

Mid Week • 1 Timothy 4

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, the chapter and verse breaks can obscure the meaning and flow of the text in scripture.

Such is the case with the transition from chapter 3 to chapter 4 of 1 Timothy.

Let's recap the historical setting for why Paul wrote this letter.

1 & 2 Timothy, along with Titus were the last letters Paul wrote.

Because the specific comments about time and place that are given here don't fit into the record of the book of Acts, most students of scripture are convinced that Paul was released from prison in Rome and completed his desire to head west into Spain.

Then he revisited the major churches he had planted earlier.

Ephesus was one of those churches.

When he got there he discovered that just as he had foretold in Acts 20, false teaching had started to trouble the Ephesian church.

Some of the men who had served as elders had gone off after error and led some of the church with them.

Paul had to leave and head west into Macedonia, but didn't feel good about just leaving the Ephesians without assistance, so he told his young protégé Timothy to remain behind and provide leadership to the church as it sought to straighten things out.

1 Timothy is his letter of instruction to Timothy on the priorities of his role as pastor of the church.

Since solid leadership is the single most crucial element to the health of any group, and specially in the church, Paul gave Timothy guidelines in looking for people to fill the roles of church leadership.

There were vacancies in the eldership since some of the elders had gone off into false teachings.

So Paul tells Tim what to look for when choosing new elders.

He also tells him what to look for when selecting people for the role of deacon.

Then he ends chapter 3 with a reminder of what his ministry as pastor needs to stay centered on – the basics, the core truths that give the Christian faith its power.

Look at 3:16 . . .

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Paul takes a favorite word of the false teachers and claims it as the sole prerogative of those who preach and those who believe the Gospel. That word is “Mystery.”

At this time in history, eastern religions were starting to infiltrate the west.

In another hundred years they would flower into what became known as *Gnosticism*.

Gnosticism was a mish-mash of Christian *terminology*, Greek *philosophy*, and eastern *mystery cults*, which were heavily influenced by Hinduism.

And even though Gnosticism didn't really formalize till the mid 2nd century, seeds of Gnostic thought were being planted in the soil of the Roman world.

Chief among these seeds of error was the idea that there were certain *mysteries*, hidden truths, that held the key to spiritual enlightenment.

By applying yourself to certain physical or mental *disciplines*, you could prepare your mind to receive this special knowledge.

And once you understood it – you would be elevated to a higher spiritual plateau.

The false teachers claimed to have achieved these new spiritual heights and if their disciples proved themselves worthy, they too could reach higher spiritual enlightenment.

The buzzword in all these groups was “mystery.”

The mysteries were the hidden truths that promised fulfillment and spiritual peace.

But the mysteries were the closely guarded *secrets* of the false teachers and shared only with their most intimate disciples – those who had proven themselves worthy.

Well, Paul takes the favorite word of the false teachers and applies it to the Gospel.

What was once a mystery, has now been made known to all through the Work of Christ.

The priority of preaching ensures that the mystery is *communicated* to all, not just a select group.

Notice how Paul describes the mystery of godliness – it is all about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Jesus Christ is both **center** and **circumference** of the Christian faith.

It begins and ends with Him.

All wisdom and knowledge is tied up in Him.

To know **peace**, to know spiritual **enlightenment**, to achieve the epitome of **understanding** is to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

So Paul reminds Timothy the best way to combat the error of the false teachers is to major on the basic truths of the Faith – that God became man in the person of Christ, that He lived a sinless life, was testified to by angels, was preached among the Gentiles, has attained a loyal following in the world, and ascended into heaven.

Then Paul launches into an analysis of the false teachers and their errant ideas.

TEXT

- 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,**
- 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,**
- 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.**

Since we covered vs. 1-5 last Sunday, I'll be more brief with my comments on these verses tonight.

Anyone who has read the bible through at least once knows there are plenty of prophecies relating to the last days.

And many of them foretell that one of the marks of the end times will be widespread spiritual deception.

The OT prophets, Jesus, and the NT scriptures all say that in the days just prior to the Lord's return, false prophets, false teachers and even false Christs will be in abundant supply.

When Paul writes, "Now the Spirit expressly says . . ." he is referring to this abundant scriptural testimony to the widespread deception of the last days.

"Latter times" refers to the **tail end** or **last** of the last days.

Those days will see a **departure** from the **faith** because people will listen to and follow false teaching.

Paul tells Timothy the real origin of this deception – it comes from the father of all lies – it comes from the demonic realm.

These lying spirits concoct lies and whisper them into the ears of men who are looking for some way to cover over their sinful desires and behavior.

They are lying hypocrites who know that what they are teaching is wrong, but do so anyway because it provides a convenient mask for their sin.

At first their conscience convicts them that what they are doing and saying is wrong, but they have ignored and gone against their conscience so many times that it has become desensitized – just like skin that's been cauterized.

Some slave masters of the ancient world would brand their slaves with a mark of ownership.

The brand was a piece of hot iron.

Forever after, the slaved was identified as belonging to his or her master by the brand.

But the sight of the brand itself was tough and insensitive scar tissue.

That's the image here – the mark of a false teacher is a **lack of conscience**.

They have trained their conscience to roll over and play dead.

Having violated their conscience from the beginning – their conscience no longer troubles them – and eventually they turn to the *active* pursuit of evil and error.

We only need look at the recent history of some of the cults to realize just how far this goes.

Jim Jones seems to have begun his career as a dedicated man of God, ministering to the downtrodden of the inner city.

But his rapid rise to popularity and power went to his head and corrupted him.

It wasn't long before he began to inject his own ideas into the scripture, and built a loyal group of supporters.

Things got worse and worse till he proclaimed himself god and demanded his followers lay down their lives for him.

Jim & Tammy Faye Baker are a classic case of the route violating conscience takes a person.

Baker admits as much in his recent autobiography.

The sin of greed and covetousness were masked by his pious demeanor and twisting of scripture – he admits all this now.

But in the days of his error, he went from bad to worse, and we all know how it ended.

Make no mistake friends, behind all spiritual deception lies the demonic.

Satan is not content to merely **nudge** you off **track** – it begins there, but that isn't where it ends.

He hates God and he hates the **image** of God that is in man – so he seeks to **deface** that image by submerging it under **sin** and **wickedness**.

Our conscience is a part of that image of God that warns us sin is contrary to our humanity and harmful.

Rather than ignoring our conscience, we need to cultivate and heed it's counsel.

Martin Luther, Father of the Reformation, realized the importance of not violating his conscience, specially when it was informed by the Word of God.

Standing before the Roman Catholic tribunal at Worms and answering for his radical ideas, he said, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither honest nor safe. Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

As v. 3 reveals, the false teaching being promulgated in Ephesus was a form of **asceticism**, the banning of normal pleasures. In this case, it had to do with **sex** and **diet**.

Again, these were the seed-ideas of what would later be called Gnosticism.

In Gnosticism, the spiritual realm was good while the physical realm was inherently evil.

Therefore, if you wanted to please God who is pure spirit, then you had to deny yourself as much contact with the physical world as possible.

By doing this, you detached yourself from the *physical* and elevated your *spiritual* self.

So, the false teachers were telling people to abstain from sex, including married people, and that they could only eat foods that were flavorless and yielded no pleasure.

So I guess they ate a lot of poi and broccoli!

Paul refutes this – God gave mankind the wonderful gifts of sex and food as good things to bless us!

In fact, the way Paul phrases it at the end of v. 3, he says that more than anyone, it's Christians who ought to be enjoying the gifts of marital lovemaking and the bounty of God's creation.

Notice what he says . . .

forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

The Christian has a far greater capacity to enjoy the pleasure of sex in marriage and a plate of good food than anyone else because we are in right relationship with the One who created these things and gave them to us to enjoy.

The Christian marital bed is a place of holy joy – Heb 13:4

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed [intercourse] undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

And a healthy, balanced diet comes from God's good grace.

Think about it – God could have made both procreation and eating something that was merely routine.

Sex could have been mere work – a duty.

Food could all taste like poi.

This could be a black and white world, void of color.

It's all a manifestation of God's grace that he paints the sky and land with color and makes food flavorful and turns the act of marriage into a thing of consummate pleasure instead of mere duty.

Asceticism would have us cross our arms in the face of God's blessing and goodness.

4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving;

5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Paul turns the tables on the false teachers and their unnecessary asceticism.

Far from pleasing God by abstaining, **prayer** turns marital sex and grateful eating into an **act** of obedient and reverent **worship**!

The false teachers of Ephesus who taught this asceticism were willing accomplices of deceptive spirits.

Paul identifies asceticism as a doctrine of demons.

It might seem like a minor thing, but that's the way all apostasy begins, with some small thing that over time turns into a big thing.

Satan knows if he can just nudge us off track, and then keep us there, we'll eventually get farther and farther away from the Lord.

We never stand still in things of the Spirit – either we are drawing closer to God, or we are drawing away. In what direction are you headed this evening?

Now, here's what we know historically about what happened in Ephesus.

Timothy and the other church leaders heeded Paul's words in this letter and as a result took a strong stand against the heresy of the false teachers.

So faithful to correct doctrine did this church become in the first century that they're given a commendation by Jesus in Revelation 2.

But everything changed in the late 2nd century all over the Christian world.

Gnosticism spreads its poison throughout the church and many came to believe the only way you could live a life pleasing to God was by retreating from the world altogether.

Many became hermits – forsaking life in the cities to live in the desert.

They made caves their abode, sackcloth their garments, and bread and water their only diet.

And when pilgrims began to make treks just to honor the hermits for their strict asceticism, the hermits retreated even farther into the wilderness.

Then it became fashionable to build a tall pillar and live on the top of it.

One hermit lived on the top of a pole for several years!

One well known church leader castrated himself!

The Roman Catholic church's negative view of marital sex except for the purpose of procreation is a hold-over from this time.

The whole monastic movement came out of this era with its view that pleasure was somehow a sign of wickedness.

The counter for all this is Paul's words right here.

They were taught and applied in Timothy's day – but they were misplaced and forgotten a hundred years later.

This is why it is so critical that God's people *always* give themselves to the *diligent* study of God's word.

It is a sure corrective to the inevitable attempt at side-tracking that comes from the enemy.

6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, [meaning the things of vs. 1-5] you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

Timothy had first nourished himself and grown strong on the truth, putting into action in his own life what he had come to discover was the will of God.

If a man or woman in leadership in the church wants to be a good minister, it's critical that they draw their spiritual nourishment from the word of God.

Books and tapes are wonderful and can be of real assistance in study, but nothing can replace just opening the word of God and asking the Holy Spirit to teach us.

What opens the scriptures to our understanding like nothing else is a heart that comes prepared and ready to DO whatever we find there.

In John 7:17, Jesus says this – “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine.”

As the years go by, a pastor ought to become more effective in his ministry as a teacher, not less.

His further study into the Scriptures ought to be molding him into an ever more effective communicator of Truth.

It's sad to see guys who when they were young and filled with passion for the ministry, demonstrated real potential to preach and teach –

But as the years go on and the church grows, their time in the word and prayer is cut in to with the tasks of administration.

Their teaching gets stale and repetitive.

They lose the inertia of regular study and having their mind and spirit challenged.

When the Apostles recognized they were being distracted from their primary task of study and prayer, they delegated the work that was distracting them to others.

How I rejoice in the fact that there are so many people here at Calvary who have taken the tasks of administration on themselves and urge me to study and pray.

Last Sunday before first service, I noticed that some of the doors had big smudges on them and grabbed the window cleaner and started washing them.

A couple of guys jumped up and took the bottle out of my hands and told me to “go pray or something.”

The elders, Charley, Eric, Myrienne, Suzanne, Jeff, the business deacons, all of these are jealous for the time I spend in study.

The flock can only go as far as their shepherd goes, and he can only go as far as he invests himself in the study and application of God's Word!

Paul reminds Timothy here that not only is he called to feed the flock as pastor, he must also protect the flock from those savage wolves that seek to rip off the flock of God.

So along with the *positive* message of Jesus Christ Paul summarizes in 3:16, the good minister will issue warnings just like he did in vs. 1-5.

There are those today who would tell us that it is intolerant and unkind to speak critically of false teachers and heretics.

The only way we could accept that kind of thinking is if we didn't believe in truth and that in the end, everything is up for grabs.

Tell me, what would you think of the doctor who sees cancer on an x-ray, but tells the patient everything is fine, he just has an alternative experience of health?

What would we think of the airline pilot who decides he wants to plot a course for Turkmenistan instead of the flight you've boarded for Maui? That he has an alternative and equally valid view of vacation?

The good minister, the pastor who cares, will say the hard things about the whackiness that is out there and hold it up to the light of truth because we know what one believes makes a difference in his or her eternity.

It isn't all up for grabs.

Sincerity *isn't* the key that unlocks the door of heaven.

There are going to be a whole lot of sincere people in hell.

There is objective, absolute *truth*, and whatever is not in agreement with it is error and evil.

I want to be a good minister – I am responsible before God for the nurture and protection of your soul – and so besides the positive message of Christ, you will also occasionally hear me issue a word of warning about the various lies and false teaching that is out there.

I will even occasionally mention names because in Romans 16, Paul tells us that we are to mark those

who cause division.

Timothy proved himself a good minister by doing what Paul says here; he instructed the church of Ephesus in these things.

7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness.

Having denied asceticism as a valid form of godliness, Paul now tells Tim what real godliness looks like.

Of the 15 occurrences of the word "godliness" in the NT, 13 are in the Pastoral Epistles, and 9 of them right here in 1 Timothy.

Paul knew the priority the pursuit of godliness ought to take in the pastor's life and so fills these letters to Timothy and Titus with encouragement toward being godly.

But godliness was no "stained glass," static word for Paul.

It didn't speak of some kind of aloof piety that withdrew from the world to live in the cloisters of a monastery or church study.

For Paul, godliness was an **active** word of **obedience** that springs from a reverent **awe** of God.

Godliness is pictured in Isaiah 6 when the prophet sees God's throne and is so overcome with awe he falls on his face in worship.

Then, when God asks who will go be His messenger, he jumps up and says, "Here I am, send me!"

The liveliness and activity associated with godliness is revealed in the **athletic** imagery Paul employs in vs. 7-12

Just as a Greek or Roman athlete had to refuse certain things, eat the right food, and do the right exercises, so a Christian should practice "spiritual exercise."

If a Christian puts as much energy and discipline into his spiritual life as an athlete does into his or her training, the Christian grows faster and accomplishes much more for God.

Rather than abstaining from certain foods and marital sex, as the apostates said, Paul tells Timothy that he ought to reject that which is profane and old wives' tales.

"Old wives' fables" was a proverb of the time that referred to silly stories with no basis in fact.

They were a gossipy kind of silliness that people who have nothing better to do but sit around and stir up trouble would share back and forth.

As we saw in ch. 1, there was a whole mythology and set of legends that had sprung up around the OT genealogies.

People studied these as zealously as they studied scripture itself.

But the stories were profane, meaning they had been made up out of thin air – they weren't true or historical in the least.

I find it interesting every time I watch Christian television to hear how the people on there tell stories about some experience they've had.

People dying and going to heaven, or hell.

Visions, voices, new insights into things the bible is silent on.

The audience listens and then goes out and reports on what so and so said.

They weave some new theology out of it and it becomes all the rage for about a week.

One morning, very early on local radio, heard a sermon by the pastor of a local church, and he spent the entire message repeating something he had heard that week on TBN.

His message, what he was feeding his flock was nothing but profane old wives' tales.

Paul tells Timothy to stay away from this silliness!

He's not to invest himself in giving his ear to such emptiness, but instead, he is to invest himself in the pursuit of godliness.

The word "exercise" is the Greek word **gumnos** from which we get our word **gymnasium**.

Literally, it means *naked*.

In the Greek gymnasium, athletes competed in the buff so that they would be unhindered in competition.

We see this in our modern day in the way athletes in the Olympics are wearing ever more tight fitting and skimpy clothing.

Since the ancient world didn't have the blessing of spandex, they simply took their clothes off. When Paul says, "exercise yourself to godliness," he means, "*train* yourself to godliness like an athlete strips himself down and trains for competition." Anyone who has been in sports and gone through the initial training of physical conditioning knows just what an intense word this is.

Guys, remember hell week in football?

Wind sprints?

Basketball players, remember the first two weeks of practice for the regular season?

Run the bleachers?

Nothing comes close to wrestling conditioning!

Thompson drills and 6-count burpees!

Weight-lifting – breakdowns!

This isn't a weak or whimpy word – This is a picture of giving it your all – and then some – just like a good coach is able to get out of you.

You see, after denying the ways of the ascetics, Paul doesn't want to leave Timothy with the impression that the Christian life is one of carnal **indulgence** and spiritual **laziness**.

Godliness may not be obtained by abstaining from food and sex, but it certainly is attained by slovenliness either.

It is a whole-hearted pursuit that demands all we are and all we've got.

8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.

Having raised the allusion to athletics, Paul presses it further.

The athlete works hard at training for the game – and *because* he or she trains, they're able to compete.

But athletic competition is such a small part of life, for just a few years, and then what about eternity?

Sure it's smart and good to be in physical shape, but in the larger light of eternity, which is more important; your cardio-vascular or the condition of your soul?

Some people spend so much time on the condition of their body they have no time or energy left for the upkeep of the inner person.

It's important that we take a careful look at what Paul says here.

"For bodily exercise profits a little"

Paul is NOT denigrating physical exercise here as some conclude.

He is just saying that in **comparison** to our spiritual condition, our physical condition is only **slightly** profitable.

Now, stop and think about that!

Who in this room doesn't know the tremendous difference there is between being in shape and being out of shape physically?

I'll never forget how I felt 3 weeks after wrestling started.

Though I was a healthy teenage boy prior to that, I was so much more alert, wakeful, and able to concentrate after conditioning it was amazing!

But I remember distinctly what happened after the season.

Just two weeks later, because I did nothing – I was starting to get winded if I just jogged a short distance.

I can tell you, when I'm in shape, I sleep more soundly, have fewer head and body aches, wake up more quickly, and am able to concentrate much more closely.

And Paul says that bodily exercise is of LITTLE profit compared to the benefits of godliness!

While being in physical shape is beneficial to this life alone, godliness is beneficial both now and

eternally.

In this life, godliness ensure we remain clear of the moral traps that result in shame and ruin, and in the life to come, godliness means a rich reward of faithfulness to the Lord.

V. 9 makes it clear that v. 8 was another one of those basic truths that were being taught to the new believers.

10 For to this *end* we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

11 These things command and teach.

Spiritual exercise is not easy - it involves work and a certain amount of pain.

The word translated as *suffer reproach* is the same word we get our word *agony* from.

It's another athletic word that pictures an athlete who is all out for the goal.

They may be winded and in pain, but they know the goal is just ahead and are willing to suppress the pain in order to obtain the prize.

Paul keeps ever before Him the Lord Jesus Christ and the work He did in saving men and women.

The cross is his inspiration.

He knows that there is enough grace and forgiveness in the cross for the entire world,

But that only those who respond in faith lay hold of it's power.

Still, he pours himself out in effort to ensure that he is bringing to the Lord everything he is so that God can use him to maximum effect.

Then he tells Timothy – tell others to do the same.

I've notice something about both spiritual and physical conditioning –

When it comes time to do it – there's a huge reluctance!

It feels so good in bed, or sitting on the couch with the remote in hand and the bag of chips and soda sitting there..

The idea of getting up and putting on the shorts and t-shirt and lacing up the shoes seems like hard work.

But you do it and start running or lifting weights, and it actually feels pretty good!\

You know you should turn off the tube, take your bible and go spend some time reading and praying, but the spiritual inertia wants to keep you glued to the chair.

But you get up, turn off the TV, and sit down to read, and wow! It's like the heavens opened up and poured refreshing on you!

In both the physical and spiritual realm, we need to establish *habits*, *disciplines* that will ensure we're being good *stewards* with both the inner and outer man.

12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Timothy was a young man and this seems to have presented him with some difficulties, not so much in the way people treated him but in the way he saw himself.

Paul's encouragement here is that Timothy would not let this issue get in the way of his ministry.

So he was young – so what? – He wasn't *too* young and Paul saw in him all the requisite qualifications to take on the arduous task of leading the church at Ephesus, which at this time may have been as large a several thousand people, all meeting in homes scattered throughout the city.

If someone took issue with Tim's age, he was not to let that paralyze him.

One sure way to overcome any questions about his age was to focus on his ministry and example.

If he was an example to others in what it means to study and teach the Word of God, if he was an example in the way he conducted himself and showed agape love to all, if he showed himself to be spiritually minded instead of merely temporal, if his faith and purity all pointed people to Jesus, then all question of age and qualification would dissolve.

13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

Paul was planning on coming back to Ephesus.

Till then, Tim's job description was simple – *Read* the Scriptures, *Exhort* from the Scriptures, and *Teach*

from the Scriptures.

You tell me – what are pastors to do till Jesus comes?

There seems a general distaste for *doctrine* in many churches today.

It seems that many would rather be entertained than taught.

How I rejoice to look out here tonight and see all of you!

I know if you were interested in being entertained you'd be at home watching the Christmas shows.

But you're here – knowing what you were coming to was a bible study!

I just want to give you all a big hug because I know doctrine is important to you.

14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

Here again we have a veiled reference to Timothy's natural timidity.

His calling as a pastor and teacher was something that had been confirmed by the Word of the Lord and by the ordination of the leadership of the church.

But Tim tended toward a meekness that caused him to withdraw from taking leadership.

His humility was so strong that it bordered on the place where he was almost *negligent* in being faithful to the Lord.

Paul reminds him of events in his past that placed the stamp of God's call on his life.

He needed to stop looking at himself and his own inabilities and step out in faith, trusting that where God guides, He provides.

It may be that the Lord is calling some of you here tonight into the ministry.

He may be calling you to be a pastor or a home group study leader.

He may have placed a call on you to the mission field or to work with the youth.

But you resist because you think yourself unqualified.

God does not ask for your *ability* – only your *availability*.

If God is calling you, do not neglect the call.

15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.

Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks, so he is."

The life of the **mind** determines the **rest** of life.

So Paul tells Tim to fill his mind with the elements of truth he's just penned.

He's to mentally digest them, turn them over and over, and examine them with careful skill.

They're to become railings that direct his life.

It seems we give little place for the life of the mind today.

What between the radio and the TV and the incessant bombardment of noise that's all around us, every day, there's no time to slow down and spend some quiet time in meditation and analysis.

Our thinking is done for us now.

Journalists and commentators tell us what's true and how we ought to respond to it.

Every speech and event is followed by a panel of experts who offer their perspective on what to think and what conclusions to draw.

And if that isn't enough, we can look at the polls and decide what's true by what the majority believe.

The communication of an entire news story in 20 seconds of sound bites has resulted in a generation of experts who have an opinion about everything based on a knowledge of nothing.

We need to slow down and take time to look at things from a biblical perspective.

Then, once we've arrived at a conclusion, we need to put them into personal action.

The word *progress* is a military word which speaks of the **advance team**.

They go out in front of the main force to scout ahead and clear away obstacles.

As the pastor, Timothy needs to lead from in front, not from behind, egging the congregation on through shame or intimidation.

God wants His leaders **out in front**, showing the way for the flock.

Again, the pastor cannot lead where he himself has not been.

16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul says, “Take heed to **YOURSELF** & to the doctrine.”

Doctrine cannot be **detached** from the one who holds it.

To teach one thing but do another is **hypocrisy** and we all know how God feels about that!

So Paul tells Tim to examine his own heart in the light of the Word of God.

A servant of God can be so busy helping others that he or she neglects him or herself and spiritual walk.

The great American evangelist of the 1800s, Charles Finney, used to preach on this text.

He titled his sermon “Preacher, Save Thyself!”

That sermon is needed today, for we are seeing people having to leave the ministry because their lives have not kept up with their profession.

Moral problems, divorces, and other kinds of shameful conduct have destroyed many of God’s servants.

That last sentence of v. 16 sends a shiver right up my spine.

Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Paul tells Timothy to continue in the practice of carefully taking inventory of his life and teaching – because by doing so he can make sure he doesn’t follow in the path of the apostates and he can ensure the safety of those he is leading.

The opposite of that is implied. If he doesn’t continue to exercise care, he might stray, and if he does he will also lead the flock astray.

I wouldn’t want to be in the shoes of those who’ve gone into apostasy and led others down the path to destruction.

What Paul writes in these verses doesn’t apply just to pastors.

It applies to all of us who believe in Christ and who make our faith known to an unbelieving world.

They watch us and see what it means to be a Christian by witnessing how we live.

Everyone of us is a witness – the only question is what is our life saying?

Hughes, R. Kent Pg. 105

Wiersbe, Warren

“Feed My Sheep”

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