

Live As An Example

Qualities of a Good Servant

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:11-16

Sermon Series: *Timothy's Charge*

Topic: Pastoral Ministry

I. Introduction

What does a faithful minister of the gospel look like? What are his priorities? What kind of activities should mark his public and private life? How should he relate to his congregation? How should he lead the church? These are some of the questions that arise from this text before us.



Review

Let's be reminded where we are in this letter.

Paul's letter to Timothy began with an urgent charge to Timothy, and then an urgent charge to the church. In the beginning of chapter 3 Paul laid out the qualities of an overseer/bishop/elder/pastor and here in chapter 4 he is applying them to Timothy. He began describing what a "good servant of Christ Jesus" (4:6) looks like. He commanded Timothy to "train yourself for godliness."

Outline of Timothy

- I. A Sweet Salutation
- II. An Urgent charge to Timothy (1:3-20)
- III. An Urgent charge to the church (2:1-4:5)
 - A. Prioritize prayer (2:1-15)
 - B. Appoint godly officers (3:1-15)
 - C. Behavior and truth in the church of God (3:14-16)
 - D. Prepare for departure (4:1-5)
- IV. A Second charge to Timothy
 - A. Train Yourself for Godliness (4:6-10)
 - B. **Live As An Example** (4:11-16)

We saw last week, that even though Paul is writing these commands to Timothy, they are of course applicable to every Christian who desires to "be a good servant of Christ Jesus." As we have seen many times before, this letter is not restricted to only the context and Christians in Ephesus. The reason this letter has been included in the Canon is because Christians hear within these words the voice of Jesus speaking to his followers. These words written by Paul to Timothy were breathed out by the Holy Spirit. They lay out a job description for the pastor, but are written for the instruction and

encouragement of all Christians everywhere.¹ In the paragraph before us this morning, the main point is that Timothy is to *live his life as a example* to the church. Just as Timothy was an example to the church, so Christians today are an example to the world.

The church of God needs godly leaders and the people of God need godly examples. We might think that the world's greatest need is powerful preachers, but what the world needs most is devoted disciples. Jesus did not say to his disciples, Go train up powerful preachers. What he did say is, "*Go make disciples of me... by teaching them to obey all of my commandments*" (Mt 28:19-20).

Paul is writing to instruct Timothy on how to be a faithful minister of Jesus in his calling to be a pastor, but within these instructions, we find principles that are helpful to every follower of Jesus. There is truth here for me as a pastor, for all of us as a church, and for each of us as individual disciples of Jesus.

Preview

In the paragraph before us (vs.11-16), Paul exercises his apostolic authority and issues 10 commands to Timothy, related to his role as the pastor (overseer/bishop) over the church of Ephesus (1:3). He calls Timothy to faithfully exercise his calling by watching over both the doctrine of the church and the devotion of his own heart. Timothy is to live as an example to the church both in public conduct and private practice. He needs to publicly preach God's word and order the church rightly but he must also practice God's word persistently in private.

II. Main Idea: Live As An Example

We see the main idea referenced in vs.12 and 15, at the bookends of the paragraph.

¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

1 Timothy 4:12 (ESV)

¹⁵ Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.

1 Timothy 4:15 (ESV)

The main idea is that Timothy is to live his life in view of the church as an example to the Ephesian believers in Jesus. He is to set before the church a pattern of godly conduct. He is to be a spiritual role model to the Christians in both public and private life. He is to live in an exemplary way in speech, conduct, love, faith, and in purity. He is to practice what he preaches being totally immersed in Christ while progressing, growing in his faith and devotion to Jesus in an observable way that encourages the church to follow him. This is the main idea: *live as an example of a devoted disciple of Jesus*.

¹ 1 Timothy 2:8.

But there is a potential obstacle to his good example.

Let no one despise you for your youth (v.12). We do not know exactly how old Timothy was, but it is likely that he “was now in his late twenties to mid thirties.”²

The word ‘youth’ (νεότης *neotēs*) in biblical and extra biblical Greek has a fairly wide range of use and can refer “to young men of military or athletic age,” which is that later teens all the way up to age 40.³

Timothy joined Paul on his second missionary journey in about A.D. 49-50 (Act 16:1). Allowing for the completion of that journey, his second and third missionary journeys, his imprisonments, and time in Ephesus before being arrested again, then writing this epistle in the early to mid 60’s, no less than 13 years has passed, which would mean that Timothy is about thirty years old.

The point is not to exactly identify Timothy’s age but rather to understand that Paul is instructing Timothy that living as a respectable and worthy example to the people of God does not come automatically because of one’s age. Timothy certainly cannot demand respect because of his office. Rather respect is earned. Therefore, Timothy is earn the respect of the church by demonstrating himself to be a proven example of godly living. Even though Timothy may be ‘young’ in relation to the other believers in Ephesus, nevertheless, if he consistently conducts himself in godly ways, then he will earn the respect of those in the church. Godly living earns the respect of godly people. Godliness is not automatically a characteristic of anyone, but must be chosen, practiced, and habitually embraced.

Five Areas of Exemplary Christian Devotion

Paul then offered five areas in which Timothy was to demonstrate himself as an example of godly living; in *speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity*. This list is not exhaustive, but rather is short summary of what the apostle Paul considers to be of importance for this young minister to give his attention.

1. *In speech*. Timothy must always consider his words. The words of the mouth reveal the treasure of the heart.

The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Luke 6:45 (ESV)

It is an uncomfortable truth that what rolls out of our mouths reveals that which fills our hearts. These are the true and terrifying words of Jesus. If profanity and anger and wrath and malice are found on your lips, then you must understand those things reside in your

² William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 258.

³ Ibid.

heart. Timothy must carefully consider his words and set a good and godly example and pattern for the people of God in his speech.

2. **In conduct.** The word (ἀναστροφῇ *anastrophē*) means a “way of life or behavior.”⁴ It refers to what one does with the whole of one’s life and body throughout the course daily life. Nothing is left out here. Just as Jesus said, so Paul here reiterates, if you call Jesus Lord, then you must be willing to *do* what he says (Lk 6:46). Timothy must be an example to the church in his conduct.
3. **In love.** The word here is *agapē*. This takes us back to what Paul wrote at the beginning of this letter, “*The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith*” (1 Tim 1:5). Love must be the primary motivation in the heart of the faithful minister. The goal of the Christian minister is that all he does is to flow from a heart of love for the people whom he serves. Timothy must be an example to the church in his love for the church.
4. **In faith.** Paul frequently joins faith and love together. The two go hand in hand. Paul wrote the Galatians, “*The only thing that matters is faith working through love*” (5:6). The faith of some in the church may waver, but Timothy is to allow his faith in Jesus to be seen by the people and so set before them an example of sure and steady faith in Jesus.
5. **In purity.** Paul uses this word again in 5:2 in reference to how Timothy should treat women. The word has sexual connotations so Paul is fully aware of the potential temptations that may befall a young single man in Christian ministry. Timothy must be pure in his relationship with the women in his church. He must be in the eyes of the church an example of nothing less than sexual purity.

Summary

Paul is explaining to Timothy that if he pays attention to these five areas, even though he is young in comparison to some, he will earn their respect as a good and godly example to the church.

A. Live as an Example in Public

After calling Timothy to set himself before the church as an example and pattern of godly living, he then calls Timothy to exemplary conduct in the public setting. Paul is now thinking of Timothy’s particular calling as a minister and lists 2 specific arenas where Timothy can serve as an example to the church; in exercise of his pastoral authority and in his leadership of the worship gathering.

⁴ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 206.

1. **In exercise of pastoral authority** (v.11). The first area Timothy is to live as a godly example is in the area of exercising pastoral authority. We see this in verse 11.

Command and teach these things.

1 Timothy 4:11 (ESV)

Command. 'Command' and 'teach' are the first of ten commands that Paul gives Timothy in this paragraph. The word '**command**' (παραγγέλλειν *parangellō*) is "a term of authority, carrying connotations of a military or judicial order."⁵ This is a very strong word. Timothy is not to be timid with his authority in the church. The "*silly myths, endless genealogies, speculations*,"⁶ which were being propagated in the church by the false teachers, pose a spiritually deadly situation. Timothy is to *command* this church like a loving shepherd commands his flock or a loving father commands his family. Being 'commanding' does not mean being unloving. The aim of this charge is the exercise of this 'command' from a heart overflowing with love. Nevertheless, to 'command' certain things in this Church is necessary and Paul commands Timothy to command "**these things**." But what things?

These things. To what things does "*these things*" refer? Paul used this exact phrase in the previous paragraph (4:6) and in 3:14. It is Paul's way summarizing and emphasizing all that he has just written, but it almost certainly extends to "all he wrote in the letter up to that point."⁷ What might "these things" be?

- Charge persons not to teach a different doctrine (1:3)
- Charge persons not to devote themselves to myths, genealogies, speculations (1:4)
- Aim for love from a pure heart (1:5)
- Do not swerve from the gospel (1:6)
- Do not use the law unlawfully (1:8)
- Teach only sound (ie. healthy) doctrine (1:10)
- The gospel is the glory of God (1:11)
- Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1:15)
- Mercy is given to undeserving as a gracious example to undeserving (1:16)
- Always keep the faith (1:18-19)
- Pray all kinds of prayers for all kinds of people (2:1-2)
- God desires to save all kinds of people (2:4)
- Jesus is the one mediator for all men (2:5)

⁵ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 257.

⁶ 1 Timothy 1:4.

⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 246.

- In all churches men should pray in holiness without quarreling (2:8)
- In all churches women should pray adorned in godliness (2:10)
- Women should learn respectfully in church (2:11)
- Men should lead and teach the church (2:12)
- The qualifications for elders (3:1-7)
- The qualifications for deacons (3:8-13)
- How to behave in church (3:15)
- Right use of sex and food (4:1-5)
- Train yourself for godliness (4:6-10)

Thus, Timothy was to be an example to the church in the exercise of his pastoral authority.

2. ***In leading worship services*** (v.13). The second arena of Timothy's public example is seen in his leading of corporate worship services.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

1 Timothy 4:13 (ESV)

Devote yourself. Timothy's public example before the church was to include visible devotion. The word ***devotion*** (προσέχειν *prosechō*) means "to continue with close attention and devotion—to give oneself to, to apply oneself to."⁸ Timothy was to continually keep on his mind and diligently apply himself to three specific things, "*the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and to teaching.*"

All three of these things have a definite article in front of them, which points to the fact that these were all "recognised [sic] activities in the congregational meeting."⁹ The example of Timothy's public devotion to Jesus was to be seen in three ways that were manifested in the worship gathering of the church.

1. ***The public reading of Scripture.*** This practice was carried over from the order of worship in the synagogue. In Jewish worship the public reading of the Scripture was at the heart of the worship gathering. The law itself contained the command to have the Scripture read aloud to the people on specific occasions. Every seven years at the feast of Booths all of the law was to be read to the people (Dt 31:10-11). Moses read aloud the law to the people after he received it from God (Ex 24:7). After entering the Promised Land Joshua read aloud the law to the people (Josh 8:34-35). Jesus once served as the public reader of Scripture in the synagogue (Lk 4:16-10). The reading in

⁸ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 655.

⁹ I. Howard Marshall and Philip H. Towner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 562.

public was necessary for the only copies of the Scripture were on scrolls kept in the synagogue. Thus, a portion of Scripture would be read and then explained. Timothy's *number one priority is to keep the word of God before the people of God*. He must set the example for the people of prioritizing the Scriptures.

2. **To exhortation.** The word 'exhortation' (παράκλησις *paraklēsis*) can also be translated as 'preaching'¹⁰ (NIV) and means "to call, comfort, or encourage."¹¹ The word is used in Acts 13 in a similar context.

After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them, saying, "Brothers, if you have any word of encouragement [*paraklēsis*] for the people, say it."
Acts 13:15 (ESV)

Timothy was not only to read the Scripture to the church, but he was also then to *explain* what the text calls for in ways that are encouraging and comforting. Preaching calls for a response to God's word. Timothy was to do exactly what Nehemiah did, when he publicly read the Scripture, "*then they gave the sense so that the people understood the reading*" (Neh 8:8). One can only respond to what one does not understand. Scripture rightly explained calls forth the encouragement to rightly respond to God's word. Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans that "...*through the encouragement [*paraklēsis*] of the Scriptures we might have hope*" (Rom 15:4). Timothy must be an example to the people in preaching God's word to them by calling them to obedience of God's word, comforting them with God's precious promises, and encouraging them by explaining the goodness of God's word.

3. **To teaching** (v.11, 13, 16). The third example of Timothy's public devotion to Jesus was his teaching. *Teaching* is a significant theme in this section. Paul mentions it 3 times. In this paragraph, Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding his 'teaching' is present at the beginning (v.11), middle (v.13), and at the end (v.16) of this paragraph. Teaching communicates truth, whereas preaching calls for an appropriate response to that truth. This is how preaching and teaching are different and yet why both are necessary. Truth must be taught, but then preaching calls forth the encouragement to rightly respond to that truth, in faith and hope. Timothy was to be an example to the church by teaching God's word truthfully and encouragingly.

What is Timothy's gift?

¹⁰ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2018), 249.

¹¹ Otto Schmitz, "Παρακαλέω, Παράκλησις," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 774-76.

Notice that immediately after mentioning teaching in v.13, Paul addresses the topic of Timothy's gift.

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.

1 Timothy 4:14 (ESV)

Paul does not specifically state what Timothy's gift is. However, since he brings it up right after writing about teaching, one can't help but wonder whether his gift is teaching? This would make sense given that Paul places such an emphasis upon the topic of teaching and in context he is talking about the public worship service. If Timothy's gift was teaching, then Paul is encouraging him "*not to neglect that gift*," because spiritual gifts are given for the spiritual benefit and building up of the church. Paul reminds him that he received that gift by the work of the Holy Spirit through when the "*council of elders laid hands on*" him and were praying for him, most likely when he was set apart and commissioned for work in the ministry.

Summary

Paul has called Timothy to live before the church as a visible example in his public ministry in regard to how he exercises his pastoral authority, how he leads the church in the worship gathering, how he keeps God's word as a priority, by how he preaches, and how he teaches. If God has given him a gift of preaching and teaching, then he must use that gift for the benefit and edification of the church. All these things are the ways in which Timothy can be a good and godly public example of a faithful follower of Jesus.

B. Live as an Example in Private

After calling Timothy to set himself before the church as an example and pattern of godly living in public, he then calls Timothy to exemplary conduct in the private setting. Paul lists four specific arenas where Timothy can serve as an example.

1. *In private practice.*

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them...

1 Timothy 4:15 (ESV)

To "*practice these things*" means Timothy is to do these things at all times. The verb '*practice*' is a present active imperative, which means that Timothy is to "continually, constantly, follow these instructions."¹² The call to continual '*practice*' reaches far beyond mere public presentation. Timothy must "practice these things" in private as well as in

¹² William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, vol. 46, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2000), 263.

public. Timothy must at all times “*train himself for godliness*.” He must “exercise” (4:8) his spiritual life at all times. He must live at home when alone just as he lives with the church. He must act in private in a way consistent with his actions in public. He must always be surrounded by godly behavior. Hence, the next word.

2. *Immerse yourself*. The minister of the gospel must immerse himself in a life of good and godly behavior. One cannot dabble a little bit in godliness, the Christian is to totally dive in! You must be immersed in the Spirit of Jesus. A true minister must wrap himself in godliness like a cold person wraps himself in a warm blanket on a winter’s eve. This once again carries a meaning that stretches far beyond the public eye. Being ‘immersed’ in godliness means being always at all times surrounded by and filled with the Holy Spirit.
3. *Keep watch on yourself*.

Keep a close watch on yourself....
1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

‘*Keep a close watch*’ translates one Greek word (ἐπεχω *epechō*) which means, “to be in a continuous state of readiness to learn of any future danger, need, or error, and to respond appropriately.”¹³ Paul is calling Timothy to a vigilant guarding of his inner life. He means for Timothy to guard his heart and protect his and soul in private so that he will be useful to the Lord in public. We have a word for ministers who pay close attention to their outward behavior but fail to do the same for their inward desires. We call them hypocrites. Those who look righteous on the outside but are not so inwardly, are repugnant and distasteful to us. We have already mentioned ‘*teaching*,’ but notice here that Paul calls Timothy to apply the same watchfulness of “the teaching” as he does to the watchfulness of his own soul. “The teaching” is worthy of the same diligence as is Timothy’s own soul.

4. *In persistent watchfulness*.

Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.
1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

Paul calls Timothy to “*persist in this*” watchfulness. To ‘persist’ in something is “to continue, remain in, and keep on”¹⁴ doing a thing. To persist is to persevere. Paul is piling up words to drive home his point that godliness is quality manifested at all times for him who would serve the church of Jesus. True spirituality is not a mantle one puts on when it is convenient and then removes when it is inconvenient. True godliness is persistent godliness

¹³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 332.

¹⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 655.

and the godly minister must wear this mantle always. This truth is necessary because of what is at stake.

You will save both yourself and your hearers. Consider what is at stake? Nothing less than salvation is at stake. Paul is not teaching that Timothy will actually effect the salvation of others, for that would contradict all that Paul has previously written. What he is saying is that a true saving faith is a persevering faith. True faith is an enduring faith. And staying in the truth is a necessary requirement for enjoying eternal life. Jesus said, *"If you abide in my word, then you are truly my disciples"* (Jn 8:31). Paul is calling Timothy to faithfully abide in the true word of Jesus. If he remains true to the word of God, then so too will his congregation.

Summary

Timothy is to set the church an example in his private life. He is to practice his faith in Jesus at all times in his private conduct. He is to immerse himself completely in Christ's Holy Spirit and in his teaching. He is to keep a diligent watch over his own heart to keep his heart faithful. He is to similarly watch over his own teaching and doctrine and he is to persist in this watchfulness at all times so that he will ensure his own salvation and that of his church as well.

Conclusion

The pastors and ministers of the church must be willing to live as examples to the church. The public and private life of the pastor is intended by God to be a living encouragement toward godly living. Pastors must be faithful in the execution of their public pastoral duties and in the private practice of their own faith. Pastors must rightly exercise their pastoral authority. They must prioritize a focus on Scripture, while preaching and teaching God's word faithfully. They must also watch over their own hearts diligently. Staying true to the revealed word of God is necessary for all ministers just as it is for all Christians.

Pastors can be good examples, but they will sometimes fail you. Jesus will never fail you. He is the example that each of us must hold before our eyes.

- He was an exemplarily 12 year-old student and obedient son.
- He was an exemplarily 20 year-old laborer and carpenter.
- He was an exemplary leader of his family after his father Joseph died.
- He was an exemplary small business owner as he thereafter carried on the family trade up until he was about 30 years old.
- Then, he was an exemplary minister, pastor, shepherd, leader, teacher, servant, prophet, priest, king, and sacrificial lamb.

Jesus is exemplary in obeying his Father's will and laying down his life so that all who have faith in him will be saved. It's good and right to look to human examples to be encouraged in your faith, but the first place to look is to Jesus.

"Look to him and be saved, all the earth!" (Is 45:22).

If you keep your eyes on Jesus, and you will not be ashamed when others keep their eyes on you.

Just as Jesus lived as an example, so each one of us are to live as an example. We are each to live as faithful followers of Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul emphasize Timothy's example before describing his ministry responsibilities? What does this teach us about spiritual leadership?
2. Which of the five areas in verse 12—speech, conduct, love, faith, or purity—is the greatest challenge for you at this stage of life? Why?
3. How does a believer's daily conduct either strengthen or weaken the credibility of the gospel before others?
4. Why is the public reading, exhortation, and teaching of Scripture central to the life of the church? What dangers arise when these are replaced by entertainment or personality-driven ministry?
5. What does it mean to "not neglect" the spiritual gifts God has entrusted to us? How can neglect happen in subtle ways?
6. Paul expects Timothy's progress to be visible (v. 15). What kinds of spiritual growth should be increasingly evident in a mature Christian?
7. Why does Paul command Timothy to keep watch on both his life and his doctrine? What are the consequences of neglecting either one?
8. How should we understand Paul's statement that Timothy will "save both yourself and your hearers" in light of salvation by grace alone through faith alone?
9. In what practical ways can a local church encourage and support pastors and elders in guarding both their lives and their teaching?
10. How does the perfect example and finished work of Christ both challenge and encourage us as we seek to live faithfully for Him?