

Paul's Epistles to Individuals

Lesson 10 – 1 Timothy 4:6-16

I. Specific Instructions (vs. 6-11)

After warning of specific spiritual threats, Paul moves on here to make specific application and a call to act. By knowing the things that can distract the brethren from the truth, Timothy (and other teachers) can know how to move forward and how to protect Christians from those false teachings.

A. *Being a Good Servant of Christ (v. 6)*

The first and best defense against these falsehoods is to dwell on and remind others of the Truth. The “brethren”, or the Spiritual family, is to be reminded in an on-going way of the real faith and the sound doctrine they are to follow as Timothy has followed it. These are the things that define how one “ought to conduct himself in the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15). The idea of reminding them of the Truth is reiterated in 2 Tim 2:14 and Peter stated his intent to remind the brethren of these things “as long as I am in this earthly dwelling” (2 Pet. 1:12-13). Paul wrote to “remind” the Romans (Rom. 15:15) and he also wanted Timothy to “remind” the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:17) just as he “taught everywhere in every church”.

B. *Have Nothing to Do With the Profane (v. 7)*

The NASB here translates as “worldly fables” but the KJV calls it “profane”. The Greek here is “*bebelos*”, meaning “heathenish or wicked”. This likely is specifically referring to things like the previous examples in Verse 3 (marriage and dietary restrictions) that spring from Jewish abuses of the scriptures but can certainly apply to anything at odds with the Truth of God’s Word. Many of the things recorded in the Talmud are outright slanderous of Jesus and are products of the Jewish efforts to discredit Christianity. These Jewish teachings are likely being referenced here. Paul, under inspiration, calls for these and other similar things to be refused. The clear instruction is to be dedicated to Godliness.

C. *Exercise (v. 8-10)*

The idea of exercise first mentioned in verse 7 (Gr. “*gumnazo*”) is something that calls to mind the physical effort and discipline of an athlete as an explanation of the spiritual effort and discipline required in service to God. The effort of an athlete is elsewhere used as an appropriate illustration as we “run the race” (Heb. 12:1, Phili. 2:16, Gal. 2:2), or “fight the good fight” (1 Tim. 1:18, 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7). The physical body is decaying but the spiritual aspect of man is constantly renewed (2 Cor. 4:16) if we are nourished on the “words of faith and sound doctrine” (v. 6). By comparison, physical exercise profits little. This fact is without question (v. 9) that we “labor and strive” not for physical things but for the spiritual benefits in Christ (v. 10).

D. *Prescribe and Teach These Things (v. 11)*

Because Jesus is the “Savior of the World” (John 4:42, 1 John 4:14), available to all men but especially to those who will take advantage of the gift by obeying (Heb 5:9 – “He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation”), these things are to be taught to all.

II. Personal Instructions for Timothy (vs. 12-16)

Paul directs Timothy in these verses to do what is required to maintain his credibility with those he teaches. It is important for teachers to keep their lives and demeanor appropriate so as to be good

examples and let the teachings be evident in their behavior as well as presented accurately in their words. Timothy was to be an “*example*” (v. 12) to those who believe. Paul, to the Corinthians, explains his own efforts to be what others needed him to be so they might learn of Christ. (1 Cor 9:22-23 – “*To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some. 23 And I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it*”). He exemplified that in how he taught the Athenians in Acts 17:22. Christ should be evident in our lives so that others see Christ in us (Phili. 1:20 – “*according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death*”) by looking out for the interests of others (Phili. 2:4), being above reproach, appearing as “lights in the world” (Phili. 2:15).

A. *Let No Man Despise Your Youth (v. 12)*

As Paul makes this statement, it is clear that it is at least in part under Timothy’s control. Timothy’s behavior should be such that no one could attribute his teaching to youthful ignorance or indiscretion. In contrast, he was instructed to show mature qualities in the administration of his “*speech, conduct, love, faith and purity*” and thereby be an example to others. Maturity is shown in one’s ability to recognize good from evil (Heb. 5:14), not easily swayed by false teaching but speaking Truth in love (Eph. 4:13-15), adhering to Godly wisdom (1 Cor. 2:6), striving for a mature way of thinking (1 Cor. 4:20). In 2 Tim. 2:22, Paul specifically warns Timothy to “*flee also youthful lusts*”. There are some temptations more commonly challenging to the young and any preacher who fails in these areas would have a very difficult time overcoming the associated hit to his credibility.

B. *Reading, Exhortation and Doctrine (v. 13)*

The NASB adds “public” and “scripture” to the idea of reading and that may be erroneous. Certainly public reading of scripture is good but the original text here, by the omission seems to incline more to the idea of Timothy’s own study. Either way, the advice is sound. Paul encourages Timothy to dedicate himself to the Word, exhorting and teaching others. 2 Tim. 4:2-3 directs him to reprove rebuke and exhort with his teaching and with great patience because a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

C. *The Gift Within You (v. 14)*

“Gift” within scripture can mean a number of things but here it is described as being given by prophecy and the laying on of hands. This seems to me to be primarily the Holy Spirit as is described in the case of Simon in Acts 8. It may be more inclusive to include Timothy’s being set apart for the ministry of Christ (Rom. 12:6-8). Either way, it was not to be neglected.

D. *Persevere in These Things (vs. 15-16)*

Timothy is instructed to be diligent in his work and his teaching in part so others would see his progress. See also 2 Tim. 2:15 and 2 Tim. 4:2. Paul himself recognized that even he could fall into apostasy (1 Cor. 9:27) by abandoning or coming up short in the work he was given to do. He and Timothy both had a personal stake in doing this work as God intends. We likewise have the same duty to insure our own work is accepted by God so as to not fall away. Perseverance is required of us all (1 Cor. 15:58, Phili. 3:13-21).