

THE SERVANT: HIS SELF AND HIS SERVICE

1 TIM 4:6-12
October 3, 2010

INTRODUCTION: Some have referred to this passage as the criteria by which a man of God must be evaluated. In this summary, Paul hands out the standard by which every minister and his ministry is to be measured.

According to William Barclay, the very first description of a church service which we possess is in the works of Justin Martyr. About the year 170 AD, he wrote a defense of Christianity to the Roman government, and in it he says, “*On the day called the day of the Sun a gathering takes place of all who live in the towns or in the country in one place. The Memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. Then the reader stops, and the leader by word of mouth impresses and urges to the imitation of these good things. Then we all stand together and send forth prayers.*”

1. EXPOSITION OF SCRIPTURE.

People ultimately do not gather together to hear the opinions of a preacher; they gather together to hear the Word of God. The Christian service is Bible-centered.

2. EXPLANATION OF SCRIPTURE.

There should be teaching. Christian doctrine is not easy to understand, but a man must be able to give a reason for the hope that is in him. There is little use in exhorting a man to be a Christian if he does not know what being a Christian is. There can be no lasting Christian faith in any church without a teaching ministry.

3. EXHORTATION OF SCRIPTURE.

The Christian message must always end in Christian action. Someone has said that every sermon should end with the challenge: “*What about it?*” It is not enough to present the Christian message as something to be studied and understood; it has to be presented as something to be done. Christianity is truth, but it is *truth in action*. Not just truth acquired, but truth applied!

4. INTERCESSION WITH THE SCRIPTURE.

Prayer; the gathering meet in the presence of God; it thinks in the Spirit of God; it goes out in the strength of God. The preaching, the listening, nor the action in the world is possible without the help of the Spirit of God.

Let’s focus our attention on the personal service of the Christian leader. We must remember that these positions of service are initiated by God’s call and a man is set apart for a special task by the church. In v. 6, Paul refers to the “**good minister of Jesus Christ.**” Paul used the word translated *deacon* in 3:8 (**Diakonos**), picturing Timothy as having the formation of a servant; anyone who serves in any ministry on Christ’s behalf. The word “**good**” in 3:1 describes the ministry and here identifies the man in that ministry. His service is to be one of serviceability or usefulness.

I. THE EXHORTING OF THE MENTOR. 6-9

“If you instruct the brethren in these things” – does not mean to issue orders but rather to advise, to suggest. It is a gentle, humble, modest word. It means that the teacher (mentor) must never dogmatically lay down the law. It means that he must act rather as if he was reminding men of what they already knew or suggesting to them, not that they should learn from him, but that they should discover from their own hearts what is right. Guidance given in gentleness will always be more effective than bullying instructions laid down with force. Men may be led when they will refuse to be driven.

A. WHAT TO ADHERE TO.

“nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine” – no one can give out without taking in. He who would teach must be continually learning. A day without intentional reflection on the Word of God is like a day without nourishment. Means to feed, to rear, middle voice (not acted upon by another, but speaks of your commitment to feed yourself). Present tense suggests that it is not by one outstanding banquet, nor by an occasional feast, but by a regular steady diet of everyday feeding.

“words of faith” – the body of Christian truth contained in Scripture.

“good doctrine which you have carefully followed” – speaks of a past commitment to Christian obedience and had been consistent in his practice. Teaching involves reminding ourselves and others of beliefs and practices we know but ignore or forget.

B. WHAT TO AVOID. 7-9

1. WHAT TO PUT AWAY. 7a

“reject profane and old wives’ fables” – profane speaks of what is radically separate from what is holy; unhallowed; anything that contradicts the Word of God.

“fables” – myths; speaks of an unwillingness to have his strength dissipated by ungodly teaching.

2. WHAT TO HAVE AS PRIORITIES. 7b-9

“exercise yourself toward godliness” – J. Oswald Sanders said, *“Spiritual ends can be achieved only by spiritual men who employ spiritual methods.”* There is no effective spiritual ministry apart from personal godliness.

“exercise” (discipline) – gymnasium and gymnastics derived from here. It means to train; speaks of rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes.

“toward godliness” – it is the heart and soul of Christian character and the aim of Christian living. A preoccupation from the heart with holy and sacred realities.

The priority of **verses 8-9** is referred to as a trustworthy statement. Means it is a self-evident, obvious statement. It is something so patently clear that everyone acknowledges it; therefore, v.9 is referring back to v.8.

Paul is not kicking bodily exercise to the curb, rather he is comparing the “exercise of godliness” to the rigorous exercise of the athlete. Cultivating godliness will bring benefits in the present life and in the life to come.

If we are not careful, we become physically fit, but spiritually flabby.

II. THE EXALTING OF THE MASTER. 10

A. WHAT WE DO.

“labor and suffer reproach” (strive) – it is the picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win. Godliness demands energy. Words suggest a continual outpouring of this energy.

B. WHY WE DO IT.

“because we trust in the living God” – he has fixed his hope on the living God. Perfect tense of verb indicates something done in the past with continuing results in the present. He constantly labors in the light of eternity. His concerns do not relate to the temporal world or earthly fulfillment, but to the realm of eternity and the invisible kingdom.

No one should ever claim that the Christian life is an easy life, but its goal is God. The greatness of the goal makes the toil worth while.

“who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” – Christ is potentially a ransom for the sins of all. The assurance belongs to those who have received Christ.

1 John 2:2, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

1 Timothy 2:4, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Timothy 2:6, “who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”

III. THE EXAMPLE OF THE MENTEE. 12

“Let no one despise your youth” – look down on your youthfulness; give no one grounds by any fault of character. *“Timothy, you do not have a long track record to establish credibility, so earn respect by your conduct.”*

“be an example” – to be imitated

1. In Your Conversation - “word”

2. In Your Conduct – “conduct”

Both of these are outward, but Paul concerns himself with the inward life as well; **“in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity”**

A. LOVE.

It involves self-sacrificing service on behalf of others.

John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.”

Greatest of Christian virtues; unconquerable benevolence. It keeps him from ever becoming bitter, resentful, or vengeful. He will never allow himself to hate; he will never refuse to forgive. Ordinarily, love is a thing of the heart, but clearly this Christian love is a thing of the will (you choose). It is the conquest of self whereby we develop an unconquerable caring for other people.

2 Corinthians 2:4, “For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.”

2 Corinthians 12:15, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.”

Love is our motivation

B. FAITH.

“in Spirit” – not in most manuscripts; it describes an inner enthusiasm for God's service.

“faith” – loyalty, fidelity to Christ, no matter what it may cost. It's a loyalty to Christ which defies circumstances; unswerving commitment. He does not deviate from his course. We trust God and are faithful to Him.

C. PURITY.

Speaks of an unconquerable allegiance to the standards of Christ. In the early days of Christianity, there was a report given concerning believers in Bithynia by their governor, he wrote: *“They are accustomed to bind themselves by an oath to commit neither theft, nor robbery, no adultery; never to break their word; never to deny a pledge that has been made when summoned to answer for it.”*

The Christian life is a life of purity. We should have a standard of honor and honesty, of self-control and chastity, of discipline far above the standards of the world. The simple fact is that the world will never have any use for Christianity, unless it can prove that it produces the best men and women.

Since the leader's life sets the standard for others to follow, an unqualified leader inevitably lowers the standard of godliness in the church. Godliness is for oneself, others, and the outsiders.