

Devote Yourself With Tenacity

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- [0 : 01] Paul refuting the false teaching of asceticism, this idea that through self-denial and depriving your body, you can come closer to God.
- And Paul said, no, everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. And now what follows in this chapter is a whole bunch of general instructions, one after another which Paul gives to Timothy.
- And some of these instructions are quite specifically for Timothy and others are here for both him and the whole church. I've broken this passage up, the rest of this chapter up into two pieces.
- The first is the trustworthy saying in verses 6 to 11, the saying that we should all be taught and obey. And the second is the example of a faithful minister that Timothy is to set.
- That's in verses 12 to 16. So let's begin to work through this and see what the Lord would say to us as a church this morning. Starting in verse 6, Paul writes to Timothy, So this first statement just reflects back to what we heard last Sunday.
- [1 : 33] Paul just finished telling Timothy about these false teachers that are going to arise and the false teaching that they're going to bring. And he was giving the truth that refutes that. So Paul says, now take care to teach these things from verses 1 to 5.
- Teach that to the brothers and sisters in the church. Warn them. And if you do, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus. Then Paul goes on and he gives another instruction in verse 7.
- He says, have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives tales. Rather, train yourself to be godly.
- This is the second time that Paul brings up this issue of myths. And we heard Paul say that this was the problem with the false teachers back in chapter 1, verses 3 and 4.
- Back there he said to Timothy, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer or to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies.
- [2 : 42] Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work. So here he picks up this problem again in chapter 4, verse 7.
- But this time he's speaking directly to Timothy himself. It's like he's saying, don't get sucked in to these distractions. Godless myths and old wives tales.
- So this must be a real problem in the church. We so easily get off of what we should be focused on and onto other things.
- We drift off from the gospel, from that focus on Christ and how we should be living for him and into these side things.
- Both myths and old wives tales have one thing in common. They refer to stuff that's not verifiably true.
- [3 : 44] Stories. Speculation. The Greek word here for old wives tales made me chuckle a little bit. It means the gossip that elderly women promote.

I don't think it means disrespect to elderly women in general. But, you know, this is kind of the thing that sometimes happens. They're elderly. They're not busy working or raising children or attending to their homes as much anymore.

And so what do they do? Well, they would spend a lot of time just talking about all kinds of stuff. Telling stories. Spreading gossip. Speculating about all kinds of things. And Paul's instruction to Timothy is strong here.

He says, have nothing to do with that. Refuse it. Avoid it. Reject it. That kind of talk.

That kind of gossip is godless, says Paul. It's worthless. It doesn't edify people. It's distracting them. So have nothing to do with it.

[4 : 49] Rather, train yourself to be godly. Now let's hone in on this word godly. What does it mean to be godly?

This is a word that, in my opinion, has been poorly translated into English by all the major translations today. It's translated this way, the same in almost all of them.

Some say in godliness. As if we all intuitively know what it means to be godly. Or what it means to have godliness.

Yes. But then I think if I was to ask you guys how to, what that means to define it, I think that we'd probably hear a variety of different answers.

Some people think it means to be like god. But in what ways? And based on what? Some people think it means to be good.

[5 : 50] To be a moral person. Others think it means to have a good character. The kind of character that pleases God. And the problem here is that we, today, in our language, we don't really have a really great, single, modern English word that captures the meaning here.

Piety would be a good word. But it's so old that most of us don't even know what it means anymore. And it's got this negative connotation to it as well. Hypocritically virtuous.

Well, that doesn't fit. Religious would also be a good word. But over time, that word has changed in meaning too. And it's got a lot of baggage now. And even amongst Christians, we kind of give it a negative twist.

We kind of pit it against relationship with God. And use it to describe a more works-based kind of spirituality. The meaning of this word, godly or godliness, is to be devout.

To be devoted to God. It's not first and foremost about a person's moral behavior or character traits.

[7 : 07] It's about a person's giving themselves to God. It's a very relational word. In this context, to the one true God, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Now, a person who's devoted to God, they will live a holy life. I mean, they will grow in their faith. And that will transform their conduct. It will change the way they live.

But those things, how we live, that's the fruit of our devotion to God. And so, what does Paul mean when he says to be godly? He means to be a person who is devoted to God and his son Jesus.

In the ways that God has said that we should be, of course. It's an orientation of the heart first. Humility towards God.

Reverence. Holy fear of God. Faith in God. A submissiveness. A willingness to obey God.

[8 : 10] To be devoted to God means to be a worshiper of God. To love God. A desire to please him. And then, that devotion, it will spill out into how we live.

And it will transform us and our character. I think this distinction is really important. Paul is not saying, train yourself to be good.

It's not just about morals. He's not saying, train yourself to be like God. He's saying, train yourself to be devoted to God. Quite literally.

Train yourself toward devoutness. Train yourself to be devoted to God.

Train yourself to be devoted to God. Train yourself to be devoted to God. And it's here that Paul borrows from the language of the athletic world. Train yourself to be devoted to God.

[9 : 15] This word in the original, actually, it's the same word that we get our word gymnasium from. The gym part of that. Or gymnastics. I love this metaphor.

Train yourself to be devoted to God. In other words, don't just sit around and wait for it to happen. Don't just sit there and wait for God to get your attention.

And change your life. Don't just go on with your life and wait until a day when you just somehow start to feel like praying. Or feel like reading your Bible.

No, when it comes to devotion to God, Paul says, train yourself toward that. Go after it. Pursue devotion tenaciously.

In the same way that an athlete prepares to compete. I think there's a huge lesson to be learned here from the world of sports. What do athletes do to win?

[10 : 17] They train. They adjust their lives. They rearrange their priorities. They change the way they eat. They adjust all their habits.

They put time and effort into practicing and exercising and building skill. They make themselves repeat the things needed again and again to build the skill.

They practice the jump shot again and again or the serve. They build these habits into their lives. And they're consistent about it.

They repeat them. Because they know that that's what will yield the results needed to win. Paul's saying, Timothy, you know the way that people approach sports like that?

Take that kind of approach towards being devoted to God. Go after it. Rearrange your life.

[11 : 13] Make it a priority. Make it a priority. Change your habits. Get yourself off the spiritual couch. And kick your bum out the door spiritually.

Start doing the things consistently and regularly that will lead you deeper in your devotion to God. Put the time in. Put the time in. Put the effort in.

Train yourself to be godly. To be devoted to God. This is Paul's biggest instruction in this part of the letter. And Paul gives us some encouragement to go with it.

Some perspective. In verse 8. Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value. But godliness has value for all things.

Holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. So here's some perspective, Timothy. Physical training is of some value.

[12 : 20] This is the exercise verse in the Bible. There's some value to physical exercise. There's health benefits that come from it. It's good for the body.

Helps you build strength and coordination and flexibility. And burn fat. Keep your heart strong. And yes, even sometimes win the game. Physical training is of some value.

But here's the contrast. The perspective. Devoted to godness has value for all things. This one motivational truth alone is worth more than gold.

Going to the gym. Going for a walk. Going for a run. Practicing with your team. It has some value. But only in a couple aspects of life.

Whether physical health. Whether physical health. Or performance on the team. But devoted to godness. Will bring benefit to every area of your life.

[13 : 25] In all things. It has value for all things. And so let's make a list of everything. Finances.

Marriage. Parenting. Work. Promise keeping. Decision making. Love. Romance.

Gift giving. Perseverance. Perseverance. Patience. Rest.

Leisure. Anxiety. Doubt. Temptation. Productivity. Big moments in life.

Little moments in life. Youth. Old age. Conflict resolution.

[14 : 26] Leadership. Serving. Art. Driving. How to talk to Nate when he pulls you over for speeding.

Forgiveness. Hope. Faith. Joy. Diaper changing.

Garbage removal. Conversation. Listening. Speaking. Responsibility. And the list can go on forever.

Because all things really means all things. Everything in life. Is affected positively. Beneficially. When we train ourselves towards being devoted to God.

God really can. And he really does change every aspect of your life for the better. If you will give your whole life to him. Once upon a time. As an example.

[15 : 29] I was quite afraid to get up in front of people. I used to hate public speaking. I didn't want to do anything like that. I'll help make the presentation. I'll write the words for it.

I'll type it up. And I'll give you the sheet. And you can go read it. And present it in front of the class. But I hated to be in front of people. I was so afraid. My palms would sweat.

My tongue would be dry. My heart would race. Until finally in my journey of devoting myself to Christ. I sensed God's call.

To be a shepherd. In the church someday. Well now what am I going to do? Sensing the call didn't take away my fear.

Not one bit. But God gave me one opportunity after another. And each one I had to meet with prayer.

[16 : 26] And inward struggle. And it was a fight to say yes to God. Over and over and over again. To trust his promises. And to press forward.

One speech. One devotional. One public speaking moment at a time. And then one day I looked up from this pulpit. Here in Davidson. And I realized. I'm just not afraid of this anymore.

There's only one person in my audience. That I need to fear. And it's God himself. And he has said. Preach the word. Be faithful in season.

And out of season. That's just one. Unexpected area of my life. That God has turned upside down. As a result of me.

Pursuing. Trying to devote myself. To Christ. And now training yourself. Towards devotedness. Impacts all things. Every aspect of your life.

[17 : 28] When you become a follower of Jesus. God's own spirit. Takes up residence inside of you. And when you surrender yourself.

And you devote yourself. To God. With tenacity. And vigor. Like he's talking about. In these. These verses. God's power is unleashed.

In you. And on you. And you are never the same. Every area. Transformed. For the better. In countless ways. Oh how we need.

This perspective. Without it. We may put a lot of effort. A lot of time. A lot of energy. Into all kinds of things. But maybe things. That only have some value.

Only a little value. In the grand scheme of things. You may be working hard. You may be putting a lot. Into this. But maybe it's a thing. That matters very little.

[18 : 28] Put that energy. Put that time. Into being devoted to God. And watch every area. Of your life. Strengthen.

Flourish. And blossom. And there's more perspective. To be had. He says. For physical training. Is of some value. But godliness. Has value for all things.

Holding promise. For both the present life. And the life to come. Going to the gym. Going for another run. Practicing with your sports team.

Again and again and again. Well that's only for the benefit. In this life. In this world. But there's a life to come. He reminds us. There's a life beyond the grave.

There's a kingdom. That's eternal. For which we were made. And saved. And devoting yourself to God. All in. Brings benefit. And reward.

[19 : 24] Both here. And now. And. In that kingdom. In that life. That eternal. Kingdom. That's coming. In verse 9.

Paul says. This is a trustworthy saying. That deserves full acceptance. It's like Paul just took the highlighter out. And just went back over all that he's just said. Timothy.

You can bet your life on this. Don't hesitate to embrace this. Fully. Don't just listen to these words. And take it in half-heartedly. Take them all the way in.

Accept it fully. All in. As a side note. If you're looking to memorize anything in God's word. To grow your faith. These trustworthy sayings.

In first Timothy. Are a great place to start. Paul says. That is why we labor. And strive.

[20 : 22] Because we have. Because we have put our hope in the living God. Who is the savior of all people. And especially of those who believe. Notice the two words.

That Paul uses there. Both of them. Have an intensity. To them. We labor. We work hard. We strive. We struggle forward.

So Paul is not the lazy. Overweight coach. That's sitting on the sidelines. Telling Timothy. To run faster. And go harder. Well he sits there.

Himself. No. He himself. Paul himself. Is training. Towards. Devoutness. He himself. Is putting in the reps. Wherever he is.

He's living vigorously. Even though it's hard. Let's remember. Says Paul. We aren't worshipping. Some lifeless idol.

[21 : 22] Or some idea. Like the pagans. All around us. We have put our hope. In the living God. And he's the savior. Of all people.

The eternal salvation. Or destruction. Of people. Is on the line. It's at stake. Here. And we have.

Word. And news. Of a savior. For. For everyone. For all people. The whole world. And so. It's like Paul saying. We're working. Our butts off. To get the word out.

We struggle forward. Despite difficulty. And opposition. And even persecution. Do you hear that fire. Of devoutness. In Paul's own heart. Take it easy.

Is the message. That the world around us. Is saying to us. Take it easy. Paul's saying. The exact opposite. Train yourself.

[22 : 28] To be devoted to God. Join. With us. Timothy. Labor with us. Struggle with us. We serve the living God. And lives are on the line.

Verse 11. He says. Command. And teach. These things. Don't miss this verse. We might have tried to excuse ourselves here.

By saying that all this. Well that's really just Paul's instructions. To Timothy. Or it's just for pastors. And leaders in the church. That Paul says.

Everything that I just taught you. And commanded you. To train yourself. To be devoted to God. Timothy. Turn around and. Teach. And command that. To the people in your church.

Don't think that your pastor. Or your elders. Are the only ones in the church. Who should be all in. Completely devoted to God. If you are a believer in Jesus.

[23 : 30] The command to train yourself. To be devoted to God. Is for you. And. So is the encouragement. And the perspective. That goes with it.

Belonging to the body of Christ. As a follower of Jesus. I'm going to put it this way. It comes. With a spiritual.

Gym membership. We are all to train ourselves. Toward. Devoutness. And the best part about it. Is we can train together. We can spur one another on.

And encourage each other. And help each other with this. So this is the first part. This is the trustworthy saying. That we are. Should all be taught.

And obey. Now we come to that second. Section of this passage. Where Jesus. Through Paul. Is going to tell Timothy.

[24 : 28] What kind of example. He is to set. For the people. In the church. He writes. Don't let anyone look down on you.

Because you are young. But set an example. For the believers. In speech. In conduct. In love. In love. In faith.

And in purity. So this is. Might feel like a daunting task. To Timothy. there are men and women in the church who are older than he is why should we listen to you Timothy you're young what could you possibly know that we don't we have experience we have the wisdom that comes with age or maybe they're saying something different Timothy whoa cool the jets you've got all this energy and fire because you're young you don't have a family you don't have responsibilities yet just simmer down cool off take it easy there's no rush here Paul says don't let anyone look down on you Timothy because you are young don't let older people discourage you but how do I influence people who are older than me how do I instruct them how do I lead them

Paul says this is the way don't just do it with words set them an example with your life an example to follow give them an example to follow with the words that you speak in speech show them how a follower of Jesus ought to speak to other people model that for them give them an example to follow in your conduct show them how a follower of Christ ought to behave themselves and act give them an example to follow in your love show them how a follower of Jesus sincerely and persistently loves the people around them give them an example to follow in your faith show them how a follower of Christ trusts God's word and hangs on to his promises and holds on to the things that he has said as truth and finally Timothy give them an example to follow in your purity just like today the city of Ephesus was known for being filled with all kinds of sexual immorality and so Timothy show them by your own life how a follower of Jesus ought to live when it comes to sexuality and to marriage show them how your attitude should be towards women how you should treat women purity with purity is it possible for a young person to influence people who are older than they are for Christ absolutely you better believe it how do we do it we do it by how we live by setting an example in all of these areas of our lives there's something utterly compelling about a person who is completely devoted to God and to Christ Jesus and so those of you who are young or younger don't think for a moment that you can't make a difference don't think that you can't be used by God to shape the lives of other people absolutely you can even people who are older than you win their respect by how you live how you speak how you act how you love how you believe and how you live in purity for those of us who are older are we off the hook here is it only the younger that should set an example with their lives well of course not this is for old and young this is how Jesus wants all his people to live as an example for the other believers in the church but it might be a little different this verse for those of us who are older how do you see the younger people in the church the younger believers are you tempted to look down on them if God's spirit dwells within his people all of them even the young ones then there are many things that we can learn even from younger brothers and sisters in the faith the question is do we have the humility to listen and to learn from them verse 13

Paul says until I come devote yourself to the public reading of scripture to preaching and to teaching do not neglect your gift which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you now these instructions are very specifically for Timothy they pertain to his leadership in the church and these are the things that are to be his priorities as a leader in the church public reading of scripture preaching or proclamation and teaching and Paul alludes to a special spiritual gift that he received in a moment where somebody spoke a word of prophecy we don't get all the details about that as much as we might like to know more about that but this is encouragement Paul is saying you've been given a gift by God don't let it go unused use it now this applies to us a little differently here today first of all not everyone who does the work of teaching and preaching in the church has a prophetic word or a special gift like Timothy had and not everyone in our church of course is a preacher or teacher but what is your role in this body in this family what has God specially gifted you for and made you for what are you competent in that you can use to build up the family of God and are you using it second let's not miss the importance of being a church today where scripture

[31 : 54] God's word is read proclaimed and taught this is how we are to function in the household of God we are to be people people of the book people who regularly hear and read the scriptures we are to have regular preaching and teaching in our church and there are two sides to this there is the side of the preachers and teachers to be diligent in their study and in their prayer and meditating and preparing to teach so that what they teach is clear and accurate and actually from the word of God but there is also the side of the listeners to show up to have hearts ready to receive a willingness to respond and put into practice the things that we hear from God's word whether here in the message or in Sunday school or on Tuesday nights it is at least a two part act to fulfill this in our church if Charles does all the work of preparing a lesson from the Bible for your kids so that they can grow in their faith but you don't bring your kids it doesn't happen it doesn't work

Jesus is saying that this is the way a church ought to function this is how we should operate this is how we should conduct ourselves by regular reading preaching and teaching of God's word and that puts responsibility on all of us some of us as teachers and preachers in our preparation and others of us to show up to be here with open ears and soft hearts ready to respond to whatever the Lord Jesus would say to us in these moments and this is absolutely critical for our health and our vitality as a church it's God's word that shapes and molds us into the kind of church that God wants us to be it's what's revealed about God in these pages that moves us to worship it's what's said about Jesus in here that makes us wise for salvation and gives us a message to run with it's the instructions that God's given in here that show us how to live and it's in here that we find the motivation to do those things in a way that honors Christ if we take the Bible out of the church the church will very soon be on life support it won't be long before we're just an empty lifeless skeleton of a church where tradition and friendship are all that's left but give God's word it's regular place to be heard and considered in our midst and watch the church come to life watch lives be changed watch love real sincere love grow in people's hearts watch needs be met and initiatives begun and a community reached so this is why

Paul emphasizes this so much in his letters to Timothy devote yourself not just give a little bit of time but devote yourself to the public reading of scripture to preaching and to teaching Paul goes on he says be diligent in these matters give yourself wholly to them so that everyone may see your progress watch your life and doctrine closely persevere in them because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers so careful faithful teaching and preaching of the word of God in the church makes the difference between life and death heaven and hell the good news about Christ Jesus and what he has done it has the power to save people but people can only believe that good news and be saved if that's what they're hearing and so as teachers and preachers there's a sobering responsibility given to us we're to take extra special care that what we teach really is what the Bible is saying we will be held responsible not just for our own lives but also for the lives of all in the church if we fail to live and teach the word of God watch your life and doctrine closely by doing so you will save both yourself and your hearers so these are the instructions that Christ has for Timothy about how he wants

Timothy to set an example for others to follow and to keep the word of God before the people let me just sum it up as a church as the very household of God we are to train ourselves to be devoted to God keeping in mind the perspective that Christ has given us our devotion to him has value for all things in life and it holds promise for this life and the life to come and so we should labor we should strive to devote ourselves to Christ Jesus and to do what he has commanded us we should strive to live exemplary lives for all around us who are watching and we should be a household that regularly hears and responds to the reading and preaching and teaching of God's word which gives us all of us something to do whether we're preacher, teacher or hearer these are the words of Christ to Timothy for the church in Ephesus and for us today let's pray

Father in heaven I pray and ask that there would be no heart in this room that is unstirred by this call to press forward and devote ourselves completely to you Lord you know the excuses that we've made and sometimes we do this for a season and then we drift away or we grow cool I pray that you would stir it in each of our hearts and that all of us would have a heart that beats for you that we would follow you all in and love you with all our heart soul, mind and strength I pray that you would turn all of our lives upside down for the good and that you would do something amazing here in Davidson and in the surrounding area as a result so that you get the glory and so that we can rejoice in the part that we got to play when you return we ask this in Jesus name

[39 : 19] Amen