

Look unto me

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me please to the passage we read in 1 Timothy chapter 4. And tonight we are going to look at verses 6 to 11.

Now you will remember that in verses 1 to 5 of this chapter we looked at some of the prayers that exist to the well-being of the church.

It is very clear that the church will not just go on without any defence, without any vigilance.

That it is not going to be just left in peace. But that there will be attacks upon it, attacks upon its integrity and attacks upon the stand that it makes for the gospel.

The threat of apostasy was brought before us. Those who stand aside or stand apart from the truth.

[1 : 12] Those who take a stand which is moved however slightly moved sideways from the truth. That is the meaning of the phrase that we looked at where it says some will depart from the faith.

The literal translation of the word is apostatized. To stand apart from. And remember Paul's encouragement to Timothy in his stand against these things.

Now in verse 6 Paul looks back for just a glance as he advises Timothy and he says to him If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ.

Now what Paul has been doing is warning Timothy about some of the threats to the church.

And he is continuing here impressing upon him that he must be continually putting these things in remembrance before the brethren.

[2 : 37] Now there is a continuity in this command which is not sin in the English. It is not a case of giving them warning once and then leaving them apart.

He is to be continually putting them in remembrance of these things. He is saying to him that he is to keep his people on the alert.

That he is to keep them vigilant. That there are these possible dangers to the health and to the safety and to the integrity of the church.

If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things you will be what? A scaremonger? A heresy hunter?

A heresy slipper? No he says. You will be a good minister of Jesus Christ. And I think that it is very very clear in these words that it is part of the task of a good minister to keep before the people the dangers that shift them as a church.

[3 : 59] to warn them about things which are really the thin edge of the wedge. People say well it is only a little change.

It is only just a small thing. How can that matter so much? Very often a small thing in itself doesn't matter. But it is the thin edge of the wedge.

And Satan is so very very good at doing that. In any kind of relationship. Especially in the church. To drive the wedge in. And to create a crack.

You know yourselves better than I do. How storms are eventually broken just by putting in wedges. Wholes are drilled and then the wedges are put in.

And they are tapped one by one along the line. Until finally the slab of stone just splits. You know you people know far more about that than I do.

[5 : 02] But it illustrates how careful we must be when there is a thin edge of a wedge driven into the church.

I believe that the greatest danger that faces the church today is just that slow and imperceptible drift away from the truth.

That slow, so slow that we cannot see it happening. And I believe with all my heart that it is happening in the church.

That there is a drift away from the true and full biblical gospel. That there is a man-centeredness coming into the gospel that we preach. which is utterly alien to the Bible. But it has happened so slowly. We can't put a date on it. We can't say it began with such and such a time.

[6 : 11] We cannot say such and such a passion introduced. Because it is all so subtle, so slow and so imperceptible.

And I feel myself, according to the words before me here, that as a minister, if I am going to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, then I have to perceive these things.

I have to see them, I have to be alert to them, and I have to warn my congregation against them. We are in danger of losing the gospel.

We are not in danger of just in one massive move, going right over to a gospel of works. But we are in danger of losing the gospel just by a slow and imperceptible drift.

Now the description that Paul gives here of a good minister is itself very interesting.

[7 : 24] It says that if Timothy does this, he will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained.

Here we have a description of a good minister. Not an all-inclusive one, but it is brought before us here that the minister himself, that he must be nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine.

Again, there is continuity here. This is so important for a minister. It's important for any Christian who is going to maintain and retain his peace and his job.

But for a minister, it is so important that he is continually nourished, that he spends time in the place where nourishment is to be found, that he grazes in the pastures where spiritual nourishment is plentiful.

I mean by that, that he spends time in the secret place and that he spends much time in communion with God in secret and in private and that he spends time in searching and in mining the Word of God.

[9 : 17] There is absolutely no substitute in the life of the minister for these things. And if I as a minister don't have these things in my life, if I am not nourished in the pastures given by God, then I might as well finish the thing off.

There is no point in me continuing. I cannot do this work by just doing everything. Supposing I do everything else.

Supposing I preach, supposing I visit, supposing I labour, supposing I'm like a man running across country west, using up all my energy. What does it matter?

It means nothing. Absolutely nothing. Unless I am a nourished man. Unless my soul and my heart are nourished in the pastures and with the food that is given by God.

And that has to be in the secret place, in prayer, and in the study of God's word.

[10 : 34] There is continuity in it. And there is something else in it. And that is that it has to be daily. Remember the manner of the Old Testament.

Remember that it was all there just for them to be gathered. All they had to do was go and gather it. But some said, Oh well I'll gather a double lot today.

And I won't have to gather any tomorrow. And it just didn't work. Except on the day before the Sabbath. But for the normal day, it just didn't work.

Because it was rotten the next day. It had all declined. You see, today's manner is for today.

Today's nourishment for the Christian and especially for the minister is for today.

He can't say, Well, I did a double lot yesterday. I did double time yesterday. Therefore, I don't need to do any today. It is a continual, a continuous nourishment in the same way that the manner was.

[11 : 46] Nourished up in what? Now there is an important difference between the original and what we have in the English here. That in the original it says, nourished up in the words of the faith and the good teaching.

Now that is specific. And it seems to me to indicate that even in those early times that there was a recognized body of truth among the Christians.

That there was in Paul's mind and that it was also in Timothy's mind because Paul assumed that Timothy would understand what he was talking about.

That he had to be nourished up. That he had to be fed. That he had to be strengthened in his soul in the same way as the body is strengthened by food and it was to be in the words of the faith and in

the words of the good teaching.

There is a way in which the word of God can be distilled and can be in a sense stated in a few simple truths.

[13:16] A few simple basic truths. We have these things in our own day in our catechisms and in our confessions of faith. And we should realize more the body of these things.

These words contain the words of the faith and of the good teaching. Paul says to Timothy that he used to be nourished up in these things.

He has to have his heart lined and furnished with these simple and basic truths of the word of God. Whereunto, he says, thou hast attained.

Literally, whereunto you have followed closely beside. We know that Timothy had a Christian upbringing.

Both his mother and his grandmother taught him the fundamental things of the word of God. He was nourished in these things from his early youth.

[14:22] And it seems that he was very obviously somebody who was earnest and who was eager to learn and who was eager to do service for God.

Even although he was in some ways timid and perhaps perhaps weak in health. Nevertheless, Paul recognized him as someone who had in him the makings of a good minister, the makings of a good pastor.

These things Timothy had already attained to. He had already followed closely beside these things. It is not the things that we tend to look for that are brought to the forehead.

It is not things like passionate gifts, passionality, charm, charisma, eloquence even.

[15:25] These are the things which we set so much store on. these are the things that we look for when we select a man for the ministry. These are not the things that are before Paul.

Good minister is someone who wants. Someone who is nourished up in the words of the faith and of the good teaching and has followed through beside these things.

He has remained parallel with them. He has not drifted from them. He has remained close to them.

Then in verse 7 we have the words but refuse profane and old wives fables.

Despite the but that is at the beginning of this sentence, I don't think this is a reference backwards to things like apostasy which have been discussed in the previous verse.

Of course I see that this profane and old wives tales that we have here are set over against godliness.

[16:55] Paul is saying profuse profane and old wives tales and old wives fables on the one hand but on the other hand over against that exercise thyself rather unto godliness.

and I think that's the way that we have to tie and explain this verse. There is an antithesis here. One thing is set over against another.

Profane and old wives tales are set over against godliness and the pursuit of godliness.

it is all so easy for the minister to involve himself in just nothing more than profane and old wives tales just information which is empty rather than the task the toil of exercising himself unto godliness.

Oh old wives tales what is this what is this bringing before us here. So the word tales here is the same word as we have when we talk about myths and myths are legends as opposed to factual truth.

[18:36] Stories tales legends as opposed to things which are factual and sober truth.

Timothy is to refuse these things. So we have here two kinds of these myths. Firstly profane myths.

That is just literally things that are open and accessible to anyone and everyone. Common things.

Things that are not in any way holy. Things that are not in any way hallowed or sanctified.

Things which are just common, empty and open to everyone. They have nothing of spiritual value in them.

[19:36] They are just quite simply common things. Profane myths. And then there are old wives myths. Of course one has to be careful in this day and age of political correctness but we simply have to say that Paul is talking here about things that are frivolous.

Things which are really trivial. Things which perhaps tickle the pallid and tickle the lust for information and for gossip but nevertheless they are empty they are frivolous.

Timothy is to refuse these things and the word is he must strongly refuse them. He must refuse them with strength with power with determination.

what does that mean? It means that the person who is a minister must push these things resolutely away from himself.

people he is always going to be told things which are not going to do him any good.

[21 : 09] And it is so absolutely important for a minister that he doesn't be the carrier of things like that.

Now we all know that we assume that and we know that that is obviously necessary for a minister that he cannot be a carrier of terms but that's not enough the minister must go further than that he must strongly refuse these things he must put up a barrier he must not let these things lodge in his mind he must strongly refuse them strongly refuse these myths profane myths and old wives myths but he says in contrast to that as I do the opposite from that you have these two kinds of myths on this side and on the other side something else what is on this side you have to strongly refuse and what is on the other side you have to exercise yourself towards it you have to pursue it we have looked at what is on the side what is on the other side what is to be contrasted with these myths well it's something which is of just absolutely overwhelming importance for a minister it is to exercise himself unto godliness oh how my heart cries how it weeps when

I think of this how I feel so frustrated in my own ministry when I look at this and I realize that I have not exercised myself unto godliness and I have not pursued this I have not put it at the top of my priority the way that I should have done this is I suppose in that phrase the greatest advice that a minister could ever be given and that is to exercise himself unto godliness godliness what is godliness it is I suppose the pursuit of fellowship with god of communion with god of obedience to god of developing a sense of one's duty towards god seeking to fulfill all obligations towards god that must be the minister's priority all to exercise towards godliness others this thought of exercise it then triggers something in

Paul's mind having said to exercise and it is literally to train yourself to godliness we have that in verse seven it triggers off this thought in verse 8, the thought of exercise, he says, for he says, bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things. What does Paul say here about bodily exercise? Now you see a lot of people today, they have taken to the roads and to the streets and they're doing all kinds of things to exercise their bodies and we see ministers doing the same thing and we might say, looking at this at first reading, we say, well that's all wrong. That's not what this is saying. It is not saying that bodily exercise is of no benefit. What it is doing is simply putting it in its place. It is saying it profiteth a little. It does profit.

[26 : 28] I think it is very important and it is very biblical that we should exercise our bodies, especially those who are in rather sedentary or seated occupations. It is important that they keep their body in good tone. But we mustn't think that this is an overwhelmingly important part of life.

It profits, yes, but it profits only a little. Now let's just try and get that in balance. It profits, yes, but it profits, yes, but it profits only a little. Not without value and yet of only a little value. Compared to the exercise and the pursuit of godliness it is of little value. For bodily exercise profits, just a little but on the other hand godliness exercising yourself towards godliness is profitable unto all things it is profitable in all avenues of life your bodily exercise might give you an advantage and a feeling of goodness here and there but this is something which is going to benefit you in all avenues of your life the pursuit of godliness two things are brought before us two things two promises attached to the pursuit of godliness profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come first promise attached is to do with this life does that mean that for the christian this life is going to be easy no it doesn't for the picture before us is as far as i can see that the christian if anything suffers more and has more afflictions and more heartaches than the unbeliever unbeliever god is then the proper the promise attached to this life for the christian it is the promise of the covenant the covenant to be in covenant relationship to god so we're talking this morning about being united to christ the french the french usage here is the word that we have for engagement when we say covenant they say engagement this is the promise this is the benefit it is simply to be walking this life in a relationship of being engaged to jesus christ being betrothed to him and looking forward to the day of the final marriage the exercise of godliness has first of all the promise for this life it has secondly the promise attached to it of the life to come final redemption final redemption that great final marriage of the church to jesus christ the hope of one day being a member of the family of god in which jesus christ himself

is the first born god that is the promise that is to do with the life to come what is paul saying here he is saying that bodily exercise well yes it promises a little but it is it is only a little but on the other

hand being a seeker after godliness it means having the best of both worlds it means having the best of the world here and having the best of the world that is to come we come to verse 8 we have here to verse 9 we have a sort of a link between verse 8 and verse 10 he looks back at what he has said and he says this is a faithful thing what is a faithful thing simply this that the seeker after godliness has the best of both worlds that is a faithful thing and worthy of all acceptance worthy of acceptance by all but this verse 9 it also looks forward it's the link between verse 8 and verse 10 for verse 10 therefore we live we both labor and suffer suffer reproach therefore because of these of these great promises because of the fact that the Christian quite simply has the best of both worlds the true seeker after godliness has the very best of both worlds because of that therefore therefore we both labor and suffer reproach what follows is like a thumbnail sketch of the Christian life talk about thumbnail sketches just like something that you would sketch on your thumbnail there is the small picture of what the Christian life is really like first of all we labor we labor but we have said the Christian as the best of both worlds and yet that this life is not a bed of roses for the Christian there is much affliction but there is also this the motivation because of these promises we are motivated to do certain things and to bear and to suffer certain things for he says because of the faithfulness because of the certainty of these promises to do with this life and to do with what is to come because of things we both labor and we suffer reproach because we trust in the living God who is the savior of all men especially of them that believe so here is this thumbnail sketch it has just two pictures in it first of all this strenuous toil does that describe your Christian life I'm sure it describes your physical life I'm sure that most of you know all too well that your daily round is one of strenuous toil I wonder if all that strenuous toil gives you a thought or raises questions in your mind are you toiling strenuously seeking after godliness are you toiling strenuously in your Christian life in seeking after god are you toiling strenuously even seeking to be saved are you toiling strenuously in the things which really matter is there any comparison between the toil of your physical life and your physical labors is there any comparison between that and the toil of your spiritual labors are you saying well I am so busy with the physical toil that I quite simply do not have the time or the energy left to give to spiritual toil to spiritual energy to spiritual work it's not the case well I wonder if you are then saying to god well yes lord

[37 : 05] I know it says in the bible that I should do myself to this strenuous toil and spiritual things but I'm afraid I have made other arrangements I'm afraid that I have so filled my life with other things that there is just no room for these things or you might perhaps put it another way and say well my circumstances are such that I have no choice but to fill my life with these things to the exclusion of spiritual toil and you might even say to me well it's alright for you you're a minister you're at that full time let me tell you that I could waste my life expanding energy in physical things in doing and in running about everything and neglect the spiritual toil

I could hear quite easily can happen to me as it can happen to you so I put to the question how do you answer this one before God is it a case of other arrangements the second thing it says here is suffering reproach because we have these promises to do with this life and the life that is to come we gladly give ourselves to strenuous toil in spiritual things but we also gladly suffer reproach sometimes we are hated for our testimony the Lord said marvel not if the world hate you it hated me before it hated you it is something which is inexorably tied up with a clear testimony that sometimes there will be reproach sometimes there will be hatred now these two things these two descriptions of the

Christian life the strenuous toil and the suffering reproach these two things are there we because we declare our hope hope notice notice how he ties it up for therefore because of these promises we both labor and suffer reproach because we trust in the living God our testimony is this that we trust we have put our hope in the living God we have put our hope in him as the one who is the savior of all men and especially of those that believe the savior of all men does that mean that all men will be saved no it doesn't patently and clearly doesn't mean that because all men are not saved and yet here it is put before all men the gospel calls all men to be saved the gospel calls all men to come to this savior there is none other and all who will be saved will be saved through the savior who is the son of the living

God that plan of salvation has its origin in the living God he gave his son and because he gave he is the originator he is the planner of all that great salvation because we declare our trust in the living God who is the savior of all men none other savior is available to any but he is especially or literally most of all the savior of all those who believe he is their savior in a special way he is their savior in a

real and permanent way to them he is not just being offered to them but to them they have received the offer they have closed in with the gospel of

Jesus Christ they have embraced Jesus Christ and he is especially to them the savior because they believe this section finishes with verse 11 where Paul says to Timothy these things command and teach notice both things there are some things which the minister must command that vigilance must be commanded that pursuit of godliness must be commanded that pursuit of pastors which nourish that must be commanded the testimony must be commanded the witnessing must be commanded our trust must be known to all men some things are not just an option they are a command

[43 : 15] Paul says to Timothy these things command and teach it is a great question for me it is a great question for you in relation to me you can look at these things and you can assess your minister you can look at these things and you can say well is he really a good minister some people say well he is a good minister I like him he is a nice person he has perhaps a good way in certain situations and they say well therefore he is a good minister perhaps he preaches occasionally a good sermon and they say oh he is a good minister because sometimes he is very good but these are things these are the things that you should be looking for they are there in these words before you and you have the right you have the right to demand and to expect these things of me as your minister

I didn't invent them you didn't invent them you can say this is here here is God's word speaking to you as a minister this is something that you have to attend to this is something that you must pull yourself together on because it is not my word it is God's word this is the picture of a true minister of Jesus