



**Sunday School Lesson for January 22, 2006
Released on January 19, 2006**

"Guidance for Teaching"

Printed Text: 1 Timothy 4:1-16

Background Scripture: 1 Timothy 4

Devotional Reading: 1 Timothy 6:2b-10

Time: A.D. 62

Place: Macedonia

1 Timothy 4:1-16

1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

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

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

6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Je'sus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

8 For bodily 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.

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

10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

11 These things command and teach.

12 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.

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

14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

TODAY'S AIMS

Facts: to examine a passage that deals with the work and walk of the good minister of Jesus.

Principle: to teach responsibilities of good Christian leaders.

Application: to help students appreciate the awesome responsibility that goes with leadership.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Last week we saw the apostle Paul give instruction to Timothy with regard to leadership in the local church. Paul specifically wrote with regard to the selection of elders and deacons. He cited the qualities that should be found in men upon whom would be laid the responsibility of overseeing the affairs of the church and ministering to the material needs of its members.

Now Paul turns his attention to Timothy's responsibilities as an evangelist (see this description in 2 Timothy 4:5). These would relate to Timothy's duties in teaching and preaching as well as in his personal life. This retraces the charge Paul had given him earlier in this letter (see 1 Timothy 1:3, 18).

Warning About False Teachers (1 Timothy 4:1-5)

1. How did Jesus' warning in Mathew 24:11-24 parallel Paul's warning about false teachers?

In Mathew 24:11-24, Jesus was explaining to his disciples the signs of His coming and the end times. He told them that many false prophets will rise up and deceive many and the love people once had for God will grow cold (passionless, stiff, unresponsive), in other words they will be spiritually dead because they were deceived and had fallen away from the faith. Paul's warning to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:1), was given to him by the Holy Spirit and describes a similar situation that Timothy must beware of. Paul tells Timothy a time will come when those who once professed Christ will deny him because of their enticement from evil spirits and doctrines of devils which will be spread by false teachers.

2. What did Paul mean by the "latter times" (1 Tim. 4:1)?

The term "latter days" is referring to the period from the first coming of Christ until His return. Paul, under the revelation of the Holy Spirit, warned Timothy that apostasy will exist throughout this period, reaching a climax shortly before Christ returns. Apostasy, is the falling away from one's religious faith where a change from professing faith in Christ to denying the faith takes place. Paul goes on to tell Timothy the identifiable factors of apostasy, being the "seducing of spirits" and doctrines of devils. These false teachers who themselves wandered away from the truth will lead others to do the same. Paul told Timothy those who fall prey to such deception will abandon the Christian faith. They will be lured by demonic powers into following strange beliefs. Those who abandon the Christian faith are merely professing or nominal Christians who associate with those who truly believe the gospel, but fall weak after believing lies and deception by which their true nature of a nonbeliever is revealed.

3. What is the origin of the term "hypocrisy"? (v 2)

"Hypocrisy" is a word that comes from Greek drama. It is derived from the Greek word, "*hypokrisis*" which is the act of playing a part on the stage. The acting was called "hypocrisy" because actors showed one face to the audience - the mask - while their real face stayed hidden. Hypocrisy in this context involves saying one thing while believing or doing another. The false teachers whom Paul knew and spoke of were hypocrites. They did not practice what they preached. They came disguising themselves as true shepards but promoted those things that were not of Christ but desirable to themselves. In this particular verse, we know Paul is schooling Timothy on "false teachers and their duplicities; however we as believers must be cognizant of these elements as well so that we don't fall prey to such teachings or become hypocrites.

Note: "Hypocrisy, acting out a role of righteousness, is not what God wants from us. God is not observing us like an audience would scrutinize an actor; He is not applauding how well we perform our "righteousness script" or even how sincere and genuine our performance is. God is not impressed by unrighteous people who have only done a good job of play-acting righteousness. The promise of our inheritance as believers is actually to be righteous people from the core of our beings. Our hearts and wills will be completely transformed. God will give this gift to those who are trusting Him to save them from their sin; He will not give it to people who have approached life like actors and who are counting on their acting performance to win God's approval."

Larry Barber, an associate staff member of McKenzie Study Center

4. How can a conscience be seared? (v 2)

"Seared" is a medical term referring to cauterization (destruction of tissue). False teachers can teach their hypocritical lies because their consciences have been desensitized as if all the nerves that make them feel had been destroyed and turned into scar tissue by the burning of demonic deception. As Paul used the phrase, "seared with a hot iron", this is a picture of a body part burned so bad that it no longer has feeling. If we look deep into this verse, anything without feeling is considered dead. Anything dead, is unproductive. If something is unproductive, it has been cut off from its lifeline. Remember, Jesus is our life line. These false teachers Paul spoke of were spiritually dead and alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance within them and the blindness of their hearts. They had become so self-willed that they detached themselves further and further away from the truth therefore being turned over to their own reprobate mind.

5. What characteristics of Asceticism and Gnosticism did the false teachers represent? (vs 3-5)

Paul defined some of the false teachings that he had experienced and foretold would soon come to the church. Two basic issues are mentioned: forbidding marriage and requiring vegetarianism.

The forbidding of marriage was a characteristic of what became known as "Gnosticism," a name for various religious sects that taught that the physical world is evil and only the spiritual is good. The practice of denying bodily pleasures (and even bodily needs) is called "Asceticism." Ascetic and Gnostic groups often opposed marriage and childbearing because they perpetuate the physical. Celibacy was viewed as spiritual. God's blessing upon humankind to multiply and fill the earth was rejected.

The forbidding of meat was in the same context. There were at least two reasons for false teachers to forbid meat. First, some might claim that eating meat was forbidden because one could not know whether it had been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8). Second, Gnostics would have wanted to avoid the physical world as much as possible. Avoiding meat would have been one step toward a purer life in their mind-set. Let us be mindful that the Bible corrects Asceticism and Gnosticism as it corrects all false teaching. Marriage was ordained in Genesis 2:24 and the consumption of meat in Genesis 9:3.

Duties of a Faithful Minister (1 Timothy 4:6-11)

6. What makes old wives' tales sound believable? (v 7)

Old wives tales are ideas that are not true but are repeated by those who don't know any better as if it were true. Because something is repeated over and over again can make it appear to be believable. Old wives tales are simply worldly fables. They are the opposite of what is Holy. We as believers must avoid all false teaching and follow the instructions that Paul gave Timothy - which is to exercise ourselves toward godliness (which is a proper response and attitude toward God) instead of believing in such fables. Living a life of godliness is a requirement for an effective ministry.

Paul also reminds Timothy in vs. 6 that he has thus far carefully followed good doctrine and he is to continue feeding on the truths of Scripture in order to maintain his spiritual health which is something we as Christians must all do.

7. How can the reward of bodily exercise be compared to exercise toward godliness? (v 8)

Bodily exercise is the athletic term denoting the rigorous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes for the sake of winning a medal or a crown which is only a temporal reward. In Paul's days, a laurel crown was given to victors of Greek athletic games. The Greeks enjoyed two great athletic events, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games in which the winner received a wreath of greenery which is a "perishable" crown. However, to exercise toward godliness is spiritual self-discipline (learned through studying and applying the Scriptures to our lives daily) which is the path to godly living and leads to a greater relationship with God and the gain of an "eternal" crown.

Remember, the race is not given to the swift nor to the strong, but it is given to those who endure until the end. We, as believers must continue to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus.

8. What did Paul mean by saying that God is the Saviour of all? (v 10)

Paul called God "the Saviour of all," not just of those who believe. His point was that even those who scorned Paul's teaching could be saved by God. Scorners and believers have only one Saviour. Paul did not mean that all people will be saved but that all could be saved if they would believe. The saving power of the Cross is potentially for everyone, including people who presently do not believe. This is why the work of studying and teaching the truth of God is so important.

Note: Another interpretation of this passage is as follows: God graciously delivers believers from sin's condemnation and penalty because He was their substitute (2 Cor. 5:21), all men experience some earthly benefits from the goodness of God. Those benefits are: 1) common grace - a term that describes God's goodness shown to all mankind universally (Ps. 145:9) in restraining sin and judgement (Rom. 2:3-6, 15); 2) compassion - the broken-hearted love of pity God shows to undeserving, unregenerate sinners (Ex. 34:6-7, Ps: 86:5 and Matt. 23:37); 3) admonition to repent - God constantly warns sinners of their fate, demonstrating the heart of a compassionate Creator who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:30-32; 33:11); and 4) the gospel invitation - salvation in Christ is indiscriminately offered to all (Matt. 11:28, 29; 22:2-14; John 6:35). God is, by nature, a saving God. That is, He finds no pleasure in the death of sinners. His saving character is revealed even in how He deals with those who will never believe (1 Tim. 2:6).

9. How can a church leader be said to command as well as teach the congregation? (v 11)

Paul told Timothy to command and teach sound doctrines in the church. To command something, is to be master of /exercise authority/be in charge of. In looking closely at the verb, "command", it is a call to action. In order to command anything, you must show thyself approved. You only can command of others what

you yourself exhibit as well. That which you study and put into practice will show up your life.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul told Timothy to study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Precision and accuracy are required in biblical interpretation beyond all other efforts because the interpreter is handling God's Word. There is spiritual authority in someone who is teaching the Bible accurately and faithfully. When teachers are expounding the Bible accurately, they may command people to believe the truth. Those who do not listen to their teaching will face judgment and will not be able to claim they did not hear the truth. We as believers and Christian leaders on this Christian journey must realize that we are the way people see Christ. Our lifestyle must line up with the word of God. We lead by example. Paul, in 1 Timothy 4:12, commanded Timothy to be an example and not to worry about his age but live the life that he teaches about so that the congregation would be influenced by the words he spoke and the deeds he showed.

Counsel on Personal Conduct (1 Timothy 4:12-16)

10. Why is the public reading and teaching of Scripture so important? (v 13)

Paul instructs Timothy to perform the duties of reading and teaching the Scriptures. Reading refers to the custom of public reading of Scripture in the church's worship service, followed by the exposition of the passage that had been read. Teaching the Scriptures challenges those who hear the Word to apply it in their daily lives. It may involve rebuke, warning, encouragement, or comfort. "Doctrine" (teaching) refers to systematic instruction from the Word of God. In last week's lesson, Paul gave Timothy the qualifications of Pastors/Bishops (1 Timothy 3:2) with one being the ability to teach. Knowing how to teach the word can effectively help people grow spiritually. Paul also told Timothy in verse 14 not to neglect the gift that was in him. This gift is the grace given to Timothy and to all believers at salvation which consisted of a God-designed, Spirit-empowered spiritual ability for the use of ministry. Timothy's gift was leadership with special emphasis on preaching and teaching. This gift was identified by a revelation from God (1 Timothy 1:18) through prophecies.

Conclusion

Help Wanted: More People Like Timothy!

A host of leaders like Timothy would shake the church! They would be willing to let God use them in building up His kingdom on earth. They would be leaders who are well trained in the Scriptures, are willing to take a stand for truth, and will back it up with a godly life. What is our church doing to train and mentor its Timothys to come?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for your Word. Thank you for your Spirit of Truth. Lord, God, enable us through the power of your Holy Spirit to rightly divide thy Word. We ask that you continue to order our footsteps in thy Word so that we may remain

faithful and live a godly life before thy people. Give us a mind to study and stay focused on those things that are pleasing in thy sight. We, the believers of the gospel, are the way that others see Christ. Let us therefore live the life that we speak about so that others will ask what must they do to be saved. For we know that it is your desire Lord, God that all are saved and none are lost. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thought to Remember

"The things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Respect for others is essential in the Christian life. Study 1 Timothy 5:1-25 as you prepare for this important lesson.

Lesson Summarized by

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