

How to Profit in Life

Sue's lesson last week on verses 1-5 painted a picture of apostasy and false doctrines in the church. Today, in verses 6-11, Paul paints the portrait of a good minister to instruct Pastor Timothy.

READ I Timothy 4: 6-11

Vs. 6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.

“Good Minister” - good here can be translated “noble,” “admirable,” “excellent,” or “beautiful.” “Minister” also means “servant.” Though this passage is directed towards ministers it can also apply to all of us as God calls us to serve and minister to others.

Warns the Flock

“These things” refers to the false teaching and apostasy that will characterize the church in the last days - what Paul had just talked about. A good minister does all he can to lift up Jesus Christ and warn his flock about false teachers who will try to seduce and lead them away. The Greek word “instruct” means suggest, counsel, advise. False teaching is such a threat to the flock that the good minister will use every method of communication he has to instruct and protect his flock.

Nourished on the Words of Faith

“Words of the faith” obviously refers to the Word of God. No teaching is true that is not based on the Scriptures. “Nourished” can be translated “constantly nourished,” a present participle, which means it should be done continually. None of us will ever reach the point of saying we know everything in the Bible. Even scriptures we thought we completely understood, God can give us a newer, deeper understanding of at a later time. We can't feed others if we have not been fed. A good minister is constantly nourished by God's Word, and because of that, they nourish others. Here Paul commends Timothy on following good doctrine.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
Colossians 3:16

The word “dwell” means to “be at home with.” It's the opposite of being a visitor. When the Word of God is at home in our hearts, we naturally can teach others with all wisdom. For many however, the Word is like a visitor. They think, “Maybe I'll read my Bible today; but if I don't have time I'll just skip it.” People like that will not be effective teachers or ministers. To be effective ministers, we need to read and study the Bible - the whole thing, a balanced diet of Old and New Testament. Often we only go to verses or passages that are our favorites, but we need to study the entire Word.

Timothy did this. He had been nourished on the Scriptures from his earliest childhood and he continued to feed on the Word of God. Additionally, he was obedient to it; he practiced it in his daily life. James 1:22 exhorts us *“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”* When God’s Word is in our heart we will live accordingly, bringing honor to God.

Vs. 7a But reject profane and old wives’ fables,

Avoids Ungodly Teaching

The good minister avoids frivolous speculations and rejects godless myths and old wives’ tales. The priority must be on God’s Word, not the words of man. He must test and reject anything that compromises the Scriptures. He uses the tools God has given us to minister to his flock. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...”* (II Corinthians 10: 4-5) A minister uses spiritual weapons that have divine power - the Word of God, prayer, worship, fellowship, repentance, etc.

Vs. 7b-8 and exercise yourself toward godliness. ⁸ 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.

Exercises Himself to Godliness

Godliness doesn’t just happen - it takes work and discipline. Paul told Timothy to *“train yourself for godliness.”* The minister is to train himself in godliness as much as an Olympic athlete exercises his body. Think about how much time, energy, effort, and dedication the athlete puts into his training. His sport is his life. So it is with a minister: godliness is to be his life. Titus 2:12-13 exhorts us all to godliness: *“teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

Spiritual discipline is often hard work and a struggle. It often includes not only fighting our mind but also our body. It is a struggle to meditate on God’s word early in the morning or at night. It is a fight to pray when we don’t feel like it or we’re dealing with distractions. It can be a labor to serve others when we ourselves are physically, emotionally, or spiritually tired. But when we persevere we find God’s blessing and the fruit of godliness. God promises to bless the godly person while he walks on this earth and eternally in the life to come. While physical exercise is profitable for us, the greater reward comes from exercising towards godliness.

Vs. 9-10 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. ¹⁰ 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.

Continually Trusts in the Living God

Paul and other ministers labored to exhaustion and strove to help others because they believed in a God who was living - not dead like pagan idols - and who was the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. The word “labor” means arduous and strenuous work. The good minister works and works to the point of fatigue - until he can go no further. He exerts

every ounce of energy and effort in his body for the sake of Christ. He continues to minister even when men ridicule, revile, mock, curse and persecute him. Why? Two reasons:

- Because our God is the living God; this should be the motto of everyone's Christian life; David challenged Goliath in the name of the living God: it is our trust in the living God that empowers us to accomplish great things for His glory
- Because Jesus Christ is the Savior of all; all men can be saved from the grip of sin, death, and condemnation; Jesus' work on the cross is sufficient to save all, but only effective in saving those who come to Him by faith

Godly people must labor and expect reproach. They must do good and yet expect at some time to suffer ill; toil and trouble are to be expected - Jesus told us that in this world we will have tribulation. Therefore, the good minister must labor no matter how difficult the struggle. He must share the glorious news that man can be reconciled to God and live forever. Actually Romans 12:11 exhorts **us all** to be "*not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*"

Vs. 11 These things command and teach.

The good minister preaches and teaches with authority. He boldly declares the Word of God. He does not allow the fear of man nor the danger of hardship stop him. He has been commissioned by God and stands in the strength of the Lord. Therefore, he knows the Lord will deliver him through all the dangers of life if he will be faithful, courageously sharing the truth of God's Word. As believers, we are commissioned by Jesus to "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matthew 28:19-20) We are to labor until the day God takes us home.

Paul closes this verse with an exhortation for Timothy to command and teach what Paul had taught him. Paul is not reprimanding Timothy for having failed to do his duty nor was he implying that Timothy was timid and fearful of doing his work. Instead he is encouraging Timothy to remain on course and continue what he started: command his flock to ignore false teaching and exercise themselves unto godliness, teach them the profit of it, and that if they serve God He will uphold them eternally.

*For His divine power has bestowed on us absolutely everything necessary
for a dynamic spiritual life and godliness, through a true and personal knowledge of Him who
called us by His own glory and excellence.*

I Peter 1:3 AMP