

December 06, 2020

- I Timothy 4: 7-16 -

“Keeping One’s Priorities Straight”

### Introduction:

Fifty-five years ago *A Charlie Brown Christmas* was first broadcast on American television. Some network executives were worried that quoting the Bible would offend viewers. These network executives wanted Charles Schulz, its creator, to omit the Christmas story, but Schulz a bother in the Lord, insisted it stay in. The program as we know was an immediate success and has been rebroadcast every year since 1965. In this very first episode “Linus” recites Luke 2:8-14, and then the classic line, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

Keeping Christ in Christmas is keeping the main thing the main thing. I hope this passage helps us all to apply this principle to Christmas and to our Christian walk. Paul cautioned Timothy to keep focused on the Word, keeping the main thing the main thing, not on things that come from man. The priority must be on God’s Word, not on the words of man. Paul is writing to Timothy, a fellow brother and friend who had been Paul’s companion for possibly fifteen years or so. Now he is responsible to give leadership and oversight to the church in Ephesus. Paul advises him to...

### I. Keep Godliness First. (V. 7-12)

1. In practicing the Word there are some things to avoid and some things to give a little attention to and some things to devote extra time to. Keep your priorities straight and that is the preaching and teaching of the word of God. We must avoid as leaders distraction from the main thing. What to refuse or avoid...“godless myths and old wives tales” These are teachings that have no basis in Scripture. This was, however, a sarcastic description used in philosophical circles to indicate a lack of credulity. There are a lot of distracting things that you can give your attention to. Good advice for the holidays. --- Matthew 6:33

2. Paul shifts to an athletic illustration in the latter section of verse 7; and just as the Greek or Roman athletes had to refuse certain things, eat the right food and do the right exercises...so a Christian should practice ‘gumnazō’ it is exercise ‘spiritual exercise’. He is to keep in training for a godly life. If a Christian puts as much energy and discipline into his spiritual life as an athlete does into his game, we would grows faster and accomplishes much more for God.

3. Verse eight has created a bit of controversy today in light of our self-conscience culture. Physical exercise has value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future. If we exercise spiritual principles we won’t have to work so hard at the physical. Our bodies are God’s temples, to be used for His glory (1Cor 6:10-20) certainly we ought to take care of our bodies, and exercise is a part of that care. I think God expects us to practice both. A healthy body can be used by God, but we must major on godliness. Beware of self-mutation, cutting, drugs, even sex outside of marriage.

Application: If some of you would spend as much time getting spiritually fit as you do getting physically fit you would be spiritual giants! Godly character and conduct are much more

important than golf or bowling trophies. Paul challenged Timothy to be as devoted to godliness as an athlete is to sports. When you see athletes going through their training you ought to be reminded that there are spiritual exercises that you should be doing. Remember, it is far more important that you be strong spiritually and don't neglect your soul as you care for your body.

4. Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is: Paul here explains the value of godliness, both in its temporal and its eternal sense. Godliness makes the life that now is better, and we should not hesitate to believe it and to tell people this. Paul in verse 9, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. Those are the main points. Train yourself to be godly, and then put your hope in God. Folks, this is how you make an impact and a difference in others' lives. "We must have our hope in the living God."

5. Training to be godly is the means of influencing others. Godliness is manifested through our lives. Paul the apostle is giving practical suggestions to Timothy in this text, starting from verse 10 stating, "for this we ***labor and strive***" (*suffer is not the best word today*) the word strive is the word from which we get our word "agonize". It is the picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win. Your laboring and striving will be a good witness to other weaker believers and to the lost. We strive against the current of ungodliness so we can influence others in our lives.

6. Verse 11, "Command and teach these things." This is a call for Timothy and it's a call to command them to repent, to command them to believe the gospel, to command them to bow the knee to the authority of the Word of God, to teach them all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. Authority comes from God, through the Scriptures, to you when you handle the Scripture accurately, clearly, and boldly. Verse 12, He says to set an example in speech – watch what you say and how you said it, in life – watch your walk in love in faith and in purity.

## II Keep progressing in the word (v. 13-16)

1. As a godly Pastor Timothy was to grow spiritually so that the whole church could see his spiritual progress and imitate it. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, we note this in verse 14. It is indeed true that it is God alone who saves and not even the smallest part of His glory can rightly be transferred to men. But God's glory is in no way diminished by His using the labour of men in bestowing salvation." (Calvin)

2. Every Christian has at least one grace gift from the Spirit. Note the word "given" comes from the Greek word "didomi" which has a wide application of uses. They are given so you can use them in ministry to others!

3. In verse 15 Paul called Timothy to *meditation* on God's Word and the work of God in his life. Timothy was encouraged to give it his all, to put forth a maximum effort, and by doing so, his progress would be evident to all. Often, progress is not evident because we do not give

ourselves entirely to the pursuit of God and His will. Devote yourself fully to Christ (v. 15) Timothy's spiritual life and ministry were to be the absorbing, controlling things in his life...not just sidelines that he occasionally practiced.

4. So in verse 16, he summarizes, and he says this: "Take heed to yourself and unto teaching, continue in them "**Take heed**" means pay attention. Focus your attention in on two things, yourself and your teaching is what he says. Without giving heed to his **life**, Timothy might suffer shipwreck. Without giving heed to doctrine, Timothy might lead others astray or leave them short of God's salvation.

Those who hear him as a pastor should be hearing doctrine. Timothy's primary call was not to entertain, amuse, or even help with practical things – it was to present Biblical doctrine, and to give heed to that doctrine.

5. Take spiritual inventory (v. 16) "if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." Of course, the word saved isn't the narrow definition of salvation from eternal condemnation, but the wider definition of the process of being saved. It's the whole sanctification process. Once you are saved, you grow and become mature. If you persevere in what you know and how you live, you'll grow, be sanctified; salvation will be manifested and you'll prove your salvation. Also, the salvation of people you are ministering to will be proven. You will grow and others, too. Examine your own heart and life in the light of God's Word.

#### Conclusion:

Often we fall short of all we can be for God because we are *passive* in our Christian life; we simply do not give ourselves completely. Jesus warned against this passive attitude in the parable of the talents, where the servant who did nothing was severely rebuked.