

“Disseminating Definitive Doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:6-11)

1. Engaging (6-7)

- a. Instructing (6a) “these things” refers to Jesus as the foundation for truth and the agent of salvation (3:16), and the true doctrines taught in Scripture as a whole. Note that “these things” also refer to the just mentioned apostasy. John MacArthur wrote: “The failure to think biblically and theologically has cost the church dearly. It has allowed the infiltration of all sorts of error. That, in turn, has led to the church’s becoming confused and weak. Convictionless preaching, consisting of watered down teaching, platitudes, and weak theology has replaced doctrinally strong expositional preaching. The resulting legacy has been one of charismatic confusion, psychological encroachment, mysticism, even psychic and occult influence. Much of that chaos can be attributed directly to the failure of pastors to think critically and preach with conviction. So many pastors have failed to draw the line clearly between truth and error and build their people up in the rich and sound doctrine of God’s Word. Such weak preachers are often said to compensate by having what some call a “pastor’s heart.” A pastor’s heart, however, is not measured by how good a man is at petting sheep, but by how well he protects them from wolves and feeds them so they grow to be mature and strong.”¹ If pastors fail to warn of the wolves in wool, they will be held responsible (Ezek. 33:17-21).
- b. Affirming (6b) “good minister” or “beautiful/excellent servant” I love the fact that Alistair Begg and John MacArthur point out how much of the church has redefined what marks the excellent (or even qualified) pastor. MacArthur wrote: “Pastors are often evaluated on the basis of the wrong criteria. Their effectiveness is frequently gauged by the size of their church, their building program, their popularity, their educational background, the number of books they have written, or their radio or TV exposure. ¶While such things may have some significance, none of them are biblically valid criteria for assessing a man of God. The Puritan genius John Owen wrote, “A minister may fill his pews, his communion roll, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before God Almighty, that he is and no more” (cited in I. D. E. Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977], 192).”²
- c. Learning (6c-d) “nourished” implies both feeding self and others “in the good doctrine.”
- d. Rejecting (7)
 - i. Part of proclaiming truth – the Gospel – is warning of the many counterfeits. This letter and others are filled with warnings which could hinder one’s faith or completely derail it! Acts 20: 29-31
 - ii. “Reject” is not to put up with such. This echoes Paul’s introductory instruction to command that such perverse, speculative, and sensational teachings be forbidden (1:3-4).
 - iii. Conspiracies, politics, legends, and the sensational trends are not to occupy our time nor the pulpit.
 - iv. Such is rather fit for “old wives” i.e. for silly old women. Star, National Inquirer, Globe, etc. There has been a popular sensational topic of interest re: mixed race of humans and fallen angels. But this stuff is not edifying nor advances the Gospel.
 - v. The remedy for such is the “these things” mentioned above and Phil. 4:8 cf. 2 Tim. 2:16.

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1995). *1 Timothy* (pp. 159–160). Moody Press.

² Ibid. 157–158.

vi. The remedy is also prescribed in the subsequent lines i.e. exercising in spiritual discipline.

2. Exercising (8-9)

- a. Preparation (8a) The term *gymnazo* (from which we get gymnasium) is translated as exercise or discipline. This training is employed in godliness like the physical training for a gymnast yields agility, strength, endurance, etc.
- b. Profit (8a-b) The profit of such discipline is godliness. MacArthur explains: “*Eusebeia* (**godliness**) expresses the reality of reverence, piety, and true spiritual virtue. It was a word much used by the philosophers of Paul’s day. The Platonists defined it as “right conduct in regard to the gods.” The Stoic definition was “knowledge of how God should be worshipped.” Lucian said it described one who was “a lover of the gods,” while Xenophon said it characterized someone who was “wise concerning the gods” (cf. Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 172–73). Thus even to the pagans [godliness] meant a concern for deity and a reverence for things holy. ¶ That concept carried over into the Christian faith. **Godliness** is a right attitude and response toward the true Creator God; a preoccupation from the heart with holy and sacred realities. It is respect for what is due to God, and is thus the highest of all virtues. In 1 Timothy 6:3 it is said to be at the heart of truth. Second Peter 1:3 says that it comes from Christ, while 1 Timothy 6:11 balances that by teaching that believers must pursue it. According to Acts 3:12 it brings power, while 2 Timothy 3:12 indicates it brings trouble. First Timothy 6:5–6 says that it brings eternal (though not necessarily temporal) blessings. **Godliness** is the heart and soul of Christian character, and the aim of Christian living (cf. 1 Tim. 2:2; 2 Peter 3:11). ¶ Spiritual self-discipline is the key to godly living. In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 Paul wrote, ~~Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.~~³
- c. Promise (8c) of benefits for now in our gymnasium and for the life to come, in reward/capacity for such.
- d. Proverb (9) the proverbial “faithful saying” is v. 8 and it is true. The flesh is but a vapor and the spirit is immortal.

3. Enduring (10-11)

- a. Destination (10a) Godliness is the destination (Ro. 8:29). And though it is He who has begun and will finish His work in us (Phil. 1:6), we must “labor” to work out our salvation (Phil. 2:12-13).
- b. Repudiation (10b) and as we ‘labor’ against the grain of the world we “suffer reproach” because we are the convicting salt that stings and light that exposes the world’s dark deeds and desires. 1 Jn. 2:15-17 cf. Ro. 12:2; Jn. 15:18-19; Lu. 6:26; Jam. 4:4!
- c. Motivation (10c) 1 Jn. 4:19 we love Him because He first loved us. We trust the “living God” who had quickened our spirits/hearts and called us to holiness. Idols are not living and cannot make alive anyone.
- d. Salvation (10d)

³ Ibid. 164–165.

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- i. What this cannot mean is Universalism: “The Bible clearly teaches that those who reject God will be sentenced to hell (Revelation 20:11–15). Matthew 25:41 and 46 state that the duration of that punishment will be eternal. Second Thessalonians 1:8–9 says that those who do not know God and refuse to obey the gospel will suffer eternal punishment away from God’s presence. Jesus repeatedly spoke of the danger of hell (Matt. 8:12; 13:41–42, 49–50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). He solemnly warned those who rejected Him that they would die in their sins (John 8:24)”⁴
- ii. What this most likely means: Our great God is the Savior of the world, and the world in one sense enjoys that salvation which stays the wrath of God upon the earth. We are under the “common grace” of God, but such is no automatic salvation for the age to come. Ironically, the world condemns Christians, whose presence preserves the world via the Spirit’s residence with us. They enjoy a level of God’s salvation while we endure their hatred. OT illustration: God ‘saved,’ or ‘delivered’ Israel the whole nation from Egypt’s bondage, but not all of Israel was “saved” in the spiritual sense (Ro. 9:6, 8; cf. 2:28-29). God judged most of them and struck them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5). In fact vv. 1-13 warn the Corinthians of such a presumption as Israel displayed.⁵ N. T. Wright (I think) sums it up well: “note that the word ‘saviour’ was in regular use in Paul’s world as a title of honour for Caesar, the Roman emperor. In using it for God, as here, or for Jesus, as in 2 Timothy 1:10, Paul is making a claim that this God, and this Jesus, are the true ‘saviour’ in the sense that through them the whole world will be rescued from decay and injustice. There is a sense in which the entire world, and all people in it, are better off as a result of the saving work of God through Jesus. But, since humans retain the right and dignity to refuse God’s ultimate offer, it is only believers who appropriate this salvation fully.”⁶
- e. Arbitration (11) Nevertheless, we endure with authority of His Word and Spirit. Preachers are to “command” obedience to the Word of our Salvation (Acts 17:30). Richard Baxter, the godly seventeenth-century English Puritan, summed up an application for this admonishment to pastors when he wrote, “The ministerial work must be carried on diligently and laboriously, as being of such unspeakable consequence to ourselves and others. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect the creation, to attain the ends of Christ’s death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil, and demolish his kingdom, to set up the kingdom of Christ, and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind, or a lazy hand? O see, then, that this work be done with all your might! Study hard, for the well is deep, and our brains are shallow.” (*The Reformed Pastor* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979], 112).

Further Study:

Different uses of the term “savior”

The word **Savior** is not always in Scripture limited to salvation from sin. In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, *sotēr* (**Savior**) is sometimes used in the lesser sense of “deliverer” (cf.

⁴ Ibid. 167.

⁵re: the general use of the term “salvation,” Isa. 63:8 states that God “became their [Israel’s] Savior.”

⁶ Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for Everyone: the Pastoral Letters: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (p. 48). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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Judg. 3:9; 6:14; 2 Sam. 3:18; 2 Kings 13:5; Neh. 9:27; Obad. 21). Words in the same word group occasionally have that sense in the New Testament as well (cf. Luke 1:71; Acts 7:25; 27:34; Phil. 1:19; Heb. 11:7). A related word, *sōzō* (“to save”) is used in the Gospels to refer to physical healing (Matt. 9:21–22; Mark 5:23; Luke 8:36, 50; John 11:12; cf. Acts 4:9). God **is the Savior of all men** in that He withholds the death and judgment all sinners should receive because of sin (cf. Ezek. 18:4, 32; Rom. 6:23).⁷

PC:

As always, the Word applies to us. Therefore, we can take Paul’s instruction to Timothy and cling to it for obedience, boldness, and unspeakable profit. Westernized Christianity has been greatly weakened by spoiled ‘ministers’ who in turn misrepresent the Gospel and revert to “affirming” an anemic Church in her complacency. Even in the Church’s formative years, Paul had to employ much corrective instruction as such internal corruption was inevitable (Acts 20:29-31). How much more ought we to heed such instruction? The Church has been influenced by the hedonistic culture to such a degree that, in some cases, churches are indistinguishable from the world in attitude, priorities, motives, and values! The answer for correction is always in the Word and Paul’s instruction to Timothy must be reemployed here and now. We are to boldly reject the spiritual perversions and warn the sheep of the wolves in wool as they teach such. We are to be sanctified by the Word and exercise the spiritual disciplines which produce true godliness. And as we remain faithful to the Word of Promise, we experience a “great Salvation” which is enjoyed both now and forevermore! Not to mention that it’s the only way to be obedient in our commission to advance His Kingdom.

⁷ Ibid. MacArthur. 168.