

The Good Servant of Christ – Part 4

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 **expectations** of the pastorate
 - a. the beauty of **1 Tim. 4:6** = a confidence builder in dealing with *realities* (disappointments)
 - b. the beauty of **1 Tim. 4:11** = a confidence builder in dealing with *reservations* (expectations)
 1. **vv. 6-16** are a strong message by the Apostle to Timothy about **what is expected of him**
2. the **content** of the chapter
 - a. a chapter which gives a *concrete definition* of what the church *really is*: the **repository** of truth
 - b. a chapter which gives Timothy advice on what to do about this (as a “good servant of Christ”):
 1. he **begins** by pointing out the problem that Timothy *needs to see* (**vv. 1-5**)
 - a. the reality of **apostasy** amongst some in the church – those who will “depart”
 - b. **Timothy needs to face this reality in the church head-on; to sense the gravity of it**
 2. he **continues** by giving instructions on how Timothy is to *make this visible* (**vv. 6-10**)
 - a. by taking the risk to *warn* the church of these things, motivated by a strong sense of *truth*
 1. moving the church away from “myths” – from those things that “seem” right but are (in fact) contrary to the apostolic message *and lead to forms of apostasy*
 - b. **Timothy needs to turn this reality towards the church so she senses the gravity of it**
 3. he **finishes** by commanding Timothy to “ram this home” to *save the church* (**vv. 11-16**)
 - a. Paul gives a “rapid-fire” set of imperatives (commands) – **seven (7), 1 per verse + 1**
 1. to “command” = take up the mantle (and risk) of *true leadership*
 2. to “set an example” = be *consistent* between your life and your word
 3. to be “devoted” (addicted) = prioritize the teaching and *exhortation* of the Scriptures
 4. to not “neglect the gift” = do not substitute *other means* above your Spirit-given ability
 5. **(now)** three (3) additional commands to complete the thought ...
 - b. **Timothy needs to do what he is gifted at to save the church from this grave reality**

III. The Good Servant Teaches (1 Timothy 4:11-16)

Content

e. the imperative to immerse yourself in the work (v. 15)

1. “these things” (**see also vv. 6, 11**) – either:
 - a. the *larger* context of how myths lead some into apostasy, and how to address it, or
 - b. the *immediate* context of devoting himself to the reading, teaching, and exhortation of Scripture
 - c. **(most likely)** the latter addressing the former – preaching of the Word to address the issue of myths that lead some away from truth to apostasy
2. “practice” = meditate upon (KJV); take pains with (NASB); be diligent with (NIV); put into practice (NRSV); lit. keep thinking about; plot (plan) over; revolve in the mind
3. “immerse yourself in them” (*en toutois eimi*) = give thyself wholly (KJV); **lit. in them be**
 - a. a strong sense of **discipline** – to be immersed in and aware of and prepared to give an answer
 1. **e.g. how do you get to Carnegie hall? practice, practice, practice ...**
 2. Paul expected Timothy to be disciplined about these matters; constantly aware of how myths creep into the church, and then addressing them immediately and fervently
 3. **i.e.** a modern pastor needs to be constantly aware of those patterns in the larger culture or society that would *corrupt* the thinking of his people on matters of faith and holiness

4. **e.g.** the *religion* of secularism is “in your face” to change your patterns of thinking, even attempting to convince you that adherence to biblical principles is **unthinkable** (i.e. that accepting biblical teachings is *inconsistent* with being a “Christian”)
 - b. **principle: the entirety of the Christian life is based on discipline – it is the ordinary work of the Spirit to bring believers through spiritual growth, and this growth requires discipline**
 1. the follower of Christ is to shed all falsehoods that he has collected, and the sins that follow
 2. the follower of Christ is to embrace all truth that is revealed, and the holiness that follows
 3. the follower of Christ is to recognize that these things take discipline (**Hebrews 12:3-6**)
“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin [i.e. opposition] you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, ...’”
 4. so, the preacher is to be *disciplined* about his methodology of preaching, so that his **primary concern is the discipline of his people in truth and holiness**
 4. “so that all may see your progress” = so that all may see advancement in both you and them
 - a. **note:** this is the first “so that” in this list of imperatives – the first time Paul actually tells Timothy what *results* he should be seeing from this work
 1. **IMO:** this is the result of obedience to all of the imperatives up to this point – what should be “seen” by everyone as Timothy teaches, sets an example, exhorts, uses his giftedness, etc.
 - b. “your progress” = one (or more) of the following:
 1. **(unlikely)** your *professional* progress – how you are improving in *using* your giftedness
 2. **(possibly)** your *collective* progress – how the *congregation* is advancing because of your effort
 - a. every preacher worth his salt is constantly analyzing **his effectiveness**
 2. **(probably)** your *personal* progress – how you are growing in holiness *yourself* through teaching
 - a. every preacher worth his salt applies his messages **to himself** first and foremost
 5. **Paul insists that Timothy must immerse himself wholly in the effort to reverse mythology in the church in a way that is obvious in its real and measurable effect, even in himself**
- f. **the imperative to keep a close watch on yourself (v. 16a)**
 1. “keep a close watch” = be alert; watch; stay on top of; pay close attention to
 - a. **i.e.** don’t fall asleep at the wheel, don’t take “time off”, don’t stop checking on things; don’t *assume*
 2. “on yourself” = be alert to your own shortcomings and sins, the kinds of things that would *disqualify* you from being an effective authority and source of instruction (**1 Corinthians 9:27**)
“But I discipline my body and keep it under control [or I pummel my body and make it a slave], lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.”
 - a. every preacher worth his salt stays alert to the **constructive criticism** of others (especially his elders) in order to be an effective authority through his own witness
 3. “on the teaching” = be alert to the tendency to “drift” into your *own* mythology, the kind of teachings that “sound good” to the congregation, but are actually *inconsistent* with the biblical revelation
 - a. **e.g.** layer together a sound *biblical theology* with a sound *systematic theology* – teach the text, but teach how that text fits into the larger picture of the *entire* revelation of God (**e.g. John 3:16a**)
 - b. every preacher worth his salt stays alert to the **challenging criticism** of others (especially his elders) in order to stay the course and not “wander off” into his own mythology
 4. **Paul insists that Timothy be introspective, examining himself personally to be sure that his own life is consistent with a set of teachings that are consistent with the Word of God**
- g. **the imperative to persist in all of the above (v. 16b)**
 1. **each (sub)command is part of a single imperative that spans the entire paragraph**
 - a. command and teach → set an example for others → devote yourself to the exhortation of Scripture → use your Spirit-given giftedness → immerse yourself in the work → examine yourself and what you are teaching = **do your job!!**
 - b. **IOW:** be a “good servant of Christ Jesus” (v. 6) by doing what he has called you to do ...
“The first sign of the heavenly call [to the pulpit] is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work ... Alleine: ‘Do not enter the ministry if you can help it’ ... If any student in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way; he is not the man in whom dwells the Spirit of God in its fulness, for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants.” (C.H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*)
 - c. **(imperative #7)** “persist in this” = persevere in the work, even though it is *hard*; don’t give up when difficulties arise; *stick to what Christ has impressed upon your heart to do*
- h. **the results of all of the above (v. 16c)**
 1. “you will save” = rescue; deliver; heal; restore; preserve; make whole (**x106 in N.T.; 89 as “save”**)
 - a. preaching the truth will result in stony, rebellious hearts encountering the person of Jesus Christ
 1. through the Gospel = the entirety of the message of the person and work of Christ to accomplish the will of God in redeeming a people, drawn to him through regeneration and conversion by repentance of sin and faith in his completed work of righteousness – not just “professing faith,” but radically trusting in the work of Christ above all other forms of self-reliance
 2. **i.e. the Spirit** uses every passage of Scripture to reveal some aspect of the Gospel

- b. preaching the truth will result in growth in righteousness for those who now trust in Christ
 - 1. **(see above)** the work of preaching will *transform* believers from those who are controlled by the flesh to those who are controlled by the Spirit through the work of sanctification
- c. preaching the truth will save the church from the devastating effects of falsehood and myth ...
- 2. **question:** what does **1 Timothy 4** have to do with you – a passage that is written to pastors and those who preach, and not just to members of the congregation?
 - a. note that this letter was circulated by the early church and eventually included in the N.T. canon
 - b. even though the bulk of the letter (**esp. chap 4**) is written to leadership about leadership
 - c. so, the *church herself* must have considered the letter worthy of inscripturation – they must have seen its value *to themselves* as much as to Timothy (they took it *from* him)
 - d. therefore, the value of this chapter (specifically) is this: if Paul considered the work of warning and preaching about apostasy to be so important to the point that he would write these things to Timothy, certainly he believed that the *church* needed to hear and to heed the warning
 - 1. **IOW:** the church saw **1 Timothy 4** *as about them*
 - e. **warning: it is easy, without a steady diet of disciplined preaching that focuses on the whole counsel of God, to fall into mythology, to be “taken in” by heterodoxy, and find oneself (over time) drifting away from a full-orbed understanding of Christ and his truth, resulting in the introduction of grave sin into your life, and to apostasy**
 - 1. **secularism is relentless – we need to be relentless against it**