

Rodney King  
Youth Pastor  
Calvary Baptist Church

## A Good Servant's Discipline (Part 1) 1 Timothy 4:6-10<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction (v. 6)

In the previous 5 verses of 1 Timothy 4 we saw that Paul reminded Timothy of a sad truth: some will fall away. We saw a multiplicity of examples in which people who were supposedly believers fell away from the faith. We should not be surprised when people fall away from the faith; rather, we should grieve and mourn over them who have "once tasted of the heavenly gift" and will face the eternal consequences for their rejection (Heb. 6:4-6).

Now Paul describes to Timothy what a "good servant" (*diakonos*) looks like.

#### NASB

6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.  
7 But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness;  
8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.  
9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.  
10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Paul's main point in this passage is this: *Good servants discipline themselves for godliness by avoiding false teaching and nourishing themselves on the spiritually life-sustaining words of Scripture.*

The emphasis in this particular portion of Scripture is on pastors (i.e. Timothy as the pastor of the church in Ephesus is a good minister if he reminds the church of vv. 1-5). Yet we know that these still apply to every believer because Paul instructs Timothy to "put **the brethren** in remembrance of these things (v. 6a). In fact, though the letter is pastoral in nature, it is implied that these truths will be taught by Timothy to the church (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3; 3:15).

Warning the church of false teaching that will cause some to fall away is the charge of every pastor. In fact, that is exactly what Paul told Timothy in the second letter he sent:

**2 Timothy 4:1-5** <sup>1</sup>I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup>preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.<sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup>and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup>But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

A good servant (and specifically a pastor in this case) reminds the brothers and sisters of truth through the means of divine truth (i.e. the Word of God).

Paul then describes the results of a good, obedient servant: he is nourished (v. 6b). This word is only used here in the New Testament and carries the idea of being *trained in*. Paul will use this metaphor later (cf. 1 Timothy 4:8). A good servant who reminds the brothers and sisters of truth is trained in the words of the faith and the good doctrine that accompanies the truth.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible.

*Words of the faith* — The words of the faith (definite article should be supplied, which the NASB in fact does) refers to all the right doctrines contained in the Bible. This is yet another reason why pastors should teach the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27 KJV). This is why it is so important for every believer to (1) be in the word of God daily and as Pastor Dickson puts it “get that one thought from the Word”; and (2) every believer should be listening to the preaching of God’s Word which presupposes that every believer be actively involved in a local church (Heb. 10:25). The only way to identify error is to learn the truth.

*Good doctrine* — A major theme of the book Paul again urges Timothy to train himself in good doctrine. Though some might think that doctrinal teaching should be reserved for the Bible college setting, I am more and more convinced that doctrine (and especially doctrinal preaching) should be done in the church. It is by means of right doctrine that God protects and preserves His children. The consequences of following a different doctrine are dangerous:

**1 Timothy 6:3–5** <sup>3</sup>If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, <sup>4</sup>he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup>and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

APPLICATION: Frequently arguing is viewed negatively; instead, everyone with different views are to “get along” with one another. This is a result of postmodernism which argues that there is no absolute truth; all truth is relative. Whenever anyone argues passionately for absolute truth he is immediately labeled as a bigot and narrow-minded. Yet according to God, those who passionately (and still graciously) propagate the truth of God’s Word are commendable (i.e. good servants).

While Paul focuses specifically on pastors, the truths we have just looked at apply to you, as well. You are to be a good servant of Jesus Christ, too.

---

#### **Preview Outline:**

*How will I know if I am a good servant of Jesus Christ? A good servant of Jesus Christ is marked by two broad categories:*

- 1. What He Avoids — Foolish Philosophies**
- 2. What He Pursues — Disciplined Godliness**

---

*The first mark of a good servant is—*

#### **1. What He Avoids — Foolish Philosophies (v. 7a)**

Literally, *reject*, or *have nothing to do with* (Paul uses this same word when describing which widows were to be *rejected* from receiving financial support from the church in 5:11). He is to refuse worldly fables (i.e. anything that is contrary to what is clear, divine truth).

Paul does not intend to be derogatory toward older women; rather, he is using a common phrase of his day. In that ancient culture women were not afforded the opportunity to be educated like the men were. As a result, men who were arguing their ideas to others would belittle arguments of their opponents as “tales only fit for old women” thereby insinuating that the opposition’s arguments were “uneducated” and “unfitting” for the academic discussion. Paul uses this same phrase to denote the true identification for uneducated arguments: anything that does not align with biblical truth. The standard for all truth is divine truth.

A person who believes the lies that Satan gives is truly a fool (compare that with the foolishness of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 1:18ff which is able to make us wise to salvation). Satan propagates his foolish philosophies through the means of foolish men.

ILLUSTRATION: I think of some of the lies that Satan has perpetuated today:

- Follow your heart; let your heart be your guide.
- You have the ability to make yourself the best you can be.
- You can live your best life now.
- You are never responsible for your actions; you are the product of other people's faults.

Each of these subtle lies are laid bare by the Word of God: (1) the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9); (2) we are dead in our trespasses and sins and unable to come to God apart from divine grace (Eph. 2:1ff); (3) all those who are in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12); and (4) every man is a sinner who will suffer for his own sins (Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

To heed the foolish philosophies of our day is to sacrifice the truth on the altar of error. A good servant of Jesus Christ will avoid foolish philosophies that run contrary to divine truth.

*The second mark of a good servant is—*

## **2. What He Pursues — *Disciplined Godliness* (v. 7b)**

The man of God is *disciplined* (KJV “exercise”). This word comes from the Greek word “*γυμνασία*” (*gymnasia*) from which we get our English word “gym”. Just as a person with a gym membership disciplines his or her body to become fit, so does the good servant.

This discipline is toward specifically *godliness*. Though people are saved by grace through faith in Christ, in no way does that mean God's redeemed children may live in a way contrary to what He lays out in His Word. Over and over Paul mentions the word *godliness*: 1 Timothy 2:2, 10; 3:16; 4:7–8; 6:3, 5–6, 11. *Godliness is that characteristic of a believer which emulates the Son of God in obedience to the Word of God.* Godliness, then, is a fruit of a true believer.

**John 13:35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (NKJV)

**John 14:15** If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Paul further expands his athletic illustration in v. 8 by laying out a foundational truth: namely, a good servant knows that the discipline of godliness has both a present and future benefit. We will look at this next time.

## **Conclusion**

Though the world has its measurement for what a “good christian” is, the ultimate measurement is found in Scripture: *a good servant disciplines himself for godliness by avoiding false teaching and nourishing himself on the spiritually life-sustaining words of Scripture.*

