

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

Beginning January 29, 2025

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Pastoral Epistles

The First Letter to Timothy

Text – 1 Timothy 4 – “Problem People and Practical Warnings”

Introduction

Paul, having concluded his instructions to Timothy regarding leadership within the local church, will not give him some very practical advice, really warnings, about some things to beware of, and some things to keep in mind.

The former chapter showed us some things to look for when considering someone for a leadership position. Here in this chapter, Paul is giving us a partial view of some of the problems that preachers and deacons will face in the ministry. Some of these problems will be because of people from within the congregation, some without. However, Paul will also help Timothy to watch out for some things that may come from within himself. These verses are extremely practical; they deal with things that all preachers of the gospel will face at some point in his ministry.

I. Problem People (vs. 1 – 5)

"1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:1 – 5)

Paul had already addressed some of the problems that Timothy was dealing with at Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 1:3 – 7; 18 – 20).

He had also warned the Ephesian elders, several years prior about problem people:

"28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in

among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears."

(Acts 20:28-31)

V. 1 – Notice that Paul is clear that this is something that the Holy Spirit is saying. This is not merely the advice of an older preacher.

"latter times" - In Paul's next letter to Timothy, he will further remind them of problem people in the last days:

"1 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 6 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, 7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. 9 But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." (2 Timothy 3:1-9)

Peter warned about "scoffers" in the last days:

"3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3-4)

"some shall depart (ἀποστήσονται from ἀφίστημι – ahistēmi) from the faith" – This is the word that we get apostate or apostacy from.

"seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" – These are doctrines that were caused by devils influencing lost people. John spoke about these kinds of "spirits" in his first epistle:

"1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every

spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. 4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." (1 John 4:1-6)

Satan is a deceiver:

"7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:7-11)

That is why we need to put on the whole armor of God:

"10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:10-20)

John also gives us a hint in that first epistle that these men who seriously depart from the faith permanently are not true believers. They may have been professors of faith in Christ and they may have even been members of a congregation, but they were not truly saved:

"18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." (1 John 2:18-19)

Jude also addressed these false prophets:

"3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Jude 1:3-4)

V. 2 – “having their consciences seared” – this word means to cauterize, as when a wound is cauterized to stop bleeding. Paul wrote to the Ephesians earlier about lost people being “past feeling:”

"17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephesians 4:17-19)

Also, in Paul’s letter to the Romans, he speaks of lost people having a reprobate mind:

"28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32

Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:28-32)

Vs. 3 – 5 – Here Paul gives an illustration of some of the false doctrines that people will try to influence the church with.

"Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats" – This was not just somebody saying that it might be a good idea for certain people to not get married, because Paul said that himself:

"8 I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

9 But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn. ... 25

Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. 26 I suppose therefore that this is

good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. 27 Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. 28 But

and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned.

Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. 29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; ... 32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for

the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: 33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. ... 35 And this I

speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction." (1 Corinthians 7:8-9,

25-29, 32-33, 35)

These false prophets were commanding people to not marry, and they were commanding them to abstain from eating meats. Does this remind you of any religious group? This was a form of asceticism, which demands the denial of any pleasure, and what is worse, they were requiring that people abstain from these things as a requirement for salvation.

To say that people may want to abstain from meats for health reasons or even for spiritual reasons, perhaps because the meat was offered in sacrifice to idols, is not going too far; but, to say that people have to abstain from meats in order to be saved, or in order to be in a right relationship with the church is taking things too far.

Notice in vs. 4 and 5, Paul specifically states that there is nothing spiritually wrong with eating meats or anything else. Everything that God made is good. He originally excluded man's diet to include only herbs:

"29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. 30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. 31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." (Genesis 1:29-31)

After the flood, He expanded man's diet to include animals:

"3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things." (Genesis 9:3)

Meat is good; if you want to eat it, go ahead, and give God thanks for it. If you don't want to eat, and instead only choose to eat vegetables, go ahead, and give thanks for that.

The same is true for marriage. Marriage is good:

"18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. ... 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."
(Genesis 2:18, 21-24)

"22 Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD."
(Proverbs 18:22)

These false prophets were adding to salvation by putting requirements on it that God never made. This was an attack against salvation by grace through faith; it was attack against the gospel.

We are not talking about minor differences that separate churches, such as regarding the mode of baptism, or the form of government a church uses, or an opinion on the timing of

the rapture, or even a position on a particular Bible version. Here, these seducing spirits with their doctrines of devils are attacking the very core of our belief system; they are attacking the fundamentals of the faith:

Illustration - Fundamentalism's Creed

The Niagara Bible Conference in 1878 published these 14 fundamental beliefs in 1878:

- 1 The verbal, plenary (complete, absolute, or full) inspiration of Scripture.
- 2 The Trinity.
- 3 The Creation of man, the Fall into sin, and total depravity.
- 4 The universal transmission of spiritual death from Adam.
- 5 The necessity of the New Birth.
- 6 Redemption by the blood of Christ.
- 7 Salvation by faith alone in Christ.
- 8 The assurance of salvation.
- 9 The centrality of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.
- 10 The constitution of the true church by genuine believers.
- 11 The personality of the Holy Spirit
- 12 The believer's call to a holy life.
- 13 The immediate passing of the souls of believers to be with Christ at death.
- 14 The premillennial Second Coming of Christ.

In 1910, the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church listed these five fundamentals:

- 1 Inerrancy
- 2 Virgin Birth
- 3 Substitutional Atonement
- 4 Bodily Resurrection
- 5 Authenticity of Miracles or the Second Coming of Christ

Note – later in the twentieth century, the “five fundamentals” were defined as:

1. The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:8-9).
2. The Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:27).
3. The Blood Atonement (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:12 – 14)
4. The Bodily Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1 – 4; 14 - 15)
5. The Inerrancy of the Scriptures themselves (2 Timothy 3:16 – 17; 2 Peter 1:20)

You can see from these lists that the doctrines being promoted by these heretics were serious deviations from the faith.

We also see from this section that sometimes people will get hung up on issues that are very distracting from the main purposes of the church. Sometimes, people will get caught up with some doctrinal heresy and attempt to pull others from within the congregation into it with them. However, possibly equally as dangerous are the people who get hung up on an issue that is not a big deal in the grand scheme of biblical issues, but it is very important to them.

Illustrate – everyone has their pet issues; things that are very important to them, but often they are things that the Scripture does not emphasize.

There was a person here at our church years ago who was very convicted regarding debt, and she asked me if our church would ever get a mortgage to finance a building project. I told her that I agreed with her that debt can be a very dangerous thing and that I would certainly be opposed to getting a mortgage that was beyond the church’s ability to pay; and I also told her that I was opposed to consumer debt, such as credit cards. However, I had to honestly also tell her that I would not hesitate to take out a mortgage to finance a building project. We have had three mortgages here at the church; two of which have been retired. This third mortgage of \$300,000.00 was taken out so that we could finish a roughly \$1 million dollar building addition, so it represented only about 30% of the cost of the overall project. Anyway, this person did not like my answer and left the church over it. This debt issue was a big deal to this person, but they put more weight on this issue than the Bible does.

We need to make sure that we are emphasizing as a church the things that God emphasizes; that we are dogmatic about things that the Bible is dogmatic about. We

need to be careful about getting distracted regarding things that may not be that important.

II. Practical Warnings for Others (vs. 6 – 11)

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. 11 These things command and teach. (1 Timothy 4:6 – 11)

V. 6 – This verse is transitional. It refers to what Paul already stated in the first five verses, but also to what he will be saying in the remainder of the chapter.

Reminding people of what God says is what good ministers do. I have no new truth to give you. Certain aspects of the truth may be new to you and possibly even new to me, but it is not new. We spend most of our time ministerially reminding people of stuff they already know.

“nourished up” (ἐντρέφόμενος from ἐντρέφω – *entrophō*) – It is interesting that Paul makes the connection to food, or physical nourishment. Jesus said: *"4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4; also Luke 4:4)

Job said: *"12 Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food."* (Job 23:12)

Just as good food nourishes the body, the Word of God will nourish the soul.

The phrase, “nourished up,” within this context means to form the mind. Timothy will help form the minds of those he ministers to by “putting them in remembrance” of the things Paul was teaching them. It also indicates that Timothy himself would be nourished by ministering to the brethren.

Timothy had already learned a great deal of Scripture; much of which was taught to him as a child:

"15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15)

But he was continuing to study:

"15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

A minister of the word needs to be continuously studying, sharpening his skills so that he can effectively teach the people that God has entrusted to him.

Peter told us that we need to: *"18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)*

V. 7 – Here, Paul tells Timothy to “refuse profane and old wives’ fables.” The Word of God is profitable, but wives’ fables (μύθους from μῦθος – *mythos*) are not profitable but are to be refused, shunned, or avoided. This is the second time that Paul addressed these fables within this letter. It must have been a problem in Ephesus.

"4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do." (1 Timothy 1:4)

He will again deal with this in his next letter to Timothy:

"14 Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Timothy 2:14-18)

These fables would no doubt include the false doctrines that the “problem people” were teaching, which were referred to back in verses one thru three.

Paul also warned Titus about Jewish fables:

"14 Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." (Titus 1:14)

People in 2025 are not immune to believing in fables. We must be sure to separate fact from fiction. False doctrines and traditions can creep in and be elevated to a level where they become the dogma of the church.

Then Paul reminds Timothy to “exercise (γύμναζε from γυμνάζω – *gymnazō*) [himself] rather unto godliness.”

"14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14)

The word, “exercise,” brings to mind the sports terminology that Paul often uses:

"24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

"1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2)

V. 8 – Paul makes the contrast from bodily exercise to exercising to become more godly. You will notice, however, that he did state that bodily exercise does have some profit to it. Our bodies are the temple of God:

"18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

We are told to present our bodies as a living sacrifice:

"1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not

conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

So, it is beneficial for us to take care of these bodies. It is easier to fulfil God's will when our bodies are healthy, and we will be able to serve God longer into our old age with good health.

As important as it is to take care of our earthly bodies, it is far more important to work at being godly; to exercise our souls.

What are some spiritual exercises that we can do to edify our souls?

1. Read the Scriptures.
2. Study the Scriptures.
3. Spend time in prayer.
4. Tell people about Jesus.
5. Serve the Lord by serving others.
6. Encourage and edify our brothers and sisters in Christ.
7. Striving to live holy, separated lives.

You will notice that Paul stated that these spiritual exercises will follow us into eternity; *"having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."* Spiritual exercise will make your life better today and it will also benefit your eternity:

"13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Revelation 14:13)

V. 9 – *"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance."* We see this phrase two other times in the Pastoral Epistles:

"15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15)

"8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." (Titus 3:8)

The question is: what is the faithful saying that Paul was referring to here in 1 Timothy 4?

It appears to be referring to what was stated previously about emphasizing godliness. Here, Paul is re-emphasizing it here and will emphasize it yet more in the following verses.

Paul reminds Timothy of the purpose for their labors. They are serving a living God who truly will bless them abundantly both in the present as well as in eternity.

Notice that Paul states that God is everyone's Saviour, but His salvation is especially important to those who believe because only believers will receive the eternal benefits of salvation. All men will benefit in a temporal way because of the salvation that Christ provides but only believers will benefit eternally. According to MacArthur

Paul's point is that while God graciously delivers believers from sin's condemnation and penalty because He was their substitute (2 Cor. 5:21), all men experience some earthly benefits from the goodness of God. Those benefits are:

1) common grace—a term that describes God's goodness shown to all mankind universally (Ps. 145:9) in restraining sin (Rom. 2:15) and judgment (Rom. 2:3–6), maintaining order in society through government (Rom. 13:1–5), enabling man to appreciate beauty and goodness (Ps. 50:2), and showering him with temporal blessings (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:15–17; 17:25);

2) compassion—the broken-hearted love of pity God shows to undeserving, unregenerate sinners (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 86:5; Dan. 9:9; Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:41–44; cf. Is. 16:11–13; Jer. 48:35–37);

3) admonition to repent—God constantly warns sinners of their fate, demonstrating the heart of a compassionate Creator who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:30–32; 33:11);

4) the gospel invitation—salvation in Christ is indiscriminately offered to all (Matt. 11:28, 29; 22:2–14; John 6:35–40; Rev. 22:17; cf. John 5:39, 40). God is, by nature, a saving God. That is, He finds no pleasure in the death of sinners. His saving character is revealed even in how He deals with those who will never believe, but only in those 4 temporal ways¹

In v. 11, Paul reminds Timothy once again to “command and teach” these things to the Ephesians. Timothy had the authority as the pastor of the church at Ephesus to command

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1867.

that the church would not allow such deviations from sound doctrine. The commandment was from God. Timothy was not commanding on his own; he was speaking for God.

III. Practical Warnings for Timothy (vs. 12 – 16)

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. 15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. 16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." (1 Timothy 4:12 - 16)

A. Be the Right Example (v. 12)

V. 12 – Maybe, because of Timothy's age, people had a hard time submitting to his authority. That may have been the problem with the church at Corinth when Paul was communicating back and forth with them. Timothy was likely in his thirties when this was written and many of the people that he ministered to, particularly the elders, were much older. It would be perfectly natural for Timothy to be a little intimidated ministering to people who were older, more educated, or perhaps richer than he was. The Greek culture respected age and experience. David also had this problem. He was an exceptional young man but because of his youth, he did not get the same respect that would have been given to someone older. Timothy would have to be the right example (τύπος – *typos*) to them if they were going to submit to his authority. Timothy (and everyone who ministers) needed to be a picture of Christ to these Ephesians.

Paul gave similar instruction to Titus:

*"7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern (τύπον from τύπος – *typos*) of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you."* (Titus 2:7-8)

We will also have to be the right kind of example if we are going to be used of the Lord to effectively minister to the people that God gives us (children, members of our church), or that He sends us to (people we meet).

There were six specific areas that Timothy would have to be very careful about. He needed to display spiritual maturity in all six of these areas:

1. **Word** (λόγῳ from λόγος – *logos*) – here meaning speech, the words that Timothy said. He had to be careful about his speech. The Bible has a lot to say about what we say:

"29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." (Ephesians 4:29)

"28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." (Proverbs 17:28)

"14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)

"8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them." (Proverbs 8:8)

Jesus said:

"37 For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."
(Matthew 12:37)

Read James 3:1 – 12

The children sing a song that is appropriate for this discussion:

Oh, be careful, little tongue, what you say,
Oh, be careful, little tongue, what you say.
There's a Father up above who is looking down in love,
Oh, be careful, little tongue, what you say.

2. **Conversation** (ἀναστροφή - *anastrophe*) – here meaning conduct or behavior; manner of life; the things that we do.

"23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." (Psalm 50:23)

"27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" (Philippians 1:27)

"5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

"15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;"
(1 Peter 1:15)

"12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12)

"9 Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." (Titus 2:9-10)

3. Charity (ἀγάπη – *agape*) – the love of God; and unconditional and abiding love; the love of the Cross; a self-sacrificing love.

"13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)

Timothy could not be a hireling; he had to genuinely love the people that he was leading and ministering to.

"5 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:" (1 Timothy 1:5)

"22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

"8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

4. Spirit (πνεύματι from πνεῦμα – *pneuma*) – the word, “spirit,” can mean many things. It is used to reference the third part of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit. It has also used to reference air or breath. Here, it carries the idea of an inner attitude, or it could also refer to Timothy’s excitement or enthusiasm about his ministry. The key to understanding this distinction from other uses of the word, “spirit,” is the word, “in.” We see the phrase “in spirit” a few times in Scripture and they help us to understand what Paul means here:

"23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24)

"23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." (Proverbs 29:23)

"8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." (Ecclesiastes 7:8)

"3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:3)

"80 And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel." (Luke 1:80)

"21 When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." (John 13:21)

"11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;" (Romans 12:11)

"4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3:4)

Some people may do and say the right things, but they have a bad spirit, or a bad attitude. Paul wanted Timothy to do and say the right things to these Ephesian believers, but he also wanted him to have the right attitude.

The best way to have a good spirit is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, meaning that you are yielded wholly to what the Spirit of God wants to do in and through you.

"18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;" (Ephesians 5:18)

5. Faith (πίστει from πίστις – *pistis*) – The Bible definition of faith is found in Hebrews 11:

"1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ... 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:1, 6)

The dictionary might define faith as belief or dependance; the conviction regarding the truth of anything. We believe in God; have faith in God. True faith will alter your life dramatically; belief determines behavior.

We are saved by grace but through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ:

"8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Paul told both the Romans and the Galatians that it is faith that justifies us:

"28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Romans 3:28)

"1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:" (Romans 5:1)

"16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of

Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Galatians 2:16)

"11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith." (Galatians 3:11)

"24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24)

However, James tells us that faith will be followed by good works.

The General Epistle of James has a lot to say about faith; it describes what faith looks like and how it is lived out in real life:

"5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:5-8)

Read James 2:14 - 26

Living by faith means more, however, than just obeying commands and living a holy life. It also means that we will not be afraid to step out, trusting the Lord to do what He says he will do. As a pastor, I sometimes can be very conservative, safe; not willing to take too many risks. Many of the younger people here push me at times to step out of our corporate comfort zone and be willing to prayerfully, yet courageously do something for the Lord.

Hebrews 11 is the great Hall of Faith chapter. It is loaded with illustrations of Old Testament Saints who were used of the Lord to do incredible things.

It also reminds us that faith will also cause the believer to endure some horrible hardships without betraying the Lord.

Read Hebrews 11:32 - 40

6. Purity (ἀγνεία – *hagneia*) – meaning sinlessness of life.

Paul will remind Timothy again regarding purity:

"22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." (1 Timothy 5:22)

"22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

Purity is something that all believers struggle with, but it can be especially difficult for younger folks to maintain their purity.

Regarding the Church and women, the Bible uses the word, “chaste,” which has a similar meaning:

"2 For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:2)

"3 The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 4 That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, 5 To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus 2:3-5)

"1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: 6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." (1 Peter 3:1-6)

The good news is that God is purifying us through the sanctification process:

"1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." (1 John 3:1-3)

Having examined these six areas, examine yourself and determine if your example is what it should be.

B. Have the Right Focus (vs. 13 – 15)

V. 13 – “give attendance to” (πρόσεχε from προσέχω – *prosechō*) – this word is sometimes translated “take heed,” or beware. It means to pay close attention, devote yourself to, and not neglect.

Paul listed three things that Timothy was supposed to pay close attention to:

1. Reading the Scriptures

The reference to reading is likely about publicly reading the Scripture aloud to the congregation. This may very well be the case due to the next thing that Timothy was to give attendance to was exhortation, which would also be done publicly.

“At a time when believers lacked personal copies of God’s Word, such a practice was essential to promote knowledge of the divine message.”²

We saw this practice in the Old Testament (Nehemiah 8:1 – 8) and in the New Testament (Luke 4:16 – 27). The Scripture was to be read and then explained.

Even though most of God’s people today have a copy of the Scriptures, it is still a good practice for the church to publicly read the Scriptures today.

"14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Acts 13:14-15)

Wiersbe said:

Every local church ought to have a schedule of Bible readings for the public services. It is commanded by Scripture that we read God’s Word in the public assemblies. (I might add that those who read the Word publicly ought to prepare themselves privately. Nobody should be asked “at the last minute” to read the Scriptures publicly. The Bible deserves the best we can give.)³

One commentator made an astute point about protecting the church from heretical teaching through the corporate reading of Scripture. He said: “The public reading of Scripture also hedges the church against error. The problems facing Timothy and the Ephesians centered on false teaching. The corporate reading of truth is a defense against falsehood.”⁴ This is true because the people are hearing from God’s Word directly.

John Phillips emphasized the need for ministers to also be reading good books other than the Bible, and he is right about that; but surely this could not possibly be what Paul meant as there were no books at that time for ministers to read. They probably did encourage and instruct one another through letters.

Of course, today with copies of the Scripture in every Christian home, it is also very important for us to be daily in the Word of God:

² Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 138.

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 227.

⁴ Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 208.

"3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Revelation 1:3)

"4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

"1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm 1:1-3)

Timothy had been immersed in the Scriptures from a child:

"14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

2. To Exhortation (Preaching)

Exhortation (παρακλήσει from παράκλησις – *paraklēsis*) means to call near, comfort, encourage, or supplicate. It can also include warning or rebuke. It is what we do when we are preaching the Word of God. The difference between preaching and teaching is that preaching is geared toward influencing the will whereas teaching is focused on instructing the mind.

3. To Doctrine (Teaching)

Teaching (διδασκαλία from διδασκαλία – *didaskalia*) involves “the systematic instruction from the Word of God.”⁵

"9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9)

⁵ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1867.

Teaching and doctrine are a major emphasis in the Pastoral Epistles. The word, “doctrine,” appears sixteen times, including:

"2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;" (2 Timothy 4:2-3)

"1 But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:" (Titus 2:1)

The word, “teach,” appears nine times, including:

"3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine," (1 Timothy 1:3)

"2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2)

If we are going to teach the right doctrine, we must be able to “rightly divide the Word of truth, applying hermeneutical principles so that we are interpreting the passages correctly, both grammatically and within their historical context. Once we are sure about a passage’s interpretation, we can then make an application to our context.

V. 14 – Don’t waste the gifts that God gives you. Timothy was gifted and equipped by God for the work of the ministry. His giftedness was prophesied beforehand, possibly by Paul,

"18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;" (1 Timothy 1:18)

It was also recognized by the elders (the presbytery - πρεσβυτερίου from πρεσβυτέριον – *presbyterion* – often translated elders). This means that the congregation recognized Timothy’s giftedness and call to ministry.

All believers have at least one spiritual gift:

"4 For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: 5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; 7 Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; 8 Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness." (Romans 12:4-8)

See also 1 Corinthians 12:7 – 11.

"8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging. 10 As every man

hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

(1 Peter 4:8-11)

You have been gifted by God so that He can put them to good use for the cause of Christ, so do not waste those gifts.

V. 15 – Be thoughtful about what God is doing in and through you. Pour yourself into the work of God. God wants you to keep advancing, keep growing, keep conforming to the image of Christ.

"18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen." (2 Peter 3:18)

"58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

The minister of God must be wholly focused on God and His work. Paul said:

"13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

Too many of God's ministers are double-minded, and *"a double minded man is unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:8)

"24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24)

Illustration by John Phillips:

When I first joined the staff of Moody Bible Institute, the radio pastor of the MBI network was an older believer named Robert J. Little. This godly man was a walking encyclopedia of Bible knowledge and was much in demand as a conference speaker. After speaking at one local church, he was approached by a man about his own age who said, "Mr. Little, I wish I had your knowledge of the Bible."

R. J. looked at the man for a moment, then said, "My friend, you are too late. You look like you are about my age, so I'd say you are about fifty years too late. To acquire my knowledge of the Bible, you should have started fifty years ago and studied diligently

every day. That's how long it took me to acquire my knowledge of the Bible. You are too late—but you can still make a start."⁶

Your sold-out devotion to God will not only help you, but it will help other people. Conversely, if you flounder spiritually, or worse, if you fall, it will have a devastating effect on the people who are looking up to you.

C. Keep Doing It (v. 16)

The phrase “take heed” (ἐπεχε from ἐπέχω – *epéchō*) is found some 128 times in the Scripture. It means to observe carefully or pay close attention to. Timothy was advised to play close attention to himself, meaning that he needed to make sure that he was not veering away at all from the will of God.

"12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

Many a minister has fallen, and nobody is exempt from temptations, etc. The minister of God must be accountable to God, to himself, to his family, and to those he ministers to. Let the people in your life observe you closely enough so that they can spot a problem before it gets too big to fix.

He was also to pay careful attention to the teaching: his own and those that were teaching in the ministry there in Ephesus.

Paul wanted Timothy to last in the ministry as long as he had:

"14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;" (2 Timothy 3:14)

Too many people are quitting; too many are floundering. We need to keep moving forward for Christ until He calls us home.

⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), 1 Ti 4:15b.