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2 Timothy 4: Part 1

Steve Walvatne

Thirty years of faithful service are concluding. The apostle Paul will conquer no more cities with the gospel, he'll visit no more local assemblies, and he'll write no more epistles. These are the last of his final words. The mood is much different from that in his letter to the Philippians, an epistle written during his first Roman imprisonment. There he said, "If I be offered" (or, "poured out," 2:17), but now, "I am already being poured out" (v.6, JND). In Phil. 1:23 he said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ", but here he says simply, "The time of my departure is at hand" (v.6). He is no longer pressing "toward the mark" (Php. 3:14), but writes, "I have finished [the] course" (v.7). He is passing the baton of responsibility to Timothy (and future generations) and Timothy must step up.

What F.B. Meyer penned of Joshua could have been written of Timothy. He wrote that Joshua "was conscious of his utter inadequacy to fulfill the great commission that was thrust upon him...he had never dreamt of so high an honor, so vast a responsibility. He had been content to be Moses' minister, satisfied to wait below while his master passed into the cloud to hold fellowship with God..." (*Joshua and the Land of Promise*). Joshua and Timothy knew that a great gulf can exist between training and actual performance and so they stepped forward in "fear and trembling." Unlike those who are brash and impulsive, neither wanted to embrace the mantle of responsibility prematurely.

Timothy knew he could never be Paul, but the Lord wasn't looking for that. God's workmen are unique, endowed with their own abilities and personalities. They fit the moment and then pass on. The key is faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2), for the Lord uses faithful men – ones not enamored with position or power – but whose sole aim it is to obey and honor God's Word. Paul testified of Timothy, "He worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do"

(1 Cor. 16:10). They weren't identical, but both walked lockstep with God, and that's what counted most.

Paul charges Timothy "before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom..." (JND). He leaves no doubt as to the gravity of the matter, making his pronouncement before God, even Christ Jesus, whose RULE, RETURN, and REIGN are imminent. Paul is leaving soon, but Christ is coming soon, and Timothy must move in conscious recognition of the Omnipotent One. Paul's words are sweeping, referring to judgments that occur hundreds of years apart, but they're also emphatic. Timothy's service is being evaluated by the Judge who will sit supreme, officiating before the living and dead. Heaven's verdict of that service will be manifested at the Lord's "appearing" (*epiphaneia*) or literal return to earth, and then onwards, into the thousand year reign of Christ.

We'll consider this chapter under the following headings: (1) **Paul's Charge:** vv.2-5; (2) **Paul's Change:** vv.6-8; and (3) **Paul's Close:** vv.9-22.

Paul's Charge

Here we find instruction that is applicable to all Christian LABORERS in last days. Interwoven with it, are comments regarding the general attitude of LISTENERS. We'll look at both, but first notice:

THE LABORERS' MANDATE: "**Preach** the Word". God's servants are to be like the old-time town criers, who publicly proclaimed the edicts of a king. They're to "herald" (*kerusso*) God's Word aloud. That's their divine mandate for last days. Few doubt that we're in those days, yet preaching in certain places has fallen out of vogue. It's been replaced with PowerPoint presentations and puppet shows, with campfire conversations and music concerts. Movies and plays are filling the

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hours that once were reserved for preaching, yet none of these methods come close to the heavenly mandate. Nothing is more owned of God than the plain, pointed, and public preaching of His Word. That is what the Holy Spirit delights to use in convicting men of sin and pointing them to Christ. The natural man loves entertainment; he loves a forum in which he can participate and add something to the mix. But preaching closes men's mouths, leaving them speechless. It's a unique form of expression; not lecturing or performing or reading, but body and soul uniting to press home an important aspect of God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. "Preaching," said Lloyd-Jones, "is theology coming through a man who is on fire" (*Preaching and Preachers*). This is the laborers' mandate for last days and it cannot be improved upon.

THE LABORERS' MESSAGE: "Preach *the Word*." Scripture is the laborers' source-book. Nothing else. If a laborer doesn't stick by that, then he's disobedient. When Jonah entered Nineveh, he was to "preach unto it the preaching *I bid thee*" (Jonah 3:23). Jeremiah was told to gird up his loins "and speak unto [Judah] *all that I commanded thee*" (1:17). Ezekiel was sent to the house of Israel with instructions to "speak with *My words* unto them" (3:4). And Haggai spoke "in the *Lord's message* unto the people" that had returned to Jerusalem (1:13). None of these servants were at liberty to say what they pleased. Yet today, countless preachers in Christendom set God's Word aside and focus on things as mundane as politics and sports. We that gather to the Lord's Name alone must guard against preaching that veers from God's inspired Word. Personal illustrations or stories, for example, can emphasize a message and be helpful; but too many, or ones too long, only overshadow the message and detract from God's Word.

THE LABORERS' MANNER: "*Be instant, in season, out of season.*" Laborers are to be at their post, ready for the Lord's bidding. "Be instant" (*ephistemi*) signifies an urgency to preach truth, both "in season" when it's "opportune" (*eukairos*) and "out of season" when it's "inopportune" (*akiros*). Writes Kelly, "The structure of each verb implies prompt action" (*The Bible Treasury*: 2 Timothy, vol.16). Nothing foolish or ill-mannered is envisaged here – that's always out of place. Instead, the call is for dogged persistence in the face of man's fickle notions. As James Baker writes: "The apostle himself had preached when the occasions were easy, but also when they were difficult. He had shown that there was no 'closed season' for preaching and had taken every opportunity which was open to him" (*What the Bible Teaches*: 2 Timothy).

THE LABORERS' METHOD: "*Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*" Preaching is weighty work. It reproves, rebukes, and exhorts, with *proper temper* and by *plain teaching*. There's nothing

frivolous here. "Reprove" means "convict". It leads to sin-consciousness. "Rebuke" cuts closer and "censors" or "admonishes". Sin cannot be coddled or flippantly dismissed, for unless it is judged in the light of God's holiness, there will never be recovery. Lenski translates "rebuke" as "chide", something akin to a reprimand. The Lord did this to Peter in Mk. 8:33. Once sin has been exposed and judged, the way is clear for "exhortation" or "encouragement". But it's not aimless encouragement. Through "doctrine" or the "teaching" of Scriptural precepts and principles, the wayward are restored to a righteous path and given a solid foundation upon which to walk. This is why "aptness to teach" is so vital in leaders (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24). Complementing all of this work is a "longsuffering" spirit, for sinners and backsliders alike, are not easily turned.

THE LABORERS' MINDSET: "*But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*" Here we have four basic instructions. (1) Laborers are to "watch" or "be sober" in all things. The word denotes steadiness or stability. Laborers must be sober in judgment or their preaching will suffer. "No disciple can render maximum service while his spiritual senses are blurred by earthly compromise" (Dwight Edwards: *Call to Completion*). They must "stand clear of that which might excite or stupefy" (Kelly), unlike the masses that fall victim to fables. (2) Laborers are to "endure" or "suffer" hardships just as their Master (1 Pet. 2:23). These are especially burdensome when they come from professing Christians. Perhaps that's why Paul repeats the injunction three times in 2 Timothy (see also, 1:8; 2:3). (3) Laborers are to maintain a gospel spirit. Timothy's chief gift was apparently in pastoral work, yet he still must "do" the work of an evangelist. Responsibilities and difficulties *within* an assembly can so encumber brethren that they lose their passion for sinners *without*. (4) And finally, laborers are to "make full proof of [their] ministry." Or better, "*Fulfill thy ministry*" (RV) or "*Fill up the full measure of thy ministry*" (JND). Any number of things might hinder this. To fully discharge their duty, laborers may need to forego things that some deem legitimate and endure things that some think unbearable. His eye must rest on Christ (Phil. 1:21), that like his Lord he'll be able to say at journey's end, "*I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do*" (Jn. 17:4).

Before we conclude this first part of chapter 4, notice some things Paul writes about LISTENERS in last days. And remember, these are professing Christians, not irreligious worldlings. Five things are noted:

1. They'll Refuse Sound Teaching. "*They will not endure sound doctrine.*" Many last day listeners will emulate the deplorable attitude Israel exhibited during the time of the Judges, when "*every man did that*

which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg. 17:16; 21:25). A widespread intolerance will overshadow the "wholesome teaching" of God's Word. What previous generations preached and practiced, this generation will refuse. And we're seeing it now. Many grimace when practical truth is expounded. The "old paths" – "proven paths" – are being discarded as narrow and obsolete, while a host of new and mostly unscriptural things are being promoted and pursued. Why is this happening? Reverence for God's Word has waned.

2. They'll Revere Smooth Teachers. *"But after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers."* Last day listeners will wield great influence on who fills the platform. They'll hand-pick preachers, not by the high standard of Scripture, but according to their "own lusts" or desires. Sadly, many laborers will be compromised and preach what people want to hear; they'll join the band of popular preachers – be among the "heap" – but at great spiritual loss. Fifty-seven years ago, an article from *The Christian Worker* appeared in *Truth and Tidings* and what the writer wrote then is even more applicable now. He wrote:

...Where truth is most urgently needed it is often most determinedly resisted. Some preachers seem to understand this perfectly. They carefully observe how the wind of popular opinion is blowing, and they regulate their ministry accordingly. They seem to go upon the principle that nobody must be offended; which is just another way of saying that no conscience must be reached! To call attention to certain evils would not be "acceptable", for the saints seemingly love to have it so...He may flatter himself that he is earning golden opinions of his ability as a preacher. But he only earns the thanks of those who are "at ease in Zion", and who are heartily glad that he has not disturbed their sleep of carnal security. (March 1953)

3 They'll Require Steady Tickling. *"Having itching ears."* Itches are pesky things; the more they're scratched, the more they itch. This "itching ears" is a chronic and contagious spiritual malady that seeks gratification through a steady dose of soft sermons. Those stricken with the disease abhor any preaching that impresses man's sin and future judgment, or his carnality and eternal loss. They desire new things, pleasant things, humorous things – things that tickle the ear rather than prick the conscience. While these assuage the symptoms, they never cure the cause.

4. They'll Reject Spoken Truth. *"And they shall turn away their ears from the truth."* Truth refused is truth rejected. "Turning away" depicts a rabid hostility toward the message and the messenger. The multitudes surrounding Stephen in Acts 7 illustrate this. When they heard his words, they *"cried with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord"* (v.57). They rebelled against spoken truth and

then went after him. The Savior endured the same. Here, however, it's professing Christians that stoop to this awful low! Faithful laborers in last days may not be physically martyred (though some will), but may be called to endure a kind of spiritual martyrdom; one that entails the destruction of their character through slander and falsehood, that could even result in their excommunication from the gathering. But faithful laborer! Never forget that God has a crown perfectly suited to martyrs and it will more than compensate for the deepest oppression experienced here (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

5. They'll Relish Senseless Tales. *"And shall be turned unto fables."* Children are infatuated by these, underscoring the stunted condition of last day listeners. Even now, "fiction" or "myths" thrive in Christendom. "Shall be turned" means "twisted", signifying minds so warped, they're unable to distinguish between truth and untruth. James Baker says "shall be turned" is passive, "indicating that they are now acted upon by an outside force; thus, those who themselves turned their ears from the truth fall under the influence of the myths and fables propounded by evil teachers". Israel is a prime example: They drifted from God to false gods and were thus taken captive by idolatrous nations. Contrariwise, the Thessalonian saints *"turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God"* (1 Thess. 1:9).

Someone asked an old Scottish saint, "Would you rather live or die?" He replied, "It does not much matter, for if I live, He will be with me, but if I die, I shall be with Him."

SAINTS AND SPORTS

Robert Surgenor

"And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zech. 8:5). This is normal.

"Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play" (1 Cor. 10:7). This is abnormal!

It is interesting to note that the words "**Playing**" and "**Play**" are the same as the word "**sport**." Little children love to sport, that is, to play little games of skill. Wise parents realize this inborn trait and guide the little ones in their endeavors. Fathers are to be fathers to their little ones and mothers are to be mothers and one could hardly call it unscriptural for a father and mother to play with their children in the privacy of their yard.

However, there is another truth to consider. *"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put*

away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). Of course the world knows nothing of this, for sports captivates the human race on its mad rush down to eternal perdition. I have been told that the sports section of the newspapers commands the greatest attention of man. The world is “sports mad”.

History of Sports

It is interesting to know the origin of competitive sports, for to be forewarned is to be forearmed. History tells us that sports commenced around 4000 B.C. Many games were religious rituals to prepare the participants for the next life, to gain victory over foes seen and unseen, to influence the forces of nature and to promote fertility among their crops and cattle. It was believed that sport was divine, gift of the gods. In Egypt, sporting pictures were on the walls of Egyptian temples. The Pharaohs and nobles were diligent participants in sports. This is one of the “*pleasures of sin*” that Moses refused (Heb. 11:25).

The first Olympic games commenced in 776 B.C., the foot-race being the sole event. Ancients believed that the god Zeus was the creator of the games. The Olympics centered around the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, and the games were played in his honor. In 708 B.C. the Pentathlon was introduced which involved five events: foot-racing; leaping, spear throwing, discus hurling, and wrestling. In 688 B.C. boxing was introduced, and in 680 B.C. chariot racing.

At the commencement of each Olympic event there was a ritual to the god Zeus, to worship him and to gain his aid. Upon a huge altar, piled with wood, was laid all manner of fruit, vegetables and slain animals. Near the altar stood a heathen priest holding an unlighted torch in one hand and a polished metal bowl in the other hand. Through capturing the rays of the sun in the metal bowl the torch was lighted.

Two-hundred yards away stood a designated number of youths. At a given signal the youths raced towards the priest and the first one to arrive took the lighted torch from his hand, then raced to the altar and ignited the fagots, thus offering a sacrifice to Zeus their god. Even today, at the opening ceremony of the Olympics, the flaming torch is used, a solemn reminder that the Olympics had idolatry for its origin!

Connected with sports is the word “*gymnast*”. Its origin is interesting. During one of the Olympic games a runner lost his loin cloth, but continued to run naked. He won, and from that day all the running events were conducted in the nude. Thus the word “*gymnast*” (*gymnos*) means “*naked*”. Victors were crowned with a garland of twigs from a wild olive tree, the forerunner of all our modern medals.

The definition of the word “*sport*” is enlightening. The word is an abbreviation of “*disport*” which means “*a diversion and an amusement*”. Rooted in Latin, it literally means “*carry away*”, (*desporto*). Thus, to quote a historian – “people are carried away from the cares, anxieties and frustrations of life to a world of relaxation, excitement and thrill”.

It is admitted by the ungodly that the object of sports is to compete with and excel, if not, dominate others. Sports taught various tribes how to defend themselves, to avoid defeat, subdue opponents, thus the invention of archery, judo, karate, etc. In the Greek mind, sport ruled supreme. Olympics dominated Greek life. Athletics and gymnastics were the national pursuit. It was believed that contests of strength molded the mind, strengthened the body, helped prepare for war, helped renew the spirit of the departed, and helped to win the aid of the gods.

During the history of mankind, there was a short “death blow” to sports when Christian Emperor Theodosius I termed sports as “pagan idolatry”. As a result of his decree, all sports were banned in A.D. 393. However, 1,502 years later the games were revived.

The most violent of all sports today is football. The game evolved from the Roman sport of *harpastum*. The Romans used it as part of their military training to toughen up the legendary Roman legions. The Roman conquest brought their game to Britain, where the game came to be called “*fote-ball*”.

In 1314 A.D. King Edward banned the game stating that it was “nothing but beastly fury and extreme violence, wherefore it is to be put in perpetual silence”. The game was imported to the USA and Harvard and Yale chose Rugby as the preferred version. From this, American football evolved. Around 1920 professional football was born. Big money was involved as well as significant injuries. In 1987, 4 were killed and 329,987 were injured in this game, according to the National Collegiate Association. According to the National Safety Council there are 20 million injuries yearly, of which 6 million are long lasting, bringing scars, paralysis or death. About 32 college and high school students become paraplegics each year as a result of football injuries. Ninety-five percent have a chance of serious injury.

A 1988 report of 112 high school programs reports 65,634 injuries. The secret in winning the game is a fire of hate burning within towards the opponents. Coaches play on this, exhorting their players to “go out and break their neck.” A Harvard psychiatrist was quoted as saying, “The coach must have his men feeling that they cannot only kill, but that they should kill”. In a

1986 survey of 350 colleges it was discovered that among university athletes there was more rape, assault, break-ins and drug traffic than any other group. Football is the game of violence that breeds violence.

In the light of these documented reports and the history of sports, can we not employ the words of Paul? *"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"* (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

The whole concept of sports runs contrary to Christian doctrine. Consider these simple facts.

(1) Sports encourages aggressiveness.

Compare this with 1 Cor. 13:4-5.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked."

(2) Sports promotes pride and the spirit of contest.

Compare this with Phil. 2:3-5.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

(3) Sports is selfish at the expense of others.

You want the team to win and the opponent to lose. Exaltation of self at the expense of the putting down of others. Compare this with Luke 14:11, and Matt. 11:29.

"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

(4) Sports captivates the minds of the ungodly.

It is totally of the world, having its foundation in heathen idolatry. Compare this with Col. 3:1-3, and 1 John 2:15-17.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the

world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

For saints to abuse the time God has allotted them, to watch or participate in sportive games runs in direct opposition to the will of God and brings displeasure to His heart. Some give the excuse that if two teams play against each other and all present are Christians that makes it legal. In view of that perverted thought consider 1 Corinthians 10:7. *"Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play"*. Were they all not of Israel? No mixed company is mentioned, yet their activity brought the judgment of God upon them. Instead of wasting your money to indulge in sports, use that money for the kingdom of God. Instead of endangering the temple of the Holy Spirit (your body), care for it. Instead of wasting your time playing or viewing sporting events use your precious time for spiritual things, and then when you stand before the judgment seat of Christ you will be able to say, "Lord, I have presented my body a living sacrifice to Thee during my sojourn on earth." Then maybe you will hear Him reply, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant".

The words of Peter come to mind. *"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God"* (1 Pet. 4:1-2). In other words, in view of all that the Lord endured on our behalf, is it too much for Him to ask us to put our fleshly nature to death and not live to its unholy desires, but rather live to God's holy and divine will? Is that asking too much? The worldling lives for self. The saint lives for the Savior. Let me ask you, where do your interests lie? How do you spend your valuable time?

A preference reveals a principle. Let a believer be brought to a testing point, where the claims of God and the claims of the flesh are in conflict, and his choice will determine the depth of his principle.

THE BLESSING OF A DYING PRINCE

Sidney J. Saword

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph" (Heb. 11:21).

This unique reference, in the "Honors List of Faith's Heroes," to the checkered career of Jacob, would be an

incentive to examine the original passage more carefully. In Genesis 48 we read that Joseph brought his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim near to the deathbed of Israel, progenitor of the nation that bears that name. He arranged them so that Manasseh the firstborn should be nearest the right hand of the dying Patriarch. To the surprise and displeasure of Joseph, his father deliberately crossed his arms, resting his right hand upon the head of the younger son Ephraim and conferring upon him the coveted birthright blessing, which by nature belonged to Manasseh. Thus we see nature overruled by faith, and law giving way to grace.

The crossed hands of the dying prince (Israel means "a Prince with God") placed on the heads of those two boys, would remind us of that which transpired many centuries later. On Calvary we see the dying PRINCE OF PRINCES (Dan. 8:25), not with crossed hands, but with hands nailed to a cross, and denied the comfort of a bed and pillow for that agonized, pain-racked body, bringing the blessing of Abraham upon us Gentiles, through being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13-14).

Thus in the Cross, prefigured by those crossed arms, we see the same principle repeated: Israel, the rightful heir by nature, being set aside and Grace flowing out in blessing upon the younger—the Gentiles; the Law is superseded by Grace. However, Manasseh also came in for a blessing, though not so great as that of Ephraim; for of the former Jacob adds:—"He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his (Ephraim's) seed shall become a multitude of nations . . . and he set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Gen. 48:19-20). In this present dispensation God's grace, in its exceeding riches, has reached out to earth's remotest bound and the Name of Jesus has become a Light to the Gentiles. However, the wondrous virtue of the Cross will one day overtake God's scattered earthly people as a nation, and on redemption ground they will again enjoy the benign smile of the Lord's favor and blessing upon them.

As the years rolled by Ephraim and Manasseh became fathers and eventually two tribes in Israel bore their names. Passing on to Numbers chapter one we see that the wilderness journey commenced with Ephraim having his predicted advantage over Manasseh. He leads with 40,500 warriors to his credit, whereas Manasseh follows with 32,200. After the forty years of wilderness testing, when the tribes are again numbered, we note the solemn fact that Ephraim has lost his acquired advantage. Manasseh now leads with 52,700, leaving Ephraim far behind with 32,500. During the wilderness journey Ephraim has gone down 8,000 in number, whereas Manasseh has gone up 20,500! In that final reference to the tribes in Revelation seven, we notice Manasseh named in verse

6, but Ephraim by name omitted.

*"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition; upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Have we been favored with a good start? Let us go in for a good finish. Manasseh, whose name means "forgetting," got a setback at the start, but he pressed on and won. This reminds us of the Apostle's words in Phil. 3: 13-14:—"This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Paul commenced his career as the "last" and "least" of the apostles, but he kept his eye on the prize, and later could humbly testify: "But by the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; **but I labored more abundantly than they all:** yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:10) . It was a handicap race in which others got a good start of the Apostle, but God's grace worked so effectually in and through him, that he finished well and won a crown (see 2 Tim. 4: 8).*

Romans eleven solemnly reminds us of the responsibility which such a place of privilege brings upon us Gentile believers. Through Grace we have been given the place of favor and advantage, but *"unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."* So in verses 20-21 we read: *"Well; because of unbelief they (Israel) were broken off and thou standeth by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee."* This we understand to mean the Gentiles under Grace, but the principle can be applied in the sense of a visible testimony before the world, the candlestick being removed (Rev. 2:5), and which sadly came to pass in the case of all those fine assembly testimonies which flourished in apostolic days.

These are truly wilderness days of testing for us. Are we losing ground or are we gaining? Are we threatened with extinction or is the place of our tent being enlarged (Isa. 54:2)? This should cause us individual exercise and self-examination, for each one forms a vital part of the assembly with which he or she is linked up. Think of that dying Prince of Life on Calvary, His humiliation and sufferings, pouring out His soul unto death; consider the infinite cost at which He has brought us into the inner circle of the Father's love, and may it constrain us henceforth not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15). Also may our hearts be further stirred by the inspiring example of the Apostle Paul to forget those things which are behind, and press *"toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."*

I Timothy 5:1-3

Larry Steers

There are two epistles written by Paul extensively touching assembly order. 1 Corinthians is a precious statement of New Testament assembly principles valid for our day. Also, Timothy was at Ephesus when he received his first letter from Paul. He was requested by Paul *“to abide still at Ephesus – that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine”* (1 Tim. 1:3). The truths of this first epistle to Timothy were to be ministered to the Saints at Ephesus.

The first two verses of chapter five of 1 Timothy give clear practical teaching on a young brother’s relationship to older and younger brethren, to older and younger sisters, and to widows. How essential such instruction is today when standards of acceptable behavior are non-existent in the world around us. These five groups represent different personalities, occupations and status of life found in the assembly at Ephesus. All would be part of the fellowship (Acts 2:42) and must be seen working together for the blessing and unity of the assembly.

Paul is impressing upon Timothy and saints today a right deportment towards and respect for age and sex differences. As a relatively young brother Timothy must be an example of a Christian gentleman.

“An Elder”

The word for “elder” is found four times in this chapter (versus 1, 2, 17, 19). In verses 17 and 19 the “elder” is a spiritual guide, a shepherd, in the assembly. However the context of verses 1 and 2 would indicate physical age is in view. We will notice that “the elder women” are older sisters. While the older brother may be an overseer a young man must have a right attitude towards all older brethren.

The word “rebuke” is found only here in the New Testament and means a sharp, severe rebuke. It could be rendered in the presence of others, privately or behind a brother’s back. The tense is an aorist subjunctive accompanied by a negative. This is significant because it suggests an action not existent but it should never occur. It is the strongest possible command to prohibit an act from happening. Timothy was not rebuking older men but was to be careful that he never did. It is so essential today that younger brethren must be commendable in their deportment towards older brethren.

Considering that Timothy was at Ephesus with responsibility to minister the truths of this pastoral letter to those in “the fellowship”, he would be working with and teaching older brethren. Some may be intransigent and severely test Timothy’s patience. But

“the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient” (2 Tim.2:24). Again *“thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man”* (Lev. 19:32). As an example of showing respect a young man would not address an old brother using his first name. The writer knew Mr. Albert Joyce but would refrain from using his first name when speaking to him or referring to him in conversation with others.

The word “intreat” has the meaning *“to kindly beseech”*. In these verses the spiritual relationship is illustrated by the natural human relationship. “As a father” indicates how a Godly son would behave towards his natural father. He would be expected to show reverence, tenderness, and respect in a mannerly fashion. In the same way he should honor older brethren. If a young man does not manifest a respectful deportment to his own father and these elderly brethren, he may never be a help in the Lord’s work.

We owe much to the sound ministry and guidance of mature spiritual brethren. Concerning these we read *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”* (Heb.13:7).

“Younger Men”

Timothy would also need to work wisely with younger brethren. The word “younger” is a comparative expression meaning new or youthful and is found four times in this chapter (versus 1, 2, 11, 14). “As brethren” implies that younger men are not to be looked down on as inferior. They should not be publicly embarrassed in the Assembly Bible Reading. An example here is Paul’s relationship with Timothy. He is referred to as “my own son” (1 Tim. 1:12), “son Timothy” (1 Tim.1:18), and affectionately “O Timothy” (1Tim.6:20).

When our esteemed aged brother Mr. Fred Watson was no longer able to occupy the Assembly platform he was a great help in Bible Readings in the city of Toronto. One night a young brother passed on a few thoughts he had enjoyed from the passage under consideration. His comments were ignored. Brother Watson slowly put his hand into his suit coat pocket and took out a notebook and a pen. The honored servant asked the young brother to repeat what he had said. While writing the young man’s repeated thoughts Mr. Watson commented that his memory was failing and he wanted to remember when he arrived home what the young man had said. What a lesson for all present that night.

Young brethren need a word of counsel kindly imparted, help when the going is rough, and a compassionate hand on the shoulder with a word of

encouragement. How commendable when older brethren take younger men under their wing, befriend them and impart words of spiritual weight.

“Elder Women”

The word “elder” is the same word found in verse 1. Eternity alone will reveal the contribution that Godly older sisters have made to an Assembly. Younger believers do well to treat them with the respect, consideration, and the kindness they deserve. These sisters are described in Titus 2:3.

1. *“Behavior”* This implies reverence in demeanor, dress, conduct, and conversation. *“As becometh holiness”* indicates what is sacred. They carry with them an atmosphere of the fear of God. These sisters are an example to all the Saints and especially to younger sisters to whom they are “teachers of good things”.

2. *“Not false accusers.”* They are not given to fault finding, criticism, or gossip”.

3. *“Not given to much wine.”* In Eph. 5:18 “drunk” is an inceptive verb (Vine’s Dictionary Page 343) and emphasizes the commencement of an act, the first drink. The same form of a verb is found in Mark 8:15 “she arose and ministered unto them”. There was a moment when she commenced to minister. Paul could not write “not given to any wine” as wine was allowed for medicinal purposes (1Tim.5:23) and also for the Lord’s Supper.

Paul instructs young men to treat these honored older sisters as “mothers”. Once again he is appealing to the natural realm. As a young man would treat his own mother with respect and esteem so he would relate to every older sister with politeness and respect

“Younger Women”

“With all purity” sets a high moral standard for conduct and thought life. There must be no unacceptable familiarity but a safe reserve. He would abstain from the appearance of evil (1Thess.5: 22). With exercise before God he would keep himself pure (1Tim.5: 22). Again *“be thou an example of the believers in purity”* (1Tim.4:1

“Widows”

There are many widows of the Lord’s Servants amongst us (not to exclude other widows). Their husbands labored, bearing the heat and burden of the day. These sisters know what it is to spend weeks at home alone while their husbands were preaching the Gospel and ministering the Word of God to the saints. One does feel at times they are forgotten. Allow me a word of exhortation to conclude this article. When fellowship is being distributed at a conference do you remember the widows of the Lord’s Servants who once ministered at your Conference?

Zeal for God

Andrew Turkington, Venezuela

After the sad episode of the golden calf, God presents Himself to Moses with the name of "Jealous" (Ex. 34:14). *“For thou shalt worship no other god; for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”*. He never accepts any rival in our affections, and He certainly is worthy to have this unique place.

We also, as beloved of God, should be jealous and not accept any other thing that would displace the unique place that God should have in our hearts and lives.

The word "jealous" comes from a root that signifies "to boil", and it refers to the that fervor or ardor that pursues or defends something. A dictionary defines it as "fire in the heart". A mistaken jealousy can exist, of course. The Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2); Saul of Tarsus, so far as zeal was concerned, was a persecutor of the church (Phil. 3:6). The Judaizers had a zeal for those in Galatia, but not for their good (Gal. 4:17). Correct zeal, or jealousy, is that fervor that defends the interests of God, acting in accord with His will and according to His Word. The opposite to this is an insensitive indifference to that which dishonors God.

We would like to note four examples of men that manifested zeal for God, three in the Old Testament, and the example of the perfect Man, the Lord Jesus, in the New Testament.

Phinehas --

Zeal for the Separation of the People of God

Numbers 25 is one of those chapters that we would prefer to have not been written. In the two previous chapters, God put in the mouth of Balaam sublime words with regard to the people of God. One of these high commendations is *“... lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations”*, (Num. 23:9). The secret for enjoying the presence of God among others, and the entire blessing that this represents, was to maintain their separation from the nations around them.

But in chapter 25, the people began to lose their separation. *“And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.”* (Num. 25:1-2). Although Balaam could not bring the curse of God upon the people, he managed to cause the people to incur God's discipline, counseling Balak to *“put a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication”*. (Rev. 2:14) Thus the people lost their separation and had to suffer the consequences.

The people were already suffering God's discipline, and the slaughter had begun, when an Israelite boldly *"brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."* (Num. 25:6). In that moment, Phinehas, *"while he was zealous for my sake among them"* (25:11), acted in judgment, thrusting both transgressors through with his javelin, thus turning aside the wrath of the Lord against the people. God lauded Phinehas because *"he was zealous for my sake"*.

Where are those brethren and sisters nowadays, that will manifest the same zeal for God, to maintain the separation of the people of God from this present evil world? The world has entered into the assembly before our eyes, and do we not feel "fire in our hearts"? Are we becoming accustomed to worldliness? It wasn't acceptable for Phinehas to act for God, and the elder won't be popular who seeks to preserve the people of God separate from the world. However, the praise of such doesn't come from men, but from God, and this is what really matters.

Elijah --

Zeal for the Obedience to the Word of God

When Elijah said to God that he had felt a living zeal for Jehovah, God of Hosts, he didn't merely speak words. He had not remained indifferent to the disobedience of the people to the Word of God. Even more, he prayed fervently that it might not rain, knowing that only by means of this strong discipline on God's part, there would be restoration. Finally came the expected moment, after 3 1/2 years that followed, when Elijah stood alone before God before 850 false prophets and in the presence of the people of Israel on Mt. Carmel. After sending forth this famous challenge, *"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him"*, (1 Kings 18:21). Elijah then proceeded to demonstrate by means of the sacrifice, who was the true God.

Where are those "Elijah's" in our day, that feel a living zeal for the Lord because of the disobedience of the people of God? Has the moment come when we can see the evidences of the disobedience and not feel "fire in our hearts"?

Jehu --

Zeal for the Lordship of Christ

Israel had followed Baal for many years. It is true that Baal can mean "lords", but he wasn't Jehovah the Lord; he was a different lord. They were not recognizing the lordship of Jehovah, and for this reason, God anointed Jehu to exterminate the religion of Baal. Jehu invited Jonadab to come up with him in his chariot and said to him, *"Come with me, and see my*

zeal for the Lord" (2 Kings 10:16). Even though the great slaughter that Jehu made of all the followers of that false lord may seem cruel to us, the divine verdict was: *"thou has done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes .."* (2 Kings 10:30).

We also can say, "Lord, Lord", and not do what He commands us. And if we do not submit ourselves to the lordship of Christ in our lives and in the assembly, we are serving another lord as a result. Can we view the lordship of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ being unrecognized without feeling a "fire in our hearts"?

The Lord Jesus Christ --

Zeal for the House of God

The Lord Jesus Christ was just beginning his public ministry, when He demonstrated his zeal for the house of God (John 2). Perhaps it appears strange to see the Lord armed with a scourge of cords, expelling from the sacred precincts those who had converted the house of His Father into a marketplace. But the disciples remembered that it was written: *"The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up"* (2:17). The Lord couldn't remain indifferent before the lack of reverence in that place where God dwelt in the midst of His people. The situation had come to that extremity that would require an action this drastic on the part of the Lord. In another occasion, the Lord *"would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple"*, (Mk. 11:16). When there is no genuine zeal for the house of God, we are willing to allow many things.

Later Failures in Zeal

"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.." (Gal. 4:18). In the first three cases of zeal for God there were failures, but none in the example of our Lord Jesus.

Though Phinehas executed judgment that day against the Midianite, afterward, when he went with the army to avenge the sons of Israel against the Midianites, he did not complete the judgment. Moses was angry and said, *"Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor,"* (Num. 31:15-16). This is like ourselves, for we can act with zeal in one occasion, and afterward, slacken in a later situation.

Even though Elijah felt a living zeal for the Lord and confronted those hundreds of men, before another day, he was fleeing before the threat of one woman. In addition, he committed the error of thinking that he the only one, when God had secured for Himself 7,000 in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal. We also should recognize that we are weak men and we are only able to firmly stand before the Lord in the strength that He gives. And we shouldn't forget that

God has a remnant that remains faithful to His Word; if we have zeal for the Lord, we are not the only ones.

Even though Jehu executed correct judgment, it seems that he did it with a proud spirit, saying to Jonadab, "*behold my zeal*", and even rejoicing in the slaughter of the family of Ahab. But the saddest part is that he didn't continue in his own reign afterward as he began, because "*Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.*" (2 Kings 10:31).

The perfect Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, didn't change in His zeal for the House of God. At the end of His public ministry, He did exactly what He had done at the beginning, demonstrating the same zeal to maintain the holiness of the house of His Father.

from "La Sana Doctrina" March-April 2007

"No Crusts"

Words in Season, Nov 1943

I hear young Christians say, "There is no harm in this or that; no harm in going to this place; or in reading this book; no harm in that companionship."

What does such language imply?

Suppose that I had been to dinner at a friend's house and on my way home I stop at another house. While there the good lady brings me a dish of dry, hard crusts of bread, and says to me, "Would you like a few of these crusts?"

"No, thank you," I say.

"Oh," she says, "there is no harm in them; they won't hurt you."

I reply, "I do not decline on that ground. I do not suppose that they would do me any harm. I do not suggest that you have poisoned them, but the fact is that I have just come from a good dinner and I am so satisfied that I really do not want the crusts."

Now, if we are really satisfied with the good dinner, feasting with the Lord Jesus Christ, when the world comes along with its dish of old crusts and says: "There is no harm in this or that or the other thing," you will say: "They may be perfectly right and lawful in themselves, but the fact is I have been feasting in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ and He has given me something better and sweeter than anything the world has, to give." So without difficulty you can say—"No thank you, I do not care for the crusts."

Remember Me

H P Barker

We naturally like to be remembered. It would pain us to know that our friends never think of us when we are absent from them. "My people no longer remember me," said a late Queen of the Belgians; "it is time to go." The words were the last she ever uttered. Her heart was broken by the forgetfulness of those who were dear to her.

Before the chief butler left the precincts of the prison, Joseph made a very simple request of him: "*Think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me*" (Gen. 40:14). When once again the butler moved in the high circles of the Egyptian court, it says of him: "*Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him*" (Gen. 40:23). Sad words, telling once again the story of human forgetfulness and ingratitude.

Has it ever struck you, Christian reader, that your Lord and Savior has made of you a request similar to that of Joseph? He does not want His people to forget Him. It is well that we should note the exact terms of His request. "*Take, eat...in remembrance of Me.*" Observe that He does not say "in celebration of your blessing," or "in remembrance of the benefits conferred upon you," but "in remembrance of ME" (1 Cor. 11:24).

How can we explain the indifference of many Christians to this touching request of their Lord? I can understand anyone saying, "There are so many sects and companies with divergent views, that I am puzzled where to go to join in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus." But it is difficult to understand that one who owes his all to Christ should be content to let the years slip by without being concerned as to partaking of the Lord's supper at all! Does such an one understand that it is the way He Himself has appointed for His people to show that they do not forget Him, but cherish His memory and desire His company? There is nothing that can so touch the heart and renew the affections as this remembrance of the Lord Himself. Our cold, forgetful hearts may be warmed; our affections renewed and fixed afresh on Christ, as we are gathered, even if only two or three in number, for the remembrance of Him.

Let us covet ever to possess a tender conscience, that is a conscience not only quick to discern evil, but instantly to shun it, as the eyelid closes itself against a mote.

I never saw a useful Christian who was not a student of the Bible. If a man neglects his Bible, he may pray and ask God to use him in His work, but God cannot make much use of him; for there is not much for the Spirit to work upon.