

1 Timothy 4:10-16 – “The Call to Faithful Living”

Summary Statement:

Paul charges Timothy (and us) to persevere in ministry by anchoring our labor in hope, living as a godly example, and faithfully stewarding God’s Word and our gift.

1. Anchor Your Labor in Hope – 4:10-11

4:10 - *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.*

I want to back up a little bit and look at what we covered last time, because it relates a lot to Verse 10.

- **1 Timothy 4:7–9**, *“But reject profane and old wives’ fables, 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. ⁹ This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.”*

This faithful saying could be what’s addressed in vv. 7+8 (many believe that’s what it’s pointing to, while others think it’s referencing vs. 10).

Either way, vs. 10 is being said with vv. 7+8 in mind. We need to exercise ourselves toward godliness. Godliness has profit for this life and the life to come. So with that in mind, ***we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God...***

Exercise means work. Exercise often means sweating it out. You’re laboring and toiling. It’s not easy, that’s why many of you don’t do it 😊. But it’s good for you.

No pain no gain!

So to this end, *we labor and suffer reproach...*

- There are some manuscript variants of this phrase. Some having ‘*suffer reproach*’, others having ‘*strive*’. This word *strive* that Paul uses elsewhere (1 Timothy 6:12 - *fight*) is the Greek word, *agonizomai* [ag·o·nid·zom·ahee].
- This is where we get our English word agony. We don’t like feeling agony, it’s not pleasant, but it’s the means by which we grow and are strengthened.
- Exercising ourselves toward godliness is at times a labor, it’s something we must strive for. It doesn’t come easily or naturally; our flesh will want to resist it. We may wonder at times, ‘*Is it worth it?*’

But Paul gives us the reason we continue in these things and the means we can continue in them – ***because we trust in the living God...***

We trust in His good purpose for it. We're anchored to that hope that He is alive and at work producing something better in us through every labor and agony.

- **2 Corinthians 4:17**, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"*

We serve a living God who is worthy of all we may go through. We may encounter suffering and pain, but it's all with purpose and blessing. Glory is awaiting us!!

We are confident of that because we serve a living God. He's the Saviour of all. Our hope is in Him. So we can be assured that all we go through will be worth it.

- Now to say ***He's the Savior of all men, especially to those who believe***, may sound kind of odd, as though everyone gets saved. But those who believe get a little bit of a bonus. Well, as much as some would like to claim a universal salvation, we know Scripture does not teach that.
- How this can be read is: He's provided salvation for all, but only those who put their trust in Him receive that salvation.
- It's not enough just to believe He's the Saviour of all. It's not enough just to know that He's provided salvation through the sacrifice, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus. You must appropriate that for yourself and put your trust in the finished work of the cross through Jesus Christ!
- He is the Savior of all men in that this is available and accessible to all. What a gift!

4:11 - *These things command and teach.*

Timothy was prone to timidity and fear. So Paul encourages Timothy to put on his big boy pants and not back down from declaring these truths.

What things was he to ***command and teach***? The very things we've just been dealing with, especially in this chapter. False teachers had come in and begun to corrupt the gospel. They began to add various works and instigate a legalistic path to God. Timothy was told to reject these things. And he needs to teach others to reject these things and continue in godliness. God has provided salvation; it doesn't come through our works. So, keep believing in the only One who is able to save. These are the things Timothy is to ***command and teach***.

And he's to do so with boldness.

- Peter Cartwright, a nineteenth-century, circuit riding, Methodist preacher, was an uncompromising man. One Sunday morning when he was to preach, he was told that President Andrew Jackson was in the congregation, and was warned not to say anything out of line. When Cartwright stood to preach, he said, “I understand that Andrew Jackson is here. I have been requested to be guarded in my remarks. Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn’t repent.” The congregation was shocked and wondered how the President would respond. After the service, President Jackson shook hands with Peter Cartwright and said, “Sir, if I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world.”^{75 1}

2. Live as a Godly Example – 4:12

4:12 - *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.*

Timothy may have been young, but God doesn’t put conditions on age. He wants us to be spiritually mature no matter how old you are.

- Some people at 18 can be more spiritually mature than a person in their 70’s who’s been a believer most of their life. It’s not about the natural age, it’s about your spiritual maturity in Christ.

And it wasn’t that Timothy was some teenager fresh out of Bible College, he was most likely in his thirties at this point. Yet compared to some of the elders in Ephesus, he was considered young.

And it may be these false teachers that were in their midst were despising Timothy and trying to discredit his role as a pastor due to his age.

- We can’t always control the attitudes and criticisms of others, but we can certainly live in a way where those criticisms have no ground to attach themselves to you.
- This is how Paul instructs in this next part.

Timothy was to demonstrate a spiritual maturity by being ***an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*** Timothy may be thinking, *let’s just take one at a time here Paul – that’s a pretty long list.*

⁷⁵ Craig B. Larson, Editor. *Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching*, p.42.

¹ Leadership Ministries Worldwide. (2003). *Practical Illustrations: 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (p. 120). Leadership Ministries Worldwide.

The point is, when we're living a demonstrable life of transformation, it's hard to bring anything against you.

So, Timothy was to be an example:

a) **in word**. Timothy's speech and conversation was to reflect that of a child of God. How sad when professing believers proclaim their faith in Him then turn around and start contradicting everything by speech that doesn't honour God (athletes who thank their Saviour Jesus Christ, then soon after start cursing). It just doesn't mesh. Timothy was to be an example of his depth in Christ by the way he talked.

But of equal importance to your talk is your walk...

b) **in conduct**. Not only his speech but his whole demeanor and way he's living his life should be reflecting a life that is living for Jesus.

Again, what a sad reality when hypocrites derail potential believers from ever coming to faith in Jesus. It can be so discouraging when a person witnesses another professing their faith in Jesus, yet that person lives no different than a person who doesn't believe.

Our speech should line up with what we truly believe, and our walk should back up our talk.

c) **in love**. Timothy is called to be a person that is being an example by his love. Love is the evidence of a life that is filled with the Spirit – it's *the* fruit of the Spirit. If we're going to be demonstrating this love then we need to be filled by His Spirit. Jesus gave us a new commandment saying, *"...that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

(**John 13:34**). The problem is that's often a love that goes beyond our human capability and we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to love like that. It's interesting that Paul adds **in spirit** next. This isn't in some of the older manuscripts and you may not have it in your particular version of the Bible, but these need to go hand in hand. We need to walk in love and that love will be a natural byproduct of the Spirit's work in your life.

Timothy must also be sure that he is motivated by love in all that he does. It's the love we've received from God that leads us to minister to God and minister to His people. Paul would say in **2 Corinthians 5:14**, *"For the love of Christ compels us..."* This love we've received should cause us to love God and others and compel us to do what we do.

d) **in spirit**. Again, operating from a place of love (the fruit of the Spirit) we're going to have a right spirit in what we do. Timothy should have a gentle spirit, not a critical or mean spirit.

- e) **in faith**. This could imply Timothy's faith in the Lord. That's definitely something you want to be an example of, and not have it up and down or wishy-washy. But this word can also refer to faithfulness. Timothy was encouraged to live a life of faithfulness.
- f) **in purity**. Timothy was to watch himself and be careful of tempting things. Paul would say later to him, "*flee also youthful lusts...*" (**2 Timothy 2:22**). That would be a tall order in Ephesus. They didn't have it any easier than we have it.

3. Devote Yourself Fully to the Word and Your Gift – 4:13-16

4:13 - Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

In light of all that Timothy has been up against in Ephesus, these are the things that he really needed to stay committed to. And how this takes care of so much of the problems we encounter – there's a definite order here.

- Take time to read the word in your gatherings – **reading**.
- Be sure to explain it and give the meaning of what you're reading (**exhortation**).
- And emphasize right **doctrine**. Don't let it just be your own thoughts and ponderings, but be sure that what you are teaching is lining up with God's Word as a whole.

Some translations read this as: "*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*" (NIV).

Preaching or **exhortation** [paraklēsis] is about calling people to hear. It's meant to elicit a response from those listening. Teaching or **doctrine** is about instructing people in God's truth. It's explaining in further detail the principles of Scripture.

- This all reminds us of the scene in **Nehemiah 8:8**, "*So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.*"
- This is what routinely happened in the Synagogue, and it was carried over in the early church and it sets the pattern for what is to happen in church today. That's why we give great priority to the reading and teaching of God's Word here at Riverside.

4:14 - 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.

We're not sure what gift Timothy received, or what occasion is being talked about here. Perhaps it was like an ordination service as Timothy was being commissioned to serve in the church at Ephesus.

Nevertheless, Timothy had apparently neglected this gift of God that He had given to aid him in the ministry. Where God calls us, God will equip us. But we can also hinder that gifting by not putting it to use. Again, it would seem that Timothy struggled with a feeling of inadequacy.

- Paul would tell him in his second letter to *“stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).*

10:15-16 - *Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*

Timothy was to take time and think through these things, dwell on them, meditate on them. This is not to empty his mind, but to fill his mind with God's Word. He was to give himself ***entirely to them...*** In other words, his life was not to be lived in complacency or mediocrity, he was to live full out for the Lord, ***that your progress may be evident to all.***

- A good minister should be living in a way where other's see a growing and maturity unfolding before them. A minister can't expect others to be growing in the word if he himself is not growing in the word.
- It's not enough just to tell others what to do, his life must be a living breathing sermon as well.
- What kind of sermon is your life preaching?

So Paul says, ***take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.***

“This emphasizes the importance of the personal life in any servant of Christ. If his life is wrong, he might be ever so orthodox in his doctrine, but it is of no avail. A. W. Pink has well said: “Service becomes a snare and an evil if it be allowed to crowd out worship and the cultivation of one's own spiritual life.””²

And ***continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*** Now this is an intriguing verse. We know that we are not justified before God by our actions or faithfully performing our duties. Rather, this

² MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments* (A. Farstad, Ed.; p. 2094). Thomas Nelson.

would seem to speak of Timothy keeping Himself in the truth and thus not being led astray by false teachers or apostate Christians that Paul referred to earlier. Continue to guard yourself Timothy and proclaim right doctrine, and in doing so, you'll save yourself and others from going down a path of error.

Paul's charge to Timothy is a reminder that the Christian life is not passive – it is intentional, visible, and impactful. We labor because our hope is alive. We speak because truth matters. We live carefully because others are watching. And as we remain anchored in God's Word and faithful in our walk, our lives become instruments God uses – not only to grow us, but to guide others into truth. So, take heed to yourself... and continue. It matters more than you think.

Points to Ponder:

1. Is your life reinforcing or contradicting your message?
Your talk matters – but your walk validates it. What does your life say about your faith?
2. Are you prioritizing God's Word or neglecting it?
Reading, exhortation, and doctrine aren't optional – they're essential. Is Scripture shaping your daily life?
3. Is your growth visible?
Paul says your progress should be evident. Are you growing – or just maintaining?