

A PATRISTIC COMMENTARY

The First Epistle
Of Paul the Apostle
To Timothy

2002

Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Translated by:

Mary Rose Halim

St. Mark Coptic Orthodox Church
4775 S. Pearl Street
Englewood, Colorado 80110

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

The Apostle St. Paul wrote a number of epistles directed to some of his disciples such as Saints Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, who were church pastors (bishops). However, the letter to Philemon has a distinguished nature. Although it is directed to a pastor, it is to some extent a personal letter, revealing the role of the master and believer towards his slave. It also shows the deep fatherly feelings of the Apostle Paul towards a thief and fleeing slave, who became a believer in our Lord Jesus Christ and practiced a life of repentance. As for the rest of St. Paul's epistles, they are referred to as Pastoral Epistles¹ because pastors find in them a fertile spiritual source for pastoral teachings and ministry.

THEIR AUTHENTICITY

1. External Evidence: During the Second Century AD, around the year 170 AD, the *Muratorian Canon*, which is considered the oldest formal list of the New Testament, mentions the 13 epistles of St. Paul and so omits the Epistle to the Hebrews. In that same period, the *Paschito Canon* mentions St. Paul's 14 epistles including the Pastoral Epistles as legally acknowledged books. **Eusebius** also mentions such epistles with St. Paul's other writings as acknowledged and confirmed legal books².

None of the Eastern or Western Church Fathers doubted the authenticity of these epistles or that their author was any other than St. Paul the Apostle. Indeed, many of the church fathers have used many

¹ The first to use the term 'Pastoral Epistles' is D. N. Berdot in 1703. However, Paul Anton is the one who made it popular in 1726.

² H.E. 3:3:5.

quotations from these epistles in their writings. Examples can be seen in the writings of **St. Clement the Roman**¹, **St. Theophilus of Antioch**², **St. Irenaeus**³, **Tertullian**⁴ and **St. Clement of Alexandria**. The latter borrowed from the First and Second Epistles to Timothy when he wrote about the heretics who had refuted them since they revealed their misunderstanding and ignorance of St. Paul's teachings⁵. He also borrowed from St. Paul's Epistle to Titus.

2. Internal Evidence: This is not less powerful than the external one. Starting from the 19th century⁶, some critics began attacking those epistles. They refused the fact that St. Paul is their author, and consequently refusing their legality. They based their opposition on historic, ecclesiastic, traditional and linguistic bases. It is possible to present a summary of the most important points in their criticism as follows:

First: From a **historic viewpoint**, their protests alleged that such epistles could not be identified with any part of St. Paul's life as it is related in the Book of the Acts.

We can answer such objections by saying that the apostle's life and work cannot be limited to what is mentioned in the Book of Acts. Concerning what is related at the end of that Book about the Apostle's

¹ *Ep. To Corinth 2:4.*

² *Ad Autol. 3: 14.*

³ *Adv, Haer*

⁴ *De Praescript*

⁵ *Stromata, 2:31*

⁶ *The first to raise doubts is J. E. Schmidt in 1804. Following in his steps are: Schleiermacher; then The School of Tubingen. A large group of scholars defended the premises of this trend and related its origin to the apostle himself. To name a few of these, are: Weiss, Zahn, Godet, Barth...*

imprisonment, we know that this was not the last chapter in his life. We know that he was released to preach till he was imprisoned again in Rome and that he was martyred during the reign of Nero. The Acts of the Apostles mentions that the governor Felix, Festus and Agrippa did not find anything that would enable them to condemn the Apostle Paul and imprison or kill him. He could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:31-32). Therefore, when he was sent to Rome, he was released. This is what we find in the apostle's writings since he expected himself to be released (Philip.1: 25-2:24, Phil. 22). This appears also in the church tradition embodied in the writings of the historian **Eusebius**¹. On the other hand, many of the dangers that the apostle was exposed to and which he mentions in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (2:24-27) are not mentioned in the Acts. Moreover, in the second century, the **Muratorian Document** speaks about St. Paul's journey to Spain, which is an event that did not take place before the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome².

Therefore, **we cannot limit the life and work of St. Paul to what is mentioned in the Acts**, whether they are events that have taken place preceding his imprisonment at the end of the book or after. The apostle undertook his missionary work, preached, and wrote his Pastoral Epistles during the last period of his life.

Second: From the **doctrinal viewpoint** some critics see differences between the thought expressed by the apostle in his epistles and those in his other writings. They see that even if the Pastoral Epistles have some Paulistic thoughts, such thoughts are exceptions. Instead of a belief in the Trinity: faith in the Father who opens his fatherly bosom, in the Son through whom we become rich, holy and

¹ H.E. 2:22.

² L. E. Berkhof: *N.T. Introduction*, 1915, p. 239.

righteous and in the Holy Spirit that takes us to participate in the glories and the blessings of free grace, St. Paul talks about the life of piety and good acts. McGiffent says about such epistles that we do not find in them any trace of the main great truth found in the writings of St. Paul: the death of the physical body and the life in the spirit.

We answer such critics by saying that these epistles were written by St. Paul in his old age. **He was satisfied with his earlier teachings concerning edification and tradition, and he knew that they had become widely spread in all churches.** Therefore, there was no need for repetition since the Christian belief was clear. On the other hand, the Epistles were not intended for the people of a church but they were directed to pastors. They clearly convey a pastoral aim and underline ecclesiastical orders and Christian behavior. We can call them farewell epistles to church servants to whom the apostle delivers pastoral responsibility and ministry.

Third: Some protesters claim that the apostle focuses in these epistles upon the ecclesiastical orders, the ordination of bishops and deacons, and the designation of the role of widows etc. matters which, in their view, did not occupy the mind and heart of the apostle that yearns for the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. They stated that in his previous epistles the apostle did not speak about organizational details. He was interested in enflaming the spiritual capabilities of each individual. Such critics find that the orders were instituted much later on and after the era of St. Paul.

These allegations can be answered as follows:

1- It is true that the writings of St. Paul in particular and those of the Early Church in general, tended to deal with eschatological issues. All were looking forward eagerly and anxiously to the Second and Last Advent of Christ. However, this attitude did not mean that the Church ignored the importance

of ecclesiastical orders. On the contrary, when St. Paul wrote his First Letter to the Thessalonians, he talked about the coming of Christ. However, when he found out that they had misunderstood it and thought that His Advent had come, and that they had left their daily works, St. Paul hurried to correct their concepts. He stressed the necessity of adhering to order and organization as well as to daily work (2 Thess. 2: 6-15). Moreover, he asked them to avoid mingling with those who live without any order. If this applies to individuals, how much more would this be required of the Church? **It becomes clearly essential for her to live in order and organization in all aspects of her pastoral life and worship, and as she awaits the Advent of her Bridegroom.**

2- St. Paul believed in the principle of “**the unity of life.**” Hence he did not accept duality. The Christian lives as a heavenly and earthly citizen simultaneously without any conflict or contradiction between his heavenly spiritual life and his daily practical one. The believer believes in the unity of life in Christ without confusion between heavenly thoughts and life on earth, or between sanctifying the spirit and the body as well. Similarly, the Church as one sanctified whole knows but one life in Christ. Hence, **there is no contradiction between the Church order and spiritual life.** If the apostle is spiritually enflamed and inspired not occupied to speak in detail about the church order in his early Epistles, this does not indicate that he belittles or ignores such matters for spirituality does not mean disorder or confusion.

Concerning the claim that such church order took place at a much later period, this is not true. **Deacons existed directly after the start of the Early Church on the holy day of the Pentecost (Acts 6).** St. Luke, in his accounts in the Acts about the journeys of the Apostle Paul and his preaching tells us: Paul and Barnabas “had appointed elders for them in each church” (Acts 14:23). The apostle Paul also

directed one of his epistles from captivity to the people including bishops and deacons (Phil 1:1). In his letter to the Romans, the apostle recommends the deaconess of the church Phoebe (Romans 16:1).

Fourth: Some objections are raised as mention is made in the Pastoral Epistles of the false teachers. These are the Gnostics who lived during the second century, at a period, which comes much later after the apostle. The truth is that the teachers mentioned by Paul are people whose majority called for a return to the literal application of the Law especially to the practice of physical circumcision. On the other hand, if Gnosticism had risen during the second century with its prominent leaders, **Gnostic thought preceded Christianity and affected both paganism and Judaism. Indeed, its roots and beginnings appeared during the age of the apostles.**

Fifth: The Pastoral Epistles were not mentioned in Marcion's list published in the Second Century. This is natural because the list does not represent the ecclesiastical thought of the Orthodox Church. Marcion deleted even the holy Gospels such as Matthew, Mark and John. Perhaps he had not received these epistles. This is doubtful however. Most probably, Marcion had known them, but had not accepted them since they opposed and challenged his Gnostic thought. For example, they spoke about the Law as being good (1 Tim. 1:8), whereas Marcion rejected the Old Testament as a whole. Besides, St. Paul's epistles encourage the resistance to false teachings (I Tim. 6: 20).

Sixth: From the **linguistic viewpoint**, some see that the Pastoral Epistles have 902 Greek words, 306 of which do not occur in his other epistles. This is natural since such epistles have a completely different aim from that of the other Epistles. In his other epistles, St. Paul wrote to specific churches to deal with theological issues and ecclesiastical disputes. In the Pastoral Epistles, he wrote to pastors about their pastoral work and church orders. Therefore, they had to have their own features and relevant

expressions and words. So, we cannot say linguistic difference indicates a different writer. **It indicates a different issue.** Moreover, such epistles include 50 Greek words that are mentioned in St. Paul's other Epistles but which do not appear in any other New Testament book.

Finally, we can say with N. J. White that those Epistles possess a Paulistic characteristic¹, for they embody his style, **his seriousness and his spiritual power.** They reflect his **loving spiritual strength and purity** that is coupled with great courage and holiness. Moreover, these epistles are similar to his other epistles in their general framework in that they having a prologue, an apostolic blessing, the core of the issue and the epilogue. They also convey **his general inclination to resist any return to the literal obedience of the Law.**

THE DATE OF THEIR WRITING

Most scholars think that the Pastoral Epistles were written in a short time and towards the end of the apostle's life. It is probable that his Epistle to Titus and his First Epistle to Timothy were written within a short time of each other, hence they have come down to us similar even in their expressions. They were written during his missionary journeys after his first imprisonment in the year 63 AD. His Second Epistle to Timothy was written during his last imprisonment in Rome and just before his martyrdom.

THEIR CONTENTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

1) Actually, these Epistles are neither private nor personal ones. They are essays that lay down the general bases of evangelical work through which we can sense the characteristics of the Early

¹ N. J. White: *Exp. Greek. Testament*, 6, p. 63.

Church.

2) They are characterized with practicality especially concerning the pastoral aspect during the apostolic age, without dealing with theological and faith problems.

3) The First Epistle to Timothy closely resembles the Epistle to Titus as both are directed to two pastors (bishops) dedicated to a new service in Ephesus and Crete. The Second Epistle to Timothy has a different purpose, which is to support the Church against Emperor Nero's persecution and the imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome awaiting his martyrdom.

4) Different from the other New Testament books, these epistles deal with the Church Order during the Apostolic Age.

5) These are directed to every pastor as he is considered "*a spiritual soldier for Christ.*" He lawfully struggles to preserve the faith handed down to him by the apostles without deviation, and pure from heresies and false teachings. They also draw attention to the necessity of positive work and service and the avoidance of confusion, which results from unfruitful arguments.

CONTEMPORARY HERESIES

In order to understand the Pastoral Epistles, we have to have a background of the contemporary heresies to which St. Paul and other spiritual leaders of the Church were committed to resist. Such heresies took two forms:

First: A return to the literal traditional thought or what is called **the Judaic Movement**. It was not easy for Christians who were first Jews to give up their previous privileges such as circumcision,

liturgical worship and their pride in their lineage especially those descendants of Levi or Judah, etc., besides their pride in the Mosaic Law and the Prophets.

Second: The appearance of **the first seeds of many kinds of Gnosticism**. These reflect a tremendous mix of elements comprising Jewish, Christian, and Greek elements, as well as Mystical and Eastern philosophies¹. Those most important characteristics of these heresies were:

1) *Duality between the material and the spiritual*. To them, the creator of the material or the physical is the one and same creator of the element of darkness. If he is not evil, he is at least lesser than the Great Creator or the Creator of the spirit. Through this duality, the body cannot cope with the spirit just as darkness cannot meet with light. Therefore, some of them see that Christ could not have accepted a true physical body. He crossed through the Virgin Mary as if in a channel without taking any body from her. He appeared in an imaginary flesh or, as some others claimed, in a body different to ours that had no material element and descending from heaven. In this way they denied the truth of the Divine Incarnation. Consequently, they considered marriage profane, and regarded marital relations to be sinful. For this reason, the perfect do not marry, not for the purpose of being dedicated to worship and service or to consecrate their lives, but in order to escape from being impure. From this perspective, they think that the Resurrection took place by the resurrection of the spirit. They held that the spirit rose from death without waiting for the resurrection of the body since in heaven, there could be no component of darkness. Briefly, they believed that man could achieve perfection only by becoming the enemy of the flesh and abstaining from marriage and some foods.

¹ *The author: Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria, 1980, p.7, 8.*

Christianity rejects this view. Christian devotion implies that a person gives up some of his rights, not because they are profane or out of pride as he considers himself more perfect than his brothers, but because he lovingly wishes to devote himself to worship and service. St. Paul set an example through his own life: he gave up his right to take a wife in contrast to St. Peter (1 Cor. 9:5), he sacrificed the enjoyment of necessities of his flesh through his evangelical service (1 Cor. 9:12), and he demanded that man should abstain from eating any meat if that would cause a brother to stumble (1 Cor 8:13).

2) Some of the Gnostic sects demanded *the existence of lineage*. They conceived it to be a ladder that started with the Superior Being and descended through many mediums or Aeons and culminated in Jesus Christ. It is as if Jesus Christ is the first Mediator through whom man gains gnosis (knowledge) and moves into a greater Aeon. The next stage enriches him with new knowledge and so carries him to what is still better, and so on until at the end he reaches the Supreme Being. Therefore, St. Paul affirms that there is One Mediator, our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Son of Man (1 Tim, 2:5).

In general the Gnostics see that communion with God cannot be achieved through faith but through the intellectual gnosis that belongs to the perfect. It is as though salvation does not depend on the bases of faith but on knowledge (gnosis). For this reason, they called themselves the 'Gnostics,' or the possessors of knowledge.

3) As Gnosticism is based on the pride of having knowledge, *the Gnostics divided believers into classes or sects*: the sect of the perfect who are the possessors of gnosis, and the sect of the simple. Therefore, St. Paul exerted his utmost effort in his epistles to stress and confirm that Christ is the 'Treasure of Wisdom.' Who is offered to all without distinction and that salvation is granted for all.

4) The Gnostics are known for their *literal interpretation of the Bible*. Therefore, they stumbled and could not understand many of the Old Testament verses, especially those concerned with God's wrath and His restraint, and those that speak about His having a hand or a face etc. This caused them to refuse the Old Testament. Some of them went as far as describing the God of the Old Testament to be a cruel God. Therefore they claimed that the God of the New Testament sent Jesus Christ to save the world from that cruel God. Thus, they created the trap of duality between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. This urged St. Paul to affirm and emphasize *the unity of the work between the Father and the Son*, and to confirm the obedience of the Son to the Father, and receiving from the Father the gifts of the resurrection and glory. Thus, he affirmed the eternal love relationship between Them.

5) As the majority of the Gnostics considered the flesh to be their enemy, they refused to accept any distinction made between men and women. Therefore, the apostle explained that 'there is no difference between men and women in Jesus Christ.' Yet, man must be a man who works in his capacity as a man while a woman works and uses her talents as a woman. *Faith does not despise a gender but it never fails to distinguish between the two sexes*. That is why the commandments clearly distinguish between the two sexes on the bases of their diverse talents and capabilities and not on the bases that one sex might be better than the other.

This is a simplified view of the subject, and we will return and deal with it in detail in our textual study of the epistles, God-willing.

* * *

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST LETTER TO TIMOTHY

TIMOTHY

Timothy is a Greek word that means “righteous man of God,” or “The honor of God¹.” Timothy believed in Christ through St. Paul during his first preaching journey in Lystra of Iconium in 46 AD. His father was a Greek whose name is unknown. He probably died when Timothy was still very young. His mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois were Jews and they were the ones who brought him up. Both of them taught him the Holy Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15) yet, they did not circumcise him. However, it was St. Paul who circumcised him in order to avoid the wrath of the Jews (Acts 16:22). During this second missionary journey, St. Paul found in him good faith and spiritual enthusiasm (1 Timothy 1:18). Timothy was known to be pious among the believers (Acts 16:2) therefore, the apostle chose him to accompany him in his journeys. He traveled with the apostle to Galatia, Troas, Philippi and Thessalonica. Yet, Timothy stayed in Berea with Silas when the apostle left it suddenly (Acts 17:14). Later on he joined St. Paul in Macedonia and Corinth and it seems that he stayed with him during his stay in Corinth. Then, St. Paul sent him with Erastus to Macedonia before his third journey (Acts 19:22).

Timothy’s name is mentioned in the prologues of Paul’s epistles (2 Cor. 1:1; Philip. 1:1; 1 Cor.

¹ J. L. McKenzie: *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1972, p. 892.

1:1; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:1; Phil. 1). His name is also mentioned in the final farewell in the epistle to Romans (16:21).

Timothy was sent to Corinth by St. Paul because of the turbulence that took place there before the writing of the First Letter (1 Cor. 16:10). St. Paul also pointed to Timothy's contribution with him in spreading the Gospel in Corinth (2 Cor. 1:19).

Upon writing the letter to the Philippians, St. Timothy was sent to Philippi (Phil. 2:19). He was also sent to Thessalonica to write a report before the writing of the First Letter to its believers (1 Thess. 3:2, 6).

In the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb. 13:23), the apostle Paul points to Timothy's imprisonment and release.

It seems that after Paul's first release from his first imprisonment in 63 AD., he left St. Timothy to care for affairs in Ephesus.

From all this, we can see the close relationship that existed between St. Paul and his disciple and his full confidence in him. Many times, St. Paul calls Timothy 'My son,' 'My true son,' 'My dear son' or 'My trusted son' (1 Tim. 1:2,18; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Tim. 1:2). By reading the expressions used in the two epistles to Timothy, it seems that he was shy by nature¹ and that he suffered of poor health.

THE DATE OF ITS WRITING

It was written in the year 64 or 65 AD., approximately, after the release of St. Paul from his first

¹ *The Jerome Biblical Comm., 1970, vol. 2, p. 350.*

imprisonment in the spring of 63 AD. He wrote it when he was on his way, passing through Macedonia and after he had visited Ephesus, (1 Tim. 1: 3).

THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

He sent it to Timothy to clarify to him his pastoral commitments in Ephesus. He tells him about certain church orders concerning general procedures of worship, and the characteristics of pastors as well as their duties especially those dealing with the constant struggle against fighting devious heresies. Finally, he focuses on the pastoral relationships that connect the pastor with all the different types of the masses.

THE SECTIONS OF THE LETTER

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1- The commandment is the goal of pastoral work: | Ch. 1. |
| 2- General church worship: | Ch. 2. |
| 3- The characteristics of pastors. | Ch. 3. |
| 4- The struggle of pastors: | Ch. 4. |
| 5- Church relations: | Ch. 5. |
| 6- Social relations. | Ch. 6. |

Chapter 1

THE COMMANDMENT IS THE GOAL OF PASTORAL SERVICE

As usual, St. Paul starts by the apostolic blessing, explaining to St. Timothy the seriousness of his pastoral work in Ephesus: he was to deliver the divine commandment and to warn believers against the mongers of superstitions and unfruitful arguments which have no edifying purpose. St. Paul explains to Timothy his mission through reference to his own experience. He thus urges him to undertake a spiritual struggle as he performs his divine service.

- 1- **The apostolic blessing:** V. 1-2.
- 2- **The purpose of the commandment:** V. 3-11.
- 3- **The commitment to the ministry:** V. 12-17.
- 4- **The struggle in the ministry:** V. 18-20.

1- THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father,

and Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Tim. 1: 1, 2).

In this opening, the apostle gives the apostolic blessing to his disciple Timothy according to his needs and surroundings. In it, the following points may be noted:

A. As he writes to a servant who is committed to preaching and witnessing in spite of hardships and difficulties, St. Paul wants to affirm that it is the Father who has entrusted to Timothy this ministry and that it does not come from any person. His designation comes from the Father Who has offered His Only-Begotten Son for the salvation of humanity; and it also comes from the Son Himself. To clarify his point, the apostle says: *“Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope.”* As **St. John Chrysostom** says: [From the beginning, St. Paul elevates Timothy’s spirit and encourages him by saying that God is our Savior and that Christ is our hope. We suffer a lot but our hope is great! Even if we are exposed to fall into traps and dangers, yet we are saved by our Lord and God and not by man. Our Savior is not weak since He is God. Therefore, we are not vanquished by any dangers whatever they may be. We will never be let down since our hope is in Christ¹.]

As servants of God, who have been sent by the Father who has sacrificed His Son for humanity and by the Son who has been offered for our salvation, it is becoming that we too should offer lovingly our lives for the sake of every man.

The Apostle, amid sufferings, considers himself an ‘apostle’ that is an envoy or an ambassador of God whose work is to do nothing else but to testify to Him through his life and preaching. He has

¹ *In 1 Tim., hom. 1.*

accepted this mission by the “*commandment of God.*” The word “*commandment*” in Greek is used to convey a royal military order that cannot be refuted but must be carried out; therefore this is a mission that must be carried out in answer to this divine command. This command was issued when God set Paul apart ever since his birth (Gal. 1: 5). It was also confirmed by a church command when the Spirit said: “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). Then the church fasted and prayed and the disciples placed their hands on them.

B. In this opening, the apostle emphasizes the role of the Father as a Planner of Salvation, the Designator of apostles, and the Giver of grace, mercy and peace. He deliberately does so to confirm the unity of the work between the Father and the Son. In this context, **St. Ambrose** says, “Notice how the Kingdom and the Commandment of the Father and the Son are one and the same¹.” Hence, the apostle destroys the duality of the Gnostics who distinguish between the God of the Old Testament and the One of the New Testament. As St. Paul adores the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, he repeats It three times during this brief opening. However, he defines Him as being the Son who has been offered by the Father out of desire to save us. It is through Jesus Christ that we enjoy all the gifts and blessings granted by the Father.

C. As St. Paul speaks about the Father and the Son; he does not speak about their relationship apart from us. He says that we know Them through their work for and on our account and sake. He calls the Father as our Father and Savior, and Christ as our Lord and hope. It is as though the apostle does not want to present to us mere theoretical theological knowledge that is based on human mental wisdom. He

¹ *On Christian Faith, 3:12.*

wants us to get acquainted with this truth and possess it as the mystery of our salvation and perfection.

D. St. Paul repeats the words “*our Savior*” in his Pastoral Epistles more than in any of his other Epistles. He affirms to the pastor that his main work is to direct his people to their Savior. He also highlights the necessity that the pastor must be concerned with the work of salvation more than with anything else.

E. He calls St. Timothy his ‘*true son in the faith.*’ The word ‘*true*’ in Greek is ‘*genuinos*’ which means ‘the original, true, genuine or legal son.’ In fact, St. Paul went through the pains of delivering him into Christianity through the difficulties he met as he carried his mission of spreading the Gospel (1 Cor. 4: 14; 16:9, 10; Phil. 10). He considers him the spiritual son that he esteems. **St. John Chrysostom** comments on that expression by saying: “There is no difference between them as Timothy resembles the apostle in his faith. This is like what happens with babies since there is a resemblance (between the parent and his offspring)¹.”

St. Paul honors his spiritual fatherhood for God’s people. This is clear in his words: “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). This is not an honorary fatherhood but it is a commitment and a responsibility. **St. John Chrysostom** says to his spiritual sons: [I love you so much that I melt in you and you become everything for me: My father, mother, brethren and children!²]

If Paul is considered a father for Timothy, his spiritual fatherhood stems from God’s fatherhood

¹ *Ibid.*

² *The author: St. John Chrysostom, 1980, p 17. (In Arabic)*

for all humanity. Therefore, he calls God ‘*our Father.*’ Through His fatherhood, St. Timothy and St. Paul find real rest. This is also expressed in the following words of **St. John Chrysostom**: [In this we find consolation, for if God is our Father, then He cares for us as children, and this is according to Jesus Christ Who says: ‘Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?’ (Matt 7:9)¹.]

F. In his non-pastoral epistles, St. Paul most often gives the apostolic blessing only. Yet here he adds mercy, in Hebrew ‘*chscedh,*’ and this word is repeated 127 times in the Book of the Psalms as being the object of people’s praise to God. The Lord has shown us His mercies even when we were still enemies. He has rescued us from a state of enmity to a state of adoption as His children, and from darkness to light. Therefore, it is becoming that we should respond to His mercy by being merciful to others, and so follow as servants in the steps of our Master! **St. John Chrysostom** indicates that teachers need to attain God’s mercy as they perform their ministry due to the difficulties they have to bear. St. Paul himself showed mercy towards his disciple St. Timothy. We find him expressing pity towards him as he says: “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23).

G. St. Paul calls Christ ‘*our Hope.*’ This is why the Early Church insisted on using this epithet. We continue to call Him our Hope not because we will attain something in Him but because we hope to have Him Himself. He constitutes not only the Door of Hope but He is the Source of Hope itself. In Him, we receive the mystery of our life, our salvation, and our eternity. **St. Ignatius of Antioch** says:

¹ In 1 Tim., hom 1.

[Rejoice in God the Father and in Jesus Christ our common hope¹.] **St. Polycarp** says: [Let us then be steadfast in our Hope and in the Patron of our Righteousness... Jesus Christ.] In Him lies our hope as we enjoy the new nature deserved by His blood and as we get buried with Him in the baptismal font. In Him, we enjoy victory over death and attain eternal life; and in Him we enter into the bosom of our Heavenly Father in order to live and to be glorified with Him.

2- THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMANDMENT

St. Paul expresses St. Timothy's commitment to direct the believers in Ephesus to avoid strange teachings and unproductive arguments that are not spiritually constructive. He says to him: "***As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain here in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith***" (1 Tim 1:3, 4).

The word '*urged*' is used in Greek to mean 'plead anxiously,' and it is as though the apostle does not intend to give orders but pleads with his disciple. **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this as follows: [Notice the gentleness of expression as he uses the style of a slave rather than that of a master².]

He urges Timothy to advice some Ephesians not to '*teach other doctrines*' or 'unorthodox doctrines³,' according to the Greek sense of the expression. By this, he meant those who interpreted God's word deviously. **St. John Chrysostom** comments saying: [St. Paul did not mention certain

¹ *Ad. Eph.*

² *In 1 Tim., hom 1.*

³ *Pulpit Comm, v. 21, p.2.*

persons by name in order not to embarrass them through open and direct reprimand. The apostle found in the city some bad disciples of the Jews who wanted to force believers to observe the Mosaic Law. This is a subject that the apostle deals with in his other epistles. They did so not because they were prompted by their consciences, but in search for vainglory. They wanted to have their own disciples since they envied the blessed Paul and resisted him¹.]

What are the fables that the apostle asks them not to listen to? Maybe he meant what he wrote to Titus: “not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth” (Titus 1:14). This refers to those of Jewish origin. As for those of Gentile origin, Paul warns them against superstitious fables that were characteristic of such cultures as the Greek, Roman, and Persian cultures, etc. Such cultures had myths or stories about the descent of some gods to marry daughters of the people of this world, and in this way created a branch or genealogy that had its origin in heaven.

What are the genealogies?

First: Perhaps he was referring to the Jewish genealogies. Many of those who had come into Christianity still honored their priestly lineage or their origination from the tribe of Judah, etc. and so stumbled into the trap of vainglory.

Second: In the ancient gentile world, genealogies were given great importance. To cite a few examples, Alexander the Macedonian or the Great had a family tree going back to Achilles and Andromache on one side, and to Perseus and Hercules on the other. **St. John Chrysostom** says that the Greeks traced their deities through certain genealogies.

¹ *In 1 Tim., hom 1.*

Third: St. Irenaeus¹ and Tertullian² explained that the genealogies mentioned by St. Paul referred to the seeds of Gnostic heresies that claimed that the Supreme Being had produced an offspring. From that another one sprung out and so on. A series of offsprings came into being and these were referred to as ‘Aeons.’ Progressively, these ‘Aeons’ grew weaker from one genealogy to the next. The belief was that that man could attain the Supreme Being through knowledge (*gnosis*), and as they passed through these ‘Aeons’ or media³.

The apostle comments on these matters by saying that they are ‘*endless*,’ to indicate that they are tiresome and purposeless. One could not benefit through their pursuit.

Now, what does the apostle mean by: “*which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith*”? Does the apostle reject research and discussion of matters of faith?

The Gnostics were interested in knowledge, but that did not stem from a love for truth that would have been characterized by a pious and humble spirit. They were interested in knowledge for it made them arrogant as they indulged in dry, sterile, and lifeless arguments. They sought to create arguments for the sole end of arguing, and as such were far removed the life of piety. Thus, gnosis replaced faith as a road to salvation. These are ‘*disputes*’ which do not seek ‘*godly edification which is in faith*.’ As for the ‘*disputes*’ that promote ‘*godly edification*,’ these are one that is concerned with faith and they arise from a humble spirit that seeks the truth rather than argument and discussion. The search, in such a case

¹ *Adv. Haer. Lib.1.*

² *Adv. Valentin 3.*

³ *Read in this book The Introduction to the Pastoral Epistles (Contemporary Heresies).*

is for the purpose of finding the truth in order to apply and live by its principles.

St. Irenaeus says about these teachers: [They make the teachings of the Lord corrupt and prove themselves to be evil interpreters of the good word of God. They destroy the faith of many people by taking them away from the way of truth as they hide under the veil of knowledge. They deceive the simple with their eloquent words and good looking faces while they destroy them ruthlessly¹.] **St. John Chrysostom** comments on fruitless controversies as follows: [We must not be concerned with controversies. The fact that we argue leaves no room for faith as faith gives controversies temperance. But why does Christ say: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be open to you”? (Matt. 7:7) and “You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life” (John 5:39). To ‘ask’ means to pray and have a sincere desire. Christ orders us to study the Scriptures not for the purpose of getting into the difficulty of controversies but for the purpose of ending them as we seek to discover their true meaning. Thus, there would be no more need to get into them again as they would have been finally settled².]

What we would like to confirm is that faith rejects sterile controversies. Yet, it accepts constructive argument held in a spirit of sincerity and true eagerness to know the truth and enjoy it under the leadership of God’s Holy Spirit. Ever since its foundation, the Christian School of Alexandria sought to reconcile faith and philosophy and to couple the heart with the mind³.

¹ *Adv Haer. 1: 1.*

² *In 1 Tim., hom 1.*

³ *The author: The Early Fathers of the School of Alexandria, 1980, p 14, 15.... (In Arabic)*

St. Paul deals with the love of controversies raised by heretics. This was a love that served the lust for appearances and authority. His purpose is to define the goal of pastoral ministry which is to present the evangelical commandment in a spirit of demonstrated sincere love. He says: “***The purpose of the commandment is love, which come from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from a sincere faith***” (1 Tim. 1: 5). Without love, the commandment loses its effect and teachers deviate from their mission. As a result, it turns into fruitless controversies, causing divisions in the community. **St. John Chrysostom** comments on such a situation in these words: [When people do not have love, they envy those with a good reputation, and become anxious to attain authority, and for love of authority they come up with heresies¹.]

“*Love*” is the ultimate purpose of the commandment and the message preached by the apostle and all the servants of the Word. It satisfies the heart and determines man’s aim. Consequently, he does not become confused by false controversies and does not allow himself to be involved in negative arguments. The apostle defines the characteristics of such love as being: “*a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.*” **St. John Chrysostom** says: [But about what kind of love is the apostle speaking? It is sincere love that is not based on mere words but that stems from the inner inclination and emotions of a being, for the apostle states: “*from a pure heart.*” An evil life creates divisions since: “For everyone practicing evil hates the light” (John 3: 20). It is true that there are friendships even among the wicked, for criminals and thieves love each other. Yet this love does not spring from a pure heart or a good conscience, but rather from a profane heart and not out of sincere faith, but from a false and hypocritical one... for faith indicates truth... and whoever truly believes in God cannot keep away from

¹ In 1 Tim., hom. .2.

Him¹.]

Potiphar's wife loved Joseph but with an impure heart. Thus she was not implementing the commandments, and sought to satisfy her own lusts and desires, and when Joseph rejected her, she threw him into the prison. Amnon loved his sister Tamar till he became sick. Yet, when she did not quench his desire, he despised her and caused her to be brought into shame. Therefore the apostle insists that love must be out of "*a pure heart*;" it should spring from a heart sanctified by the dwelling of the Holy God in it; from "*a good conscience*"- that is a good intention or will- untainted by hypocrisy or slyness; and "*a sincere faith*." That means that one's love for one's brothers should stem from one's faith in the Lord and one's love for Him. In this regard, **St. Augustine** says: [We can never love others truly unless we love the Lord. Each one who loves his neighbor as himself loves God, but if he does not love God, then he even does not love himself².] Briefly put, we may say that every one of us loves himself in God. This is the result of the love each one has found in God, through faith in Him, and through His living within us. We become like a holy altar for Him, and we are enabled to love our neighbor as ourselves! This is the kind of love that is able to satisfy the heart, thought, and all sentiments and feelings. In such a state, man does not find any place for unworthy controversies.

The apostle Paul goes on to say, "***Some, having strayed, and have turned aside to idle talk***" (1 Tim. 1:6). It is true that if a man wanders away from the true divine love, his internal life turns into an emptiness that can never be satisfied. He consequently turns to corrupt conversations and aimless controversies in the hope of concealing his internal weakness and shortcoming. Such a man turns away

¹ *Ibid.*

² *In Joan, tr. 87: 1.*

from leading a righteous life and giving practical testimony into a life that lusts after knowledge and authority, devoid of understanding and wisdom. The apostle explains this state in his words: “*desiring to be teachers of the Law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm*” (v. 7). **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this passage as follows: [We find here another reason for evil and that is the desire for authority.” Therefore, Christ says:” But you, do not be called Rabbi” (Matt 23:8). The apostle also says: “For not even those who are circumcised keep the Law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh” (Gal. 6:13). This means that they ask for dignity, yet they disregard the truth... “*understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm*” (v. 7). The apostle blames them because they do neither know the real aim of the Law nor the right time to demand authority. But if this is due to misunderstanding, why is this counted as a sin against them? Because what has taken place is not the result of their longing to be teachers of the Law but as a result of the absence of love. Their ignorance itself springs from the same reason. The soul that defiles itself with the matters of the flesh loses the purity of vision. Its failure to love leads to blindness and countless conflicts... indeed it can no longer have good judgment¹.]

To sum up their condition, it is accurate to say that their deviation from the path of true love had led them into a state of internal emptiness. They wanted to conceal that by claiming to be the teachers and defenders of the Law. Yet, they were ignorant of its true purpose. Their life became characterized by numerous arguments and controversies that were not conducted with the purpose of leading themselves and others to the truth- they were conducted as a means of satisfying their selfish love of authority and supremacy. In order to avoid any misunderstanding that the apostle is blaming or accusing the Law in

¹ In 1Tim., hom. 2.

itself, or that he considers teaching it to be a bad thing, he says: “*We know that the Law is good if one uses it lawfully*” (v. 8). Then, the Law is not in the Law but in its abuse. **St. Augustine** compares the situation of these teachers to Lot’s two daughters who abused their father (by sinning with him) and conceived Moab and Ben-Ammi - the Moabites and the Ammonites- who represent all acts of evil. They and their offspring were the cause of endless troubles for God’s people. On the same subject, **St. Augustine** says: [The main troubles of the Church arise only from those who abuse the Law¹.]

Some of the Christians who were of Jewish origin thought that St. Paul was speaking against the Law (Acts 6:13,14). That explains why he always stresses that the Law is sacred and good, (Romans 12:12), if we use it on the right way: it is important to understand that “Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). St. Paul also says: “Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24). The apostle says that we must accept the Son of God... “born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under Law, that we might to receive the adoption as sons” (Gal 4:5). We have received the Law not to use it creating controversies, but so that it may condemn our general tendency to the sin and fall. Thus, we can accept Christ Who absolves sinners, and frees us from the judgment of death pronounced upon us by the Law. Therefore, the apostle says: “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under Law but under grace” (Romans 6:14). “For I through the Law died to the Law that I might live to God” (Gal. 2:19). “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the Law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor, (Gal. 3:23), and “But if you are led by

¹ On Ps. 6.

the Spirit, you are not under Law” (Gal. 5:18).

St. John Chrysostom talks about the role of Law by saying: [If you use the Law in a sound way, it will lead you to Christ. If the aim of the Law is to justify man, but it is unable to do so, it leads you to the One who is able to do so¹.] When we come enter to the Lord Jesus Christ and enjoy the life given to us in Him through the Holy Spirit, then we enjoy what the Law was unable to give to us. Hence, there would be no need to return again and fall under the rulings of the Law. In this respect, **St. John Chrysostom** says that the horseman uses the reins at the beginning to control the horse. But once the horse behaves in a controlled manner, there is no need for the reins. The child also learns the alphabet, but once he gets to be a good reader, there is need for him to go back to the alphabet. This is the proper use of the Law; once it has achieved its purpose by leading us to the Lord, we rise above it and do remain under it any longer. [Those who are above the Law are no longer part of the school of the Law. Yet, they observe it as they access a higher degree, and perfect it as they are inclined to follow virtue and are free of fear... for he who lives above the Law is the same who knows how to apply it properly².] In other words, if the Law is used properly, we can lead a virtuous life in Jesus Christ. Then, we would not remain under the Law and it will not become an issue of controversy or theoretical arguments in our life. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [If someone fulfills the Law through his behavior; then he is using the Law properly and for his own benefit³.]

In this way, we get to understand that the Law is given to sinners and evil people in order that it

¹ *In 1Tim., hom. 2*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

might lead them to Christ as their Savior. He is the One who grants them a virtuous life in Him, elevating them above the Law. Therefore the apostle explains: “*knowing this; that the Law is not made for the righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust*” (v. 9-11).

The evils mentioned above are the most terrible types of sin that corrupt the soul and resist the holy life in the Lord according to His glorious gospel. The Law has been instituted for those who commit such crimes in order to reveal to them their complete incapacity. Thus, through the message of His free salvation, they may come to Christ not only as the Forgiver of their transgressions but as the only One Who can carry them into the ‘blessed glory of God.’ This glorious Gospel, which has been entrusted to the apostle, is now delivered through the Law to evil people.

St. Ambrose considers the Law to be important. It is essential for evil people and not for the righteous ones. The latter walk virtuously through the observation of the Law that they have digested with their minds. On the other hand, it is the Law that deters evil people through their fear of punishment¹.

From another perspective, if the apostle is writing to his disciple Timothy that the subject of his preaching is the commandment whose end is love; then it is this love that opens our hearts and enables

¹ cf. *Duties of Clergy* 3:5.

us to see that the Law is presented to the worst and most profane evil classes in order to bring them into the glory of God's message. It is as if the apostle advises his disciple to love every man and especially evil people in order to get them away from their evil and lead them into a blessed evangelical life. Here, the apostle does not say 'evil people' but classifies them as follows:

- ❖ *The lawless and insubordinate*: those who break the commandments intentionally and not out of weakness or ignorance.
- ❖ *The ungodly and sinful*: those who commit sin boldly without embarrassment or shame.
- ❖ *The unholy and profane*: those who are convinced easily to sin without suffering from any kind of guilty conscience.
- ❖ *Murderers of fathers or mothers*: they represent those with the cruelest hearts since they are more evil than savage monsters that do not harm their children!
- ❖ *Sodomites*: the worst type of adultery and impurity, they commit what is most contrary to nature.
- ❖ *Kidnappers*: they are the worst type of thieves who steal men to sell them as slaves (Exod. 21: 6, Deut. 24:7).
- ❖ *Perjurers*: those who commit the most terrible kinds of lies.
- ❖ *Those who are contrary to sound doctrine*: those who not only commit evil but also resist the truth.

For these people and their like, God has set His Law. He wants them to feel the need for their Savior. So, it is becoming of us to open our hearts with love towards them without belittling or discouraging them and so leading them to lose hope in attaining salvation.

3. THE COMMITMENT TO MINISTRY

The end of the commandment is love. It is love that opens the heart lovingly to all people. It

enables the pastor to care for the wicked, the criminals, the insubordinate, etc. Such a commitment is not considered a gift from a pastor to his people, but rather the payment of a debt since the pastor reciprocates God's love for him by loving His people. This is the mystery behind the commitment to serve; He has loved us first, therefore we are obligated to love Him by loving His children.

St. Paul quotes his own experience as a practical example of God's work in his life. He says, "***I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent: but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief***" (v.12, 13). Here, St. Paul praises God who not only saved him when He saw him falling into the jaws of death as he blasphemed and persecuted the Church of God, but also raised him to be a faithful servant of the Truth. God did not only forgive him for his past but also appointed him to be His ambassador. The apostle often declared how in the past he was a persecutor, and a tyrant (Acts 22:4-7). He did so to reveal the abundance of God's free grace to him, and to disclaim any personal merit making him worthy of the ministry. He thus attributes every thanks to the Lord. Yet, he does not ignore the freedom of human will that is sanctified by the Lord. He is indebted fully to God's grace Who is so generous as to make appoint to the ministry. He uses the word 'strengthened' implying the granting of 'His divine power' so that through that he could pay back the debt of love. Now he could do so by showing love to those who have not yet experienced God's work of salvation. Besides, he was enabled to keep his hope strong and never despair in the task of bringing others to salvation! **St. Augustine** says, [As Paul was forgiven for his great crimes, it is becoming that no one should despair due to any sin, for it shall be forgiven to him!¹]

¹ In Ps. 85.

St. Paul realized that he was “*shown mercy*” and that the blessings he had received came as a free grant from God and His mercy. **St. Augustine** says, [The apostle says that he has been shown mercy not due to personal merit but due to God’s mercy¹.] **St. John Chrysostom** says, [Notice how the apostle thanks God as he knows that even what he does on his own is a gift from God who has made him a chosen vessel².]

In humility, the apostle admits that he was a persecutor, a blasphemer and a tyrant. Then, why did God called him for the ministry rather than any other persecutor, blasphemer or and violent man? **St. John Chrysostom** explains as follows: [Because what they did was done not out of ignorance but according to their own will and total knowledge. There is a testimony of this as the gospel says: “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than praise of God” (John 12:42, 43). At another time, Christ told them: “How can you believe, who receive honor from one another” (John 5:44). The Pharisees said to one another: “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look the world has gone after Him” (John 12:19). Thus, they always loved authority. But where was Paul at that time? It is said that he was learning at the feet of Gamaliel, and did not have any share among those who opposed the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, Gamaliel did not appear to be an ambitious man. Then how was Paul associated with the resisting masses? He saw that the teaching was growing and becoming prevalent on a wide scope. During Christ’s life, the disciples followed him and the Jewish teachers were completely abandoned. Therefore, Paul was against the teaching out of

¹ *In Joan. tr.*, 3: 10.

² *In Tim., hom.*, 3.

jealousy and not out of love for authority, which stirred the other Jews. Then what was the motive for his journey to Damascus? He thought that the teaching was harmful and was he feared it would become widespread. But the Jews did not care about the masses; they carried about their love for authority and how that was affected by the Lord's teachings¹.]

What saddened the heart of St. Paul was that the simple people knew Christ and accepted His gospel, including the tax collectors who enjoyed him. He had spent most of his life serving the Law but in ignorance, as he was interested in its letter and not in its end. However God's mercy rescued him and led him to enlightenment.

St. Paul says: "***The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are Christ Jesus***" (v. I4). God's mercy did not stop at not punishing the apostle for his past behaviors of blasphemy, persecution and violence, but elevated him to enter to Jesus Christ to be a Son of God and an inherent of the Lord. This was what the apostle felt before God's abundant grace that supersedes any mercy. Therefore, he continues saying: "***Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst***" (v. I5). Such is God's grace that saves the worst of sinners.

St. John Chrysostom says: [No one who sees a prisoner at the royal palace doubts God's Mercy. Such was Paul's situation, giving himself as an example. He was not ashamed to call himself a sinner. On the contrary, he rejoiced as he could present a good proof of the Lord's miraculous work in him. For God considered him worthy of receiving His most tender mercies. In this letter, he calls himself

¹ *Ibid.*

a sinner and even the chief sinner. Yet, in another part of his writings he says: “concerning righteousness which is in the Law, blameless” (Philip. 3:6). As for the righteousness that he truly seeks and which comes as a result of God’s work, then even those who are righteous as they observe the Law are considered sinners, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3: 23). That explains why the apostle refers to ‘the righteousness that is in the Law’ when he speaks about his righteousness. This is similar to a person who seeks wealth and so considers himself to be wealthy, yet he discovers that he is the poorest of the poor when he compares himself to a king who possesses enormous treasures. In the same way, the righteous will be considered sinners if they are compared with angels. Hence, if St. Paul who lives righteously as he observes the Law is considered the chief of sinners, then what man can be called righteous? The apostle did not call himself that just to condemn his life and judge it to be impure. He wanted to expose his unworthiness by comparing his righteousness with the righteousness of God. Besides, he wished to underline that those who enjoy God’s righteousness are the sinners¹.]

“However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all long suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life” (1 Tim. 1:16).

St. John Chrysostom comments on this verse as follows: [He was shown mercy so that other sinners would not despair of obtaining mercy. Everyone is ascertained to receive similar mercy. The apostle shows great humility as he calls himself the chief or first of sinners, a blasphemer, a persecutor, and unworthy to be called an apostle. Yet he wants to serve as an example. Imagine a crowded city whose citizens are all evil - some worst than others - then all deserve to be condemned. However, if

¹ *Ibid.*, hom 4.

there is one among them who deserves a greater punishment, as he has committed all sorts of evil, yet the king could want to issue a pardon to all. They might not believe that until they find that he has actually pardoned even the one who has committed the most evil. By so doing, the king leaves no doubt in anybody's mind. St. Paul says that God wanted to present a full confirmation of the forgiveness he grants to sinners, so He chose him as the subject of God's mercy since he was the first or worst of sinners. The apostle himself is the evidence that illustrates that there can be no condemnation on anyone any longer since mercy has been granted even to him. It is as if he is saying: If God forgives in this way, then He will punish no one. If I have been saved, then no one should doubt in being saved. Note the humility of the blessed apostle, for he does not speak about God '*showing longsuffering*' but '*all longsuffering*,' and thus indicating that there is no need to reveal greater longsuffering than that shown in his condition. He considers that no sinner would need more forgiveness and more longsuffering or even a portion in contrast to his own need!¹]

The apostle continues to say: "***Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God alone who is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen***" (v. 17).

Through divine mercies, our teacher, the apostle St. Paul, has been elevated from under the order of punishment up to the order of an ambassador of the Church and has become her apostle. Thus they reveal and bring glory to God the King of all ages. The son has been glorified indeed through this divine act, and the Father has been glorified as the Planner of this salvation. **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [On account of these matters we do not glorify the Son alone, but we glorify him together

¹ *Ibid.*

with the Father... as the Son continues to accomplish greater acts, the Father receives more glorification¹.]

How do we glorify and honor God? We honor Him more by our deeds than by our words of praise. By sanctifying the spirit and body through our lives in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. We sanctify not only ourselves, but also every person – spiritually and physically- through prayer and constant striving towards that endeavor. God has been glorified in Saul of Tarsus because He had shown mercy and converted him into an apostle delivering the Truth. Yet God has been more greatly and truly glorified because so many have entered, through Him, into a new life and are enjoying His Holy Spirit.

4- STRUGGLE IN THE MINISTRY

St. Paul has now ended his message to Timothy in which he clarifies matters concerning the commitment to apostolic ministry. He explains that this is a debt that is paid to God Who has loved and saved him. It is a sign of a believer's true love and his adherence to the commandments. He ends his message in this context by speaking about the 'struggle in the ministry.' He says: "***This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare***" (1 Tim. 1:18).

It seems that some had prophesied concerning Timothy at the time of his baptism or when he began to serve and commit himself to pastoral work. Accordingly, St. Paul, inspired by God Himself has called Timothy to the ministry, in other words, it is not a charge made by one person to another. This is a

¹ *Ibid.*

charge that deals with love and pastoral work. The focus is on the necessity of waging a good spiritual struggle; it is important that the pastor struggles in his work just as someone serving in a spiritual army. The aim is to save every soul from the bondage of sin. **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [Just as in every army each one does not serve with the same energy, since each is dictated by the needs of his job; similarly in the Church there is one who serves as a teacher, a second as a disciple, and a third as a member of the congregation¹.]

What does the apostle mean by “the good warfare” that St. Timothy should undertake?

It is not enough that a minister should struggle; he needs to fight a good fight. In other words, he needs to present the commandments in an appropriate manner. He needs to present God’s commandments as they have come down to us from the Old Testament and the New Testament as they represent one thought and one spirit. **St. Clement, of Alexandria**, says that when the apostle refers to the ‘prophecies’ he is not alluding to St. Timothy specifically, but rather to the prophecies that occur in the Old Testament. These, he says, predict the preaching of the New Testament. It is as though what St. Timothy will do in his ministry is the fulfillment of the specific prophecies about the spreading of the Gospel.

The apostle speaks about the spiritual struggle of the servant or pastor, and draws an inseparable link between the pastor’s inner life and his effort to spread the Word. He says, “... *having faith and good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered ship wreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to*

¹ *Ibid. hom., 5.*

blaspheme” (v 19, 20).

In every age, there are those who oppose Truth. This happened in the time of Moses and Aaron when magicians appeared to challenge their authority. That is why as good shepherd must remain spiritually strong as he supports God’s people against those who resist the upright teachings. Indeed, he needs to possess “*faith and a good conscience.*” **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this apostolic expression as follows: [He, who wishes to be a teacher, needs to teach himself first. A person cannot become a commander without having been a soldier first. The same applies to a teacher too; he needs to have been a student first. In another part of his writings, the apostle says: “lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27). He advises Timothy to have ‘*faith and a good conscience*’ in order to be able to help others. This draws our attention to the need to follow the advice of our superiors even if we are teachers ourselves. We all do not deserve to compare ourselves with Timothy, but if he has listened to this advice and he used to learn even though he was a teacher, then does not become clear that we do need to do the same?¹.] **Bishop Ambrose** states: [I wish to struggle to teach myself in order to be able to teach others, for there is only one Master (God), who alone does not learn what He teaches to everyone².]

Those who have rejected ‘*having faith and a good conscience... have suffered shipwreck.*’ This is a natural result since a corrupt life leads even teachers to deviate from the upright teachings and fall into heresies and strange inventions. Consequently, concerning the faith, they suffer shipwreck. This can be clarified in another way and as follows, a virtuous spiritual life adheres to the Lord Jesus Christ by

¹ *Ibid.*

² *The author: Pastoral Love. P. 700.*

observing the upright faith and living joyfully in hope. In the same way, a life of corruption adheres to senseless controversies that are far removed from the upright faith, and consequently suffers shipwreck from which no Christian can offer rescue or shelter. Thus life is one whole complete unit made up of holiness and upright living and these two are inseparable. In the same way, corruption and deviation from the faith as well as despair are inseparable. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [If someone deviates from faith, he cannot be steady, He therefore floats around until he soul gets lost in the depths.¹]

The apostle presents two examples, saying, “*of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme*” (v. 20). Hymenaeus is mentioned also in 2 Tim. 2:17, and the apostle describes him as having ‘strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.’ He presented his false teaching by wrongly interpreting the words of the Lord Jesus Christ about the resurrection of the soul from the death of sin, through believing in Him. In this way, he denied the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Alexander is probably the one mentioned in 2 Tim. 4:14, “Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much harm. May God repay him according to his works.” These two men refused to obey the voice of the Lord due to their pride. They therefore stumbled into the way of evil and strayed from faith as a result of a corrupted life. Therefore the apostle decided to deliver them to Satan that they may learn a lesson and not out of mere revenge. By doing so, St. Paul might have intended to prevent them from membership in the holy Church and from corrupting the thought of the people. At the same time, this exclusion might lead them to repent and return to God. The apostle condemned the act of the person who had committed evil with his father’s wife in Corinth in the same way. “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 5.

are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Do you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:4-6)

St. John Chrysostom asks: "But how does Satan teach them not to blaspheme? Can he teach others what he has not taught himself and since he is a blasphemer still?" He also provides the answer: [He does not teach them, but as it is said, "that they may learn." Satan does not carry out the task of teaching if this would be the result... he is like the executioner who may be himself involved in endless crimes, yet he used to correct others¹.] This agrees with the words of **Tertullian**: [Through punishment they learn not to blaspheme. God has given His servants the authority to deliver a person to Satan, although Satan himself has no innate authority over us².] **St. Jerome** states: [It is as though Satan is an executioner used by the Lord... so that the apostle implies that sinners are delivered to Satan to be punished so that they might return to God³.]

Notice that the apostle says: "that they may learn." But this he means that the punishment is intended for edification and improvement and not for mere revenge. That is why he appeared to be severe on the person who committed evil with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:4-6). Yet, if this member, who has been eliminated from the holy fellowship, expresses deep sadness and repentance, then the apostle does not wish him to be in despair. Consequently, he rushed to write to the Corinthians to tell them: "For if I make you sorrowful, then who is he who makes you glad but the one who is made sorrowful by

¹ *Ibid.*

² *De Fuga in Persecutions*, 2.

³ *In Ps., hom., 34.*

me?... this punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest such a one should be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him” (2 Cor. 2:2, 7, 8). The apostle clarifies the aim of punishment in these words: “Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness according to the authority which the Lord had given me for edification and not for destruction” (2 Cor. 13: 10). He explains how he will be eager to be gentle rather than punish by saying: “What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?” (1 Cor. 4:21)

Chapter 2

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO CHURCH WORSHIP

In the first chapter, the apostle reveals the meaning of the commandment. It is the topic of pastoral work, and it enables the servant of Christ to express love as he serves everyone and especially the evil ones. The whole being of the servant is occupied in offering loving ministry, giving it all his/ her effort. There is no time for useless controversies as he struggles like a good spiritual soldier. In the second chapter, the apostle tells Timothy about the general guidelines of church worship.

- 1- Prayer for all humanity: v. 1-7.**
- 2- Instructions for male worshippers: v. 8.**
- 3- Instructions for female worshippers: v. 9- 15.**

1- PRAYER FOR ALL HUMANITY

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men” (v. 1).

The apostle reveals the mission of the Church and how it should be carried on all levels: the universal, the local, and the individual. The reason for this is that the Church is not an institution that

competes with the world to grab its possessions. The Church is first and foremost a congregation devoted to the worship of the Lord as they pray for the world's sanctification. Therefore believers offer 'supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all men.'

Abbot Isaac¹ finds that what the apostle says here represents the stages of fellowship with God that a believer enjoys. These are similar to ascending stages yet they compliment each other. The believer begins by making supplications or requests for his essential needs, he then moves into prayer or flight to God thereby entering into a deep and loving relationship with and for Him alone. From this stage of divine love, the worshipper ascends into the stage of offering intercessions or requests for all men. In this case, he forgets all his needs and does not pray for his own needs, but for the needs of others. It is love for his fellowmen that enables him to do so. Finally, the worshipper offers thanksgiving as an expression of the angelic life that is based on uninterrupted and constant thanksgiving and praise to God.

The Church applies all these forms of prayer in her worship and liturgies. This is especially true during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The believer prays to receive forgiveness for sins he has committed, for spiritual growth, and for the satisfaction of his spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. These prayers become integrated and lead the worshipper into a mysterious conversation with God through His Only-Begotten Son and through the Holy Spirit. The Church does not stop her intercessions for all men. Moreover, the essence of the Eucharist is the enjoyment of a new and thankful life that reveals itself by our steadfast adherence to the Lord Jesus Christ that is why we celebrate the Holy 'Eucharist' or

¹ *Cassian: Conferences, 9.*

‘Thanksgiving.’

Origen¹ elaborates on the distinction among these forms of prayer and gives examples for them: *Supplications* are pleadings made in the hope of receiving something that a person needs. For example the supplication of Zechariah, the priest, and the words of the angel to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer is heard: and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John” (Luke 1:13). *Prayer* is the expression of worship filled with praise and offered to God alone. According to **Origen**, it is possible to offer the three other forms to any body - as when one person asks something of another person, or intercedes between one person and his brother, or thanks someone he did him a favor. As for prayer, it can be offered to God only. An example of prayer is found in 1 Sam. 1:10, where Hannah, the wife of Elkanah “prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish.” Concerning *intercessions*, **Origen** finds that these constitute the request for specific matters presented to God by someone who has great and unusual hope. A unique example of intercession is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is expressed in the words of the apostle: “but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom. 8: 6, 27). Finally, there is the form of *Thanksgiving*, which is the expression of gratitude combined with prayer and offered as God has granted blessings and gifts. Again, there is a unique illustration of this form of worship in the dialogue between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Father. He thanks God, the Father, for the gifts he grants to the simple in these words: “At that time Jesus answered and said: ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and

¹ *On Prayer 14: 2-5.*

have revealed them to babes” (Matt. 11: 25).

St. John Chrysostom considers that this passage is an invitation to ecclesiastical ministry that is distinguished by love for all. The pastor engages in it with his congregation day and night. They pray for all humanity including the wicked and the idol worshippers. He says: [A pastor acts as though he were a father for the whole world. Consequently, it is appropriate that he cares for each one in the same way that God, whom he serves, does... this has two results: on the one hand, it draws the pastors attention from outside matters as nobody can pray for people if he resents or hates them in any way. On the other hand, these people become better as a result of the prayers offered on their behalf. They consequently depart from the wickedness they plot against us. Indeed, nothing attracts mankind to learning more than loving and having more love. Look at those who have persecuted the Christians, lashed, exiled, and killed them. The Christians used to pray offer fervent prayers for those who were treating them so barbarously. Similarly, a father lifts up his child and carries him even though he might have slapped his father’s face. This is because the child’s behavior cannot tear away the father’s tenderness. This is how we should behave and retain our goodwill towards outsiders even if they strike us... what does the apostle mean by the words *‘first of all’* in verse 1? He means in every day service and in the knowledge that we should offer daily prayers, in the morning and at night, for the whole world, including kings and all those who possess authority¹.]

This passage reveals to us how the Church engages in communal liturgies day and night. She remembers in her supplications all kings, presidents, and all those in leadership positions, as well as for

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 6.

all humanity. In the Liturgy of St. Basil we find that the supplication offered for all the above occurs as part of the prayer recited for the peace of the Church and just before the prayer of reconciliation. In the liturgy of St. Gregory, special prayers are offered for the king or president, for those who work in the palace or royal residence, for all those employed in the country, and for the safety of the soldiers.

The apostle says: “*for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence*” (v. 2).

St. John Chrysostom asks if it is appropriate to pray for a king who worships idols during the celebration of the holy Mysteries? He answers in these words: [The apostle has revealed the benefit of doing so as he says: ‘*that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.*’ It is as though he is stating that the well-being of those in authority is synonymous with our own peace. In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul commands them to obey their rulers “Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake” (Rom. 13:5). For God has instituted ‘government’ for the well-being of everyone... we obey, not as men pleasers, but in accordance with the principles of justice. Indeed, if they are neither safe nor victorious in wars, our lives would surely be exposed to disturbances and sufferings. Moreover, if they die, we shall be dispersed¹.]

What does the apostle mean when he says: “*that we mean lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence?*” **St. John Chrysostom** replies to this by saying that there are three kinds of war: wars that arise when strange animals attack us, wars that erupt among us, and wars that occur within the person himself. **St. John Chrysostom** finds that the quiet and peace mentioned refer to the

¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

inward peace of the soul, as well as the rest we get in the absence of the third kind of war. Hence the apostle finishes the verse by saying “*in all godliness and reverence.*” Our supplications and intercessions for all mankind coupled with sincere obedience to authority result in inward peace and we become sons who carry the features of their loving and obedient bridegroom! Our relationship with others is neither based on the gain of material or honorary benefit; neither does it arise out of fear. It is founded in God, in whom we meet with everyone and work to accommodate all for the sake of God, the Lover of mankind.

The apostle goes on to say: “*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (v. 4). **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [What is it that is acceptable? Prayer for others! That is what is acceptable to God, and that is His Will... Follow God for He desires that all be saved. This is the mystery behind the prayer of each person for everyone else. If God desires that all be saved then you should have the same desire too! When this becomes you will, then pray that this desire be fulfilled since having the will - or desire - leads to prayers¹.]

Some may ask: “Shall we pray for idolatrous nations? To this **St. John Chrysostom** responds: [Do not fear to pray for other nations, for the Lord wants you to do so. Only fear to pray against others, for that is something that would not please the Lord. If you have to pray for idolaters, then you naturally have to pray for heretic. Therefore let us pray for everyone, and refrain from persecuting anyone².]

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.*

Some may wonder: “Why do I have to pray for them? Is God’s plan for them not sufficient? “ **St. John Chrysostom** responds by saying: [Prayer has a very beneficial action on them for it attracts them to love and grants gentleness to the worshipper himself. Prayer has the power of attracting them to the faith¹.]

Finally, the apostle confirms God’s love made evident as He offers salvation to all humanity. The apostle wishes us to pray for all, whether it is part of our worship in Church or on our own. He calls upon us to do so in order to cancel the Gnostic duality that divides believers into those who are perfect and those who are simple².

The apostle establishes a link between the general prayers offered in Church – with all the sincere love that it expresses towards all humanity - and the redemptive intercession before God and which Jesus Christ offers on the behalf of us all. To that effect he says: “*For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Jesus Christ, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,*”(v. 5, 6).

The intention of the apostle here is to affirm that the only way our hearts can be opened up to love all men is through our union with the only Mediator and cannot be accomplished on our own. He has this power because He not only offered words of prayer, but also became incarnated, and suffered to redeem us all! The feature of love evident in our communal and individual prayers is the feature of Jesus Christ Himself – ‘the only God’- who became ‘Man’ to save us all!

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Cf. The Introduction: Contemporary Heresies.*

It is worth stopping here to reflect upon the apostle's words. These have preoccupied the thought of the Early Church and consumed the feelings of the fathers, shaking their inner depths.

In a way, the context of the epistle here is not an attack on the concept of intercession that we lovingly carry out on each other's behalf before God. It arises from the Gnostics' teachings about the presence of consecutive genealogies that began from the Superior Being and ended in the coming of Jesus Christ. These genealogies are projections or aeons that present knowledge as the road to salvation. They consider that the Gnostic can be liberated through knowledge to attain Jesus Christ, and that through Him and more knowledge, he will be promoted to a greater aeon, and from there to an even greater one. This escalation through (stairs) or aeons continues until the Gnostic attains the Superior Being through knowledge. The apostle underlines that the Truth that God wishes all men to attain is faith in the one Father who sent His Only-Begotten Son as the only redemptive Mediator capable of reconciling all believers with Him. In this way, the apostle destroys the Gnostic concept of genealogies and aeons.

Through our understanding of the above, we cannot extract these verses from their context. Others use them to deny the power of intercession or prayers that the churches offer on behalf of each other – whether they are for departed members or for those struggling in this life. This is a deviation from the thought presented by Divine Inspiration. This Inspiration intends to affirm the unique work of Jesus Christ in reconciling us with His Father. This is an action that no heavenly or earthly being can ever possibly do!

The apostle underlines the words '*one God*' and continues with '*the Man Jesus Christ,*' to clarify that there is no other way of reconciliation other than through the Divine Incarnation. **St. John**

Chrysostom says that the Mediator communicates with the two parties to mediate between them. The Lord Jesus Christ cannot intercede to the Father if He is isolated from Him. Moreover, He cannot intercede for people if He is isolated from them. As a Mediator between God and men, it is appropriate that He possess union with the Father as well as union with men's nature. He comes as the Reconciler of both as He is the Incarnate Son of God. He carries in His one nature the union of both natures together, without any confusion, mixing, or change.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, finds that the goal of the incarnation is the fulfillment of this amazing Mediator: for He is the Son of God who took on our humanity in order to tear away the enmity that existed between God and man, or between the Divine nature and human nature¹. He has ripped off our estrangement from the True Life, for He has re-instituted us, who are human, to the fellowship with His Father.

❖ The Son of God through incarnation became the Son of Man. Thus He could join and unite them together in Himself even though they are separate by nature².

St. Gregory of Nyssa

❖ He did not want any angel to be the Mediator, but only the Lord Jesus Christ Himself inasmuch as He humiliated Himself and became Man.

❖ In that way the Son of God Himself, the Word of God, is the Mediator between God and men. He is the Son of men but equal to God through oneness in His Divinity, and united with us by His

¹ *Adv. Eunomius* 2: 12.

² *Ibid.*, 3:4.

Incarnation.

The Lord Jesus Christ interceded on our behalf to the Father as He has become a Man, yet He has never stopped being the one God and the Father. The Lord prays: “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as you Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one” (John 17: 20.21).

St. Augustine¹

- ❖ There is a mediator that separates, and another that reconciles: the one that separates is sin, while the one that reconciles is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who tears down the wall of sin. He came as a Mediator, became the Priest, and the Victim at the same time.
- ❖ He is the Door that leads to the Father and there is no other way to get to the Father except through Him.

St. Augustine²

- ❖ Man cannot be reconciled with God without having faith in Jesus Christ whether before or after His incarnation³.

St. Augustine

¹ *On Trinity* 3: 11; 4: 8.

² *In Joan tr.* 41: 5; 47: 3.

³ *In Ps* 105.

- ❖ In the end of time, the Lord re-established His friendship with us, for He became the Mediator between God and men. The Father forgave us who had sinned against Him, as He erased our rebellion by Christ's obedience. He granted us fellowship with our Creator and submission to Him¹.

St. Iraneous

- ❖ He reconciles God with men, and men with God!
He reconciles the spirit with the body, and the body with the spirit!
In Him all natures were unified, and all agreed in the way a Bridegroom does with his bride as they unite and share marital life².

Tertullian

- ❖ He preserved in Himself the body, vested on Him and which He accepted, while retaining both aspects as a warrantee of His ultimate perfection. He also granted us the zeal of the spirit (2 Cor. 5: 5).
He took from us the zeal of the flesh, and carried it into heaven as a warrantee for everyone...
Therefore, do not be anxious, O body, and do not worry, for you have attained, through Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven!³

Tertullian

- ❖ As the Mediator between God and men became the Firstborn of all mankind, he announced to His brothers the common features He shared... He says, "I will leave you so that I may Myself become

¹ *Adv. Haer 5: 17:1.*

² *On the Resurrection of the Flesh, 63.*

³ *Ibid., 51.*

the true father and become your father from whom you have been separated. I will make the true God – whom you have rebelled against – become your God. By being the Firstborn, I bring in Me all men to their God and Father¹.

St. Gregory of Nyssa

The Gnostics denied the truth about the incarnation of the Son of Man. They thought that the Savior could not possibly united to the body since it is an element of darkness. Some claimed that He had a spiritual body that he had received from heaven and carried it through the womb of the Virgin Mary without taking from her any flesh or blood. Therefore the apostle puts emphasis on ‘*the Man Christ Jesus,*’ since anyone who denies His incarnation denies His redeeming work, and also tears away His ability to intercede on our behalf. **St. Augustine** remarks: [He who knows Jesus as God and denies His manhood has not accepted His death on his account. As a man, He died. Whoever denies the manhood of Jesus cannot be reconciled with God through the intercession of the Mediator... he is not justified “*for as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous*” (Rom. 5: 19)².”

Far from being just words, the Lord practically demonstrated His mediation on our behalf through His incarnation and His crucifixion. The apostle goes on to say: “***who have Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time***” (v. 6). He offered His life as a ransom to reconcile all men with God. This is the price of the practical reconciliation that the incarnate Son of God has paid. Notice how the words ‘*for all*’ is repeated for the purpose of destroying the Gnostic thought of duality from the life of

¹ *Adv. Eunom.* 2: 8.

² *In Joan* 66: 2.

believers, that divides men into the perfect and simple.

The Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself a ransom for all. Therefore we need to observe the offering of prayers on behalf of everyone and to love all men. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [There is no doubt that Christ died for idolaters too, so should you not be able to pray for them?!¹.] The Only-Begotten Son presents in due time a true testimony of divine love through this practical and all-inclusive love.

This divine act and Messianic testimony evident in the redemption offered for all is the topic of the apostle's mission and preaching. The apostle says: "*for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle- I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying- a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth*" (v. 7). St. Paul the apostle devoted his life to preach the message of salvation to the entire world since God's grace included all humanity. Thus he became a teacher 'of the Gentiles in faith and truth.' Since faith became widespread beyond the compass of the Jews, the truth or knowledge became no longer the property of one group rather than another.

We would like to comment briefly to say that the main principle in our communal and private worship needs to be the possession of a heart big and full enough with love so as to encompass all humanity; praying for all and offering supplications for their salvation.

2- INSTRUCTIONS FOR MALE WORSHIPPERS

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 7.

“Therefore I desire that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting”(v. 8).

The apostle instructs men to lift up pure hands when they pray wherever they are; in public church gatherings, in family worship, and also in their own bedrooms. This is different from the Lord’s words: *“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place, and your Father who sees you in secret will reward you openly”*(Matt. 6:5, 6). How does the apostle speak about praying ‘everywhere,’ whereas the Lord limits the place of prayer to the ‘bedroom’? **St. John Chrysostom** explains as follows: [There is no contradiction here. Indeed there is harmony. First, we need to understand what is meant by ‘*go into your room*’? And why does the Lord command us to do so since we pray everywhere? Shall we refrain from praying in Church or anywhere else at home and confine our prayers to the bedroom? Or what is the meaning of these words? Actually, the Lord is warning us against boasting. He commands us to offer our prayers secretly and does not seek to put limits. For example, when He says, *“do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing”* (Matt. 6:3), He is not speaking about the hands (left and right) but He is issuing a strong warning against boasting. This is what is meant in these verses, for He does not intend to confine prayer to a specific place, but rather makes a singular request and that is to abandon vainglory. Here, St. Paul intends to distinguish between the prayers offered by Jews and those offered by Christians. He speaks about *‘everywhere... lifting up holy hands in prayer;’* this is something that the Jews did not allow. They were not permitted to draw near God, offer their sacrifice, or complete their ministry in any place. They had to come altogether from all over the world and come to one place. They had to be gathered in one place to complete their worship. In contrast to that, the apostle calls for a liberation from such customs and it is as though he is saying: Our way is different from the Jewish ways, and since the

Lord commands us to pray for everyone because He has died for all, it is therefore appropriate to pray everywhere. The focus here is on the manner of prayer¹.]

Thus, prayer may take place anywhere, and this does not disagree with the command of the Lord pertaining specifically to prayer in one's room. The first teaching encourages prayer anywhere without any restrictions and as long as the heart is full of love that enables it to pray for all men. The second teaching encourages prayer that is far removed from vainglory and false pretences or appearances.

This command is directed not only to men but also to the whole Church: men and women, children and the elderly, and all youth. All should be committed to lead mature spiritual lives. Hence they will raise their spiritual (inner) hands just as the Lord spread out His hands in love upon the Cross to erase all wrath against mankind.

'*Holy hands*' can only refer to a life that functions through the sanctification of the spirit ...even if prayer springs from the depth of the heart inwardly, and from the lips outwardly; yet it would be acceptable only if it is coupled with spiritual work and with sincere struggle in the name of Jesus Christ...our prayers and praises to the Lord must be matched with spiritual work!

'*Holy hands*' refers to both spiritual and physical purity. According to **St. Jerome**: [Our harps are our bodies, souls, and spirits, working together in harmony so that the strings may produce the tune!².]

¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

² *On Ps. 21.*

Holiness does not involve the washing with water but rather indicates repentance. This enables the Holy Spirit to work within us, and purify us totally: inside out. **Tertullian** says: [What would make us offer prayers with clean hands but an unclean spirit? It is essential to raise spiritual hands that are holy: free from vanity, crime, cruelty, poison, idolatry, and other shameful matters...this constitutes true holiness¹.] He also says, [After the body has been completely washed, that is purified by baptism, it becomes necessary to be purified by constant repentance and just as we do when we wash our hands constantly from impurities².]

3- INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEMALE WORSHIPPERS

From the above, it becomes clear that a man, and indeed every spiritually mature soul, needs to be inwardly holy, and to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ by spreading out his hands lovingly, as if they were stretched on the Cross, in order to intercede by words as well as by deeds, and having no doubt or wrath. A woman, too – and every soul that has become a bride of the Master – needs to be concerned with her inner adornment in her worship in order to bring joy to the heart of her heavenly Bridegroom. St. Paul, the apostle says: ***“In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works”*** (v. 9, 10).

St. John Chrysostom comments on this apostolic teaching as follows: [what is this? Do you come before God with braids and golden jewelry? Maybe you are coming to a dancing locale? Or some

¹ *On Prayer*, 8.

² *Ibid.*

indecent party? For braids and precious attire are appropriate to such places. However, in the presence of God, there is no necessity for such things. You are coming to pray for the forgiveness of your sins... to supplicate God, and to plead with Him that He may respond forgivingly to you! Why do you adorn yourself? These clothes are inappropriate to someone pleading! How do you puff? How do you weep? How do you pray fervently while you are adorned in this manner?¹] He goes on to say, [Jesus Christ is your Bridegroom, O virgin, therefore why do you seek to attract your dear fellowmen?... the ornaments that are pleasing to God are humility, chastity, and commitment to orderliness and decency in one's attire... stop this stupidity, O woman! Divert your attention from yourself and focus on your inner adornment².]

We can deduct from the words of St. Paul that abstaining from outward adornment is not a virtue in itself. Virtue lies in the commitment to embellish the inner heart and thoughts through living in godliness and self-control. The virtue of a person lies in putting on the Lord Jesus Christ as He brings radiance to the soul encompassing her emotions and feelings, as well as to the mind with all its potentials. The apostle says, "*the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation... professing godliness with good works.*" In other words, they reflect God's sanctity and His characteristics within them.

What we say about adornment also applies about modesty. It does not simply refer to wearing certain clothes, but rather intends to underline that we carry within us our Savior who enriches the heart, thought, sight, tongue, etc. and clothes us with inner and outward modesty. It therefore befits women as

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 8.

² Ibid, Roger Gryson: *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church, Minnesota, 1976, p. 128.*

well as all Christians to be modest in controlling their eyes, words, and even their inner thoughts. Let us pray in the words of the Psalmist, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.” Who can the watch of the mouth and the door to the lips be other than the Holy Spirit? It is He who sanctifies our inward and outward parts, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself opens and no one closes, and closes and no one opens.

Now that the apostle has dealt with a woman’s obligation to observe inward and outward modesty, and to abstain from indulgence in outward adornment, especially while in Church; he goes on to speak about her silence in the Church. Besides, he deals with the women having to teach men in general church meetings. He says, “***Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve, woman being deceived, fell into transgression, nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self control***” (v. 11-15).

Some may ask, ‘Why should women keep silent, and not teach in Church? And why is it indicated that they be submissive?’

In order to understand these verses, it is important to place them in the context of the state of the Church at the time of writing this Letter. Within the Jewish community, a woman was forbidden to study the Law, and was not allowed to play any leadership role in social service. A Jewish man thanked God daily as He had not created him as ‘a Gentile, or a slave, or a woman.’ However, we do not deny that some women, driven by fervent God loving hearts, did play leading religious and political roles in the Old Testament. Note that for the Jews, religion and politics were inseparable, and that the Lord Jesus Christ sought to correct that concept. In the Old Testament, the following prophetesses are known:

Miriam, who led the women in songs of praise (Exod. 15:20); Deborah, who was also a judge (Judges 4:4); Huldah in the days of Josiah (2 Kings 22:14); Noadiah in the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 6: 14); as well as Anna who is mentioned in the New Testament (Luke 2:36). Thus the woman enjoyed many rights, actually, while under the Mosaic Law compared to others living in the world at that time. In spite of that, she remained removed from the ministry in the holy places, from teaching in the Church, etc.

In the case of the Greeks, the temple of Aphrodite housed one thousand priestesses, and they offered their bodies to the worshippers as a part of worship. The temple of Diana, in Ephesus, also housed hundreds of wicked priestesses.

The Christian Church has elevated the status of a woman, and has given her many rights. However, the right to teach has been denied to women whenever there are men to fulfill that role. The reason for that is to avoid misunderstandings.

According to the Holy Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ has elevated the status of women. We read that a number of women followed the Lord and His twelve disciples during His preaching. They served Him out of their purses (Luke 8:1-3). The names of some of them, who had also followed Him to the Cross, are mentioned (Matt. 27: 56, 61; 28: 1). The women were the first ones to announce the Lord's Resurrection to the disciples (Luke 24:10 ,11).

In the Apostolic Era, and with the rise of the Church, the women, including St. Mary, regularly joined the disciples in prayers and supplications (Acts: 1:14). St. Luke recounts in the Book of the Acts the positive role that Tabitha played in serving the poor and the widows (Acts 9:36). In the long greetings found in the epistles of St. Paul, the apostle, we get the sense of the role many women have

played in the missionary work of the Church. These women were not less zealous than the men in spreading the message of the Gospel. The apostle speaks about Phoebe, the deaconess in Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1, 2). She served strangers and travelers, 'housed strangers,' and opened up her home for religious meetings. He speaks about 'Priscilla and Aquila' as 'fellow workers in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 16:3). The strange thing is that he mentions the name of the wife before her husband's, which did contrary to the custom of that time. This might be due to the fact that they were more fervent than their husbands, as we see in the case of the wife who helped Apollos, her husband, in rectifying his understanding of the faith. **St. John Chrysostom** mentions that example besides many other women whom he mentions by name as they illustrate strong ministry. In the Book of the Acts, we read about the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, and how they prophesied (Acts 21:9). Some of these names also occur in a writing which dates back to the fourth century: Hermeon, Caritina, Iris, and Eutychiana¹. God willing, we shall refer in other writings, to the work done in the sphere of ministering to widows and virgins.

Thus the Christian Church has never denied a woman's rights from its earliest beginnings. Then how is it that the Church opposes her role as a teacher among men?

We need to refer to the words of St. Paul, the apostle, who explains Gnosticism and its effect on the church in the apostolic era. Society at that time distinguished sharply between men and women, and put on women such cruel restrictions that defied their human rights as well as civic and criminal laws. In contrast, Christianity claimed that "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there*

¹ *De Praescriptione 41: 5.*

is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The Gnostics despised the body and considered it to be an element of darkness. Consequently, they were hostile and wished to discard it by rejecting all matters related to it, the rejected marriage as an unclean issue, some foods used to feed the body, as well as rejecting the resurrection of the body on the Last Day. Moreover, they refused to admit the difference between the sexes, so in their teachings they stated there is no such thing as a man or a woman but just a person who is a being endowed with talents that had nothing to do with manhood or womanhood. In other words, they wanted to society to exist without giving any consideration to such differences! Such teachings disturbed the church, and led her to claim that there is neither male nor female in Jesus Christ as they were members in His holy Body. However, she did not ignore the role of each as a separate and different entity. In this context, St. Paul speaks about the obligation of the woman to cover her head and the man to expose his during worship (1 Cor. 11:4, 5). The apostle, who was inspired by the Spirit, was not the kind of person who would be concerned with such matters in a literal way as many would think. He really wishes to confirm that although men and women are equal in Jesus Christ yet salvation, fellowship in His Body, and the renewal of life have not severed femininity from women or manhood from men. Each has a vital and active role in the life of the Church in the unifying spirit of love.

It is correct to describe St. Paul as a man of great vision and love. In his teachings in this letter concerning a woman’s silence in Church, her withdrawal from teaching, men, and her submission, he does not intend to despise her status or reduce her role. He wishes her to undertake what is suited to her nature as a woman, and to her physical and emotional capacity. When the body submits to the head, it does not mean that the head is better, or that the body is to be despised. For there cannot be a head apart from the body, and it cannot have a function with it. It is true that the head provides for the body, yet if

one does not respond to the other, both would lose their peace and existence. St. Paul does not deny the roles Eunice and Lois played in the life of St. Timothy and teaching him the Holy Book (2 Tim. 3:15). Neither does he ignore the righteousness of Priscilla and her husband as they served individually and with many others in different countries, and how they had led Apollos to know the Truth (Acts 18: 26). He also mentions Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2, 3.

Moreover, the apostle probably made this restriction with the intention of removing any chances that could lead the Church to stumble. Yet, he has not ignored her educational role in the family, among women, and towards herself.

The writings of **Tertullian** help us to discover the intention of the apostle, St. Paul. Prior to his adoption of Mani's heresy, he attacks the Gnostics and says: [Look at the women of the heretics, how wanton! They are so arrogant that they teach, argue, cast out devils, and heal - they might also baptize?¹] Even after he had deviated and adopted heretic teachings, **Tertullian** did not depart from this apostolic commandment. Even though he adopted some of the teachings of the two prophetesses Maxmilla and Prischilla he says: [A woman is not allowed to speak in Church (1 Cor. 14:34, 35), neither should she teach, baptize, or undertake any function in the priesthood and that is specifically designated for men²,.] Here, **Tertullian** reveals that the restriction is based on a consideration of what agrees with the nature of a woman, without any intention of degrading her status. However, **Tertullian** was slightly affected by heretics, and resumed to assign to her the role of prophesying³.

¹ *De Resurr. Carnis* 11:2; *De Exhort, Castitalis* 10:5.

² *On Veiling of Virgins* 9: 1.

³ *Adv. Mare.* 5:8:11; *De Anima* 9:4.

Finally, what does the apostle St. Paul intend to say in this verse: “*Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control*” (v. 15)? Some explain that the holy Virgin Mary brought great honor to women as she has given birth to our Savior. Others consider that even though women are deprived of the right to teach in public in the Church when men are present, yet they would receive their crown by teaching their children to walk in the faith, in love, in holiness, and with self-control. This is a task that men cannot do... truly women offer to the Church blessed members who have leadership!

Chapter 3

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PASTORS AND THEIR DUTIES

So far, St. Paul the apostle has spoken about the following issues: church worship in general; the importance of offering prayers for all people, even for pagans since Christ has sacrificed Himself as the Redeemer Who desires to bring salvation to all; the need to be spiritual persons and raise holy hands in prayers while doing spiritual work too; and how our souls should be prepared, as a bride waiting for her Bridegroom, all decked with inner rather than outer glory. St. Paul in this chapter talks about the pastors themselves:

- 1- The Characteristics of Bishops: v. 1-7.**
- 2- The Characteristics of Deacons: v. 8-13.**
- 3- The Pastor's View of the Church: v. 14-16.**

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BISHOPS

“This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (v.

1). The desire for bishopric is not a desire for authority and dignity. It is rather the desire to wash the feet of others, and to sacrifice the self for everyone in Christ Jesus. In the Early Church, the bishop or

the overseer was the father who was exposed to persecution, torture and exile. He bore it all in order to lead human beings into the life of the living faith. Even during periods of relative peace, the bishop never felt that he was entitled to authority and dignity, despite his children's love for him. Instead, he felt a fatherly obligation toward everyone. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [If anyone desires to be an overseer, he must not desire authority and dominion. He must desire to protect the church spiritually. If he feels that way, I would not blame him. Even Moses desired the job but not the authority. Yet, his desire brought him sarcastic reproach: "*Who made you ruler and judge over us?*" (Acts 7:27, Exod. 2:14) If anyone desires this job with such understanding, then let him desire it. For the role of the bishop has been called (*episcopacy*) due the task of 'overseeing' that is involved in it¹.]

St. John Chrysostom talks at length about '*the desire for the bishopric.*' He clarifies the difference between desire of offering sacrificial ministry and that of attaining the rank due to the authority it brings with it. In his book '*On the Priesthood*' he states: [There are many other things that the priest must be characterized with. First of all, he has to get rid of the desire to attain this rank since if he desires it and gets it; it turns progressively into a love for dignity. He could even get enslaved to this desire to the extent that it makes him liable to many evils as hypocrisy and malice and to submit to other obligations... Such is the cause of massacres that prevailed in the church, and that brought destruction to cities due to struggle for authority. No one must think that I disagree with St. Paul's saying that: "*If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.*" For I do not say that desiring the bishopric is a bad thing but the bad thing is the desire for authority and the love of power².]

¹ In 1 Tim., hom, 10. The word 'episcopus' or 'bishop' in the Greek language means 'overseer.'

² De Sacr. 3:10: 11.

2. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A BISHOP

A- Blameless: **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [Every virtue is included in that word. If a person feels from within that he has sinned, then he should not desire a task for which he is not qualified. Actually, such a person needs to be administered to rather than be an administrator to others. **A provider needs to be shine more brilliantly than any other planet.** His life must be faultless, so that others may look up to him as a role model¹.] **Fr. Gregory (the Great)** says: [Every person should know his own worth. Knowing that he himself is condemned because he is dominated by sin, would dictate him not to dare to undertake the task of pastoral work. For anyone who is corrupted by vice cannot intercede for the sins of others².] **Fr. Gregory** interprets the words of God to Moses concerning the kind of person who comes before the Lord to offer bread that he should be without defect (Lev. 21:17–21). In a symbolic way, a person who is spiritually defected should be eliminated from the priesthood and pastoral ministry. These are the words of the Lord: “For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or a limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or a broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch.” Whatever his rank, a priest should not be blind, for he needs to possess clarity in perceiving heavenly inspiration. He should not be lame, for he needs to be able to walk in the path of the Truth. He should not have a marred face, as he needs to possess spiritual discernment. He should not have a limb too long or he would be like the person who imposes himself and interferes excessively upon others. He should not have a broken leg or hand as he would be incapable of movement and work,

¹ *In 1 Tim., hom. 10.*

² *The author: Pastoral Love: 1965, p. 656*

etc.

B- The Husband of One Woman: St. John Chrysostom comments as follows: [The apostle does not set this down as a command. He does not say that a bishop should have one wife, but rather that he is forbidden to have more than one. This is due to the fact that the Jews at that time were not only allowed to get married twice - after the death of the first wife or after divorcing her - but also to have two wives at the same time¹.] In other words, the apostle does not oblige a bishop to get married, but he rejects to ordain a person who got married twice, even if the first wife is dead or has been divorced. St. Paul is writing in the early years of the Church, and at a time when polygamy was allowed and prevalent among the Gentiles. Hence if any of them accepted the Christian faith but had married more than once, they should not be ordained as bishop. The apostle intended that those ordained should be from among the most chaste and pure. Now that the doors of monasticism have become open, it is now possible to find those who are chaste monks, and bishops are ordained from among them.

C- Alert: St. John Chrysostom comments as follows: [This means that he needs to be cautious, possessing thousands of eyes around him, sharp sighted, and with unclouded inner vision².] As though the bishop, being an overseer of God's people, should have a fervent vision, alert and aware of his personal salvation as well as of that of his spiritual brothers and children. He should not be burdened with administrative matters or preoccupied with general or private problems that distract him from his spiritual mission. That is why **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this characteristic by saying: [It is appropriate that the bishop should be vigilant, fervent in the spirit like some one inhaling fire! He needs

¹ *In 1 Tim., Hom 10.*

² *In 1 Tim., Hom 10.*

to work constantly, performing his duties day and night. For he is more dedicated than an army commander is towards his troops! He needs to be cautious and giving care to everyone!]

D- Temperate: or poised acting with wisdom, discernment, and moderation. He should not be inclined to the right or to the left. Hence he would be able to direct his children wisely and evenly. While providing for their spiritual needs, he should not ignore their psychological, social, or physical needs. He is to direct each person according to that person's specific potentials and not in accordance with his own inclinations.

In our discussion about pastoral love, we indicated that a priest - regardless of his rank - should be wise in his dealings with his children. He needs to know how to deal with adolescents, elders, poor, rich, married, virgins, the humble, and the arrogant, etc. each one according to his circumstances. Hence no one will be spoiled or led to despair¹.

E- Modest: A priest needs to be modest in his clothes, behavior, and speech. For modesty is a trait that affects the inner soul, and is reflected in a person's sentiments and dealings. We have dealt with this point earlier². Examples of modesty are found in one's avoidance of unseemly jokes, teasing that is corrosive to the spirit, favoring women or young girls with special attention, etc.

F- Hospitable: Receiving strangers indicates a generous heart filled with practical love. That is why the apostle praises the Romans in his words: "distributing to the needs of the saints, *given to hospitality*" (Rom. 12:13). He also says to the Hebrews: "*Do not forget to entertain* strangers, for by so

¹ *Pastoral Love*, p. 759-727.

² *Pastoral Love*, p. 663-668.

doing some have unwittingly entertained angels” (Heb. 13:2). If someone has not practiced such practical love before his ordination, then how could he offer lovingly his life as a sacrifice to serve his congregation on becoming a bishop?!

During the early years of the Church, believers and ministers traveled often due to persecution. Therefore they were received as guests in the homes of other believers, and especially in the home of a bishop. **Hermes**, in his book *‘The Shepherd,’* says: “A bishop must be hospitable, happily receiving strangers and God’s servants at all times.”

G- Able to Teach: It is not enough for the bishop to be blameless, and possess spiritual knowledge, and zeal. He also needs to have the talent of teaching, and this is a rare thing to find. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [This is not a requirement in those who are being provided for, but it is an essential talent needed in those who are ordained to provide for others¹.] In the **Didascalia**, it says: [Give attention to your speech, O bishop, so that you may interpret the words of the Scriptures if you can. Satisfy your congregation and quench their thirst from the light of the Law. Thus they will be enriched with your teachings².]

H- Sober-minded: Throughout their ministry, the Jewish priests were forbidden to use alcoholic drinks (Lev. 1:9). In the same way, it is appropriate that a Christian minister abstain from such drinks. It is a sign of his fullness of the real spiritual wine, the wine of the Holy Spirit that grants joy to the soul.

St. Jerome comments on these apostolic words as follows: [The indulgence in drinking is a

¹ In 1 Tim., hom 10.

² The Didascalia, Ch. 3.

wrongdoing that greedy and pleasure seekers commit. When the body gets hot with drinking, then immediately the fire of lust is aroused. Thus drinking indicates an undisciplined control of the soul, as well as laxity in behavior. Such a state consequently leads to loss of chastity. For a person who just lives for pleasure, is a dead person, even though he lives (1 Tim. 5:6). As for a person who is a drunkard, that one is not only dead but also buried. Just one hour of misbehavior led Noah to be uncovered, although he had lived with dignity for sixty years (Gen 9: 20-21)¹.]

I- Not Violent: In the Old Testament, Nehemiah was driven by holy jealousy to strike those who were married to foreign idolatrous women. He explains: “So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them (Neh. 13:25). Nevertheless, Christianity does not turn to violence to achieve inner renovation, for the sanctification of the inner soul has to come about as a result of man’s total freedom of choice. The apostolic instructions demanded that a bishop, priest, or deacon who strikes a believer because he has sinned should be displaced. **St. John Chrysostom** rejected the possibility that there could be a bishop who would behave in such a foolish and inappropriate manner. Consequently, he finds that the apostle’s words should be taken in a symbolic rather than in a literal sense. He says: [These words do not mean that he uses his hands violently... for some are able to strike the conscience of the brothers, and this is what I believe is the intention of the apostle².]

J- Not Greedy for Money: When a person’s heart is drawn to profit and money, however slight that attraction may be, he would not know how to offer all his wealth and life in the ministry of his people. If such a person is ordained, he will not seek to put the needs and rights of his people before his

¹ *Pastoral Love*. P. 668.

² *In 1 Tim., hom 10*.

own. Indeed, he will use the Church as a tool to satisfy his own needs and thereby corrupt the Church of God.

K- Gentle, not Quarrelsome: A minister should bear the spirit of his Master Who “*will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets*” (Matt. 12:19). In gentleness and humility, the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in the heart. Similarly, it is appropriate that the bishop lives in the spirit of his Master in order to present a living picture of the humble King, the One Who has conquered evil by good, and erases all quarrels by love!

L- One Who Rules his House Well: A minister should have children who submit and honor him. Otherwise, how can he look after the Church of God if he cannot govern his home? He who is incapable of providing for his small church at home, how can he take the reins of church leadership? In his home, submission comes easily due to natural bonds and laws that are also reinforced by the laws of the Church. In contrast, laws to submit to his leadership do not dictate his congregation. They do so only through the power of spiritual love and faith.

If a bishop is chosen from among those who are sanctified to chastity, then he needs to have children submitting to him spiritually. A minister, who has not gathered children in Christ around him before his ordination, would not know how to win souls for God while he is handling the heavy tasks of the bishopric.

M- Not a Novice: or he would become proud and “*fall into the same condemnation as the devil*” (v. 6). It does not ‘not young in age’ but not young or new in the faith. St. Timothy was young in years but he was mature in the faith. Being new to the faith could be accompanied with fervent zeal to

serve, yet it carries the danger of self-imposition and arrogance. In such a state, a person could lose his soul by his own pride, and destroy those entrusted to his care.

N- He must have a Good Testimony Among Those who are Outside: St. Paul says that a bishop “*must have a good testimony among those who are outside lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil*” (v. 7). Believers may give a good report of a member from among them, yet the testimony of Gentiles would be a confirmation to such a report. This is similar to the presence of light; no one can deny it even though he may reject it. Even enemies evidence a good life. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [It is beneficial that the good have a good reputation among their enemies...Why has no one accused the apostles of being adulterers, unclean, greedy, or deceivers? Their accusers were simply opposing their preaching, is it not because their lives were blameless? That was so evident! Therefore let us live in that way so that no enemy or unbeliever can breath an evil word against us. Truly, even such men honor a virtuous life. Truth shuts up the mouths of the enemy... Just as no one can say that the sun is dark even if he were blind. It would be to his disgrace and he will fear to be blamed by others. Hence, no one can blame someone whose goodness is evident¹.] **St. Jerome** comments as follows: [This is how the life of a Christian bishop should be: those who argue with whom on issues of the faith cannot argue about his life².]

2- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEACON

St. John Chrysostom says: [The apostle has discussed issues related to bishops, describing the

¹ *Ibid*

² *Pastoral Love*, p. 655.

characteristics and qualifications that they should possess. He touched on the issues related to priests, and went on to speak about deacons. The reason why he did not speak at length about priests is that there is no great difference between them and bishops; each is entrusted with the task of teaching and leadership in the Church. All that is he said about bishops is relevant to priests as well, except that the bishops have the authority to ordain. Otherwise, there does not seem to be any other distinction¹.]

These are the Characteristics of Deacons:

A- They Have to Possess Dignity: “*deacons must be reverent*” (v. 8). **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [This means that they need the same qualities found in bishops. What are these qualities? They need to be blameless, dignified, hospitable, patient, not quarrelsome, and not greedy. This is underlined by the use of the word ‘*likewise,*’ and to provide more clarification adds ‘*must be reverent not double-tongued.*’ This implies being free of hypocrisy or deception. For there is nothing more demeaning to man than dishonesty, and nothing more harmful to the Church than not attaining salvation².]

B- “Not given too much to wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience” (v. 9): These are the same traits that we have discussed before in speaking about bishops. Although there is a big difference in priestly rank and responsibility, yet, as workers together in one vineyard, they need to possess the traits that are worthy of the Owner of the Vine. They need to possess His One Holy Spirit. According to **St. Paul**, “*Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Lord. There are differences of ministries but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it*

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 11.

² Ibid.

is the same God who works all in all" (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

Note that the bishop has been already tested as he served earlier in a lower priestly rank. As for the deacon, he receives the first priestly rank without having practiced it before his ordination. This is why the apostle says: "*But let those also first be proved.*"

C- The apostle continues to say: "*Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slandered, temperate, faithful in all things*" (v. 11). **St. John Chrysostom** finds that these words do not apply to women in general, but rather to 'deaconesses' specifically. He explains his view by saying, [Let us apply this to the deaconesses, for this is a necessary, useful, and honorable order in the Church.] Others find that this is a teaching concerning the wives of deacons

D- "*Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses as well*"(v. 12). **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [Note how he requires the same virtues of bishops to be found in the deacons too. Even though they do not occupy equal ranks, yet they need to be like them; blameless, pure, ruling their children and houses well¹.]

The apostle ends his teachings about deacons by these words: "*For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Jesus Christ*" (v. 13). **St. John Chrysostom** explains this verse as follows: [The apostle seems to say that when a person befriends someone of a lower rank, then the first gets elevated to a higher one.] That is he gets promoted from the rank of a deacon to that of a priest.

¹ *Ibid.*

3- The Concept of the Pastor regarding the Church:

“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”(v. 14). It could be that the Apostle was concerned that St. Timothy would be overcome by some frustration, therefore he promises to go to him, He confirms that he would go but advises him not to give in to depression should he not arrive in the near future. St. Paul explains to Timothy that the Holy Spirit allows that for the purpose of his edification. This would be a rare opportunity for St. Timothy to exert a greater effort as a minister in the Church of the living God, the pillar and the ground of truth. Consequently, he would receive a greater crown. The absence of St. Paul the apostle would not be the cause of destruction or fatigue, but rather a chance to work and strive harder in his ministry as a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle finds this a good time to reveal to St. Timothy, who is a bishop of a church, the status of the Church that has been entrusted to his care. In this context the apostle says: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory”* (v. 16).

What is the Church of Christ, where the bishops minister, and the deacons serve?

A- The pillar and ground of the truth: St. Paul considers that the whole Church is one body composed of all believers. They stand together on Truth that is like a pillar and a base in which they are held. Without that Truth the whole entity would collapse. Whereas the Gnostics depend on knowledge as the basis of salvation, the apostle considers that the Church is the first and foremost means of reaching the truth. However, the truth here is free, and God grants it to all men without discrimination

whatsoever.

The Church is the pillar that our father Jacob set up and ‘*poured oil on top of it*’ (Gen. 28:18). This served as a sign of its sanctification to God by the Holy Spirit. The Church is the smoke rising up in the wilderness, ‘*perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant’s fragrant powders*’ (Song 3:6). She is the pillar that rises with the smoke of the sacrifice that does not hurt the eyes, but opens them to see the heavenly truth, perfumed by the sufferings of her Bridegroom (the myrrh), and with the fragrance of the frankincense.

This is how a true pastor conceives the Church of Christ. **St. Jerome** comments as follows: [The Church does not embrace walls and buildings, but rather comprises the truth of her teachings. She is the true faith! Actually, ever since fifteen or twenty years after the rise of the Church, heretics have controlled all its buildings. However, the true Church exists wherever the true faith exists¹.] In other words, the Church, being the true faith, can never be overcome whatever the circumstances of the believers may be!

B- She enjoys the mystery of godliness: The Church does not involve the mere intellectual knowledge of truth as the Gnostics believed. Rather, she represents the practical attainment of truth through a godly life. The Divine Incarnation has granted this to us. That is why the apostle says, “*great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.*”

Thus the Church is conceived as the pillar of Truth. She is grounded in the unique, acceptable, sweet smelling sacrifice of Jesus Christ to the Father. This truth is achieved through the Incarnation of

¹ On Ps. 46.

the Word Who is the Way that leads to offer the sacrifice of the Cross. He is the Door through which we will enter to a new life as we unite with God the Father in His Son. He has appeared among us and carried our nature so that we might be in Him. Thus we can enjoy His life, His characteristics, and have fellowship in His glory! This is the practical truth that is offered to us through the Gospel in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gnostics have denied the truth of the incarnation by denying that the Lord really carried a human body. In this way, they were denied the godliness of life that has been granted to us through Him. They have diverted the truth, making it a theoretical, intellectual knowledge that has no spirit or life! In other words, the Incarnation is not a philosophical belief that the Church embraces for the sake of argument, but, rather, it is the mystery of her godly life and her inner glory!

C- Justified in the Spirit: The Church essentially stands for the acceptance of the Holy Spirit that God has granted to us. It is the Spirit that makes us steadfast in the Lord Jesus Christ and takes us to Him, not only to be washed in His precious Blood of our sins, but also to grant us His righteousness so that we may be seen as righteous by the Father. The apostle says: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”(1 Cor. 6:11). If the Church is in essence steadfastness in Christ, as members of His Body, then this gift enables her to take flight in the holy Spirit and enter the bosom of the Father. She has been justified by the holy Blood, and carries the features of her Head and Groom!

D- Seen by Angels: The Church is activated by the fiery Spirit, and lives by the righteousness of Jesus Christ in the bosom of the Father. This really makes her the ‘heavenly life,’ enjoying an angelic nature. Thus the Church, as one body enjoys the perception of God, and her members become like

angels who are given insight to perceive the intangible God! In other words, the Church in the New Testament is the revelation of the only Son, having one nature, in the midst of the believers. These are the faithful who, like the angels, can enjoy being in His presence, see Him, and enjoy His characteristics.

By saying '*seen by angels*,' the apostle probably means that the angels, who have seen Him before the Incarnation, have come to see Him in a new light after He became incarnate in His Church. They come to perceive Him as the perfect sublime lover through the crucifixion, and His amazing divine work in the believers: those who were once sinners and enemies, transformed by sanctification and justification and becoming beloved children, glorified in Him!

E- Preached among Gentiles: The Church, as the pillar and ground of truth that grants us the mystery of godliness in Jesus Christ, carries us by the Holy Spirit to live in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Hence we are enabled to share the nature of angels. The above gifts are offered to all mankind through preaching the Messiah, the Savior, to the Gentiles. Everyone can enjoy these divine blessings without discrimination or preference given to one nation or one race over another. This echoes the saying of the psalmist: "Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world" (Ps. 19:4). The purpose of preaching is to elevate mankind into the heavenly glory.

To sum up, we consider that the true pastor conceives the Church as the practical enjoyment of truth; she embodies the mystery of the Incarnation, the entry into the life of godliness, the justification of the soul, and fellowship with the angels. She is the mystery leading all mankind to discover the unifying faith and bringing them to the sublime glory. Hence all are enabled to live in the heavenly bosom.

St. John Chrysostom comments on these verses by saying: [Truly, great is this mystery: God

became man, and man became god, and man became without sin! He became God the Incarnate, and received by the world, and preached in it! The angels see Him with us! This is truly a mystery! May we never despise it... but may we live in a befitting manner¹.]

¹ *In 1 Tim., hom 11.*

Chapter 4

THE STRUGGLE OF PASTORS

St. Paul, the apostle, has covered the following points in the previous chapters: The Commandments are the object of pastoral ministry (Chapter 1). He clarifies some of the concepts concerning communal church worship (Chapter 2). He then speaks about the characteristics of pastors and servants (Chapter 3). Now, St. Paul speaks to his disciple, St. Timothy, about the commitment to spiritual struggle. He says that this is necessary as the pastor leads all the people into church life, or in other words, into unity with God in Jesus Christ, enjoying the spirit of righteousness, fellowship with the heavenly ones, and entering into the divine glories. It is hard spiritual work that requires the pastor to be aware and alert, opposing any heresy and persisting in all means of spiritual struggle. In this context, the apostle deals in this chapter with the following issues:

- 1- Apostasy** v. 1-11
- 2- Advice for Pastors** v. 12-16

1- APOSTASY

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (v. 1-3).

The heretics, who had Gnostic tendencies, preached abstention from marriage, and from eating meat, as both were prohibited on the premise that they defiled the soul. The social class labeled as the 'perfect' class was committed to obey such restrictions.

The reason for depreciating marriage is a result of their misconception of the body, which they regard as an element of darkness that has to be fought. Consequently, they viewed the physical relations between a man and his wife as proof of the profane needs of the flesh. Hence, such relationships, in their eyes, were impure and forbidden for the 'perfect' class. In contrast, in the Christian view, the body is God's good and holy creation. If it has become inclined to evil lusts, due to our sinfulness, yet by accepting the Son, Who is the Word incarnated, He has sanctified our body. Hence we consider our body an element to be revered and honored. Based on that concept, the bodily relations between a husband and wife are not viewed as actions enacted to satisfy base lusts, but rather as a sign of internal love and unity between the two partners as each of them respects the other. In other words, marriage to a true believer is accepted, first and foremost, because it involves another person who is loved, respected, and viewed honorably for his own merits. Such a view is untainted by the desire to satisfy physical lusts, for the other partner is seen for his humane features rather than for his physical aspect. Some theologians find that the physical relationship is an expression of reverence and honor since it is a partnership between man and God. With God, the married couple will conceive children who will be members in the holy Body and children of God!

The Early Fathers have elaborated on the theme of the sanctity of marriage. **St. Augustine** says: [For the Lord attended the wedding to which He was invited... and by doing so He wished to confirm that it is He who has instituted marriage... and that unity between a man and a woman is ordained by

God, and that divorce comes from Satan¹.]

Some may ask: **Why does the apostle honor virginity, and why does he desire that all may live like him without concern? And why has the Christian monastic movement taken place?**

Virginity in Christianity is not the abstention from marriage as it is a profane thing. It is a deeper spiritual marriage between the soul and her Bridegroom and has no other preoccupation. Marriage is a holy mystery that is honored by virgins, monks, and nuns. Yet, they prefer virginity, not because they vilify marriage, but because they wish to soar towards an angelic life devoted to worship and divine ministry. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [We do not prevent those who wish to get married, but encourage those who do not want it to remain chaste and virgins. There is a difference between prohibition and leaving man to act completely according to his own will. He who prohibits issues a general order binding everyone. On the other hand, he who recommends virginity as being a higher state does not prevent marriage but prefers virginity².]

Concerning the issue of foods: some of the Gnostics regarded certain foods and meat as evil elements. Hence it was inappropriate for the 'perfect' to eat them. However, the Church does not prevent such foods because they are profane or unclean. She asks her children to abstain from them for some time as a means of controlling the body and enabling the soul to control it by the help of the Holy Spirit Who grants sanctification to both body and soul. Abstention promotes a spiritual uplifting which is more meaningful than mere physical denial. Note that sick people are allowed not to fast since their illness is considered a form of abstention that they accept with thanksgiving!

¹ *In Joan. tract., 9:2*

² *In 1 Tim., hom., 12.*

Such is our view of material matters, whatever they may be, **“For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer”** (v. 4, 5). God has created everything well (Gen. 1:31), and there is nothing that is defiled in His creation. Yet when man fell, his sight as well as his conscience became corrupt. He was master of the earthly creation and in sinfulness abused certain things. For example, there are those who use stones, gold, and silver in their worship of idols... material elements are good in themselves but man has defiled them by his evil conscience. That is why the sanctification of matter is connected with the sanctification of man’s nature as well as his conscience and perception.

St. John Chrysostom comments on the apostolic verse above by saying: [The apostle states two premises: The first is that nothing of God’s creation is profane; and the second is that if anything has been defiled, it has to be sealed- that is crossed by making the sign of the Cross over it, while giving thanks and glorifying God. Consequently, all impurity will be removed from it¹.] In this context, **St. Augustine** says: [All things that exist are good because their Creator is Omnigood².]

St. Paul focuses on three issues that define the mystery of sanctification: thanksgiving, God’s Word. Such issues are present in a sublime and unique way during the Liturgy and Eucharist. During that ministry, the Church soars through the Holy Spirit towards the Heavenly Father. She offers thanks through the unique sacrifice of His Son- that is, through the sacrifice of the incarnate Word of God... the Father accepts the life of the Church as a life lived in thanksgiving and witnessing to God’s Word. Moreover, it is a prayerful life that is acceptable to Him. He responds by offering to Her an infinite

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Faith, Hope, Love 12.*

fountain of sanctification through which the body and spirit of its members are sanctified, as well as all matter in its highest form. This is evident in the transformation of the bread and wine into the Lord's holy Flesh and Blood!

This is the sound teaching on which St. Timothy has been brought up: God's creation is good. Moreover, whatever man has defiled can be sanctified with thanksgiving, God's Word, and prayer. That is why the apostle tells him: "***If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of good doctrine which you have carefully followed***" (v. 6).

Timothy was brought up in the upright Orthodox faith away from falsehoods. He is dedicated to instill that faith in his fellow brothers. Therefore, St. Paul uses the words '*instruct the brethren*' rather than 'command the brethren.' This reveals how a good pastor ought to speak to his fellow men: softly and as though he is reminding them rather than issuing commands or prohibitions and seeming to snub those around him.

Having dealt with positive aspects such as St. Timothy's upbringing in the living faith and upright teachings, as well as his commitment to instruct God's people in them; St. Paul turns to negative aspects and says: "***But reject profane and old wives' fables***" (v. 7).

It is becoming for a pastor to avoid wasting his time and thought in falsehoods. He needs to train himself and his people to follow a righteous life or undertake spiritual exercise based on the upright faith. St. Paul advises him saying, "***...exercise yourself rather to godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that***

which is to come” (v. 8). Thus the pastor needs to dedicate all his time to the edification of the Church of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he is enabled to fulfill that in his own personal life and in his work among God’s people.

What does the apostle mean by “*profane and old wives’ fables*”? Perhaps he is referring to the same Gnostic thoughts we have talked about before. They are thoughts of pagan origin and have become obsolete. Yet, they creep to some Christians under the veil of ‘Gnosis’ or knowledge. They are profane old thoughts clothed in a new form by heretics who seek to destroy the upright faith. **St. John Chrysostom** finds such myths as representative of some individual thinkers seeking to return to Judaism. Their thoughts do not carry the power of God’s Word for they reflect literal and deadly falsehoods. The apostle calls them ‘*old wives’* tales because they have become obsolete and dated, and therefore are no longer appropriate to the new life we have in Jesus Christ. St. Paul finds that a return to these teachings would be similar to a mature man who reverses to breast-feeding. Clearly, such a man would be harmed and reap no benefit.

A spiritual person is like someone who has progressed from the immaturity of childhood into manhood. Therefore he cannot reverse to the literal interpretation of the Law. Indeed, he trains himself, as a man, in spiritual exercise, which is far more beneficial than physical exercise.

What does the apostle mean by physical exercise?

Some see that it is the practice of fasting and extreme asceticism (without involving the spirit). This could be beneficial to the body, but it cannot benefit the soul unless it is linked to the spirit (prayer and love, etc.). However, **St. John Chrysostom** refuses that opinion as he considers physical exercise to indicate the Olympic games that were popular among the Greeks. To an extent, these are good for the

body. Yet devout exercise is beneficial for both body and soul. He expresses his view in these words: [Some find that apostle is referring here to fasting. But this interpretation is inappropriate since fasting is a spiritual exercise and not a physical one. If fasting were a physical exercise, it would have been refreshing to the body. However, fasting renders the body weak and feeble, and therefore cannot be considered a physical exercise¹.]

In speaking about devout, godly fasting, the apostle says: *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe These things command and teach”* (v. 9-11).

What is the trustworthy saying that deserves all acceptance? Godly and devout spiritual fasting is beneficial in every way, and it carries promises in the present as well as in the future (v. 8). It leads the believer to hope in the living God and thus receives blessings in this life and in the one to come. **St. John Chrysostom** expresses this idea as follows: [When a person finds that he been cleaned of all evil, that is his sins and wickedness have been forgiven, then he can produce good fruit and rejoice while he lives on earth too. As for the wicked, he is punished both here and in the life to come. He will live in constant fear and cannot face anyone with confidence. He would always look pale, tremble, and full of anxiety. Is not that the case of deceivers, and thieves who are dissatisfied with what they have? Is not that the miserable condition of murderers and adulterers who even doubt the sun when they look at it? Maybe that is a life? No, to the contrary, that is a horror².]

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 12.

² In 1 Tim., hom., 12.

This is the effect of true spiritual exercise; it brings the spirit of joyous hope to the spirit. This is reflected even in our temporary life besides granting us our heavenly crown. As a result, we lead a happy life, rejoicing in spite of the pain. Our joyful spirit does not abandon us even when we are in tears. This is what Jesus intends when He promises us to ‘*receive a hundredfold*’ in this life ‘*and inherit everlasting life*’ (Matt. :29; Ps. 10:30).

The apostle says: “***For to this end we both labor and suffer.***” The Cross becomes sweet in spite of all the pain, labor, bitterness and deprivation that it brings. For in the middle of the increasing difficulties, the spirit enjoys the supremely divine comfort. In tasting the sufferings of the Cross, we become acquainted with the power of the resurrection that is working in us.

These promises are not exclusively granted to one group without the rest, as some Gnostics like to indicate. Indeed, these promises are intended for all mankind. This is what the apostle confirms in all his epistles. Here he says: “*we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.*” He is the Savior of all mankind, yet only believers can feel His redeeming work.

2- ADVICE TO PASTORS

Having tackled the subject of the pastor’s commitment to spiritual struggle in his private life and in his preaching about the living and upright faith, the apostle advises Timothy concerning that struggle:

A- “*Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (v. 12). If a pastor is young, he must not feel inferior, for an elder is not judged according to his age but according to his wisdom. That wisdom is apparent not only in his knowledge, sermons, and teachings, but also in his capacity to provide solutions, reveal love and be generously disposed to embrace every soul. Thus he does not deviate from leading a well-balanced

spiritual path since he walks in spiritual wisdom, in fearless and unwavering faith, and living in purity and chastity. A pastoral commitment does demand temporal experience as much as it necessitates the experience of a life led in honesty and truth. This is revealed in the product of the mouth, the heart, the spirit, and in all hidden and apparent behavior. With such qualities, a pastor becomes a living example to God's people.

St. John Chrysostom says: [As long as you lead a serene life they cannot debase your youth. On the contrary, they will admire you. That is why the apostle continues to say: “...*be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*” You have to be an example of goodness in every way, and a model of Christian living. This will be a living testimony, a basis, and a yardstick for others seeking to lead a godly life. This is the appropriate role of a teacher and pastor¹.]

B- “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (v. 13). The pastor needs to progress in his inner life constantly. He can do so through spiritual exercise besides reading and learning. This should be coupled with the desire to preach and teach for the purpose of leading every soul into the new experiences that the teacher practices daily. Note that the pastor is a learner and a teacher, a trainee and a trainer. He grows daily, and produces fruit in his own life and in the life of his fellow men and spiritual children.

C- “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery” (v. 14).

If God has blessed us with talents then we should not extinguish them. On the contrary, we

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 13.

should invest them in order to present them with their profit to our Lord. **St. John Chrysostom** explains the word ‘*prophecy*’ to signify ‘teaching,’ and the word ‘*presbytery*’ to mean ‘the clergy’ in general. He says that the apostle is speaking here about the rank of bishops rather than the priesthood¹.

The gifts endowed upon St. Timothy are the power of preaching God’s word, prophecy, and the rank of a bishop. They are free gifts from God regardless of his merits. However, he is obligated to kindle them by work and struggle lest they wither in him and hence condemn him before the One who has granted him these blessings.

In this chapter, there is an affirmation of the principle of bestowing the rank of priesthood through the laying of hands. However, this gift is granted to invest a person with responsibility rather than honor. The apostle explains: “***...give yourself entirely to them***” (v. 15). In other words, he is saying: “dedicate your whole life, your energy, and your talents to the ministry of these free gifts. Undertake this work and disregard any other.”

The Apostle requires him to grow constantly in every way: in studies, in worship, in preaching, in problem solving, and in spiritual guidance... that is a growth in every aspect of pastoral work and without deviation into excesses. The apostle explains: “***...that your progress may be evident to all***” (v. 15). He adds: “***Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you***” (v. 15, 16). There is no duality or extremism in the life of the pastor. He acts spiritually for his own edification as well as for that of God’s people. His spiritual life must not come at the expense of his pastoral responsibilities, neither should latter be achieved at the

¹ In 1 Tim., hom., 13.

expense of his own progress. He needs to engage in both his own life and his pastoral ministry as one whole integrated and harmonious task.

Chapter 5

CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS

In the previous chapter, St. Paul instructs Timothy in matters concerning his spiritual life and his pastoral work. He considers that both are one whole and integrated. In this chapter he clarifies the broad guidelines of interacting with his congregation:

- 1- Treatment of each group: v. 1-2.
- 2- Honoring widows: v. 3-16.
- 3- Duties towards the Clergy: v. 17-18.
- 4- Method of reproach: v. 19-21.
- 5- Caution against hasty ordinations: v. 22
- 6- Advice concerning St. Timothy's health: v. 23.
- 7- Hidden and apparent sins: v. 24-25

1- TREATMENT OF EACH GROUP

“Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as father, the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity” (v. 1, 2).

The Apostle asks pastors to exercise wisdom as they deal with each group, and each person

under their care. They need to know how to attract all whether they are men or women, elderly or children, etc., so that none deviates and walks away from the sheepfold of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that context, **St. John Chrysostom** says: [The priest deals with married people who have children and servants, with the wealthy and the officials who possess authority... that is why a pastor needs to be a many-sided man. I do not say that he must be hypocritical, deceptive or flattering but that he needs to be extremely flexible. He needs to go along with each one in order to make him feel comfortable in his specific circumstances. He needs to be merciful and strict as it is impossible for a pastor to apply the same treatment to all those under his care. He is like a physician who cannot use the same medicine for all his patient; or like the ship captain who must know more than one way by which to face the winds, for we are exposed to many winds¹.]

The Apostle provides examples of ways the pastor can apply as he deals with the different groups in his congregation. These can be summarized in one expression and that is that pastoral work is a work of love and not an office of power. Hence a pastor treats the elders as fathers and mothers to him: **“Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as a father.... the older women as mothers.”** The pastor is committed to correct their mistakes but without stern rebuke proceeding from his authority. Correction should take the form of a friendly conversation, as a son would speak to his father or mother. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Rebuke is inherently wrong, especially if it is directed to an elder. This wrong is doubled three times if the rebuke is directed from a young man to an elder².]

A pastor needs to deal kindly and tenderly with the youth too, and not just be applied or reserved

¹ *Pastoral Love*, p. 736, 737.

² *In 1 Tim., hom., 13.*

to the elderly. The apostle says: “*the younger men as brothers...the younger as sisters, with absolute purity.*” Without love, the pastor cannot touch the hearts of adolescents and youth. Yet, in his handling of the mistakes of younger women, he must observe the spirit of absolute purity so that he may not be stumble or cause others to stumble. Otherwise, while he is trying to reform them, he may lose his purity or cause others to stumble, even if his behavior springs from a simplistic heart. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Dealing with younger women always causes doubts; yet a bishop cannot avoid dealing with them constantly. Therefore, such contacts must occur in strict observance of total purity¹.]

In short, we believe that the pastor’s relationship with God’s people must be grounded in the ability to deal with each class, group, and individual in his congregation. His ministry needs to be done in a spirit of love that is marked by gentleness and tenderness. However, it should be untainted by flattery or hypocrisy that would endanger the salvation of his congregation or that his own soul. He needs to act wisely and purely in order to avoid pitfalls into which he himself as well as others may stumble.

2- HONORING WIDOWS

In treating the problem of suffering in the life of people, Christ has not come to take away pain from us but He has willingly accepted it instead of us on the Cross, thus changing the concept and course of suffering. In the past, pain was conceived as the fruit of God’s wrath, and one of the signs of our rebellion against Him. Now, in Jesus Christ, pain has become a sign of amazing divine love and obedience and of thanksgiving since the Only-Begotten Son has accepted to suffer even to death on the

¹ *Ibid.*

Cross. Hence, we have come to understand the path of pain with a new perspective as we accept it with love, obedience and thanksgiving to the Father through His Son. Similarly, in the case of widows, the church does not urge widows to change their status by encouraging them to get married in order to release them from their pain. It has elevated the concept of widowhood, transforming it from being a condition of misery and sadness to a state of spiritual activity in the Church. Widows have come to occupy a rank in the Church that is honored and has a positive task to perform in the Church. Widows are no longer considered a devastated, broken-hearted class of people, who draw the sympathy and pity of everyone. On the contrary, they occupy the third rank after the clergy and the chaste, and have their great work and mission in the Church. This strengthens their spirits and, in general, the whole church benefits from their ministry¹. This is what **St. John Chrysostom** clearly tells a young widow in a letter to her. Her husband was about to be appointed a ruler over a province. He does not only write to her to soothe her in the disaster of his loss, but also to urge her to work in God's vineyard. We notice that St. Paul talks in great length about 'widows,' probably more than about any other class, giving them special attention and highlighting the extent to which the Early Church, especially the Fathers of the School of Alexandria, gave importance to them in their writings.

The Apostle says: "***Honor widows who are really widow***" (v. 3). It is as though there is a distinction between a widow who is real and another who is unreal. In other words, he differentiates between widows who occupy a rank serving in the Church, and widows who need the services of the church.

¹ The author: *A letter of Comfort from St. John Chrysostom to a Young Widow.*

Concerning the services of the Church to widows, the apostle says: “***But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay to their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God***” (v. 4).

The Apostle demands the application of the simplest human principles dictating that the son or grandson be responsible should the mother or grandmother be widowed. Since she had served him in his childhood and youth without expecting any reward, he should take care for her if she becomes needy due to her widowhood. This is what families, who have the means, should do in order to enable the Church - ministers and congregation - to focus their attention on those widows who are in need.

In the Old Testament, God rejected the worship of believers if it lacked acts of love and mercy. He commanded them to look after widows as He says: “*Learn to do good: seek justice, reprove the oppressor, defend the fatherless, plead for the widows*” (Isaiah 1:17).

In the second century, **St. Ignatius of Antioch**, wrote to his brother **St. Polycarb of Samyrna** the following: [In the presence of God, be a defender of widows¹.] **St. Polycarb** also deals with this subject as he writes: [Priests have to be merciful and kind to all. They must not turn their backs on those who go astray; they must care for the sick; and they must not ignore poor widows or orphans².] **St. Justin**, in the same century, talks about helping widows and orphans. He says that is an integral part of the weekly Eucharist worship, when believers present their offerings and the head of the holy

¹ *Ep. To Polyc. 4:1.*

² *Ep. To Phil. 6: 1.*

congregation distributes them¹. **Hermas** writes, also in the same century, saying that when a believer fasts, he should give the money he would have spent on the food to a widow, or orphan, or any needy person². It is as if the concern for the needs of widows should occupy the heart of every believer whether he is a bishop, a priest, or a member of the congregation. It is a major part in the composition of a Christian person's behavior, in his weekly communal worship, as well as in his private unseen devotions.

This is the way in which the Church has cared for the needs of widows ever since its very beginnings. St. Paul sets down the required conditions that qualify a widow to receive help from the Church. He says: "*Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives*" (v. 5, 6).

The Apostle sets down the following conditions:

A- She has to be really desolate. That is she has lost her husband and has no children or grandchildren who are able to look after her.

B- She should have placed her hope in the living. Having lost the one who supported her, yet she puts her trust in the One who is really able to give support. She must find her rest in God Himself who will never let her feel alone! The Church would embrace such a widow, and she will find that the believers too - the clergy as well as members of the congregation - who will love her and offer all

¹ 1 Apol. 67: 6

² The Shepherd, 56: 7.

possible means of comfort. Hence she will accept their love as a gift from God Himself.

C- She needs to persevere in supplications and prayers day and night. She should not consider this temporary life as the reason for joy, but rather seek to be constantly connected to her Bridegroom, supplicating Him for her needs and engaging in constant prayers.

D- She should not lead a life of pleasure or leisure: **“But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.”** That is the condition of the soul that loses her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ: living as a widow but seeking temporary pleasures to satisfy her empty heart. In this context, **St. John Chrysostom** comments: [A person who lives for pleasure is dead though he lives. He lives to satisfy his belly without fulfilling his other (holy) sentiments. He does not look for what he ought to see, or listen to what he ought to listen, or speak what he ought to say, or even accomplish the work of the living... he is dead!¹]

“And these things command, that they may be blameless” (v. 7). **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this apostolic saying as follows: [The matter is not left up to them. Command - is the word used - that they do not live for pleasure... for this is an inappropriate matter for widows. Women who live for pleasure should not take part in the divine sacraments... Therefore, let us command widows who live for pleasure not to enroll in the list of widows in obedience to the Apostle. It is like the soldier who is not qualified for his job as he indulges in going to swimming clubs and theaters².]

The Apostle goes on to say: **“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever”** (v. 8). St. Paul, the

¹ In 1 Tim., hom 13.

² Ibid.

apostle, seizes this specific certain situation concerning the care for widows to declare the commitment of believers to look after not only their mothers and grandmothers, but after every member of the holy Church who is in need. Naturally, his own family has priority. A true Christian is characterized with limitless love and care for others. How much more can this be truly evident towards his own and those in his household? The following quotation is taken from the Book of Isaiah: “...and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this as follows: [The caring that the apostle is speaking about is inclusive and embraces the needs of both the body and the soul¹.] He also says: [A person who does not look after his family transgresses against God’s Law and the laws of nature... Faith does not consist of a mere confession of a belief but rather involves a fulfillment or application of the acts consistent with the faith².]

St. John Chrysostom noticed that some believers look after the spiritual and bodily needs of others while ignoring their own families’ needs. This shows that their motive to serve others does not stem out of love or kindness of heart but out of the love of appearances. If their service sprang from the depth of a loving heart, they would not have ignored the service of their immediate families, which is a service that no one else can see, or praise, or be thankful for.

St. Augustine considers the desolate widow as the symbol of the widowed human soul in that it is like someone who has no man to support. Like her, the soul has placed its hope in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day (v. 5, 6). He expresses his idea as follows: [Every soul that realizes that it has no source of support other than God is a widowed soul.. but what has caused this

¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

² *Ibid*

widowhood? It is the recognition of that very state in which it finds itself: without a husband whom she boasts of as her defender. That is why widows seem to be abandoned; yet they have a tremendous Support. The Church, as a whole, is like one single widow that has been abandoned in this world! She is made up of men, women, married and single persons and yet she is one entity. If she feels her desolation and understands the reason for her widowhood, then the Church will find her support ever present and within her reach¹.]

After speaking about caring for widows, the Apostle talks about their rank and says: “***Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saint’s feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work***” (v. 9, 10).

Roger Gryson, in his book ‘The Ministry of Women in the Early Church’², states more than once that the Fathers of Alexandria placed widows in the same lists for bishops, clergy, and deacons. For example, **St. Clement of Alexandria** stated that vast numbers of commands such as these are recorded in the Holy Bible to chosen individuals: some are priests, while others are bishops, as well as deacons and widows³. This does not mean that widows are part of the priesthood, but that they represent a part of the Church ‘s makeup. They have a role specific to them, especially in offering prayers. Many of the Fathers have devoted articles about the topic of ‘widowhood.’

¹ In Ps. 132.

² *The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, 1976, p. 25.

³ *Paed.* 3, 12, 97, 1; *Cf. Origen: Prayer*, 4: 28; *his sermons about St. Luke 17*; and *his commentary on Mathew 4*: 22.

The Apostle has defined the above conditions necessary to enroll widows in the ranks of the Church (v. 9, 10). **St. John Chrysostom** comments as follows: [How strange! How particular he is in defining who can be qualified as a widow. It is almost similar to the traits required in a bishop¹.]

The following are the characteristics defining a widow:

A- She must not be less than sixty years old. The apostle focuses on a widow's age to ensure that she is not a source of temptation as she visits the homes of the poor and the sick to offer services. She may also have to accompany a bishop or priest in his visits to certain homes to minister to women or youth, or to baptize girls. Widows are a great support in the ministry to women. In his speech to a young widow, **St. John Chrysostom** comments on the above apostolic verses and says: [When the apostle laid down the rules for the ordination of bishops, he did not mention age. However, here, he defines age, why is that? It is not because he is giving greater importance to widowhood, but because widows play many dangerous roles that are varied – some are public and others are private. Moreover, a young widow is like a city that is not guarded and therefore is exposed to theft and plundering. Many around her watch her; they are those who wish to lay hands on her money as well as those who wish to corrupt her chastity².]

B- She should have been *“the wife of one man,”* and should not have been previously married. Thus she shares here one of the characteristics required in the clergy and in deacons. It is as though the Church cannot comfortably entrust her work to ministers or servants who are not members or even to those who have been married more than once.

¹ In 1 Tim., hom 14.

² A Letter of Comfort, p, 11, 12 (In Arabic).

C- She should be “*well reported for good works,*” in other words, people can testify that she is blameless. This is a similar trait required in bishops and the clergy too. In this context, **St. Ambrose** says: [A widow’s great aim is not only to preserve the purity of her body only, but also to practice virtue on a sublime and abundant scale¹.] He also says: [It is not without reason that they must be above reproach, for these women who have devoted themselves to virtuous works receive tremendous honor even from bishops. Thus her age as well as her virtues as a widow entitle her to be honored².]

D- She should have well “*brought up children,*” that shows that she has succeeded in the task entrusted to her. Consequently, she can be entrusted with strangers, and to look after those who are poor and the sick among them.

E- She should have “*lodged strangers*”: **St. John Chrysostom** comments on this requirement as follows: [Note that the apostle is not speaking about simply greeting them sweetly, but intends to stress the importance of receiving them willingly and actively and as though she were receiving the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Widows need to ensure such service by offering it themselves rather than delegate their servants to serve strangers. The Lord Jesus Christ says: “*If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet*” (John 13:14)... If you receive strangers as you receive Christ, then you should not be embarrassed when you are honored. However, if you do not receive the Lord with that kind of fervent reception, then you are not really receiving Him at all³.]

¹ *Concerning Widows 2.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *In 1 Tim., hom 14.*

F- A widow should have “*washed the saint’s feet*”: **St. John Chrysostom** asks: [Who are these saints? They are all those who are suffering and this does not include all the saints. There are saints who have many who look after them; therefore they do not need to be served since they are being provided for. Therefore, a widow should look after those who are in need; those who are not known or who are known to very few. The Lord Jesus Christ says: “*inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*” (Matt. 25:40)¹.]

Origen rejects the literal interpretation for ‘*the washing of the saint’s feet*.’ He says that the washing of feet is the task of servants and slaves, and that the apostle does not intend his words to be taken literally for he is speaking about the purification of the soul through the use of appropriate language². He also says: [These widows deserve to be honored by the Church for they wash the saint’s feet through their spiritual teachings. By saints, I am not referring to men but to women, for I do not allow a woman to teach or to have authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:12) The apostle wants women to teach godliness in the sense that they teach the young girls - and not the young boys - chastity. Therefore they have the task of training young adolescent girls to be chaste and loving to their men and children.]

Through this passage, we realize that widows in the second century, and in the Church of Alexandria, played a role in teaching adolescent girls, and to the exclusion of boys. They trained them in the chaste path and a loving marital life, as well as in the principles of Christian family behavior.

G- To sum up, the apostle requires a widow to have “*followed every good work.*” According to

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Comm. On John 32: 12.*

St. John Chrysostom, a widow should perform all good works and if she is unable to do so, we should help her. He adds: [That is why the apostle is very particular about widows and sets requirements that are higher than those set for virgins. He requires them to be more observant and more virtuous¹.]

Finally, St. Paul the apostle warns against the recruitment of young widows, as he says: ***“But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith”***(v. 11, 12). The apostle fears the temptation young widows might present if they turn their backs on the Lord. In other words, he worries that after accepting the state of widowhood as a condition in which they are spiritually married to the Lord Jesus Christ, they would wish to get married. This would mean that they have broken their promise to dedicate all their effort and time in prayer and service to the Lord. They are not condemned because they got married after they had been widowed, but because their thoughts deviated after pledging their consecration to serve the Lord. It would have been better if they had married before enrolling in the lists of widows consecrated to serve in the vineyard and then withdrawing from their holy life.

Upon abandoning the bride of their souls, such young widows enter into a stage of idleness which the apostle describes in these words: ***“And besides they learn to be idle, wandering from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some have already turned aside after***

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 14.

Satan”(v. 13-15). **St. John Chrysostom** comments on these verses and says: [Idleness is the teacher of all sins.] God does not belittle the marriage of widows or their having children, but He condemns their spiritual idleness and inner emptiness: this is what displeases Him. Marriage is not forbidden. On the contrary, it is considered a stronghold for young widows since it does not leave a chance Satan to conquer them.

The apostle reveals the honor due to widows as he conceives them as brides of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is echoed by **St. John Chrysostom** who says: [By these words, the apostle helps us to understand that those who have lost their husbands are brides of the Lord who takes the place of their men... do you see what great honor is granted to widows! This happened in the New Testament when the light of virginity shone brightly. Yet in spite of the brilliance of this class (of virgins and chaste persons), it does not outshine the glories of widowhood; a condition in which a widow gives out light to all and still preserves her own value¹.]

The apostle concludes his teachings about widows by underlining the obligation of families towards their widows. St. Paul says, ***“If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the Church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows”*** (v. 16). From this verse, we understand that the Church is committed to provide and organize the material matters in order to help those who are in need and have no one to support them. However, when widows have families – children or grandchildren – who have the means, then the Church entrusts them to support their own needy ones... organization does not contradict to spirituality, and **St. Augustine**

¹ *Letter of Comfort, p. 14.*

explains: [It is as though the Lord is a money box (John 13:26-31), in which the offerings of believers are kept, and He uses these for His needs and for those who are needy. This helps us to understand His command to us not to worry about tomorrow (Matt. 6:34), not in the sense that He wanted his saints to be penniless, but that they should not serve God with such a goal in mind¹.]

3- DUTIES TOWARDS THE CLERGY

“Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine, For the scripture says: ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain’ and ‘the laborer is worthy of his wages’” (v. 17, 18).

The apostle is not using the word honor in the sense of glorifying the ministers, but he intends to convey the obligation of the Church to provide their material needs in order to enable them to be completely devoted to preach and teach the holy Word. **St. John Chrysostom** finds that the apostle, in these verses, is not encouraging the clergy to get money but rather urging them to consecrate themselves to their work, and not to have any worry about the necessities of daily living. He says: [A person who lives lazily and frivolously does not deserve honor. If he does not become like an ox that strives endlessly and carries the yoke in spite of the heat and thorns, he would not have a harvest to carry to the storage².]

The clergy provide for the spiritual needs and salvation of believers. In doing so, they are not deprived of receiving a double share of temporary matters. By enriching them, they are enabled to give

¹ In Joan. tract., .62: 5.

² In 1 Tim. hom., 15.

to the needy out of their abundance. Hence the intention of providing abundantly to the clergy is not intended to enable him to live a life of leisure or aristocracy. Clearly, a minister who is a provider cannot be distrusted with a double reward because it will not draw him to earthly matters. This is similar to the multitude of blessings God granted to Abraham. They led him to increase in his loyalty and thanksgiving to God while rising above temporal matters. This is the belief of the Church and of believers. As for the minister, he should be cautious not to be tempted by his twofold share. He needs to beware lest the love of the world swallow him up as he ministers, and lest the love, generosity and honor people give him distract him from his struggle and ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ.

4- METHOD OF REPROACH

“Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses” (v. 19).

This is not a new teaching for the Mosaic Law states that a person must not be condemned without a testimony from two or three persons. It seems that the apostle’s teaching is intended to confirm the old command while focusing specifically on the elders. The Greek word for ‘elderly’ means ‘the elderly clergy.’ However, **St. John Chrysostom** finds that the apostle does not refer to the position, but rather to those who are old in years, for it is inappropriate to hasten and believe accusation against older people for committing any sin. Probably, this teaching focuses on the old people who get so hurt by accusations that, even though their innocence might be proved, they remain psychologically harmed for a long time. This is in contrast to the ability of youth to recover much more rapidly.

St. Paul goes on to say, ***“Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear”*** (v. 20). He could be speaking about the elderly clergy and therefore warns against rapid judgment. But if they are proved guilty, and if the matter is serious and threatens the faith of believers,

then they should be reproached publicly to protect the safety of the faith of the Church.

Because of the extreme sensitivity and costly danger of this matter, he asks St. Timothy, by the help of God the Father, His Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ, and the saintly angels, not to deal with these matters if he is obeying any personal bias or tendency to favor any one. St. Paul says: ***“I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality”*** (v. 21).

The worst thing that could happen in a Church is to have judgments and condemnations carried out with personal motivations and hidden under the cover of truth. Such a situation would divide and tear the Church down and the grace of God would be removed. History provides us with some examples even though they are few - these reveal how some Ecumenical courts abroad have been held, with hidden motives and contrary to their appearance, and have brought great bitterness to us!

5- CAUTION AGAINST HASTY ORDINATION

“Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure” (v. 22). St. Paul has now ended his teachings about the great caution and conditions to be observed before indicting an elder and investigating the underlying secret motives before making any accusations. He now speaks about the ordination of clergymen, at all levels, by the laying of hands (Acts 6: 6). This should not be done hastily lest he be a partner in their sinfulness, and consequently be accountable for them before God. It is therefore fitting to give a person some time rather than ordain him as a priest hastily and then condemn him for his mistakes.

St. Paul addresses St. Timothy as a bishop, yet the teachings are directed to all those who take

part in choosing men for the priesthood. **St. Jerome** reproaches us in these words: [In these days there are many, who build churches. They have walls and pillars made of expensive marble, ceilings that glitter with gold, and altars ornamented with jewels. However, when it comes to the designation of the Lord's servants, they are negligent and have no concern¹.]

The apostle associates the careful consideration before the laying of hands with the preservation of a pure life. It as though by taking part in ordaining priests who are wholly pure, a priest is also counted as sharing in their purity. Conversely, if the ordained commits any evil, then he who has ordained him is condemned and is considered impure in the sight of God.

6- ADVICE CONCERNING ST. TIMOTHY'S HEALTH

“No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities” (v. 23). The apostle reveals himself as a tender father towards his disciple. He instructs him not to drink water only, but to use some wine as a cure for his stomach and other illness. Besides being kind hearted, he is also free of the deadly literal interpretation of the word. When he finds a person stumbling because of a prohibition to eat the sacrificial meat offered to idols, then he agrees to deprive himself of that meat. He explains: *“it is good neither to eat meat, nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak”* (Rom. 14:21). When he finds a bishop abstaining completely from wine in spite of his need to use small amounts for health reasons, then the apostle urges him to drink.

Tertullian states that St. Timothy had abstained from drink not in conformity with the Law but

¹ *Pastoral Love*, p. 232.

in obedience to his own dedication. Drinks, in themselves, are not prohibited by the Law, yet it is inappropriate, especially to those who have sanctified themselves to serve the Lord. **St. Clement of Alexandria** explains that St. Timothy used drinks as a strengthening medication for his failing health. However, there is the cautionary word, ‘*a little*,’ to warn the sick against abusing it¹.

St. John Chrysostom asks: Why did the apostle not heal St. Timothy’s stomach rather than permit him to drink? And the answer: [So that when we find the great and the virtuous suffering hardships, we would not object. We should conceive such trials as beneficial. A messenger from Satan visited even St. Paul to try him, so that he would not boast beyond measure (2 Cor. 12:11). Hence it becomes understandable that St. Timothy was suffering from weakness. The miracles he had done could have led him to be boastful; therefore he was left to give in to the need for medication - and not heal miraculously - in order to humble him. Moreover, it would help others not to stumble as it teaches them that those who perform great acts are persons who share with them the same fragile nature².] In the same way, St. Timothy was left to moan under his pain, and to force himself to take a little drink, in order to recognize his personal weakness.

7- EVIDENT AND HIDDEN SINS

“Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden” (v. 24, 25). Here, the apostle is speaking about the ordination of clergymen, and explains that while some sins and good deeds are evident, some are also hidden. Therefore, he wishes to confirm

¹ *Paedagogus*, 2: 2.

² *In 1 Tim. hom.*, 16.

to Timothy the necessity of not ordaining anyone whose sins are evident. The Church should examine all those nominated for the priesthood. It is not sufficient to find them without evident sins, but their good deeds should recommend them. It is true that some could have deceptive appearances, and their real deeds could be hidden, hence leading us to make wrong choices... we consequently need God's intervention in the ordination of priests; He Himself is the sole examiner of the heart and inner being. How great is our need for prayer and holiness; we need to call on God to choose shepherds who have a heart like His own!

Chapter 6

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Having spoken about organization within the Church, clarifying the relationship between the pastor and the different classes of the community such as the elders, the adolescents and the elderly people; the responsibility of the Church towards widows, and the ordination of priests, etc. St. Paul goes on to give us a live picture of the social relationships, especially those between slaves and their masters in the Lord.

- 1- Advice for slaves: v. 1-2.
- 2- Stressing the practical side: v. 3-5.
- 3- Instructions to the rich, v. 6-19.
- 4- Final advice, v. 20-22.

1- ADVICE FOR SLAVES

The Apostle presents to his disciple as well as to wealthy persons the main guidelines to be applied when directing slaves. The ultimate goal is to carry out a practical and fruitful ministry that is far removed from false condemnations and void battles with words. ***“Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed”*** (v. 1)

St. Paul, in his writings, was interested in the slaves who had accepted the Christian faith. He gave them instructions that had to be observed just as he gave their masters instructions to be applied in

their dealings with their slaves. Although the apostle did not launch an open rebellion against the slavery system, yet he destroyed it through love and faith. He elevated the spirit of the slave, and gave him a message and role model through his own life – a life of holiness evident in his dealings even towards his severe master.

The Apostle talks to the slaves who are burdened and ‘*under the yoke.*’ He seems to be telling them he is sympathetic and understands their pains and burdens. He realizes that they ‘*are under a yoke.*’ He reaches out by using the immediate realities to serve as examples, rather than vague theoretical abstractions. It is true that he cannot relieve them from their yoke, yet he can put before them the possibility of a new life in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He alone Who can elevate their hearts above the yoke - whether it is a psychological or financial one. A slave must not look at himself under the yoke of slavery and feel humiliated and embittered. As long as he carries ‘Jesus Christ’ within him, he can elevate his heart, soul, and feelings above the ‘*yoke.*’ Hence, the slave can proclaim the evangelic truth to his cruel master. He is able to do so through his way of holy living and affectionate Christian behavior, rather than indulge in controversial arguments and violence. Consequently, the master will be attracted by such loving and practical ways. In this way, the slave can be obedient to his cruel master, not out of fear or inability, but out of his faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. History has given us many examples of slaves who were able to attract their masters to the faith through their godly behavior. Indeed, some of these masters became rebellious against their own bad system.

Through this spiritual perspective, the Apostle elevates man above all circumstances surrounding him. A person can achieve his ends even if he is the slave of a cruel master. **St. Ambrose** says: [Although Joseph came from a family of great Patriarchs; he was not embarrassed by his humbled

slavery. On the contrary, he adorned it by his regular good ministry, and made it glorious through his virtues. He knew how to be humble while he was turned into a commodity in the hands of the seller and buyer; and called both ‘my master.’ Contemplate his humbleness as he says: “*Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (Gen. 39: 8, 9). His words are full of humbleness and purity. He is humble as he is obedient to his master and admits, in a generous spirit, his gratitude. He is pure as he considers it a terrible sin to defile himself by such a great crime¹.]

Christ has elevated the spirit of slaves by accepting ‘slavery’ Himself; as a slave, He came to wash the feet with His own hands, and to clean the hearts with His pure Blood! Thus, He attracted mankind to Him by His ministry and not by revealing His divine glory, as He is God’s Son and the living Word. Therefore St. Paul, the apostle, is not ashamed to say that he enslaves himself to many in order to elevate them from a state of slavery to sin into a state of freedom as children of God! In the same way, by loving others, we should not be ashamed of enslaving ourselves and serving them gladly in Christ Jesus. We should love, obey, and submit to them in the Lord; so that we can captivate their violence and cruelty, and lead them to know the freedom that divine love brings.

The above instructions are intended to guide slaves in their relationships with their unbelieving masters, or employees with their violent employers. But how should they behave towards other gentle believers? St. Paul says: “***And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because***

¹ *Duties of the Clergy 2: 17*

they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things” (v. 2).

Just as the believing slave is to submit obediently to the unbelieving master in order to glorify God, and to spread the Gospel in order to prevent anyone from blasphemy; similarly, he should be committed to submit to the believing master for the sake of love and brotherhood. Faith truly brings everyone into a relationship of sincere brotherhood, for “*there is neither slave nor free...for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. 3: 28, Col 3: 11). Yet, such brotherhood does not mean that we rob our brothers of their right of honor, or disregard their duties towards us. Our faith in Christ Jesus grants us equality in truth and spirit before God and the Church. However, this does not exempt us from our temporal commitments, whether these are related to our work or our relatives, such as the submission of a son to his father, or the loyalty of a worker to his employer. Brotherhood does not mean negligence or indifference to the rights of believers. On the contrary, it urges the employee to perform his duties towards believers in all due seriousness. St. Paul says, “***because those who are benefited are believers and beloved***” (v. 2). **St. John Chrysostom** says: [It is as if the apostle is saying, ‘if you consider the brotherhood of your masters to be a great benefit, then, based on this principle, you must all the more submit to them¹.]

If it is appropriate for slaves to obey and love their masters, then how much more is it befitting that we love and submit to the Master of all mankind. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [May we be ashamed and fearful, my dear brethren. May we serve our Master in the same way in which our slaves serve us².]

¹ *In 1 Tim. hom., 16.*

² *In 1 Tim. hom., 16.*

He also says about slaves: [The fear of their masters is before their eyes, while the fear of our Master is not before us at all¹.]

2-EMPHASIS ON PRACTICAL ASPECTS

“Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself” (v. 2-5).

The Apostle commands his disciple to teach and preach. By teaching, he means presenting the upright faith and Christian belief, and by preaching he means transferring the belief into a practical way of life and applied behaviors. It is as if the apostle is advising him to combine belief and behavior, faith and practice! **St. John Chrysostom** sees that this combination of teaching and preaching signifies the combination of authority as a teacher and of tenderness as a preacher. He explains this in the following words: [The teacher needs to have not just authority, or just kindness: he needs both kindness and authority combined².]

The Apostle says: *“Teach and exhort these things.”* What does he mean by *‘these’*? He is referring to all that he instructed previously being inspired by the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. If any

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 16.

² In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

one deviates from that Spirit to speak out of his own thought and according to human wisdom rather than according to the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13) then such a person is assuming and conceited, and understands nothing. Pride turns faith into controversies and stupid quarrels about words that corrupt men's spiritual life and tear away the spirit of godliness. It drives the whole Church into a path of envy, disputes, evil suspicions. This leads to corrupt arguments marked by slyness, trickery, and deception, and have nothing to do with the truth. Consequently, godliness gives way to commerce since those creating such disputes are working in their own interest rather than serving the Lord and the edification of the Church, that is why the apostle says, "from such withdraw yourself."

St. John Chrysostom comments on the previous verses by saying: [Conceit does not stem from knowledge but from ignorance. He who knows the teachings of godliness tends to become increasingly humble. He who knows the upright words cannot be ungodly.] He also says: [He who knows things that are not necessary lacks knowledge, and pride arises from ignorance¹.]

St. Cyprian speaks about the danger of conceited heretics who cause division in the Church and corrupt the faith. He says: [The Apostle says: "*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them*" (Eph. 5:6, 7). There is no reason or justification for being deceived with their false words and or for joining them in their corruption. Escape from such people. To all those who desire the Church to withdraw through the mercy of God, and to all who pray for complete peace: (the Church) - the mother and children - (the believers), I beg and pray you to pour prayers daily before the Lord. May your

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

prayers and supplications be joined with ours, and may your tears mingle with our wailing. Beware of wolves that separate the herd from the Shepherd. Avoid the poisonous tongue of Satan, for it has been a deceiver and a liar since the beginning of the world. He lies in order to deceive, and flatters in order to harm. He promises good things in order to plant evil, he promises life in order to offer death... He promises peace to prevent it from being achieved, and salvation in order to impede the sinner from attaining it. He promises to promote the Church even while he exerts every effort to drive who believe him to complete destruction outside the Church¹.]

3- INSTRUCTIONS TO THE WEALTHY

“But godliness with contentment is great gain” (v. 6). Those who engage in corrupt arguments and accusations have fallen in love with earthly matters. They divert godliness into a trade as they exploit spirituality for their own gain. Actually, they are losers for *“godliness with contentment is great gain.”* The more a person abandons the love of the world and turns his back to it, the more the Lord will fill him spiritually, psychologically, and financially too. The more a person renounces what is in the world the more the Lord enriches him as He knows that worldly matters will not affect him. Our father Abraham is a good example; as much as he renounced, he was granted. Conversely, as much as Lot coveted, he came out empty - handed and lost even his wife. That is why **St. Isaac, the Syrian**, explains that a person, who seeks honor, loses it, and he who renounces it, finds it pursuing and clinging to him.

In a spirit of godliness, the true believer perceives the following truth: ***“For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these***

¹ Epistles, 39: 6.

we shall be content” (v. 7-8). The believer’s recognition that he enters the world with nothing and leaves it with nothing makes him satisfied with the least possible. Hence, he lives not for pleasure but just for mere survival. He only desires what suffices to feed and cover his body, so that he may live by the power of the spirit until it is time to leave this world. As for those who desire the riches of this world, they live in a state of inward poverty. The world cannot give them satisfaction or fulfillment. The Apostle explains:

“But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (v. 9-10).

St. John Chrysostom comments on these words as follows: [The apostle says: ‘*Those who desire to be rich,*’ and not ‘*Those who are rich,*’ but rather those desiring wealth. There is a person who has money and uses it wisely and without over estimating its importance. Thus, he gives to the poor, for example. Such a person cannot be blamed: it is only the greedy that is to be blamed¹.] **St. Clement of Alexandria**² wrote about this issue as he found it necessary to solve this problem. In the title, he asks: ‘*Is there Salvation for the Rich?*’ The main theme is the affirmation that wealth is not an evil in itself: the evil lies in the lust for wealth. Besides, without money, it is possible to assist the poor, the sick, the stranger, etc. Hence the problem is not wealth but the enslavement to it. This drives people to enter into trials, traps, and numerous lusts that are all foolish and harmful; finally leading to destruction. This lust

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

² Who is the Rich Man that is saved? (*Quis dives salvetur ?*)

weighs down on a person and destroys his inner depths, to the extent that he is disabled to rise above the waters of this world. As for the soul that has set itself free from the lust for riches and its desires, it can elevate itself and tread above the waves of the world, and thus be raised above all earthly matters. The soul that has liberated itself from the love of the world lives in true freedom that no one can steal away.

“For the love of money is the root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (v. 10). This explains why the apostle found that money is the source of all evil. Once this lust captivates the heart, it diverts it from the upright faith. Moreover, it wounds the inner being and causes much pain. Riches may cause a person to deny his God, or disobey His commands, and consequently turn to stealing, or murder, or causing divisions, etc.

St. John Chrysostom comments on these apostolic words by sayings: [Take away the love of money and wars, hostility, conflicts and strife will come to an end. Therefore it is necessary to throw out those who lust for riches from the world, for they resemble wolves and plagues. Just as strong stormy winds invade a calm sea and disturb it to its depths causing the sands settled in its depths to mingle with the high waves, so do those who lust for money as they disturb everything and cause confusion. A greedy person is no one's friend. And why do I say 'friend,' while he does not know God Himself... He is like a fire that catches in wood and damages everything around it... That is how that plague (lust for money) destroys the world. Many are exposed and may catch that plague: kings, honorable and great men, the poor, women, men and children. Although we hear sermons on greediness in public and private places, yet none has become any better, so what should we do? How can we quench that flame? Even if it has grown and has reached the sky, we must put it out. We must have the will, and then we will be

able to control the great fire! Just as we have enflamed it by our will, so by our will we have to put it out... Therefore, let us have the will... but how can we generate that will? By realizing the futility and uselessness of money. By knowing that it is not going to come with us out when we depart from this world. Indeed, it will leave us even while we are still in the world. It falls behind, and abandons us in pain, with wounds that accompany us to the time of departure. If we compare a rich person who is in heaven to a rich one living in this world, the later appears to be worse than a moth. This is because he is surrounded by endless dangers. In spite of his temporary pleasures, he is constantly sad. By contemplating eternal life, we will come to despise the riches of the world. Truly, we have to remember that wealth cannot achieve anything that is worthwhile, whether it is glory or health, or anything else. On the contrary, it drowns people and drives them to ruin and destruction¹.]

The Apostle links between the love of money and the deviation from faith by saying: “*some have strayed from the faith in their greediness.*” **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Greed attracts their eyes, and steals their minds, disabling them to watch their ways. This is like a man who walks in a straight path that is probably unknown to him; he passes through the city of his destination but wanders randomly with tired feet. He is really walking aimlessly. This is the effect of greed².]

St. Cyprian talks about the bonds of lust for wealth, and says: [How can those weighed down by the chains of their wealth follow Christ? Or how can those burdened with earthly lusts seek to attain the heavens or climb up the sublime and majestic heights? They believe that they are owners whereas they

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

² In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

are really owned; they are slaves to their profits and not masters of what they own!¹.]

Some may wonder: “Why is the love of money considered to be the root of all evil, as long as I do not seek the money of others but ask for what is due to me? **Tertullian** answers: [The Spirit of God declares through the apostle that ‘*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.*’ We must not understand that to mean simply the lust for money that is not ours, but also the love of what we think to be ours. For this is too belongs to others, since there is nothing that is our own. We really possess nothing for all is God’s; indeed He possesses our own souls².]

We end our talk about ‘the love of wealth’ by quoting **St. Clement of Alexandria**: [The best wealth is to lack any lust.] Let us pray for the true and better type of wealth where the heart is void of desires, and is indeed in a state of poverty due to that. This can be achieved if the heart is in a state of real satisfaction as it rests in the Lord Jesus, the Source of true wealth. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, “*that you were enriched in everything by Him*” (1 Cor. 1:5).

The Apostle presents to us the positive aspects of avoiding the lust for temporal wealth through praying for wealth that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, and even more to be rich in Him. He says, “***But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness***” (v. 11).

As the apostle wishes to set us free from the lust of temporal wealth, he reminds us of our real status by saying, “***O man of God.***” A man of God prays to be rich in matters that belong to God, and not

¹ *Treat. On the Lapsed*, 12.

² *On Patience*, 7.

for what is temporary and finite. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [What a great honorable epithet! We are all considered as men of God. However, it is the righteous man who is specially ‘the man of God.’ If you are a man of God, do not ask for unnecessary things that do not lead you to Him. “*Flee these things and pursue righteousness.*” Do not be greedy but pursue ‘*godliness*’ through the observance of good teachings. Also pursue faith as it opposes foolish controversies, and practice love, patience and gentleness¹.]

In that way, the apostle tackles greed from every angle, with its positive and negative aspects. Having underlined that greed is the root of all evils and the cause of deviation from faith and good morals; he emphasizes the status of the believer as a man of God whose soul rises above temporal matters, and seeks to attain the eternal Fatherly bosom. As long as his sight and heart is set on earthly lowly matters, man cannot escape greed. However, if he realizes his status, his heart will be lifted up to the place where his treasure is: in God’s bosom. Actually, running away from greed and lust for temporal matters is not a loss or a waste. On the contrary, it is a transition into a state of fulfillment and satisfaction as the Lord. Jesus Christ Himself is the true ‘Righteousness’ and ‘divine Love’ etc. In Him, the soul experiences the life of godliness and enjoys inward wealth that comes with contentment. All feelings of need just vanish... thus instead of love for temporal matters, we enjoy the new life in Christ Jesus through His Holy Spirit, and enter into the bosom of the Father.

This is the rich and glorified life that elevates us above temporal things. It requires the believer to struggle constantly and adhere to the eternal promises. We have to proclaim our belief and witness

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

before everyone. The apostle says: ***“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses”*** (v. 12). Thus, the apostle moves from talking about the love of wealth or the greed that captivates those who love wealth to what is more deep and that is the engagement in a struggle and its sufferings. For the believer effort does not end at not desiring temporal things, but he has to accept pain in order to receive the heavenly rewards that have been promised to him. He puts before him the ultimate reward of eternal life to which he has been called. This enables him to fight the good fight of faith, and to confess the upright belief in a practical manner and in the presence of many witnesses. In this way, we will resemble athletes taking part in sports competitions; they deprive themselves from many physical pleasures to prepare and train their bodies for the games, setting their eyes on the ultimate reward.

This commandment, with its focus on the good struggle of the faithful and their testimony before witnesses, is not directed to the congregation only. The shepherd himself should also observe it, and as St. Paul says: ***“I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing”*** (v. 13, 14).

Since this is a serious matter, the apostle charges Timothy to observe this command without blame until he meets with the Lord. He calls on the Father and His Only-Begotten Son Jesus Christ to underline that They are ever present and watch over him.

He instructs Timothy not only against greed, but also to endure suffering. He entreats him before God the Father, Who grants life and resurrection from death. **St. John Chrysostom** says: [Here he is giving him consolation in the face of all the sufferings that await him, reminding him of the power of the

resurrection that is active within him¹.]

The Apostle also calls on the Lord Jesus Christ to be his Witness as He himself served as an example for giving the good testimony, and which He did before Pontius Pilate. **St. John Chrysostom** explains: [The command stems from the example of the Master, therefore, you must do what He did. That is why I pray Christ to be a Witness: so that we may follow in his steps (1 Pet. 2:21). The Apostle speaks to his disciple Timothy about “*the good confession.*” The same subject is discussed in his Letter to the Hebrews, where he says: “*looking unto Jesus the Author and the Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls*” (Heb. 12: 2-3). It is as if the Apostle is saying ‘Do not fear death since you are the servant of God the giver of life.’ But what is the ‘*good confession*’ to which the apostle is referring? It is what Christ said when asked by Pilate: “*Are you a king then?*” *Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice*” (John 18:37). The Apostle is probably pointing to this testimony by Jesus Christ. Or he might be referring to the Lord’s answer when Pilate asked Him: “*Are You then the Son of God?*” *And He said to them: “You rightly say that I am*” (Luke 22:70). This is in addition to many testimonies and confessions made by Christ².]

Christ’s strong testimony before Pilate urges the believer - priest or layman - to keep the

¹ In 1 Tim. hom., 18.

² In 1 Tim. hom., 17.

command, applying it as an instructional and behavioral tool. A believer is to testify to the Truth in the proclamation of the faith and the work of the Spirit. The testimony that a believer gives in this life is revealed at Christ's coming. The Apostle explains: "***which He will manifest in His own time, He who is blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords***" (v. 15). At the appropriate time, the Lord of glory will announce it. The Blessed One to whom we offer praise and glory, as He is the Giver of all blessings. He is the **Potentate**, i.e., the Possessor of all honor, power, and authority, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Almighty and no one is mightier than Him. If He allows us to suffer in this life, that is not due to weakness; but due to His will, and as a means to bring us into His glory.

"Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to Whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen" (v. 16)

Once more, the apostle presents to us the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as an example of '*the good confession.*' He bore suffering not out of weakness or inability since He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the only One that death or darkness cannot overcome. Indeed, He is beyond our understanding, and no one has really seen Him, or could ever see Him, that God offers the '*good confession*' before the weak Pilate. How then does a believer fear to give the '*good confession*'? Christ witnessed to the Truth so as to encourage us to witness to the Truth through our union with Him. Thus, we offer Him eternal honor and might when we carry on his '*good confession,*' and His features appear in us.

The Apostle, in describing Jesus Christ as the only Immortal One, and that He lives in an inaccessible light etc., wishes to reveal to us the One we enjoy when we give our good testimony with Him and in Him and for His sake. If, by giving testimony, we accept suffering unto death, then we do so

in order to enjoy the One Who alone is immortal, and to enter into Him where there is the inaccessible light. **St. Clement of Alexandria** says: [What would man need after he attains the inaccessible light?!¹]

As St. Paul did not want his teachings to be interpreted as an attack against the wealthy or wealth, he gives instructions to believers who are wealthy. He says: “*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*” (v. 17-19).

We can summarize the previous commands in the following points:

A- Avoid Arrogance: The apostle commands the rich of this world not to be arrogant. He distinguishes between those who are rich in this life and those who are rich in the world to come. He does not worry concerning the latter as they are rich in Christ who grants humility. However, he worries about the rich of this world who can become arrogant since wealth draws them to be self-assured. Such is the first evil that strikes the rich as they depend on their wealth and believe that they can do everything through money, thus falling into the evil of arrogance.

St. Mary enjoyed the richness of the coming world in great humility, as her Christ became her real Treasure. He lived within her physically and spiritually, or as **St. Augustine** explains: the humble Lord, Jesus Christ, will not teach His mother pride. Therefore, let us carry our Christ in us as St. Mary did in order that He may grant us true richness without arrogance.

¹ *Stromata*

B- He warns the rich against depending on their wealth, underlining the need to place all hope in God, and not in money.

C- True richness is the enjoyment of immortal matters. Therefore, if people want to be the rich, they should do deeds of love. These will be the deposit and the source of their eternal wealth.

D- Generosity: wealth is a gift or talent granted to the wealthy by God. It is not to be stored but to be invested by constant giving. Thus the treasure will be transferred from the earth to the heavens. We have previously quoted many of the sayings of the early fathers about the subject of 'giving'¹.

4- A FINAL ADVICE

“O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and vain babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it; some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen” (v. 20-22).

The Apostle ends his conversation with his disciple by asking him to guard what has been entrusted to his care: the living faith given once to the saints. This is what we call the 'tradition' or the 'apostolic inheritance.'

The sign of our commitment to guard that trust is our restraint from false and foul conversation, such as useless controversies concealed under the name of 'knowledge' or 'gnosticism.' In these, the living faith is distorted into expressions or linguistic terms that lack life or experience. This is what leads a man to lose his life. The apostle may have intended to point to the Gnostics as we have previously

¹ *Brotherly Love: Almsgiving (In Arabic).*

indicated - who have substituted faith by knowledge, and have thus fallen victims of false knowledge.

St. John Chrysostom says: [The apostle has rightly spoken about it as what is falsely called knowledge. For where there is no faith, there is no (true) knowledge¹.]

¹ *In 1 Tim. hom., 17.*

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.