

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“The Development of the Church ”

1 Timothy 4:10-16

I don't know what your church background might be, but mine was in a very formal church growing up. As formal as you can get, and in that environment when I was younger, I had one question that was really never exactly answered for me as I pondered the service that I would go to every week, and that was “why are we doing this?” There were a lot of parts to it. Our services here are more straight-forward. We have music, we have teaching, but there was a lot of stuff going on and I wondered why are we doing this, and what's that for? I am that kind of person, kind of a little inquisitive, and eventually I kind of grew bored with the whole thing. By high school I decided I would rather watch football on Sunday morning and never did come to grips with that.

But now I have been involved in this church many, many years and one of the things about our church that, when I started to attend here in 1981, captivated me like no other was I felt like there was a purpose for what we were doing. In fact, I actually saw people seeking to achieve the purpose and even to state the purpose, and that was very exciting to me, as I had in college become a Christian. That purpose is to really seek to grow in our faith, to help others to come to faith and grow; it helped me to capture what we're busy doing.

This passage we are going to be looking at this morning, 1 Timothy 4:10-16, really gives us some instruction of how to grow in our faith, individually and as a church. As we look at this, I trust we will be developing. That's why I called it the development of the church.

The first part of 1 Timothy 4 was doctrines that were coming upon the church that must be fought against, that was the defense of the church. This is the development of the church. You know the best defense is a good offense and to prepare people well. To help them be strong in faith will ward off the attacks of the evil one. So let's look at this passage. We will start at chapter 4 verse 10 and go down to verse 16, the end of the chapter.

Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:10-16, “For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. (11) Prescribe and teach these things. (12) Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. (13) Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. (14) Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. (15) Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. (16) Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.”

So, right in the first verse is a statement to persevere, to love, to strive, to work and this is for a purpose, and I've entitled this “to be concerned for the world.” And the reason is because this striving, this laboring is focused upon the future. There's the word “hope,” and whenever you see the word “hope” in the Bible you know that it's looking to the future. Not gee, I hope so, a seventy-five percent chance, something like that, but an actual firm assurance, a confidence that this hope will be achieved. A hope that what God has promised He will fulfill.

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So, for this hope we are laboring, we are striving, we are working because we have a hope fixed on a living being, alive God. Our motivation to continue in the present is our confidence in the future. We have this hope for the future that gives us confidence to go on, to work presently. This is important for us to have a view of the future. This is why so much of the Scripture is given about future things because it encourages us in the present to live righteously and godly.

Then it goes on to describe the living God who is the Savior of all men, and there's a future, not just for us, but for others. We labor for our future, the hope that lies ahead for us, and also for the future of others. He's the living God, He's the Savior of all men, and as the savior of all men, He has given an opportunity, His death, to bring salvation to the world. We should be concerned about the future for the world, the unsaved around us, and desire to see them enjoy what we have come to enjoy. If we have this hope and this vision for what God has done that will move us to labor and strive, presently, to work.

Now as we look at this verse there is a theological issue here. God is the Savior of all men. Why aren't all men saved if He is the Savior of all men? He certainly is, but what's also abundantly clear, not only in the Scripture but just by looking around, is that not all are seeking God. Many have turned to their own desires, and their end is destruction. God is the Savior of all men, potentially. That is who He is. Potentially He is the Savior, but, actually, that is only applied personally to those who believe. The requirement, of course, for the Savior to have come to rescue you from sin is belief.

Now there is another issue, and Dale has been speaking the past couple of weeks about God drawing us. That no one comes to the Father, Jesus said, unless the Father draws him is so true. It's abundantly taught in the Scriptures that God has chosen certain people to Himself and is drawing them. Apart from that, no one would be saved, because apart from God we have all turned to our ways. We are not going to be seeking God (Romans 3:10-12). We need God to intercede and bring us to Himself.

Now some people who believe this truth, as well they should, will say this, well, God is the Savior and has died for only those who have believed. This passage says that He is the Savior of all men and there are other passages that support this. I would like to give them to you just to clarify the understanding of God as Savior. You may not have it memorized it but John 1:29 will sound familiar to you. John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Christ death was for the sins of the world not just for the sins of the saved, the chosen.

2 Corinthians 5:14 says, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died." He died for all; His death was for all.

Even more clear is Hebrews 2:9 which speaks of His death for certain people. "But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." His death is for everyone not just some but for all.

2 Peter 2:1 speaks of His death for those who are ungodly, not just for the godly but for the ungodly. "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought

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them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” There we have it. The savior of all men has bought even those whose end is destruction.

And finally, 1 John 2:2 says, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” So, the Scripture teaches that Jesus is the Savior of all and we have to recognize that. We have a purpose in life to follow the Savior, to bring His message, to the world, of salvation. That's who He is; He is the Savior. That salvation is applied to those who believe.

Now back to 1 Timothy 4, verse 11, “prescribe and teach these things.” This is communicating God's will. We are called to prescribe and teach these things, and there are two commands regarding to what we are to communicate. Prescribing is insisting on obedience. This is not optional; we must obey. And teaching is instructing for obedience, helping people to understand why they are to obey. We need both.

If we only have insisting on obedience, we then have people doing certain things but not knowing why they are doing them, just being ordered. That is a temporary thing without an understanding of why we are to obey. So, we just don't insist on it, we need to instruct it. When we instruct it, we are not just throwing out ideas, “this is what the Bible says. hey, do what you want, you choose.”

There is an understanding, that this obedience must be applied and the instruction is the motivation to understand the significance of the words as we apply them to our life. And in that, God's will is communicated. The present tense here, prescribe and teach these things, indicate we must do this habitually. We must be busy about prescribing and teaching God's will, not just externally, but with an understanding of any appreciation that this is necessary for us.

Verse 12 says, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” This verse reminds me of when I was first put forth as an elder for our church. It was about 13 or 14 years ago now.

In our process we have as a church, we give anyone who has a objection the opportunity to come and talk to the person that has been selected and discuss that with them. And I admit I had one person who came and talked to me and thought I wasn't qualified. And the reason they thought I wasn't qualified was that I wasn't old enough. At the time I was 30 years old, so I graciously said, “I'm working on it, I'm getting better, give me time.”

Seriously, it was an interesting thought. Unfortunately, there is no actual age involved in church leadership, so I couldn't look to the Scriptures and say this is the time. The best I could come up with was you had to be 30 years old to be a priest, not that that's the same thing. I basically deferred to the leaders of the church and left it at that.

A foot note here, I think there is not an age given because churches and fellowships are different, and some are older and some are younger and you have to work with what you have; and at the time, we were younger. Now we are all aging together.

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So, let no one look down on your youthfulness. I thought of that; I think of this now. Without younger people, our church is not going to be strong. We must not look down on youthfulness, but recognize that there is an encouragement that must come from them. Now, youthfulness in our society may not be as second-class as it was back 2,000 years ago where age really elevated you in society. So, Timothy had more of an issue here.

This was actually something of a weakness, and he was instructed to be confident in spite of his weakness of his age. He didn't have the standing in society because of his age, yet he was instructed to not be deterred by that. While people may consider that a weakness, he was to show himself an example.

Now there are weaknesses that we can change and weaknesses that we cannot change, and certainly age is something that we change very slowly. For the weaknesses that we cause, we should change. There are certain things we may be doing that are causing us to not be as able to serve, and if we have those things, we should change those things. We should mature. But there are many weaknesses that we do not cause. They are just who we are and we should continue in that. Whether it's our age, whether it's our place in life and the responsibilities that we have that are large, maybe our physical situation, our academics, our family, whatever our situation is that we have weaknesses in, if we cannot change those weaknesses, we have to trust that God has allowed those weaknesses to be in our life and to move forward in spite of them.

The remedy for our inadequacies, which we all have, is a godly life. All of us are not as able, as adequate as we could be, or maybe should be, or would like to be; but we have a path to overcome that and that's the rest of this verse. "But rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity,"--what we say, what we do, how we think, what we believe, and how we conduct ourselves in purity, which is likely speaking of sexual purity-- "show yourself an example of those who believe." The remedy for our inadequacies is a godly life, and our weakness can actually be a strength.

Paul saw it this way in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 and so should you. He said this, "My grace" (these are the words of Christ quoted by Paul) 'my grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (10) Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

When we have weakness or inadequacies, this is the opportunity for the Lord to work in those weaknesses to strengthen us, and to help us, in spite of those weaknesses, serve others. And we can be confident and trust that the Lord will do that because He wants to work through us, for who he's made us and the position he has put us in.

On to verse 13. This is speaking about the role of the word of God in developing the church. "Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching." We are developed as we labor and strive to reach the world. We are developed as a church as we have every person participating, younger as well as the older, we need all, and we are developed as a church when we give attention to the Scripture. Indeed it is the Scripture and our attention to it that will bring this growth that we so need.

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The public reading of the Scripture and our commitment to the Word involves a couple of things. There was a public reading in the Scripture that was necessary because they didn't have the distribution of the biblical text that we do today. There wasn't the printing press; they didn't have 15 bibles in their homes of different versions. So, the public reading was even more essential, but what was publicly read was not just read. It included exhortation, which was necessary to build up the heart, to bring strength out of weakness, to bring correction for the unruly, to exhort, to move forward. When we are teaching, our teaching must include exhortation to be where God would want us to be, not just throwing ideas out, but exhorting toward application toward obedience. We must give attention to the Scripture for exhortation and to teaching and that's necessary to build up the mind. We must have the heart strengthened so we have a desire to apply. We must have the mind taught and instructed so that we will have knowledge of what it is we are doing and why we are doing it. Both of those come based on the Scriptures.

When I was in college I attended a church that was a fairly strong church. It taught the Scriptures regularly. People understood the Scriptures as they were being taught, faithfully. As time went on and as I would go back to visit, the church began to change, and one notable way it changed was there was a fellow who took the leadership position in the church whose training was more in the area of counseling, and not particularly biblical counseling, and he brought less instruction from the Word and more encouragement through stories and jokes. He was a funny guy. I appreciate that, but nevertheless, the Scripture sort of diminished in the life of that church and to their detriment. There were still lots of people that came, perhaps even more, but the church didn't have the depth.

And they did something that I even thought, I wonder if this is a good idea. What they did was whenever he happened to reference a verse, they would project it up on the screen like we do the music, the text, and he would read it, and they could just read along. The result of that was people really didn't need to bring their Bibles because the verse was right there. They could just read it all together. I thought, well, I wonder if we should do that. It would be kind of handy. You wouldn't have to lug your Bible around. It would be convenient, but I thought, nah, it's good for you to lug your Bible around. It's good for you to have to find where things are, and there's an expectation that we must have so that we are involved enough in the Scripture to know what's in it and not just have me tell you about it, but you have to actually look at it your self and go hmm, I wonder if that's true, and think about it and interact with it yourself.

So, I thought, I don't really want to make this to convenient for you. I would like you to lug your Bible around. I would like you to have to find things. I can remember in my life having to go figure out where is this book and dig around and feel embarrassed and everybody else got there before I did, but it's good for you to pursue the knowledge of God's Word yourself. If we do this and we are committed to this, we will be on the path toward growth, not just personally, but corporately as a church. This is really important for us because God's Word is essential for growth.

Our spiritual growth will be in proportion to our involvement with the Word of God. There is no substitute, and funny stories and jokes won't do. It's indispensable for maturity. I just want to read you one verse (Colossians 1:28) that explains why we need both encouragement and teaching. "And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ."

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Each one of you must be admonished, must be taught, must be instructed.

Next, verse 14. We must continue in God's work, must persevere and continue in the work. "Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery." This is continuing God's work, because that is what spiritual gifts are all about. You have giftedness from God, not to just help you be happy, but to help others be holy. That is what your spiritual gift is for; a spiritual gift should not be neglected. Now don't get caught up in the second part of the verse, which says, "which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery."

This was descriptive of what happened to Timothy, this is not prescriptive, or ordered that we should be doing things this way necessarily. In fact, the Scripture says in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that all of us have giftedness and have been given the Spirit which gifts us. Timothy's experience was in a time with the miracles of the apostles, and prophecies, and came in conjunction with prophetic utterances. And accompanying this was the laying on of the hands of the presbytery or the board of elders, the leaders of the church; and the laying on of hands was the means of formally recognizing him in the responsibility of ministry.

And we do that. We formally recognize people, but the point that you should come away with is the command here, and there is a command here, that is do not neglect the spiritual gift within you. I don't know if you have ever taken a spiritual gifts test. I took a spiritual gifts test when I was in college. I remember it to this day. A lot of questions were on it. I wasn't really sure if those questions were related to what the end of this was, but it was fun until I got to the end of it. You know what my spiritual gifts were, the gifts of missionary and martyrdom. I decided that I didn't like spiritual gifts tests after that, and I've held that position to this day. Spiritual gift tests are rather unnecessary. The Scripture doesn't give any spiritual gift test, and they are bad. I'm still here today; I have not been martyred yet. The Scripture does not call us to explore but to exercise our spiritual gifts. There is no instruction to go figure out what your spiritual gift is, but there is lots of instruction to utilize your spiritual gift.

You may ask, well, how do I utilize it if I don't know what it is? I'll tell you, get busy, get started, do stuff and you will find out how God has put you together. The wheel can be more easily turned if it is moving, than if it's parked. Get busy, serve.

I don't know if you remember the album, the CD cover, that we released, produced about a year ago on scripture songs. Do you remember who painted the cover? Francisco Aceves, our deaf pastor. I learned something recently about this. Actually, I learned this as he was doing the cover for our next one. I learned that he did this using three colors. He used yellow, blue, and red and painted it. I said, wow, that's impressive. Why did you only use three colors? He tried to save us money. Well, with those three primary colors, you can get every color there is. Now there are computer monitors that will display sixteen point something million colors.

So, it is with our gifts. We are who we are, and God has given us abilities and we must exercise those abilities, for He has uniquely put us together. The blend of what He has given us to serve and not neglecting it means, be busy serving others in the church. I say this not to get more workers, I say this because you need to be serving, you must not neglect your spiritual gifts, you must be busy

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helping others. In that you will be developed and our church will be developed for what God will have it to be and you to be. When we neglect our spiritual gift it comes when we fail to serve in the church, so consider that.

Next we must be captivated by God's will, verse 15, "Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all." Do you see something standard here that is not just the Sunday morning type of thing? Take pains with these things, with your serving, with your ministry. There's the word progress, so that your progress may be evident to all, that communicates something, it suggests something, it suggests our need for growth. If your in progress that means you haven't gotten there yet and we haven't gotten to where God would have us to be, we must continue to grow so that our progress may be evident. This is true for everyone, we need to grow.

Progress does something else: it stimulates others for growth. As our progress is evident, that encourages, that challenges and it stimulates others to follow as well. That's why we need to be relating to each other personally, to see this progress, that's why we have growth groups, that's why we have ministries that involve relationships so that we can see the encouragement of people seeking to be absorbed in the things of God so that we can progress in faith and our church can be developed. That stimulates us to grow.

Our progress is more important than our position. God, I'm convinced, is more excited when you are progressing than where you happen to be. No matter how many years you have been a Christian or how many Bible verses you have memorized or how many ministries you have done in the past, what God is much more excited about is which direction you are headed, and how fast you are getting there. Our progress is more important than our position, be captivated by doing His will, be absorbed in it and make progress, and not just for your sake but for the sake of the body of Christ, take pains with this, exert effort.

And finally, verse 16, which is considering our walk, and if there is a verse that can capture the content of this book I would say this is it. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching. Pay close attention to what you are doing and what you are teaching. Attention to our behavior, attention to yourself what you are doing. Think about it closely and give it some attention. Don't just do, but evaluate.

Attention to our beliefs, and to our teaching, attention to what we believe, it seeps out even when we don't try to, our beliefs effect others. We do not believe in a vacuum. Our behavior assures our salvation. This phrase, "persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation." That ensuring salvation is not producing salvation it is assuring us of our salvation. We are not doing things in order to gain salvation but what we do, how we live, our behavior convinces us that we haven't kidded ourselves professing things that we don't really know. If we are behaving properly that validates our beliefs. So pay close attention to yourself and see if your behavior is supporting your profession. If it's assuring your salvation.

While our behavior assures our salvation our beliefs assist others salvation. You will assure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you and we can be instrumental. God's agent, His tool, His resource to helping others enjoy what we have come to enjoy, in fact we should. If we persevere in these things we can have confidence that those who hear us, some, because God is

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working in the lives of some, will be looking to respond. Our behavior assures our salvation, our beliefs assist others salvation. God wants to use you to reach others. He can reach others without you but He wants to use you so you can bring His message to those around. I hope that you will develop personally, as our church develops personally through this. Perseverance which leads to sanctification, holiness, our church will be developing in sanctification in holiness. In service as we are more committed to building up one another in Christ and seeking the lost for Christ. That's how we are developed and that why we are busy about doing the things we are seeking to do.

Lets close in prayer. Lord Jesus we thank You for calling us to Yourself. For giving us an understanding of Yourself and enabling us to make progress in this through Your Spirit. We pray that we would be paying close attention to ourselves and to our teaching as an individual and as a fellowship that we can be accomplishing Your will more abundantly in the future than it has been in the past. And we pray that You help us to be wise and insightful of the ways that we serve not neglecting our giftedness or our abilities but utilizing the potential that You have entrusted to us. And we pray that when the end of the time has come we will have been found pleasing to you and maximizing what You have entrusted to us. In Jesus name, Amen.