

Do Not Neglect Your Gift

September 22, 2019

1st Timothy 4:11-16

11 These are the things you must insist on and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. 15 Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

The overwhelming majority of today's scholars assert that the author is not the Apostle Paul. However, it was important to the author that the readers actually believe that Paul wrote the Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles are the 1st Timothy, 2nd Timothy, and Titus letters. They have an overall purpose that is summed up nicely in **1st Timothy 3:14-15** I am writing these instructions to you so that ... you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God (NRSV). The letters focus on the ethical life of the Christian; personal and social, for the individual and the church. The Pastoral letters were significant in church development. They shaped our pattern of ministry and church structure and guarded against false teaching and heresy.

1st Timothy is addressed personally to Timothy, a co-missionary of the Apostle Paul. When Paul continued on with his mission, Timothy stayed in Ephesus where he faced a problem. People were teaching a conflicting doctrine that threatened the church. The letter contains duties of church leaders but it is more about the character of a leader than duty or assignments. The focus is ethical and moral as opposed to administrative. Our Scripture today shows this.

The Scripture lesson is on the importance of correct learning and teaching. What is being taught is righteousness. **1st Timothy 4:7** Train yourself in godliness (NRSV). The Scripture emphasizes:

1, Sound teaching. This is what is needed for the teacher.

Verse 11 These are the things you must insist on and teach.

2, Godliness. These are personal characteristics and integrity.

Verse 12 Set the ... example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

3, Duty of teaching.

Verse 13 Give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching.

4, Diligence.

Verse 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you

Verse 15 Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them

Verse 16 Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching ...continue in these things.

Timothy converted to Christianity when Paul visited Lystra. He was Paul's companion and co-missionary on Paul's 2nd missionary journey. His life was marked by assets and liabilities, virtues and weaknesses. His personal difficulty came due to his age (around 30 - 35 based on writings, and when he joined Paul) he suffered from a lack of respect. He was commissioned by laying on of hands from the council of elders (1st Timothy 4:14). This is a rite of passage. It means a transferring of the power of the Holy Spirit from one person to another for teaching and healing. It is a transference of authority, a commissioning, a consecration to a particular position or duty. The commissioning actually comes from God. Whereas, God sent Christ to the earth

with a plan of salvation. It is God's will to offer salvation to all. God sent Jesus with the divine mission of offering salvation. Jesus sent the disciples to go out into the world and make disciples. Discipleship spread down through the generations to us here today. God needs faithful leaders that are nourished in the truth to nourish others in the biblical truth. So, Timothy is ordained for a mission. He is to devote his life fully. He is to give all of his energy to public reading of scripture, preaching, and teaching. Timothy has to teach doctrine. He has to be exemplified by the life that he lives. He must be above reproach. He must have a solid moral character and a loving disposition. He is to set an example by his behavior. The lesson is for clergy and laity. When gifts are given to you and since all gifts are given by God, you are expected to make full use of your gifts. Respond energetically, give of yourself completely, and uphold the standards of virtue.

This brings us to our contemporary lesson for today. The fundamental reality is that human beings are spiritual beings made by God, in the image of God, to be in relationship with God. However, we are all different; unique with our own personalities. We are free to make a choice and decide for the self. In life we always have a choice because the freedom to choose is a God given right. Well, your choice leads to lasting consequences. Some people are drawn to righteousness. Some people fall away. 1st Timothy addresses a disturbing reality of deceitfulness. Hypocritical preaching for personal motives. Timothy is charged to guard against it. This is a lesson for all of us. God needs strong leaders with moral character to guard sound doctrine, to live their lives by the word of God, and to teach others to live by the word of God.

God has given us grace. Our duty is to respond to God's grace. We are all called, each and every one of us with different skills and abilities. We are all called. We owe it to God to respond to the calling. So, do not neglect your gift.