

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES: GOD'S DIRECTIVES FOR HIS UNDERSHEPHERDS

I. 1 Timothy: Basic Local Church Ministry Q. Taking The Biblical Stand On Gnosticism (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

I. Introduction

- A. In 2003, Dan Brown produced the novel, The Da Vinci Code that suggested Emperor Constantine suppressed the writings of the true, merely human Jesus of the Gnostic works and promoted the divine Jesus of the New Testament's four Gospels, that the Christian faith as we know it today is thus a false promotion of the actual historical Jesus. (Bill Brown, "The Heart of the Conspiracy," Torch, Summer 2006, p. 2-5)
- B. 1 Timothy 6:20-21 records comments by the Apostle Paul on Gnosticism itself, and 1 Timothy was part of the New Testament canon that both defenders of the faith and heretics alike cited in their writings for authority just fifty years after the death of the last apostle and two hundred years before Constantine! (Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, 1971, p. 175) We thus do well to view this very important passage:

II. Taking The Biblical Stand On Gnosticism, 1 Timothy 6:20-21.

- A. What Paul had to communicate beginning with 1 Timothy 6:20 was so important to him that he addressed Timothy with an interjection, the word "O" in Greek that means "O!" in English, and that expresses "emotion" in this context, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 903.
- B. Addressing Timothy's name in the vocative mood of direct address after the interjection, Paul urged him to "guard, defend" (*phulasso*, Ibid., p. 876) "what was entrusted" (*paratheke*, Ibid., p. 621) to him, 1 Tim. 6:20a.
- C. That deposit entrusted to Timothy comprised the "body of Christian truth which in some way was under attack in Ephesus" where Timothy ministered as pastor, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 748.
- D. This effort to preserve the truth was to be accompanied by Timothy's "turning away from" (*ektrepo*, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 245) "profane" (*bebelos*, Ibid., p. 138), "empty talk, chatter" (*kenophonia*, Ibid., p. 429) as well as turning from "oppositions, objections, contradictions" (*antithesis*, Ibid., p. 73) of "falsely bearing the name" (*pseudonumos*, Ibid., p. 900) of "knowledge" (*gnosis*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 730; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 162-163), 1 Tim. 6:20b,c-21a. We explain these errors Timothy was to resist:
 - 1. The profane, empty chatter Timothy was to shun in 1 Timothy 6:20b was likely errant distortions of Christian theology much like what Paul would later direct Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:16 to shun in the profane chatter of the claim by Hymenaeus and Philetus that the resurrection was already past.
 - 2. However, the "oppositions" of "knowledge" that were "falsely" so-called that Timothy also was to resist was a different entity, a "supposed key to the mystery religions which were already aborning [starting to be formed] and which would mature into a full-fledged Gnosticism during the next century. Their influence was already being felt in Ephesus, so much so that Paul could say that some had gotten so caught up in professing their esoteric *gnosis* that they wandered from the faith," Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.; 1 Tim 6:20c-21a!
 - 3. Since "the faith" in 1 Timothy 6:21a is the body of Christian truth that had been entrusted to Timothy to guard, protect and defend (1 Tim. 6:20a), even this fledgling form of Gnosticism had begun to lead people away from the entire Christian faith that Timothy was to guard, a huge foe to Timothy's ministry!
 - 4. Accordingly, Paul's emotional interjection "O!" in 1 Timothy 6:20a displayed his great concern that Timothy fulfill his calling to protect the congregation at Ephesus from the errors not just of distorting Christian beliefs, but of Gnostic error that replaced the entire Christian faith with another belief system!
- E. Paul then closed his epistle, urging that God's grace might be with Timothy and his hearers, the "you" being plural, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1 Timothy 6:21b. It would take God's grace to guard Timothy and his congregation with him from the potent force of Gnostic error that they would face, what Church History has proven to be the case with pastors and churches not only with Gnosticism, but with other false systems!

Lesson: *The Apostle Paul emotionally called Timothy to guard the true Christian beliefs that God had entrusted to him, to shun both profane, empty chatter of distorted Christian theology and to resist Gnostic errors that opposed the entire Christian faith. Paul relied on God's grace to keep Timothy and his congregation from all error.*

Application: *(1) May we realize that the Gnostic writings did not comprise the initial beliefs of the Early Church as Dan Brown's book, "The Da Vinci Code" claimed, but that Gnostics taught a system that the Apostle Paul himself emotionally opposed, that we hold to the truth in the canonical New Testament versus Gnosticism! (2) May we rely on God's grace to guard us from both distortions of the Christian faith as well as from systemic oppositions to it!*