



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1st Timothy 4:11-16

“A Young Man's Qualifications for Ministry”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Again, Father, we come to Thee in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior asking Thee to give us illumination through the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the first epistle that the apostle wrote to young Timothy and for the instructions that is contained within it. We thank Thee for the words of exhortation and admonition. And we recognize that while many of the things were written specifically for Timothy and his particular service to Thee that nevertheless many of the things have their application for us as well. And we pray that we may be able to respond to the words of Scripture and may the Spirit make the application that is necessary for our own personal lives. We pray that if there should be someone here that does not know Jesus Christ as personal savior that through the word of God they may come to know him whom to know is life eternal. We commit the hour to Thee and pray Thy blessing now upon each one of us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight we are turning again to the 4th chapter of Paul's first letter to Timothy and devoting our time to the study of verses 11 through 16, primarily verses 12 through 16. So if you have your New Testaments will you turn to 1 Timothy chapter 4,

and listen as I read these verses? Beginning with the 11th verse, the apostle remember has been saying some words concerning bodily exercise and especially concerning godliness, and then he has added that, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance.” And finally in verse 11 then he says, “These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit.” These words, this prepositional phrase, “in spirit” is not found in the most ancient and the better Greek manuscripts and consequently they probably should be eliminated. Now if you have a modern version, the chances are you do not have them in your text, following “in love, in spirit.” So I think if you have an Authorized Version you can put brackets around them. They are not found in the better manuscripts. Then, “In faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

Guy King, who has written a short commentary on Paul’s letter to Timothy, has referred to these verses as a young man’s qualifications for leadership. That title smacks to much of ecclesiastical position, in my opinion. But if we change leadership to ministry, a young man’s qualifications for ministry, it’s not a bad title for the section. It therefore is a group of verses which has primary reference to Timothy himself and the ministry to which God had called him in the area of Ephesus. There are several specific things that Paul calls to the attention of his young legate, but in general he exhorts him concerning his beliefs and his behavior.

So we’re going to look at is as a section that has to do with Timothy and his ministry, and specifically, the things that concern his beliefs and behavior, and then to

spell it out in verse 11 and 12, the apostle writes Timothy some words concerning his youth and his conduct. He states in the 12th verse, “Let no man despise thy youth.” I think in the background of all that Paul is saying here in this 4th chapter are the false teachers. Now he has been speaking about them from the beginning and so it’s not surprising then to read this against the background of the false teachers who were affected in some way with some of the tenants of what later became to be known as Gnosticism. The “these things” of verse 11 refer to the preceding and they specifically have to do with false teaching and so since the new section probably begins here I think that we are then to read these verses against the background of the false teachers. “Let no man despise thy youth.” It may well have been that some derogatory remarks had been made about Timothy because of his youth. So the apostle writes, “Let no man despise thy youth.”

Now naturally in an audience like this with so many young people you would be interested in knowing just how young Timothy was. Well we don't really know. We do have some indications. For example, he has been with Paul in ministry for fifteen years by this time. Furthermore this word “neotes” which is the word used for youth here, is a word that can describe anyone of military age, and since military age went up to the age of forty. It’s possible that Timothy was as many as forty years of age. But let’s just say he was thirty-five. Now, I’ve often said to you, jokingly, that thirty-five is middle age because according to the Scriptures we may expect seventy years normally. If we’re strong and vigorous, such as I am, we might have eighty. [Laughter] But that’s what the Bible says about the span of a man’s life, and so if you’re thirty-five, you’re middle age. If you’re more than thirty-five, well then only the Lord can help you [Laughter] when you get that old.

Now Timothy is here then evidently a man possibly thirty-five, possibly a few years younger, but he’s not a stripling. He’s not a teenager. He’s not a young man in his early twenties. He is a man who has had fifteen years of Christian experience, and yet the

apostle states with reference to him, and incidentally, we know from Timothy’s second letter that he grew up in a Christian home, and so he is a man who has had a great deal of Christian experience, and a man who has been in a Christian environment ever since his beginning. So the text here does not have anything to do with a young man who is a teenager or a young man in his early twenties. This word that the apostle uses he feel free to use of a man who is as old as thirty-five or even forty for that matter.

I think it would be good for us to turn back and read Acts chapter 16 verse 1 through 3 which tell us something about Timothy’s engagement in the ministry of the word of God with the Apostle Paul. Acts chapter 16 and verse 1 through verse 3, now this is the second missionary journey, and we read in Acts chapter 16,

“Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: Timothy was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father (and by the way this word translated here “was” because of the indirect discourse of the original text should be rendered “had been”) a Greek.”

His father had been a Greek and therefore we know that by this time his father was dead, which does increase the likelihood that Timothy was a man in his thirties. So this is the account of how Paul came to be acquainted with Timothy, and also how he came to be associated with the Apostle Paul in ministry and came to be what we have called an Apostolic legate, that is a representative of the Apostle Paul.

Now the reason that this word is directed to him, “Let no man despise thy youth,” is because though he is a relatively young man, he has had a great deal of Christian experience and it would be Timothy’s responsibility as a teacher in the church at Ephesus

and in that vicinity to have a great deal to do with the elders. Now in the 5th chapter he writes Timothy some instruction concerning the elders. He states, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.” He states that, with reference to the elders that, an elder should not be accused “but before two or three witnesses.” So, Paul directs these words to Timothy since he would have a great deal to do with elders, and there might have been a tendency on some of the older men to despise Timothy because he was not an older man, relatively speaking, but a man in his thirties.

Now, we then should, it seems to me, avoid to extremes from this text. One extreme is to assume that a man who is full of gray hair is the only kind of man who can possibly be a leader and an elder in the local church. That’s one extreme which should be avoided. We all know that there are older men who have not grown a bit in Christian maturity. They have been converted, and they have been sitting in the pews for twenty or thirty years, but still have not grown spiritually. A person cannot possibly grow spiritually if he does not, not only listen to the word of God, but give himself to it in personal study and also in application of the word of God. And it is not an easy thing to grow in spiritual maturity. It’s a very sad thing that many of our churches are filled, our evangelical churches, I’m speaking about, are filled with men who have been Christians for fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years but have relatively grown just a few inches in degree since the time that they came into the Christian faith.

Now that’s one extreme. The other extreme is to think that because a man is a young man that he is therefore disqualified for service as an elder. Now, one should have experience, “Lay hands suddenly on no man,” Paul will tell Timothy later, so that we are not to bring young men into the eldership, into the presbytery or into places of spiritual responsibility who have not had spiritual experience. And spiritual experience is not gained in two or three or five years. We should avoid that. But that’s the other extreme, and it seems to me that, I say extreme, I don't mean that the avoidance is the extreme, but

it is true that in many places young men who have not had Christian experience are made deacons and elders when they should not be. So, Christian experience is the key thing. Timothy is a young man, but he is a man of rich spiritual experience, fifteen years with the Apostle Paul. I think that ought to qualify anyone if he paid any attention at all. That ought to be equivalent to four years at Dallas Theological Seminary [Laughter] by anybody’s measurement.

There is an old story about William Pitt who got up in the House of Commons one time and began to apologize because he was only thirty-three years of age. And he began to say right at the beginning that he wanted to apologize for the atrocious crime of being a young man and addressing the House of Commons. There is a great benefit in age if there has been development in the truth. But if there is no development then it’s a wasted amount of time.

“Let no man despise thy youth.” But on the other hand, young people, of course, have two weaknesses. Number one they often talk too much. They talk beyond their experience and knowledge. That’s very common. Old men do too. But young men seem to do it especially, and this is one of the weaknesses of a young man is to talk beyond his experience. And then secondly, he often does not live up to the things that he says. And so the apostle addresses himself to these questions too and says, “Let no man despise thy youth,” Timothy, but on the other hand, in order to shut the mouths of the critics, “Be Thou an example of the believers in word, in conduct.” So he was to be very careful about the things that he said. To learn to control your tongue is a very difficult thing. And it’s especially difficult; it seems to me for a young person.

So, “Be an example in word,” in utterance, the utterance should be careful, few, and also seasoned with grace. And then in conduct, in manner of life, that’s the second thing. I’m sure that someone would say, “Well if a young person is to be an example in word, I can understand that, and he’s to be an example in conduct, I think I can understand that, but what do you mean? Conduct is a very broad word.” It means

actually in the Greek text something like manner of life. So the apostle gives us three details, and I think these three nouns that follow are designed to explain what an example in conduct is. First of all, “In love,” Christian love, what is Christian love? Well you’ve often had people explain to you the true significance of the Greek word, “agape,” which is the characteristic Greek word for love. I know that you’ve heard a number of Bible teachers tell you that there are several words for love in the Greek language.

As a matter of fact there are many of them. But there are three or four well known ones, there is the word, “erao” a verb which means to love, from which we get the English word erotic, and as you might expect it’s a word that has to do with sexual love frequently. Then there is a word that is “phileo,” and it means something like to like. Now it can be more than that, but it refers to the love that a person has for another person or thing because they have mutual interests, mutual likes as a general rule. Someone has said the first kind of love, “erao” is all take. This kind of love is give and take. And then “agapao” the characteristic Christian word is the word that expresses the love of the will which directs affection toward an object or a person apart from any consideration of the worth or merit of the object. So it is all give. One is all take, the other give and take. This one is all give. It’s the kind of love that God had, of course, when he gave Jesus Christ for us apart from any consideration of merit, apart from any consideration of having mutual interests with us, but his love directed itself toward us arising out of his sovereign will.

Now involved in this is almost always the idea of sacrifice, and it’s especially preeminent in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ of course, and his love for the elect. So Timothy, “Be an example of the believers in word and in conduct,” and specifically first of all in Christian love. That means that the love of the brethren apart from any merit, apart from any mutual interests, but the love that you should have is the love that is patterned after the love of Jesus Christ. That’s a very difficult thing, but that’s part of what it is to be an example in conduct, to love the saints. The saints are not always a very lovely group

of people. Now you can be sure of that. Now, once of course, you get to mingle with the saints and when the saints begin to talk about Jesus Christ and express their affection for him, you can enter into that. But it’s very difficult to love the saints. You’re looking at me as if you don’t really believe me. Well look at me, and think about trying to love me. That ought to make you realize how difficult it is. It’s difficult to love the saints. But this is something that young Timothy is to be an example of the believers in.

Secondly, he’s to be an example in faith. Now remember in our study last time I made a comment about the article, “Before faith,” the faith, having reference to the body of doctrine to which we hold as Christians. Now when the word faith occurs without the article, it may have the sense of faithfulness. It can also mean the faith which we exercise in Christ when we believe, but probably in the light of this context here, he’s to be an example of the believers in faith, probably it has its quite common meaning of faithfulness. Therefore we could probably put it into an English synonym such as loyalty. Be an example of the believers in loyalty, in fidelity, perhaps even in enduring constancy in the Christian life, loyalty.

Now there is a great place for that too. There’s a great place for being steadily loyal to the local church, to the believers in the local church in spite of the things that happen in the local church. There are people in the city of Dallas who come into one of our evangelical churches, and they are there happily until someone offends them in some way. And so they get peeved and upset and so they travel over to one of the other evangelical churches, and they sit there until something happens that upsets them, and then they move to another particular church. There are people in this city who have been in three, four, or five of the evangelical churches in this city. Now they, it seems to me, generally speaking, all of these may be justified of course, I’m not attacking any of you in the audience. I’m sure that not any of you have ever had that experience, but loyalty, fidelity to the principles to the local church to what God is doing in a particular place is very important. And the apostle speaks of it here, “Be an example in loyalty.”

Now, I’m not going to tell you to stay in the church regardless of what difficulties may exist in the church. There are times when, of course, it may be desirable, maybe called of God for changes to be made. But I do think that all of us need a little bit more loyalty to the principles which we say we hold and to the body which meets in the local meetings of the church. Loyalty is an important virtue, belongs to the Christian life.

And finally, in purity, that of course, is to be expected. Timothy, be an example in purity, a difficult thing for any individual, and I think young people have temptations that probably are greater than older people. These are very, very important and sound words that the apostle addresses to Timothy. Now having said these words concerning Timothy’s youth and his conduct, Paul now turns to give him some words concerning his public utterance because he is a teacher evidently, and his ministry is to minister the word of God in the assemblies of the saints.

Someone has said that what we have here in verses 13, 14 and 15 is a kind of pattern of Christian service. I think to be more accurate doctrinally we would say it’s a kind of pattern of how one should exercise one’s spiritual gift of utterance. Justin Martyr, who wrote *The First Apology* in the 2nd century, which, incidentally, is a very significant book or work because it tells us a great deal about the church in the 2nd century. In one part of his *First Apology* he describes what went on in the meetings of the church on Sunday, and it’s very interesting to hear Justin speak about the kind of service that they had. They observed the Lord’s supper every Sunday, incidentally. That was confirmation of what the apostle’s evidently practiced. They observed the Lord’s supper every Sunday. They remembered the Lord Sunday by Sunday. But when Justin describes the church service he said it was made up of reading of the word of God. It was made up of urging, and pressing upon the listeners the truths of the word that they have read, and then the body of believers offered prayers to the Lord. So there was reading of the word. There was preaching, exhortation, urging of the truths upon the audience, and there was

prayers. And they observed the Lord’s supper, so you can see what kind of meetings they had in the early church.

Now these words that Timothy will here from the Apostle Paul have very close reference to that. He states in the 13th verse, “Give attendance to reading.” Now this word, “to give attendance” means to hold to. It’s a very strong word. It’s the word that’s used over in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28 when Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders and says, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” “Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock.” So here, “Give attendance to reading.” Public reading of the word is evidently in mind in the light of the context, public reading. We tend, I think in our services in the local church to, today, to discount the reading of the word. The reading of the word is a kind of interlude in the service before the sermon, and frequently we don’t even listen as the word is read. Sometimes we read it together. I learned a long time ago to read the word and not pay any attention to what you were reading. Read responsively. I read one verse, and then I rested, and then I read the third verse, and I rested. And when I got through I never knew what I was reading, although I had pronounced all the words correctly with the proper southern accent. [Laughter] So, reading.

Now in the early church they made a great deal over it, and I’m sure that one of the reasons was probably because they didn’t have Bibles such as we. It was not easy for a person to have the Scriptures. Probably to buy even a scroll of one of the books cost a considerable amount of money. Perhaps they were not even available. We don’t know a great deal about the availability of the parchments or the papyri copies of the books of the New Testament, so probably the reading of the word was more important because individuals did not have the opportunity to read it as we do. But we have reference to this in the word of God, this reading. For example, I’m going to read from Revelation chapter 1 verse 3, beginning of this great apocalypse John says, “Blessed is he that

readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.” So he speaks of the fact that there is a reader, a singular, and others who listen. Now I’m not saying there was a lector in the assemblies of the saints, but a person did read and others listened. And he says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

Now we have other references to reading in the New Testament. I’m going to read a few of them just to show you that the New Testament does have a great deal of stress upon this reading of the word of God. Acts chapter 13, verse 15, “And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” It was the custom in the synagogue to read both from the law and the prophets. And evidently, that practice carried over into the Christian church. In Acts chapter 15 and verse 21, “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day,” again a reference to the practice among the Jews. 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 27, the apostle has another word to say about reading, he states, “I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.” So there was a time in the local church at which they gave attendance to the reading of the word of God, and it was an important time for the local church.

So he tells Timothy, and evidently Timothy did a great deal of the reading, “Give attendance to reading.” In other words, pay attention to it, devote yourself to it. Ultimately in the final analysis we are not interested in the preacher’s opinions. We are interested in the word of God. And of course, I would hope that every one of you when you listen to me that you listen in order to discern in what I say the word of God. Not everything that I say is the word of God. That’s no new information for you, I’m sure. [Laughter] But I want to remind you of it because there are a lot of people who listen to certain preachers and tend sometimes to equate the things that that particular preacher says with the word of God. I do not preach the word of God in its infallible, inerrant

sense. I hope that what I say is in harmony with the truths of the word of God. And that the things that I say will ultimately at the judgment seat of Jesus Christ be proven to be generally accurate with the intention of the writers of Scripture. But in the final analysis we are interested in the word of God, not in the opinions of the preacher. So you must learn to listen with perception and with discernment.

“Give attention to the reading of the word of God.” It would be much better for you if you would really do it. If you read the word of God for an hour, then hear me preach on Sunday morning for an hour, it would be better for you if you really did that. Of course, I hope you’ll do both. I hope you’ll hear the word of God for God has given us teachers to be taught the Scriptures and I hope you will read the word. But Timothy is exhorted to, “Give attention to the reading,” in other words, for the saints, Timothy it is important that the Bible be read.

Now then says, “Give attention to exhortation.” Now “exhortation” doesn’t mean simply to tell the saints where they’re wrong. Rebuke is part of exhortation, but the word exhortation in the Bible refers to comfort, so it has to do with words of comfort. It refers to rebuke, so it has to do with words of rebuke. It also means encouragement, and therefore it has to do with words of encouragement. And you must not think for one moment that when he says, “Give attention to exhortation,” that that does not mean that we are to have no doctrine. All of this passage indicates otherwise. We’ll have a couple of references here to doctrine. The very next word is a reference to it. But to show you how filled with doctrine exhortation is I’m going to ask you to turn with me to the Epistle of the Hebrews chapter 13, Hebrews chapter 13.

Now probably all of you in this audience know that the Epistle of the Hebrews is not an easy book. The Epistle of the Hebrews is probably one of the most difficult books in the New Testament. I know, I guess I have taught the Epistle of the Hebrews over forty times, between forty and fifty times. I have taught it forty times at Dallas Theological

Seminary from the Greek text, and other times as well. It’s not an easy book. At the end of the book the writer of this book states.

Incidentally there came to my hand about six months ago a paper. Oh ladies I know you’re going to be mad at me for saying this. There came to my hand a paper written by a woman from California. That explains it. It’s not that she’s a woman. She’s from California. In which, she makes a strong plea for Priscilla as being the author of Epistle of the Hebrews.

Now, this was an old theory, Harnack, the German scholar is the man who first suggested that Priscilla wrote the Epistle of the Hebrews, but you just know that this paper was going to be written in the light of the feminism of today because there are no feminine authors in the word of God, and so the only possibility, evidently, according to this young lady is Priscilla. So she has written a scholarly paper. I have a copy of it. She sent it to Dallas Seminary. It was referred to me as Professor of New Testament.

She delivered this in a theological seminary on the coast in California and after she delivered it there, they evidently didn't say anything about it. They must have cheered it, I guess, because she wrote us and told us that undoubtedly we’d like for all of our students to read this paper. And I have no objection to having our students read the paper. It would just be embarrassing because the young lady who wrote this paper states that Priscilla wrote and has a lengthy argument for why Priscilla wrote it. We have no writing, of course, of Priscilla at all. The only thing we know about Priscilla was that her husband was Aquila, [Laughter] and further that they had some contact with Apollos who was an Alexandrian and the language of the Book of Hebrews is largely Alexandrian.

But she had completely overlooked, as evidently all of the theological students in this well known Clermont School of Theology of the University of Southern California had overlooked the fact that in the 32nd verse of the 11th chapter of the Epistle of the Hebrews, the writer of the epistle says, “What shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon.” Now in the Greek text the word “me” is either masculine or feminine,

but in the Greek language when a participle agrees with a pronoun, participles have gender, masculine, feminine, and neuter. And the participle that agrees with the “me” is masculine and not feminine. So you see we don't know who wrote the Epistle of the Hebrews, but we know this. I’m sorry ladies. We know this, it was not a lady. Now you wouldn't have to know this scholarly information to know that. This young lady had completely overlooked the grammar. She evidently had never read the Epistle of the Hebrews in the Greek text, but anyway we would have known that it was not written by a woman because it says, “I beseech you brethren bare with me the word of exhortation for I have written a letter unto you in few words.” And no woman would ever write a letter in a few words. [Laughter]

Now one of my students a long time ago didn't like my argumentation there. He came up with a smile on his face and said, “No Dr. Johnson I disagree with you. I think that is exactly what a woman would do. She’d write a long letter and call it few words.” Maybe his argument is better than mine.

The point I want you to notice, however, after that lengthy introduction is in verse 22, the apostle says, “And I beseech you, brethren, bare with the word of exhortation.” Now, he calls the entire Epistle of the Hebrews a word of exhortation. Now if you read through the Epistle of the Hebrews you will find that this epistle is an epistle in which about 10 chapters are devoted to doctrine and about 3 chapters are devoted to exhortation regarding the Christian life. So when the apostle writes to young Timothy and says, “Give attendance to reading,” “Give attendance to exhortation,” he’s not saying in any way that this exhortation should not be biblical doctrine. And to confirm it he goes on to say in the very next word, “Give attendance to doctrine.” In other words, in the teaching that Timothy is to do there is to be Christian instruction. That is important in young Timothy’s ministry. Here it is again, doctrine.

Not so long ago we had an examination at Dallas Seminary of one of our men who had completed all of his courses at the Dallas Seminary. I was amazed. I was

dumbfounded. And lest you think that the cause of it all is begin attributed to the other faculty members, this man had actually studied the Epistle to the Romans under me from the Greek text. But I was amazed. His confusion over biblical doctrine was abysmal. Not only that, not only was he confused, but when he was asked questions, he would take a long trek and in the course of answering the questions and the long trek, he would affirm one thing at the beginning and then affirm another thing at the end, which two things were diametrically opposed to one another. I was appalled. I must say I could hardly utter a word afterwards. I was so amazed that a man could take all four years of our courses at the seminary and be so abysmally ignorant, so confused, with reference to biblical doctrine. And answer, his answers were as slippery as boiled okra. [Laughter] That comes from last week. [Laughter]

Timothy, “Give attention to reading,” “Give attention to exhortation,” “Give attention to teaching,” teaching. Now each of you in this audience should have some understanding of the great sections of theological doctrine. You should know something about theology proper. You should know something about anthropology. You should know something about soteriology. You should know something about the other great divisions of Christian truth. Timothy, teach them.

Now, then he moves on to discuss the spiritual gift that Timothy has been given. “Neglect not the gift that is in thee.” It would appear from the emphasis of this chapter that Timothy’s gift was the gift of teaching. I would presume that what Paul tells Timothy most harmonizes with the fact that he is the possessor of the gift of teaching, possibly pastor/teacher. But teaching was part of his gift from God. Paul says, “Do not neglect the gift which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

Now this is a very interesting thing. I wish that we had a small group that we could study this for about an hour, but let me say a few words about the things that appear in this verse. You’ll notice he says that he has a gift. It is in him. It was given

him through prophesy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Now we don't have time to turn to all of the passages that bare on this, but if you have a pencil and you'd like to put them down and study them for yourself. They are these passages: Acts chapter 16 and verse 2, we've already had reference to that, we read that passage, 1 Timothy chapter 1 verse 18, and 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 6.

Now what you gather as you put together these passages of Scripture that have to do with Timothy's reception of the gift is something like this, Timothy was a young man who grew up in a Christian home, and he lived in the area of Derbe and Lystra. Now the text of the Book of Acts says that he was well reported of by the brethren, so he had evidently been in the meetings of the saints for a number of years, and it had become evident in the meetings of the saints and through Timothy's Christian life that he was not only a Christian man, but he had grown in stature and also it became evidently through his participation in the meetings of the saints, for this was the way the gift was discovered, in the meetings of the saints, through the meetings of the saints, as they met around the Lord's table in free opportunity for gifted men to ministry their gift, Timothy had evidently reached the place where the brethren began to speak about him and say, "The young man has the gift of teaching." It's evident.

Incidentally, that is what the elders are looking for here in Believers Chapel. On Sunday night when the church meets and there is opportunity for gifted men to express themselves in ministry of the word, then the elders are paying a great deal of attention, looking for manifestation of spiritual gift. Evidently, Timothy had manifested spiritual gift. He was well reported of by the brethren and when the Apostle Paul came to Derbe and Lystra they spoke to him about young Timothy. And furthermore when Paul was there some of the men evidently stood up in the meeting and through prophesy, that's the meaning of the text here, through prophesy they expressed what was the mind of God for them as they looked at Timothy. And evidently some of the men got up in the meetings of the saints and said, "God is impressing upon my mind the fact that young Timothy here

is being led into the ministry of the word of God, perhaps with the Apostle Paul.” And so, through prophecies in the assembly, and so you can see again, they had freedom of utterance, so men stood up and with reference to Timothy spoke specifically concerning him.

And then there arrived as a result of the prophecies and as a result of the testimony of the elders of the local church in Lystra and the apostle’s observation of the situation, there came over them the conviction that they should as a group of elders, lay hands upon Timothy in identification with him in the ministry of the word. And that is what happened, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery it was confirmed that God had given Timothy a gift. It was evident, no doubt, to Timothy. It was evident to the saints. They had spoken about it. It was evident to the apostle. And they engaged in the laying on of hands in confirmation and in identification of the will of God. That would have been a very comforting thing to Timothy because not only would he have thought that he had the gift of teaching, but he would know that others thought he had the gift as well.

There are lots of people who think they have the gift of teaching who do not have it. They are the only ones who think that they do have. Now if you’re the only one who thinks that you have the gift of teaching, the chances are you do not have the gift of teaching. It has not been developed yet. But Timothy evidently had convinced the elders, convinced the apostle through his ministry that God had laid his hands upon him and had given him a gift, and the apostle with the elders, identified themselves with him in the laying on of the hands, and thus signified their harmony in Timothy’s exercise of his spiritual gift. So Timothy, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.”

“Meditate upon these things,” that word means “to study,” “to ponder,” “meditate.” What does this mean in the context? Well I think it means to devote yourself, Timothy, to the gift that has been given you. Ponder, meditate upon it. In other words, do everything

that you possibly can to develop the gift that God has given to you. If I am speaking to young men who have gift which God has given, this is an exhortation, and it seems to me, to you to devote all of your powers under God to the sharpening and development of the spiritual gift which God is implanted within you.

Many years ago I was down town speaking in the YMCA to some of the business men. Dr. Walvoord was there that morning, and as we were walking out one of the business men said something to Dr. Walvoord such as, “Dr. Walvoord we are very grateful for Dallas Seminary which turns out young preachers of the word of God.” And he probably used the term, “which makes such great preachers of the word of God.” Dr. Walvoord turned to him and said, “We do not make any preachers. The only thing we do is give tools for the development of the gift which God has implanted within them.” And that is true.

Finally, there are some words concerning Christian practice. Timothy is told in the 16th verse, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine.” Incidentally, these words, it seems to me, are addressed to intellectual sloth, and too often we who ministry the word of God do have intellectual sloth in the study of the word of God, and also it seems to me, it’s addressed to those who have a closed mind. “Take heed to yourself,” this word, incidentally, is stronger than the one, probably a little stronger than the one translated above, “Give attendance.” It means to fix your attention upon. So fix your attention upon yourself, and the doctrine. Isn't it interesting the order here? “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine,” because, of course, the kind of doctrine that we proclaim, if it should come from a person whose life does not measure up at all to the doctrine that he proclaims, it will not have its force.

Now any teacher knows that he cannot live up to perfectly all that he says, for he is proclaiming to word of God. But there must be a kind of harmony or some kind of consonance between what he says and what he lives in his own life. And so Timothy,

“Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.” He’s telling him to concentrate. Fix his attention upon his own spiritual life. It’s not all teaching. It’s not all intellectual activity. There must be the application of the truth.

Gladstone was one of Britain’s greatest Prime Ministers. Men sometimes ask him what the secret of his success was. He said, “Concentration.” Disraeli was his mortal enemy. They asked Disraeli what was his secret of success. He said, “Persistency of purpose.” There was one more famous Prime Minister than either of these two, Daniel. And the thing that was characteristic of him was that he purposed in his heart. “Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine.” Any athlete knows today that if you cannot concentrate, you cannot play big time athletics. I used to play a little golf. Concentration, even concentration didn't help you sometimes, but if you couldn't concentrate, you couldn't play golf. To try to make a three foot putt when the match hung upon it, that’s a very difficult thing to do, and if you don't concentrate, if you start thinking, “Now what’s going to happen if I miss this? What’s my father going to say? What’s my friend going to say? How am I going to feel?” You won't even hit the cup. Concentration, “Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine.” Christian life is a serious thing. “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them.”

Now we have one final clause or two here which can be understood in two different ways, “For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.” Now does the Apostle Paul, after all his teaching on grace, finally come to tell us that the way we get saved is by doing these things? No, surely not that. So we’ll dispense with that without even considering it. It contradicts everything the apostle says elsewhere. We’re never saved by what we do. But it’s possible to understand this as present salvation from the power of sin. In doing these things, “Taking heed to yourself and to the doctrine and continuing in them,” in doing these things you shall save yourself and them that hear you from the power of sin in your life, in other words, emphasis on the human side of our salvation. The means of perseverance would be referred to. After all

doesn't Paul say in Philippians, “Work out,” he’s speaking to believers, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling?” Doesn't he say that? So why could not this mean, in doing this you shall save yourself. Work out your own salvation, for its God who works in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Some have understood this as present salvation from the power of sin. But, how does that fit those last words, “Save thyself and them that hear thee?” That does not seem to fit that at all. So I’m inclined then to take the other interpretation. What he’s talking about is deliverance from the false teachers. In other words, if you will devote yourself to considering your own Christian life and to the doctrine of the word of God and if you continue in the Christian life and in Christian truth, you will both save yourself, deliver yourself from the teachers who are attempting to lead you astray and furthermore you will also deliver those who are listening to you as you teach the word of God. So the word then to save here has the meaning of to preserve or to deliver the meaning that we gave it when we considered that difficult verse, verse 10, last time, “The living God who is the Savior,” the deliver, “of all men, specially of those that believe,” the elect.

Well this is a great message to a young man. Perhaps you could sum it up by simply saying that Timothy if you are to make progress in your gift of teaching and in the ministry of it, you must be careful in the cultivation of your Christian experience to lay proper stress on your action, your life, and proper stress on your teaching, your doctrine. May God help us to learn from these words to young Timothy. Let’s close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] We’re thankful to Thee, Lord, for the teaching of Thy word, and we pray that these words addressed to young Timothy may have their impact upon us...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]