

1 Timothy 4:1-16

"Preaching, Practicing & Progressing In The Word"

What are you looking for when it comes to considering a church you call "home"? What are the things you think through when you consider planting yourself for the long haul in a local fellowship?

Many people look for the perks that come w/the package. "Do they have a good women's ministry, a good men's ministry, a single's ministry? Do they have a youth group or college campus outreach, how about small groups?" We look for certain things that are attached to the main hub, what kind of things does this church offer to/for me. We seldom stop to think about how we can contribute *to* the church, but rather what we can get *out of* or *from* the church. We approach it w/a "what's in it for me" mentality. Consequently many churches have developed the way that they do ministry to suit the "consumer" market. They want all the bells & whistles attached to their ministry so that they appeal to your personal appetites, if they offer what *you* want than you'll stick around.

But we shouldn't look to feed the "consumer appetite" but rather we should look to develop "communers" w/God. It's not about "consuming", it's about "communing" it's not about what *people* want to see in the church, it's about what GOD wants to see in the church. When we consider a church, though a good youth group & various solid ministries attached to it are great... The things *attached* to the main hub are secondary, what we need to consider is the *main hub*. What's happening behind the pulpit, are we going to get a steady diet of the un-diluted (& as we talked about Thursday evening) unapologetic word of God?

You see, small groups & social activities are all good & well, & they can develop over time (perhaps you'll be the one who spearheads the ministry you'd like to see offered). However what you're to be looking for is a church that *preaches* the Word, that *practices* the Word & that *progress* in the Word of God. That's basic exhortation of 1 Timothy Ch 4. Preach the word, practice the word, progress in the word. Timothy is to be a good minister (servant), a godly minister & a growing minister... notice.

Vs 1

1st Timothy Ch 4 is a dramatic departure from the MT Top we left off from in Ch 3. Ch 3 ends w/a lofty revelation of who J.C. is, the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory. This revelation of God becoming a Man in the Person of J.C.

From that Mt peak Paul says, “People won’t always hold tight to these things.” In the latter times some will *depart* from the faith, from the clearcut, obvious & essential teachings of the Word of God.

He gives us 3 tell tale signs of being in what he calls “latter times”. He says, “Fingerprint #1, Departure, Fingerprint #2 Deception, Fingerprint #3 Demonic Doctrines.”

“Now the Spirit expressly says” or “explicitly, very specifically” says, & w/that Paul begins to speak briefly into the spiritual condition of latter times. In Luke 18 We discover that Jesus said, “...when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”¹ In speaking of the last days in Matt’s gospel He said, “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.”² Here Paul reiterates, the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith.

We’re learning that specific spiritual dangers will accommodate/characterize the “latter times”. The danger of apostasy (or departure), the danger of deception, (deceiving spirits) & the danger of false doctrines (the doctrines of demons); of course we know that the bible qualifies the time of Christ’s appearing till His return as the last days. Heb Ch 1:1-2, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these **last** days spoken to us by His Son,”³ So the moment Jesus showed up on the scene we entered into the biblical era called the “last days”. It’s as if we rushed headlong to the edge of a cliff & now on the edge, history is running parallel to it & could careen off into eternity in an instant, at any moment. We’re there & when it comes, it will come suddenly & w/out warning.

The warning we get is written in God’s word, we’re reading of one of them now. As we get closer to the end there will be an increasing disinterest & disillusionment w/truth & a seeking after things seemingly spiritual, which is a lie. John said before he passed from the scene that already the spirit of A.C. was in the world, doctrines of demons, deceitful spirits. Paul saw it as future yet already casting its shadow over his day... it’s only been on the increase & up-rise since then.

Satan has his sights set on you believer, he wants to lead you astray... *Not* by means of obviously dangerous & damaging methods...subtly, deceitfully. You’re never going to receive a document that says, “Danger: Satanic document enclosed, read it, believe it & be destroyed by it.” No, people will come to your door, they’ll be well manicured, concerned & compassionate, nice & friendly...

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Lk 18:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 24:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). (Heb 1:1-2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That's why it's so critical that you know the truth of the Word of God. So you can recognize the lie. When Paul was writing to the Corinthians he spoke of deceitful workers who wanted to be regarded as messengers of truth, as though they had a message from God even as did the apostles. He said, *"...such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works."*⁴ Even as God speaks truth & uses people to share it, Satan will use people to spread his lies. (The doctrines of demons)

Vs 2-3

We spoke earlier in Timothy of the need for a "good conscience". Here Satan works through those who have a "seared" conscience, cauterized, being past feeling. Their conscience no longer replies when they speak lies & live the life of the hypocrite; you see one of the marks of the true servant of God is honesty/integrity, he will seek to practice what he preaches... This person will affirm something w/their lips that they deny w/their lives (speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared w/a hot iron).

You see, the apostate isn't wrong only on a doctrinal level, but on a moral level as well. As a matter of fact many times its moral justification he's looking for, that's why he changes his doctrinal position. You see they used to agree w/the scripture. But now that they want to justify sin in their life, they don't believe that any more. They kill off their conscience & propagate a lie.

The particular problem that Paul was dealing with was one of asceticism/legalism. People thinking that if they could somehow discipline their body physically that it would elevate them spiritually. As if institutions that God created are somehow *ungodly*... These people were teaching that it was more spiritual if you remained unmarried. When the general consensus of scripture is, *"It is not good that man should be alone;"* Gen 2:18 Some may be called to live a life as a single individual, that's fine. But most are called to marriage. It doesn't make you more spiritual to be married, it doesn't make you more spiritual to stay single. To each one as God calls them...

Same thing w/diet, many people who take the "spiritual" road do so as a vegetarian. Or a Vegan, as if that's a little holier or something. Listen, if you choose not to eat meat that's fine, but don't do so on the basis of a spiritual conviction, there's nothing spiritual about it.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [2 Co 11:13-15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul was dealing w/these same issues when he wrote to the Colossians. He said, *"Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— 'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of **no value** against the indulgence of the flesh."*⁵ As a matter of fact they might very well add to the indulgence of the flesh. Because now you're priding yourself on how spiritual you are. In seeking to discipline your flesh you're in fact feeding it all the more...

Vs 4-5

When God created the animals He said, "It is good" when He created male & female He said, "It is good." He told Noah, *Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.*⁶ Jesus taught that it's not what goes into a man's mouth that makes him unclean, it's what comes out of his mouth that defiles him. For the mouth speaks forth what's in the heart, murders, lusts, lewdness, pride, blasphemy...foolishness. These are the kind of things that defile a man, not eating pulled pork 😊.

Jesus told Peter, "Rise Peter, Kill & Eat" it's ok to have a hamburger or whatever... Now if you change your diet for physical reasons that's up to you (wanna be a little healthier or whatever) but there's no benefit in changing your diet for spiritual reasons. Just pray & thank God for it, He's declared it's fine, thank Him for it & eat it. *"Nothing is to be refused if it is received w/thanksgiving."* (Sushi? Thank God for it, & eat it. Bacon? Thank God for it & pound it down. 😊 I'm not saying it won't hurt you physically, but it doesn't hurt you spiritually. Foods don't commend us to God.

Vs 6

So here we have it right, what's the main objective of the Pastor in the local church? To "instruct the brethren" of these things. What things? The true teachings of the Word of God. We want to be *nourished*, that is, *trained in* the words of faith & of the good doctrine, or teaching that's found in the Word of God. *It involves both the instruction of positive doctrine & the exposing of false doctrine that people might be wise, not easily deceived or led astray. We're to be faithful conduits of truth.*

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Col 2:20-23). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 9:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You might underline the words “carefully followed.” You’ve examined it *thoroughly* & you follow it *faithfully*. You don’t just know it; you do it, you follow (or obey) the teaching of God’s Word.

If you want to be a “good servant” of J.C. you will need to *nourish* yourself in the words of faith & of the good doctrine. If you fill your mind w/ungodly things, don’t act surprised when you become an ungodly person. But if you will fill yourself w/the word of God, nurture yourself on the words of faith, & good doctrine you will become a good servant of J.C.

Vs 7-8

Hey don’t just preach or proclaim the word, practice the word. “Exercise yourself” toward godliness. Don’t entertain the ungodly words of man (reject profane & old wives’ fables) don’t be distracted from the goal, the goal is godliness, that’s what we’re “exercising” ourselves toward. **Jesus said that when we grab hold of the plow we’re not to look to the left or to the right, we’re not to deviate from the path. What path? The narrow path which leads to life, the path that you started down when you surrendered your life unconditionally to J.C. Don’t deviate from the truth of God’s word, don’t give ear to other teachings, stay true to the word of God.**

Now, Timothy was a young man at this time. Maybe he was into fitness, that was a very prominent passion in the Greek world. All you have to do is look at the ancient sculptures to see that they were into the physical specimen. Be that as it may Paul says, “Hey, think of it like this. Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable in virtually every arena as it pertains both to this life & the life to come.”

Paul doesn’t say that there’s no value in hitting the gym. He just says that it’s only of value for a little while, for a small temporary span as it pertains to this life. He says, “But if you’ll exercise, or train yourself toward, or pursue godliness (God-likeness) that will be of benefit both now & forever.”

Now maybe physical fitness isn’t your thing, but you have a hobby or a profession that you’re passionate about. Paul is saying, pursue godliness w/that same passion. Do spiritual exercises. Pray, read the word, serve the Lord, tithe, submit one to another, sacrifice, witness. **All of those things will train you in godliness, & godliness will help you both now & forever. If you’re growing in godliness it will help you in our marriage, in your employment, godliness has the potential to impact your every action, every experience & every relationship for the good.**

Now, godliness may not make this life the most comfortable, or the riches, or most pleasurable, or the easiest, but it will be the most contented, fulfilling life you can live in this world & it makes for a great reward when you see Jesus face to face.

There are all kinds of things you can do that will have no impact on your eternal well being whatsoever. Godliness isn't one of them, it will "profit" you in the life to come. Sin & vice have nothing to offer you in the life to come, degrees & certificates of "higher learning" offer nothing in the life to come, worldly success or wealth, personal fame or beauty, being an accomplished musician or athlete or artist offers nothing in the life to come. Only godliness is guaranteed to benefit you. Not only now potentially, but it's guaranteed throughout eternity.

Vs 9-11

We don't trust in idolatry, or some vain philosophy, but in the Living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

What does that mean? "Savior of all men, especially of those who believe?" **It means that God in the Person of J.C. gave Himself for the sins of all mankind, there is no other way by which man must be saved but by grace through faith in the Person of J.C. For God so loved the "World" He is the Savior of all men. The sufficiency of His sacrifice is broad enough to encompass all of humanity throughout all of world history.**

However the efficiency will only be realized by those who believe. God alone is the Savior of all men, there is no other way. That salvation will be realized, or apprehended by those who believe.

Btw I want to point out that when Paul says, "For to this end we *labor*". That word "labor" speaks of exertion to the point of exhaustion. Exercising toward godliness takes work, how many of you can bear witness to that? It takes discipline & devotion to make a winning athlete, same holds true if you're to be an effective Christian.

You will avoid untruth while actively pursuing the truth, you will have public service & personal/private integrity, you will teach others while learning & growing personally, you will exhort others but examine yourself; discipline & devotion, both are critical.

We want to have magical pixie dust sprinkled over our heads & wake up the next morning all godly, it doesn't work that way. Godliness demands discipline, it takes energy. I've got to deny myself, a crucify my flesh & walk in the Spirit ... *intentionally*. "These things (Paul says) command & teach." Teach God's word w/authority, unapologetically...

& Let the chips fall where they may...

Vs 11-16

Preach the Word, Practice the Word & Progress in the Word. Hey, that applies to us all! He says, "Let no one despise your youth." Now we don't know exactly how old Timothy was at this time. We know that the word "youth" was applied in the ancient Greek until you were too old to be drafted into the Military which was 40 yrs of age. Many believe that Timothy was perhaps early 30's at this time.

So don't envision this 18-20 yr old young guy. However Paul would've been around 70 or so. I've discovered that to an extent youth is always relative. If someone is a decade or more older than you, you're young to them. & Sometimes those older than you can be critical of what they consider a lack of life experience in you (& often times understandably so).

Paul says, "Don't let anyone be able to say something justifiably critical of you, but rather you set the standard, be an example of godliness to the other believers around you."

Think about that, what if today we all looked at your life & we wanted you to be our example. So this week we are all going to speak like you speak, we're going to be in the word to the extent you're in the word, we're going to pray like you pray & we're going to conduct ourselves like you conduct yourself. Would we be the better for it (as a body of believers) or worse?

Paul says to Timothy & to you & me, consider yourself the example in what you say, in what you do, in your attitude, in faithfulness & in moral purity. These 1st few deal w/what people see outwardly, the last few deal w/who you are inwardly, we're to be examples one to another in these ways.

We're to give attention (as a church) to reading God's word publicly, a preacher worth his salt will exhort you to love the Lord your God, trust the Lord, serve the Lord, don't just hear the word, do the word; & we're to be mindful to teach God's word. Read it, explain it, apply it.

Don't neglect the gift that's w/in you. God has given you a gift or gifts of His Spirit, are you employing them in the kingdom of God, or neglecting them, burying them & making no use of them?

Vs 15

Meditate on these things, immerse yourself in them, you won't absorb the truth of God by gliding/glancing over it, you've got to go all in. Biblical mediation isn't an emptying of your mind, it's a filling of your mind w/the word of God.

“Give yourself entirely to them,” Give the goal of godliness all that you are, put forth your maximum effort, exert yourself to the point of exhaustion in becoming the man or woman God has called you to be; & I guarantee you people will see Christ in you. Your progress will be made evident to all. Your spiritual life shouldn't be a sideline kind of option that you occasional practice, your life should be absorbed entirely in these things.

So often we fall short because we're quite simply passive in our Christian life, we don't give ourselves *entirely* to these things. Alan Redpath said, “You might have a saved soul but a wasted life.” Let that never be said of you! May that never be said of me...

Vs 16

Every pastor, every person needs to constantly examine 2 great areas of concern. Our life, & our doctrine. A life not in order leads to shipwreck. It happens all the time in ministry. **Guys like myself exert so much effort into helping others that we neglect ourselves & consequently the pastor's life, marriage, family & ministry crumble right out from under him.**

But it's so important that God work *in* us, if He's to effectively work *through* us. We should tend to ourselves, examine ourselves in the light of God's word. God's word isn't just for the people, it's for the preacher to. It's salvation to us & to those around us... So may we be a people who proclaim God's Word, who practice God's Word, & who progress in God's Word. Amen?

Prayer Points:

Father we recognize that we're in the latter times, people seem to be falling out of love w/You in an ever increasing fashion. May we hold tight to the truth of Your word, may we be nourished in the words of faith & the good doctrine, may we carefully follow after them. Teach us Lord what it means to exercise ourselves toward godliness, to be examples to one another in godliness & to give ourselves entirely to pursuing You. We want to be all that You've called us to be for the glory of Your name.

It's true that God is the Savior of all men, but you will only apprehend that Salvation by grace through faith in the Person of J.C. Jesus said, “I am the way the truth & the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me.” He was crucified for our transgressions, but raised that we might be justified in the sight of God, through faith in Him. Surrender your heart, your life to God today... it may not be the easy way, but it's the only way by which you will be saved.