



CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

SERIES V

WISDOM LITERATURE AND NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

Lesson 22 Commentary 1 Timothy
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PAUL'S YOUNG DELEGATE 1 Timothy

INTRODUCTION

On his first missionary journey, Paul met Timothy's mother, Eunice and his grandmother, Lois. Both were Jewish Christians and presumably Timothy was also, though his father was Greek. At Lystra, where Paul met them, Paul had healed a man crippled from birth. On his second trip through Lystra, Paul invited Timothy to accompany him on his journeys. The long association enabled Paul to see the worth of Timothy, and, after some time, he appointed Timothy as his legate at Ephesus. As Paul's representative, we might call Timothy a bishop, which is closer to our modern bishop than the terms *episcopoi* and *presbyter*.

Two letters to Timothy are in the New Testament, with some very special teachings from Paul. These letters, along with the letter to Titus, are called the Pastoral Letters, for they were to pastors and about pastoring. These Letters were probably written from prison in Rome, where Paul, tradition says, was given a death sentence and beheaded outside Rome, for such a death could not be given inside Rome to a Roman citizen (63 A.D. or later).

I. SOUND DOCTRINE (1 Timothy 1-20)

A. True Teaching in Faith (1 Timothy 1:3-20, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4). In the Greeting by Paul, he lovingly refers to Timothy as "my child whom I love" (1 Timothy 1:2). This is Paul's way of addressing a young person whom he baptized. He does the same for Titus in his letter, though to Timothy the addition of "whom I love" shows us the strong affection and the recognition of Timothy's gifts and his personality. In this small example from Paul, we today can trace the Church's use of "Father" to recognize a priest's bringing new life to those whom he baptized.

The affectionate remembrance of Timothy in prayer "as indeed I do constantly" and Paul's memory of Timothy's tears when they parted, brings awareness to us of the warmth of Paul and the relationships these early Christians had, as they traveled about for the sake of Christ and His Good News, always in danger of beatings. For example, some Jews stoned Paul after this Lystra meeting. Later, Timothy accompanied Paul on his second and third journeys. At the time of this let-

ter, Timothy was in Ephesus, sent by Paul while he was in Macedonia, to warn the Ephesians of some false teachers (1 Tim 2:3, 4). These went about “with interminable genealogies, and speculations,” writes Paul.

It is training in faith that Paul wants Timothy to give the Ephesians, and “love that springs from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith.” What a difference from “myths, genealogies, and idle speculations” (1 Timothy 1:4).

Do we have the qualities that Timothy was to teach the Ephesians?

B. The Role of Law (1 Timothy 1:8-11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Titus 1:3). Law is meant to protect the good and prevent and/or punish the unruly. The list of crimes committed against the good by the evil ones, sadly brings to our minds that our newspapers and newscasts are more filled with such crimes and lawbreakers than with good news. As we read the list from the ancient Roman times, we admit that many of these are common among our American young people, many who have no real associations with Christians like Timothy.

C. Paul “the Sinner” (1 Timothy 1:12-16). Humbly and honestly, Paul tells Timothy of what saved him, a “blasphemer, a persecutor filled with arrogance” (1 Timothy 1:13). Jesus Christ mercifully came to him personally, granting him overflowing grace along with the faith and love for Jesus who “came into the world to save sinners of which I am the worst” (1 Timothy 1:14-15) “so that I might become an example to those who later would have faith in him and gain everlasting life” (1 Timothy 1:16).

In this account of Timothy’s young life turned over to Christ, of Love and its need to save the good from the lawless and the unruly, and of Paul, once an arrogant religious extremist, we have examples of three types of young people.

To our shame, and with a reality shown us through the undeniable camera, we across America have been shown crowds of graduating high schoolers, “lawless and unruly” in a drinking spree, shouting defiance at the police and killing and being killed by their drunken driving. All of Paul’s list of what the law tries to save the innocent from have been reported and shown on public screens of young Americans: sexual perverts, murderers, even of their own fathers’ and mothers’ lives, perjurers, fornicators.

Paul writes here of “those who in other ways flout the sound teaching that pertains to the glorious gospel of God” (1 Timothy 1:9-11). In all this list, Paul adds the reason in our day for this behavior among many, too many, American youth: “the irreligious.” For in America’s free schools it is unlawful to teach “sound doctrine... that training in faith which God requires” (1 Timothy 1:4). As an educator on all levels for years, I found that if there is no fear of God, the One who sees all and will judge all, what chance do our schools have to produce law-abiding citizens, especially in non-church going homes? What about the parents, the homes? They also were deprived of religious teaching as children and youth. The strange thing is that schools in America for the first hundred years were under local authority and religion was part of education. Only in the 1950’s or later did some liberals claim the Constitution said no to this. We need to call for a return to the earlier interpretation.

The evidence of irreligious young people dominated by materialism and false values is too great for us to deny. Paul’s list of the pagan beliefs of his day needs Paul’s answer: the faith Christ brought. Will citizens rise up to change such an education that produces too few who know and obey God?

Paul’s words to young Timothy can be parents’ words today: “my child: I have a solemn charge to give you... that you may fight the good fight and hold fast to faith and a good conscience. Some by

rejecting the guidance of conscience have made shipwreck” (1 Timothy 1:19).

II. CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIVING (1 Timothy 2:1-15)

A. Prayer at the Liturgy (1 Timothy 2:1-2, Romans 13:1-7, John 8:32). Paul’s teaching of intercessory prayer at the liturgy “for everyone, especially for kings and rulers,” was perhaps the origin of the custom of such prayer after the Mass Readings, a custom for earlier times and lost for a long period. In the research and studies done at the last Vatican Council (the 20th in the 2,000 years of the Church and the most authoritative church teaching—Pope and Bishops together), this intercessory prayer was reinserted in the Mass. At first, even today somewhat, we weren’t quite sure how to do that, but it is becoming familiar and effective today. We have now to learn to put heart and mind into the meaning of the words and make them a prayer from us.

B. The Lives of Christians (1 Timothy 2:2b-7, Romans 13:1-8). Paul describes how the Christian life is meant to be lived: “in peaceful and quiet lives with all devotion and propriety. To do this is right and acceptable to Christ our Savior: he wants everyone to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth.” Paul wrote this line under a world government that knew not God or “the truth.”

It is applicable to today, isn’t it? We, too, who are in full union with Christ our Savior, know that He wants everyone to be saved and He shed His blood for that. We need badly to learn the evangelism of some Christian brothers and sisters who today attract not only the unchurched but the regularly churching Catholics. In South America today, evangelized long ago by Spanish missionaries, the “evangelical” churches with their teaching from the Bible—that wonderful record of Words of God that can directly speak to the unchurched—are converting thousands of born Catholics to the Bible Churches. If we and our church leaders had awakened to the results of not

putting the Bible in these largely uninstructed (only baptized) people’s hands, they would not have been lost to the guidance of the true and long-lasting teacher and guide: The Catholic Church with its “all truths for all times.” But it is not guaranteed to make no mistakes in how to evangelize.

Yet, God has always used attacks on the Church and defects in it to correct its insufficient or unwise ways. In the meantime, this problem is the reason for Catholic Scripture Study. Its plan is that the members who feel its benefits in their lives, bring others to it. That is its chosen way to spread; it will move to new places with its graces for our lives, only through its members as the early church did, and as other Christians do today (including the remarkable work of BSF over the world due to one devout Christian woman) (John 3:10-11).

C. Women in the Assembly (1 Timothy 2:9-15, Isaiah 3:16ff, 1 Peter 3:2-4). In the Church gathered for worship, Paul teaches quiet and fitting actions and dress, especially of those who put much emphasis on beauty and style—the women. He suggests the avoidance in God’s house of “fancy hair styles, gold ornaments, pearls or costly clothing,” as if to attract attention to themselves when it would show love of God to help others be attentive to the prayer and the worship of the Church to the Creator of all beauty. Our times disagree greatly with the Scriptures in Genesis 3:6f, 1 Timothy 2:13-14. Obviously, the men of his times such as Paul was, had no understanding of a more just pattern for women. However, the social sins of today in which women are heavily involved—divorce and remarriage, abortions, birth control for the purpose of avoiding all but one or two children or none, are evils in God’s eyes and will result in a loss of blessings or new evils for individuals or for the nation.

We should look twice at the words of Scripture and what God is saying in these texts on women: “their adornment must be good deeds” (1 Timothy

2:10). Of the values here, “adornment with good deeds,” obviously the second is of more value to God and society than the first. As we interpret this we may feel that Paul is demeaning women and restricting their rights. Yet, do we not agree that the good deeds of a woman is of more value than her adornment? Perhaps there have been and still are too many women more interested in adornment than good deeds.

In the Adam and Eve story (Genesis 3:1-6), although Adam was created first as an image of God who is father and protector and from whom Eve was created, Eve was the first tempted and the first to fall and to cause the man to fall, bringing both of them unable to pass original justice to their children.

This Biblical message can tell women and warn them of the immense power they have over men. Perhaps desiring power as a woman can be a cause of ills in our society. In searching for the meaning of women, we should ponder God’s intentions for them. This is the higher value in their lives. God’s loving Will to create Mary shows what God hopes for women.

The great distinction between the gifts of men and women is that the human race was “born of women”—the greatest role God gave to women.

III. QUALIFICATIONS FOR MINISTRY (1 Timothy 3:1-16)

A. Bishop (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The official we read of here is not the same as our bishop. “Episkopos” and “presbyteros” are, in these early writings, equivalent, referring to the same person. The functions of a modern bishop would be those of Paul or one of his legates, as Timothy is here. The virtues mentioned are generally required of all the faithful, even of all good people. Elsewhere, Paul wishes “all to be as I am,” that is, a celibate dedicated to God and His Church exclusively, and because of that celibacy is open and

dedicated to all who belong to Christ and must be in good repute by all in the area.

B. The Call and the Youth of Timothy (1 Timothy 3:14-17). Though he is “young,” Paul advises and encourages him to speak and behave, to love and to love the faith in purity. “Read to the people, encourage and teach... by your spiritual gift... when the elders laid their hands on you.” This refers to the long custom of blessing and giving special calls and duties. It is still used in the Church in ordaining priests and bishops. It is especially helpful for those in such roles to re-read these lines.

C. Widows, Elders, Slaves, and Teachers (1 Timothy 5:1 - 6:21)

1. There being no “rest homes” then, the children and grandchildren of widows have “to learn... to repay their debt to their parents.” Paul speaks of “enrollment” as a widow, which placed her in the care of the church, and he lists the good qualities that must be known of her. Younger widows are often “distracted from Christ” or marry again. Paul really must have known some of these who “learn how to be idle and gossips” (1 Timothy 5:13-14).

2. Elders (1 Timothy 5:17-25, Matthew 18:16). Among these directions are two to notice: “Do not be too quick to lay hands on anyone,” again noting the use of this in ordaining special ministers and in sacraments they give. He adds as is his custom, a new subject: “You should give up drinking water and have a little wine for the sake of your digestion and illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:19-23). Paul is writing and dictating as his thoughts come!

To slaves and to their masters, Paul teaches Christian conduct (1 Corinthians 7:21-24).

3. Teachers and Money (1 Timothy 6:3-10). Though Christianity was so young in the world, this shows the respect we must have for

doctrines handed down to us for many generations. But even then there was teaching differing from sound teaching, or new doctrines or departures from the faith handed down which Paul condemns. “Religion, of course, does bring profit, but only to those who are content with what they have... People who long to be rich are a prey to trial, trapped into all sorts of foolish and harmful ambitions which plunge people into ruin and destruction.” And here is a much-used line that was contemporary in Paul’s day. “Money is the root of all evils” (1 Timothy 6:10). As a true teacher, the ardent apostle adds:

“There are some who, pursuing it, have wandered away from the faith, and so given their souls any number of fatal wounds” (1 Timothy 6:10b).

Paul encourages Timothy to recall what his vocation means and gives Jesus before Pilate as a model of proclamation of our calling. Another closing teaching is for the rich, but which can help all of us, especially in contemporary America, the richest country in the world, and one of the strong tempters to materialism as the top value in life. Paul adds to us, also: “Take great care of all that has been entrusted to you” (1 Timothy 6:20).

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QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 23
2 Timothy

Day 1 Read the Notes and Scripture references.

- a. Give three aims Paul wants Timothy to teach the new Christians in Ephesus.

- b. From the notes, what elements do you learn that are missing in the education of modern youth?

Day 2 Read 2 Timothy 1:1-5, Acts 16:1.

- a. What do we learn about Paul the “Apostle of Christ Jesus” in these five verses?

- b. Read 2 Timothy 1:6-8, Romans 8:15. In 6a, what event after Jesus ascended is recalled by “stir into flame”?

- c. What can “stir into flame the gift of God” mean for us?

- d. Explain the meaning of 6b and 7 for you.

Day 3 Read 2 Timothy 1:8-18, Romans 6:9.

- a. What does 2 Timothy 1:8 and Luke 9:26 say to you?

- b. Share what verses 9-10 means for your faith.

- c. Quote one of the remaining verses that helps you.

Day 4 Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7, 1 Corinthians 9:25.

- a. How does verse 2 apply to the Church and its teaching?
- b. Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13. Share the effect on you of verses 8-12.
- c. Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26; Matthew 12:20. How does this help you?

Day 5 Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

- a. Choose a description in verses 2-5 and give an example of it today.
- b. In your opinion, how could our society or our religion eliminate any one of these?
- c. Read 2 Timothy 3:10-16. In these verses are answers for verses 1-9. What do you learn from this chapter?

Day 6 Read 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

- a. How does Paul impress his younger minister and follower with the importance of his “charge” in verse 2?
- b. Read 2 Timothy 4:6-18. How is Paul consoled as he awaits his dissolution?
- c. In verse 14-18, what words tells us of Paul’s ultimate aim as he travels over the Roman empire?
- d. How has Paul inspired you?