

Armagh Baptist Church – 20th June 2010
The Life and Times of Timothy 9
1Timothy 4:6-11
A Word to the Minister (part 1)

Introduction

So far in our studies in 1Timothy there has been something for the women of the congregation, something for the deacons, something for the elders, and something about false teachers too.

I'm sure you'll all agree that it's time the Pastor himself got a touch from God's Word. He's so busy preaching at the rest of us, its time he took a wee bit to heart himself! Maybe that's what you're thinking this morning as we turn to 1Timothy again.

Well, we're coming to that today - A word to Pastor Timothy, that Pastor Ian or any other pastor can take to heart as well. In fact we're going to look at this over the next two weeks, so Pastor Andrew can get some of it next week too! We're going to have an act of commissioning for Andrew & Carolyn next Sunday morning, in preparation for their move to Millisle, where Andrew will take up the pastorate there. So we'll look at the final part of this chapter then.

What's the background to this passage of Scripture?

Well, it seems that Timothy has been getting a lot of criticism levelled at him in Ephesus. That's usually what happens when a pastor starts tackling thorny issues in Church life. But a good minister should not shy away from difficult issues just to avoid criticism! If you're going to show leadership, you're going to be criticised, it's as simple as that. As soon as you lift your head above the parapets and start making a few changes, that's when the criticisms are going to start. Timothy had been sent to Ephesus to remove a few false teachers from their eldership positions and to replace them with more suitably qualified men to lead the church forward. Now, it doesn't matter who you are, you're not going to come into a church and start doing something as important as that, without facing a few criticisms and a bit of opposition.

If you go down to ch.4:12 you discover, reading between the lines, that Timothy has been getting looked down on simply because he was younger than most of the other leaders in the church (see 4:12). Timothy was probably about 35 by now. But bear in mind that Jesus himself began his ministry at 30 and was crucified by the age of 33, so Timothy was in good company. But age is not the issue - or at least it shouldn't be, if someone is clearly called of God.

But if we read between the lines of Ch.4 we'll discover that there were other things that Timothy was getting criticised for as well, and Paul seems to be aware of this as he writes to encourage him in his work. Paul is concerned to

point out to Timothy how he can '**be a good minister of Christ Jesus**' (v.6) – And in so doing how he will be able to silence the critics in the church.

So what should a good minister be able to do?

1. Point out False Doctrine and correct it with the Truth (vs.1-6)

Verse 6 refers back to the verses at the beginning of this chapter which we looked at before when we thought about the false teachers in the church.

Paul tells Timothy here (v.6):

*'If you point these things out to the brothers,
you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus,
brought up in the truths of the faith
and of the good teaching that you have followed.'*

Some ministers always preach positively, others always preach negatively. Those who preach positively *always* present the truth of God's Word meticulously and clearly, but they never criticise false doctrines or point out false teachings in other groups or in other churches.

Those who preach negatively of course do exactly the opposite: they never present the truth of God's Word directly or in a straightforward way, rather they leave their congregations to figure out what the truth is by pointing out all the time what it is not. In other words they spend their time using their pulpit as a whipping post for all the other denominations and cults and isms that are around. Their preaching becomes very critical and vindictive towards others.

There is of course a happy medium that the good minister of Jesus Christ will want to aim at. He will want to do his best to clearly present Biblical doctrine in a positive way - stating what we *do* believe clearly, but from time to time he will have to illustrate what we *do not* believe by pointing out the un-Biblical teachings of other churches or groups. But at all times he should seek to speak the truth in love. Try not to become too critical of others; try to be as positive as possible.

Andrew illustrated this very clearly last Sunday morning when he talked about the Jehovah's Witnesses coming to his door, while he was putting out his recycling box. He said they had a very good conversation, talking at length about the Scriptures, but there came the point when Andrew had to point out where they disagreed and where they had to part company, and that was on what they believed about the Lord Jesus Christ. How we believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Son of God, God come in the flesh. And it was at that point they had to agree to differ, not in a nasty way, but simply

recognising that until God's Spirit opened their eyes to see the truth about Jesus, that was where they had to disagree completely on doctrine.

So a 'good minister' must be able to point out false doctrine and to correct it with the Truth of God's Word. But what else should a good minister do?

2. Keep physically fit, but remember spiritual fitness is more important (vs.7-8)

This seems a strange one to us, but more and more with the increase in medical knowledge, the importance of physical exercise and physical fitness, has been well established to enable you to be at your best as far as your work is concerned.

But strange as it may seem, sometimes church members can become very critical of their pastor if he gets into keeping fit! If he takes up jogging every morning or evening, if he gets into cycling, or if he starts playing golf or something like that. Maybe if he has a keen interest in football or cricket or whatever. They begin to say to themselves, "Our pastor has a great time of it, sure he only works one day a week, and he can run off and play sport or keep fit whenever he feels like it - maybe I should think about going into the ministry? Sure, it's a great life!" I don't know whether you think like that or not?

We don't know how Timothy kept himself physically fit, but for some reason, Paul had to say to him that physical training was 'of *some* value, but godliness has value *for all things*, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.' (v.8). He said in v.7 that Timothy should 'rather train [himself] to be godly.' Now Paul wasn't telling Timothy to stop his keep-fit regime! He did not say that physical training was of *no* value, he said it was 'of *some* value' - so there's nothing wrong with putting time and energy into keeping fit, but we should keep it in perspective - it's not the be all and end all.

I used to know a pastor who was into jogging, he used to go for a 10 mile jog every morning and the same again every evening, and he was "as skinny as a rake." - "More meat on a butcher's knife" as they say! In fact sometimes he just looked ill, he was so gaunt looking! To me, that's taking it to extremes, but sometimes that's what sport does - it gets a grip of you, and begins to take up too much of your life, and that is what Paul was warning about here.

I don't think sport will ever take over my life - I don't think I'm in danger of that, but it does no harm to have a bit of exercise now and again. Occasionally I would play a round of par 3 golf with my kids or go for a ride on my bike, but not nearly as often as I should!

I know that physical exercise keeps the mind alert, as well as keeping the body in trim, but knowing it and doing it are often two very different things! But the point of what Paul was saying here was that Timothy was to make sure that he put as much effort into training himself to be godly, as he did into training himself to be physically fit. I wonder do you?

Maybe you've no problem being disciplined in getting out for a walk, or a jog once, maybe twice a day, maybe you go to the pool to swim a few lengths religiously every day, if you've got the time, maybe you go to the gym regularly? But how often do you train yourself to be godly? How often do you spend time in God's Word? How often do you spend time meeting with the Lord in prayer? Do any of us make those things part of our daily routine, as religiously as some people go for a jog, or a walk or a cycle?

*'Physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things...
...rather train yourself to be godly.'* (v.8 & v.7)

I don't know what exactly Timothy's critics in the church were saying about him. I don't know if it had something to do with his physical fitness or not. In fact reading between the lines of this book we get the impression that Timothy wasn't all that physically fit at all - in fact maybe the opposite - we get the impression he was often sick with tummy up-sets (5:23). Who knows, maybe that was brought on by stress, because of the difficulties he was facing in the church in Ephesus? We really just don't know why Paul made this point about Timothy training himself to be godly, not just physically fit. But if Timothy really did want to silence his critics, then there was something else that he did have to do:-

3. He must put all his energies into the work of the Gospel (vs.9-10)

Paul reminds Timothy in these verses of another of his 'trustworthy sayings.' This is the third one we have come across in 1 Timothy: (1:15) (3:1) (4:9). In this one Paul reminds Timothy of three things:
- *'that we have put our hope in the Living God'*
- that this God is *'the Saviour of all men'*
- and then he adds: *'especially of those who believe'*.

We wish that God was the Saviour of 'all men' literally, but he's not. That statement simply means that God pours his grace and mercy and his good gifts upon all men every day. Whether they're good or bad, saved or lost God is gracious to the good and the bad every day by giving them food & sustaining their lives. Theologians call this 'common grace' - what God as our Creator gives to each one of us whether we acknowledge Him or not.

But ultimately God can only be the Eternal Saviour of those who actually believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, personally for themselves.

And in order to be able to do that, they must first of all hear the Gospel.

They must first of all hear that Jesus is God's Son, and that He came into this world and died on that cross for their sins, in order that they might be forgiven and saved for all eternity. What they have to do is simply trust in Him as their Saviour and Lord. But they need someone to get out there and tell them!

That's why Paul says in v.10, "**...and for this we labour and strive.**"

Those are two very strong action words: labour and strive. The point Paul is making is that a good minister should put plenty of energy into reaching out to the lost with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A good minister needs to remember that unless he and his church reach out with the Gospel to the needy and the lost all around them, then those people will die in their sin and be lost for all eternity. God will hold us accountable.

But it doesn't matter how good the minister is, he can't do it on his own, he can't reach the lost all around the church on his own, he needs the help of his people to stand with him in prayer, to go out with him for support, and to practically assist in any way they can to bring the Good News of salvation to the lost. God calls us as a church *together* to reach out to the lost.

So don't criticise your minister for not reaching out, if you're not doing it yourself, or prepared to help in the task of outreach and evangelism from the church. Instead, let us get out there in the coming months and do it together!

So this morning, we have seen the first 3 things that a good minister of the Gospel must be able to do. He must...

1. Point out False Doctrine and correct it with the Truth (vs.1-6)
2. Keep physically fit, but remember spiritual fitness is more important (vs.7-8)
3. Put all his energy into the work of the Gospel (vs.9-10)

Next week we will find 3 more things that will mark out a good minister, as we take the opportunity to set Andrew apart for Pastoral Ministry once again.

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