Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Qualities of an Excellent Servant, Part 3
Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:12
Code: 54-32

Well let's open our Bibles together to 1 Timothy chapter 4, 1 Timothy chapter 4 and we're looking again at the qualities of an excellent minister of Jesus Christ...the qualities of an excellent minister of Jesus Christ in verses 6 through 16.

A couple of years ago on an Easter Sunday, I was asked to do a television program with a local network affiliate. We were out in a park in Glendale. I remember the setting very well. It was Easter Sunday afternoon and they wanted a little bit of religious flavor to their program so they asked if I would do an interview.

We sat on a couple of high stools, myself and a well-known local newscaster by the name of Paul Moyer. And we were talking about religion and he was asking me questions. And trying to identify where I fit in this sort of evangelical framework, he said, "Are you like..." and then he began to list every media preacher he could think of, all the way down the line. He got..."Are you like..." And I kept saying no, no, no, no, no, not like any of those. "Well," then he began to ask, "what's your ministry, or what's your emphasis?" And I talked about teaching the Word of God and working within the framework of a church. And he said, "Do the things that they do to raise money and the personal sort of wealth and prosperity that some of them are indulging in," and on and on he went, "do those kinds of things bother you?" Yes, they bother me.

"Why don't you do something about that?" he said. "How is it that so many people can take the name of Christian, the name of Christ and get out there and do all these things that you feel misrepresent what you believe?" And then he asked this question, he said, "Who is in charge of your movement?"

That's a very insightful question. I said, "From a human viewpoint, nobody's in charge. There is a standard by which all of us who minister are to be measured and that standard is the Bible. But admittedly there are people who do not bother to set their life against that standard or their ministry."

Then he said this, and I thought this was equally insightful, he said, "Why don't you police your movement? It's really getting you bad press. In other words, there is an awful lot of negative attitude about Christian ministers and Christian ministry because some people have so greatly abused it and perverted it and twisted it and are doing it in an unbiblical fashion and an unchristlike manner. Why don't you police your people?" he said.

Well, I thought that was a good idea and I'd be happy to do that, I just don't know how to pull it off. By the way, God is policing it and ultimately will deal justly and properly with every violation. But for the time being, it's very difficult.

How do we police our movement? How do we measure these people? What standard do we use? Who is in charge and how has he laid out the criteria? Well the answer is we have to go the Word of God. We have to have a biblical standard by which every ministry and every man in ministry is measured. And we have every right to measure them against that standard.

Now first of all, in chapter 3 we saw some personal qualifications that were necessary for men in ministry, blameless, one-woman man, temperate, sober minded, good behavior, given to hospitality, skilled in teaching, stays away from wine, is not violent, is patient, not a fighter, not covetous. Then we saw some family qualifications. He rules well his own house, has his children in subjection with all seriousness. Titus adds has believing children. So we saw some personal qualifications by which any man in ministry must be measured. Then we saw family qualifications by which any man is measured.

Now in chapter 4 we are looking at the ministry itself. If the man is right, and the family is right, then here's how to measure the ministry itself. Here are the standards by which we evaluate a good minister in terms of his function of what he does, of how he ministers.

The key phrase is in verse 6, "Thou shalt be a good minister, or a noble or excellent servant of Jesus Christ." What is an excellent servant of Jesus Christ? The emphasis here on the ministry part, not on the personal qualification, that was covered in chapter 3. But what are those things that should mark his ministry? Of course they overlap with his personal life but they are the things reflected in his ministry that make him an excellent servant...qualified to bear the name of Christ and serve in His behalf.

First of all, we saw...we'll review briefly...that an excellent minister warns his people of error. He warns his people of error. It says if you put the brothers in remembrance of these things, the things he refers to are in verses 1 to 5, doctrines of demons, seducing spirit, lying prophets, hypocrites, all that false teaching, if you remind them of these you'll be a good minister. In other words, he is to be one who warns his people of error. He is not a milk toast person. He's not someone who accepts any view, any doctrine. He's not wishy- washy, limp, he's very aggressive. He is somewhat confrontive when it comes to error. He is skilled enough in the Word of God to be able to identify error and refute it from the pages of holy Scripture. He warns his people of error. He draws lines. He's definitive in what is right and what is not.

Secondly, and this, of course, is very essential to fulfill the first one, he is nourished up, verse 6, in the words of the faith, that's Scripture, and of the good doctrine, that's the teaching that flows from

Scripture, unto which he has already attained. In other words, he has an ongoing feeding on the Word of God. He has a high intake of Scripture which allows him to be skilled at the direct ministry of the Word.

I spent two days this week with a layman, a Christian layman. He said, "I want you to read a paper that I have recently written." He gave me a paper which he had written on the subject of the Rapture of the church in relationship to the sequence of events in the end times. The paper is about 30 pages long single spaced. This is a layman. He said to me, "I got into the study of the Word of God and I have spent three hundred and fifty hours studying this particular theme in order that I might understand the Word of God better." That is a layman, a very busy man in business who manages multiple corporations, who spent three hundred and fifty hours on one biblical issue. I know men in the ministry who have never spent three hundred and fifty hours on any issue in the Scriptures. But this man, who is an excellent servant of Jesus Christ, as Paul writes to Timothy and wants him to be, is an expert student of Scripture. He is very skilled in handling the Word of God.

Thirdly, an excellent minister avoids the influence of unholy teaching. He stays away from unholy teaching. I had that emotion in me as I read my latest edition of "Christianity Today," and I was so grieved lately, the latest issue advocates women to be ordained to preach and minister. And then on one page is another advocation of a book recently written by a man who does not think premarital sex is sinful, it's just...it's just a poor timing of premarital bonding, whatever that is. And he said he came to that view because of certain surveys. Well, surveys notwithstanding, the Word of God is pretty clear about premarital sexual activity.

But the point again was, here we are sitting there at our desk and in the name of evangelicalism comes a steady parade of things intending to hit us right in the stomach and soften up our muscle on the matters of conviction. It's just a steady, steady stream. And at some point you say to yourself, "I really don't need that anymore, that has no purpose, that serves no good end for me except to soften up my spiritual muscle and steal some of my convictions. And when they're thrown at me by supposed experts who have a string of degrees along their name so long that it has to bend and go down the column, these people must be right, maybe they know what I don't know," and away it goes.

But the one who is an excellent minister cultivates a pure and devoted mind. He feeds on holy truth, not lies that create doubts, questions, suspicions.

Fourthly, an excellent minister is disciplined in personal godliness. And these two go together. Verse 7 says refuse the profane old wives fables, and exercise yourself rather unto godliness. Avoid the unholy and pursue the holy, is what he's saying. Go after the godly things, have a reverence for things holy, divine, a worshiping life. Don't exercise for the body, it profits for a little time and a little effect but godliness profits all things not only in the life that now is but is...in the life to come, the eternal life. And this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. This is something everybody

knows. Exercise unto godliness. An excellent minister is disciplined in personal godliness. He seeks to draw nigh unto God with a holy life.

An excellent minister is committed to hard work, we saw that last time, verse 10. We labor, we suffer reproach simply should be translated we strive unto agony, we work hard because we are serving the living God. We are serving in eternal matters. The God who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe. In other words, we recognize eternal salvation is the issue here, we are serving an eternally living God who offers an eternal salvation. And so eternal destiny is the issue. That's why we work so hard, that's why we endure pain and difficulty because we understand the consequences are eternal.

Then last time we closed with the sixth quality of an effective or excellent minister and that is in verse 11. An excellent minister teaches with practical authority. These things command and teach. There is a place for teaching, the articulation of truth, but it is in a command mode, an aggressive confrontive commanding of people to obey the Word of God is coupled with instruction on how to do just that. That's command and teach...command and teach...command and teach. Do it and here's how...do it and here's how.

Now I said last time that that kind of authority is built, first of all, on your view of holy Scripture. If you believe in an inspired and inerrant text, you know it is authoritative.

Secondly, it's built on your understanding of the Word of God.

To preach authoritatively you want to believe it's God's Word and then you have to know what it means. If you don't know what it means, how can you authoritatively speak it? That's why in seminary it's so important to teach people the principles of hermeneutics, that's from the Greek word hermeneuo which means to explain or translate or interpret. They need to know how to explain the Bible, how to interpret the Bible. They need to understand the principles of interpretation. How do you find the meaning of a passage? How do you work with the language and the context and the culture and the geography and the history and all of the factors that go into interpreting the Word of God? They need to learn that in order that they can rightly divide the Word of truth and not be a workman who should be ashamed of what he does.

Authority comes then from a view of the Bible that says it is God's Word and secondly, on top of that, you have to build another foundational level on the basis of understanding what it says. If I believe it's God's Word and I understand what it means, then I can speak it with authority.

Third thing would be the urgency regarding the need of men to hear it. I will speak with conviction and authority when I understand how urgent it is for you to hear it and fourthly, obedience to the Lord. I speak with authority because the Lord commands me to do that and I want to be obedient.

Now if you don't believe it's the Word of God or if you're waffling on that view, you can't be authoritative. If you're not sure what it means, you can't be authoritative. If you don't think it's that big of a deal for men to hear it, you're not going to bother to be authoritative. And if obedience to the Lord isn't a priority, you may not bother to do it either. But if those things are in place, you're going to teach in a command mode. There's going to be a firmness and a strength and a boldness and an aggressiveness to your teaching that says this is what God says, this is demanded, you must respond or suffer the consequence.

So, the excellent minister has authority, pursues godliness, studies the Word, warns his people, works hard and avoids unholy teaching. That's all in the past. Let's go to number seven.

And this is the one I want us to focus on this morning. It's a very important basic truth, an excellent minister is the model of spiritual virtue...the model of spiritual virtue.

In other words, he is the tupos, the word example in verse 12 is tupos. It means the model, the image, the pattern. It's a pattern laid down, you put a piece of paper on it and you draw on that paper the pattern underneath that's coming through. It's the model that you set up when you're going to paint a picture and you paint exactly what you see, like still life on a table.

You set it there and that's exactly the way you paint. It's the example of setting a pattern of living that others can follow.

That is really at the very heart of excellence in ministry.

In fact, Thomas Brooks said, "Example is the most powerful rhetoric." Somebody put it this way years ago, "Your life speaks so loud I can't hear what you say." Your life is your most powerful message. And men in the ministry somehow need to learn that. Recently a friend of mine visited his alma mater, a well- known seminary in our country. And he suggested to them that the thing he noticed when he was there and the thing he noticed in the graduates coming out from there was a lack of an understanding of true godliness. And he said, "I would like to suggest that the seminary add a class along the lines of holiness and godliness in personal life." And the rebuttal of the professor was, "That wouldn't have any academic credibility."

Well, academic credibility isn't the issue in the ministry.

The issue in the ministry is a godly life, is the model of spiritual virtue, that's the issue. Give me a godly man and I'll show you someone you can pattern your life after. Give me a man whose head is full of knowledge but doesn't have virtue in his life and I'll show you a man you better run from because you're going to get confused and you'll start to live like he does, having all the right truth and

none of the right behavior. And that kind of a dichotomy is deadly and frightening.

The single greatest tool of leadership...the single greatest tool of leadership is the power of an exemplary life, it's the bottom line. Notice verse 12, Paul writing to Timothy again whom he wants to be an excellent minister says, "Let no man...that's comprehensive, let no one...look down on your youth." How you going to turn that around? By being an example of the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Some versions say in spirit but that was added later in the manuscripts, doesn't appear in the earlier ones. Just five: word, conduct, love, faith, purity. You're to be an example in those areas.

Now all the authority and preaching, beloved, you need to understand this. All the authority and preaching is useless.

You can command and demand and speak and so forth, it's useless if it isn't backed up by a virtuous life. It's useless.

I heard a man on television the other day and this man was calling for godliness and a prayer life and this...he was saying, you know, we need to be committed to the Lord and we need to get our lives right with God. And I know that guy, and I know that guy committed adultery, divorced his wife, ran off with a young twenty-year-old girl, came back four years later, started his ministry all up again. He has nothing to say to me. There's no credibility in what he says. I'm not interested in hearing that from him. It just smacks of hypocrisy. I'm not interested in that. There's no conviction and he can't move my heart, see. I don't buy into it.

Whenever the pattern of godliness isn't in the life, it sucks the power out of the ministry and it becomes hollow and shallow. Sometimes people ask the question, you know, "So-and- so's such a good preacher, so forth, why doesn't anybody go to the church?" Well, it might well be that the people who've been there have seen the lack of living out what is being preached and the loss of integrity is more than they can handle. The excellent minister, see, is to be a pattern of godly virtue that can be imitated.

Thomas Fuller, the Puritan, had a great idea. He said, "Teaching is like putting nails in the wood. Example is like hammering them deep." He's right. You can stick the nails in the surface but if you want to hammer them deep into the hearts and souls of people, it's example that does that. You set the pattern.

Now the New Testament is replete with this kind of injunction. And I just survey briefly the text because the Word of God carries the power and authority to convict our hearts. In 1 Corinthians 4:1q6, Paul writes, "Be ye followers of me." And he says, "I beg you to be followers of me. I am the pattern."

Now you say, "Isn't that egotism?" No, that's not egotism.

That's simply the character of a godly man who knows his spiritual responsibility is to be an example. Obviously he knows he's not perfect, but he is saying to them I am as much as is humanly possible what you are to be. No man should have to say less than that and still be in ministry. The word is mimeti(?), we get the word mimic, mimic me, do what I do, pattern your life after me.

Later on in the same 1 Corinthian epistle, chapter 10, he talks about giving glory to God in whatever you do, 1 Corinthians 10:31. And then he makes himself kind of the example. He says in verse 33, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of many that they may be saved, I do everything to glorify God and to reach others." Then he says in chapter 11 verse 1, the next verse, "Be ye followers of me even as I am also am of Christ." In other words, you just do your ministry the way I do, live your life the way I do.

Philippians chapter 3 verse 17, "Brethren, be followers together of me, be followers of me as you have us for an example," he says. We've set the example, now follow it.

In the fourth chapter of Philippians verse 9, "The things you have learned, received, heard and seen in me, do them." Do what I do. Say what I say.

In 1 Thessalonians, again the same idea. Verse 5 of chapter 1, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only but in power and the Holy Spirit, in much assurance as you knew what kind of men we were among you for your sake and you became followers of us and of the Lord." We follow the Lord, you follow us.

Second Thessalonians, he says it again. Chapter 3 verse 7, "You yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we behave not ourselves disorderly." And down in verse 9, "We have made ourselves an example unto you to follow us." Just common for Paul to enjoin people to follow his example.

He says in 2 Timothy 1:13, "Hold fast the form of sound words which you have heard of me. Hold on to what you've seen, heard in me."

Now this is basic to all ministry. In Hebrews chapter 13 it tells us in that seventh verse, the ones who rule over the church who have spoken the Word of God are to have their faith followed.

Now when you come into ministry in the church, you are to have a life that can be followed by other people. That's a tremendous challenge. That's why James says stop being so many teachers, theirs is a greater condemnation. Not only because of the seriousness of teaching error, but the seriousness of living hypocritically. The life has to match the message. And tragically this is violated, just constantly violated in ministry, constantly.

Be specific. Verse 12 with me, look what Paul says, what areas are the issue? First of all, "Let no man despise your youth but be an example of the believers." Now that's the general thing. What he is saying here is, now watch this, you are young, with youth comes a certain amount of questioning.

You've got to have respect if people are going to follow you, right? But if you're young, you're going to have to earn that respect. The Greeks subordinated youth to age. If a man didn't have age, he had to earn respect. So he says to Timothy, "Timothy, you're going to have to earn respect. You're not going to get it by your gray hair because you're not that old."

Now you say, "Well, how old is Timothy?" Look at the little phrase "your youth," just how young was he? You might think he was sixteen, or fifteen or twenty-one, but let me give you some background. When Timothy joined Paul originally on his second journey, his second missionary journey, Acts 16 records that meeting with Timothy, and he took Timothy with him. Timothy was probably in his early to mid twenties. Okay, 22 or 24, 25, 26, somewhere in there. It is now fifteen years later. So very likely he's in his late thirties. He's in his late thirties.

You say, "Here it says of him, `Let no man despise your youth.' You mean late thirties is youth?" Yes, in the Greek culture it definitely was. In fact, Luke calls Paul young. Luke speaks of Paul as young in Acts 7:58 when he must have been over 30. And this is supported by the word here neotes which is translated "youth," which was used to described anyone up to 40. So 40 was the breaking point. You were young until you were 40, and then after 40 you were mature, skilled, wise, and old.

So here is a young man Timothy, under 40, and Paul says to him, don't let anyone think down, look down, underrate, show contempt on your youth. Now how are you going to turn that around? How you going to gain their respect? It's a question of showing yourself an example to the believers. Reveal yourself to be a model of spiritual virtue. That's the key...that's the key.

The word "example," tupos means pattern or model. And if you are to offset your few years and have authority among your people and be believed and followed and honored and respected, it's going to have to be because the flock ignores your age and sees your example. They have to see the virtue of your living.

Now this is to be comprehensive in five areas. Notice those five areas in verse 12. One, in speech, in word it says. That just means what it says, in speech, conversation. The conversation of the servant of God is to be exemplary, exemplary.

Jesus said in Matthew 12, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks...the mouth speaks." Whatever comes out of the mouth is a revealer of the heart. And that's why Jesus said by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned. In other words, just let me hear you

talk and I can tell you the state of your heart, right? The speech of the servant of God is to be exemplary speech.

What kind of speech? Well, let's look at Ephesians 4.

We'll dig into this much more deeply when we come to James 3 in our Sunday night series, and get into that whole chapter on the tongue. But for the moment, in Ephesians chapter 4 it says regarding conversation, verse 25, "Put away lying." So the first thing that should never ever come out of the mouth of the servant of the Lord is a lie. Should never be any falsehoods, untruths, never any talking out of both sides of the mouth, telling one thing to one person and another thing to another person. No lying. Speak every man absolute truth with his neighbor. Tell everybody the truth.

Boy, I'll tell you, it just destroys leadership credibility when people begin to compare notes about falsehoods that have been passed around. Somebody telling one thing to one person, another thing to another, they meet, compare notes, and know you're a liar. There is to be absolute honesty in speech. A man should be able to stay in a ministry year after year after year after year and never ever be thought to speak anything but absolute truth.

Furthermore, verse 26, "Be not angry to the point of sin."

There's a place for holy wrath and holy sort of righteous indignation, but no place for the sin of anger. And especially that smoldering anger that goes past one day into the next and so forth. And that's another thing reflected in speech, anger. No man in the ministry, no excellent servant of Jesus Christ will ever speak words of wrath, speak words of anger, will never get to the point where he is frustrated, upset to the sin level in terms of his speech where his words are angry, bitter, vitriolic, vengeful, ungracious, or whatever. His speech is always to be filled with grace, seasoned with salt to the purpose of edifying other people, not angry.

And then in verse 29, obviously, "Let no filthy talk come out of your mouth." First of all, no speech that is less than true. Secondly, no speech that is less than loving. Thirdly, no speech that is less than pure. Nothing is more tragic to me then to be in the association at some point with some person who says they serve Jesus Christ out of whose mouth comes some dirty talk.

That just shows a dirty heart. There's no place for that. No place for corrupt or filthy communication.

But what is coming from the mouth, he says in verse 29, is good, to the usefulness of building up and that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Your speech should bring that which builds them spiritually and that which brings them grace.

There's a place for fun. There's a place for joy. Laughter does good like a medicine. A merry heart, says the Scripture, is beneficial. But there's no place for dirty talk, no place for angry speech and no place for speech which is less than true.

You have so many illustrations through the history of the church of men who in anger have really destroyed their credibility. Men who have told stories that are dirty, double- entendre, low-level conversation and they really set a standard, not only in my mind and the heart of God are those people disqualified for a ministry, but they lower the standard of ministry to that level. And everybody who knows they're like that says, "Well, that must be acceptable kind of Christianity," right? So that just drops the standard to an unacceptable point.

Colossians 3:8 says the same thing. You might look at it for a moment. Colossians 3:8, in almost the same kind of context, seeking to help us understand what it means to put off the old man and put on the new, just as Ephesians 4 did, says, "To put off," verse 8, "anger, wrath, evil...and the idea is evil speech...blasphemy, dirty talk out of your mouth and lying,"

verse 9. All that has to do with the mouth. And there should be no anger, wrath, evil, blasphemy, filthy talk or lies coming out of the mouth of anyone, any believer, especially someone in spiritual leadership.

So, first of all, Timothy, if you're going to be an example, it starts with your speech. Secondly, you should be an example not only in speech but in conduct. May I suggest another word?

Life style...life style, behavior. This has to do with a righteous life. You're to be a model of righteous living, a person who lives out their convictions, who lives out biblical principles, who lives out godliness in every area of life. The things you do, the places you go, the things you possess, the way you spend your life, the life style you live, your manner of living is really a sermon. It is so loud a sermon that it will over power or it will come along side what you say.

Some people have come to our church, told me about a pastor they had who is in the Los Angeles area who was so deeply involved in materialism, and so forth...in fact, I've heard a couple of them recently...one pastor was given a new Rolls Royce from his people who wanted to give it to him, I guess, as a gift, I guess they knew that's what he wanted so they gave him a Rolls Royce. He told them to take it back and redo the whole interior, he didn't like the color of it. I recently heard about another situation very similar to that...that's not uncommon in the ministry...the ministry can be a place where men can feed, they can feed like the horse leech, talked about in the Old Testament, sucking blood out of people for their own self aggrandizement.

Paul said I have coveted no man's silver, no man's gold, and no man's apparel. I don't want anything from you except to give my life to you, that's all. That's all I want.

But you take a life style like that and match it up with a biblical message and you've got blatant hypocrisy...blatant hypocrisy. And the undermining of everything that is being said...and you say, "Which is true?" I'll tell you which is true, the man is what he lives, not what he says. That's always the way it is. But when a man says it and lives it, then you have power in the message, then you have authority in the message, you have believability.

What about life style? It's basic. It's absolutely basic.

If we are to set the kind of living style that others are to follow, then it has to be right. James 3:13 says, "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life his works with meekness." Who is the wise? Who is the knowledgeable man? The man who shows you with his life how to live, that's the man you want to follow. That's the man. And in Hebrews, as I mentioned earlier, chapter 13 and verse 7, it says those that are over you, who rule over you, who have spoken to you the Word of God, follow their faith considering the result of their life style. That's the kind of life style you want because that's going to lead to eternal reward.

Peter really nails it. First Peter 1:15, "But as He who called you is holy, so be ye holy in all your life style." It's a holy life style. Verse 18, "You were redeemed from your former life style, now unto a holy life style." First Peter 2:12, he says it another way, "Having your behavior, or your life style, honest among the pagans that though they may speak against you as evil doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold glorify God in the day of visitation." Your life should be so good and so virtuous, your life style so honorable, so biblical, so Christ exalting that your critics have absolutely nothing to say.

First Peter 3:1 says to a wife with an unsaved husband, you will win your husband not by your words but by your life style, by your behavior, your conduct, your godliness, your chaste conduct coupled with reverence, he says in verse 2. In verse 16 of the same chapter, having a good conscience whereas they speak of you as evil doers they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good life style in Christ. Isn't that wonderful? It's how you live. It's where you go. It's what you do. It's how you spend your money. And I'm not saying you should be poor. I'm not saying you can't accept what God wonderfully graciously gives you, it's a question of what you pursue.

I've said so many times that I've been blessed beyond most people. And sometimes I feel so bad about it until I consider the source of it. And if I can look in my own heart and say I haven't sought it at all, I haven't sought it and if God in His grace has chosen to give it, then I can accept it. It's a question of attitude. You can have a bad life style even though you don't possess a lot. Your bad life style is you just want a lot and the pursuit is wrong whether you ever get your end or not. On the other hand, God may choose to bless you and your heart is right and you use everything you have for His glory.

Well what is your style of life? Where do you spend your time? Where do you spend your money? Where do you spend your energy? I see the life style around us in the world today so absolutely incompatible with everything that is biblical. I see families being absolutely disintegrated because everybody in the house wants to work. And so the family goes to pieces while everyone goes to work so they can buy bigger houses, bigger cars.

And then when they do have spare time, they're down working on the physical body instead of working on the spirit, the soul, the family, the children. So much confusion in life style. Instead of the church maintaining an alternative, the church gets sucked up in the same stuff. So those in spiritual leadership are to be a model of life style, behavior, conduct.

Thirdly, this is so wonderful. You're to be an example, Timothy, in love...in love. You better be a lover, and by that it doesn't necessarily mean that you're a hand-shaker and a back- slapper and a baby kisser, although all that's fine. That's kind of the fun part of the ministry. But when you talk about love you have to use a biblical definition, we're not talking about spiritual goosebumps and emotions and feelings and the fuzzies and the warm and fuzzy kind of feelings that sometimes you get in a fellowship environment. What we're talking about in biblical love is self-sacrificing service in the lives of others.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man...do what?...lay down his life for his friends."

I believe in my heart that's ministry. You just lay down your life for your friends, that's all. And it's no sacrifice because you understand the goal is eternal, you're back to verse 10. You know, I said that to Patricia the other day, where did my life go? I mean, I'm 47 and that's good, I'm happy to be 47, I don't mind. And I still have a lot of energy and a lot of things I'm excited about, but I look back over the last 20 years and where did it go? It went. In a sense, I just gave it away.

I don't...I can't even remember it. In fact, somebody said, "Do you listen to your own tapes?" And I said, "Only to find out what I believe about something." Because I preached them so long ago they went by so fast I can't remember what I believed about it.

But everything went by so fast in my life. And it's okay.

I said to myself, "But that's all right because this...isn't this what love is all about? Isn't this what God calls the servant to? To love his people to the point where he just gives away all of his energies and his time for the purpose of communicating the things of God to them and seeing them strengthened and built up in the Lord. I mean, that's what it's all about. That's all there is for life...nothing else. God so loved that He...what?

That He gave, and anything less than that isn't love. There are the givers and the takers in the world, the true lovers are the givers not the takers. And ministry is all about giving and giving and giving to meet needs. Paul says to the Thessalonians that wonderful wonderful testimony of his affection for them, that he treated them like a nursing mother cherishes her children. What devotion. First Thessalonians 2 verses 7 and following, we were affectionately desirous of you, willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only but our own souls because you were dear to us. And so you remember that our labor and our travail was day and night, we worked and worked and worked on your behalf. We exhorted. We encouraged. We charged every one of you that you would walk worthy of God. And we gave our life to that, he says. And even he did his own work to earn his own living.

There was Epaphroditus, chapter 2, who nearly died in the service of God's people. He gave himself so strenuously to service that Paul says he was near unto death, but God had mercy on him. Why was he near unto death? For the work of Christ. He didn't regard his life to serve me, he was expendable. That's love. Give yourself away. Paul says, "If I'm offered on the sacrifice of your joy, I rejoice. I don't mind giving my life for you." We've only got the one life, you know.

I've thought that so many times through the years. You just ask yourself that. Should I stay where I am? Or should I go somewhere else? It's a big wide world and there are lots...there are lots of opportunities. I remember when I was contacted to pastor a church in Scotland. And from time to time on some other foreign land to go and do some ministry or some other city in the United States, or Canada, or whatever. And you say to yourself, "Should I stay and spend myself in this one place?" And you have to just wait for the voice of God to answer that, but it's all bound up really in the sense that God's called me to give my life. And this is the people I'm to give my life to, then this is exactly what I'll do, that's how love is expressed. That's the biblical kind of thing that is referred to when it says, "Timothy, you're to be an example of love." It's self- sacrificing service on the basis of others.

And you have the same responsibility. As I said all the way along these things, they're not just me but they're you, too. So you're to serve your love to others in terms of self-sacrificing interest in meeting their needs.

Fourthly, he says in faith, and that's in verse 12, in faith. The word "faith" really could be translated "faithfulness" or trustworthiness or loyalty, fidelity, unswerving commitment, consistency. The idea is be consistent, Timothy, be faithful, loyal, trustworthy, believable because you don't swerve off the track, you're not in and out, hit and miss, up and down, back and forth. You're there. You're solid.

You're moving, unswerving, consistently, always committed, never deviating. Boy, that's the kind of thing people can follow, that's the kind of bandwagon they get on.

"Moreover, brethren," Paul says in 1 Corinthians...in 2...yes, 1 Corinthians 4:1 and 1, Paul says, "Moreover, brethren, it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." The real...the real thing that separates men in the ministry from those who succeed...who separates between those who succeed and those who fail is this idea of consistency, who are the loyal trustworthy faithful long-term people who hang in there unswervingly consistently serving Christ through all the years of their life? That's the faithfulness. Timothy, just be consistent, unwavering. It's so important.

You know, there are always the flash-in-the-pan approaches, but we're to be consistent, faithful, never ever deviating. Paul had that reputation, the reputation of absolute faithfulness. He mentions some of his friends who were the same, Epaphras, Colossians 1:7, who is a faithful minister of Christ. Colossians 4:7, he mentions another of his friends, Tychicus, who is a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. That's the key, just consistency and faithfulness to the things of God.

So, Timothy, you're to be an example in all these areas and one more, finally in verse 12, in purity. The word is hagneia, it means purity in the area of sexual chastity and also implies purity in the matter of heart intention. If your heart intention is pure, then your behavior will be pure as well. There is to be purity in the sexual area.

History has shown and it's just obvious to all of us that ministry is devastated by sexual impurity...just devastated. And I believe the men in the leadership of the church are vulnerable in that area if they let their guard down because I think that's a primary area of occupation by Satan, because of its devastating effect. So there must be a maintenance of absolute moral purity, fleeing lust. We want to be, 2 Timothy 2, don't we?, vessels fit for the Master's use. Then he says, "Flee youthful lust."

Now let me sum this up, and listen carefully. If a person to be an excellent minister of Jesus Christ is to be a model of virtue in speech, life style, sacrificial love, trustworthiness, and moral purity, then listen carefully...anybody who isn't a model in those things has no business being in the position of spiritual leadership. Why? Because if he lives at a lower level, that's where he sets the standard. And the responsibility of spiritual leadership is not to live in isolation, like some outer space kind of saint, but to live at the level where God wants everybody to live...and the standard has to be maintained.

Now how can you do that? How can we change what's going on in our country? Well, I think several things. One, men who are disqualified ought to get out of the ministry and do something else. Maybe God will bless them and use them even more if they don't try to be hypocritical. I'm sure He would. Two, we need to pull together pastors from all around the world and reinforce to them these truths. We've got to police the movement.

Somebody has to do it. We have to get control of this thing.

And so that means two things. We've got to demand that men who aren't qualified get out. And then we've got to call the men who are qualified to stay pure. We've got to get these guys together like we do at the Shepherds Conference and we've got to pull them together and set the standard, whether personally in counseling with them or preaching these things to them or giving tapes to them, we've got to keep setting that standard up.

And then the third thing is we've got to train a whole new generation of young people who are totally committed to these standards. And I believe by God's grace He's put Grace Church somewhere in the forefront of all of that. I'm not willing to accept a lower standard, and I don't think you are either. And I know the Lord isn't. But if we're going to have the high standard, we've got to set it out there again, we've got to start measuring people by it. And if they don't qualify, that's got to be made known. And if they do, they've got to be called to an ongoing holiness. And then we've got to raise up young men who are committed to these things.

We do have to police the movement, folks. We should be as eager to put the wrong person out as we are to put the right person in, right? Well, let's bow in prayer.

Father, there's no intention in our hearts, and You know that, to set ourselves up as the model of all spiritual virtue, for that would not be true of any of us. But, Lord, by Your Spirit and Your grace and the application of Your holy Word, we know we can be what You want us to be, as much as is humanly possible. I thank You for the leadership of this church. I thank You for the modeling of speech and behavior, the modeling of love, the modeling of loyalty, trustworthiness, the modeling of purity. I thank You that You have set many examples before us. And as a result, the people here have come to understand the standard which You require. You require it for Your glory and our blessedness. And what could be more wonderful to us than those things.

So, Father, I just pray that where there are those men who name Your name and stand in the pulpit, and, Lord, their life is not right and their ministry is not honoring to You, I ask, Lord, that You would remove them from that, that they might not detract, that they might not destroy, that they might not lower the standard. And, Father, I ask that You would take that great host of godly faithful men and that You would bind their hearts even more closely to the standard that You have revealed and make them more zealous than ever in the power of the Spirit to live to that standard and to keep that example high. And I would pray for a new generation of young men who can be the leaders in your church around the world who have that high standard. Help us, Lord, to train them at the Master's Seminary and other great institutions. Help us to build them in our churches, to nurture them in our personal discipleship so that we can see days ahead should Jesus tarry a great ministry for Your Word in the church and in the world.

And we would pray, too, this morning for some who've gathered with us who've never received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Maybe fighting battles against committing themselves to Him, maybe just shy on their understanding of who He is, maybe reluctantly holding on to their sin while wanting Christ but yet afraid to let go. Lord, whatever it is that holds anyone back from Christ, we pray today that the Spirit of God might break them free from chains that they might embrace Christ and come to the fullness of eternal life.

And the rest of us, Lord, help us to live these kinds of lives. Call us to that ever higher and higher standard to be like Christ.

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