

A YOUNG CHRISTIAN LEADER

1 Timothy 4:1-16

Key Verse: 4:12

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."

In the last passage we learned that all Christians are basically overseers and the stewards of God's world. From Jesus' point of view, all Christians are the light of the world. So Jesus said in Matthew 5:14, "You are the light of the world." As we know well, fallen man wants to live an easygoing and pleasure-seeking life and wants to be recognized as a great man. But Christian leaders must set their hearts in Jesus and decide to do a noble task. In chapter 4 Paul instructs Timothy about several things.

Paul warns Tim that no one should look down on him because he became a top leader of the church when he was young. He has to be an exemplary person for the believers in his life of faith so that he might be recognized as a great leader even though he was young. These days, many young people are too practical; they have no idea to be great men or women. We can learn in this chapter that when we are young we have to be great leaders. When we are old, it is too late to decide to be a great man or woman of God. Let's listen to Paul as he instructs Timothy to become a great leader while he is young.

I. A good minister of Christ Jesus (1-10)

First, hypocritical liars (1-6). Paul knew that in later times some would abandon the teachings of the Bible and faith in Christ and follow hypocritical liars. Hypocritical liars are very powerful because they possess the power of the demons. It is very sorry to see those who abandon the truths of faith and follow hypocritical liars. There have always been hypocritical liars and witches and magic artists. They lie and deceive

people for the sake of their own benefit. So Paul said they are "hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron" (2). Their conspicuous characteristic is that their consciences are utterly corrupted. They are unpredictable people. They can do anything to deceive people. Mostly, they teach their own superstitions, not the Bible.

In apostolic times there were antique philosophers called Gnostics. They were magic artists of the times. They made use of the theme of Plato's philosophy in falsity. They taught people that spirit, which was called "idea," is good. But matter (the things of the world) are all evil. This was Plato's preliminary assumption. Later Plato changed his theme that matter can be good by means of association with "idea." In short, matter also can be good. But these Gnostics only taught people that spirit is good and matter is wrong. In this way, they bound people with their theories and made people their slaves. These magic artists said that the physical body is evil, therefore marriage is evil. So man should not marry. But in reality, they gave permission to certain people to marry. They also taught people to abstain from certain foods, because food belonged to matter. In history, what is good and what is evil have been great ques-

tions to all people. People in the early centuries had this question in their hearts. For people always had a yearning desire to be good. So they really want to know what is good and what is evil. Some said, "Power is good." Others said, "Knowledge is good." Still others said, "The world conquest is good." But they were all wrong. Only Jesus is good (Mk 10:18) because he saves men from their sins and gives them eternal life. The Gnostics deceived truth-seeking people and stole their hearts. They were like the church leaders of the dark ages who said, "If you buy indulgences you will go to heaven."

When we see people, everybody seems to be evil enough and the world is crazy. But it is not so. Everybody seeks good. Everybody seeks God in this dark generation. Two years ago, around 100,000 magic artists throughout the world claimed that Jesus would come at 10:00 p.m. October 28, 1992. Ignorant believers brought what they had and gave all their possessions to the magic artists. One young man who lived a double

life was a secret hallelujah Christian. He met a woman magic artist and was ordained by her. Soon he began to get high by speaking in tongues and indulged in magic dancing. But when he had no word of God in his heart the demon crept into his heart and made him very self-righteous. Then he began to condemn all other Christians.

Paul instructs Timothy to watch over them because they ruin the truths of the faith. More than that, Paul strongly implies Timothy should carry out the mission to cast them out with courageous faith. Otherwise, the church of Christ could not stand. Paul gives Timothy the reason why he has to watch out for heresies. For example, everything God created is good. We Christians must receive God's created things with a thankful mind. So to speak, we must eat cow, knowing that it was created for man's happiness. Look at verse 4. "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving." Here Paul's main point is that Timothy must master the basic truths of God

and protect God's flock of sheep from hypocritical liars. If we know the basic truths of God and prevent hypocritical liars we are good workers of God. Look at verse 6. "If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed."

Second, train yourself to be godly (7-10). In the ancient times, oratory was known as the best scholarship and sophistry was known as the joy of life to all men (Ac 17:20). So many people had many kinds of ideas. Greece, the origin of humanism, produced innumerable myths and fables. Among them, Aesop's fables were the best, even though he was a Greek slave. Other stories of myths, such as old wives' tales, are no more than one gossip to another (7). They are well-trained in gossiping. They also enjoyed gossiping as a joy of life.

But Paul instructs Timothy to train himself to be godly (7). If we

do not train ourselves to be godly we become endless gossipers. From time to time we see many old women speak endlessly. Paul says that godly training has great value. Look at verse 8. "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." How nice it is to be an Olympic gold medalist in boxing through physical training. How nice it is to be a gold medalist in gymnastics, defeating so many competitors. But physical training does not give us eternal life; instead it gives rheumatism and elbow pain. They say that in Greece there were so many gymnasiums. At first, the athletes devoted themselves to physical training. Later, all of them turned out to be homosexuals. Physical training is very temporary. But godly training gives men eternal life.

What is godly training? It is to hold the promise of God about the present and the future. Look at verse 8b. "...holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." We are still a good and evil man. We Christians' job is to train oneself in godliness. Even if we are converted in

Jesus, we have to discipline ourselves to believe that we have eternal salvation and the kingdom of God through his Son's death and resurrection. Godly training is also to have hope in the living God. Look at verse 10. "(and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe." We remember very well about the life of Spurgeon. He became a church pastor at the age of 17. We wonder how a teenager became a pastor of a church. But when we read history, he began to pray in the early morning at the age of 17 and made it part of his life. When he assumed leadership in a church, the members were no more than 50. But his church membership grew to be 5,000. When he was 19 years old 12,000 gathered to hear his sermons. It was possible for him through godly training in his teens. Spurgeon had severe rheumatism, which mainly attacked both his legs. But he spoke the word of God each Sunday, even though his legs gave him excruciating pain. Yet Spurgeon always thanked God for God's grace upon him. His absolute faith in Jesus

and overcoming faith for his weak body forged him into a godly man. Spurgeon is a good example of Paul's instruction concerning godly training.

II. Excellent young leaders (11-16)

First, don't let anyone look down on you because you are young (11-12). In Paul's times there were not many Christian leaders. Timothy was a Christian leader but he was young and physically weak. Nevertheless, to Paul, Timothy's youth could not be a problem in his becoming an excellent spiritual leader. Paul instructs Timothy to be an excellent leader whom even older men cannot criticize or devalue or look down on. In ancient times, old people were respected unconditionally and young people were unconditionally looked down on. Paul prayed that Timothy would overcome this social consensus by divine discipline. Look at verse 12. "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set

an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." Here Paul gives several areas that Timothy must mature in so that no one could look down on him. First is love. There are many kinds of love: eros, phileo, agape. There are many love stories throughout the ages. But these days love stories are vanishing and the stories of violence prevail. Paul said, "set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love...." In this phrase, love is the main point, and this love is the love of God. Timothy must mature in the love of God. Without maturing in the love of God no one can be an influential young leader. There was a pastor who took care of 130 lepers. He had two sons. Since hungry Stalin, utilitarian Churchill and senile Roosevelt divided Korea into two parts, Korea became a pro-communist and a pro-American country. Pro-communist guerrillas shot the pastor's two sons to death. Later they were arrested. But the pastor appealed for their pardon and adopted them as his own sons. Is it possible for a human being to do so? Yes it is possible when we know the love of God. It is possible to be an excellent young

leader when we have the love of God. Here we learn that love is the heart of God and at the same time it is the will of godly men. It is not based on emotional feeling.

Second, Paul instructs Timothy to be pure (12). When Paul instructs Timothy to be pure, he is talking about purity to God and to the promises of God. Purity is unconquerable allegiance to God's promise. Christianity is the religion of God's promises. There are two parts in the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament. "Testament" means promises. These two Testaments are called the Bible. Now we know Paul's instruction to Timothy to be pure.

Third, Paul instructs Timothy to teach the Bible (13). At that time, there was no printing shop. There was no book, but only scrolls made of sheep or goat skins. So in order to study the Bible one leader stood on the platform and read out loud. At that time, it was not easy to teach the

Bible. There was no microphone system. Timothy had to read the Scriptures in the open air, and people began to come and hear and said many "amen"s when they were touched by the word of God. They repented and cried a lot. They could not afford luxurious one-to-one Bible study. Paul instructs Timothy to devote himself to Bible teaching in this way (Neh 8:1-3).

Fourth, do not neglect your gift (14). Timothy was outwardly not so gorgeous. But his loyalty was recognized by people as his gift. Because of his gift, that is, loyalty, elders ordained him as their leader. There is a story about George Washington. George Washington was loyal to his country and his soldiers. The conditions of the winter in Valley Forge were unbearable. The diet of the soldiers consisted of corn meal and little else. At one point some became so hungry that they ate their own shoe leather. In addition, many kinds of pestilences: flu, smallpox, typhus and exposure, took a fearful toll. Out of a force of 10,000 men, 2,500 died

during that winter. But his soldiers had no idea to run away or complain. It was because Washington stayed with his men and shared their sufferings rather than staying in his general's quarters. Because of Washington's shepherd heart, his soldiers were happy to suffer and happy to die. Even though he was a young general, his loyalty to the states and to his fellow soldiers was not only great, it is historical. Here we learn that we must mature in loyalty to Jesus like Timothy. This part reminds us of Hebrews 13:8. It says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Fifth, show your progress (15-16). Look at verses 15,16. "Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers." When Paul instructs Timothy, "show your progress," he is saying the secret of being an excellent leader. Those who grow to be great leaders have glad

heart to learn from others. Those who grow to be great leaders have glad heart to be diligent in learning something. As a result, they make progress day by day. Then the flock of God under their care see that they are making progress. And God's flock also make progress.

In this passage we learn that we must be excellent Christian leaders when we are young. When we become old we have no time to grow up to be excellent leaders. May God give us a decision of faith to become excellent Christian leaders when we are young.