

1 TIMOTHY



Day 289

“A Violent Man and the Worst Of Sinners”

October 16 - 1 Timothy 1:1-20

Celebrate the Day, I declare that today is a day of remembrance. It's not Memorial Day or Veteran's Day or the Fourth of July; no, today is the day I want you to think very hard about how far God has brought you from your early days of faith. Today we will remember where we came from, and find, I hope, ample reason to rejoice in Jesus.

Recently a dear friend wrote me a letter I'd like to reproduce for you here.

“Hi Pastor Steve: I was talking to a friend this weekend

she attends the local church in my town. She told me when she

received Christ's salvation she felt a joy beyond compare. But now, although she's still a Christian she has lost that joy she experienced at first. I feel kind of the same way—we do not know how to get our joy back. Any suggestions will be appreciated. Signed, Your friend.”

Is there any one else who could easily echo those words? This is not an uncommon experience for the believer. The Christian life is like a dangerous pilgrimage that can take you to some scary, out-of-the-way places. This reminds me of the story of Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, written by John Bunyan. When he begins his journey, he is met by very difficult obstacles, though he is determined to leave the City of Destruction and make it to the Celestial City. Along the way he is met by many and varied dangers, toils and snares. For a person to find joy along the way, while he is fighting the temptations and trials of his journey,

takes much faith indeed.

Let me suggest that you sit down and survey the territory from which you have come. Do you remember the first steps you took as you walked along the road that took you out of the kingdom of darkness? Do you recall the depths of selfishness you were in, and how exciting it seemed that God would receive a sinner who needed grace to get up and go? Think for a moment about your initial experience in the Word of God, and how it seemed like such a mystery until the Holy Spirit began to make the words come alive. Can you make your way around the Bible a lot better now than then? Can you remember where the Sermon on the Mount is and the love chapter and the chapter where Jesus talks about being born again? Just think about how far you have come.

Sometimes we forget what God has done in our lives. It is helpful to imagine where you'd be today without the Lord in your life. What selfish highway would you be on if it weren't for the love and grace of God in your life? It would probably be a lonely road. Think about your loyal Christian friends. Think about the way you feel in worship and how it delights your heart when Christ is honored. Think about how Christ has saved you from the trap of addictions and obsessions that plague so many people. God has brought you a long, long way.

Paul was aware of this in his life. He actually thought he was the worst of all sinners. He had acted so violently against the church that it just amazed him that Jesus had come into his life. So if you know anyone who says that he just cannot see how God can

save a wretch like him, remind him of Paul and his outlook about where he had come from. Paul had so much to be thankful to God for. In 1 Corinthians 15 he says that he is who he is by the grace of God. He's saying that if he could be saved, then anybody could.

Where would you be today without Jesus?

More importantly, where are you today because

of Him?

Do you see yourself as the "chief of sinners" like Paul?

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," (1 Timothy 1:15).

God's blessings reach violent and sinful men,

Pastor Steve



"Ladies, Shhhh!"

October 17 - Philippians 3:1 - 4:1

Men are too passive, women are too boisterous. Don't you hate generalizations? Of course, some men are gregarious and loud and some women are passive, but generally speaking, guys say little and women talk. In some households the gals speak for their guys. Paul says that this is not God's way.

Interestingly enough, this pattern occurred even before the first couple disobeyed God. The perfect man sat by passively and partook of the forbidden fruit after the perfect woman succumbed to the tempter's guile. They believed the devil over God and went the way of the horny toad.

But if God's design is that the man would lead, then why didn't Adam stand up and oppose the anti-God voice? The Scripture indicates that the woman was truly deceived and the man was disobedient. Remember this verse in Romans 5: "...sin came into the world through one man..." (verse 12) and, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners..." (verse 19). The woman is absent from this accusation. Interesting.

In the church the Lord has set up an orderly way to manage things. This extends to the home, but in 1 Timothy Paul is concerned about the way the church does business when they gather. He is conscious of the need for order and accountability. He is not

invalidating the role of women. He is merely laying down His design for Christian life and worship. This discussion reminds me of 1 Corinthians 14, where Paul said some very pointed things about the order of worship. There he is concerned that worship be understandable, and for the male elders to stand up and judge whatever utterances may be given in a worship environment.

God is essentially saying that the buck stops at the desk of the men. They are to lead. They must lead the church and their wives and their kids. That doesn't mean that women cannot give input or may not teach when they are under the authority of a man or men, but they are not to take the role of leader. Paul says clearly, "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission."

Mutual submission in the Church under Christ's leadership is always the norm. In Ephesians 5 Paul says that we are to "submit to one another out of respect for Christ." The man's role is not a dominant one, but one of loving leadership. He is to lead by emulating Jesus. He must be a servant-leader. He is to lead as Jesus would, teaching the flock the Word of the Lord so that they, both men and women, can grow up into maturity in the Lord.

Even a woman's style of dress can be significant, because it may indicate whether she is a submissive

type of person or not. If she dresses by putting on the Ritz, she may not be as interested in godliness as she is in drawing attention to herself. You know, every time Matilda enters the meeting hall, every head turns to see what new kind of costly jewelry she'll be wearing or how her hair is fixed. She always parades the latest styles and eye-catching attire. Matilda needs to dial it down and focus on building up the body of Christ rather than her own little thing. Matilda needs to realize that Christ is the head of the church and that she needs to dress and behave more submissively. Am I being reasonable or am I just making you mad? I'm trying to properly interpret Paul's words. Go back and read him and judge my thoughts by what the Bible says.

Men, there is a good lesson here for us. Are you too passive? Do you often say nothing even when you have an opinion? Do you consider yourself "laid back?" That's an excuse I often hear, which is supposed to somehow validate passivity. Men need to be more assertive and loving in their leadership. We need to first simply consider ourselves leaders. Our kids need to know that the final decision on things rests on our shoulders. Their mom may make a decision for the kids, but if the kid complains, he'll have to deal with dad. Dad should be in the driver's seat. Dad should be talking to his wife about decisions and procedures in the home, and when the rules need to be enforced, Dad should be right there enforcing them.

In the church, men should be in roles of leadership. Men need to take the reigns and steer the fellowship so that it goes in an orderly way. It should

not be tossed here and there by some new-fangled teaching or some loud voice that wants to take over. When godly men are in places of leadership you can be assured that the church will be moving forward.

Women, try not to take Paul wrong. It is too easy today to let our "liberated" culture dictate the direction of the church and our homes. The lesson for you is to decide if you see yourself in a submissive role. Are you submissive and supportive of your husband? Are you speaking positively about the male leadership in your church? Do you seek to support those whom God has placed over you?

Women are good talkers. I am still amazed at how long my mom could talk on the phone with her mom when I was growing up. I think it was hours at a time. Now my wife can do the same. After I have talked to my mom for half an hour I am pretty much done. She can keep going, but the truth is that I have already run out of things to say. Women sure can talk longer than men.

My question is, what kind of a listener are you? Can you talk without really listening? I'm not accusing you, just wanting to know. Proverbs says that when words are spoken in multitudes, sin is unavoidable. Do you sometimes get in trouble because you have said something too hurriedly and have injured someone with your words? Paul says to us that we need to slow down and be quiet, in church especially.

Let's bow for a moment of silence.

God's blessings work in an orderly way,
Pastor Steve

**“Leaders Beware”**

October 18 - 1 Timothy 3: 1-16

Leaders in God’s church must be called to that task. They also must demonstrate the qualities laid down in this chapter, and they need to be aware of the responsibilities that attend their work. It is a difficult assignment. Those who want to be leaders are doing a good thing, but it is still hard.

It sounds like leaders need to be like Jesus. Now that’s a tall order, isn’t it? Can you imagine the job description for that employment ad? Wanted: someone willing and able to model the character of Christ. When you think about that long enough—especially if you are a leader in Christ’s church—that could be very disconcerting. It might be helpful to take a look in a couple of other sections of Scripture in order to shed some needed light on this topic.

Peter said, “To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings and one who will also share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away,” (1 Peter 5: 1-4). There is that pesky word “example.” John said, “Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did,” (1 John 2:6).

These kinds of passages can either melt us or motivate us, but they cannot leave us neutral. We who lead are called to take seriously the expectations God has for us. Is there any other way to look at this?

Let’s revisit the expectations Paul lays out.

He says we cannot be the kind of person who elicits scorn when our name is mentioned. He says we ought to be committed exclusively to our wives. We shouldn’t go overboard in any area except in our commitment to Jesus. We ought to love to hang out with

others. We should also be gentle like Jesus and not bully others. Drinking and fighting and materialism ought not to characterize us in our day-to-day lives. Our families ought to be in order, and the kids should be able to express their own faith in the Lord. We must have some spiritual mileage under our belt so that we do not make silly spiritual mistakes that give the devil an advantage. And we should have friends in the community of non-believers so that we can have an effective witness to them. Sound reasonable for a leader in Christ’s church? I think so. Does it mean that you have to have each and every quality mastered if you would be an elder in the Body of Christ?

To think that any one leader has mastered all of the qualities of an elder would be to say that he had reached absolute sanctification or perfection. Yet, Paul doesn’t seem to be leaving a lot of room for discussion. He just says that these things are the way an elder ought to be. So we ought to take the high road in our interpretation and not attempt to water down the passage to fit our own wants. We can safely say that Paul does not mean that an elder must be perfect in every way at all times, because of what the elder John says in his first little letter at the end of the Bible. John makes it clear that if we had the idea that we never sin, we would merely be deluding ourselves.

Those who lead need the empowering of the Holy Spirit in order to be examples to the flock, as Peter puts it. The Holy Spirit actively enables us to be Christ-like. Therefore, leaders must be continually full of the Spirit in order to be the kind of examples the church needs. Of course the command to be full of the Spirit is for all believers, but that directive is even more pertinent for leaders because of the need to set the pace for others.

Do you desire to lead? Then spend your spiritual energy on being filled with the Spirit. As you overflow with the Spirit you will have what it takes to give to

others the life-changing power of Jesus. If you want to lead, Paul says, that is a good thing, but be careful not to rush into leadership for selfish reasons. Follow Jesus and then turn around and see who is following you. If no one is there right now, don’t lose heart;

continue to follow Jesus and eventually you will be a fisher of men.

God’s blessings come through the elders,
Pastor Steve

**“Watch Out”**

October 19 - 1 Timothy 4: 1-16

Don’t forget to take time for yourself. Over the course of the year we have talked quite a bit about Christian service and what it takes to be a servant of God. The truth also is that servants can sometimes get very wiped out when they do not take time out to refresh themselves.

Do you already do this? Do you take time to relax, reflect, and revive your soul? Do you have a hobby or two that allows you the opportunity to unwind? Is there an appointment on your calendar that you are looking forward to because you know it will be a blast? If so, then you are probably finding enough energy and more to take care of the bigger responsibilities that are required of you.

I have talked to enough people in conflict to know that weariness plays a huge role in upsetting one’s well being. When we neglect sleep it will catch up to us in no time. We will automatically become more edgy and demanding of the ones we love. They will wonder if tonight will be Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde. You have to take charge of the hours you sleep in order to be balanced. As a matter of fact, I have heard that the experts say that an adult needs nine hours of sleep every night. How many hours do you get?

Paul told Timothy to “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” Timothy had a lot of responsibility in the fledgling church. He was going to follow in Paul’s footsteps. Many times in Acts

and the epistles Paul refers to Timothy as his own son in the faith. Paul and the young man had a very close relationship. They depended on each other. Paul knew that Timothy would need to balance his life in order to stay healthy enough to lead others. Paul knew the pressures could get horribly intense. And in the heat of the many spiritual battles, it would be easy for Tim to lose focus on what was important. So Paul tells him to watch himself too.

Also, Paul reminds him to make sure his teaching is right on. It would be so easy to drift with the tide and go down the detours that would inevitably pop up. Instead, Paul wants Timothy to hang on to the core teachings so that he will be able to teach the Body of Christ. It was no different back then than now. People are easily led down rabbit trails and neglect the pure teaching of the Word. Also, as we have said many times, truth gives life. The more you hit the target when you study and teach others, the more freedom in Christ the church will experience. Freedom in Christ was a passion of Paul’s.

Do you take the time in your schedule to relax? I mean to let your body and mind and spirit kick back. No demanding activity or stress, just good old-fashioned fun. You know what? Spirituality can be fun. If you spent three carefree hours reading the book of Colossians, marking it and praying about its words, believe me, you’d tell me you had a great time. It’s fun to be in God’s Word. At the same time you will revive

your soul. You will fortify your soul and insulate it from the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It is so important to find time to evaluate your life and reflect on what's true. Some people say they do not have one minute in their day to do this. Not even one minute. They may say they are too busy, but the same person will not be too busy to watch a two and a-half hour movie. Why? Because the movie is "relaxing." I wouldn't argue that it is wrong to watch a movie; the only point I'm making is that if we have time to watch movies and TV then wouldn't it make sense to spend some time during our day reflecting on what's important for our lives?

Do you have a spare hour? After reading this

message, could you take a full uninterrupted hour and spend some alone time, relaxing and reflecting and reviving your soul? You may have to put something else on hold, but give it a try. See if it doesn't match up to the thing on your agenda and maybe even knock it for a loop. Everybody's busy, but everybody is also stressed out and on edge. Let's get off the merry-go-round today and take some time to know ourselves and do some good business with the Lord.

Make today or a time this weekend a Season of Reflection. Paul told Timothy he and others would prosper if he would take the time.

God's blessings revive our souls,

Pastor Steve



"Keep Yourself Pure"

October 20 - 1 Timothy 5:1-6:2

I have sat with a good number of ladies who have wept with feelings of disgust because of the sinful concessions that they have made to men, sexually. They feel used and mistreated. They feel small. They are confused because "love" did not give them the thing they were most after—acceptance and security and safety. They have sometimes been used and discarded in ways that would make even the most seasoned counselor squirm.

Often these women had been warned about the damage sexual impurity and unhealthy relationships can bring. Maybe they thought they were in love, maybe they feared rejection; for whatever reason, they ignored the warnings.

Why does it seem to be human nature to ignore good and healthy warnings? In 2005 Hurricane Katrina ravaged the state of Louisiana with Category Four winds and rain. There had been fair warning that she was blowing in, but hundreds of people, for a variety of personal reasons, chose to ignore the warning. The

results were disastrous.

God's Word warns us for our own benefit. David said in Psalm 19 that the Word of the Lord was the most precious commodity that a person could have. Let's quote him: "The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward," (verses 9, 10).

Sexual purity is probably the most critical topic of our day. Moral laxity and bankrupt values plague our society. Essentially, whatever sells drives the marketers of our day. If exploiting people in the sexual area elevates the bottom line, they'll do it. Kids are growing up with a really flimsy moral backbone. As a result, communities are being guided by unrighteous values. When this happens people end up getting hurt. They are looking for intimacy and love and connection, and

what they get is pain and sexually transmitted diseases and fractured relationships. So how do you live in the world and stay free from its pollution?

You have to be purposeful about your approach to handling moral questions in your own life. Then you must take a stand against the attacks of those who would downplay the importance of your convictions. Taking action against moral weakness means guarding against the things that you allow through your eye-gate and into your mind. This means that you will have to take safeguards when it comes to your use of the internet or the media or any other vehicle through which the rotten stuff can enter.

If you do use the internet there are very good filters that will not allow you or your children to browse sites that would be harmful. It is better safe than sorry in this regard. Sometimes something that seems innocent can lead to something that's not. Once my son was using the computer in my office while I was busy outside. He clicked on music.com, and up popped a porn site. He tried to exit but couldn't. The sites just kept coming up one after another. Finally he gave up and turned the computer off. When I returned, I noticed that he had been online so I decided to check my history. You can imagine the shock I felt as one carnal site after another appeared. My son had gone home in the meantime, but at the moment of the revelation I knew I would be having a tough talk with him. I went home, rounded him up and brought him back to the office. I talked to him about the importance of treating God's gift of sex with respect and explained that those kinds of sites exploited people sinfully. He was trying to interrupt me to tell what had happened, but I was on a roll and didn't want to lose the opportunity to teach him a lesson.

Actually, to his credit, he had already told my wife what had happened. I then felt a sense of pride that he knew it was wrong and these things needed to be avoided. I was amazed that these kinds of "pop ups" were right there on an innocent search for music. It is

a lure. It baits you and then leads you down a path of moral destruction.

Paul told Timothy to keep himself pure. Paul knew that the message of the gospel would suffer if the church leaders were involved in any kind of immoral activity. It would be up to Tim to carry the torch once Paul died, and the aged apostle was careful to warn his young son in the faith of the pitfalls of moral laxity. He couldn't afford to follow in the ways of the flesh and give himself over to sensuality. If he did, he would lose personal spiritual power and become ineffective in ministry.

Besides making every effort to guard the images that enter your mind, it is always key to remember God's emergency room in 1 John 1 and 2. There you'll remember that God gives us the process for walking in the light as God is in the light. Once we step foot in the darkness it is essential that we agree with God that our action is sin, confess it, and receive the cleansing forgiveness that God offers in Christ. Without daily cleansing, hour by hour and minute by minute, we will have an impossible time keeping pure.

Christ is the model here, as He is in every area of our walk with God. Jesus was tempted in all ways and yet did not sin. He lived an absolutely pure life. Purity is the result of walking with Him and obeying Him. When He is our focus, the sins in darkness are a lot less appealing. You know you are growing spiritually when the sins that once were alluring are now despised in your eyes. They make you sick. You no longer want their influence in your life.

Paul will tell Titus, "to the pure all things are pure." In other words, while you are in the process of daily cleansing, you will begin to view sin as sin and right as right. Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5). That is a benefit worth living for!

God's blessings are pure,

Pastor Steve



“Sound And Godly”

October 21 - 1 Timothy 6: 3-10

Gimmicks come and go. Sensations dazzle for a while and then fade away. There is sometimes a lot of hoopla about almost nothing and then you are left with—well, nothing. Fads are fads. They attract our attention for a time and then they are gone. Take hair-dos for example. In your lifetime, how many different kinds of hairstyles have you been through? In the seventies I had long bushy hair that rested on my shoulders. Enough said.

In the church there are also fads that come and go. Prophecy gurus have been at the forefront of this kind of thing. It used to be that an Israeli general couldn't go to the bathroom without someone using that as an indication of some prophetic significance. In the late '70s there was a “ministry” in Orange, California called The Amazing Prophecy Center. Before the leader ran off with his secretary, he would teach week to week on some new development designed to make his audience believe he had the inside skinny on the second coming. That “amazing” center no longer exists.

The ministry of prophecy has also taken a beating in the church. Self-proclaimed prophets have come and gone, sometimes causing division in the church with their far out “words” from God. These messages have ranged from the mundane to the ridiculous.

Sometimes the “prophet” will just mimic Biblical language and speak like a flowery oracle. “Thus says the Lord, the First and the Last, the Almighty, Yea, my children, I have called you and loved you with an everlasting love. You can trust me to meet all of your needs and take care of you, Yea, I tell you my children that you are the apple of my eye, etc., etc.,” No harm done. Really he is just making God's Word sound more imminent and alive. I wonder why he thinks he is more in tune with God to speak this way. Wouldn't God just talk in the way I would normally talk to Him? Jesus didn't seem to have a special accent or emphatic

way of saying things that was his “God talk.”

Then there are those who have made actual prophetic predictions. I remember a book that guaranteed that the end of the world would happen in 1994. On New Year's Day 1995 those books were on the bargain table. I was in an environment once where a man who was supposed to be a pretty significant voice in the church declared by the Holy Spirit that his colleague would have a boy and God would do great exploits in the boy's life. This was before sonograms. He had a girl. Oops. He wasn't speaking by the Spirit, obviously. It did sound pretty dramatic in the meeting when he proclaimed this prophecy. I'm sure people were impressed at the spiritual insight of the prophet. But he was wrong. Back to the drawing board.

The illustrations could go on and on. So how do I know if something is right or not? Paul gives Timothy instruction in these things so that he can lead the church effectively. Paul knew the time would come when wolves dressed in sheep's clothing would infiltrate Christ's Body. Paul says that there are two tests to determine if some new teaching is of the Spirit or not. This simple approach would help young Timothy keep things prioritized. It must have been difficult for a young pastor to keep his priorities squared away.

First, Paul says the teaching has to conform to sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is the teaching honoring to the Name of the Lord Jesus? Does it highlight Him, or the teacher? Does it promote the things Jesus talked about and did? Can you find a verse in the gospels to confirm the actions of the speaker? Remember, Jesus quoted the Old Testament in His ministry and the apostles quoted the Old Testament and the Words of Jesus. We are to quote all of the above and not promote our own thing.

Someone might say, “Could the Spirit though bring up some new thing today that is not under the umbrella of the prophets, Jesus or the apostles?” The

answer is no. Otherwise, by what authority would we know it was of God? Now, it is no problem drawing good applications from the Bible to help people in various walks of life; but to do so independently would be wrong. Sometimes teachers will bring up topics not covered in the Word, but they are usually exposed for what they are, self-proclaimed prophets. Be careful. The enemy comes as an angel of light. For example, the Mormon angel Moroni is described as an angel of light. The problem is that his words do not conform to the instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, is the godliness test. By the way, before we dive into this one let me say that you need to do both tests. You need to make sure the teaching conforms to the Words of Jesus and then you can use this one. Consider: does the new teaching lead to godliness? Does it promote humility and love? Does it result in spiritual fruit like the fruit of the Spirit listed

in Galatians 5? Usually when a strong-minded teacher comes on the scene he creates controversy by touting his ideas and drawing people into his camp. This leads to divisions in the Body of Christ. Remember Paul's reaction to this kind of thing in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1? He makes it clear that this kind of behavior does not glorify God or lead to godliness. It only shows that the men involved are spiritual weaklings.

Now take this paradigm and use it as a grid to test whether the new thing you are excited about is really of God or not. If we don't use our heads and test the spirits, we could find ourselves going down a path that leads away from sound doctrine, the teachings of our Master Jesus.

Rejoice in Jesus Always.

God's blessings can be discerned,
Pastor Steve

2 TIMOTHY



