

FITNESS FOR LEADERSHIP / Sunday School- March 20, 2011

Unifying Topic: PREPARE FOR LEADERSHIP

Lesson Text

I. Proper Spiritual Training (I Timothy 4:6-11)

II. An Example For Believers (I Timothy 4:12-16)

The Main Thought: 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. (I Timothy 4:12, KJV).

Unifying Principle: People who are asked to serve in leadership positions may question their qualifications and preparedness. How should potential leaders respond to opportunities to serve? The writer of I Timothy encouraged leaders to give themselves to God's work without neglecting their personal spiritual quest.

Lesson Aim: To help students appreciate how Christian leaders are to be good examples.

Life Aim: To teach how Christian ministers are to prepare themselves through proper training to perform their responsibilities in preaching and teaching the Word, and to live a life that is an example for others to follow.

- 4:6 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.
- 4:7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.
- 4:8 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.
- 4:9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation.
- 4:10 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.
- 4:11 These things command and teach.
- 4:12 Let no man despise thy youth; but in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
- 4:13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.
- 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.
- 4:15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.
- 4:16 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.

HISTORY:

Chapter 3:14-16: The truth revealed will cause the church to go forward to cause many to come into the kingdom. Paul has made things clear about Jesus to the church, now the church has to behave as the living church of God and not allow the gospel to be a mystery. [For the completion of these verses, it is in the Sunday School Lesson of "The Search For Meaning"—March 6, 2011].

Chapter 4:1-5: ¹In this chapter the apostle foretells a dreadful apostasy which should happen in the last times, Paul begins this chapter with describing how the Spirit has revealed that in latter times there would be an apostasy in which some would depart from the faith. This falling away would come about as people gave heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, leading to their speaking lies in hypocrisy and searing their consciences as with a hot iron. Examples of their false doctrines are given: forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from certain foods. Regarding the latter, Paul makes it clear that all foods are acceptable if they be received with thanksgiving, for they are sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (1-5).

LESSON:

I Timothy 4:6-11 Proper Spiritual Training

V6 This is the second charge given to the young minister Timothy. **If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ:** Remembrance is needed because it is so easy to forget. Forget what? - Impress upon them what has just been written; call their attention to it again; everything that has come before in Paul's letter (verse 1):

- The danger of apostasy (some will depart).
- The danger of deception (deceiving spirits).
- The danger of false teaching (doctrines of demons).

When he calls him, "*a good minister of Jesus Christ*," he is referring to the things that Timothy had to bring to their remembrance to fulfill his call. A good minister must teach positive doctrine so that people will know what they believe

¹ http://executableoutlines.com/1ti/1ti_04.htm

and where they are going. But he must also expose false doctrine so that people will not be seduced and led astray. It may not be popular all the time but it will be beneficial.

V6b nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained: A good minister is first nourished by a teacher and he also nourishes himself in the Words of faith and good doctrine. Timothy's early training was under the guidance of a godly mother and grand-mother. That training made him a good minister and servant of Jesus Christ and the church. Paul continues that training. He's saying, be nourished on the words of faith and the true teaching which you have followed. Therefore, you would watch what you are feeding on! Only by reading the Word, studying it, meditating on it, and mastering its contents can a pastor fulfill his mandate (2Tim.2:15). Timothy had been doing so since childhood (2Tim.3:15) and Paul urged him to continue. It is true that the words of faith and sound doctrine are nourishment. Just as our bodies need food for nourishment, so too, do our spirits. What you feed on is what is going to determine how effective you become as a leader. The "*good minister*" preaches the Word that he himself feeds on day by day. But it is not enough to preach the Word; he must also practice it.

V7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness: There are a lot of distracting things you could give your attention and your mind to. However, a good minister avoids frivolous speculations, rejects profane tales and old wives fables. "*Exercise*" (*Gr gymvazo*) is the word from which we get gymnasium. Exercise takes determination and discipline. "*Godliness*", is a proper attitude and response toward God; holiness of heart which is the prerequisite from which all effective ministry flows. Don't get detoured by profitless trivia, but rather exercise about those things that lead unto godliness.

V8 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. "*Exercise*" is an athletic term denoting the rigorous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes. All of his physical energy, effort, time, and dedication are to be given over to godliness instead. He is to train himself to a godly life, as a gymnast trains himself in bodily physical exercise. If half the effort that goes into bodily exercise were put into spiritual exercise, God's people would be much healthier and stronger spiritually and much better off. Certainly we ought to care for our bodies, and exercise is a part of that care but spiritual self-discipline is the path to godly living. Our bodies are God's temples, to be used for His glory, and His tools and service. But bodily exercise benefits us only during this life; godly exercise is profitable now and for eternity. Bodily exercise is profitable, but godliness is far more profitable. The reason is clear: godliness bears fruit—great fruit—both in this life and in the life to come. God promises to bless the godly person now while he walks upon this earth, and eternally when he receives that life to come. Therefore, a good minister exercises himself to godliness.

V9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation: A good minister is a man of reason and of purpose. Therefore, all that is being said, all the instructions are trustworthy and all deserve his complete acceptance. Therefore, he commits his life to do exactly what Scripture charges him to do.

V10 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: Paul is saying, we're in this together. We both work and suffer rejection. The word "*labor*" (*Gr kopiaō*) means to work at it to the point of exhaustion as athletes do. A good minister labors and labors, works and works to the point of fatigue and exhaustion; to the point that he can go no further. He exerts every ounce of energy and effort in his body for the sake of God and Christ. He continues to minister even when men ridicule, revile, mock, curse, and persecute him. And he is even willing to suffer reproach (rejection) for Christ. Why?

- Because God is the living God in whom he trusts.
- Because Jesus Christ is the Savior of all men especially to those that believe. All men can be saved, actually delivered from the grip of sin, death, and condemnation.

Therefore the good minister must labor, no matter the reproach. He must share the glorious news: man can now be reconciled to God and live forever.

V11 These things command and teach. A good minister commands and teaches these things. One of the difficulties Timothy had to overcome was that he was young. It was that he must silence criticism by conduct. He had to preach and teach with authority, standing boldly declaring the Word of God and the commandments of God. He does not allow the fear of men or the danger of hardship stop him. He stands in the strength of the Lord. Therefore, he knows that the Lord will deliver him through all the dangers of life if he will only be faithful; if he will courageously declare the Word and the commandments of God.

I Timothy 4:12-16 An Example For Believers

V12 Let no man despise thy youth; but in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity: A good minister is an example to the believers. Greek cultures placed great value on age and experience. Since Timothy was in his thirties, still young by the standards of that culture, he would have to earn respect by being a godly example.

Timothy had to refuse to be discouraged from those who might have thought he was too young or inexperienced to Pastor. Paul is saying to Timothy that he is the stamp that is to leave an impression on those around him.

1. He was to be an example in word: ²A man's speech reflects what's in his heart. All types of sinful speech must be avoided by a man of God. That includes any deviation from truthfulness. He had to control his usual and familiar conversation and tongue at all times—in what he said and in the way he said it, no matter the opposition. He is to set the example in what he talks about.
2. He was to be an example in conversation: This refers to the conduct, behavior, and his lifestyle; the manner of his life. His conduct was to be disciplined and controlled. He was to demonstrate that he was a true follower and leader for the Lord, living in all godliness and righteousness for the Lord.
3. He was to be an example in love: This love is a self-sacrificing, caring commitment which shows itself in seeking the highest good of the one loved. Since the highest good for each person is that they glorify God in their lives, love is committed to help each person grow in submission to Christ's lordship. The good minister gives his time and energy to the people he is called to serve, devoting his whole life to seeing them strengthened and built up in the Lord.
4. He was to be an example in the spirit: His walk was being led by the Spirit and keeping his mind upon spiritual things. It means "*spiritual-mindedness*" (Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry's Commentary, p.821).
5. He was to be an example in faith: Faith here does not refer to belief, but to faithfulness or unswerving commitment. No matter what the circumstance, the good minister is faithful and loyal. This essential virtue of loyalty separates those who succeed in having a powerful influence from those who do not. He was to be loyal to the Lord Jesus and the church regardless of the demands, hardships, temptations, trials, or opposition.
6. He was to be an example in purity: This refers primarily to purity in the area of sexuality, both in actions and in the intentions of the heart. Sexual immorality always begins in the mind. He was to live a moral and clean, just and honest life. He was to be free—completely free—of coveting, lusting, worldliness, self-seeking, immorality, and all other known sins. He was to live a life of purity that far exceeded the standards of the world or just anybody else. His heart and life were to be pure—perfectly pure.

V13 Till I come: As a father gives instruction to a son, so Paul gives instruction to the one he has placed in his stead. Until Paul comes to Timothy, he is exhorted to:

1. Give yourself to reading, preaching and teaching (V13).
2. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you (V14).
3. Practice these duties (V15).
4. Watch your life and teaching closely (V16).

V13b give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine: At the end of this letter, Paul emphasizes to Timothy: A good minister devotes himself to public worship; a constant practice and way of life; be absorbed in it. There are three things in particular to which he is to publicly devote himself to:

1. Reading— He must read the Word publicly since all did not possess Bibles as we do today.
2. Exhortation—Exhort (encourage) people to act on it faithfully. Exhortation challenges those who hear the word to apply it in their daily lives. It intends the stirring up of believers to the exercise of grace.
3. Doctrine—Teach scripture and its doctrine understandably. "Doctrine" designs the teaching and instructing of the church in the mysteries of the Gospel; opening and explaining the truths of it; defending them against all opposers, and refuting errors and heresies contrary to them. Before he teaches others he must teach himself (Rom. 2:21). His spiritual progress is an example to his flock and an encouragement to others.

V14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery: The word "*gift*" is the Greek word "*charisma*." It simply means "*a gracious gift from God*." A good minister does not neglect the spiritual gift that is in him; the special anointing given him by the Holy Spirit. Neglect is dangerous, for it means that a minister fails to do his duty and he is unfaithful standing before God. The call is to the ministry. The source is from God. The power is of the Holy Spirit. Note, that the gift had been received through both prophecy and the laying on of hands by other elders or ministers of the church. Prophecy verified what the Lord had already done. Paul is reminding Timothy of this verification.

When Timothy was ordained by the elders ("*presbytery*"), he received an enabling gift from God when the elders laid hands on him. But for some reason, Timothy had neglected to cultivate this gift which was so necessary to his spiritual progress and ministry. In fact, Paul had to admonish him in his second letter, "*Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands*" (2 Tim. 1:6). It is encouraging to know that the God who calls us also equips us to do His work. We have nothing in ourselves that enables us to serve Him; the ministry must all come from God. However,

² <http://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/dont-let-anyone-look-down-on-you-alan-balatbat-sermon-on-doing-gods-will-68447.asp>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>

we must not be passive; we must cultivate God's gifts, use them, and develop them in the ministry of the local church and wherever God puts us.

V15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all: Meditate means "to attend carefully", turn over in your mind these things, not only what Paul had just mentioned, but also live, eat, and drink the Word and its instructions. A good minister meditates and wholly gives himself to these instructions. And he reflect upon the purpose of the Scripture to his people. It takes hours of thorough preparation to give a 35-minute message on Sunday morning! A preacher must examine Scripture carefully. He must: outline it, meditate on it, research it, ask and answer questions in his own mind about it, look up the meanings of words in the lexicons and books, look for illustrations, think through an introduction and a conclusion to his message, and yet do all this without becoming mechanical or artificial. That takes a lot of work because preaching requires careful preparation of the heart. The word "profiting" ("*progress*," *NIV*) is a Greek military term; it means "*pioneer advance*." The figure in the word is uncertain, but is supposed to be that of pioneers cutting a way before an army, and so furthering its advance. Timothy was to grow spiritually so that the whole church could see his spiritual progress and imitate it. It would be evident to all.

V16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: The words "*take heed*" (*epeche*) mean to keep a strict eye upon or to keep on paying attention to oneself and to one's teaching. Paul had given this same warning to the Ephesian elders in his farewell message: "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves*" (*Acts 20:28*). A good minister guards himself and his teaching. Timothy was to examine his heart in the light of the Word of God. Note that Paul put "*thyself*" ahead of "*the doctrine*."

1. He guards his body, keeps it both morally and physically fit. He flees the temptations that assault and seduce him, and he controls his thoughts and keeps them pure from the lusts of the world and flesh. He neither eats too much nor succumbs to immoral thoughts or acts. He neither gives in to greed nor seeks the possessions or wealth of the world.
2. He guards his spirit and keeps it spiritually fit. He worships God every day and lives in God's Word and prayer all day long, and he shares the glorious gospel of Christ, witnessing to and exhorting people as he walks throughout the day.
3. He guards his study and teaching, avoiding the profane doctrines, teachings, notions, philosophies, ideas, and fables of men.

V16b continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee: Note what he does. He continues in the instructions of the Word of God. The word "*continue*" (*epimene*) means to "*stay by them*," "*stick to them*," "*see them through*" (A.T. Robertson. *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol.4, p.582). By careful attention to his own godly life and faithful preaching of the Word, Timothy would continue to be the human instrument God uses to bring the gospel and to save some who heard him. The good minister leads by example. Why? A servant of God can be so busy helping others that he neglects himself and his own spiritual walk. However, by continuing in the instructions of the Word, he saves both himself and those who hear him. He cannot lead anyone further than he himself has gone. This is why Paul says here to Timothy, "*That all may see your progress*." The Word has to become personal within his own heart.

SUMMARY:

"We find Paul instructing Timothy on how he can be a good minister of Jesus Christ. As he instructs the brethren in matters pertaining to sound doctrine, he will also be nourished himself. But he should also be careful to avoid foolish fables, and rather exercise himself to godliness, which is of more enduring value than bodily exercise (vv6-10). These things were commanded and taught (v11).

Though Timothy is young, he should not let anyone despise him for his youth. Instead he must demonstrate the proper example of how a believer should speak and live. With further instruction as to what things to give attention, Paul encourages Timothy that by following these admonitions his progress will be evident to all, and he will save both himself and those who hear him (11-16).

Instructions were given for the preparation for leadership. The training, meaning practice will produce what you preach; will show the purposed product. You can't pluck anything before its time and God knows that time. No matter how young Timothy was, he was mature enough for the quest.

APPLICATION:

Being a good example means never forgetting who's in charge. Will it be you or God? The tests you go through prepares you for life and for the calling God has for your life. Follow Him first, so others can follow you second!

ⁱ <http://theparkwaychurchofchrist.com/SermonsM-S/order10.htm>

ⁱⁱ http://executableoutlines.com/1ti/1ti_04.htm