

christian

WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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SOUND DOCTRINE

I Timothy 6:3-5

Ronnie Scherffius

A general theme woven throughout Paul's first letter to Timothy is sound doctrine. At least ten times Paul emphasizes soundness of teaching and faithfulness to the doctrine of Christ (1:3, 10; 4:6, 11; 5:7, 21; 6:2-3, 13-14, 17, 20). The apostle reinforces this theme with such phrases as "charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1:3), "these things command and teach" (4:11), "these things give in charge" (5:7), and "these things teach and exhort" (6:2). In the beginning of the sixth chapter Paul addresses the conduct and attitude of Christian slaves toward their masters. By their conduct, the doctrine of God will either be slandered or defended. Let's note Paul's admonition and see what lessons we can draw from our text.

Sound Doctrine Defended

That none may find occasion to blaspheme the authority and doctrine of God, Christian slaves were to treat their masters with the highest degree of dignity (6:1). Slaves whose masters were also brothers in Christ were not to hold them in contempt but rather as a brother faithful to sound doctrine and beloved of God (6:2). Imagine a man serving as a shepherd over the flock of God and also a master to one of the flock. Consider the circumstances of a man faithfully and forcefully preaching the gospel to the church on the Lord's day only to return home as a slave to a family who are members of the church. Such relationships would certainly be difficult to navigate without the guidance and direction of sound doctrine.

Furthermore, picture how the master would kindly

respond, not only to the Christian slave but also to the wholesome words of Jesus Christ, which dictated such a peaceful and unpretentious attitude. Moreover, how greatly impressed would an observing world be, seeing one in such a lowly position standing on equal footing with his master in a life serving God. By following such apostolic admonitions Christian slaves powerfully defend sound doctrine.

Sound Doctrine Defined

Paul defines sound doctrine and draws a line in the sand that exposes the true heart and character of

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THE CHURCH AND ITS PRIORITIES

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"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE CHURCH AND ITS PRIORITIES

Cody Westbrook

The Bible has a great deal to say about priorities. After 70 years in Babylon, the Persian king, Cyrus, permitted the Jews to return to their homeland. In 536 B.C. Zerubbabel led the first group home to begin the process of rebuilding the temple of God. After harassment from a group of Samaritans the work came to a standstill and stayed that way for 16 years. Then, God raised up the prophet Haggai to issue this message—"Consider your ways" (Hag. 1:5)! The people had prioritized their own houses over God's and so they needed to repent and change their priorities. Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Christ must have the preeminence in our lives (Col. 1:18). John recognized this when he said, "He must increase but I must decrease" (John 3:30), and Joshua recognized it when he exhorted Israel to "choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:14-15).

We all have priorities and we must ensure that they are aligned properly. The same may also be said of the church. As Paul drew his first letter to Timothy to a close, he made sure to emphasize the need for proper priorities. Consider three items listed in 1 Timothy 6 that the church should prioritize.

- **Sound Doctrine (1 Tim. 6:3-5)** – Healthy teaching is mentioned no less than 8 times throughout the book of 1 Timothy (1:3; 10; 4:6; 13; 16; 5:17; 6:1; 3), and is a subject that demands our attention. Those who do not concern themselves with sound doctrine are guilty of prioritizing self over salvation. They are described as proud (puffed up or conceited), ignorant (a firm grasp of nothing, cf. 1:7), and obsessed (sick with obsession of that which only produces problems, cf. 1:4; Jas. 3:14-15). They are sick with conceit, greed, and

covetousness, the result of which is a corrupted mind that has no regard for truth. The church must "withdraw" from such individuals (v. 5).

- **Godly Living (1 Tim. 6:6-16)** – In contrast to verses 3-5, verse 6 makes clear that godliness is not a means of financial gain, but rather contentment. Some dedicate their lives to pursuing things of worldly value, but God's people must recognize this as foolishness (vss. 6-10). True contentment is found in godliness and therefore we must be sure to prioritize things of genuine value (vss. 9-12). This means running away from evil, relentlessly pursuing things that are good (righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness), fighting the good fight, and keeping a firm hold on the prize.
- **Proper Focus (1 Tim. 6:17-21)** – Three commands make up this section. First, trust God (v. 17). Tragically, too many put their trust in things that are "uncertain," when we should all put our trust in the only thing that is certain—God (cf. Luke 12:16-21; Phil. 4:10-13; etc.). Second, excel in good work (vss. 18-19). The church should constantly be involved in work that does good for the Lord and other people. Doing so will make eternal deposits that will never be devalued (cf. Matt. 6:19-21). Third, guard the gospel (vss. 20-21). The gospel had been "committed" to Timothy's trust. The language describes the gospel as a deposit which had been placed in Timothy's care. He was to guard and protect it from those who would cause harm (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2).

Considering the overall context of 1 Timothy as well as the context of chapter 6 reveals a number of items that demand the attention of the Lord's church.

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Chapter 1 emphasizes the need for sound doctrine and contrasts its purpose with the consequences of unsound doctrine. Chapter 2 discusses our Lord's will for worship and the roles of men and women. Chapter 3 identifies the qualifications that God demands in church leaders. Chapter 4 tells us about the qualities that God desires to exist in His servants. Chapter 5 discusses relationships in the body of Christ and how they are to be maintained. Chapter 6 brings everything together by emphasizing sound doctrine, godly living, and a proper focus.

Take a moment to reflect on your congregation. What things are prioritized? Is there sufficient attention given to preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God? Are the classrooms and the pulpit healthy? Is worship offered in spirit and in truth? Is there an emphasis in developing godly men to lead? What about service, godliness, and a proper focus? This edition of the Christian Worker is designed to make us all take pause and reflect on our priorities. As an individual, am I putting first things first? As a congregation, are we focusing on the things that God wants us to focus on? "Consider your ways" (Hag. 1:5).

CW

CONTENTMENT (1 TIM. 6:6-10)

D.J. Stucky

"For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim. 6:10a).

This Scripture is familiar to many, even those who have do not acknowledge God. Its message is clear and its application poignant, especially in 2019. And while this quotation stands strong on its own, analysis of the surrounding context will give us a greater appreciation of the truth it reveals.

As with every passage of Scripture, 1 Timothy 6:6-10 must be viewed in context of the entire book from which it comes. Throughout the letter, Paul dealt with the present threat of false teaching. He opened the letter by commanding Timothy to rebuke those who taught error (1:3-7). He warned Timothy of those who would depart from the faith (4:1-3) and encouraged him to teach sound doctrine in response (4:12-16). Timothy is told to withdraw from false teachers, as they have nothing of value to offer (6:1-5). Then in verse six, Paul makes a contrast centered

around the word *godliness*, which in this context has the general meaning of religion. False teachers were using *religion* as a vehicle for personal gain. Paul tells Timothy that godliness with contentment is *great* gain.

Contentment is from a Greek word meaning *sufficient* or *independent*. Greek philosophers thought contentment came from satisfaction with one's own inner resources. In the context of 1 Timothy, some false teachers were seeking contentment in wealth and popularity. These ideas could not be further from the truth. According to the Bible, contentment means being satisfied with our circumstances in life, whatever they might be. Paul defined contentment perfectly when he said

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:12-13).

Our satisfaction with life must be independent of health, wealth, and possessions, "for we brought nothing into this world, and is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Tim. 6:7). In this statement we have echoes of Job, who said after losing his children and all of his property,

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).

Nothing we have now truly belongs to us because the originator and giver of all good things is God (Jas. 1:17). Even if we could claim complete ownership of our physical blessings, they cannot and will not last forever (1 John 2:17 cf. 2 Pet. 3:10). We began life with nothing, and we take nothing with us when this life is over. Thus, if we seek contentment in the things of the world, we will be left wanting (Jas. 1:9-11). If we seek contentment in obeying God, then nothing can take that away from us (Matt. 6:19-20; 33).

Paul's advice to Timothy is to be content simply with the necessities of life (1 Tim. 6:8). While this advice is simple in theory, it is difficult in practice. American consumer culture urges us to desire more. This culture has conditioned us to focus on the things we do not have instead of appreciating the things that we do have. In a country that is blessed with riches and luxury, people conflate their needs and their wants. These people cannot and will not be content unless they are comfortable. The Bible provides a stark contrast to the attitudes of

the world. According to God, food and clothing are the only physical requirements for contentment! God knows we need these things and has promised to provide them when we seek first His kingdom (Matt. 6:33). Contentment is part of trusting in God's providential care. Instead of looking at the desires we lack, we should focus on the blessings God has already given both big and small. This will have a profound impact on our attitude and spiritual well-being. In contrast, if we do not take joy in what we have and make our lives about gaining wealth beyond what God has given to us, we put ourselves in danger. That is Paul's point in 1 Timothy 6:9.

The pursuit of wealth will not only leave us wanting, but it will leave us hurting spiritually. If we do not obtain the wealth we seek, it is painful. Yet even if we do obtain wealth, it could come at great cost to our souls (Mark 8:36). The false teachers that Paul warned Timothy against were departing from the faith (1 Tim. 6:10b) and throwing away their salvation for riches that would not last. They desired material wealth so much that they taught error to obtain it, condemning themselves as well as those who heeded their words. We must learn from this example and take heed lest we fall (1 Cor. 10:12).

The love of money is the root of all evil, having the power to lead even the mightiest Bible scholar down the path of falsehood. In contrast, even the poorest, humblest proclaimer of the gospel who finds contentment in the love of God will find a peace that passes understanding (Phil 4:6-7). The love of money is the root of all evil, but godliness with contentment is great gain.

CW

PERSEVERANCE

1 TIM. 6:11-16

Carl McCann

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to ensure no false doctrine was taught (1:3). On at least five other instances Paul reminds Timothy (and us) of the importance of sound teaching (cf. 1:10; 4:6,13,16; 6:3-5). Within the overall context of 1 Timothy 6:3-16, we note areas needing correction, namely doctrine (6:3-5), discontentment (6:6-8) and the "dollar" (6:9-10). Failing to understand and follow sound doctrine robs men of salvation (1:15), mediation (2:5), godliness (3:16), profitableness (4:8) and eternal life (6:12). Surely, what we have noted this far encourages

us as it did Timothy and the brethren in Ephesus to persevere that we may "lay hold on eternal life."

EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT

Verse 11 - Contrary to the behavior of "some," Timothy was to show himself a "man of God." This simple phrase, so rich in meaning and history, would help encourage Timothy to persevere and remind Timothy that he truly was God's man. In order to persevere Timothy must flee (run away from) evil things and continually pursue (follow after - ASV) good things. The word pursue is a strong term, related to hunting, which means "to pursue a prey until it is apprehended." Working definitions of the six things Timothy is to pursue are as follows:

- Righteousness - a right standing with God and man.
- Godliness - reverence for God demonstrated by one's conformity to His will.
- Faith - trust in Jesus demonstrated by obedience to His commands.
- Love - devoting oneself to God and serving our fellow man in the best way possible.
- Patience - bearing up under all trials and afflictions.
- Meekness - gentleness, or the familiar "strength under control."

Verse 12 - Regrettably, we will have occasions when we must flee (avoid or run away) certain things, but like Joseph (Gen. 39), these moments clarify where we stand! We are to be ready to "fight the good fight of the faith." The word fight, whether it is a military or athletic term, identifies a continual and determined effort to gain the victory. Not every fight can be characterized as good, but this one is! The prize to be gained is eternal life, which the gospel has called us to (2 Thess. 2:14) and to which confession is made at the time of one's baptism (Acts 8:35-38).

Verse 13 - As further motivation Paul commanded Timothy to remember God's greatness and the fact that Jesus had witnessed to His own deity before the pagan ruler, Pontius Pilate (Luke 23; John 18). We are here because God made us. As the creator of man and all things, God is the sovereign ruler (Acts 17:24,28). Therefore, this command of Paul was not to be taken lightly, as Timothy's perseverance rested securely upon the rock solid confession of Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 16:16) and the fact that He is the only Way, Truth and the Life (John 14:6).

Verse 14 - This verse contains two areas where opinions vary. Namely, does the commandment Timothy is to keep, refer to preserving all of God's word or a specific command? And second, is Timothy to keep himself or the command unspotted? As to the first question, this writer believes it refers to keeping the command of verses 11-12. It seems logical that if one is determined to flee evil and pursue goodness, fight the good fight of the faith, then following all of God's commandments will not be an issue. Further, in keeping all of God's commands, Timothy would also keep himself pure and unstained (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12-16). This steadfastness to doctrine and purity of life must continue until Christ returns (cf. Jas. 1:27; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23).

Verse 15 - The fact of Jesus' return is firmly established in scripture (Acts 1:11), an equally established point is the truth that man does not know when His return will be, that is left to God (Acts 1:7; Matt. 24:42,44). The appointed time of Jesus' return is reserved for God. However, there is disagreement as to whether this verse is referencing God or Jesus. This writer believes the emphasis is upon God the Father. Consider, several thoughts along this line. First, while on the earth Jesus stated ignorance as to when he would return (Matt. 24:36). Second, 1:17 contains language that is very similar to our present context. Lastly, Jesus declared that when men saw Him they saw the Father (John 14:9). Without question, when Christ returns the time will be exactly right. This uncertainty as to the time of Christ's return should cause us to be vigilant and persevering in our faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Further motivation is ours as we consider that God alone is the ruling, reigning power of the world.

Verse 16 - Paul continues the majestic picture of God, identifying Him as the only one who possesses immortality (deathlessness) in His very being. In contrast, man is a mortal being, possessing an immortal soul. We long to be clothed with immortality. Moses requested to see God's glory (Ex. 33:18), not knowing "no man can see God and live" (Ex. 33:20). In response God protected Moses, placing him Understandably, Paul ascribes to God honor and everlasting power. May we ever bow before His glorious and majestic name.

PRACTICAL LESSONS

One doesn't have to wonder why Paul wrote to Timothy, his major theme is given in 1 Timothy 3:15- proper behavior by Christians in the church. Let's note some practical lessons from Paul's last personal instructions to Timothy and allow them to help us persevere.

1. Take note of the time. There is a time to flee, follow and fight. All of these are vital in our persevering faithfulness to God.
2. Remember the glorious confession we made before witnesses concerning the deity of Christ.
3. My life will either adorn or bring reproach upon the gospel of Jesus Christ.
4. Jesus is coming again.

CW

A PROPER EMPHASIS

(1 TIM. 6:17-21)

Cody Kilgore

One of my favorite songs is "My Hope Is Built On Nothing Less." I love this song because it provokes and challenges the hearts, souls, and minds of the saints gathered to affirm that their foundation and hope is the Lord Jesus Christ. What a lovely song and a grand message! However, are we accurately affirming that message in our minds and hearts? There is a constant challenge in our perseverance of faith as temptation swarms us from all around. It is time to examine ourselves (2 Cor. 13:5), readjust our focus (Heb. 12:1-2), and take hold of what matters most (Phil. 2:12). In 1 Timothy 6:17-21, Paul will address two temptations that often take the place of the gospel: riches and knowledge.

Warning for Those Tempted by Riches (6:17-19)

Paul speaks to the rich, encouraging them to use their riches for the kingdom. He is not challenging the rich themselves, but rather their perspective. How often do people become rich and consider it their due payment? It happens every day and everywhere. The apostle Paul challenges their perspective by indicating that riches come from God and implying that wealth is for the church and not for us. There seems to be an attitude that circulates in the church that we must be wary of our wealthier members, but Psalm 49:16 clearly states that we should not become wary of these members, but rejoice. There is, however, a level of awareness that needs to exist in our minds as we potentially accumulate riches because of the temptation that so heavily surrounds money (1 Tim. 6:9; Eccl. 5:10; Acts 5:1-11; Jas. 5:1-10). The temptation is to be greedy (Luke 12:15) and to envision money as our

savior (Zeph. 1:18; Pro. 11:4; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). The reality is that our wealth is a blessing which the Lord supplies us with as a means of ministering to others (Pro. 3:9, 14:31; 1 Cor. 16:2; Phil. 4:17-18). The main message that Paul desires for the rich to know is that they need to “take hold of that which is truly life.” Henry David Thoreau is quoted, saying, “Wealth is the ability to fully experience life.” In other words, the real treasure is to pursue a life of meaning. What means more than the life that God intends for His people to enjoy? Nothing can compare (Heb. 11:26)! Now, how does Paul say we can “take hold of that which is truly life”? We can attain the prize by doing good (Gal. 6:10), being rich in good works (1 John 3:17-18), being generous (2 Cor. 8:1-7), and by being ready to share (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37).

Warning for Those Tempted by Knowledge (6:20-21a)

Paul, in his personal address to Timothy, commands him to “guard the deposit entrusted to him.” This is in reference to the gospel. Paul is encouraging Timothy to remain strong and guard the gospel, something which he has done on more than one occasion (1 Tim. 1:18; 4:8-10, 15-16; 6:12-14; 2 Tim. 1:8, 12-14; 2:12; 3:14-15; 4:2-8). To help Timothy see how he, a young preacher of the gospel, could be swayed, Paul speaks of things which are falsely called knowledge. Is it wrong for a Christian to pursue further education? No, if that were the case, then Paul would have been a hypocrite (Col. 1:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:15). The warning is not against knowledge; it is against supposed knowledge. What sort of teaching could have been circulating during the time that Timothy was preaching, to which he could have been vulnerable? 2 Timothy 2:16-18 speaks of a possibility. In 1 Timothy 6:20 and 2 Timothy 2:16, the same phrase is present “irreverent babble,” or empty speech. The later goes on to mention two who have given themselves over to the irreverent speech, Hymenaeus and Philetus. The two men were teachers of Gnosticism, in which they taught that the resurrection of the dead already took place. They taught so because they mingled the Greek view of immortality (the body dying eternally and the spirit remaining awakened) with the biblical doctrine of a resurrection. This teaching was denying Christ His true deity and even that He arose from the grave bodily (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7; Acts 1:10-11). Is it wrong for the Christian to be filled with knowledge? No, however, we must be sure to fill it with what is actually knowledge (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). How many Christians have grown by listening to gospel

sermons? In contrast, how many Christians have hurt themselves by listening to denominational sermons, filled with false doctrine? The key is the ability to filter the good from the bad. The Hebrews writer makes the argument in Hebrews 5:14 that the mature in Christ are those who have had their power of discernment tested. How can a Christian guard the deposit entrusted to them? Through proper discernment.

Exhortation for Us All (6:21b)

In 1 Timothy 3:14-15, Paul said,

I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Paul’s focus is behavior, and the way he chooses to conclude this appeal for behaving godly is by reminding Timothy and the audience of the reading of this letter to have the proper perspective. Eyes fixed towards heaven are the only kind that can one day behold it. Hearts centered on Christ are the only kind that can one day worship Him in heaven. Minds set on those things which are above are the only kind that can make it above. May the Lord be with you. May you continue to walk by His side. May all we do be in response to the glory of God and for the glory of God.

CW

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any who would stand in opposition to the doctrine of God: “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). Here is the line. Here is

the bar. Here is the standard to which all men are to conform and by which all men are to be measured.

First, Paul defines sound doctrine as the “wholesome words” of our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul uses the same terminology in another letter to Timothy speaking of those who “will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3), and to Titus speaking both of sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2:1) and of those who are “sound in the faith” (Titus 1:13; 2:2). The Greek word translated “wholesome” was used by the ancient Greeks in the sense of one’s health either mentally or physically. We find the term in Luke twice of those who are whole or healthy (Luke 5:31; 5:10) and once of the prodigal son who returned “safe and sound” (Luke 15:27). Wholesome does not refer to the spiritual health of the soul but to the words themselves which are healthy or sound. Peter spoke of sound doctrine as “sincere milk” or “spiritual milk which is without guile” (2 Pet. 2:2). David sang of the wholesome words of God that “convert the soul, make wise the simple, rejoice the heart, enlighten the eyes, are more desirable than gold, and are sweeter than honey” (Ps. 19:7-10).

Second, Paul defines sound doctrine as “the doctrine which is according to godliness.” The Greek term translated godliness is found fifteen in the New Testament. Paul employs it nine times in his letters to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7, 8; 6:3, 5; 6:6, 11; 2 Tim. 3:5). The doctrine that is “according to godliness” is the doctrine that promotes godliness. That is, the doctrine that promotes reverence and respect toward God.

Finally, it must be emphasized that these words are not limited only to Paul’s admonition regarding Christian slaves. The Greek word translated “teach otherwise” is found in only one other passage of Scripture, which passage serves to bookend this letter to Timothy.

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine (1 Tim 1:3).

In the opening of this letter Paul instructs Timothy to charge the saints not to teach contrary to sound doctrine. The apostle then proceeds to note those things which are according to sound doctrine. Then as he draws his letter to a conclusion he points Timothy back to his opening charge to teach only sound doctrine — doctrine that is healthy for the soul and promotes reverence toward God.

Sound Doctrine Despised

Paul next reveals the true character of those who

despise and refuse to consent to sound doctrine. Blinded by pride they become ignorant of knowledge and spend their time “doting about questions and strifes of words” (6:4). According to Thayer, the word translated doting carries the sense of one who is “sick of any ailment of the mind.” In essence Paul says that one who despises sound doctrine becomes so consumed with debating trivial matters that rather than being sound in the faith (Titus 1:13; 2:2) they become diseased in the mind. They do not “give heed unto the doctrine” that will save them and others (1 Tim. 4:16), but stir up envy and strife which leads to slanderous accusations and hurtful suspicions among brethren.

The apostle further notes that those who despise sound doctrine engage in “perverse disputings” or “wranglings” of men (1 Tim. 6:5). In other words they continually cause irritation and friction among brethren. Such men have become corrupted in their minds and destitute of the truth. How tragic! Those who despise the healthy and wholesome doctrine they once held dear now possess minds that are rotten having defrauded themselves of the truth. So corrupt of mind are those who despise sound doctrine that rather than consent to wholesome words they seek to make a living off of them.

Sound Doctrine Distinguished

What is our responsibility to those who despise sound doctrine? Paul makes it clear that we are to withdraw from them (1 Tim. 6:5; cf. 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Thess. 3:16). The withdrawing of our fellowship from those who reject sound doctrine distinguishes us from the world. Paul admonished, “if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed” (2 Thess. 3:14). To the Philippians he wrote, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example” (Phil. 3:17). Clearly, following after sound doctrine distinguishes from those who refuse to consent to the wholesome words of Christ. Further, our withdrawing fellowship from those who teach other doctrine also serves to distinguish that healthy wholesome doctrine from doctrines that corrupt.

One who gives himself to the meditation sound doctrine is easily identified and is a benefit to all with whom he may come into contact (1 Tim. 4:15-16). May we ever strive faithfully to proclaim and persevere in that sound wholesome doctrine that promotes reverence and respect toward God.

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