belong totally to Christ. If, through circumstances of life, we are alone again and free from family responsibilities, this may be an invitation from God to dedicate ourselves completely to the service of the Church and to constant prayer.

If today retired Christians looked into their lives in the light of God’s presence, the Church would have more leaders and missionaries than are necessary.

household and give adversaries no grounds for criticism. <sup>15</sup>Some have already strayed to follow Satan. <sup>16</sup>If any Christian woman has widows in her family, let her assist them; in this way the church will not be burdened and may assist those who are truly widows.

### Regarding the presbyters

• <sup>17</sup>Let the elders who preside well receive double compensation, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. <sup>18</sup>Scripture says: *Do not muzzle the ox while it threshes grain, and: The worker deserves his wages.*

<sup>19</sup>Do not accept accusations against an elder except on the evi-

dence of two or three witnesses. <sup>20</sup>If he continues to sin, rebuke him in the presence of the community, as a warning to the rest.

<sup>21</sup>I urge you, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus and of the holy angels, to obey these rules with impartiality, without making distinctions. <sup>22</sup>Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, thus becoming an accomplice in the sins of others. Keep yourself free from blame. <sup>24</sup>The sins of some people are plain to see, even before they are examined; the sins of others are known only later on. <sup>25</sup>Likewise good deeds are conspicuous; even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

<sup>23</sup>(Do not drink only water but take

<sup>1</sup>Thees  
5:12

Dt 25:4;  
1Cor 9:9;  
Lk 10:7

Dt 17:6;  
2Cor  
13:1;  
Mt 18:16

2Tim 1:6

Mt 5:16;  
10:26

• 17. Paul speaks again of the *elders* or “presbyters” who are in charge of the local community. Paul wants the community to help its leaders spiritually and financially.

We have already noted that the *elders* who were in charge of the community and who presided at the Eucharist were chosen from the most esteemed believers. This paragraph shows that the primary service expected from them was the preaching of the Word.

*They deserve double compensation.* It is rather astonishing to see that in many parishes the council consists of more lay people competent in social or material matters than persons of the Word, learned or prophetic, capable of giving life to the community.

They must fulfill their duties. *Rebuke him in the presence of the community as a warning to the rest:* the first Christians were no angels. Sometimes their enthusiastic and sincere faith needed strong discipline in order for them to remain faithful to their commitments. Besides when have leaders of communities not caused problems?

In verse 18 note the quotation of the Gospel: “the worker deserves his wages” (Lk 10:7). This passage shows us that when this letter was written, towards the year 90, the Gospels were already considered “Scripture.”

At the beginning and end of the chapter, the author insists on faithfulness to tradition. Faith is not a doctrine that can be adapted to one’s tastes. Leaders are required to have a respectful and humble attitude towards this treasure

entrusted to them to be transmitted to others. We can already see two faults:

– instead of deepening faith, some multiply words;

– some replace surrender to God’s Word with a critical attitude that attempts to judge faith and decide if it agrees with their own ideas.

Money is mentioned twice (6:10 and 6:17-19). After the first years of enthusiastic faith, the Church finds that, even for believers, everything is lost when love for money persists. That is the drama in certain countries where solid Christian groups have been caught up with the best of society in the pursuit of money: faith continues to be important for them but this faith only motivates fidelity to religious practice. Money that has become our security lessens our trust in God (6:10) and isolates us from others.

The pastors of the Church should be the most aware of the danger (6:11). Salvation for them will be to place themselves in the less secure areas of life and society, where an act of faith is constantly necessary to overcome difficulties and joyously accept sacrifices (v. 12). It is not in seeking first of all our personal fulfillment that we become *God’s agent* and a witness of Christ, as he himself has been the witness of the Father (6:13).

Paul calls upon Timothy to avoid all those dangers and remain true to faith and free from greed. By doing so, he will be “a man of God,” a witness of Christ.



a little wine to help your digestion, because of your frequent illness.)

**6**<sup>1</sup>Let those who are slaves always show respect to their masters, so that no one may speak ill of God and his teaching. <sup>2</sup>Those whose masters are Christians should not show less respect under the pretext that they are members of the church. On the contrary, they must give a better service since they are doing good works on behalf of believers and dear friends.

### Love of money

Teach and stress these things.

<sup>3</sup>Whoever teaches in some other way, not following the sound teaching of our Lord Christ Jesus and true religious instruction, <sup>4</sup>is conceited and understands nothing. This one is crazy about controversies and discussions that result in envy, insults, <sup>5</sup>blows and constant arguments between people of depraved minds and far from the truth. For them, religion is merely for financial gain.

<sup>6</sup>In reality, religion is a treasure if we are content with what we have.

<sup>7</sup>We brought nothing into the world and we will leave it with nothing. <sup>8</sup>Let us then be content with having food and clothing. <sup>9</sup>Those who strive to be rich fall into temptations and traps. A lot of foolish and harmful ambitions plunge them into ruin and destruction. <sup>10</sup>Indeed, the love of money is the root of every evil. Because of this greed, some have wandered away from the faith, bringing on themselves afflictions of every kind.

<sup>11</sup>But you, man of God, shun all this. Strive to be holy and godly. Live in faith and love, with endurance and gentleness. <sup>12</sup>Fight the good fight of faith and win everlasting life to which you were called when you made the good profession of faith in the presence of so many witnesses.

<sup>13</sup>Now, in the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Jesus Christ who expressed before Pontius Pilate the authentic profession of faith: <sup>14</sup>preserve the revealed message to all. Keep yourself pure and blameless until the glorious coming of Christ Jesus, our Lord, <sup>15</sup>which God will bring about at the proper time, he, the magnificent sovereign, King of kings and Lord of lords. <sup>16</sup>To him, alone immortal, who lives in unapproachable light and whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honor and power for ever and ever. Amen!

<sup>17</sup>Command the rich of this world not to be arrogant or to put their trust in the uncertainty of wealth. Let them rather trust in God who generously gives us all we need for our happiness. <sup>18</sup>Let them do good, be rich in good deeds and be generous; let them share with others. <sup>19</sup>In this way, they shall heap up a sound capital for the future and gain true life.

<sup>20</sup>Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you; avoid useless and profane words, as well as discussions arising from false knowledge. <sup>21</sup>Some have lost the faith in accepting such knowledge.

The grace of God be with you all.

1Cor  
7:21;  
Col 3:22;  
Tit 2:9;  
Rom  
2:24

Gal 1:8;  
2Tim  
1:13

Phil 4:11

Heb 3:5;  
Ecl 5:14

Jn 18:36

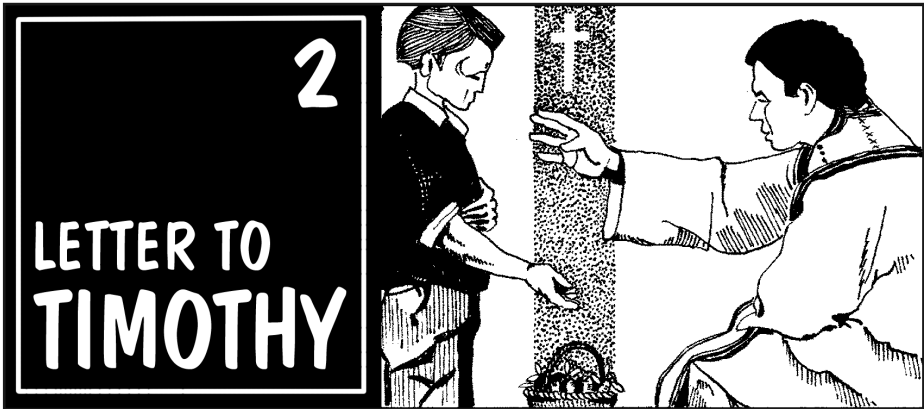
Dt 10:17;  
Ps 136:3;  
Rev  
17:14

33:20;  
Jn 1:18

Lk 12:16

Mt 6:20

2Tim  
2:18



Read the introduction to the first letter to Timothy.

While the first letter to Timothy showed us that Paul was still free to move about, he wrote this letter from one of his prisons. Which one? One of Paul's remarks about the Christians who assisted him (2 Tim 1:17) seems to suggest Rome. That would be around 61–63, or even later, during Paul's second captivity in Rome shortly before he was condemned to death. However, this traditional interpretation was based on a bad translation of this passage. The themes of this letter show that it must have been written from Caesarea where Paul was detained before governor Felix (Acts 24). The letter would have come only a few months after the first one.

Paul speaks about his being a prisoner, a new situation that threatens to be ongoing. Then he focuses his attention on the place of failure and suffering within God's plan. Apparent failure of many Christian lives after a conversion and promising beginnings and the suffering of the apostle in chains on account of the Gospel. At times, he envisions the worst and appears ready to sacrifice his life, as in Philippians 1:20. But at other times, he comes back to the conviction that we also read in Philippians 1:19: this captivity forms part of his mission and it will enable him to bear witness to the Gospel before the highest authorities of the Roman Empire.

Some people think Paul could not have written chapter 3: it seems foreign to Paul's style and his concerns. We can easily compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5 with two paragraphs of Romans 1:29-32 and 3:10-19 and see that there is nothing new here. And the rest of this chapter takes up what we read in Romans 15:5 and 13. The style of this chapter might be surprising if it had been a letter meant to remain private but this is certainly not the case. Even though he was addressing Timothy, Paul knew that the letter, not devoid of rhetoric, would be read.

Let us not forget that since leaving Miletus and even more after his arrest in the Temple (Acts 21:27), Paul had turned the page. He had said goodbye to the Jewish world as well as to the Greek world that he knew and loved. He was not mistaken to foresee a rather dark future.

Timothy was the first and the most loved of Paul's assistants. Paul would like to pass on to him his own strength and apostolic conviction. Therefore, Paul reminds him that meditation and knowledge of the Word of God form the foundation of a life of faith and of apostolic activity.

**1** <sup>1</sup>From Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of his promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup>to my dear son Timothy.

May grace, mercy and peace be with you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

**God did not give us a spirit of bashfulness**

<sup>3</sup>I give thanks to God whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly, day and night, in my prayers. <sup>4</sup>I recall your tears and I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, <sup>5</sup>so like the faith of your grandmother Lois and of your mother Eunice, which I am sure you have inherited.

<sup>6</sup>For this reason I invite you to fan into a flame the gift of God you received through the laying on of my hands. <sup>7</sup>For God did not confer on us a spirit of bashfulness, but of strength, love and good judgment. <sup>8</sup>Do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord, nor of seeing me in chains. On the contrary, do your share in laboring for the Gospel with the strength of God. <sup>9</sup>He saved us and called us—a calling which proceeds from his holiness. This did not de-

pend on our merits, but on his generosity and his own initiative. This calling given to us from all time in Christ Jesus <sup>10</sup>has just been manifested with the glorious appearance of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light in his Gospel. <sup>11</sup>Of this message I was made herald, apostle and teacher.

<sup>12</sup>For its sake I now suffer this trial, but I am not ashamed, for I know in whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is capable of taking care of all I have entrusted to him until that day.

<sup>13</sup>Follow the pattern of the sound doctrine which you have heard from me, concerning faith and love in Christ Jesus. <sup>14</sup>Keep this precious deposit with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us.

<sup>15</sup>You must know that those from Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. <sup>16</sup>May the Lord show his mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often comforted me and was not ashamed when he found out that I was in prison. <sup>17</sup>On the contrary, he showed courage, searched for me and found me. <sup>18</sup>May the Lord grant that he find mercy on that day. You know better than I all the services he had rendered in Ephesus.

Tit 2:11

Heb 2:14;  
1Tim 2:71Tim  
6:20

4 16

• **1.6** *Fan into a flame the gift you received.* See 1 Timothy 4:14. Paul tries to give his own energy to Timothy and he reminds him of God's love and promises.

*The sound doctrine... the precious deposit... which you have heard from me* (vv. 13-14): see 1 Timothy 1:3. The doctrine of the faith cannot be altered, but neither can it be put in storage. It must be lived, which brings into play our creativity as well as that of the Holy Spirit that lets it be rediscovered each day.

*He saved us and called us:* see Ephesians 2:8-10.

*He is capable of taking care of all I have*

*entrusted to him* (v. 12). These words invite us to remember the exact meaning of the word "faith." In Hebrew, for the Old Testament, the word "faith" had the same root as "to be firm," or "to lean on something." In Greek, the word that has become "faith" signifies both the trust that could be had in a debtor, and the guarantee given to the creditor. So Paul considers all his apostolic life as the deposit he has placed in God's hands. Like Paul a person of faith is not deceived by the mirages of a happy life but prefers to use his life in an often thankless labor and persevere as if he already saw what couldn't yet be seen (Heb 11:27).

Phil 3:5;  
Acts  
26:4Acts  
16:11Tim  
4:14Rom  
8:15Eph 2:8;  
Tit 3:5

**Labor like a good soldier of Christ**

**2**<sup>•1</sup>You, my son, be strong with the grace you have in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>Entrust to reliable people everything you have learned from me in the presence of many witnesses, that they may instruct others.

<sup>3</sup>Labor like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup>No soldier gets involved in civilian trade; the soldier's aim is to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup>No athlete is crowned unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup>And again, the farmer who tills the land is the first to enjoy the fruits of the harvest. <sup>7</sup>Think over what I am telling you; the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

<sup>8</sup>Remember Christ Jesus, risen from the dead, Jesus, son of David, as preached in my Gospel. <sup>9</sup>For this Gospel I labor and even wear chains like an evildoer, but the word of God is not chained. <sup>10</sup>And so I bear every-

thing for the sake of the chosen people, that they, too, may obtain the salvation given to us in Christ Jesus and share eternal glory. <sup>11</sup>This statement is true:

*If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;*

*<sup>12</sup>If we endure with him, we shall reign with him;*

*If we deny him, he will also deny us;*

*<sup>13</sup>If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.*

**Do not fight over words**

<sup>•14</sup>Remind your people of these things and urge them in the presence of God not to fight over words, which does no good, but only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup>Be for God an active and proved minister, a blameless worker correctly handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>Do not take part in useless conversations, alien to the faith. This

Rom  
8:17;  
Mt 10:33

1Cor 1:9;  
Num  
23:19

Tit 2:7;  
1Tim 4:7

1Cor 9:7;  
9:25

Acts  
13:30;  
Rom 1:4  
Eph 3 1;  
Phil 1:12

• **2.1** *Entrust to reliable people (v. 2).* We have seen in Paul's first missions that he took care to establish elders in each community (Acts 14:23; see also Tit 1:6). They must be able to preserve the faith in full. We often give more importance to immediate effectiveness of our actions rather than to doctrinal exactitude. In the long run, there is never an error that is not paid for. Saint Irenaeus affirms that the primary mission of the Church is to maintain in the world a true knowledge of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. See however the commentary on Galatians 2:5.

Then Paul invites Timothy to surrender completely, with the assurance that his efforts will be rewarded.

*Be strong with the grace you have in Christ Jesus.* Christ's witness must be courageous and strong, as the messenger of the victorious Christ. His own conviction will convince others. He must avoid the many ways of wasting time and getting off track in his mission: idle conversations devoid of value. Things that do not promote a better service of God (1 Tim 1:4): false religious problems unrelated to real life.

*No soldier gets involved (v. 4).* It happened at times that Paul earned his living while

preaching (2 Cor 11:9; 2 Thes 3:7), but now here the letter speaks for those who waste their time in working for a living when the community has the duty of seeing to their needs. For a minister of the Church, work can be a way of placing oneself in the world and in the midst of people; but it could also be a way of escaping the difficulties and humiliations of every apostolic task.

• 14. Return to the experiences of the apostolic worker. In time the converted are tested: some make progress and others are lost. The apostle should not be astonished: no fall, no scandal can shake *the solid foundations laid by God* (v. 19): the Church will never be defeated.

*They hold that the resurrection has already taken place (v. 18).* Faith in the resurrection was accepted with as much difficulty in those times as it is today, and many wanted to keep the word without being embarrassed by a God who shatters our way of thinking. Perhaps those named here held that a spiritual resurrection took place at baptism and there was nothing more to hope for after death. On this subject, see in the Gospel of John the precision given in 5:28 immediately following 5:25.

leads to a greater impiety. <sup>17</sup>Such teaching spreads like gangrene: I am thinking of Hymeneus and Philetus.

<sup>18</sup>They strayed from the truth, holding that resurrection has already taken place; and with this they upset the faith of some. <sup>19</sup>But the solid foundations laid by God are not shaken; on them it is written: *The Lord knows those who are his*, and: *Let him who confesses the name of the Lord turn away from evil.*

<sup>20</sup>In a large house we find not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay. Some are reserved for special uses, others, for ordinary ones. <sup>21</sup>All who clean themselves of what I speak of, will become a noble vessel, useful to the Lord, prepared for any holy purpose.

<sup>22</sup>So shun the passions of youth and seek righteousness, faith, love and peace, together with those who call upon the Lord with a pure heart.

<sup>23</sup>Avoid stupid and senseless discussions, since such are the cause of misunderstanding. <sup>24</sup>God's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to all, always teaching and patient with those who do not understand, <sup>25</sup>gently correct opponents; perhaps God may grant them to repent and dis-

cover the truth, <sup>26</sup>withdrawing them from the snare of the devil who held them captive to his own will.

**3** • <sup>1</sup>Be quite sure that there will be difficult times in the last days.

<sup>2</sup>People will become selfish, lovers of money, boastful, conceited, gossips, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy. <sup>3</sup>They will be unable to love and to forgive; they will be slanderers, without self-control, cruel, enemies of good, <sup>4</sup>traitors, shameless, full of pride, more in love with pleasure than with God. <sup>5</sup>They will keep the appearance of piety, while rejecting its demands. Keep away from such people.

<sup>6</sup>Of the same kind are those who enter houses and captivate weak women, full of sins, swayed by all kinds of passion, <sup>7</sup>who are always learning but never grasping knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup>These people of corrupt mind and false faith oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. <sup>9</sup>Yet they may not go very far, for their folly will be clear to all, as in the case of those two.

<sup>10</sup>You, instead, have closely followed my teaching, my way of life, my projects, faith, patience, love, en-

• **3.1** *In the last days* (v. 1): see 1 Timothy 4:1. Even the presence of evil in the Church should not surprise us.

The paragraph 14-17 gives us in a few words a full message on biblical meditation: *the Scriptures will give you wisdom* (v. 15). Biblical meditation is the best means of making faith mature (vv. 15-17). When these lines were written Scripture was essentially the Old Testament, but already the Church possessed and considered as *Scripture* several Gospels and some of Paul's letters.

Just before the mention of Scripture we read: *Continue with what you have learned—knowing from whom you received it.* "Tradition" means precisely what we receive from our elders. The reading of the Bible is inseparable from the "Tradition of the Apostles,"

which is the "Tradition of the Church," and it is a way of understanding the Bible, just as Jesus immediately after his resurrection opened to his apostles a new way of reading salvation history. This tradition is the second support of faith.

*All Scripture is inspired by God* (v. 16) and there we look for a message from God to his people rather than an occasion for personal speculation. The same Spirit that directs the Church has equally inspired the biblical authors.

For many years, we spoke of the "inspiration" of the Bible, not so much to encourage the reading of it in the family or community, but to affirm the fact of it being without error. It was also because some people saw contradictions between Bible and science. These

1Tim  
6:21Num  
16:5;  
16:26Rom  
9:21

1Tim 3:2

1Tim 4:1

Rom  
1:29

Mt 7 15

Act 13:50; 14:5; 14:19  
 Jn 15:20; 1Thes 3:4; Acts 14:22

durance, <sup>11</sup>persecutions and sufferings. You know what happened to me at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra. How many trials I had to bear! Yet the Lord rescued me from them all. <sup>12</sup>All who want to serve God in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, <sup>13</sup>while evil persons and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

<sup>14</sup>As for you, continue with what you have learned and what has been entrusted to you, knowing from whom you received it. <sup>15</sup>Besides, you have known the Scriptures from childhood; they will give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>16</sup>All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, refuting error, for correcting and training in Christian life. <sup>17</sup>Through Scripture the man of God is made expert and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### Preach the Word

**4**<sup>\*</sup>In the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by the hope I have of his coming and his kingdom, I urge you <sup>2</sup>to preach the Word, in season and out of season, reproofing, rebuking or advising, always with patience and providing instruc-

tion. <sup>3</sup>For the time is coming when people will no longer endure sound doctrine but following their passions they will surround themselves with teachers to please their itching ears. <sup>4</sup>And they will abandon the truth to hear fables. <sup>5</sup>So be prudent, do not mind your labor, give yourself to your work as an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

<sup>6</sup>As for me, I am already poured out as a libation, and the moment of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me on that day; and not only me, but all those who have longed for his glorious coming.

### Final greetings

<sup>9</sup>Do your best to come to me quickly. <sup>10</sup>You must know that Demas has deserted me for the love of this world: he returned to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. <sup>11</sup>Only Luke remains with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is a useful helper in my work. <sup>12</sup>I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

<sup>13</sup>Bring with you the cloak I left at

problems have partly disappeared. Each book is as the human authors wrote it, reflecting their culture and their limitations (before the coming of Christ, faith had not attained full maturity; before rational science, people could not express themselves according to scientific views). The entire book is also from God and every text is part of a definitive message. It is there we find the truth of God, and not in the exactitude of details and literary form, which we necessarily must adapt to our modern language.

Above all we must remember that the Word of God is the normal nourishment of faith. It is not only *useful for teaching*: Bible reading has the value of a sacrament for the faithful. No preaching, no catechism even though “bibli-

cal” can replace the frequent meditative reading of the word of God for the development of faith.

- **4.1 Preach the Word (v. 2):** this is Paul’s last advice. It must be the first concern of the Church and of any church leader.

Paul knows that he will not be freed and that he will be condemned to death. He embraces his own sacrifice just as Jesus did.

We find the comparison of the soldier and the athlete that Paul liked so much. In those days athletes received a crown of laurels as a symbol of immortality: *As for me the time of sacrifice has arrived, and the moment of my departure has come.*

1Tim 4:1

Phil 2:17

1Tim 1:18; 6:12; 1Cor 9:25; Phil 3:14; 1P 5:4; Rev 2:10

Col 4 14

Col 4 10

Troas, in Carpos' house and also the scrolls, especially the parchments.

Pro  
24:12;  
1Tim  
1:20

<sup>14</sup>Alexander the metalworker has caused me great harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.

<sup>15</sup>Distrust him for he has been very much opposed to our preaching.

<sup>16</sup>At my first hearing in court no one supported me; all deserted me. May the Lord not hold it against them.

Mt 10:19;  
Phil 1:19;  
Ps 22:22

<sup>17</sup>But the Lord was at my side, giving me strength to proclaim the Word fully, and let all the pagans hear it. So I was rescued from the

lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will save me from all evil, bringing me to his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him for ever and ever. Amen!

Dn 6 23

<sup>19</sup>Greetings to Prisca and Aquila and to the family of Onesiphorus.

Acts  
18:2

<sup>20</sup>Erastus remained in Corinth. I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

<sup>21</sup>Try to come here before the winter. Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters send you greetings. <sup>22</sup>The Lord be with your spirit.

Acts  
19:22;  
20:4

May grace be with you all.