

The Good Servant of Christ - Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy to demolish myths by focusing on the teaching of Scripture
2. aim – to cause us to seek ways by which we recognize myths that divert from the true gospel
3. passage – 1 Timothy 4:1-16

b. outline

1. The Good Servant Sees (1 Timothy 4:1-5)
2. The Good Servant Trains (1 Timothy 4:6-10)
3. The Good Servant Teaches (1 Timothy 4:11-16)

c. opening

1. the **disappointments** of the pastorate
 - a. while there are many blessings to being a pastor (**e.g.** conversions, spiritual growth), there are a number of significant disappointments – one of those disappointments is when people leave
 1. not to go off to seminary or retire near their grandchildren or are relocated by their job
 2. rather, those who simply wander off, with no explanation as to why – not (necessarily) leaving the faith, but leaving for something “different” or “easier” or “more appealing”
 3. **reminder:** most apostasy is *not* people renouncing Christ – it is usually just a slow drift away from orthodoxy and orthopraxy that results in them “checking out” of the church over time
 - b. one of the responses to this by pastors is to ask: could we (or I) have done something different?
 1. unfortunately, this becomes a “cat-chasing-his-tail” problem – if we do “this” differently, will they stay, and what will they need different *next* (**e.g.** being a manager at CDI)?
 2. maybe this is why so many pastors “burn out” and leave the ministry, even before 5 years!
 - a. **note:** one of the values of the type of leadership structure implied in **1 Tim. 3**
 - c. one of the beauties of **1 Tim. 4:6** = a strong *confidence builder* in what it means to be a pastor and deal with those things that are disappointing – Paul’s way of building up Timothy in the face of these kinds of disappointments, encouraging him to “soldier on”
2. the beginning of a **new chapter**
 - a. a chapter which gives a *concrete definition* to what the church *really is*:
 1. the “*pillar and buttress*” of the truth – the **repository** of the message of Jesus the Christ
 - a. **IOW:** the central message of the church is Jesus! the *only source* of righteousness by rebel sinners before a holy God – the church is the organism that advances him as Lord
 2. **Paul is convinced that the church is the divinely appointed institution to hold this truth out to the world, and anything that alters it is to be expunged from the church**
 - b. a chapter which gives Timothy (specifically) advice on what to do about this reality:
 1. starting in **4:1**, Paul turns specifically to Timothy to offer him some advice on how to proceed
 - a. he instructs Timothy in order for him to be a “*good servant of Christ Jesus*” (**4:6**)
 2. he **begins** by pointing out *the problem that needs to be seen* (**i.e.** to be aware of; **vv. 1-5**)
 - a. the reality of **apostasy** amongst some in the church – those who “walk away” from the faith, either in outright denunciation or in a gradual decline from orthodoxy (**i.e.** a drifting away)
 - b. through teaching (literally) spun from the depths of hell itself (“*the teachings of demons*”)
 - c. by men who are charlatans – “*liars*” that no longer know the truth or feel shame for their lies
 - d. who impose religious restrictions that run *precisely contrary* to God’s good purposes
 - e. **Paul desires that Timothy face this reality in the church head-on; to recognize it fully and to sense the gravity of what is happening around him**
 3. he **continues** by giving instructions on how Timothy is to deal with this in the church (**vv. 6ff**)
 - a. through warning, through training, through toiling

II. The Good Servant Trains (1 Timothy 4:6-10)

Content

a. warning the church in the face of apostasy (v. 6)

1. **note:** this verse teaches Paul’s view of what a “*good servant of Christ*” is supposed to be doing!!
 - a. in a sense, this is an entire seminary’s worth of training in how a pastor is to deal with **reality**

2. “put ... before” = make known; lay down; lit. risk one’s life – to make known something that is uncomfortable to see or that may not be received well by those to whom it is shown
 - a. Timothy is not to seek the “easy” path of avoidance or sticking to just that which is “comfortable”
 3. “brothers” (*adelphoi*) = siblings; those of a family; (in the Pauline corpus) the church, made up of brothers and sisters in Christ, adopted by the Father, and drawn together by the Holy Spirit
 - a. Timothy is to address difficult matters before the entirety of the body – it is something that he is to be *transparent* about before the entire church
 4. “these things” = the facts that Paul has just revealed for Timothy to see and understand (vv. 1-5):
 - a. there will be people who will depart, both from the faith and from the repository of the truth
 - b. there will be people who will teach what is false, distracting others from the truth faith
 - c. there will be people who will reject a good diet of the word of God and prayer for cheap substitutes
 5. **Paul expects Timothy (and all pastors) to be honest about the work of the devil in the church, who will attempt to lead people away from what Christ has ordained for them to pursue**
 - a. **i.e.** the true discipleship of trusting Christ by taking up the cross, denying yourself, and following him in utter obedience
 6. **question:** what should **motivate** the pastor to this honesty – what should *drive* him to such *warnings*?
 - a. esp. given that the *natural temptation* of the pastor is to try to “comfort” the sheep rather than “spook” them (“speak comfort to me Jacob,” Ebenezer Scrooge, *A Christmas Carol*)
 - b. **answer (v. 6b):** the *training* that Timothy has received in “the words of the faith” and “the good doctrine” that he has been taught and follows
 - c. **principle: the learning of doctrine and theology spawns a love for truth (and a desire for more of it) and a deeper trust in Christ as that truth penetrates our hearts and minds**
 1. **doctrine does divide** – it divides those who truly love Christ *because they know who he really is and what he’s really done* from those *who haven’t got a clue or simply don’t care*
 2. **LOW:** the understanding of the deep things of the faith (given him by Paul) should cause Timothy to have a deep hunger for everyone else to understand these deeper things
 3. **LOW:** Timothy’s *passion* should be to warn the sheep about the dangers that are lurking about them because he *knows* and *understands* what true faith in Christ *means*
- b. training the church in the face of apostasy (vv. 7-9)**
1. **note:** these verses teach Paul’s description of how this honesty in the “good servant” is to come out
 - a. in a sense, this is the entire *ministry* of the church wrapped up in a single imperative
 - b. **note:** the repetition of the phrase of 1:15 in v. 9 – a principle at the heart of his own *personal experience* and *mission*:
 1. “the saying ...” = the principle that he has just laid down; a *core concept* in his mission
 2. “is trustworthy ...” = it is a principle that must be *believed*, even as a matter of life and death
 3. “deserving of full acceptance” = it is a principle that *governs* every aspect of the church
 2. avoid “irreverent, silly myths” = profane; irreligious; pagan; lit. **ungodly old wives tales**
 - a. **don’t forget:** Ephesus was *loaded* with mythology – the Greek pantheon was *everywhere*
 - b. undoubtedly, a re-description of the kind of heterodoxy (or heresy) introduced in **chap. 1** and repeated in **vv. 1-5** that leads to much apostasy (**i.e.** mythologies that grow up in the church)
 1. **e.g.** the devotion to saints and Mary [in Romanism], the recasting of Jesus as a social gospel warrior [in new evangelicalism], etc.) – **sinful humans easily mythologize the gospel**
 3. train yourself “for godliness” = do the hard work of pursuing holiness in yourself *and in your flock*
 - a. **principle: holiness (meaning to be a fully devoted follower of Christ) does not just “happen” – it requires discipline and effort and perseverance and commitment**
 - b. true, justification is entirely by faith in the *completed* work of Christ, but justification *assumes* the continuing effort of conforming every aspect of our life to this state of righteousness (**i.e.** living out *practically* what we are *positionally*; sanctification is the *necessary result* of justification)
 - c. in **v. 8**, Paul uses an *illustration* to make the point:
 1. “bodily training” = the discipline used by athletes to hone their *bodies* – all of the effort and perseverance required to shape your body to be able to compete
 - a. this type of training is of “some value” = it is a training that is for a *temporary goal*, and will eventually fade away (**i.e.** good for the moment, but fleeting in the face of death)
 2. “godliness” = the discipline used by believers to hone their *soul* – all of the effort and perseverance required to shape your spiritual life to be able to enter “the life to come”
 - a. this type of training “holds promise” = it is a training that is for a *permanent goal*, and will not fade away (**i.e.** a precursor to that perfect state of glorification)
 4. **Paul expects Timothy (and all pastors) to put the church on a strict training regiment, teaching them the fullness of the Scriptures in strict discipline to the goal of full conformity to Christ**

c. toiling in the church in the face of apostasy (v. 10)

1. **note:** this verse teaches what the “good servant” is to expect from himself and his people
 - a. in a sense, this is the entire focus of the church and everything in it
2. “the living God, who is the Savior of all people” = the helper towards the goal of himself
 - a. not a belief by Paul that God intends to save “all people” (**without distinction**)
 1. that is *clearly denied* by every aspect of Paul’s soteriology, here and elsewhere
 - b. rather, a view of God whereby he is the “Savior” of all people not in the *salvific* sense, but in the sense that his *goodness* and *common grace* extend to everyone “*especially ... those who believe*”
 1. Paul doesn’t name “Jesus” as the Savior, but rather “God” (in the more generic sense)
 2. the context seems to suggest the need for “help” and “strength” in living rather than salvation
 3. the character of God as One who provides goodness for both the wicked and the righteous is central to the *divine decree* – God will allow the wicked to prosper, but their prosperity will act as *judge* over them, while his *salvific grace* will only be extended to his elect
 4. the “*especially*” implies that what is being provided to the elect is a *unique* form of help, whereby they toil towards a goal *in God* rather than in the temporal things of this world
 - a. **e.g.** the “obligations” of **v. 3** are designed as “toil” for *temporal* value only, and are contrary to what *God himself* has designed in the world as good (**i.e.** marriage)
3. **Paul expects Timothy (and all pastors) to expect the people of the church to toil towards holiness (not happiness) because our hope is not temporal, but God himself as the holy One**
 - a. **the “good servant” presses his people (both faithful and apostate) beyond their comfort zone – he pushes them to strive for holiness in all things by teaching them the fullness of God’s revelation in the gospel and its explicit expectations**
 - b. the apostate drifts away, refusing the discipline – the elect one takes up the challenge in love