

## Sixteenth Summary of the New Testament Titus 1st Timothy and 2nd Timothy

### Pastoral Epistles:

St. Paul was approaching the end of his ministry and the end of his life. He faced imprisonment and eventually martyrdom, so he wanted to bless the Christian Church with specific instructions about how to carry out the holy ministry. The so-called "pastoral epistles" (Aquinas seemed to have introduced the term) are works written to two individuals, namely Timothy and Titus who ought to be construed as evangelists or missionaries. They would take Paul's instruction and help restore or establish for the first time congregations with bishops, elders, overseers, and deacons (all terms related to the pastoral ministry, while deacons or deaconesses are distinct from pastors, a term practically synonymous to bishop, elder and overseer). Thus, the term "pastoral" is certainly appropriate, especially when you consider the fact that it is only 1st Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 that we have the qualifications for pastors. Middendorf rightly warns against two extremes: 1) We are not to take these qualifications to mean that we're looking for Supermen or Jedi or "a few good men" (like the Marines); that is, we don't want to set the bar so high that people think pastoral candidates are just short of touching of heaven; 2) Nor are we to ignore these qualifications and rationalize that these standards hold no bearing on candidacy. Speaking to the first problem, just think of St. Paul. Once upon a time, he was an accessory to murder, persecuting the Christian Church, and then God made him become an apostle! Speaking to the second tendency, St. Paul himself gives this warning: "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1st Timothy 3:6) Even St. Paul (after his conversion) was driven into the desert (Arabia) evidently for a considerable period of time. The next verse mentions that he did not meet Peter until three years later.

There has been much ink spilled to elaborate on these qualifications for the pastoral ministry, especially today in application to the question of whether women may be pastors. Let me give a short and simple reason as to why the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod (the church body of Concordia University Irvine) practices as we do: The Word of God refers to men in this office. That is our reason. And while many go to "headship" as put forth in 1st Corinthians 11:3, I don't even want to get that complicated. We simply do as the Scriptures say, because the Scriptures are considered authoritative. God is wise in giving us offices and in other contexts roles that have nothing to do with status or comparative worth. That's all. Just as men and women have roles in marriage; men and women have offices and roles in the Church. Only someone not aware of the Scriptural witness would say that the role of husband is "superior" to the role of wife. If someone tries to reduce the question of gender and the pastoral ministry to ideas of "rights," and/or "ability," and/or "status," and/or "the times" then they depart God's Word. At the same time, we do not DENY what the Word of God DOES say! Luke 2:36 mentions Anna a prophetess and Acts 21:9 says that the evangelist Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied. In addition to Luke's references, St. Paul mentions Phoebe, a "deaconess." (Romans 16:1) Once again, the offices and roles are distinct and all of them are "indispensable" in the body of Christ. (1st Corinthians 12:22) Personally, I have two favorite aspects when it comes to the pastoral epistles. I would like to share them with you. These epistles have a list of "sure/trustworthy sayings." Here they are:

1. 1st Timothy 1:15: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners -- of whom I am the worst."
2. 1st Timothy 3:1: "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task."
3. 1st Timothy 4:9-10: "This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe."
4. Titus 3:8: "This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

Here is a short summary of what I've just listed:

1. Accept that Jesus came to save sinners!
2. Desire the office of the ministry, the noble task!  
[Here if one was not actually seeking to go into full-time church ministry, then such a Christian may still actively support and make use of it!]
3. Put your hope in the Living God!
4. Devote yourself to doing what is good!

How's that for a summary of the Christian life?!

The other aspect is based on 2nd Timothy 4:2-4: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

Personally, this Scripture is a great source of comfort to me. God is real and He does not set us up for disappointment. He does not call us to be "successful" according to the world's standards when it comes to the ministry of the Church. He calls us to be faithful. He also warns us that there will be large gatherings of people who do not gather to hear the truth, but to hear what they WANT to hear. The ministry is not easy, but we can always know when we're being faithful: it is not a matter of "survey says," but a matter of handling the truth and to do so is not only to honor God, but it is the best thing for people who desperately need to know the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's end our course lectures with the message of the Gospel from Titus 3:4-7: "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

Amen! In Christ, Dr. Espinosa