

EXPOSITORY
SERMONS
AND
MEDITATIONS
in the Scriptures

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MEDITATIONS IN 1 TIMOTHY

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MEDITATIONS on the 1st Letter to TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 3: 1-13 (Part 3)

For Sunday, 1st March 2026

CONTINUING in the teaching of Peter concerning the quality and character of an overseer in the church, we come to four points of character. The overseer or presbyter should be temperate, self-controlled, respectable and hospitable. These are self explanatory and so need no special explanation. However they are truly essential in a minister of Christ and need to be noted and dwelt upon again and again to keep these evidences of a sanctified character in the front of the thinking and living of a minister of Christ.

The next quality essential to a minister of the Gospel spoken of by Peter in 'able to teach'. This is perhaps the most essential and important quality for a minister in the church. There are many other qualities necessary for a good minister, but this surely must be the first and most important.

When we read in the Acts concerning of the choosing of deacons, we read that it was to release the apostles from other needs in the church, so that they could concentrate on the importance of preaching and teaching.

The Gospel and Word of God in the Scriptures contain the food for the soul, and essential for the spiritual health and growth of every true believer. Just as the body requires the nutriments of food for bodily strength and health; so the soul and the new nature needs the food of the word of God for the strength and health of the soul. If there is not good teaching and preaching, and if there is not true teaching and preaching according to the inspired and

infallible Scriptures, then believers will not grow, and be weak to withstand all the assaults of the devil.

A minister of Christ must be well taught in the truths of the Gospel, and the teaching of God in His holy Word, but also must be able to teach. Being able to teach does not simply mean that the teaching is correct and true, but it must be teaching that is successful in causing people to understand it, receive it, and apply it. Cooking food for the feeding of the body does most good if it is truly nourishing and balanced, but also served up in an appetising form. The same is true of preaching and teaching the truths of God. A bad cooked meal for the body is often rejected and turned away from. In the same way a sermon may be true to the Scriptures, but unintelligible and unattractive when preached, and so people are left without the spiritual nourishment they need. This is no use at all. Similarly if a sermon is not prepared and delivered well it will be useless to feed the soul. Being apt to teach is of first importance in a minister of the Gospel.

The next qualities needed by the effective minister of the Gospel given by Peter here are 'not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money'. These also may be classed as self explanatory, but lumped together make up the importance of a holy and unworldly life.

Drunkenness, violence, like losing ones temper and acting in response to such weakness, and being of a quarrelling disposition, is of the world and worldly; and combined with this is the worldly spirit of being a lover of money. Money and much of it is thought by the world as the means of happiness, success and being important in life. This pursuit of monetary wealth is seen in the proliferation of all sorts of gambling in modern society. Such gaining of wealth is utterly condemned in the Bible and as a denial of God, but also evil and damaging of society in different ways. It is bowing down to the idol of chance, which is a denial of God who gives to all in his creation order. It most often makes the poorer, poorer. It may be commended as a means of raising money for good causes, but God's way is to give from the heart.

Instead of these worldly lusts, Peter tells us that the minister of Christ should be gentle. This surely may be summed up as treating others in a Christ-like way, and in the way we also long to be treated. How beautiful such a quality appears when it is present in a person, and in a minister speaks to people in the flavour of the love of Christ.

The next important quality for a minister of Christ which Peter highlights is that of a leader, with qualities of administration and leadership, which brings about truly good and godliness in people. This is a ministerial quality of such importance, that we need to leave for the next meditation of Peter's teaching on the qualities of godliness required in the approved minister of Christ.

MEDITATIONS on the 1st Letter to TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 3: 1-13 (Part 4)

For Sunday, 8th March 2026

THE next two verses of 1 Timothy 3 is where Paul speaks of the need for an overseer or presbyter in the church should know how to manage and care for his family in a loving and godly way. And argues in verse in verse 5 that if a minister of Christ shows that he is unable to truly care and manage his family, how can he be expected to manage and care for the family of the church to which he is a minister.

The two words which stand out in these two verses – verses 4 & 5 – are manage and care. Manage speaks of the way a man relates to his family, so that in every respect the well-being of the family, every member, are cared for, and also that the image of the family, both in the church and in society, glorifies God.

The idea of care is the quality of love which is concerned with the happiness and well-being of every member, and that love seeks to bring to each member of the family, the feeling of being loved and cared for.

Together with this general managing and caring, the family of the minister comes the caring of the soul and the spiritual needs of every members. It is important with regard to this that he husband must be careful to teach, by word and example, the good news of the Gospel, and the quality of life which adorns the doctrine of Christ.

This is easier to say than to do. It has been proved by experience that the regime of godliness imposed on children has proved so counter productive, that it turns children away from Christ and the gospel. This issue in managing and caring for ones family is perhaps the hardest to get right. Much prayer and genuine love is required, and even then the result may be less than desired.

We have an example in the Old Testament in the case of Eli, the senior priest at that time. We can read about it in 1 Samuel chapters 2 and three. He had two sons, Hophni and Phinhas. They were both priest's, but their way of life was patently wicked. Eli was judged by God for not caring for them and disciplining them, and both sons came to sad end. I could say more on this managing and caring for ones family, but this, I think, is enough to highlight this issue. Peter surely highlights the importance of the overseer or minister should be able to manage and care for his family in love and godliness, because if he is unable to do this, how can he manage and care for the family of God in the church.

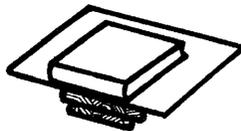
Then there is the words of Peter which speak of the minister seeing 'that his children obey him with proper respect'. Here is a quality which is prone to the dreadful action of Satan. Satan is always looking for ways he can disturb Christian families, and ruin the relationship of a pastor with his people. We all have the adverse image of a Victorian father, which has long been deplored in modern times.

In this respect the devil has much leverage to employ. Human pride and sense of importance is one. Then there is selfishness which is quality in life which we all need to watch. In seeking that children should be taught to obey must never be executed in pride, selfishness and importance. Such action in a father and a minister must always have the prime quality of insuring, in a loving and concerned way, the saving of the soul, the showing forth the love of Christ, and the godliness of living. This is the importance of living for Christ in this world, and so caring for family, and the family of the church, that every member is brought to love God, and love Christ, and be filled with joy of salvation and believing.

In the end the husband and father in the family, and the minister and pastor in the church, need to seek that God should be glorified, and Christ honoured and loved, and family members and church members, may live in faith and godliness, and the peace of God which passes all understanding.

The point that Peter is making is that if a minister of Christ fails to manage and care for his family in all respects, how can he possibly make good the greater responsibility with regard to managing and caring for the family of God.

This teaching of Peter boils down in the first place to the godliness of the father and the minister. The love of Christ should shine through everything that is done. The quality of humility should be evidently seen. The father and minister who believes he is above criticism and learning must inevitably be unable to teach and care for the flock of Christ. It will also mean that the image of life and character seen by others will not promote any true usefulness for God.



MEDITATIONS on the 1st Letter to TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 3: 1-13 (Part 5)

For Sunday, 15th March 2026

Paul speaks of two orders of ministry in the early church. We have already observed that the office of a deacon arose out of the business of the apostles in the beginning of the life of the church, and the need to release the apostles from administrative duties so that they could give themselves to teaching and preaching. We have also observed that in the case of two deacons, Stephen and Philip, they soon became teachers and evangelists. Because of this progression, Paul speaks here of deacons being another order of ministry under the senior ministry of overseers.

As we view the development of ministry in the church over the years since the early days of the apostles, and the progression of ministry after the apostles had passed away, we are able to observe how different things have become in the various forms of church government which have developed. Without going into all these, Paul gives us here in 1 Timothy the pattern of simple ministry which is the Scripture model, and this should be the model which the church should be reformed to. In the Church of England and the Anglican community throughout the world, there has grown up three orders of Ministry, of Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons. Bishops have become the supervisors of a group of congregations, called a diocese. Presbyters the minister of a congregation in an area called a parish. And Deacons the first order of minister for newly ordained in order to be trained before they become Presbyters. The order of priest is the result of the corruption of the ministry which has resulted in the Catholic world, but in reformed circles it has been recognised that this is a corruption of the ministry under the influence of Satan, and that in the New Testament there is only one priest, the everlasting priesthood of Jesus, making all other priests unnecessary and redundant, as Jesus according the order of Melchizedeck, has performed completely all the office of priesthood

completely and forever. This teaching is made clear in Hebrews 4: 14 – 10: 30.

Leaving this rather brief and limited historical survey, we return to the office of a deacon in the days of Paul, and his teaching here concerning them. The first remark is simply that the teaching of Paul concerning a deacon is similar to his teaching concerning overseers or bishops. It is obvious that the word for Bishop in the Greek of the New Testament 'episkopon' as used by Paul in 1 Timothy 1: 1 is recognised in the context as simply describing a presbyter or minister as we know it today.

It is plain also that the order of a Deacon is not one of sole responsibility for a congregation, but of an assistant minister under a presbyter.

In verses 8 to 10 Paul defines five essential qualities necessary in one seeking the ministry of a Deacon. In the first place Paul highlights the quality of character and life. He says a Deacon must so live and work that he is man worthy of respect. In other words one seeking the office of a Deacon must be of good character in all aspects of life and living. If he is not he will bring dishonour not only on himself but also on the church and upon Christ and the Gospel.

Then Paul requires that a Deacon be sincere. It is easily possible for a person to put on an outward appearance that seems to be worthy of respect, but inwardly has a disposition quite contrary to that which is reality of respect. In other words his religion and faith must be truly expressing new birth and new life.

The third quality for a deacon required by the Apostle Paul is soberness. He must not be addicted to wine, and must not allow himself to the drinking of too much alcoholic drink so that he loses control. Nor must alcoholic drink be necessary to cope with the difficulties of life. Paul does not say here that drinking alcoholic wine is wrong.

Then Paul tells us that a Deacon must not be a lover of money, and because of such love may easily use unlawful and dishonest means in

order to gain wealth. Paul speaks of dishonest gain. Honest employment to gain a living is not condemned.

The next quality necessary for a Deacon spoken of in verse 9 is the importance of being faithful in proclaiming the whole counsel of God in the doctrines and teaching of the Bible. He must hold the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. A bad conscience results from holding back on any Bible truth, or not be ignorant of any truth, nor allow personal thinking to deny any truth. It is easy to hold back from teaching some truth because of fear of the opinions of others. The Deacon must be wholly faithful to all the word of God.

Paul then says that these qualities must be tested as present in one who seeks to be a Deacon, in order that such a person is truly qualified to teach and to truly glorify God in such a ministry. We still have verses 11-12 to study, which will be dealt with in the next meditation.

MEDITATIONS on the 1st Letter to TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 3: 1-13 (Part 6)

For Sunday, 22nd March 2026

IN our study of the teaching of Paul to Timothy concerning the ministry in the church of Christ, we come to verse 11. The meaning of this verse resolves around the Greek word 'gunaikos' and 'gunaikas'. It is used in verse 2 concerning Paul's teaching concerning Bishops or Overseers. In verse 11 it is used concerning women in the context of what is required concerning the ministry of Deacons; and then again in verse 12 concerning the wife of a Deacon. These words have their root in the Greek word 'gune'. This root word has the meaning of woman, whether married or single. It seems to me that the translation in the RSV as well as AV in these verses as 'wife' or 'wives' is more governed by cultural conditioning than true fairness and correctness.

Translated literally in verse 2, the phrase concerned would be 'the husband of but one woman'. In the context to translate 'gunaikos' as wife is entirely justified. However the literal translation of the word in verse 11 is '*it behoves women similarly to be grave, not slanderers ...*'. Here it seems to me that it is quite unjustified to translate the Greek word as wives. The context is concerning the ministry of deacons, and so the word must refer to ministry, and should be 'deaconesses'. The way this Greek word is translated as wives is simply governed by the understanding given in other parts of the New Testament by Paul. Here it is used in connection with ministry in the church, where it is made clear it is concerning suitability for ministry.

The tradition that has grown up over the years that women have no place in the ministry of the church, and that it is only right for men, has been the reason for this rather imperfect translation in verse 11. After all in Romans 16 Paul speaks of women as 'fellow workers'. It seems to me that Paul makes clear in verse 11 that it was accepted in the developing church that women had a ministry similar to deacons within the church.

Like deacons, deaconesses have to have appropriate qualifications. So like Deacons the Deaconess must also be worthy of respect in the same way as Deacons.

Paul then says that the Deaconess should not be malicious talkers. That is they must not be gossipers. Paul obviously observed that women, perhaps, are more prone to this than men. It is so important in the ministry that all confidences must be sacrosanct. Nor is right to join in conversation which concerning the lives of others and talking about their failings or peculiarities, nor should conversation be engaged in that disparages the character of another.

The next qualities for a Deaconess given here by Paul is similar or the same as for a Deacon, as being temperate (not given to drunkenness), and trustworthy. This surely indicates that Paul is speaking about women in ministry, and qualifications for ministry.

Verses 12 and 13 concerning qualifications for ministry also substantiates the meaning of the word 'gunaikos' given in this meditation. Paul speaks in the same way as he speaks for Overseer that the Deacon should be the husband of but one woman, i.e. wife.

Paul also speaks in the same way concerning the Deacon's family that the Deacon should be able to manage his family and household in a sanctified and godly manner. The same applies to the Deacon as the Overseer, that if he is unable to manage and care for his family, how can he be qualified to manage and care for God's people in the church.

In the last verse concerning Paul's teaching concerning the ministry in the church Paul is drawing his teaching to a reasonable conclusion. This is the content of verse 13. Paul draws all together under the context of 'serving well'. Such a phrase gathers together all that Paul has said about the qualifications for ministry in the church into one whole. Serving well speaks of a minister as being seen and approved as truly and rightly serving Christ in the care of the people of God to whom the ministry is directed. The ministry can be viewed rightly as 'service'. Service to God and service to God's people. The minister is a servant. He or she has no right to lord it over those served, but rather to so preach, teach, love, care for, his or her people that they may be strengthened in the faith and love of God, and show lives that adorn the doctrine of the Gospel.

In this respect the minister gains an excellent standing in the church, and also is blessed with great assurance in their faith in God and Jesus Christ. This will mean strength and assurance and comfort for the minister, but also give assurance to the people he or she ministers to, that in believing the teaching they are safe in the sight of God, and assured of their acceptance unto eternal life.



MEDITATIONS on the 1st Letter to TIMOTHY

1 Timothy 3: 14-15

For Sunday, 29th March 2026

AS we draw to a close our study of this 3rd chapter of 1 Timothy we come to consider and marvel at the wonderful care of God for his emerging church.

In these two verses Paul is telling Timothy that he hopes to come to visit him soon, no doubt to extend his teaching to Timothy and make him a more worthy and true pastor, but that he now writes this letter to Timothy in case he is delayed in coming. We are told also that the purpose of visiting Timothy again was to teach him how people should conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Paul makes clear here that the church is the depository of the truth and message of God for salvation. While the apostles were alive, this depository of the truth of God was safe in the hands of the apostles who were under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be taught in a supernatural manner to know the full depository of the truth. The Gospel was passed on in that apostolic time verbally by word of mouth by the teaching of the apostles, and thus was safe from the devices of Satan to place error in the church. Satan was doing this viciously even while the apostles were alive, and it is a fact that all the letters of the apostles were the result of the error Satan was continual injecting into to life of the church.

We have in these two verses the wonderful care of God for the church. Paul was planning to visit Timothy. God seems to hinder this coming in ministry so that Paul would be inspired to write the substance of God's message concerning the church, so that it would be preserved. Also God by the power of the Holy Spirit plainly made sure that these writings would be preserved for all time. Also as there were many writings proliferating in the

early church, the Holy Spirit made sure only to truly inspired should be collected to form the New Testament.

What would we who have been saved and raised to new life in Christ do in the present, so that we would be preserved from the massive evil action of Satan to lead the church away from the truth, and infiltrate massively into the church for its spiritual corruption and death. This is so terribly plain in the apostasy of the Roman Catholic church, who over the years has been proved to be overcome by Satan by setting its authority above the Bible, and where they dominate seek to prevent the Bible being read by their members.

But this terrible corruption is seen to have infiltrated massively in all the denomination of Christendom. If there had not been these inspired writings, the true church would be bereft of the truth and not be able to be safe from the works of the devil to destroy the church. This is why Satan has worked so hard to overthrow the Bible as containing the depository of God's truth. God has preserved the Bible so that faithful believers, the elect of God before the foundation of the world, have the truth in the Bible as it is interpreted by the Holy Spirit for the hungry and seeking soul.

God, by his Spirit, has given these sacred and apostolic writing, by which the error of Satan in the church can be made clearly known. And has given his Spirit that those truly seeking God's truth may be able to interpret it correctly for the saving of the soul and the health of the soul.

If Paul had not been hindered from visiting Timothy, Paul, perhaps, would not have written this letter, which is a source of truth and comfort and assurance for his people today who are troubled by so much falsehood in the teaching of the church, which has caused God to withdraw himself so greatly from so much of the life of the church.

In these verses Paul gives his reason for writing this letter to Timothy. He says he writes to give instructions so he would know how people in the church ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the

church of the living God. He goes on to declare that the church is, or should be the pillar and foundation of the truth.

The church can only be the foundation and pillar of the church if it remains absolutely faithful to the Scriptures. In the end of the book of Revelation we read these words (Revelation 22: 18ff) – 'I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which is described in the book'. These words specially apply to the book of Revelation, but it also describes the same for the whole of the Bible. How tragic is the way the visible church has disobeyed this warning, and by it have and are destroying souls everlastingly.

GOD'S WORD FROM HOSEA

Number 29

THE RELEVANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT PROVED

“(v.2)Israel cries out to me, 'O our God, we acknowledge you!' (v.3)But Israel has rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him. (v.4)They set up kings without my consent; they choose princes without my approval. With silver and gold they make idols for themselves to their own destruction.”

Hosea 8: 2-4

WE now proceed to verses 2-4 of this 8th chapter of Hosea, and surely there can be no clearer demonstration of the relevance of the Old Testament for the church today, because any honest understanding of what the prophet is saying concerning Israel, is mirrored in the visible church now and throughout history. God is speaking through his prophet to Israel, and as we seek to understand the fact he opens up in the action of Israel, it is as plain, as it ever can be, that it describes clearly the same attitude and action that is in the church today, so let us look carefully at the prophets words concerning Israel, and if we do it will be clear that this action is something repeated again and again in the visible church worldwide, and certainly in the present time in the visible church.

Verse 2 is the cry to the Lord which Israel was making in response to the prophet's complaint from God. The words of the verse speak of Israel claiming that they were faithful to God in their conduct and worship of Jehovah, the one true God. In these words the people, specially in their leaders, were claiming that in their worship and living they were being faithful to the worship and practice handed down to them from Moses. In other words they were claiming to be faithful to God. They claimed to acknowledge God.

As we consider this claim of Israel, it reveals an attitude which really believed that this claim was true, and outwardly in many ways this was true. There is no suggestion that Israel had denied all the religion handed down to them from the time of Moses. Also much of their practice of worship still contained much of the faith made clear by Moses, and contained in the temple worship. The difference was in what was added to this worship, and what they expressed by this worship in action and speaking.

Israel were still worshipping, but the worship was expressed before idols. In the time of Jereboam¹, who led Israel in separation from Judah and Benjamin, the worship was offered before two golden images of calves. Since that time the images of God changed, but still the claim was that they were still faithful to worship before Jehovah. Together the claim of verse 2 is that Israel was living as God wanted them to live.

This worship is mirrored directly in the Catholic expression of worship, where images of one kind and another are claimed as aids to worship. From that comes the addition of worship of saints and Mary.

In the visible church as a whole, expressed in a multiple different ways, there is the claim that worship is truly given to God, because certain common truths of Christianity are retained, even though in a multiple different ways, the worship of God through Christ taught in the Bible, is either denied or altered to fit the perceptions of modern thought and reason. The claim is gone as far as declaring that it does not matter what we believe as long as we claim that we are Christians.

Israel claimed that they acknowledged God, even though their worship was to idols, simply because they retained elements true to the faithful worship of Jehovah, so today the visible church claims to be truly worshipping God, even though much of the objective truth made clear in the Bible is rejected or changed. Indeed any suggestion that such worship is deficient, or perverted, is claimed to be insulting, and judgemental, and those who express such criticism as lacking in love.

The next verse, verse 3, challenges this attitude, and begins to speak of the consequence that will result from this way of thinking. The words of verse 3 are as follows - 'But Israel as rejected what is good; an enemy will pursue him'.

This is a declaration by God through the prophet of His assessment of the claim of Israel that they still acknowledged God. God speaks directly and positively in a way which is hated in the thinking of much of the visible church. It is felt as awful and totally wrong to question or criticise another who claims to be a Christian, specially if they are nice and good and kind. In this way the Old Testament, and this word from God, is rubbished, and it is declared that it is right for human reason to decide what is true. It is asserted that human reason is well able to decide what is true in the Bible and what is not. Yet Hosea, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares otherwise

The cry of Israel in verse 2 can be nothing less than Israel feeling that blessing from God had been removed, and by their claim to be still truly worshipping God they were questioning why blessing they had known in the past seemed to have been withdrawn. They felt that God was dealing with them in an unreasonable way. Verse 3 is God's answer to this complaint.

Verse 3 is an expression of truth which is not only expressed in the Old Testament, but is also clear in the New Testament, not only in the teaching of the Apostles, but also in the teaching of Jesus himself.

God makes a clear and direct declaration that wherever there is a departure from his revealed word and truth, this is a direct rejection of what is good. The meaning of good here encompasses all the truth of God both moral and spiritual. It is good to obey and follow all that God has declared in the revelation of the Bible, and any way there is a deviation from this good is a rejection of what is good, and in the eyes of God, evil.

Because the Israelites had set their attitude and thought and way of life above the revealed truth of God, in the words of

verse 3, God is offended and is not pleased, and reacts accordingly.

The reaction of God is revealed in the next sentence which tells us that because of the way Israel had turned away from God's truth clearly revealed to them, an enemy would pursue them.

God had promised to bless Israel. In the days of Moses and Joshua God's protection and blessing was clearly evident in the way God brought them through to desert of Sinai safely, and then gave them victory over the inhabitants of the promised land, and provided for them and protected them. Again and again God intervened to save Israel and provide for them. In a particular way God defended them from the powers all around them, and kept them safe and protected from attack. Verse 3 surely indicates that because Israel had rejected good, the truth of God, this protection and preservation from God had been withdrawn, and they were now vulnerable to the power of their enemies, and were suffering on account of it. The history of both Israel and Judah is littered with this fact. It was only as Israel repented and turned back to the Lord, did the blessing of God return.

The relevance of the Old Testament is seen in the fact that the same syndrome is clear in the modern visible church. It is plain to see that the blessing of God has been withdrawn in the visible church, where there is, and has been, a setting up of human reason and desire over the truth of God in the Bible. I speak from the condition of the Church of England in the 21st Century; but there is every indication that the same lack of blessing from God is evident in the visible church in other countries. The only exception to this syndrome in the UK is where churches are faithful to the revealed word of God in the Bible.

As we think of the history of Israel in their history in the two book of Kings and Chronicles, another issue is present, which again is mirrored in the church today. Israel turned to the worship of the heathen all around them because they saw in their practice and living, a license to embrace a way of life which their fallen nature approved. The same may be said of the attitude in the declension of religion in the visible church today. It is seen in the religion that has departed from the whole teaching of the Bible, a way of Christianity that allows a way living and believing that is more approved by human desire and way of living. This decline is often described as 'worldliness', because it allows into the church, and into the lives of Christians, various practices in society which have been felt to lead to decline in spiritual life, and holiness.

Verse 4 goes more deeply in the expression of how this worldliness and rejecting what is good was expressed in Israel. Under Moses and Joshua, and also under the reign of David, the life of Israel was not only governed by the teaching handed down from God to Moses, but when questions arose concerning how Israel should be governed and ruled, Israel ceased to apply to God and his direction, but acted according to human wish and opinion, and not of God. This is specially described in the words that Israel set up kings and princes, without consulting God, and without seeking the approval of God.

This was also particularly evident in the practice of worship. The accusation from God was that Israel, with their silver and gold, made idols, even though God had directly forbidden this in the first three commands of the ten given directly to Moses by God.

The mention of silver and gold speaks of Israel relying entirely on their own resources, without applying to God, and claiming that with their own resources they were quite able to order their own way of life, and preserving, without hindrance.

What is shown so clearly in the life of the visible church today is that this accusation of God against Israel, is just as relevant in the thinking and practices in the church today.

When problems arise in the church, and indeed in individual churches and congregation, which need attention and resolution, these are approached in a worldly fashion. Human wisdom applies worldly values and actions to the problem. There is usually no enquiry as to the reason that caused the problem. Prayer is rarely engaged in to discover why the problem has occurred; nor is there any thought that the problem has arisen through the action of God's displeasure, and in consequence the withdrawal of his provision and blessing. The leaders of the church seemed to act in a similar way as the board of a company dealing with a problem arising in the business.

In wider issues in the church, of which the problem of disunity in the church is an example, has been the wide concern of the visible church for over a century. There seems to be little enquiry in a genuine way as to the reason for the problem. Again human wisdom is applied. The Bible is neglected in this enquiry, or it is applied in a way that is far from the truth the Bible expresses. Verses are used out of their context, and are used to make statements which is according to human wisdom.

When this approach is questioned such questioning is shouted down, and the ones asking the questions are ignored and despised, and treated as those opposing what is thought to be absolutely right. Again this is a description in the present of the attitude of Israel in verse 4 in modern guise. God's word is despised and rejected. When the proposals made by human wisdom and reason fail, it is always declared to be the fault of the ones who question such thinking and action. Human

wisdom is so proud that there is no thought that God is saying anything in the opposition and the criticism.

So we are able to see that as Israel behaved in the days of Hosea according to their own wish and wisdom, is indeed reflected in the thinking in the present time.

Having sought to understand the mind of God and the Holy Spirit in these words given to Hosea, their remains the enquiry as to why such action of Israel should have occurred. In doing this and understanding this, we may be able to have light given of the present decline in Christianity in the present.

The Bible tells us that there are two answers to this dilemma. The first is action of Satan, called the god of this world in the New Testament. The second is the truth about human nature, as fallen, sinful and corrupted since Adam sinned and God executed his promise to Adam that disobedience would bring death.

The devil and the evil principalities powers in the spiritual realm under his authority, are the problem. Just as Satan worked to bring devastation of the creation of God in the Garden of Eden, these powers, under Satan's control and authority, have been working ever since, and are still working, to bring the perfection of God into chaos. One of the supreme victories of Satan is to cause the world to deny his presence and his reality. In the visible church the idea that Satan exists, is laughed at. Satan has so puffed up sinful human wisdom, he has succeeded in making society scorn and deny his reality. So he works in society unhindered by human thought and conviction. Because of this Satan has strengthen his power over humanity, and weaken the church, and brought the church under his control.

Human nature, fallen and sinful as it is, has quiesced willingly in this bondage. This is made clear in John 3: 19 - 'This is the verdict; men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil'. How Satan has puffed up human pride to revolt against such biblical wisdom and declaration.

How well does God declare this truth in the Old Testament. He dupes people not to appreciate this and to believe and act upon it. So Satan triumphs in causing the darkness to become even more dense, and the light of Christ to be turned against.

MARCH 2026

GOD'S MESSAGE IN 2 PETER

Expository Sermons in the 2nd Epistle of Peter

OMNIPOTENCE & OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

"(v.3)First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. (v.4)They will say, "Where is the coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation. (v.5)But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. (v.6)By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. (v.7)By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men."

2 Peter 3: 3-7

THE Bible is ever up to date. What Peter describes and prophesies in these words is an exact picture of modern times. This is exactly a description of the thinking of the world, of science, and philosophy, and the thinking in society of modern times, which assumes as scientifically accurate the fantasy of modern thought, which is treated as the only acceptable thinking, and which scoffs at the truth in the Bible, and the words of Peter in these verses before us. This is found not only in the thinking of the world, but is also the thinking of much of the visible church. Let us now observe, as clearly as we are able, what Peter is telling us. It is not surprising that Peter can speak as he does, because, like all Biblical writers, he was under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus sent into the world to declare all truth. Again it seems best to seek understanding by studying each verse in turn, and then bringing altogether at the end of this sermon.

Peter speaks of understanding. That is true and godly understanding. Peter says we need to understand that with respect to this world and creation there will be 'last days'. God has always made clear in the Bible that he will bring to an end this creation which Satan has so vilely spoiled. Therefore there will be last days concerning this planet and the rest of space, etc. This truth, of course, is laughed at by modern thought. It is supposed that the world has existed millions of years and will go on existing infinitely into the future; though this thinking is being challenged by the way modern living is destroying the world in different ways, bringing concern for the future.

In Biblical terms speaking of the 'last days' encompasses the future as each era has it. However, although these last days in the context of time we are living in, may be for each generation a distant future, in the mind of the eternal God, there will be a point in history when the end of time will come. The Bible is full of this truth, and the book of Revelation speaks of this clearly. Also when we read the Gospels, Jesus, in his teaching makes this clear.

Peter speaks of 'scoffers' that will be present to scoff at any idea of the revelation which is found clearly in the Bible. He goes on to describe these scoffers as following their evil desires. God has made clear that any thinking which scoffs at the revelation God has given in the Bible are following their evil desires. Evil desires does not necessarily mean vile and immoral behaviour and so on, but describes as evil any thought and action which denies God's truth, and sets their own opinions above the word of God. The world's thinking has always done this, but in modern times these evil desires have become prominent in the visible church, and this is mainly because the world has scoffed at God's truth expressed in the Bible, and caused church thinking to embrace what is called scientific thought and evidence. There is no doubt that scientific knowledge has amazingly increased our understanding concerning our universe, and this must be recognised, but we need to be aware how Satan, with his twisted evil wisdom, has blinded human thinking into a wrong appreciation of scientific advance. Science brings facts before us which it has discovered and then brings imagination to fill in the gaps. This way of proceeding brings the result of more and more progressing into fantasy. If the Bible is received as God's true revelation, then thought governed by the Holy Spirit, brings a true understanding, which science does not overthrow.

The thinking of the scoffers in Peter's time is described in verse 4. The church had received the promise of Christ that he would return in power to bless his believing people and bring in the beauty and joy of righteous living in a renewed world. The early church believed this. It looked forward to it with expectancy, and believed the return of Christ would occur even when the apostles still were living. However time passed and this promise of Christ has not happened. In the light of this scoffers had latched on to this, and began to say that this promise of Christ was not going to happen, and from this began to deny the whole teaching of Christ.

The thinking which began to prevail was that as the world had gone on from the very beginning, it would go on endlessly into the future, and any idea that there would 'last days' was an untrue fantasy. From this these scoffers began to undermine the whole faith of Christ, and the teaching not only of the Old Testament, but also the writings of the apostles.

This thinking, promoted by Satan, fails to take account of the truth of God, revealed by God, in grace and mercy, in the words in the Bible. Peter recalls this for us. In verse 5 Peter speaks of this with a truth which the world denies – But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water'.

This expresses the wisdom of the world which ignores God, and fails to take account of his omniscience and omnipotence. Instead there is this fantasy which declares that by pure chance, matter and then life appeared, and then evolved slowly over a millennia into the complicated structure of space and planets, with life by pure inanimate chance beginning to exist in the lowest form and then again by chance evolving into life as we see it in our planet of the present. Science uses its knowledge to suggest how this has happened, but cannot explain how such complexity could possible have happened by chance.

This thinking is because Satan has puffed up human thinking to ignore God or even deny the existence of God. In contrast, in the Bible God has revealed himself as an ever existing timeless almighty being who is the source of all his creation. Peter expresses this in the words of verse 5 'the heavens existed and earth was formed out of water and by water'. The book of Genesis describes this work of God without explanation which would be beyond human comprehension, being part of this creation. What God reveals of himself, which human wisdom discounts, is the omnipotence of God and his omniscience. What seems to our wisdom a monumental and unbelievable task is not beyond

omnipotence and omniscience. God is the source of all things including life.

Again the power and nature of the everliving God is beyond us, but God in the Bible helps our impotence by declaring himself, and giving such description of his omnipotence in such passages as Isaiah 40: 6ff, and specially from verse 12.

In order to help our understanding further as to the omnipotence of God and his rule over all humanity and powers on earth, Peter mentions the fact of the flood in the days of Noah, in Genesis 6. Peter introduces this with the words of verse 6 'By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed'. The history of the flood in the days of Noah have been sneered at as impossible fantasy, but evidence has been discovered that such a flood did happen.

The Bible narrative speaks of rain being unknown before the flood, where the earth was watered by dew rising from the ground. It speaks of God directing Noah to build a huge boat, called in Genesis the 'Ark'. The largeness required was so that life may be preserved by Noah and his family for humanity, and all animal and insect life and the rest of life. Through the evidence of the building of the 'Ark', and Noah's preaching, this act of God to destroy all life was made known, and people given opportunity to heed the warning of judgement and destruction, but like modern wisdom such warning was laughed at, and all life was destroyed except such life preserved in the 'Ark'. God's love and grace is seen in the providing of the 'Ark' and the warning of his judgement through the preaching of Noah.

Peter ends these verses by declaring the truth of God again, at the end of time, to judge the world and all life in it in verse 7. His words are 'By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men'. Peter, inspired and directed by God,

warns of a final judgement of the universe, which includes all the infinity of space, and this planet earth. Like the days of Noah the world in its wisdom sneers at this as an impossible fantasy, even though the sin and greed of mankind has already commenced the destruction of our planet. History, as always, repeats itself. This is inevitable because of the blindness and darkness and ignorance and pride which Satan has introduced in the minds of men and women. There is no doubt that God created man with enormous potential. There is no doubt that this potential is seen increasingly in the tremendous advance of knowledge which has occurred over the last century and a half, and seems to increase rapidly all the time. But the evidence of human weakness and corruption is seen in its total inability to deal with the way humanity has no answer, however much it tries, to solve the problem of evil and moral corruption which throughout history has continued to destroy human happiness and offend against God's righteousness.

APPLICATION.

God in amazing grace, mercy and love, as he did in the days of Noah, has provided a way of escape from this coming judgement and end of the world. The 'Ark' God has given is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In this provision of escape and safety from the coming judgement and end of the universe, Jesus was given by the Father, to provide a righteousness for people which satisfies completely God's holy demands, and promises complete forgiveness and eternal life in the new heaven and earth God has said he will create, when he destroys this present universe. The entrance into this almighty 'Ark' is simple. Like the time of Noah where if the people had repented of their godless living, and believed the message of Noah, then the 'Ark' was there to save them; so the same is true for us. We must believe that God in pure righteousness can't leave godlessness and unrighteousness to continue, there must be repentance of human godlessness and sinfulness, and a turning to God in sorrow. Then the way of safety,

a place in the 'Ark' Jesus Christ, is open to all who will believe the good news that God so loved the world that he gave his Son to deliver people from eternal perishing, and if we believe in Jesus as our 'Ark' of safety, and put our trust in him to save us, we will be granted forgiveness, new life, and a place in the new heaven and earth, which God has provided through Christ for all who believe. Oh! Believe and be saved.

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