

The Spirit predicted two menaces of false teaching that would arise. Religious men would depart from the faith and seek to control behavior through regulation, discounting the power the Holy Spirit and of grace in a born again heart. They would impose non-scriptural limitations on the basic blessings God granted all mankind at the creation, marriage and diet. Doing so, they insult the grace of God in giving His Son. He moves Paul to strongly encourage Timothy to remind the brethren of these dangers not yet apparent. Doing so he would be counted a good minister(servant) of Jesus Christ.

Some might think these matters to be of little consequence and not worthy of our attention. But God sees them as attempting to place us back under bondage to law. Law, but different from God's Law given Moses, which is still useful to convict sinners of their need of a savior. Peter, a faithful observer of Mosaic law, was told to not to call that which God has called holy common, Acts 10:\_\_\_. This was a major change for the Jews and for any Gentiles who were accustomed to pagan dietary rituals. God's 1400 year test of Israel under the Law of Moses proved man's inability, and unwillingness to abide by it. Yet, celibacy was not a feature of the Law of Moses and the dietary restrictions were not imposed because of any intrinsic defiling elements in any banned food. Nevertheless such restrictions are routinely imposed upon professing Christians today. Examples: Mandatory celibacy for "clergy," and enforced Lenten fasting, etc. These defy Christ's teaching and insult His finished work on the cross by attempting to add man's merits to His.

Paul continues by warning of profane (unholy, ungodly, worldly) thinking. Don't entertain such thoughts, or those who may express them in our presence. Stick to the scriptures. Secular plays, movies, videos, novels, "sitcoms," "soaps" and the like are examples. Then there is the music we choose. Does it teach solid scriptural truth and encourage devotion to Christ?

What are "old wives fables?" They are fictional, as opposed to factual, stories, myths. And not always merely fiction but a false story presented as true [a story, a narrative purporting to set forth facts, "e.g., Matt. 28:15, an account or story, in which actually there is a falsification of facts," Vine.] A current example is "The Da Vinci Code". I appeal to you, don't even think of reading it. Fictional novels, videos, movies (even if by Christian authors) about biblical characters and events are to be used cautiously, or avoided all together. While they may give us a vivid sense of the reality of events described in scripture they give us more than God saw fit to give us. For instance the recent film "The Passion of Christ" dwells more on the physical suffering than God wanted us to see. He has spared us the detailed blow by

blow account in the scriptures, even though He did not spare His Son. I think even the disciples didn't witness what that film depicts. These books and other media tend to divert us from, and dilute and distort in our minds, the knowledge God has given us in scripture.

On another tack, we are not to be carried away by food fads, health fads, fitness fads, and the like. These tend to cater to self not godliness. We are to exercise ourselves to godliness. Not that bodily exercise and proper diet is not profitable for one's health on the earth. He says it is "for a little." But godliness is far, far more beneficial, both while here and for eternity. Godliness has the promise for life associated with it. Maintaining physical fitness can contribute to bodily health and well-being, and possibly even extend life here on earth.. Doing so may possibly enable us to serve the Lord longer or in greater capacity than otherwise. But ultimately (the Lord be not come) we will all naturally age and die. Paul does not condone "couch potatoes," an unhealthy diet or inactivity. In contrast, he put his personal health and safety at risk to preach Christ to others. He wants us to put godly priorities on our time and energy and avoid making health, fitness, or sports and other recreation an idol. This caution is a faithful saying and worthy of acceptance by all. It is important to God.

God is savior of all men. He desires all men to be saved, but this is not what Paul is referring to here. God is actively interested in the safety, health and well being of all men. And not just those who are saved. Stories of His providential care of the unsaved make the news frequently, though most of the time He is not recognized in it, or given thanks. Even as believers we take much for granted. We presume upon God's goodness. Most people do, whether born again or not. We little realize the extent of His daily loving, preserving care. Paul cites his confidence in God's care as the reason he can labor and suffer reproach for God. Reproach is the opposite of approach. Paul experienced man's rejection and attacks, not acceptance and submission to his message. Timothy knew and had experienced that with Paul and on missions for Paul. All the more he, and we, need encouragement. Paul gives it here. Timothy is given a charge: "These things command and teach." Are we listening? Are we, Timothy's successors, commanding and teaching what Paul has given us to teach in the scriptures?

Timothy was a young man, perhaps in his late twenties or early thirties, maybe even younger. He is exhorted to let no man despise his youth. The exhortation has been misconstrued by some to think they should demand others give them respect and their rights to lead and teach despite their youth. Those who fall into that trap only exhibit their ineptitude to teach and lead. Paul gives the way to earn

respect.

*but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*

- P word – discourse, speech, of instruction, etc.(Vine)
- P conversation – conduct, behavior, manner of living.
- P love – “agape” more than affection but selfless love.
- P spirit, – the higher “human” God-relating being of man that distinguishes us from animals; what is above and controls our mind, will, and emotions, which we have in common with animals to some extent.
- P faith, – Resting upon the revealed promises and will of God in the power of the Spirit within us.
- P purity – cleanliness, chastity.

Who doesn't respect such an one, young or old, male or female?

Paul then gives some more personal exhortations to Timothy. If he heeds them and tends to them he will both “save himself and those who hear him.” Huh? We can't save ourselves, much less save anyone else. That's God's department. What is meant here? Obviously Paul isn't speaking about eternal salvation. He refers back to the preserving care of God for each of His own. He has promised to keep us until the end. He will. He “has to” because Christ died for us. But in order to keep us **He must act to keep us.** Do something based upon the fact that we are Christ's. Normally He uses the scriptures through prayer and the power of the indwelling Spirit to save/keep those who are His if we let Him. This is His preference. If we should stray, becoming less godly He uses other saints to keep (save, preserve) us, Matthew 18 15-20; Galatians 6:1. In order to be used to save others we must be in a useable state. We must be godly, spiritual, and faithful. If others are not in a useful state He, in His faithfulness, will resort to Providential intervention. That unheeded will lead to direct intervention, and ultimately a saint's premature home

going, 1Corinthians 11: 30, 1John 5:16.

There are quite a number of personal admonitions here for us to heed, “Till I come.” 'Til Paul comes and 'til the Lord comes. Give attendance to:

PReading – the personal and public reading of the scriptures along with exposition of what they mean.

PExhortation – urging change or action, or persistence as the need may be.

PDoctrine – teaching the truth of God from scripture.

PNeglect not the gift – Grk: **charisma**, a divine gratuity, a spiritual endowment that is in thee, in this case with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.[see note below\*] Each born again believer has been given at least one spiritual gift. Let each not neglect to use our gift(s) for the Lord, in the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. Basically, do what is needed to meet the needs obvious to you and you will discover your gift, even if others don't point it out to you.

PMeditate [revolve in the mind] upon these things.

PGive thyself wholly [one's whole being] to them.

PThat thy profiting [progress, advancement] may appear to all.

PTake heed unto:

Pthyself, we must look to our own spiritual condition before helping others. Normally this should be a brief but thorough searching and cleansing, Psalm 139:23-24, but avoid self occupation.

Punto the doctrine – continued and repeated teaching from scripture, the truth as it is in Jesus.

Pcontinue in them – Hang in there!

What grace, that **we can walk with God.** And in doing so we save (preserve) ourselves. And so walking, we are counted useful to save (preserve) others. May we be given grace to faithfully do what Paul enjoins here.

By Ron Canner, April 5, 2006

**\*Note on gift “which was given thee by prophecy.”** Either someone earlier prophesied Timothy would receive this spiritual gift, or upon the occasion of his receiving it one had prophesied encouraging, edifying and comforting words. This appears to have been a very unique incident involving Paul's hands imparting it and the hands of the elders [presbytery] given in fellowship with it. If Timothy's gift was indeed imparted by a human agent, it was through an apostle, Paul. Apostles of Jesus Christ had this authority, but scripture shows it was not passed on down to elders or assemblies. Even here the elders are not said to have conferred the gift but simply to have recognized and acknowledged the gift received and therefore indicating their fellowship with it in Timothy's exercise of it.

We aren't told specifically what the gift was, but it was probably not that of evangelization because he was exhorted to do the work of an evangelist, as if he wasn't gifted as one. Judging from exhortations to Timothy in these two letters he must have been a gifted pastor/teacher. Note that anyone with obvious spiritual gifts need encouragement and sometimes building up [repairing], admonition and even rebuke. Give them faithful, prayerful spiritual and emotional support, as well as meeting their physical needs. Do it for Christ. They do.