

A GOOD MINISTER OF JESUS CHRIST

TEXT: I TIMOTHY 4:6-16

INTRODUCTION:

1. I have entitled tonight's message, "A Good Minister of Jesus Christ" (cf. verse 6).
2. Paul and Timothy were good "ministers." They were preachers.
3. The word "minister" simply means "a servant."
4. Our Lord said in Matthew 20:26, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (servant).
5. And our Lord said in Matthew 23:11, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (same word in original Greek text).
6. Philippians 1:1 says, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."
7. Interestingly, the same Greek word translated "minister" is translated "deacon" in Philippians 1:1. The word translated "servants" is a different Greek word. It literally means, "slaves."

I. A GOOD MINISTER EMPHASIZES DOCTRINE (4:6)

1. The key word in the Pastoral Epistles is "doctrine" (cf. 1:3, 10; 4:1, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1, 3).
2. The word "doctrine" or "doctrines" is found seventeen times in the Pastoral Epistles.
3. When Paul said to Timothy in verse 6, "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things," he was referring to Bible doctrine.
4. It is interesting that after a lesson on food (4:3-5), Paul uses the word "nourished" in reference to doctrine.
5. Just as it is important to eat the right food, the right doctrine provides good nourishment. Many people are sick (spiritually and physically) on account of the wrong doctrine.
6. I saw an article on the Internet the other day entitled, "Preachers of LA Trailer Teases With Lavish, Dramatic Lifestyles of Six Mega-Pastors." It was about a new reality show which will feature six false teachers, "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29).
7. The article said, "Fast cars, lavish mansions in swanky neighborhoods, infidelity and angst-filled episodes are on full display in the prosperous lifestyles of six mega-church pastors."
8. I saw the three-minute trailer and it made me nauseated.

9. Four times in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul uses the term, "sound doctrine" (1:10; II Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1).
10. The word "sound" literally means, "to be in good health." The wrong doctrine is unhealthy and makes people sick. The promotion for this new television show about false teachers says it will feature, "Fast cars, lavish mansions in swanky neighborhoods, infidelity and angst-filled episodes..."
11. "Angst" means, "a feeling of deep anxiety or dread." Sound doctrine is healthy, but bad doctrine produces angst!
12. The apostle Paul goes on to say, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables" (4:7a). There are several references to fables in the Pastoral Epistles (cf. 1:4; II Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14).
13. Today many people believe in fables -- evolution, global warming, Mormonism, Scientology, Islam, etc.
14. We must "refuse" to listen to it. Many Pentecostal preachers teach fables. Benny Hinn said this on the TBN network, "Adam was a super being when God created him. I don't know whether people know this (No Benny, we don't "know" it because the Bible does not teach it!), but he was the first Superman that really ever lived. First of all, the Scriptures declare clearly that he had dominion over the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea - which means he used to fly. Of course, how can he have dominion over the birds and not be able to do what they do? I'll prove it further. Adam not only flew, he flew to space" (Praise the Lord, TBN, 26th December 1991).
15. Having dominion (rule) over fowls means we can eat them, not fly!
16. Roman Catholic priests teach many fables -- transubstantiation, purgatory, praying to Mary, "the Queen of Heaven," etc.
17. "But refuse profane and old wives' fables" (4:7a).

II. A GOOD MINISTER PUTS MORE EMPHASIS ON THE SPIRITUAL, RATHER THAN THE PHYSICAL (4:7b, 8).

1. There is a place for physical exercise, and Christians should stay in good shape. We should take care of our bodies. First Corinthians 6:19 says, "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost."
2. But spiritual exercise is far more important (4:7, 8). Bodily exercise has "little" value. "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things" (4:8a).
3. There are too many crowded gyms and empty churches.

4. Verse 10 says God is "the Saviour of all men." This has puzzled people because the Bible teaches those without Christ are lost, not saved (cf. Mark 16:16; John 3:18, 36).
5. Then how can God be their "Saviour" if they are not saved? It certainly cannot mean that God saves everyone, "specially" those who believe -- for this would not make sense. For if God saves everyone, how can it be "specially" so for those who believe?
6. "The Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe," means God is the "Preserver" of all people. Job 7:20 refers to God as the "preserver of men" (cf. Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, 28).
7. Furthermore, God has provided salvation for all people. He saves all who are willing to be saved. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).
8. The Bible teaches that salvation is limited to those who believe. This is why Paul says, "specially of those that believe."
9. That is why John says, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:2). This means "the whole world" could be saved -- if they believe.
10. A.C. Gaebelien said, "He is the preserver of all men, but especially of those who believe. As Creator He is the preserver and benefactor of all men; but for those who believe He is much more than that. In this God as Creator and Saviour, preserver and keeper, the believer trusts."
11. Timothy was a young preacher, so Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth" (4:12). Timothy was to set a good example:

- * in word -- watch what we say
- * in conversation -- our conduct
- * in charity -- love God and love others
- * in spirit -- be enthusiastic about the Lord's work
- * in faith -- trusting the Lord moment by moment (cf. verse 10)
- * in purity -- cf. 5:2.

III. A GOOD MINISTER GIVES HIMSELF WHOLLY TO THE THINGS OF GOD (4:15).

1. "Till I come, give attendance to reading (the Bible), to exhortation (encouraging the church members), to doctrine (teaching)" (4:13).
2. Daniel 1:8 says, "But Daniel purposed in his heart..."
3. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee" (4:14); i.e. the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

4. "The laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (4:14) is symbolic. It signifies God's call upon Timothy. God calls a man to preach, God ordains him, and God equips him.
5. "Presbytery" means a group of elders (pastors). Apparently Paul was part of this group (cf. II Tim. 1:6).
6. God gives the gift, and preachers need to develop it, and not "neglect" it.
7. "Meditate" (4:15) means to carefully attend to the things of God. By giving himself wholly to them, Timothy's "profiting" would appear to all (4:15). His progress would be seen and noticed by everyone.
8. Paul tells Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself" (4:16). He was to be very careful how he conducted himself. "And unto the doctrine" (4:16). Timothy had to be careful to teach the right doctrine.
9. In every ordination council I have been part of, the candidate was asked about his personal life -- his conversion, his call to the ministry, his family life, his prayer life, his Bible study time, etc.
10. Warren Wiersbe said, "As good ministers we preach the Word; as godly ministers we practice the Word; as growing ministers we progress in the Word."
11. "Save" (4:16) refers to "save from error" since Timothy was already saved from hell. Sadly, some Christians are saved from hell but get all mixed up in doctrinal error.

CONCLUSION:

D. Edmond Hiebert has an interesting interpretation of I Timothy 4:16. He says, "Notice that the salvation is not procured 'by doing' but 'in doing' this. We are not saved by our faithful performance of our duties, but the faithful performance of our duties is the sphere within which our salvation is realized. A pastor unfaithful in doctrine and morals is saving neither himself nor his congregation. Salvation here means more than preservation from false teaching, although that is included. Salvation here has its full soteriological significance" (*I Timothy*).