

Qualities of an Excellent Servant, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:10-11

Code: 54-31

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy chapter 4...1 Timothy chapter 4. We're looking at verses 6 through 16. And, of course, like much of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Titus, the Scripture in its intent is directed at the minister, the pastor, the servant of God Himself. And someone said to me a couple of weeks ago that it seems as though I've sort of belabored the point in the study of 1 Timothy.

And my response to that in my own mind was that if I tend to belabor the point a bit in dealing with passages that relate to the ministry, it is primarily because the Spirit of God is putting me through the process of training while He's putting you through it as well. And I find that when I dig into these passages that speak directly to my own heart and to what God has called me to do that I don't let go of them very easily. I find myself ringing them out to the very limit for all that they are worth. And I do that because I want so very much that the Spirit of God would speak to my own heart and the hearts of all in our church family who are in spiritual leadership or who are in school or seminary preparing for the ministry.

And I also am very much aware that by God's grace He has given to us the ears of pastors all around the world, not only in the United States but countries across the globe. And many of them are listening to what we are doing and saying here. And when we come to portions that speak so directly to the ministry itself and the man in the ministry, it just seems essential that we carefully delineate the truths that are there, make them fully understood and applied so that we can have as great an impact as possible on those who lead the church of Jesus Christ. Hosea said it simply like people like priests, we know the people don't rise any higher than their leadership and we have tremendous concern that God should raise up excellent leadership in His church. And if in some way He can use these studies to accomplish that, then that purpose is well served. So, you'll have to indulge me a bit for those reasons as we look together through these kinds of passages.

Now taking you back to 1 Timothy 4:6 to 16, the key phrase in this particular portion is that one in the middle of verse 6, "Thou shalt be an excellent minister of Jesus Christ." The issue here in this text is to give to Timothy the qualifications or qualities of an excellent minister of Jesus Christ. If he is to be what God wants him to be, if he is to be what the ministry demands that he be, if he is to be what the people need him to be, then he must have a standard by which to measure his life by which to form his ministry. And that is the intent throughout the pastoral epistles, 1, 2 Timothy and Titus, and specifically the intent of this very portion before us.

John Owen, the great Puritan commentator, wrote these words, quote: "A minister may fill his pews, his communion role, the mouths of the public, but what that minister is on his knees in secret before Almighty God, that he is and no more," end quote.

And what John Owen is saying is what the Scripture certainly sets forth and that is that the...that the demand of God for one in ministry goes beyond ability, it goes even beyond giftedness, it goes all the way to character. The bottom line in ministry is character. What kind of person are you before God? Somebody said personality is what you are in the light when everybody can see, and character is what you are in the dark when no one can see. And character is the issue in ministry. It is what you are before God. It is the holding and proclaiming of truth out of a godly life that is the essential thing.

And Paul wanted Timothy to understand this fact, to have it deeply imbedded in his thinking. And so he mentions it very often. Back in chapter 1 verse 5, he talked about being sure that a pure heart and a good conscience and an unfeigned faith was maintained. In chapter 1 verse 19, he talks about holding the faith and a good conscience. That is a conscience that does not accuse one of sin. In chapter 2 verse 8, men should be lifting up holy hands without wrath and dissimulation.

He talks about in chapter 3 verse 1 that an overseer does a good work. And verse 2 says his word is so good that it requires a man who is blameless. That is a reference to character. Also a deacon in verse 10 is to be blameless. In chapter 6 verse 11, the man of God is to flee sin and follow righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

In 2 Timothy 2, he is to be strong in the Lord, verse 1, strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In verse 15 it indicates that he is never to be a workman who needs to be ashamed but unashamed because obviously of a pure life. In chapter 2 verse 21, he is to be purged. In verse 22, he is to run from youthful lust and pursue righteousness and call on God out of a pure heart. In chapter 3 verse 17, the man of God is to be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work.

So, throughout the pastoral epistles, the intent of Paul is to lay the responsibility on the servant of God at the level of spiritual character. That's where everything really takes place. All ministry activity is a flowing out of character.

So the sum of the character of the holy minister then is pulled together in that little phrase in verse 6, you shall be a good or noble or excellent minister of Jesus Christ. One who would fit into Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter in to the joy of your Lord. You've been faithful over a few things, I'll make you ruler over many things." So Paul wants Timothy and anyone else who fits into the category of pastoring ministries to realize that there is a standard of personal virtue and there is a standard of public ministry that is linked to that which is inviolable from the standpoint of God for success in the ministry. God wants men of character.

Now what are the qualifications? Well, we looked at four, let me just review them briefly for you and then we'll go on and take a couple more. I have eleven in this passage but I want to be cautious as we move through so that you understand them completely. And we'll look to the rest of them next Lord's day.

Number one, we said an excellent minister warns his people of error. He warns his people of error. Verse 6 says, if you put the brethren in remembrance, or if you remind them of these things, you will be a good minister or an excellent servant of Jesus Christ. The phrase "these things" has reference to all of the doctrines of demons, seducing spirits, lying hypocrites, false teachers, those who oppose the truth who are referred to in the first five verses of the chapter. The Lord wants His servant to be warning the people about such error. That's not the major emphasis of his ministry, but that is an important aspect of it. The Lord's servant is aware that deception is subtle, it is so subtle...so subtle and deceiving that in Matthew 24 our Lord said that if it were possible even the very elect would be deceived. In Acts 20:31, Paul says that for three years, night and day with tears, I watched, that's vigilance, that's having alertness and being discerning, to analyze what teaching is going on and what teachers are lurking around the church, and I warned, that is a strong intense admonishing. And he says I did that to everyone. He personalized that ministry, he was busy warning people about error. That is a very important part of an excellent ministry.

Secondly, an excellent minister is an expert student of Scripture. Verse 6 again, notice the second part of the verse, he is to be nourished up, be being kept nourished up in the words of the faith, that's Scripture, and of the good doctrine, that's what Scripture affirms, unto which you have attained. In other words, you've already had a good start, Timothy, founded in your mother and grandmother, Lois and Eunice, who taught you the Scriptures from your childhood, you know what has been added to that by me and others like me and you have had a good beginning. Now continue to be constantly self-fed on the Word and that which the Word affirms. Essential, we are to be skilled at the direct ministry of the Scripture. And that means a high level of intake, a continual commitment to taking in the Word of God. The excellent minister warns his people of error and he is able to do that because he is an excellent student of Scripture.

Thirdly, an excellent minister avoids the influence of unholy teaching. He avoids the influence of unholy teaching. He wants to keep a pure mind. He is not at all anxious to get involved, verse 4 of chapter 1, with fables, endless genealogies that serve only to cause questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith. He is not interested in anything that's going to distract, create doubts, take away his conviction, take away his power, confuse him. He focuses on that which is the positive affirmation of the teaching of the Word of God. These are the things, chapter 6 verse 2 says, he is to teach and exhort. And verse 3 says if anybody teaches anything else and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine which is according to godliness, such a person is proud. He doesn't know anything. He's doting about questions and

disputing over words and all it does is bring envy, strife, railing, evil suspicion, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds who are destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. And he says from such withdraw thyself. Don't get involved in that kind of harangue which only serves to create suspicion about the Word of God, which only creates doubts, saps power, takes away conviction. An excellent minister avoids the influence of unholy teaching.

In fact, he is strongly committed to the principle that we know so well in Philippians 4:8, "Whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." The focus of his mind is a single focus. He is not double minded or double souled man, as James refers to in chapter 1. He is not divided within himself. He is solely and only and totally committed to the truth of God. And that in itself creates a strength.

In 2 Timothy 2:16, he is to shun any profane or empty talk that can increase only unto godliness and eat like a gangrene, that is in a very destructive manner. In fact, in Titus 2:15, he is told to speak these things that are pertaining to the gospel and exhort and rebuke. Stick with the stuff. Stick with the message. There's a certain commitment to holy truth. He feeds on it. He feeds on it. And he avoids anything that would corrupt his pure mind and divert him from the single pursuit of the things of God.

So, he warns of error, at the same time avoiding exposure to it so that it has an unholy influence. And he is an expert in Scripture. Fourthly, and this is the last point we dealt with last time, an excellent minister is disciplined in personal godliness. He is disciplined in personal godliness. And here we come really to the issue of character. His life is a pursuit of godliness, not a pursuit of fame, it is not a pursuit of popularity, it is not a pursuit of reputation, it is not a pursuit of filthy lucre or money, it is a pursuit of godliness. And ministry is the overflow of a pursuit of godliness.

Verse 7, and you remember this from last time and probably from your own memory, verse 7 says, not only refuse profane and old women's tales, we just mentioned that, stay away from unholy teaching, but exercise yourself unto godliness. Or keep yourself in training for godliness. And this is basically axiomatic. Bodily exercise profits for a little time and a little effect, but godliness is profitable unto all things because it has promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. And this is a true saying and worthy of all acceptance. This is axiomatic that spiritual exercise to godliness is far more important than physical exercise. Therefore, exercise yourself unto godliness. You are to be devoted in discipline to attaining personal godliness.

Now what do we mean by that? Well, the word is eusebeia. Let me just stretch your mind a little bit on that word. It was used by the philosophers of ancient times and the religionists of ancient times and it had a very clear meaning. For example, the Platonic definition was "right conduct in regard to the gods." The Stoic definition was "knowledge of how God should be worshiped." Lucien, the

ancient writer, said it is describing one who is a lover of the gods. Xenophon said such a person was wise concerning the gods. So even in its pagan meaning, it had to do with a concern for God, with a reverence for things holy, a reverence for things divine, being preoccupied with matters related to deity.

And it's exactly what it means in the spiritual sense in terms of the Christian faith. It is a right attitude toward God and things that are divine. It is a reverence for things heavenly, a preoccupation for things that are holy and sacred. It is respect for what is due to God and respect for what is due to heaven. It is the highest of all virtues. If the highest attribute of God is His holiness, then the highest attainment of man is to pursue a God-like holiness. Godliness then is the heart and soul of spiritual character.

If we had time we could expand our understanding of it but just to give you a little bit of insight, in 1 Timothy 6:3, godliness is said to be at the heart of truth. In 2 Peter 1:3 it says it comes through Christ. In 1 Timothy 6:11 it says we must pursue it. Acts 3:12 indicates that it brings power. And 2 Timothy 3:12 indicates that it brings trouble. And 1 Timothy 6:5 and 6 indicates that it blesses eternally but not necessarily bringing temporal prosperity.

Now let me sum that up. Godliness is the heart of all truth. It comes to us from Christ but we must pursue it. It gives us power but when that power starts to move out, it will create trouble from a hostile environment. It will bring us spiritual prosperity but not necessarily earthly prosperity. It is the heart and soul of all we do. It is the whole aim of Christian living. First Timothy 2:2 says we are to lead a peaceable life in all godliness. Second Peter 3:11, "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness?" We are to live lives that are reverently respectful of God and His Word and His will. We are to be consumed with a preoccupation for heavenly things. And by the way, it starts at home, that's practical. First Timothy 5:4, "Let them show godliness at home." That's where it starts, very practical.

So, godliness then is the pursuit of that which honors God. And a good and noble and excellent and faithful servant of Jesus Christ will be a man who warns his people, who studies the Scripture, who avoids any unholy influences that may influence him and who is committed to a pursuit of godliness. That's his heart's desire.

Now with that summing up what we've already learned and expanding our thoughts a bit, let's go to number five in this text, a very fascinating verse, verse 10. And the fifth quality of an excellent minister is that he is committed to hard work.

Now let me just say before we look at verse 10, on the one hand we've just talked about godliness. We are to be preoccupied with heavenly things. We are to be preoccupied with those things that relate to the nature of God. We are to pursue holiness. In other words, there's a certain other

worldliness about us. There's a certain disassociation with the things that are here. We are to pursue that which is divine and sacred and eternal and holy and heavenly. And having just lifted us into the heavenlies and called on us to be godly, he now brings us back to earth with a crashing jolt and says, and while you're here, the ministry is not only a heavenly pursuit, it is an earthly task. In fact, it's hard work.

And that's what I want to focus on in verse 10. "For to this end we labor and strive." And stop at that point. To this end...what end? The end of eternal life back in verse 8. Because we know that godliness has a promise not only of the life that now is but of the life which is to come to this end we labor and strive. Because we realize, now mark this one, we realize that what we do has eternal implications. Did you get that? It has eternal implications. We're not dealing with something passing away when we die, we're dealing with something that never passes away. And because we function with eternity in view, we labor and strive. The word labor and strive, both of those two verbs have the idea of hard work, very hard work. And we work hard because we are working in view of eternity. I mean, there's no short term effect here, this is an eternal effect.

Look at 2 Corinthians 5:9, to a familiar passage there. Verse 9, Paul says, "Wherefore we labor...using the same word...we labor, we work hard, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of Him." And then he gives you two reasons why he works hard. Number one, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." I'm going to have to stand before Christ to be rewarded for the things that I've done in His service. In other words, there is an eternal consequence to me as a servant of Christ. I will stand before the Lord to receive from His hand that reward which is commensurate with my service rendered to Him, whether it's been good or useless. So I realize my own eternity is in view when I minister.

Secondly, verse 11, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Now he says I'm looking beyond myself and I'm seeing unregenerate men, they're not going to face a time of reward, they're going to face a time of judgment. And because I know that men and women stand in view of eternal judgment, I persuade them, that is persuading them with the gospel.

So, Paul from his own viewpoint and the viewpoint of the people to whom he ministers says I work hard because I know this has eternal consequences. For me in terms of reward, and for those who hear in terms of destiny. This is the perspective that pushes the servant of God. And excellent minister is committed to hard work because he works in the sense of eternity. There is an eternal heaven and there is an eternal hell. And everybody on the face of the earth will either spend their eternity in heaven or in hell. And when we realize that, we are compelled. No one...no one with a reasonable understanding of heaven's glory and a reasonable understanding of hell's horror could ever be mediocre in the ministry unless he had a very cold heart. No wonder Henry Martin said, "Now let me burn out for God." No wonder David Brainard was dead in his late twenties in taking the gospel to American Indians, they gave themselves because the work needed to be done and eternity

was the issue. We're engaged in an eternal work. The destiny of souls is at stake. There is no higher and no more blessed work in and of itself but the compelling thing is the eternal aspect.

Paul says in verse 10, "We," probably referring to any companions along with him, and very likely embracing Timothy as well, and everybody else who is so called to ministry. The words "labor" and "strive" come from two Greek verbs. Kopiao which means to work to the point of weariness, exhaustion, sweat. It's a strong word used many times in the New Testament. The second one is agonizomai from which we get agonize and agony. It means to agonize in a struggle. He says we work to the point of weariness and exhaustion. We agonize, that is we literally work through personal pain because we understand the objectives and they are eternal.

Oswald Saunders wrote, "If he is unwilling to pay the price of fatigue for his leadership, it will always be mediocre. True leadership always exacts a heavy toll on the whole man. And the more effective the leadership is, the higher the price to be paid," end quote.

But we cannot mitigate against that price because we understand the urgency of what we're all about. Weariness, loneliness, struggle, rising early, staying up late, foregoing desired pleasures, all of that comes with excellence. All of that comes with the hard work of the ministry. In Galatians 6:14, Paul said, "When I took up the cross of Christ, I crucified myself to the world." What he means was when I decided to take the gospel, I died to every thing around me. I literally became consumed with that one thing. "Woe is unto me," he says in 1 Corinthians 9, "if I preach not the gospel, necessity is laid on me, I beat my body to bring it into subjection, I fight not as one that beats the air, I run as one to win the crown..." All of this describing the tremendous effort and commitment of Paul to a ministry with such eternal consequences.

In 2 Corinthians 11, he talks about how many times he was beaten with rods, how many times he was beaten with a whip, how many times he went through weariness and suffering and pain and agony and shipwreck. And all of those perils that he endured and all of that because he was so totally committed to the ministry at hand. Why? For some early reward? No. For some temporal crown? No. For reputation? No. Because he had eternity in view. And he realized the destiny of souls was bound up in this matter of preaching the gospel.

Now I want you to notice back at verse 10 again how he begins to stretch our thinking in this regard. "To this end," picking up on the promise of life to come, "we both labor and strive because we trust in the living God." Now we'll stop there for a moment. We trust in the living God. You see, it wasn't for immediate fulfillment. But for eternal reward, is what he's saying. Literally the Greek text says this, "We have set our hope on the living God." And "have set our hope" is a perfect, it means we did it in the past and we continue to do it in the present. We did it and it's still going on. We continually have set our hope in the living God. What do you mean? We're not doing what we do for time, we're doing what we do for eternity.

The contrast here is between the living God and dead idols. If you were to open your Old Testament you could look at 1 Samuel 17 verses 26 and 31, you could look at 2 Kings 19 verses 4 and 16, Psalm 42:2, Psalm 84:2, etc., etc., and you would find God called the living God, the God who is a living God...and that in contrast to dead idols. All the gods of the nations are dead idols, they're just dead idols. And so whatever anyone does for those gods is only going to have implications in time, not eternity because it's a dead idol. But Paul is saying we serve not for just a temporal earthly reward some dead idol that can carry us not beyond the grave at all but only here in time can anything have any meaning, but we serve the living God who is eternally alive and therefore will reward us eternally. That's the idea.

We live in hope. We live in hope, hope of the future. Missionaries through the years who have preached the gospel of Jesus Christ and deprived themselves of almost every earthly pleasure and pursuit in doing that and have perhaps wound up as martyrs did it because their hope was set on a living God. And they believe that that living God would provide life for them past this life. And that's why we do what we do. We're not tied to temporal things. We're not trying to amass a fortune here so we can indulge ourselves here before we leave. We are set on the future. We live in hope. We are saved in hope, Romans 8:24 says, we live by hope. We cannot be indulging ourselves only for the pursuit of the things that are here, we must have eternity in view.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4 verses 1 to 5, it's required of a steward that he be found faithful, and he says it doesn't matter to me, really, what you think of me, it doesn't matter to me what I think, I am waiting for the time when the Lord I face and He will judge the secrets of the heart and make manifest the counsels that are there and then shall every man have praise from God. I'm not looking for human praise, I'm waiting for God's eternal reward, that's what he was saying. I look to the future, I'm not bound to this earth. And that causes me to serve with all my heart, working hard to the point of weariness and exhaustion, striving and agonizing to do the work of the ministry because it has eternal consequence both to me and to those whom it impacts and it is unto that eternal consequence that I work, not some passing temporal thing. We hope in an eternally living God, he says, who shall some day reward those who faithfully serve and some day bring into eternity the fruit of that service.

Now having said that, he adds this phrase, a most interesting phrase: "We trust in the living God," and he further defines the reason for his trust by saying of God, "who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe." Who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe. Now at first glance that looks like a somewhat troublesome statement. In what sense is God the Savior of all men and if He is the Savior of all men, what does it mean especially of those that believe?

There have been many suggestions made as to this meaning, the key thing is to stay in the context and deal with the terms that are here, and we'll endeavor to do that. Now follow this thought, this is so rich.

This God whom we serve, for whom we work hard and work to exhaustion and for whom we spend our lives in a struggle in an agonizing warfare against the enemy in order to see people come to Christ, this God we have set our hope on will some day bring to full glory all those who have responded to our ministry and will some day reward us so that all of the sacrifices and all of the labor and all of the struggle will be eternally worthwhile. We believe that.

Now what affirmation do we have of that? Because this living God, we have already seen is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. Now with that in mind, let's look more closely at that phrase. In what sense is God the Savior of all men?

Well, some would say this teaches universalism, that ultimately everybody will be saved. All things will be resolved in Christ, all things will be resolved in God, there's no eternal hell, everything finally sort of wraps up in Christ. And all men will be saved. That's not what this means, the Savior of all men, because that's not what the Bible teaches. And we believe in what is called analogia scriptura which means the Bible is always analogous to itself, it doesn't teach one thing in one place which contradicts what it teaches somewhere else. Since God is the author of all it if, it is consistent.

We know there is a hell and we know that hell is eternal. The Bible is very clear about that, it is a place where the worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. It is eternal, aionios, just as heaven is eternal. It is a place where the unsaved go and they are set apart from the presence of God forever and ever. It is a place of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it is a place of evil, it is a place of torment, it is a place of isolation and loneliness. It is that which is out from the presence of God. Jesus said, "Where I go you can never come," and that's what He meant when He spoke in John 8.

So there is an eternal hell. There is an eternal judgment. There is an eternal separation between men and God for those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ. So we know this can't be teaching that all people are going to be saved in a soteriological sense. In fact, in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 it says men will be punished with ever lasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

So the Bible teaches eternal hell for those who are not saved. This, then, when it says "God is the Savior of all men" does not mean that ultimately all men are going to be saved, that would contradict Scripture.

Another view, and this one perhaps more common, is that this is talking about potential...potential salvation as over against actual salvation. In other words, He is potentially the Savior of all men, He is actually the Savior of those that believe. Now in a sense that's true. The death of Jesus Christ was powerful enough to have redeemed the whole human race. His death for sin was such an adequate death that had God so designed that it could have sufficed for all the sins of all the world, to have

delivered all men forever from their sin. And there is a sense in which the death of Christ was a potential salvation for the whole world but actual salvation only applies itself to those who believe.

However, that cannot be the treatment indicated in this particular passage. And I'll point out why. The use of the word "especially" is a very vital thing to consider. It is the adverb malista and it has a very significant sense. What it means is that all men enjoy salvation to some degree. Therefore it must be talking about the same salvation, or God is the Savior of all men in the same sense to all men as to believing men. It's just that in the case of believing men it is an especial way.

Now that may be a little bit unclear to you but the idea is that all men enjoy to some degree the saving that believers enjoy. Malista ties the two together. It can't be contrastive, or adversative, it can't be saying all men are saved in this sense but believers are saved in this sense. What it's saying is all men are saved in this total sense but especially do believers experience it. So whatever salvation it's referring to, it refers to all men experiencing in some way to some degree the same kind of salvation that believers experience.

So then we have to ask the question: what kind of...what kind of saving work of God does everybody get in on but especially believers to a greater degree? The answer is this, and I want you to follow this, this is such a rich and profound truth. In the earthly sense, all men are experiencing the protection and deliverance and saving power of God. But believers will experience that saving delivering protecting sustaining power not only in a temporal sense but in an eternal sense.

Let me show you what I mean. The word "Savior" we do not need to limit, and this is the key. We do want to see the word "Savior" and every time we see the word "Savior" say, "Oh, that means salvation...that means salvation from sin...salvation of our souls," that would not be true. For example, in Judges 3:9, Othniel, the judge, is called savior because he delivered the children of Israel from the hands of the king of Mesopotamia. In 2 Kings 13:5, God gave Israel another human savior to deliver them out of the hands of the Syrians.

In Nehemiah 9:27, it says...listen, God gave them saviors, plural, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies, Nehemiah 9:27. Obadiah 21 has a similar use. The word "Savior" in a very general sense means a deliverer. It can mean even a sustainer. Gideon, for example, in Judges 6:14 is a savior. David in 2 Samuel 3:18 is seen as a savior, a deliverer, using the Old Testament equivalent of the same word.

To show you the breadth of the usage of the word, you need only to look to some of its uses in the New Testament, as well. For example, Acts chapter 17 and I want you to understand this so stick with me because I think it's such a rich and wonderful understanding of this passage. In Acts 17:25 we find Paul on Mars Hill, he says about God that God is not worshiped with men's hands as though He needs anything, but seeing He gives to all life and breath and all things. God then, in a sense, is

the sustainer, are you ready for this?, and the provider of life and breath and all things for whom? For all men...for all men for everyone.

Verse 28, "For in Him we live and move and have our being and even your own prophets have said we are also His offspring." So in a general sense, God is the sustainer and provider of life for all men. Now the word "Savior" can mean sustainer, provider, deliverer. It is so used later on in the book of Acts, I think it's in chapter 27, if I remember right, and verse 34. Yes, Paul in the shipwreck situation says, "I beseech you to take some food for this is for your salvation." Well, what kind of salvation is he talking about? He's not talking about spiritual salvation, he's talking about your health, your physical health, your physical sustenance.

In Mark chapter 6 verse 5, "He could do there no mighty work," it says of Christ, "except that He laid His hands on a few sick folks and saved them." Well, it means there He provided healing for them. He sustained their life. He delivered them out of disease. In that sense, He saved them. Jesus in that sense saved multitudes, didn't He, who never knew soul salvation, right? He healed many more than were actually redeemed, but He was the Savior in a temporal sense of all those who were healed, of all those who ate the food He provided, God is the Savior of all men who breathe air, live life, know healing in their human bodies because God is the sustainer of all of that.

In Luke there's another passage along the same line. Chapter 6 verse 19, "The whole multitude sought to touch Him for there went power out of Him and He saved them all." Well, in what sense did He save them all? In the sense of healing them, saving them from disease, delivering them from death. In Acts 4:9, Peter and John had healed that man by the gate Beautiful and it says, "If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is saved." He is saved, or made well, or made whole.

James does it. James 5:15 to 20, that little passage there says "The prayer of faith shall...what?...what's the word?...save the sick." So the word "saved" does not necessarily isolate itself only to soul salvation. It can have implications for some deliverance from disease, from trouble, some sustenance of food, providing health and so forth.

To give you another illustration of this, go with me to Isaiah chapter 63, just near the end of Isaiah's great prophecy, and let me show you, I think, a graphic illustration. Now what we're trying to point out is, and follow the thought, that God in a temporal sense is the Savior of all men. God sustains life by His providence. God has built healing into the body. God saves men not only in the temporal sense, but listen to this, He saves them in the gracious sense. What, you say? You mean God gives grace to unbelievers? Yes, and the grace that is given to an unbeliever is the grace that has God withhold His immediate instant wrath, you understand that? The soul that sinneth, it shall...what?...die. The wages of sin are death. How long should a sinner live? A split second. But God is gracious to even sustain the life of an unbeliever. It is His mercy that lets an unbeliever live.

So, in the real large broad sense, God is the deliverer, sustainer, provider of all men. He provides food. He provides life. He provides relationships. He provides healing. He even provides grace and mercy because He does not give them instantly what they deserve.

This is illustrated in Isaiah 63 starting at verse 7. "I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord," so we're talking about how kind and how merciful He is, "according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies and according to the multitude of His loving kindnesses."

Now here's the world in a microcosm. We take the whole world and we reduce it down...let's look at one nation. Here is this nation known as Israel. God is gracious merciful and kind to Israel. Look at verse 8, "For He said, Surely they are My people, children that will not lie, so He was their...what?...Savior." Was God the Savior of Israel? Was He the Savior of the whole nation? In what sense? Temporally. He took them out of Egypt. He brought them to a promise land. He provided food and air and He gave them all the physical sustenance. When they sinned, He was merciful. When they sinned, He was gracious. In a very broad and general sense, God showed Himself to be a provider, sustainer, deliverer and savior of the nation Israel.

Verse 9, "In all their affliction He was afflicted. The angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His pity He redeemed them." In what sense did He redeem them? Bought them out of Egypt, not in a spiritual sense, not in the salvation sense that we think of, but He cared for them, He bought them out, He bore them, He carried them all the days of old, verse 10, "But they rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit, therefore He was turned to be their enemy and He fought against them." And what it says is this, note it, He was the Savior of the whole nation in a temporal sense, but in a spiritual sense only a few. You see? Only a few.

And that is the very analogy that Paul is using in 1 Timothy. He is saying we have seen God sustaining, providing power on a worldwide basis. We have seen His great wide temporal provision for men. But that provision is especially glorious to the believer for it is not only temporal it is also what? Eternal. That's his point. That's his point. When God sees Himself as the Savior of the whole nation Israel, it is in a temporal sense because He is only the Savior of a few who believed in the spiritual sense.

Listen to this. You remember 1 Corinthians 10? Listen, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant that...follow this...all our fathers, all the Jews, were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, all drank the same spiritual drink." In other words, God sustained, provided for all of them. Listen to verse 5, "But with many of them, God was not well pleased." In other words, God provides sustenance on a temporal level for all, salvation on an eternal level for those who believe.

So He is the Savior of all, but especially does He sustain and provide for those who believe and will forever and ever. All left Egypt...all left Egypt, that whole nation though different people still duly constituted as a nation all came into Canaan. God had sustained that nation and its existence. God provided the food, the water, the life, delivered them from illness and danger and enemies and preserved and sustained them all those years, but redeemed only a few who believed.

God then is a deliverer. And what Paul is saying is, "Look, we are doing what we're doing, we are laboring and striving and working hard and giving our life in the struggle because we believe the consequences are eternal, because we have not a dead God but a living God who will live forever and we have set our hope on that living God and we know that living God will sustain the souls of those who believe because we have seen already in time His sustaining power." That's his argument.

We preach because we're convinced that God is a living God who will sustain eternally and provide for and save those who believe. So Paul is saying that's why we work hard. We have a view of eternity. We see beyond the temporal to the eternal consequence. And, beloved, that is it. And if you ever lose sight of that, you've lost it. I mean, you've really lost it. Your ministry has to be in view of eternity. It doesn't matter what happens here, it only matters what happens here that matters what happens there. This is not the end. And so he says we serve with all our heart. And that's why Paul went through what he went through. And that's why any faithful excellent servant goes through what he goes through because he understands that he's set his hope on an eternal God who has proven that He can sustain life and He'll do it for those who believe on into eternity so that what we do has an eternal effect.

Thomas Cochran(?) was being interviewed for the mission field and he was asked, to what portion of the field do you feel yourself especially called? He answered, "I only know I should wish it to be the hardest that could be offered me." That's the spirit. That's the spirit. The Lord's work is not a place for people who are looking for ease. But it is eternally rewarding for those who will set their hope on eternity and realize everything they do has that in mind.

Richard Baxter, whom I appreciate so much, writing in the seventeenth century said, "The ministerial work must be carried on diligently and laboriously as being of such unspeakable consequence to ourselves and others. We are seeking to uphold the world, to save it from the curse of God, to perfect a creation, to attain the ends of Christ's death, to save ourselves and others from damnation, to overcome the devil and demolish his kingdom, to set up the Kingdom of Christ and to attain and help others to the kingdom of glory. And are these works to be done with a careless mind or a lazy hand? O, see then that this work be done with all your might, study hard," he says, "for the well is deep and your brain is shallow." I like that.

Our whole work is a labor. But it isn't a human labor. I have to say that. I have to say that Colossians 1 puts it in perspective, verse 29, Paul says, "For this I labor, I want to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." Every man perfect in Christ Jesus, I want to get them to glory. I want them to be like Christ. He has the eternal view. And he says, "For this I...he uses kopiao again...for this I work to the point of exhaustion, I agonize, but according to His working which works in me mightily." This isn't done in the flesh. We work hard but even in that working hard, it's amazing, I don't know how to describe it but there's a sense of energy that comes from a source beyond yourself.

I can't even explain what I do. I can't...if I endeavored to just do it in the flesh, I can't...I can't do it. It's like my kids have said to me in the past, "When you preach, you're interesting, but when you just talk you're nothing special." And I can't explain the difference. All I can explain to you is that there's a certain energizing that comes to the one who serves the Lord which comes from the Spirit. And the whole work has to be carried on under a deep sense of our own insufficiency and entire dependence on Christ. And that's what Paul says. I do all this according to His working which works in me mightily.

I could leave it there but I want to add one final point for this morning and the rest we'll look at next time. This is number six, it's a very brief one in verse 11, so you can see how brief it is by looking at the verse. Listen to this. An excellent minister, are you ready?, teaches with...I want to add a word, it's not on your outline...practical authority. He teaches with a practical authority...practical authority.

You have to have authority. I remember when I was told at the Police Academy one time when I was doing a graduation that someone was flunked out of the academy for their voice, their lack of an authoritative voice. And I said, "Well, what does that have to do with it?" And somebody said, "Well, you can't go up behind some guy and say, (in a feminine tone) `Stick 'em up, you're under arrest.'" You know. That's not going to have a whole lot of impact. And they talked about the fact that there's got to be a bearing and an authority even conveyed in communication. I don't know what...how that works today when women are functioning in that way. Maybe they let the men on the team do the speaking, I don't know. But there needs to be that kind of a bearing in the ministry as well.

And look at verse 11, and here he adds another thing about the excellent minister, he says, "These things command and teach." The word "teach" has the idea of passing on information. It relates to the instruction or the doctrine. He is saying give them something but give it in a command mode, make it a practical thing but make it a command.

Where did we ever come up with the style of preaching we have today? Where did we ever come up with sort of wimpy preaching? Richard Baxter says, "Screw the truth into their minds." He's right. I mean, there is much interesting preaching but not much powerful preaching. There is some entertaining preaching but not convicting preaching. There is popular preaching but where is the

transforming preaching? And where did we ever come off feeling that sort of weak suggestions chatted from the pulpit are really what God wants? God, it says in Acts 17, commands all men everywhere to repent. And when did we decide that it was only a suggestion? When did we decide that we were suppose to cuddle people into the kingdom instead of command them?

We are in a command mode. Yes with gentleness, yes with meekness, yes with love, but nonetheless with a certain amount of authority, a certain amount of assertiveness. Jesus at the end of the Sermon on the Mount gave such an authoritative message, in verse 29 of Matthew 7 it says they were in awe of Him because He spoke as one having...what?...authority...authority.

And Paul gives this word to Timothy over and over again. He talks to him about how important it is, in verse 3 of chapter 1, to command people to stop teaching false doctrine. You have to command that. Over in chapter 5 verse 7, he says, "These things command..." Verse 20, talks about rebuking people publicly. Chapter 6 he says in verse 17, "Command the rich," and goes on to tell them what the command is. In chapter 2 of Titus, verse 15, we're to rebuke and exhort in a command mode with all authority, with all authority. And don't let anybody look down on you for doing it, Titus 2:15.

Now I don't mean you're abusive and I don't mean you're ungracious, but I mean we have got to speak the Word of God not as a lot of nice platitudes, not as some kind of Pollyanna psychologist, but with a confrontive strong mode that says do this or else you're in flagrant disobedience to God with eternal consequences, right? Somehow we lost that somewhere along the line. But you read through the Pauline epistles and you will find Paul is often in a command mode. He has his moments of tenderness and his moments of compassion as he speaks to believers, but he does not mitigate in any sense the demand to obey the Word of God. The faithful servant is bold. He challenges sin head on. He confronts unbelief, disobedience and non commitment and as God commands all men everywhere to repent and as God said this is "My beloved Son, hear Him," so he carries on that same kind of directive, commanding all men to repent, commanding all men to hear Jesus Christ. Every sermon should have a tone of authority that is unmistakable.

And that authority is really built on a foundation. Let me give you that foundation. First of all, you have to know what you believe about the Bible. If you're not sure it's the Word of God, you're not going to have any authority. Secondly, once you've decided it is the Word of God, then you have to decide what it says. And if you're not sure what it means, you can't be authoritative either. So first you have to believe it's God's Word, then you have to learn what it means by what it says.

And then the third thing is you've got to be concerned about communicating it because you care about God's Word being upheld. And you care, fourthly, in the line about people's response.

Where does authority come from? One, a commitment to the authority of the Word of God. Two, an understanding of what it means. Three, a belief that God wants it communicated. Four, a belief that

men need to hear it. And on that foundation comes authority. If you're weak on the fact that men need to hear it, if you're weak on the fact that God wants it communicated, if you're weak on what it means or you're weak on what it is, you're weak and you won't have authority.

Our preaching should be filled with commands, not just sentimental pleadings. Instead of trying to sneak up on people and all this subtle kind of stuff we need to just speak the Word of God and let it do its work. An excellent ministry speaks with a practical authority, yes, commanding and teaching...commanding and teaching. Here's the command, here's what underlies it. Here's the command, here's how to carry it out...but with authority.

He has authority, pursues godliness, studies the Word, warns his flock, works hard, avoids unholy teaching. That gets us about half way through. Let's bow together in prayer.

Our prayer, Lord, is that You would make us these kind of people. And that as leaders committed to this we shall see these things reflected in the lives of the people as well, that we might be a church of people pursuing godliness, avoiding unholy influence, staying away from error, working hard, speaking with authority, all these things. Help us to start with leadership.

Lord, in our colleges and seminaries, raise up men like this. O God, all around the world, excellent servants of Jesus Christ whose ministry can be measured by the standard of the Book and be found acceptable. And, Lord, even so with all our effort, give us a great and profound sense of our own inability that we may like Paul work as hard as we can not in our own strength but in the mighty strength of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You for what You will accomplish through those who are excellent in service to You.

While your head is bowed for a moment, this message obviously is directed to those who lead in the church and as well all of us by implication who are Christians. But a couple of things come to mind as well for the matter of non-Christians, those of you who have never given your life to Christ. May I remind you that this is an eternal issue. May I remind you that what decision you make regarding Christ has eternal ramifications. When you receive Him as Savior you enter into His eternity to glory forever. When you refuse, you will spend eternity without Him in hell. You need to make that choice. God is a living God, providing an eternal salvation for those who believe. And if it's in your heart to believe and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, do that. And I in the name of Jesus Christ command you to do that or suffer the consequences for that is the Word of Scripture.

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