

Being a Good Servant of Christ Jesus (Proverbs 4:20-27 and 1 Timothy 4:1-16)

27-Sep-26

Proverbs 4:20-27

- ²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I say;
turn your ear to my words.
- ²¹ Do not let them out of your sight,
keep them within your heart;
- ²² for they are life to those who find them
and health to one's whole body.
- ²³ Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.
- ²⁴ Keep your mouth free of perversity;
keep corrupt talk far from your lips.
- ²⁵ Let your eyes look straight ahead;
fix your gaze directly before you.
- ²⁶ Give careful thought to the paths for your feet
and be steadfast in all your ways.
- ²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left;
keep your foot from evil.

1 Timothy 4:1-16

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There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

I encourage to have your **Bibles opened** initially at **Proverbs 4 – starting at verse 20** – and then we'll look at **1 Timothy chapter 4**

Let's pray...

Recap

We are continuing our series on the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy – his protégé.

Just a brief **recap** where we are up to

[Slide-recap]

In chapter 1 – Paul told Timothy to guard the Gospel and oppose false teaching in the church at Ephesus. And Paul encouraged Timothy to fight the spiritual battle well and hold on to his faith and a good conscience – particularly as Timothy felt like giving up!

In chapter 2 – Paul gave instructions on Public Worship especially on prayer and the roles of men and women in the church

In chapter 3 – Paul gave instructions on the pastoral oversight of a church and the need for godly leaders.

Now in chapter 4 – Paul describes to Timothy **what a good servant of Christ Jesus looks like.**

It is someone who recognizes spiritual dangers – someone who rejects false teaching - someone who is nourished by God's Word — someone who trains in godliness – sets an example – and devotes themselves to scripture.

Intro - The Heart (Proverbs 4:20-27)

Before we unpack this chapter – our OT reading from Proverbs 4:20-27 gives the foundation underneath being a good servant of Christ Jesus – and that is the **HEART**

When was the last time you had a **heart check**?

[Slide-Heart Check]

It's good to know that your heart is in good health – pumping blood and that there are no blocked arteries or heart disease!

But that's not what we're talking about here – Proverbs is talking about a different heart check!

The Hebrew Word for **Heart** (*lev*) used in Proverbs 4 - **refers to the inner person — the centre of our thoughts, emotions, will, desires and character**

Proverbs 4 is about gaining wisdom from God and the way that God's wisdom shapes our lives.

Looking at v20 – the writer – says to *pay attention* and *turn our ears* to listen to God's words of wisdom

And v21 says – we are *not to let God's words of wisdom out of our sight* – they are precious to our lives

And we are *to keep God's wisdom within our heart* – within our whole being!

In fact as v22 says – *God's wisdom gives life and brings wellbeing to the whole person*

Then comes the **key verse**

[Slide-V23]

V23 – *Above all else guard your heart – for everything you do flows from your heart!!*

Jesus puts it this way in **Luke 6:45**

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of!

The writer of Proverbs goes on to show us what happens when God's wisdom is allowed to shape our hearts.

It affects what we **say** – v24 – we are free from perverse or corrupt talk

It affects what we **look** at – V25 – It keeps our eyes firmly fixed on the path of wisdom God has given

It affects the direction we walk – v26

And – v27 – it helps us not to turn to the left or right from God's wisdom – and keeps us from walking in evil ways (v27)

So Proverbs 4 says: **guard your heart, because what fills the heart will eventually shape the way you live.**

And that brings us naturally to 1 Timothy 4 [\[Please turn there now\]](#)

Paul takes that same principle and shows Timothy what it looks like in practice. If the heart is being shaped by God's truth and wisdom, then that truth will be seen in the life of a **servant of Christ Jesus.**

A Good Servant of Christ - Recognizes Spiritual Dangers (1 Tim 4:1-5)

1st point – A good servant of Christ – Recognizes Spiritual Dangers – vv1-5

[Slide-Point Man]

During the Vietnam War, every army platoon had a Point Man — a soldier who went ahead of the others.

His job was to watch for danger — enemy soldiers, snipers, land mines or ambushes.

He would only signal the others to move forward when he was sure it was safe.

The lives of the whole group depended on him spotting the danger ahead.

It was literally a matter of life and death.

(pause)

And that is the picture Paul gives Timothy here.

Paul is warning Timothy about the spiritual dangers that lie ahead.

In verses 1–5, it is almost as though Paul is briefing Timothy for the mission ahead: ***“Timothy, watch out. There are dangers ahead. Be alert. Protect God’s people.”***

In verse 1, Paul makes it clear that this warning comes from the Holy Spirit. He says that “in later times” ***some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.***

[Slide-Abandon faith]

And the “later times” means the whole period between Jesus’ ascension and His return — so it includes the time we are living in now.

Paul is reminding Timothy that we are in a spiritual battle.

Satan’s strategy has always been to deceive God’s people into believing what is contrary to God’s Word.

We see it right back in the Garden of Eden. Satan deceived Eve by saying, ***“You will not certainly die”*** (Genesis 3:4) and ***“you will be like God.”*** (Genesis 3:5)

And we still see that deception today.

I knew a man – some years ago -who had professed to be a Christian for more than 30 years. He had often told me about sharing his faith with people at work. Yet, quite unexpectedly, he abandoned his faith, left his wife of 29 years and left his family.

His explanation was: “God will understand — He wants me to be happy.”
(pause)

But that is exactly the kind of deception Paul is warning Timothy about.

Don't abandon the truth of God's Word. Don't allow yourself to be deceived.
Remain faithful to Christ. (pause)

Then in verses 2 and 3, Paul warns Timothy about the danger of **false teaching**.

He says it can come through "hypocritical liars" whose consciences have been "seared" — their consciences have become desensitized to what is right and wrong.

[Slide-False Teaching]

And Paul gives **two examples of false teaching**:

First — **forbidding people to marry**.

The Bible doesn't teach that marriage is somehow less holy than being single.

Second — **forbidding certain foods to be eaten**.

Again, Paul says this is not what God's Word teaches.

So how do we protect ourselves from false teaching?

We test what we hear against God's Word.

Paul goes back to Creation and reminds us in verse 4:

"Everything God created is good" (Genesis 1)

And still in v4 — Paul says - God's good gifts are to be ***received with thanksgiving, according to His Word and with prayer***.

(pause)

So we must never develop a false sense of security.

[Slide-Spiritual Battle]

We are in a spiritual battle.

Satan wants to undermine Christ's Church by introducing false teaching. He wants to undermine godly leaders, godly families and godly marriages.

And just like the Point Man in Vietnam, we need to be alert, diligent and watchful for the spiritual dangers ahead.

We need to - Know God's Word. Test what you hear against it. And remain faithful to Christ.

A Good Servant of Christ – is Nourished By God's Truth (1 Tim 4:6-10)

2nd point – A good servant of Christ – is nourished by God's truth – vv6-10

[Slide-Heading]

In verse 6, Paul points Timothy towards good teaching,

He says if you want to be a good **minister** [and Greek word used for minister is – *diaconos* –which means **servant**]

Paul says to Timothy: **if you want to be a good servant of Christ Jesus, stay nourished by God's truth and hold firmly to the good teaching you have been brought up on.**

[Slide-Stick to Gospel]

In other words, **stick to the Gospel — pure and simple. Nothing added and nothing taken away.**

(pause)

Paul warns Timothy not to get distracted by “*godless myths and old wives’ tales.*” Don’t replace the Gospel with a whole lot of religious rules and regulations that have nothing to do with Jesus.

Instead, Paul says in verse 7: “*Train yourself to be godly.*”

The Greek word for “train” here is *gymnazō* — where we get gymnasium from.

[Slide-Spiritual Gymnastics]

So Paul is talking about spiritual training — spiritual gymnastics.

Physical exercise trains our bodies for this life. Spiritual exercise trains us for godliness and for eternity.

Going to the gym is good — but it won’t make us godly. Bible study, prayer, worship and growing in God’s Word - will.

(pause)

And this godliness is possible because, as Paul says in verse 10, *we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Saviour of all people, and especially of those who believe.*

Now, when Paul says that God is “**the Saviour of all people,**” he is not saying that everyone will ultimately be saved. The Bible is clear that salvation belongs only to those who **believe in Christ** and put their trust in Him.

Rather, God is the Saviour **offered to all people** — the Gospel is for everyone, and Christ is the only Saviour offered to the world. But that salvation is experienced and received by “*especially by those who believe.*”

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, taking the punishment we deserved. He rose again, defeating death and giving us the certain hope of eternal life.

Jesus is the Saviour — and our hope is in Him alone.

[Slide-Growing in Faith]

And that is what all this spiritual training is about: **growing in our faith and becoming more like Jesus.**

And just as physical training produces visible results, spiritual training should produce visible results in our lives.

Timothy was to become living proof of his spiritual training.

Which brings us to our third point: **A good servant of Christ sets a godly example** — verses 11–12.

A Good Servant of Christ – Sets a Godly Example (1 Tim 4:11-12)

[Slide-Heading]

In v11 and 12 – Paul tells Timothy to set a godly example – he says:

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

Even though Timothy is young, he is not to let his age become a reason for people to look down on him [in fact - the Greek suggests a stronger word like despise or hate him].

Instead, Timothy is to be an example to believers in his **speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.**

And that command applies to us too. If we are going to draw people to the Gospel, our lives should help people **see Jesus more clearly**.

How could we expect to attract people to the Gospel – if we are not using our Spiritual Gymnasium to exercise our Spiritual lives!

So we should ask ourselves:

[Slide-Speech Etc.]

About our - **Speech** — Are our words truthful, gracious, encouraging and free from gossip and slander? What would Jesus say?

Would people see Jesus more clearly by the way we speak?

About our - **Conduct** — Do we show integrity, kindness, humility, reliability and obedience? Ask ourselves, how would Jesus behave in this situation?

About our - **Love** — Do we serve, forgive, listen, care for others and patiently bear with difficult people? Do we exhibit the love of 1 Corinthians 13 – which describes what God's love is like.

About our - **Faith** — Do we continue to trust God and remain committed to Jesus, even when circumstances are difficult?

About our - **Purity** — Are our thoughts, words and actions morally and spiritually pure?

In other words, **our spiritual training should be visible in the way we live.**

And just as a physical gym has equipment to help us exercise, God has given us spiritual equipment to strengthen and protect our faith.

That brings us to the 4th point – **A good servant of Christ – is devoted to God's Word** – vv13-16

A Good Servant of Christ – is Devoted to God's Word (1 Tim 4:13-16)

[Slide-Heading]

Let me read v13 - *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*

[Slide-Equipment]

Here we have **3 pieces of spiritual equipment:**

1 - Reading the Scriptures

2 - Preaching

3 - And Teaching

Now although this command is to Timothy – a leader of a church –

It applies equally to us all here today,

We can all read our Bibles and take in God's Word

We can all listen to sermons preached on Sunday – and get Spiritual food

And we can all – to some degree – teach or tell others – what we know about our faith in Jesus and what the Bible says –

These are the pieces of equipment in our Spiritual Gymnasium

And the reason we need to keep up this Spiritual exercise is given in v15

[Slide-v15]

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress.

Did you catch the reason at the end of v15 – so that everyone may see your progress

Just like when you exercise your body in the gym regularly – people will see evidence of some progress – like muscles or weight loss -

So too with Spiritual exercise – people will see us grow in godliness

It's not about perfection but progress!

Just like regularly attending the gym – the more we read the Bible – the more spiritual progress we make. The more we listen to sermons preached – the more we grow and develop spiritual muscles!

It's hard work being a good minister or servant of God – we have to work hard at it!

It is the same struggle for all of us – we are all meant to be progressing

You need to be keeping a close watch on me – and any other preachers that come to Toukley – making sure we pursue godly teaching and godly living –

It won't be comfortable – but it's not about being comfortable (pause)

People will keep Jesus at arm's length if they see a poor example from the minister of the church or poor examples from the believers in the church

Which brings us to the last verse v16 – which sums up in one verse what Paul is telling Timothy - let me read it

[Slide-v16]

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers

We all need to train ourselves –

We all need to be Point Men and Point Women –

Protecting our families with godly teaching and godly living –

Protecting Christ's name so people outside the church can see our example of our godliness and want to be part of it –

that's what this passage is all about.

Conclusion

To finish up then

I find this passage very challenging and convicting.

I became a Christian at age 33 – and by then two of my children were age 10 and 8.

What I had modelled to them – is a love and passion for football – not Jesus!

It's hard to undo the damage – when we model the wrong thing!

You see – being a leader – especially a leader of church or family - is really tough – and it can suck if you stuff it up

If you are here today as - a parent or grandparent – or a friend or relative to someone who doesn't believe in Jesus – be very careful what your life models to those around you – don't make my mistake!

That's why v16 says

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, thank you for your good gifts and for the truth of your Word. Help us to guard the gospel, grow in godliness, and set a good example in our words and actions. Give us wisdom to recognize false teaching and strength to remain faithful to you. May we keep a close watch on our lives and our teaching, and point others to Jesus. In His Name, we pray. Amen.