

## NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025 am

TITLE: "Ministry that saves" TEXT: 1 Timothy 4 verses 1-16

SERIES: "Guarding the deposit" Pt 15 Scripture references from the ESV

**1 Timothy 4:1-16** Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, <sup>2</sup> through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, <sup>3</sup> who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. <sup>4</sup> For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, <sup>5</sup> for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

<sup>6</sup> If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. <sup>7</sup> Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; <sup>8</sup> for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. <sup>9</sup> The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. <sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe. <sup>11</sup> **Command and teach these things.** <sup>12</sup> **Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.** <sup>13</sup> **Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.** <sup>14</sup> **Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you.** <sup>15</sup> **Practise these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress.** <sup>16</sup> **Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.**

The church needs to be able to trust those who lead them, and the world needs to be able to trust the church and its leaders. Sadly, polls show that, currently, only 63% of people trust clergy. That is a tragedy in the context of gospel ministry when you consider that clergy are meant to be the ones who are preaching truth to the world.

We need to take hold of Paul's command to Timothy (v16 above)

**Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.**

Pastors are to be careful to ensure that both their teaching and their conduct are right.

**What the pastor preaches is to be truth,  
and what he preaches is to be true in his own life.**

Paul ends the chapter by showing why this is so important (v16b). He is not saying here that Timothy could be his own saviour, nor that the salvation of the congregation ultimately depends on the pastor. Paul is very clear that God is our Saviour: **God our Saviour,** <sup>4</sup> who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>5</sup> For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Tim 2:3-5).

God alone saves us by his Spirit alone, through the work of Christ alone. Elsewhere, Paul writes: **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** (Eph 2:8).

- Salvation, including the faith to receive it, is a gift of God's grace alone.

What Paul wants Timothy and us to know by his words in v16b is that:

**The reality of our salvation needs to be demonstrated in our conduct**

Perseverance in godly teaching and godly conduct will mean the salvation of hearers because:

**It is through the gospel preached faithfully that God will save sinners.**

**The gospel needs to be preached by those who show by their lives that the gospel really does lead to transformation.**

What does this ministry that saves look like? **Verses 12-16** show that four actions are involved:

1. **Setting a godly example (v12).** Timothy is a young man (probably mid 30s), who had been sent to the church by the apostle Paul. He had a mandate from Paul to silence the false teachers, but the church had not chosen him.

They may well have wondered why they should listen to him, and Timothy may well have wondered if they would listen

to him! However, Paul says that what will commend Timothy and his teaching to the church is a godly life (v12). It is a reminder to us that it is spiritual immaturity that is the hindrance to ministry, not our age.

- True leadership is **NOT** just telling people they must be godly and how to achieve that

- True leadership **IS** following Christ into godliness, and being able to say follow me into this life of godliness

The pressure of ministry must not turn us aside from the pursuit of godliness. When false teachers seek to undermine him, Timothy is not to become defensive, angry or critical in return, but he is to set a better example of godliness in the way:

- he speaks to them and about them
- he serves them despite the hostility, and loves those who oppose him
- he trusts God to defend him and stays faithful to his calling
- he exercises self-control

The church leader is to be an example of godliness in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity (**v12**). Where does that come from in the life of a church leader?

- It comes from Christ as we look to Jesus to help us
- It comes as Christ is formed in us by the work of the Holy Spirit
- It comes as the Spirit of God applies the gospel to our lives

**It is the life of Christ in the pastor that is on display**

**2. Devotion to God's word.** As pastor, Timothy has an authoritative role in the church. He is to silence false teachers, teach the gospel, command gospel living, establish ministries to care for widows and to disciple brothers and sisters, including those who are older than him. His authority to do this lies in the word of God.

- The pastor's only authority lies in the authority of what Christ commands in his word.

Hence the instruction to Timothy in **v13**. The pastor is to ensure the Bible is read publicly, giving sufficient time to this.

**The only divinely inspired words in the whole of the service  
are to be found in the scripture that is read.**

Everything else in the service is the work of a human author, but when the Bible is read publicly, we hear the words of the living God. However, we do still need a sermon (**v13b**). Paul calls pastors to expository preaching:

**All our Christian instruction and teaching is to be drawn out of the passage that is read.**

We do not come to the church with the invention of our own minds or the latest philosophies, nor do we read into the text what we want it to say or use it as a springboard to say the things we want to say.

Instead, we come to the text recognising that is what Christ wants to say to us. We sit under the text, studying to understand what it means, and we draw out from it what Christ is saying to us and how he wants us to live.

**As a pastor in the study, I am to put myself under the authority of Christ and his word.**

Having done this, we go to the church gathering and preach and teach what Christ says. We sit with people in the hospital or at home exhorting them from God's word and counsel them according to Christ's word. We ensure that all the ministries in the church follow the same pattern. The work of the pastor is to:

- place himself under the authority of Christ and his word
- study Christ's word, drawing out what Christ has to say to the church
- faithfully speak what Christ says to the church

**3. The exercise of our spiritual gifts (v14).** Paul does not say what Timothy's gift is, but the important thing is that he is to use that gift and to grow in it. When God gives us a spiritual gift, he expects us to use it, not to bury it. We are to use spiritual gifts for the good of God's people.

We do not preach for our own sake, to gain a following or to make ourselves look good. Rather, we preach and teach Christ's word because we want:

- Unbelievers to find Christ
- God's people to know Christ better, to love him more and to obey him fully
- To protect the church from false teachers

The gifting is one of the evidences of God's calling on Timothy's life. God had gifted him to do the work that Paul had sent him to do, and God had given a prophetic word in the giving of the gift. The gifting and call on his life had been recognised by the elders who laid their hands on him as a public way of showing the church's confirmation of this. Timothy was NOT a self-appointed minister of the gospel.

- There is no room in God's church for self-appointed preachers, apostles, prophets and leaders.

There were such people in the Ephesian church, who did not know and believe the gospel, and they were leading the church astray. It was up to Timothy to silence them.

- We need pastors with a clear call of God on their lives, who are gifted for the work they are called to, recognised by the church and set apart for this work
- 4. Displaying evident progress (v15).** When he arrived in Ephesus, Timothy was not the perfect pastor. Paul's expectation was that he would grow in godliness, in his devotion to God's word and in his spiritual gift.
- Timothy had to do the hard work of learning what it meant to fulfil his ministry calling

He was to immerse himself in it, going over and over the same thing again so that eventually, like a skilled tradesperson,

### **The man and his ministry become one**

Pastor Tim's preaching life started at the age of 18. The church recognised that gift in him, and he continued to be invited to preach. In the hard work of study and preparing sermons, there was plenty of practice and also the opportunity to recognise flaws. To grow in the gift he had been given:

- he read books on how to study the Bible, prepare sermons and preach
- he sought to understand Christian doctrine
- he attended preaching workshops
- he asked trusted people for feedback

Timothy would have had different tools, but the basic principle is the same. That is how we progress in the calling of God upon our lives. It is important because Paul expects that the church will see progress.

- Paul is saying that ministry is hard work. It is all consuming, but it is what ministers are called to, and people need to see progress. The church needs to see not just what we are now but what we are becoming.

**The church needs to see the trajectory of our lives towards greater godliness.**

No Christian leader is perfect, and it would be hypocritical to pretend otherwise. False teachers can give the impression that they have arrived at perfection, but that does no good for those they lead. It sets up a false view of godliness and leads to discouragement. Instead, those of us who are Christian leaders need to show that

## **We are pilgrims on the same journey as the people we lead**

If your church leaders are evidently on the journey towards greater godliness, then it is much easier to follow them because you can see them as human beings like you. You can have the assurance that if God can change them, then he can change anyone, including you.

## **There must be no hypocrisy in the life of a church leader**

Every instruction that Paul give Timothy is intended to show us this. There is a spiritual dynamic at work:

- Sound doctrine will lead to sound conduct and sound conduct will commend sound doctrine

A church leader who is grieving the Spirit of God because he is leading a hypocritical life will not be effective in ministry. You may be wondering how this is relevant for you if you are not a church leader.

This letter was an open letter. It was meant to be read to the whole church, and therefore must have had relevance for the whole church. It was an encouragement to Timothy to exercise authority and fulfil his ministry.

For the church, it was confirmation that Timothy was their minister appointed by Christ, and therefore they needed to follow his teaching and example. It is a letter that brings with it two questions:

- Will those appointed to lead us exercise their ministry in a way that enables us to follow them into a closer relationship with Jesus?
- In response will we, the church, follow their teaching and example into this closer relationship with Jesus?

Pushing further in, we all have people over whom we have influence, and people who are influential in our own lives, and we should ask two more questions in the light of that:

- a) **How will you lead those in your sphere of influence?** Will you lead them into greater godliness by setting a good example and teaching them God's word? Will you use your spiritual gifts for their good, and show evident progress?

**b) Who will you follow from among those who have the capacity to influence you?**

Will you follow those who are setting a good example, teaching you God's word and living it out? Will you follow those who are using their spiritual gifts for your good, and showing evident progress?

Who we follow and how we influence others is a matter of great importance for salvation. That is why we all need to keep a close watch on ourselves and what we say and believe, especially those called by God to church leadership.

**Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching.**

**Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers (v16)**

**Then we will be a church that commends the gospel and leads people to Christ.**