

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's open up our bibles to 1 Timothy 4 –

Once again, Paul is writing this letter to his protégé Timothy who he appointed as overseer of the church in Ephesus.

And the purpose of the letter was to encourage Timothy to continue the good fight and not quit - to weed out those individuals within the church that were preaching doctrines that were not edifying the church.

Paul also provided instructions to the church on how they were supposed to conduct themselves during worship services – and we looked at those in chapter 2.

And then last week, we he provided Timothy with God's criteria – not man's criteria - in selecting spiritual leaders in the church.

In our text this morning, Paul is not going to direct his exhortation back to Timothy.

Timothy – you need to tank a stand against those leaders and their heresies!!!

And we will see Paul provide Timothy the where these heresies come from, who teaches them and why were they being taught. Paul will then provide Timothy and the church the corrective for refuting it.

Let's pray...

Before we begin to dissect our text this morning, I want to go back to the end of chapter 3 –

One of the things we have to remember is that this was one letter –

There were no verse or chapter divisions – these were added much later to make it easier for us to find and study scripture.

And the only drawback of having chapter divisions is that we may mistakenly think that for example chapter 3 has nothing to do with chapter 4 and we kind of lose the context of the entire letter.

So let's look at the end of chapter three really quickly.

[1Ti 3:14-16 NKJV] 14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, [I write] so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Question 1

What is godliness?

Because we see this word over and over again in Paul's letter to Timothy.

Some people mistakenly think that godliness is simply doing good deeds – the problem with this statement is that even nonbelievers can do good deeds by human standards – but not God standards.

Because the bible states that “We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deed, they are nothing but filthy rags” Isaiah 64:6

Question 2

How do we attain godliness?

There used to be a popular saying back in the day – “I don't drink, smoke or chew and I don't go with boys or girls that do”

So is the secret to godliness – self deprivation???? No

Put simply, godliness is living a fruitful, obedient Christian life.

Godliness is the proof of our faith

Godliness is following Christ's example

And Paul provides us the way to obtain it –

You see, in order for us to become like Him (godliness / God like) – God had to become like man – which He did and it is only through His redemptive work on the

cross, by grace and through the work of the Holy Spirit that we can pursue godliness as we place our trust in Him.

This is the context that Paul writes our text this morning -

[1Ti 4:1-16 NKJV] 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

The Holy Spirit had made it plain again and again through the words of Jesus and the prophets of both the OT and the Church that the last days would be marked by grave spiritual deception.

The question is – what is defined as the latter times?

In more than one occasion, I have had people come to me and ask –

Do you think that we are living in the last days???

My answer is always the same – what difference does it make?

If I say yes – are you somehow going to get serious about your relationship with Jesus Christ? And if I say No – are you going to breathe a sigh of relief and continue to live the way you have been living?

The bible tells us to be vigilant

[Mar 13:33 NKJV] 33 "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

Church – the term latter times begins with Jesus' first coming and culminates in His second coming.

So it applied to the church in Ephesus and it applies to the church today.

And the Spirit is warning of apostasy in the church.

I had you make a note of the word depart – the Greek word that is used here is where we get the word apostasy from.

It's a falling away.

What were they following away from – the faith – the essential teachings of Christianity.

That salvation is by grace through faith

That godliness is only achieved by His work in us and through us.

And instead of teaching this – they were teaching doctrines of demons.

Turn with me to Genesis 3

Let's look at the first demonic doctrine.

[Gen 3:1-5 NKJV] 1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" 2 And the woman

said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 "but of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil."

Satan's doctrine in the garden of Eden is the same doctrine that the false teachers were teaching in Ephesus and still teaching today.

That we can be our own gods apart from Him – we don't need Him, we can do it on our own.

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own **conscience seared with a hot iron,**

Most false teachers are hypocritical liars.

They know what they are teaching is wrong but they teach it anyways.

How can they do this?

Because their conscious is seared – therefore it no longer bothers them.

And one of the ways that these false teachers do this is by changing their theology in order to support their desires.

Church, when my conscious bother me – I can do two things.

1. I can repent and change my behavior

2. Or I can rationalize my sin – and I can do this by taking a scripture out of context and twisting it around. And then I get other people to believe it – and the more people that follow me - the more proof I have that mine is the correct view, and so my sin isn't really sin. (a seared conscious)

3 forbidding to marry, [and commanding] to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

These were two of the things that these false teachers were teaching –

The first one had to do with the institution of marriage.

The false teachers taught that if you wanted to become more spiritual – then you would certainly not get married.

I had mentioned previously that Gnosticism was infiltrating the church.

And one of the things that Gnosticism taught was that only spiritual things were good, and that all physical things were evil.

God is good because He is a spirit.

Anything you can see or touch, like bodies, are evil.

Since marriage is the joining of two people, two physical bodies, marriage is therefore evil.

By the way, this teaching would eventually creep into the church and settle within the Roman Catholic Church as a requirement for those who were truly spiritual -

This is contrary to scripture.

[Gen 2:18 NKJV] 18 And the LORD God said, "[It is] not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

Jesus, Himself, put His seal of approval on marriage (Matt. 19:1–9), though He pointed out that not everybody is supposed to marry. (Matt 19:10-12)

The second thing that these false teachers were teaching was the certain things were not to be eaten.

The false teachers would say that certain foods would make you less "holy" in the eyes of God.

But church – food is God's idea.

And God gave us an incredible diversity of things to eat.

Genesis 2 – He gave us vegetables

Genesis 9 – He gave us meat to eat

Put them together and we have a nice juicy burger – the perfect food!!!

Church, the diet we follow should be based upon what our doctor prescribes – not thinking that somehow I will be more spiritual if I don't eat certain type of foods.

In fact, we must remember that the enjoyment of God's good gifts is really an act of obedient worship

To reject them, and to call evil what God has called good - is sin!

And Paul tells us to be thankful for God providing it.

We shouldn't be like the Children of Israel who grumbled and complained about everything.

4 For every creature of God [is] good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Paul couldn't be any clearer - nothing's to be refused if it's received by a heart of reverent surrender to God.

The practice of giving thanks and saying grace sets apart the merely common to the special use of God, so whether we're eating a meal, enjoying a moment of marital intimacy, or whatever activity we're engaged in, prayer makes it an act of worship!

I like this quote from G.K. Chesterton

You say grace before meals. All right.

But I say grace before the play and the opera, And grace before I open a book,
 And grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing,
 dancing; And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

These things is in reference to what Paul wrote in verses 1-5

Paul reminds Timothy here that not only is he called to feed the flock as pastor, he must also protect the flock from those savage wolves that seek to rip off the flock of God.

And church many times that involves pointing out the lies and deception of individuals that are teaching these false doctrines.

Paul to the church in Rome

[Rom 16:17 NKJV] 17 Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.

Paul didn't say look the other way – he said note those.

Make them known to the congregation so that they will not be lured by their deception.

7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and **exercise yourself toward godliness.**

The Greek word that Paul uses here for exercise – we get our word gymnasium from.

And really what the word means is to run naked.

Now, remember that Ephesus was in the area where they had the Ancient Olympics and because the ancient world didn't have the blessing of spandex – the athletes would run the races without clothes.

When Paul says, “exercise yourself to godliness,” he means, “train yourself to godliness like an athlete strips himself down and trains for competition.”

We see this same word used in the book of Hebrews

[Heb 5:14 NKJV] 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is], those who by reason of use have their senses **exercised to discern both good and evil.**

[Heb 12:11 NKJV] 11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been **trained by it.**

So how do we train ourselves?

By practicing doing the right thing – learning to discern between right and wrong – and learning from the difficult times in our lives.

8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

There are people – not me!

Who manage to wake up everyday at 4:00 AM in order to go to the gym and work out.

And the reason they do it is to get healthier and if they are an athlete – they do it to be able to compete.

However, some people spend so much time on the condition of their body they have no time or energy left for the upkeep of the inner person.

Paul is not saying that we should exercise at all –

He is just saying that in comparison to our spiritual condition, our physical condition is only slightly profitable – after all, we are limited on how many years I can run a marathon or a dunk a basketball –

But being in good spiritual condition – benefits us both now and eternally.

What are things that we can do to exercise our spiritual muscles and “pump up” godliness?

Prayer, reading the Bible, waiting on God, memorizing Scripture, worship, fellowship, witnessing.

9 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

Here we have another one of the faithful sayings that the church would memorize.

And it refers to what we just read in verse 8 –

10 For to this [end] we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is [the] Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. 11 These things command and teach.

Spiritual exercise is not easy - it involves work and a certain amount of pain.

The word translated as suffer reproach is the same word we get our word agony from.

It's another athletic word that pictures an athlete who is all out for the goal.

They may be winded and in pain, but they know the goal is just ahead and are willing to suppress the pain in order to obtain the prize.

And Paul tells Timothy – we are that athlete – we are the ones that run the race in agony.

Why?

Because of the work that Jesus did on the cross.

He knows that there is enough grace and forgiveness in the cross for the entire world,

But that only those who respond in faith lay hold of it's power.

Still, he pours himself out in effort to ensure that he is bringing to the Lord everything he is so that God can use him to maximum effect.

Then he tells Timothy – tell others to do the same.

This is what ministry is supposed to be all about – growing and maturing in godliness.

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

As I mentioned when we started the book of Timothy, Paul started the church in Ephesus. He was the pastor there for three years.

And then he appointed Timothy – who was much younger than he was (Many theologians believe Paul was in his 70's and Timothy – during this time - was in his late thirties – early forties) and it appears that either Timothy began to question his usefulness to God because of his age or it could have been some of those in the church that started to compare his ministry to Paul's.

Maybe they felt that he wasn't seasoned enough and that is how these false teachers infiltrated the church.

So this might have discouraged Timothy.

So Paul encourages Timothy and tells him that the one sure way to overcome any questions about his age was to focus on his ministry and example.

If he was an example to others in what it means to study and teach the Word of God, if he was an example in the way he conducted himself and showed agape love to all, if he showed himself to be spiritually minded instead of merely temporal, if his faith and purity all pointed people to Jesus, then all question and concerns regarding his age and qualification would dissolve.

In other words – Paul is telling Timothy

Don't let you age or inexperience define whether you can be used by God – allow your character do it.

I think we find an application here for the church –

We have lots of excuses as to why we can't be used by the Lord.

Sometimes we're like Timothy and we think we're too young or inexperienced for God to use us.

First of all - Don't hide behind your excuses.

Let God shape your life and press you into the lives of others.

Give them an example to follow, even if you think you're an uneven, imperfect example.

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

Paul was expecting to make it back to Ephesus one more time, though we're not sure he did.

The things he lists here are the things that he considered the priorities for "church".

There are the things that the church ought to be about when we're together.

Reading the word of God –

Putting the Word of God into practice – Exhortation

Teaching the word of God.

Unfortunately, there seems a general distaste for doctrine in many churches today.

It seems that many would rather be entertained than taught.

But I give thanks that you are here this morning because I know that doctrine is important to each one of you.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

Paul reminds him of events in his past that placed the stamp of God's call on his life.

He needed to stop looking at himself and his own inabilities and step out in faith, trusting that where God guides, He provides

Remember - God does not ask for your ability – only your availability.

If God is calling you, do not neglect the call.

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Doctrine cannot be detached from the one who holds it.

To teach one thing but do another is hypocrisy and we all know how God feels about that!

So Paul tells Tim to examine his own heart in the light of the Word of God.

You see, a servant of God can be so busy helping others that he or she neglects him or herself and his or her own spiritual walk.

That is why there are so many pastors that fall –

And the reason it is so important is because of the last sentence in verse 16

Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

If Timothy continues to examine his own heart and take inventory of his life and teachings – he is not going to follow the same path of the apostates.

But if he fails to do it - If he doesn't continue to exercise care, he might stray, and if he does he will also lead the flock astray.

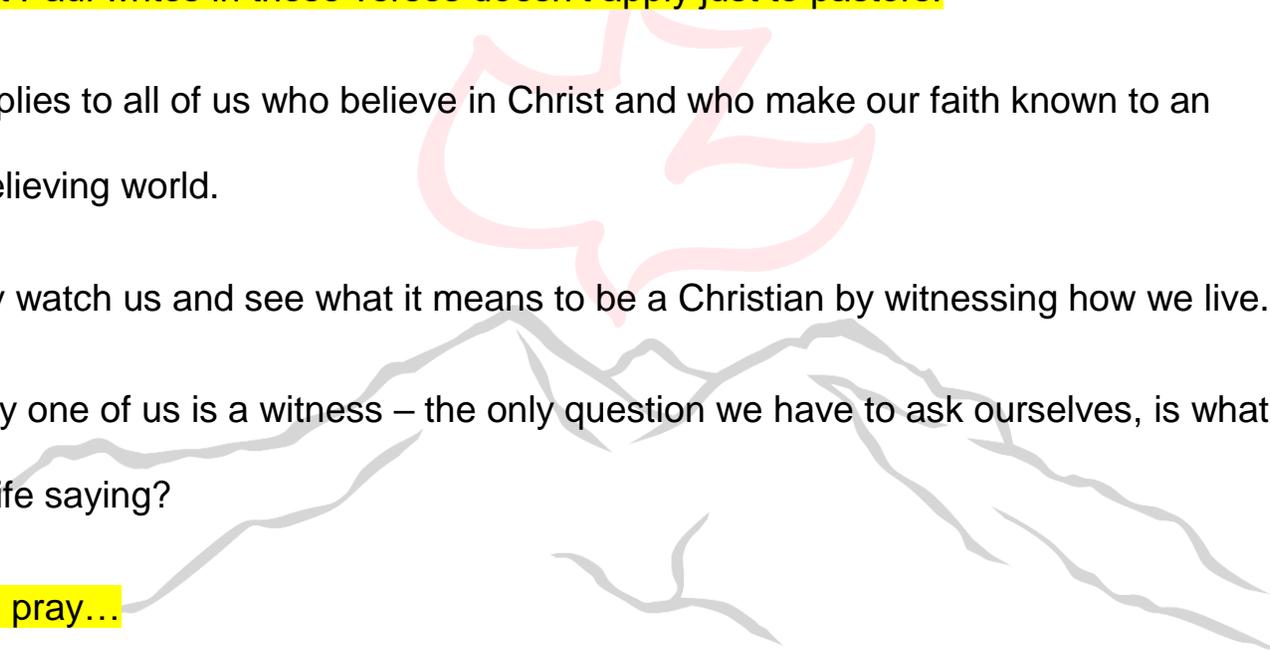
What Paul writes in these verses doesn't apply just to pastors.

It applies to all of us who believe in Christ and who make our faith known to an unbelieving world.

They watch us and see what it means to be a Christian by witnessing how we live.

Every one of us is a witness – the only question we have to ask ourselves, is what is our life saying?

Let's pray...



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