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1 Timothy 4:6-16 Fellowship Bible Church; Woodbridge, NJ

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Introduction

Chapter 4 concludes with some words of personal exhortation to Timothy from Paul. Timothy was in the position of overseeing the Ephesus church. This church had some problems that Paul had begun to deal with when he was there sometime after his release from his Acts-28-imprisonment. Paul had moved on to Macedonia, and this letter was written to give Timothy guidance in the work at Ephesus.

Chapter 3 gave us the qualifications of appointed church leaders. Those qualifications were heavy on character and testimony. They didn't stress aptitude or tasks much beyond teaching ability. Here in the latter part of Chapter 4 we see some of the actual tasks of the overseer. You might say Chapter 3 concentrated on *who the overseer is*, and here Chapter 4 concentrates on *what the overseer does*.

First he is told to remain faithful to the teaching of sound doctrine, which was summed up in the six-point confession of 3:16. False teachers would bring various distractions - Gnosticism seems to be in view here (4:3) - but sound teaching would properly ground and nourish both Timothy and his hearers. Furthermore, he is encouraged to be well-trained in godly living, setting an example for others. External religious conformity is not the ideal; godliness is. While other specific examples of what he is to do are given, they generally all fall into one of these two categories: his *teaching* and his *conduct*. These are what the faithful church overseer concentrates on.

1. Verses 6-11 - Good doctrine produces godliness, not religiosity.

- v.6 - ***these things...*** a general reference to sound biblical doctrine, typified by the points of the confession in 3:16. If Timothy, in his own study and teaching, stuck with the basics, the fundamentals, and avoided trendy ideas such as those put forth by gnostics (4:3), he would be a ***good minister*** and remain himself well ***nourished*** spiritually.

- v.7 - False teaching, such as what gnostics taught, is denigrated here as ***profane and old wives' fables***. Instead, good overseers concentrate on that which produces true ***godliness*** in character and deed. Arbitrary religiosity never can do that. Learning and obeying scripture can.

- vv.8-9 - ***bodily exercise...*** physical training. It is in and of itself good and has some use. But ***godliness*** is altogether more worthy and useful, producing both present and future benefit.

- vv.10-11 - Paul suffered ***reproach*** because he stuck with exactly what he is calling Timothy to.

2. Verses 12-16 - The ministry: be an example, study and teach.

- v.12 - The fact that Timothy was younger than many in the church meant nothing in terms of authority or godliness. He was called, he was gifted, he had been appointed. ***Word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, purity***. These are the areas where overseers must concentrate on living godly and setting an ***example*** for others.

- v.13 - This is an excellent summation of the teaching aspect of Timothy's job. Reading the scripture, ***exhortation*** concerns the encouragement of others to learn and obey, and ***doctrine*** speaks of understanding and practically applying what is learned. Overseers must concentrate on this in their own lives and give it out to their flocks.

- v.14 - Timothy was given a **gift** and needed to put it to full use.

- v.15 - **give yourself entirely to them...** There was no room for Timothy to half-heartedly pursue his work. All ministry must be zealously pursued, especially the pastorate.

- v.16 - **yourself and the doctrine...** That is, his conduct/growth/purity/personal walk with the Lord, and his ministry of study and teaching. These are the priority tasks of the shepherd. **...save both yourself and those who hear you...** While it is entirely God's work to supernaturally regenerate a lost sinner, He does use His servants to spread the life-saving word. If Timothy was faithful in his continuance of his ministry, God would save souls and preserve believers in walking with Him, including even Timothy himself. The good example of godly conduct and the spiritual nourishment of faithfully teaching sound doctrine is used by the Lord to bring about salvation, growth, and preservation of His children.