

Bristol Conference 1975-05 1 Timothy - Chapter 4:

by Stan Ford

Stan Ford's sermon emphasizes the importance of magnifying the Lord, warns against false teachings, and encourages young believers to exercise diligence in their faith.

Duration: 36:51

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33, John 8:12, 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 Timothy 4:15-16, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by highlighting the two main divisions of the chapter being discussed. The first division focuses on the warning of departure from verses 1 to 7, while the second division covers the block of diligence from verses 8 to the end of the chapter. Before delving into the chapter, the speaker emphasizes the importance of not overlooking the last verse from the previous evening, which deals with the person of Jesus Christ. The speaker then recalls a personal experience conducting a city crusade and encourages the young people in the audience to be examples in their behavior, love, disposition, and confidence in God. The sermon concludes by mentioning the need to explore one's talents and give oneself wholly to reading, exhortation, and doctrine. The speaker also mentions the intention for the crusade to be a teaching event, where the fundamentals of the Christian faith are taught, while also providing comfort and encouragement.

Transcript

I remember some years ago teaching that little chorus that we were singing, Magnify the Lord With Me, to the children on the beach at Hoylake, where for many years we conducted the Transpermy. And I asked the youngsters what it meant to magnify the Lord. The boy put his hand up, and I said, yes, son, and he went like this.

And he said, make bigger. You know, that's not a bad description, really, is it? He was looking through the spyglass, you know, magnified. And yet, that's not really it, is it? You see, when I look at my son through a spyglass, I don't make the son any bigger at all, do I? It just appears bigger.

The son's the same size, but it appears bigger. And we can't make God any bigger than he is. He's God.

But if everyone goes on this conference, determined to allow the Lord to live his life out to us, I say, he's going to appear much bigger, isn't he? He won't be any bigger, but he'll appear a lot bigger. Oh, that we might magnify the Lord together. I want to read, if I may, the fourth chapter of this very wonderful epistle.

1 Timothy, chapter 4. Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter time some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, doctrines of devils, seeking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meat, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained, but refuse profane and old wives' tables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For godly exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all expectation.

For, therefore, we vote labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the savior of all men, especially of those that believe. These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things.

Give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine. Continue in this, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

May the Lord not bad his blessing in the reading of his work. It seems to me that this very wonderful chapter has two great divisions today. It seems that, first of all, there is a warning of departure from verses 1 to 7, and then when we take up the story in verse 8, right to the end of the chapter, there is the work of diligence.

The warning of departure, and the work of diligence. But, before we come to this wonderful chapter, I wonder if I could take just a moment or two to remind you of the last verse that we skipped so very, very quickly last evening. The great verse that deals with the person of Jesus Christ.

And I feel very convicted that I dare not skip over, as quickly as I did last evening, the person of Jesus Christ. I remember some years ago, maybe I'm going back 10, 15 years now, I was invited to conduct the city crusade in the city of Glasgow. And the man that wrote me said this, uh, brother Fran, we've had quite a number of crusades over the past years.

We want this one to be somewhat different. We don't want it just to be an out-and- out evangelistic crusade. We would rather that it be a teaching crusade, where we shall teach many that will come who know Jesus Christ, the great fundamentals of the Christian faith, and yet, at the same time, remember that night by night there will be unconverted death.

And so, for the two weeks of these gospel services, I took this one verse. And, as we looked at it, we started off by reminding ourselves that, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness. For God was manifest in flesh, and the first evening I dealt with the first of the Lord Jesus.

God manifest in flesh. We reminded our hearts again that on that dark Galilean night, as by faith we would wend our way into Bethlehem's barn, we would gain sound into the face of the day. And though there was no light in the barn, that fave was none other than the light of the world.

We reminded our hearts that while there was no food there, that fave was the bread of heaven. That while there was no doctor or midwife to care for that woman, that fave was the great physician. And, we spent the first evening considering the great doctrine of the Christian faith, that God has been manifest in flesh.

The second evening, we took the second phrase of that text. He was justified in spirit, and we saw again how the life of the Lord Jesus justified his claim to be none other than Emmanuel, God with us. We thought a little of the inquiry that went from the prison, when John the Baptist sent his disciples saying, "'Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?'" How the Lord Jesus went back, or sent the message to John, that he lay there in prison and said, "'You go, you tell, you tell the things that thou hast seen, and the things that thou hast heard, how the lame walk, how the lepers are cleansed, how the deaf hear, how the dead are raised from the dead, how the poor have the gospel preached unto them.'" And, it was the word, and the walk, and the work of the Lord Jesus that proved that the first statement was true, that he was God manifest in flesh, for he was justified in spirit.

Second day, we went for the third day, we went for the third call, that he who was God manifest in flesh, justified in spirit, he was the one who indeed he appeared, I'm sorry, justified. I've got to look at it. God was manifest in flesh, justified in spirit, seen of angels, and we spoke not of the birth of Christ, or the life of Christ, we spoke of the death of Christ.

We reminded ourselves of those lovely words in the 22nd of Luke, when in Gethsemane's garden, the Christ faced the awfulness of Golgotha, and how we read that the angels appeared and ministered unto him. Why appeared unto angels? Angels appeared unto him, and we thought of the death of Christ. We reminded our hearts that while men sometimes say angels would love to preach the gospel we preach, angels did preach it.

They did preach it. And, then we thought, indeed, of the wonders of the fact that he was preached unto the Gentiles. And, as you know, there are seven Gentile epistles, and the burden of every one of those seven Gentile epistles is the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Come with me to the first one, and turn on a great epistle to the Romans, and hear the statement concerning the resurrection in that fourth verse of the first chapter, that he is declared to be the son of God, with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Oh, this is the burden of every Gentile epistle. The Christ is raised from the dead.

Then we went on, of course, and reminded them that he was believed on in the world, he was received up into glory. Never let us forget that this is the doctrine that is brought before us before the apostle dares to remind them of the warning of departure. He gives them the desperate warning that there will, in the last day, be departure from these things.

There will be those who deny his virgin birth, those who deny his sinless life, those who deny his atoning death, those who deny his bodily resurrection, those who deny his ascension to glory, those who deny the great fundamentals of the faith. Oh, let's listen to the warning that's given to us now in the fourth chapter. You will notice that the warning of departure is brought to us also under three headings.

First, you will note that, first, there is the warning concerning enticing words. May I repeat that? The warning concerning enticing words. Fourth one, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.

Then, would you notice, there is not only the warning concerning enticing words, but enforcing observance, enforcing observance. Verse three, forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meat. And then, there is this warning concerning erroneous teaching.

Verse seven, refuse the pain and all wide fables. Fables. Let's look at them then.

First of all, there is the warning of departure, that in the latter days, some shall depart from the truth. Now, he's already told us in the last verse of the previous chapter what the truth is, but now he says there are those in the latter days who will depart from the truth. I wonder if I may ask you something.

Would I be right in saying that the thing that seems to mark our present day is the fact that men and women are seeking after some experience outside of the experience of the scripture? Would I not be right in saying that never were there days when so many popes are seeking after familiar spirits? Now, we in my own country have had a desperate case of this. You see, maybe in my land, in some small measure, when there is a murder, people take note, not suggesting you don't in your land. But, I wonder if I could just say this as a matter of fact, that you've had this year, and it's not yet the end of July, you have had more murders in the city of Atlantic, Georgia than we had all year long here in our whole country, and that includes the north of Ireland.

So, you will understand that when there is a murder in my land, people do take note. It does hit the headlines of the national press, and we have just had a desperately, desperately bitter experience. Some of my dear friends, I believe Christian friends, but nevertheless, I'm very dear friends, have employed the charismatic movement teaching.

They've gone in for some ecstasy in speaking in tongues, they've gone in for some ecstasy in so-called faith healing, but neither of these things, after a while, as they never will, brought satisfaction, so they went a step further into the casting out of demons. Now, I want to make one word of desperate warning. Please, do accept it from me in the spirit in which it's given.

Whatever you do, be very, very, very careful in dealing with what people have called evil spirits. My experience has been this, that there are young people who don't even understand their own lives, let alone understand experiences that others are going through, who are traveling with this thing. Let me lift a hand of warning.

Beware! Beware! For, in my land, this charismatic group, there was a Church of England minister, a Methodist minister. There were some who had been in fellowship with the assemblies of God's and have left them because they felt that they were not bright enough, and they started to cast demons out of a man, and in casting the demons out of the man, he went straight from that charismatic movement, went straight to his home, took a knife and a chopper, and hacked his wife to pieces. Now, please, please, I mustn't go any further.

I only know that when the matter has come to the law court, the plea is a plea for insanity. The medical profession has said this man became insane because he dabbled with this thing. So, I am lifting a word of warning.

Brethren, sisters, be careful. And, a word of advice. Make sure you go along and see the slide that Mr. McKenzie is going to show of the work in Athens.

He will have something to say, I am sure, of the curse of witchcraft and demon possession. You must be there. I hope that we're not going to miss a good message.

Here, the warning is given, and the warning is given concerning these enticing words that come from seducing spirits and the doctrines of devils. There are such things as evil spirits, but hallelujah, greater is he that is for us than he that is against us. Let rest in Jesus Christ, sometimes we're apt to think that the devil is stronger than the Lord.

Remember, the devil is mighty, but he's not almighty. Remember, he can be present, but listen, he cannot be omnipresent. When sometimes I hear brethren in prayer meetings pray like this, Lord, thou knowest that almost the first person here will be the devil, I almost feel like shouting, praise God, because I know that he's without me, leaving a lot of other folks alone.

He can't be in two places at once. Now, his demons can, but he can't. Never give him more power than he's got, but don't ignore his power.

Beware, and these are the signs of the latter times. Praise God, Jesus Christ is coming back again, and when I see this happening around me, then I want to say even so come Christ Jesus. Then would you notice there are those in latter times who will enforce observances, forbidding to marry, commanding to obtain from me.

Is not this the day in which we live? Oh please, whatever my Bible may say, it leaves us in no doubt of the fact that marriage is of God. It is of God. I was most interested to hear Mr Mackenzie say that he was going off to Africa again very soon, I think it is.

He was leaving his wife behind, and they've been married, how many years was it Mr Mackenzie? No sir, 46 years. We're catching you up sir, we're catching you up, but 46 years he's been married, and he said he was still in love with his wife. He's mad love her.

I think that's great. I tell you something as well, I haven't been married that long, 35 years we've been married, but I love the girl I married when I married her, and I love her now. Marriage is of God.

It's of God. Make sure we build it, and build it well. Make sure we seek to do nothing that will break it down.

But in the last days there will be a rising crowd who forbid to marry. Now this is not those who indeed feel that for the sake of the gospel, or for the sake of the fact that they suffer with some physical ailment that would be unwise for them to marry, or even that they might have to take a wife into a dangerous place, and therefore they refuse to marry. Those are the prohibitions in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Christians.

Those are the prohibitions. But here are those who suggest that there's some higher claim than this. Then they go further, and they tell us that there are some meats we mustn't eat.

Now please, I believe with all my heart in the 11th chapter of Leviticus, I believe there are health rules. I'll let you into a secret. I like pork, but I'll let you into another secret.

There are some countries I go to, I wouldn't touch it with a barbed pole. And this is why God has forbidden certain things that are unclean. There are health rules.

There was a people going to the wilderness, and as they went to the wilderness they would be exposed to all sorts of diseases. And I believe that those health rules are good to gag. You know, I know you folks are great fishermen in America.

Well, you are, by the way, at all. I don't know why what you do, but nevertheless, you're great fishermen. But I tell you, if I ever come to your house, don't you put a mackerel in front of me, because I won't eat it.

I believe God has forbidden the eating of fish with shells on them. The other way around, I mean. Shells.

And I believe he's done it as a health law. Not as a spiritual law, but a health law. If you want to catch the biggest mackerel, I'll tell you where to go.

I'll tell you where to go. You go to the poor island there, and that's where you'll find the biggest ones. They're the carpenters of the sea, the pigs are the carpenters of the earth.

And if there's dawns a day when they raise mackerel under hygienic conditions, then I might eat them. But I'm going to say, Lord, I believe you know about the body you made better than I do. I believe they're a health law.

But there are people that have turned health laws into spiritual laws. The first time I came to America, I was in Durham, and my good friend, Mr. Weldon Detweiler--and he's still my friend, although he called me a doctor--but nevertheless, you know, my good friend, Mr. Detweiler, took me down to be on a radio program. And prior to the radio program, there was a good man by the name of Bree--you'll all know him myself--and, you know, he announced himself as 200 pounds of spiritual dynamite.

Well, he announced it, not me. But that's how he announced it of himself. And he was going to speak.

He was on the program immediately following us, and he was going to speak on we're eating hog meat, can you? Now, that's a real American subject, isn't it? I wondered whatever he was going to say, and I say to this, we're eating hog meat, can you? Of course, he's adding a word about Seventh-day Adventists. That's what he's having a word about. I only know this, that when men and women make the eating of meat and the reclaiming from it a condition of salvation, then these are the things we're warned against.

Now, I'm not talking about a person who's a vegetarian because of health reasons. I'm talking of those, as this chapter is talking, who try and make a doctrine where it's not a doctrine. But, he goes further.

He says, in the last days there will be increasing work, producing spirit, there will be the enforcing of observances, forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meat, and then there will be erroneous teachings, and he calls them profane and old wise fables. Now, whatever you may say about old wise fables, you must acknowledge this, mustn't you? That they are based on no truth whatsoever. They are fables, they're gossiping things.

Oh, let's go back to what our dear brother said yesterday. Let us remember this, that doctrine is based on text, and text is based on doctrine. The last day, the word of warning.

But, then let's go further, for if there is a warning of departure, there is a work of diligence, and I would much rather talk about this than the other. And, one of the things that thrills me here is that these words

are addressed to a young man, and I'm so glad. Yesterday, speaking of elders and deacons, we were speaking mostly of those that were mature, for it says not a novice.

Today, we're speaking to you young folks, and I'm glad of that. I'll let you know a secret that's not a thing you're suffering with, but a few years won't look right, really. I only know this, that God has something to say to you young folks, and what wonderful things he has to say.

He says, first of all, whatever else you do, you exercise your mind. Whatever else you do, you establish the truth. Whatever else you do, you be an example to others.

Whatever else you do, you implore your talent. Whatever else you do, you give evidence of the truth that lies within you. And, whatever else you do, you live a life that is exemplary.

And, that's a young folk. I say, let's look at the first one. He says, whatever else you do, you exercise your mind.

He says, exercise thyself unto godliness. Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of life, which is, and which is to come. Now, he deals here, of course, with bodily exercise as well.

Authorized version says, bodily exercise profiteth little. But, we are all aware, your margin no doubt will say it, if you've a good Bible, that bodily exercise profiteth for a little while. He's not saying bodily exercise only profits little.

He says it profits for a little while. And, may I ask you something? In the life of a man, what are those years compared to eternity? They're only a little while, aren't they? Now, bodily exercise profiteth for a little while. I believe, as brethren and sisters, especially you young folks, I believe that you ought to exercise that body of yours.

Remember, it is the temple of the Holy Ghost, if you're a believer. You need to look after it. Having spoken, indeed, of what I believe to be hell for all, now he goes on and reminds us what's this.

He reminds us of the fact that each one of us must be careful of our body. Bodily exercise profiteth for a little while. I think, I must use that word, I think I have seen this in experience, that, generally speaking, when I come across a brother or a sister who is very difficult to get on with in an assembly, that brother and sister, when they were youngsters, never learned to play ball.

They never knew what it meant to pass a ball to someone else. Now, I don't know anything about your silly old games here, but in my country, you show me a brother who's cantankerous and difficult to get on with, I'll show you a brother who never played soccer when he was a boy. You know, he had to be shooting for the goal.

He wasn't prepared to pass it to someone else and let him shoot. Never played a game of rugby. He had to be touching the ball down.

He didn't know what it meant to pass it to someone else. You know, I stood for a while and watched that game you were playing last night. I was interested in the game.

Of course, I was interested in a certain brother who stood on the touchline and shouted and shouted. I was most interested in what he said. But, nevertheless, one of the things that I enjoyed about that game yesterday, listen, it wasn't like that golf game, you know, that your husband played.

It was a game where everyone was dependent on someone else to win. And that's a good game. That's a good game.

You learn something of living with one another. I believe bodily exercise is prominent. But, listen, listen, oddly enough, half of us, for all time, there are some brethren and sisters who, no thought of their own, couldn't enter into sports.

Some of those brethren and sisters, God gives them an extra touch of His Spirit, it seems to me. That's oddly enough for men. But, let's remember, we must exercise our mind as well as our body.

Our mind, give thyself, exercise thyself unto Godliness. And then there is the establishing of the truth, verse 11. These things command and teach.

These things command and teach. What things? The previous verse. The living God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.

Why make sure, young people, that you have a command of the truth? For it is commanding of you, as young people, to teach. You see, if I'd learned one thing, I've learned this. I've learned that young people reach young people.

Isn't that true? Sitting around the table just before my son was married. I don't mean today, but, you know, just before. He kept looking at me, and after a bit I said, you've got something on your mind, son? Yes, Dad, he said, I was just thinking you've had it, haven't you? You know, when you've said all you've got to say, I don't know if there is any person that I find it difficult to understand, like a man of my age, and the age maybe of many of us here, who tries to be a teenager.

You know, when you get over 50 and you still try to be a teenager. Is there anything worth, really? I'm not a teenager. I'll let you into a secret.

I will. I never was one. They never called us teenagers when I was that age.

I won't tell you what they call us, but I never was a teenager. That's a new name. I only know that in the things of God, it's good when young people work amongst young people.

Now, I do not mean to the exclusion of those that are older. Church of God is a family, and in families, mum and dad are there, as well as the children. I'm not partial to these just youth gatherings, but I do know this, that you young folks, you must teach to others.

I command thee, teach. And if a young man falls right into it, do you teach the other young folks? And then would you notice he goes further? He speaks not only of the establishing of the truth, but the example to others in verse 12. He says, let no man despise thy youth.

No, don't let, you young people, don't let folks despise your youth. Mr. McKenzie, sir, may I ask you a question? You were talking about Antony Norris Grove, who was the first man who left England for Baghdad at the commencement of what I may call the missionary enterprise among the Christians you and I love. Mr. McKenzie, how old was Antony Norris Grove when he went to Baghdad? Are you not sure? Oh, I can say anything now, and no one can contradict me.

By the way, that gives me another plug. You ought to buy that book, Turning the World Upside Down. But Antony Norris Grove was 25 years of age.

Some of us folks would say he's only a youngster. And he went to Baghdad. Do you know how old Mr. Darby was when he left the Church of England? He was 21 years of age.

Do you know how old Lord Congleton was when he gathered with a company of Christians? Twenty-three years of age. Listen, the revival of Bible truth concerning the church didn't start with old bewistered men. Let no man despise our youth.

But, listen, if they weren't pleased, if they were not, according to the following words, they could have done nothing. They were an example. Why, he says, these things command and teach.

Let no man despise our youth, but see thou an example of the believer in words, in our personal conversation, in conversation. And you know the word conversation is behavior. Our conversation, our politics, our behavior is in heaven.

He says you be an example in words, personal conversation, in conversation, in our behavior, in charity, in love, in spirit, in our disposition, in faith, our confidence in God, in purity, in our thoughts and actions. And it's a young man and a young woman. Listen, you young folks, are you an example to each one of us in this service today? You can be, you know.

God never intended you just to be followers, but leaders. Be an example in your personal conversation. Be an example in your behavior.

Be an example in your love. Be an example in your disposition. Be an example in your confidence in God.

Be an example in your thoughts and actions. Knowing how to behave ourselves in the church of God, I say it's desperately practical, isn't it? Desperately practical. And then he goes further and he says, and employ your talent.

Employ your talent. Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. He says, neglect not the gift that is within thee.

Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them. Give thyself completely to them.

Be earnest about this thing. Don't play the fool. I know of no way to know the Bible but read it.

Do you know another way? Can you bow your knee and say, God, God, I want to know the Bible. Give me some vision that I might know the Bible. Well, you'll get up as barren as you knelt down and you're pretty barren when you pray like that.

There's only one way. If you want to know the word of God, you've got to read it. Meditate on it.

Why, he says, give thyself, give thyself wholly to them. And the evidence shall be seen. Please, the evidence shall be seen.

Verse 15, thy offering may appear to all men. That's it, isn't it? That's it. Listen, I've got to be careful because Mary's coming tonight.

But if I'm not a better husband to reading the Bible, then the Bible's no good to me. You hear that? And my sister, if you're not a better wife to reading the word of God, then you ought to be. And my brother, younger brother, my younger sister, if you're not a better son, if you're not a better daughter to reading the

word of God, you ought to be.

Let it be evidently seen by all men that these things are true. Oh, God, give us to realize that the one in whose birth and life and death and resurrection, in his ascension to glory, proved that he was God over all, blessed forever. May he so live his life out to us that there will be a living which is exemplary.

Verse 16, take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine continuing them, that thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear. Not eternal salvation. Save thyself and them that hear.

Do you want life? Say I you, again. Do you want life with a capital L? Do you really want the salvation of God? Do you want to enjoy it? Then I tell you what to do. Take heed to thyself and the doctrine.

And hallelujah, you'll find life and that more abundantly. God brought that it may be true in our life. Do you think we may sing that little chorus again, sir? Let the Lord just close.

Let the Lord have his way in your life every day. There's no rest, there's no peace until the Lord has his way. Could I ask, could I ask we sing it mournfully and quietly? With sonic pressure, remember that this surely was Timothy's way in a matter.

Let the Lord have his way in your life every day.

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