

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of Paul's First Letter to Timothy – Part 11

I. Exposition of Chapter Four (continued).

A. Verses 8-9 – “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for 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 acceptance.”

1. “For bodily exercise profits a little...” – This phrase should not be taken, as some do, of Paul speaking of physical exercise in a disparaging way. We know that physical exercise is needed, in order to stay healthy, but Paul is attempting to make the point that there is another kind of “exercise” which is more important.
2. “...but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” – Paul is telling Timothy to “exercise” or “train” to be godly. This, of course, would require discipline on the part of any believer. Paul claimed to do this when he wrote; “**But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.**” (I Corinthians 9:27). Here, Paul is not talking about disciplining his body in the sense of physical exercise, but in a metaphorical way, he is saying that he keeps the desires of his flesh under by exercising spiritual discipline.

“For physical training is of some value (useful for a little), but godliness (spiritual training) is useful *and* of value in everything *and* in every way...” – I Timothy 4:8a – Amplified Bible

3. Dr. Gordon Fee writes:

“Paul will allow that physical training (*gymnasia*) is of some value, a value, however, that is limited strictly to this age. But he says that only to set up his real concern. *Eusebeia* (godliness) is where the real value lies. Indeed, it has value for all things (better, ‘in every way’), because it holds promise for life, both the present life and the life to come.”¹

4. Verse 9 - “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.” - This is the third time (cf. 1:15; 3:1) we find the phrase “This is a faithful saying.” Paul seems to use this in order to get his reader’s attention. The word “acceptance” means; “to come to believe something to be true and to respond accordingly”²

B. Verses 10-11 – “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. These things command and teach.”

1. “For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach...” – Note: Most scholars agree that the words “suffer reproach” is better translated as the word “strive.” (It depends on the manuscripts used). What Paul is saying is that they “labor” (to engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble)³ and “strive” (compete, fight, struggle, with an emphasis on effort (1Co 9:25)⁴, to exercise godliness in their lives. (Note: These are both athletic metaphors.)⁵
2. “...because we trust in the living God...” – They continue in this conflict because their trust is in the living God. When you place your trust in Him, you know that you can receive the strength you need to endure whatever “fight” you’re facing.
3. “...who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” – The word “Savior” means; “deliverer” and “preserver.” As we saw in Part 5 of this series this word was one of the NT titles for YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah).⁶ Notice that He is the “...Savior of all men...” (cf. I John 2:1-2).

Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes:

“The title ‘Saviour of all men’ does not imply that everybody will be saved (universalism), or that God saves people in spite of themselves; for Paul added ‘specially of those that believe.’ It is faith that saves one’s soul (Eph. 2:8–10). Since God ‘will have all men to be saved’ (1 Tim. 2:4), and since Christ ‘gave Himself a ransom for all’ (1 Tim. 2:6), then *any* lost sinner can trust Christ and be saved. Christ is ‘the Saviour of all men,’ so nobody need despair.”⁷

4. Verse 11 - “These things command and teach.” – Dr. Bob Utley translates the word for “command” as the word “prescribe” and states that it means; “strict military orders”.⁸ This is a word that

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1988)

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 371.

³ Ibid., 514.

⁴ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

⁵ Robert James Utley, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 58.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 227.

⁸ Utley, *Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy*, vol. Volume 9, Study Guide Commentary Series, 59.

described authority. Paul was telling young Timothy that he was to teach these truths with authority and not be timid about it.

C. **Verse 12** – “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

1. “Let no one despise your youth...” – The word “**despise**” means; “**to feel contempt for someone or something because it is thought to be bad or without value**”⁹ Paul commanded Timothy to not allow anyone to treat him this way. But, how could he do anything about other people’s attitudes?
2. “...but be an example to the believers...” – This is one way Timothy could avoid others from despising his youth. The word “**example**” means; “**a model of behavior as an example to be imitated or to be avoided**”¹⁰ The Expanded Bible reads:

“Do not let anyone treat you as if you are unimportant [despise/disregard/look down on you] because you are young. Instead, be an example to the believers with your words, your actions [conduct; behavior], your love, your faith [faithfulness], and your pure life [purity].” – I Timothy 4:12 – The Expanded Bible

D. **Verse 13** – “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” – The words “give attention” mean; “to continue with close attention and devotion—‘to continue to give oneself to, to continue to apply oneself to.’”¹¹

1. “...reading...” – This refers to reading the Scriptures publicly in the assembly.
2. “...exhortation...” – “admonition, encouragement, consolation, comfort”; “persuasive discourse, stirring address.”¹²
3. “...doctrine.” – “to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting—‘to teach, teaching.’”¹³

Dr. Thomas Constable states:

“Timothy...should give attention to his public ministry as well as to his private life. Three duties were crucial: First, he should continue to make sure that the church leaders publicly read the Scriptures in the meetings of the church. This practice, which was carried over from temple and synagogue worship, was central in the corporate worship of God’s people. Second, exhortation should continue to accompany the reading of the Word. Exhortation describes the explanation and application of the text that the preacher reads (i.e., the expository sermon; cf. Acts 18:15). Third, teaching was necessary. This responsibility appears to have been systematic instruction in the doctrines of the faith.”¹⁴

4. Of course, these three things were not the only aspects of a public worship service. Deborah Gill adds:

“From other passages we know these were not the only parts of a New Testament worship service. Also included were prayer (2:1-7; cf. 1 Cor. 11:2-6), singing (1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16; cf. 1 Tim. 3:16), charismatic utterances (1 Cor. 11:2-16; 12-14; 1 Thess. 5:19-22), and the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34).”¹⁵

E. **Verse 14** – “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” – The “**gift**” (Gr. charisma) means; “**a free favor, free gift, Rom_5:15-16; Rom. 6:23; 2Cor. 1:11; benefit, Rom. 1:11; a divinely conferred endowment**”¹⁶ – This gifting probably refers to his gift to preach and teach the Word of God. Apparently there was a time when the “**eldership**” laid hands on him to appoint him to minister. They confirmed what the Holy Spirit was already doing in Timothy. When he was commissioned, the elders performed the “...**laying on of hands**...”. The Scriptures state that there is a “**doctrine of the laying on of hands**” which is a foundational doctrine (**Hebrews 6:1-2**). Through the laying on of hands one party imparts, or transfers, something to another.

1. Old Testament Examples: **Genesis 48:14-16; Leviticus 16:21,22**
2. New Testament Examples:
 - a. Gifts ; **I Timothy 4:14.**
 - b. Healing; **Mark 16:18; Luke 4:40; Luke 13:11-13; Acts 5:12; Acts 19:11; Acts 28:8.**
 - c. Baptism in the Holy Spirit; **Acts 9:17; Acts 8:14-18; Acts 19:1-6.**
 - d. Blessing; **Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:16.**

⁹ Louw and Nida, 762.

¹⁰ Ibid., 591.

¹¹ Ibid., 655.

¹² Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House., 1977)

¹³ Louw and Nida, 412.

¹⁴ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 1 Timothy* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2023), 96.

¹⁵ *Full Life Bible Commentary to the New Testament*, French L. Arrington and Roger Stronstad, ed. (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1999), 1248. (At the time of writing, Deborah Gill was Senior Pastor of Church of the Living Hope, Shorview, MN.)

¹⁶ *Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary*, William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett, Jr. (e-sword version 1993).