

(Through the Bible) 1 Timothy

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a good conscience and living a righteous life as a leader in the church, and encourages believers to pray for those in authority and to trust in God's will for every person in the world.

Duration: 56:34

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:16

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Godly Living"

Description

This sermon delves into Paul's first letter to Timothy, emphasizing the importance of church leadership, the conduct of shepherds and leaders, and the need for the next generation to uphold the values of godliness. Paul's exhortations focus on guarding against false teachings, maintaining a good conscience, and prioritizing love as the ultimate goal of instruction. The sermon highlights the significance of being absorbed in Christ, seeking the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and persevering in godliness and teaching. Practical advice is given on caring for widows, honoring elders, and avoiding the pursuit of money. The message concludes with a call to guard the sacred deposit of the gospel and to steer clear of worldly distractions and arguments.

Transcript

Let's turn to God's Word in Paul's first letter to Timothy. The two letters to Timothy in Titus are among the closing letters that Paul wrote towards the end of his life. And all three of them, which were the last letters that he wrote, 2nd Timothy being the last, are related to the servant of the Lord, the servant in the church.

And in the first letter to Timothy, we could say the subject is the church and its shepherd, the attitude that the shepherds and leaders of the church should have, the way they should live, and the way they should conduct church matters. And it's very interesting to see that these last three letters of Paul have this as their theme. So Paul sort of sensed that his time on earth was gradually getting over, and he was very concerned that the next generation should have the same principles and values that he himself had as a servant of the Lord.

And in the earlier letters, he spoke more about the Christian life, but in these last three letters, he speaks more about the next generation having the same values, giving them warnings, prophetic warnings about how things are going to be, and to prepare themselves for that future time. And it's very interesting to see that if you see it in that context, that Paul is unburdening his heart to Timothy and read this letter with that

in mind, and you'll see some of the most important things that a servant of the Lord must bear in mind. First of all, he says in verse three, don't allow people to teach strange doctrines in your church.

If you're a leader in your church, you have a responsibility to see what type of teaching goes on in your church. You must be alert. And if somebody gets up, you know there was a lot of freedom in the churches in the early days for people to get up and share what's on their heart, and some people may have some crazy ideas.

In those days, at least we can say they didn't have the Bible, New Testament, so they could speak like that. But even today with the New Testament, people have crazy ideas, and they get up and say things in the church, and you must not allow that. You must not allow any person to teach strange doctrines, and don't get involved in arguments.

And many times he tells Timothy, don't get involved in arguments in first letter and second letter. It's one of the most important bits of advice that he gives to Timothy. Don't get involved in endless arguments and disputes, because that won't help about genealogies and speculation.

Speculation means discussing things which are not written in Scripture. Who was Cain's wife? How does that help you to know the answer to such questions? A lot of other questions like that. Don't get involved in such discussions.

And the goal, in contrast to all that, remember that the purpose of all our instruction, verse 5, it's a very important verse. Do you know what's the purpose of all teaching in the church? The ultimate goal is to get people to have love. The ultimate goal is love.

And if you people in your congregation have not learned to love God with all their heart, and love their neighbor as themselves, then you haven't succeeded in your ministry. If you've just succeeded in getting them to go out and give the gospel to others, and not to love God with all their heart, and love their neighbor as themselves, you're a total failure. And I'd like to know how many people who have been preaching the word for so many years in some church, such a lot of teaching, have led people to love God with all their hearts, and love their neighbors themselves.

We can say such people have been successful in their ministry. Love from a pure heart. I said the other day how a pure heart is a heart that loves God totally.

No place in the heart for anybody else, or anything else. And a good conscience, and a sincere faith. So it's not just love, it's love that comes from a heart that loves God totally.

Love that comes from a good conscience. A man living with a clear conscience. So important.

Paul towards the end of his life stresses this matter of good conscience. He said it in Acts 23 before the high priest. He said it before Felix in Acts 24 16.

And he says it to Timothy in his closing years. Good conscience, good conscience, good conscience, because he had seen how many Christian workers had destroyed themselves by not keeping a good conscience. And so here is a good verse for you to keep in mind when you're trying to build up a church.

You're a successful minister of the gospel if you have worked in that church to lead people there to have love to God with a heart that is pure, which is God's place only for God. And you've led the people there to

live with a clear conscience at all times, and to have a simple, sincere faith in the Lord. You've got people to trust the Lord, not just to believe in Him to take them to heaven and forgive their sins, but also in the daily trials of life.

And he says in verse six, some people have strayed away from these fundamental things. And when you stray away in your teaching from all these fundamental issues and get taken up with small, small matters, these are the main issues. And in your teaching, you don't emphasize these things mainly, but you emphasize all these trivial little things, which are not so important.

It ends up in fruitless discussion, argument. They want to be teachers of the law, but they don't understand what they are saying and the matters about which they make confident assertions. I've heard a lot of preachers in Christendom today, and I have to say a lot of them don't know what they're saying.

Like it says here, they don't know what they're saying. They just get up and preach out what they've read in some book or studied in some Bible college or heard on some tape, and they haven't allowed that word to become part of their life. They haven't come to a place where they love God with all their heart themselves.

How in the world are they going to lead other people to such a life? The word that you hear from another man of God, you have received secondhand. All that you're hearing these days is secondhand. You must take these truths before God and say, Lord, convert it to firsthand.

That means make these things real in my life. And then you can speak it as your message. It's not just a message you've heard from somebody else secondhand.

You have converted it to firsthand by applying it to your own life, and you come into a living experience with God about these truths that you've heard. After that, it's no longer somebody else's message. It's your message.

But if you have not converted it into your life, it's always somebody else's message that you're preaching. Do you know that you can convert every message I preach into your message? Very simple. Apply it in your life.

Many people have asked me, Brother Zach, can I preach your messages? I said, sure, but with one condition. Live it first. And you don't have to quote me.

You don't have to always say, this is what I heard from Brother Zach. No, I don't want any credit for it. But live it first.

If you try to preach it without living it, I tell you in Jesus' name, you'll destroy yourself. That's what I've told them, and that's what I'm telling you. Convert it to firsthand.

Live it and preach it as your own message. Otherwise, you'll be like a great teacher of the law, not knowing what you're talking about. And he says about the law, we know the law is good if you use it lawfully.

But the law, verse 9, is not made for a righteous man. A righteous man doesn't need a law. Why do you need a law which says don't commit adultery when you're not even sinning in your thoughts in that area? Why do you need a law which says don't commit murder when you're not even angry with people? A

righteous man doesn't need these Ten Commandments because he's living at a higher level.

Why does he need them? His standard is so much higher. And further, the law is made for those who are lawless, rebellious, ungodly sinners, and a lot of things like that. And anything else is contrary to the glorious gospel of the Blessed God.

We have considered this earlier, how we are free from the law when we walk in the Spirit. And then he says, this is another thing that Paul emphasized much towards the end of his life. He says, look at my example.

See how I lived. This is always what he tells Timothy. You know how I lived.

You've seen how I lived. I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me because he considered me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Now, even though God sovereignly calls people to his ministry, this verse tells us that before he puts a man into the ministry, he tests him.

And I think the Apostle Paul was probably tested for a period of 10 years, from Acts chapter 9, where he was converted, to Acts chapter 13, where he was sent out to the ministry. It was a period of about 10 years. And what was happening in those 10 years? God was watching this man to see whether he was faithful in daily life.

And after he tested him for 10 years and saw his faithfulness, he says, okay, now I'm going to send you to serve me. And you know, when God calls you, he'll test you. I know he tested me for nearly 10 years, too, after I quit my job, before he opened up the ministry that he really had for me.

Don't think that as soon as you go out, you can step out and get an anointed ministry. God will test you to see whether you're faithful in the little things. And if you're faithful and you humble yourself under authorities God places over you, and faithful in the little things, faithful to study his word, faithful with money, faithful with your time, upright, honest, faithful in purity.

It may take 10 years, but in 10 years, God will put you into a ministry. And when God puts you into ministry, you can do more in one year than if you go 10 years trying to do something yourself. He says, he put me into the ministry.

It wasn't any man. Even though I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, you know, God doesn't put only holy people in ministry. He puts people who are outright sinners in their past life.

He makes them holy, but they could have been terrible sinners in their previous life. And that's an encouragement to anybody sitting here who's lived a very wicked life of sin in the past. There is a second century writing in which it says that Jesus Christ, in order to show that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, picked up some of the worst sinners of his time to become his apostles, of which was Paul.

But he says in verse 15, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am number one. He says, among all the sinners in the whole world, I'm the greatest. And Jesus picked me and he became the greatest apostle.

So God doesn't necessarily pick people who have been brought up in very God-fearing homes and will live very godly lives all through. He does sometimes, but he also picks up people who have lived in the depths

of sin. He can pick up adulterers and thieves and drunkards and drug addicts and transform them and make them apostles to prove that sin doesn't disqualify a person from becoming even an apostle.

The greatest sinner became the greatest apostle as an encouragement to all people who have lived in sin, who feel, I have sinned so much. God can't do much through me. God can do a lot through you, if you will trust him and repent of your sin.

I want you to notice a progression in the Apostle Paul's attitude towards his own, I mean, understanding of his own sinfulness. Many people, they think the closer they get to God, they will be less aware of sin in their life. It's not true.

Any godly person would say the closer he gets to God, the more he's aware of sin in his life, because God is so holy. Isaiah saw the holiness of God and said, Lord, I'm a sinful man. Job said that.

Peter said that. John said that. And Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 9, about 10 years before he wrote this letter, he says, I am what I am by the grace of God.

I'm the least of the apostles. He thought of himself as the least of the apostles. Five years later, in Ephesians 3 8, he goes still further down and says, I'm not just the least of the apostles.

I'm the least of all the believers. Five years later, when he writes 1 Timothy, he goes still further down and says, I'm the worst of all the sinners. So what is spiritual growth? Spiritual growth is a greater awareness of your littleness and your nothingness.

How you are the least of the apostles, the least of the saints, and the worst of sinners. Is that the way you're growing? Then you're growing in the right direction. That means that you're coming closer and closer to God.

Now a lot of people think that there'll be no consciousness of sin in my life if I come close to God. I've got victory over sin. No, it's not like that.

As we come closer, we discover sins that we never knew existed in us before. Okay? He tells him in verse 18 onwards to fight a good fight, wage war, fight a good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience, verse 19, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck. He says there are people who did not keep a good conscience.

And you know what happened? They made shipwreck of their lives. They lost their faith. How do you lose your faith? You sometimes read of believers losing their faith.

How do they lose their faith? Sometimes you, I've heard stories of some child of God, really born again, loves the Lord and goes to some liberal Bible seminary or something and he loses his faith after he hears all that is taught there. But how did he lose his faith? He need not have lost his faith. First of all, he shouldn't have gone there.

Secondly, if he had kept a good conscience, we lose our faith when we don't keep a good conscience, when we say things which are not true, when we don't stand up for our convictions. Supposing a person made the mistake of going to a liberal seminary for getting a degree. And if he had kept a good conscience, he'd have stood up to his professors and say, I'm sorry, sir, that's wrong.

That's not according to God's word. Of course, he'd have been thrown out in the first month, but he wouldn't have lost his faith. Now, a lot of people don't keep a good conscience.

They just keep quiet. The Lord is being dishonored left, right and center in their classroom. They keep quiet.

But such people deserve to lose their faith. They deserve to go to hell because hell is made for the cowardly people. It says in Revelation 21 7. It's made for those who don't have the guts to stand up for the truth.

And if you're like that, you deserve to go to hell. Definitely. But heaven is made for those who stand up for their convictions.

If you don't keep your conscience clear, you make shipwreck of your faith. That's what the Bible says. Among them are he names them hymen is Alexander.

You know, Paul was not afraid of naming people. Some people say we must never mention any names. Paul said, I'm not afraid of naming people.

I want to warn you about this man, this man, they're leading people astray. And I have delivered hymen is an Alexander to Satan so that they may not they may learn not to blaspheme. Okay, chapter two, verse one.

Here, he says, I want you to pray and give thanks for all men. Now, in previous passages, we saw we have to give thanks at all times. And in everything, always give thanks in everything at all times.

And here we find another amazing words, not only at all times, not only in all things, give thanks. Here it says, give thanks for all men. Have you read that verse? Have you learned to give thanks for all men? Does your Bible say, I want thanksgivings to be made on behalf of all men last part of verse one.

It says that that means I say, Lord, I'm thankful for everybody, the ones who harm me, the ones who do me good, everybody's working for my good. You can't do that unless you believe in Romans 828. And he says, especially you must pray for kings, those in authority.

And do you know who was the emperor in Rome? When Paul wrote this, Nero, one of the worst emperors. Well, man who persecuted Christians like anything and who later on chopped off Paul's head. He said, we got to pray for them.

So we don't pray only for people who are in authority who are godly. Even if it's the most ungodly person like Nero, who persecutes Christians and chops off the heads of apostles, pray for him. Pray what? Pray that God will restrain the forces of darkness from hindering and prevent them from hindering his purposes on earth.

What should we pray in India? We're not expecting believers to get an authority in the central government. No, that's not what I pray. Let them be unbelievers.

They were never no believers in authority in Paul's time. But we prayed because we have the power to influence almighty God, who is the greatest superpower in the universe to influence governments in every country. I have believed that for many years.

In our church, we have always prayed at election time and at other times, that God will control the decisions taken by the government. And we believe God does that. If you don't have faith, of course, don't pray.

If you think God almighty in heaven is unable to control some small government in some country, then don't pray. It's no use praying if you don't have faith. But I hope we have faith that a few people who live godly lives with a good conscience can pray and influence a country's government in a way that fulfills God's purposes in that country.

Now God's purpose may be persecution. It was persecution for nearly 200 years of Christendom, the early first 200 years. Okay, that's fine.

It may be persecution in India. And so I'm not praying against that. When Jesus himself said, all men will hate you.

In the last days, I'm not praying, Lord, don't let all men hate me. How can I pray against what Jesus himself will happen? When Jesus said in the last days, there'll be famines, earthquakes and wars. I can't pray, Lord, don't let there be any famines or earthquakes or wars.

There will be. So we can't pray against what Jesus said. It will be, I accept it.

But what we can pray is that the forces of darkness will be restrained. See in 2 Thessalonians 2, he speaks about a restraining influence. And that restraining influence is the church restraining.

And then one day time comes when that restraint is taken away and the Antichrist comes in. But until then, we must pray for those in authority and influence them by prayer. That is the best way, not by joining politics.

There's far more power in influencing them by prayer than by joining politics. And he says, this is good and acceptable. Our prayer is not that we won't be persecuted.

Our prayer is that we can live a quiet life in godliness and dignity. And if it pleases God for us to be persecuted, that's fine. And then it says here in verse 4, God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It's a wonderful verse which says that God wants every single person in all the six billion people in the world to be saved. Don't let anybody tell you anything other than that. God's will is that every single person in this universe, in this world should be saved.

He did not predestine anybody to go to hell. This verse teaches that very clearly. And not only do we save, he wants everybody after they are saved to come to the full knowledge of the truth of God.

Not just be saved. Once you have saved a person, that's not enough. God's next part of his will is that they must come to the full knowledge.

That's the meaning here. The full knowledge of the truth of God. And it says further here, because there is one God and one mediator between God and man.

That is the man Christ Jesus. Isn't it interesting that 30 years after, 35 years after Jesus ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit still calls him the man Christ Jesus. Not the God-man.

He is God. But he has taken our nature so completely that he is still called the man. Even today after 2,000 years, he is the man Christ Jesus.

You see, Jesus came and took our nature and he has taken it to heaven to represent us. And he has given us his nature to represent him on earth. That's the picture.

He has taken our nature to represent us in heaven and he has given us his nature to represent him on earth. What a wonderful exchange. He's doing that job faithfully with our nature, our human nature.

He's representing us before the Father. He's given us the divine nature to represent him in the same way on earth. Just like he stands before the Father, we are to stand before people on his behalf because he stands on our behalf before the Father.

This is a mediator. Okay. In verse 9 onwards, till the end, he talks about the way women should dress and conduct themselves.

He says, I want the women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly, discreetly. That means a woman should be careful that the way she dresses should not provoke others to lust. A lot of women follow the fashions of the world which are designed to provoke others to lust.

And you got to make sure when you tell the tailor how to stitch your clothes that you don't want the fashions that other people are having. If that fashion involves immodest exposure of your body or anything which is provocative to other people. A woman must be dressed modestly.

That doesn't mean she should be shabby. I believe it's good for brothers and sisters to be dressed neatly, smartly, decently, and a woman especially should try to make herself as attractive as possible but not in a provocative way to provoke men to lust. It's very practical.

And it says here in verse 9 further, not with fancy clothes. I find that a lot of churches which emphasize not with gold do not emphasize not with expensive clothes. I don't know why.

They tell that poor sister to take off her 1,000 rupee earring but she wears a 10,000 rupee sari. I say what's the difference? It's in the same verse. Well, I'm not here to decide about those things.

I say you take God's word. He says the main thing is it's not the main emphasis here is don't make yourself attractive on the outside but by good works in a way that's fitting for a godly woman. And then it says about how a woman should behave in the church.

Remember, the subject of Timothy is the church and its shepherd. He says later on in chapter 3 verse 15, I'm writing these things. I may be delayed.

I'm writing these things so that you must know how you ought to conduct yourself in the church especially when you come to the meetings in the church. Be modestly dressed. Don't make yourself attractive.

Of all the time. And in the church, that's the theme of Timothy, 1 Timothy 2.11, a woman must quietly receive instruction. Now that doesn't mean that she cannot teach her children at home.

She cannot teach Sunday school. That doesn't mean she cannot be an evangelist and go and preach the gospel even to men who are unconverted. She can always do that.

But in the church, 1 Timothy 3.15, this is speaking about in the church. 1 Timothy 3.15 makes that clear. In the church, she must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness and in the church, verse 12, I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man but must be quiet.

It doesn't mean that she cannot pray or prophesy because we read in 1 Corinthians 11 she can pray and prophesy. She can sing. But quiet in the sense that she must not teach men in the church.

She must not stand up as a teacher. She can get up and give a testimony. She can get up and share some word that has been a blessing to her.

But she must not teach. And she must not have authority. She must not be an elder in a church.

See, remember, if you read Romans chapter 16, you find at least five women there mentioned who were co-workers of the Apostle Paul. They were workers and they were not just cooking the food. They were actually serving the Lord.

Evangelism and other things they were doing. So women had a tremendous part in the ministry of the early church. Think of a country like India.

You know how difficult it is for a man to speak to an unconverted woman in India. Who's going to reach all these 50% of India which is women? Sisters. So I believe that women have a great ministry in counseling and evangelism and reaching out to half of India.

And we must not suppress that ministry. But as terms of authority it says Adam was created first and then Eve. And second reason is Adam was not deceived.

The woman was deceived. And that's why a woman should not teach because she's more prone to deception than the man. A lot of cults have come up through women.

But it says a woman's ministry can be bearing children. And that's a ministry too. Don't think that's not a ministry.

And I'm sure Timothy, who got this letter, believed that because he became an apostle because he had a godly mother. And he could understand that very well. If it were not for my mother, he would have said I would never have been an apostle.

Many people don't realize that discipling your children at home is primarily the work of a mother in a sense because she's there with them most of the time. I met a family, a mother who had 12 children. And she said, you know, like Jesus, I'm also training 12 disciples.

Absolutely right. So she shall be preserved for the bearing of children. There was a curse on the ground and the Lord told Eve in Genesis 3 that you bear children through a lot of pain.

So when he refers to Adam and Eve here, Paul says a woman doesn't have to fear. God will take care of her when she's delivering children. Let her continue in faith and love.

In chapter 3, he talks about the qualifications for elders and deacons and deaconesses. That means men and women servants in the church who have certain ministries. In verses 1 to 7, he deals with the qualifications for elders.

They must have a good testimony. They must not have more than one wife. You know, in those days there were people who were married to two wives or three wives.

And supposing the man and all three wives got converted, what do you do? Well, he said they can all be converted. They can come to the church. I think the man must live with one wife and keep the others away and support them.

But such a man cannot be an elder, even though he can be a good brother in the church. But he must not be given a responsibility as an elder. It's good for an elder of a church usually to be a married man because he has to counsel married people.

And he must be temperate, wise, respectable, hospitable, able to teach. Not one who loves wine and comfortable life and not argumentative type who is always arguing with people. And gentle, not controversial in terms of, again, argumentative.

Free from the love of money. Very important qualification. Notice how much emphasis the New Testament places on freedom from the love of money, which is never found in the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament you're warned about the danger of wealth, but here it's free from the love of money. And then it says, one who can control his own children well. If a man cannot keep his children in his home under control, how can he take care of the house of God? If he cannot take care of three children at home, how can he take care of 300 people in the church? Impossible.

So the way a man brings up his house and controls his house and keeps his home in order is one of the qualifications to be able to have responsibility in the church, which teaches us our home life is very important if we are to be servants of the Lord. The way we bring up our children. Children, sometimes you see in some churches, the children of the preacher are some of the worst behaved children in that church.

It's very sad. Such a man should never be an elder. And further, he should not be a new convert, verse 6, because he can fall into pride.

He must have a good testimony with those outside the church. And then deacons also, verse 8 to 10, they must not be double-tongued. That means they must not say one thing to one person, another thing to another person.

They must be sincere and upright. See, deacons are those who look after the practical affairs. The elders are the spiritual leaders of the church, the overseers.

And the deacons are the ones who look after the, like the finances, the treasurer and various practical aspects. They're looking after the widows and so many things, distribution of food. There are many, many practical things like that.

Those are the deacons. And they also must be people who hold the mystery of the faith and got a good conscience and many things like that. And then in verse 11, it speaks about deaconesses.

The women who have a ministry in the church must not be malicious gossips. And I want to tell you the word for malicious gossips here is the same word which is used for the devil in other places, diabolos. And so what he's saying is women should not be little devils.

That means always, you know, speaking evil, gossips, gossips, gossips. Of course, men shouldn't be little devils also, but women have a tendency to gossip more than men. You know, because the men are out at work and the women are sitting at home, nothing to do, and they decide to visit some other woman and they sit.

And if they sit for half an hour, it's okay. Beyond half an hour, 45 minutes, they begin to talk about other people. So women must not be malicious gossips, must be self-control, faithful.

Then only they must be given in a ministry in the church. And the deacons must be husbands again of one wife and so on, who can manage their own children. Even the people who are responsible for practical details in their church must also be able to manage their families well.

And then he says, you know, I'm writing all this so that you know how to conduct yourself in the church. Verse 16, he moves on to another subject. Well, I believe this is really the subject that goes on about later in chapter 4. This is the great mystery of godliness.

I told you yesterday there are two great mysteries. One is Christ coming in the flesh, here in verse 16, and the other is the church being one flesh with Christ. Now think of this mystery.

It's a, it's, mystery means you can't explain it. How can God be a man? I don't know. I can't explain it.

But I believe it. He, God, was revealed in the flesh. He came like us.

Believe it. It's a very important thing to believe. It's the secret of godliness.

Mystery means secret. What is the secret of godliness? What is the secret of living a godly life? The living Bible paraphrases like that. What is the secret of living a godly life? The answer lies in Christ, who came to earth as a man.

There is the secret of living a godly life. There was one man who walked on earth as a man, who lived a godly life. And that's why you and I can live a godly life.

He is the proof that a man can live a godly life. He is the proof that a man can overcome the lust of the eyes. He is the proof that a man can control his temper, that a man need never be jealous and never be bitter, etc.

So the secret of a godly life lies in Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh and was vindicated in the Spirit. That means the Holy Spirit examined every area of his life and said, 100% pure, beheld by angels. Angels watch this great mystery of God becoming flesh and walking as a man, being tempted and overcoming.

And this is what we proclaim in all the nations of the world. And people believed on him in the world when he was here also, and he was taken up to glory. This is the secret of godliness.

And this is the way we've got to go too. Today we are in the flesh. The Holy Spirit examines our life to see whether we are pure.

Angels are watching us. We saw that in Ephesians 3.10. Our life is a proclamation to the nations about what the gospel is and people believe. And one day we will be taken up to glory as well if we are faithful.

But in contrast to this God's method of holiness, the Holy Spirit says in the last days people are going to preach some other method of holiness in contrast to this. Chapter 4 verse 1. And they are going to listen to deceitful spirits. A lot of deceiving spirits are going to come into the world in the last days.

They're going to listen to doctrines of demons. Now when you read doctrines of demons you think some horrible thing. Doctrines of demons? What's that? You know what a doctrine of a demon is? Things like verse 3, don't get married.

Does that sound like a doctrine of a demon? Don't get married. Paul says there are some people who teach don't get married as a way to godliness. The secret of godliness is don't get married.

That's a doctrine of a demon. The secret of godliness is verse 3, don't eat certain types of food. Fasting is the secret of godliness.

That's a doctrine of a demon. It's things which appear good. Discipline yourself.

That's the secret of godliness. Paul says rubbish. The secret of godliness is Jesus came in the flesh.

Look at him and follow him. The secret of godliness is not in avoiding marriage or giving up your job or in fasting or in discipline of the body. No, the secret of godliness is seeing Jesus who came in our flesh and lived like us looking unto him.

Make him your example and let the Holy Spirit transform you into his likeness. That is the secret of godliness. That is what we must proclaim in the church and that's why in every church we must lift up Jesus who came in the flesh as an example for everybody to follow.

Otherwise you'll produce a church with a bunch of rules and regulations. Brother, we must fast, we must pray, we must read the Bible. All of these things are good but they can end up as doctrines of demons if you don't lift up Jesus Christ as an example for everyone.

If somebody doesn't want to get married like Paul that's fine but don't preach that as a doctrine of as a secret of holiness. If somebody wants to fast that's fine but that's not the secret of godliness. No.

And he says the reason why many of these people are deceived is because they have got hypocrisy verse two in their life. They are liars. They are not honest and their conscience is bad.

If there's hypocrisy in your life acting if there's lying in your life and you don't keep a good conscience you are a perfect candidate for doctrines of demons to deceive you. Okay and then he tells Timothy if you point out these things to the brothers verse six if you point out to the brothers the secret of godliness is not in all these things but in Christ who came in the flesh you will be an excellent servant of Christ Jesus. You want to be a good servant of Christ Jesus point out these things to others and you will be an excellent servant of Christ Jesus constantly nourished on the words of faith.

But he says don't waste your time listening to all these worldly stories which are fit only for old women. You know old women have got nothing else to do sit and talk stories to each other. He says Timothy don't waste your time listening to all these fancy stories.

On the other hand discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness. So he's not against discipline. There is a need for discipline in our life.

There is a need for fasting, need for prayer, need for discipline. But the secret of godliness is Christ come in the flesh and the Holy Spirit making us like him. But you must discipline yourself.

He says bodily discipline physical exercise has got little value but godliness is profitable even in this life and in the next life. That means if you live a godly life it will improve even your physical health. That's what it means.

I can be physically healthier if I live a godly life. If I am free from jealousy, free from bitterness, free from anxiety, I don't get acidity problems, I don't get asthma, I don't get arthritis, I don't get migraine headaches. So many things I'm saved from when I live a godly life.

I'm not saying that these sicknesses may not come due to other reasons but a lot of cases these sicknesses come because of a lot of a lot of sin in a person's life. So it's a value in this life and in the life to come. And it is because of this that we labor.

And now he says in verse 12, just because you're a young man don't let anybody look down on you. You see Timothy was a young man in Ephesus and there were people sitting in that church who were much older than him. And you know how when you go as a young man to lead a church there are people sitting older than you and you can feel intimidated.

Particularly some of those people are rich people or influential people. He says don't allow them to intimidate you. Be such an example to them in your life, by your speech, the way you speak, there should be a godliness in your speech, the way you conduct yourself, in your love for them, in the way you have faith in the midst of all your trials, in the purity you have in your life, in every area show yourself as an example.

Now this is the contrast to what we read in verse 1 to 4. The false teachers teach. True teachers are an example. They speak from their life.

The false teachers just teach certain doctrines. Don't be a teacher of a doctrine. Be an example first.

And study the scriptures. Teach the scriptures. It speaks in verse 13 about the public reading of scripture because people sitting in the congregation didn't have a bible those days.

So they had to read large sections of scripture because then only people would understand the scriptures. Today of course we don't need to read it publicly so much because everybody's got a bible. But he says give attention to scripture.

Be an example, give attention to scripture and exhort and teach. And then another important thing. Don't neglect the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Don't think that you can serve God just because you studied the scripture and just because your life is a good example those things are good. Verse 12 be a good example. Verse 13 give attention to scripture.

Verse 14 you still need the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Seek God for the gift of prophecy. You remember Timothy verse 14? I laid hands on you and the other elders laid hands on you and at that moment you received a spiritual gift when you were anointed with the Holy Spirit.

And that supernatural gift, exercise it. The bible says covet to prophesy in 1 Corinthians 14. Earnestly long for the gift of being able to speak in such a way that your word goes home to people's hearts like an arrow.

Like the words of the prophets in the old testament. Like the word that goes out of God's mouth like it says in Isaiah 55 verse 11. The word that goes out of God's mouth will never return empty.

Be God's mouth. And for that you need the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Jesus needed it and you need it and you need it all the time.

It's not just that you got it once and you have it forever. You need to seek always brothers and sisters. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, Jesus said.

Seek that there'll be an anointing and be an example. Young people be an example. Don't think you have to wait till you're 40 years before you start serving God.

I started preaching when I was 21. I was just converted for two years just baptized and I said well I don't know much but the little I know I can teach ABC to the kindergarten people and when I grow up I can teach a little more and grow up a little more I can teach a little more. When can you start teaching? Can't a first standard student teach the kindergarten student? Sure.

I used to sometimes tell my older boy to teach the younger boy when they're very very small. Why do you have to wait till you're so old before you start sharing God's word with others? The moment you're converted start sharing with those who know less than you. Maybe you can't teach people who know more than you but you can certainly teach a whole lot of people who know less than you and always there are people in the world who know less than you.

First of all the unconverted and if you've grown a little more in the Lord then younger believers. Always be ready to seek God. Always be ready to share and seek God for the gifts of the spirit and he says in verse 15 take pains with these things.

Just like that businessman he takes a lot of pains to make money to establish his business. If you're serious about serving the Lord you've got to take a lot of pains. Studying the scriptures, seeking for the gifts of the spirit, cleansing your life of everything that's impure and be absorbed in them.

What is the meaning of be absorbed in them? That's a beautiful translation. When you're absorbed in these things your progress will become evident to everybody. I'll give you an illustration.

I heard a story once and I know a family close to where I live who experienced this also. One evening they were watching a television program which was I don't know what it was some very popular television program. The whole family was watching it.

They were absorbed with the television program and the thieves in Bangalore know when people are absorbed with television programs and that is the time. It could be daytime and evening say seven o'clock. They know these people are watching television.

We can quietly go into the house and take anything we want and they went into the house and stole. These people were absorbed. Now that's a sad thing that they were absorbed with that but we can apply that in a good way.

I've got to be so absorbed. You know they were so absorbed with that television that they did not know what is happening in the house around them and I can be so absorbed with Jesus Christ and the word of God that the many many temptations in the world don't disturb me. That's what I mean.

Apply it like that. If people can be so absorbed with the television program that they are dead to what's happening in the next room, why can't we be so absorbed with Jesus Christ and God's word and our ministry that many things other people are running after in the world don't attract us. We don't even know.

This is the meaning of absorbed. So taken up and if you live like this you will constantly progress. Every year you'll be a better Christian, a more effective servant of the Lord.

Verse 16 it says pay close attention to two things. One is your life and the other is your teaching. There are two things we must watch always.

Make sure your life is pure. Make sure your teaching is pure and persevere in these things. If you continue to persevere in these things you will save other people and you'll save yourself also.

First you need to save yourself according to verse 16 then only you can save others. In other words if you have not been saved from some filthy lust how can you save other people from that filthy lust. So who has got to be saved first according to verse 16? You.

If you preach something in an area where you've not been saved yourself you're not going to be saving other people. First be saved yourself. How to be saved yourself? Be absorbed in these things.

Watch your teaching. Watch your life. Christian life is a very serious thing.

It's like a man who does business. He doesn't play the fool. If he plays the fool his business will go to ruin and dogs.

In the same way if you're going to serve the Lord let's do it more wholeheartedly than any businessman does his business. In chapter 5 he's talking about how to take care of widows. A little verse first of all for young people like Timothy.

Treat the younger men as brothers and treat the older men as fathers. Verse 1. Treat the older women as mothers and treat the younger women in your church as your sisters in all purity. If you follow this exhortation you will not fall into the danger of impurity and fall sexually like so many people have done.

Treat the younger sisters as your sisters and treat the older sisters like mothers. Then he talks about widows. How to care for widows.

In those days many Christians were killed and their widows and he says if they are young widows tell them to get married again. If they're older widows the church must support them. If their own family members cannot support them.

Practical instruction. I just want to point out one thing here in verse 10. It speaks about some of the conditions.

You don't choose any widow just make sure that she has done things like brought up children in a good way shown hospitality and middle of verse 10 if she has washed the feet of the saints. That's the one verse that teaches us that they did not have the washing of feet as a regular practice in those churches in the first century. Now some churches practice the washing of feet regularly.

I'm not against it. All I'm saying is that's not what Jesus meant when he said do as I've done unto you. What he meant was like this dirty job I did for you.

You must be willing to do dirty jobs for one another. It's not a ritual. And this verse is the one verse that teaches us that the early church did not practice it because if the early church everybody practiced it there's no need for a verse like this if she has washed the saints feet.

What it means is if she's a widow who was willing to do dirty jobs for other people take her. That's the meaning. And further it says here about how to treat elders.

Those who are elders verse 17 must be considered worthy of double honor. That means they must be paid properly because it quotes that verse 18 you shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn and the laborer is worthy of his wages. Now that's a quotation from what Jesus said in Luke chapter 10 verse 7 I think.

The laborer is worthy of his wages and Paul quotes it as scripture that Jesus said a man who works for the Lord deserves to be paid for it. There's nothing wrong in that and we should not become super spiritual and say that those who serve the Lord should not be paid. Well if they like Paul if they support themselves that's fine but otherwise it's perfectly all right to pay an elder who is serving the Lord and don't especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching you must take care of their financial responsibilities.

They should not go around asking for themselves of course not but Paul tells Timothy you make sure that such people their payment is given. Then he says don't receive any accusation against such elders unless there are enough witnesses and don't lay hands suddenly on people. Verse 22 without making sure that they are really led by the Lord keep yourself free from sin.

Verse 23 we see how Timothy also had a thorn in the flesh and that was he had frequent stomach pains and he could not be cured. So even though Paul prayed for him so he said take a little wine take a little medicine and in chapter 6 again he comes to the subject of don't get involved with controversial questions. Verse 4 and be satisfied with what we have.

Verse 6 to 10 don't get involved in the pursuit of money. Paul is telling Timothy such a good man be content with the measure of money God has given you be if you've got food and clothing be happy. It's very easy for a Christian worker to become a covetous covetous long for something else such people he says love of money verse 10 is the root of all sorts of evil those who want to get rich verse 9 and Christian work especially will ultimately destroy themselves but you verse 9 12 fight the good fight.

Remember the confession Jesus made verse 13 before Pontius Pilate what did he say to Pontius Pilate my kingdom is not of this world. Timothy our kingdom is not of this world. Let's remember that let's teach the rich people verse 17 to share what they have with others money is not the greatest thing.

One final word verse 20 guard what has been entrusted to you it's a very sacred deposit and one more warning avoid worldly and empty chatter and arguments guard what's entrusted to you preserve it and preserve that gospel and that testimony of the Lord till the end. Let's pray.

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