

Text: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Title: Qualities of Pastoral Ministry

Truth: A good minister continuously watches his own life and public ministry so as to persevere in the faith and help others to do the same.

Date/Location: Sunday Evening, May 21st & 28th, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

In 1 Timothy 4:11-16, Paul desires Timothy to continue the work he had begun. Timothy's ministry would continue to be effective in the church if he kept commanding and teaching the things Paul instructed in this epistle. In addition to commanding and teaching, Timothy was to be an example to believers so as not to give anyone reason to despise him for ungodly conduct. Timothy surely was expected to meet the qualifications of Elders in chapter three.

I. Commanding & Teaching (v.11)

Verse eleven functions as the transition between vv.6-10 and vv.12-16. The instruction to Timothy is to command and teach these things. From the immediate context, we gather that "the things" Timothy is to command against is the error of ascetism (v.1-5; e.g., prohibiting marriage, eating certain kinds of food) and teach that food should be received from God with thanksgiving on these grounds: 1) God created everything good; it is sanctified by the word of God, and 2) it is received with thanksgiving; sanctified by prayer. The "things" which Paul has in mind extend, however, beyond the immediate context to everything Paul has written in the epistle.

- A. "To command" is a term of authority. Paul instructs Timothy to only to teach but command acceptance of Paul's teaching. As an apostolic representative and a minister of Christ Jesus, Timothy had authority to set forth commands. Today there are no more apostles or apostolic representatives, but Pastors carry the same responsibility to guard the church from doctrine and practices

that disunify the church and contradict biblical truth. Those who hold the office of Elder also have similar authority to command from the Scripture. The Word of God is the believer's ultimate authority, but God gives churches pastors to communicate its directives and commands. The pastor is not to allow the propagation of human philosophy, moralism, licentiousness, ascetism, legalism, prosperity movements, universalism, etc. The pastor must command boldly and authoritatively; yet he is not to be haughty, ungracious, or ungentle in his rebuke (2 Tim 2:24-26).

- B. "To teach" suggests that Timothy is to positively set forth sound doctrine. The best antidote to false teaching is sound doctrine. Some may ask why most of our meetings consist of teaching/preaching? All our weekly gatherings consist of some measure of teaching, including our Wednesday evening prayer. Why? Because we believe that God's Word is central to the life of the church and individual believers, as it gives everything necessary for life and godliness (2 Pt 1:3) and is profitable for instruction, doctrine, reproof, correction, equipping (2 Tim 3:16). At Fellowship Bible Church, we call out as one of our core beliefs Scripture's authority and sufficiency in the life of the believer and the church:

"The Bible is sufficient for life and godliness. We are thankful that God has given us the Bible in several good English translations we can use today. We endeavor to make the Bible our rule for living in practice, not just in theory. We believe in the unqualified acceptance of and obedience to the Scriptures. We are keenly interested in Bible doctrine, for doctrine is that which is taught to us to believe, and God puts a premium on a man's beliefs. Men can believe rightly or wrongly. When one becomes a Christian, he "learns Christ" (Ephesians 4:20-24) and

wants to please the Lord by believing the same things that the Lord believes. To believe otherwise is to believe a lie.”¹

II. Exemplary Conduct (v.12)

Not only was Timothy charged to minister the Word of God, commanding, and teaching those things which Paul had written to the church, but he was also charged not to allow anyone to despise his youth. Interestingly, many commentators believe that Timothy was somewhere in his late-20s to mid-30s. From my perspective, this does not seem young at all. However, for those who are in their fifties, sixties, or seventies, those in their 20s or 30s are still very young.

One biblical scholar provides historical-cultural insight. “While people normally wouldn’t consider this too young for pastors in our culture, leaders in the ancient world were typically older people who commanded respect in the community and possessed extensive life experience.”²

Older, however, does not necessarily mean more honorable or spiritually mature (Job 32:9; cf. Js 3:13). Older people have more life experience, but if their experience is devoid of attention to the word of God, then, sadly, honorability and spiritual maturity is likely lacking (this does not permit unloving behavior toward them; see 1 Tim 5:1)

A. “to despise” means **to look down on someone with contempt or aversion, with implication that one considers someone of little value, look down on, despise, scorn, treat with contempt.**³

¹https://www.fbcaa.org/connect-detail/Core_Beliefs

²J. M. G. Barclay, “There is Neither Old Nor Young” *Early Christianity and Ancient Ideologies of the Age*, NTS 53 (2007): 225-41.

³BDAG, s.v. “καταφρονέω,” 529.

- B. There were some who criticized Timothy's commands and instruction on account of his relative youth. Who is this young "punk" anyways? Paul is not permitting Timothy to demand respect; rather, the idea is that Timothy is to behave in such a manner that he gives others no reason to despise him for any legitimate reason (i.e., conduct vs age). In other words, what Timothy may have been lacking in years of life experience, he should make up in spiritual maturity.
- C. Young pastors or teachers should give careful attention to their conduct so as not to hinder their teaching ministry (i.e., credibility). As Paul says in verse sixteen, "take heed to yourself" or "pay close attention to yourself" so as not to be looked down upon.
- D. At the same time, Timothy must be an example. If Timothy is an example to others in the following areas, there will be no legitimate reason for anyone to look down upon Timothy's conduct or teaching. As a believer, we must be an example to other believers, our children, our neighbor, as our conduct can either bolster or undermine our goal to evangelize or disciple them. These areas extend beyond the pulpit or the church building into all areas of life.
1. Word – speech, communication. This includes all forms of communication (i.e., speech and writing). This applies to all people and all times, not just when in the presence of other believers.
 2. Conduct – This refers to one's general behavior and way of life. Think along these lines: honesty, integrity, hard work, faithful to family and obligations, purity.

3. Love – a warm regard for, interest in, esteem of other people; to be sacrificial with your time, energy, finances. Sound teaching produces love (1 Tim 1:5).⁴
 4. Faith – exemplary in your personal faith in sound doctrine and good works.
 5. Purity – of the mind; of sexual conduct; of behavior around women (5:2).
- E. The terms “word” and “conduct” refer to outwardly observable qualities. The terms “love,” and “faith,” and “purity” are inward qualities. However, these latter qualities will necessarily manifest themselves outwardly in the life of a believer. All these qualities the false teachers lacked!

III. Bible-Centered Worship (v. 13)

Paul tells Timothy that his focus in his ministry in the church should be upon the public proclamation of Scripture, specifically, reading, exhortation, and doctrine. In these ways Timothy is to apply his “trade.” The Scripture is profitable when read, exhorted from, and taught.

- A. Reading. Early in the notes I mentioned that FBC is Bible-centered because we believe in the authority and sufficiency of Scripture. This is not speaking about private Bible reading, but the public reading of Scripture. In the OT, the Law was read publicly at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 31:9-13; cf. 2 Cor 3:14). In the NT, we see that the portions of the Law were read on every Sabbath (Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21). The best way to immerse yourself in God’s Word is to read it or have it read to you. The reason that we devote a portion of our service to the reading is so that we are immersed in more Scripture.

⁴Spirit – omitted in some manuscripts. See Col. 1:8. This would have to refer to your spirit or demeanor. This is a reflection of the work of the Holy Spirit.

- B. Exhortation. The act of emboldening another in belief or course of action, encouragement (BDAG, 766) (1 Thes 2:3; Hb 13:5; Phil 2:1). Some suggest that preaching conveys the idea well, which I agree with. As a pastor, our job is not just to convey an idea, but to embolden you to respond in belief and a change of living or thinking (see 2 Tim 3:16-17). Timothy was to encourage and exhort the church in the faith. The act of exhortation is not just for the pastor, all believers are to be doing this (1 Thes 5:11).
- C. Doctrine. The act of teaching, instruction (BDAG, 240). Believers need to be taught and instructed in the Word. Teaching and preaching are closely tied, yet distinct. We might say that teaching focuses more on explanation whereas preaching emphasizes exhorting or commanding. Neither, however, are completed void of the other. Although we believe in the perspicuity of Scripture, doctrine is necessary because some passages are more difficult to understand than others (Neh 8:1-7).

IV. Endurance (v. 14)

- A. This is the second of three references in the PE to Timothy's commissioning into ministry (cf. 1 Tim 1:18; 2 Tim 1:6). Paul's encouragement was to continue using his gift in Ephesus. It's unlikely that command was intended to reprimand Timothy for giving up; rather, it should be understood as an encouragement to one who has become weary. Timothy was to keep on using the gift.
- B. The "gift" that is in Timothy refers to the spiritual gifts given to Timothy by the Spirit by God's grace which enabled him to complete his ministry (see 2 Tim 1:6).
- C. The clause "which was given to you *by* prophecy" modifies the "gift" that is in Timothy. This begs the question, did Timothy receive the gift *by* actual means of prophecy (efficient cause) or is Paul saying that the prophecy is linked to the gifting, but not

means or agent (attendant circumstance). It's not possible that the prophecy is the agent or means by which Timothy was given this gift, as that is God's role. The prophecy simply indicates that Timothy possessed certain spiritual gifts.

- D. The conclusion should be made about the clause "with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." At a pastoral ordination or commissioning service, pastors will often pray for the candidate or missionary and lay their hands on them. This act of laying on of hands is not supernatural, it does not endow someone with power, it does not give them spiritual gifts. The prophecy and laying on of hands simply indicated or recognized the gifts that Timothy already possessed. Paul is encouraging Timothy to make use of the gifts he possesses, calling to remembrance the testimonies which surrounded his commissioning into ministry (2 Tim 1:6).

V. Diligence (v. 15)

- A. There are four imperatives found in these last two verses. All four have a continuous aspect, which expresses Paul's urgency and concern: Timothy must continually, constantly, follow these instructions.⁵ The word "meditate" means to improve by care or study, *practice, cultivate, take pains with* (BDAG, 627). Other translations perhaps capture the idea more clearly: "Take pains with these things" (NASB, NET) or "Practice these things" (ESV, CSB). Timothy was to be cultivating or practicing Paul's instructions in his life and ministry so that others would see his progress (v. 15). The word "absorbed" is not found in the Greek text. A literal translation of the GNT is "be in them." Timothy was to diligently be putting into practice Paul's instructions in his personal and public ministry.

⁵William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, 263.

- B. By doing so, Timothy's progress will be evident to all. True progress in the faith will be evident to all. The word *progress* implies that one is not perfect yet. The Christian minister should not try to hide his flaws or failures but demonstrate that he too is making progress by diligently putting into the practice God's Word. Just as he encourages his flock to advance in Christlikeness and manifest the fruit of the Spirit, equally so, he too should be making evident progress. This stands in contrast to the false teachers who were not progressing in their spirituality (2 Tim 3:9; 3:13; 2 Tim 2:16).

VI. Moral & Doctrinal Perseverance (v. 16)

- A. Timothy is to take heed to himself and his teaching. He is to watch over his personal life and his ministry so that he does not make shipwreck his faith, so some have. Many pastors and ministries have faltered and crumbled because somewhere along the way they stopped maintaining a disciplined moral personal life which inevitably affected their teaching ministry as well. It is the unmistakable teaching of Scripture that persevering in the faith is a mark of genuine salvation.
- B. The reason for perseverance is found at the end of verse sixteen. Timothy will save himself and save others. How do we interpret the meaning of "save."
- a. Some suggest that Paul means Timothy and the church will be "kept safe" from the false teaching. However, Paul does not use the typical word that would be translated "kept safe" (1 Tim 2:15).
 - b. Others suggest that we have here the idea of perseverance (cf. 1 Tim 2:15).⁶ This is the better of two interpretations.

⁶This idea accords with other Pauline perseverance passages (Rom 11:22 "if you remain"; 1 Cor 9:27; 15:1-2; Phil 2:12; Col 1:23 "if indeed you remain.")

- c. By being an example to the church (“take heed to yourself”) and giving himself continuously to the teaching of the Scripture, Timothy will persevere in the faith and help others to do the same (i.e., future salvation). Ultimately God is the one who saves and preserves, but man also has a personal responsibility to persevere in the faith (Jas 5:20; Jude 23).
- d. “It is not that Timothy’s endurance would merit salvation but that a stamina that produced holiness and doctrinal orthodoxy gave incontrovertible evidence of heading for salvation. Second, Paul suggested that the obedient perseverance of the preacher is an important factor in the endurance of the hearers. The preacher’s model of perseverance builds the same trait in his flock. The stumbles and fumbles of a wandering spiritual leader will infect a congregation with a variety of spiritual sicknesses.”⁷

Conclusion

Regarding Timothy’s ministry, here are eight summary statements to capture Paul’s instructions in vv. 6-16:

- 1) By following Paul’s instructions, training himself in the Gospel and good doctrine, Timothy will be a good minister (v.6).
- 2) Timothy should avoid myths but exercise for the goal of godliness (vv. 7-10).
- 3) He should command these instructions and teach (v. 11)
- 4) He should not let people look down upon him for his conduct but be a good example (v 12).
- 5) He should devote himself to Scripture (v. 13).
- 6) He should not forget that he has the gifts for ministry (v. 14).

⁷ Lea, Thomas D., and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*. Vol. 34. NAC, 141.

- 7) He should continually practice these instructions, so that his progress is evident to all (v. 15)
- 8) He should watch himself and the teaching, remain in them; for by persevering, he will save himself and those who listen to him (v. 16).⁸

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⁸William D Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, 246.