

1 Timothy 4 – Godly Exercise, Nutrition and Judgment

1 Timothy chapter 4 demonstrates the superiority of Godly exercise over natural, bodily exercise:

“... exercise thyself unto godliness: For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8).

The benefits of bodily exercise are limited – but to exercise oneself in godly matters has promise both now and for the future. Now, it is able to generate the peace of God that passeth understanding (Phil. 4:7), and for the future, it is able to prepare us for endless life in the coming kingdom. Part of the benefit of exercising ourselves in godly things, is that as we continue to apply the principles of Scripture to our lives, we develop a sense of what is good and what is evil. Hence the Apostle describes the situation to the Hebrews:

*“when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which is the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe, but solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have **their senses exercised to discern both good and evil**”* (Heb. 5:12-14).

The progress of a believer in the Gospel, therefore, is likened to a child. Firstly, the subject becomes begotten by the Word (Jas. 1:18), and then as a newborn babe he feeds upon the milk of the word – the first principles of the Gospel. But then, as he grows into adulthood, he needs to move on to solid food – the deeper things of the Word that govern the manner of our conduct in Christ. As he matures, he has his senses exercised through the experiences of life, to determine what is good and what is evil. Seeking to apply the principles of Scripture to his daily walk in life, he develops a conscience and awareness of right and wrong in the sight of Yahweh.

There is an interesting Old Testament background to this passage in Isaiah chapter 7, a prophecy of Immanuel:

*“a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey **shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good** ...”* (Isa. 7:15).

Notice that here, as in Hebrews chapter 5, the ability to know good and evil is linked with a spiritual diet. Again, Solomon asked for wisdom in order to be able to rule over Yahweh’s people:

“... Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people” (1 Kings 3:9).

The principle here, is that Solomon sought first the things to do with the kingdom and his ability to rule over it, and then Yahweh blessed him with the other riches to do with his position. Even so, we are told, “seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ...” (Mat. 6:33). Seeking to develop the ability to choose between good and bad, we must seek first the affairs of the kingdom to come, and the righteousness that shall reign supreme therein. For “exercising” unto godliness, other renderings have “training”. In other words, our life now is a time of training to prepare us for better days to come – like an athlete we must train ourselves in preparation to receive the victory: a metaphor used by the Apostle elsewhere.

Returning to 1 Timothy 4, we find that this theme of spiritual nourishment is continued:

“If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, **nourished up** in the words of faith, and good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:6).

We must ensure that we have a good spiritual diet in order to be “nourished” by the Word. Echoing Isaiah 7, the Psalmist writes that the food-words are: “sweeter also **than honey and the honeycomb**. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa. 19:10-11). And Peter gives the exhortation:

“wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious ...” (1 Pet. 2:1-3).

This emphasises the point already established: we start off as babes desiring the pure milk of the Word, and then we progress onto solid food. In so doing, we taste and see that the Lord is good (cp. Psa. 34:8), and that the assimilation of Scripture into our minds will carry great rewards.

GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING

In seeking spiritual things, we need to give all due diligence to studying the Word. So Paul exhorts Timothy:

“till I come, give attendance **to reading**, to exhortation, to doctrine ...” (1 Tim. 4:13).

Reading, exhortation, and doctrine are the three aspects so necessary for our spiritual growth. Joshua was encouraged after the death of Moses, before he was to lead Israel into the land of inheritance:

“this book of the law **shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night**, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success ... be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, for Yahweh thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:7-9, see also Psalm 1:2).

In the New Testament, we have the example of the Bereans who “searched the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11). And again, the exhortation of Paul to Timothy:

“let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who **labour in the word and doctrine** ...” (1 Tim. 5:17).

And again:

“**Study to shew thyself approved unto God**, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of Truth ...” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Here, the word for “study” implies the application of great diligence and effort, hence some versions read “**give** diligence to shew thyself approved unto God”.

In the Epistles of Paul to Timothy, there is a thread that runs throughout, relating to the importance of the word of Truth. In the First Epistle, there are 8 references to it, and in the Second, there are 6 references. A key verse is 2 Tim. 3:15:

“... from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, **which are able to make thee wise unto salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Ever scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:15-17).

The importance of giving “attendance to reading” therefore, is that the scriptures are able to save us, through faith in what they teach. They are able to provide sound, wholesome doctrine; they are able to correct us, and instruct us in the ways of righteousness. They are able to fully equip us, as the word “perfect” signifies, to perform all good works. So Paul teaches elsewhere: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel: for it is **the power of God** unto salvation to everyone that believeth ...” (Rom. 1:16). And again, “unto us who are being saved, it is **the power of God ...**” (1 Cor. 1:18).

Herein lies the importance of searching the Scriptures. The principles that they teach enable us to have a power within our minds and hearts. Studying the Scriptures is the only means whereby we can have “the power of God” within us. By imbibing the powerful Word, we can become transformed from darkness to light, from unrepentant reprobates, to the saints of the Living God. The good Lord has provided all that we need; the onus is upon us, therefore, to avail ourselves of the Power of the Word, and accomplish His Revealed Will.

SINS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS – HIDDEN AND REVEALED

There is another aspect that we should also consider in relation to 1 Timothy chapter 5. Having been granted such a powerful force for good as described above, we have the responsibility to use it in order to become wise unto Salvation. The day is soon upon us, when we shall be accountable to our Master for judgment, and we should therefore consider our own position in relation to that great event. To prepare ourselves for standing before Messiah. So the Apostle describes in our reading:

“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.” (1 Tim. 5:24-25)

There are those whose sins are open before all, as men of the flesh manifest themselves to be but brute beasts whose end is to perish. Israel of old were of that category. Isaiah describes this:

“the shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and **they declare their sin** as Sodom, they hide it not ...” (Isa. 3:9).

And again, Jeremiah speaks of finding the sin of the people: “... I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these ...” (Jer. 2:34). Their sin was open and committed without shame: they were like Sodom of old, in not even attempting to hide the enormity of their iniquity.

But we suggest that for the most part, men’s sins are hidden. It is what men do when no-one is watching, under the cover of darkness that is important. The exposing of these sins “follow after,” when the Lord will make manifest the thoughts and intents of the hearts. So the Apostle spoke to the Corinthian ecclesia:

“wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts ...” (1 Cor. 4:5).

It is a principle of Scripture that all things are open to Divine Scrutiny. Nothing can be hidden from Yahweh, whose all pervading spirit is everywhere present:

“O Yahweh, thou hast searched me, and known me, Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thought afar off ... if I say Surely the darkness shall cover me, Even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; But the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike unto thee ...”
(Psa. 139 – see whole Psalm)

In one sense, the omniscience of Yahweh is a great comfort to us: we know that whatever might befall us is known of by our Father who will deliver us according to His Wisdom. But the other side is that if we really believe that Yahweh sees what we are doing at all times – would we still do some of the things we do? – (I speak to myself as much as to others- CAM).

We have an example of a hidden sin being brought to light in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They sold a certain possession, and claimed to have given all of the value of it to the Apostles, to provide for the poor believers who needed help. But the reality was, that they only brought part of the value, and not the whole amount. This was a secret sin – no one would know any different. But nothing is hidden from the Holy Spirit, and Peter immediately knew what had happened:

“But Peter said, Ananias, why hath satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3, see verses 1-11)

The consequence was that at the word of the Apostle, both Ananias and his sinful wife dropped down dead before him.

We might think that this is a sin that we would not perform. We, after all, are called to higher things, and dishonesty about money is something that perhaps we might not succumb to. But the principles involved certainly do apply to us: we have made a vow at our Baptism to give everything to the service of Yahweh. Do we keep that vow? Or do we, like Achan, Eli’s sons, Saul and others keep back part for ourselves? This is the real issue: whether or not we seek first the Kingdom and Yahweh’s Righteousness, and devote everything we have to pursuing it. If we do not, then we are in danger of lying to the Holy Spirit in professing to give all, when we only gave a part. Our judgment will be just (again, I speak to myself as much as to others – CAM)

So it is that the Apostle, again to the Corinthians spoke that “every man’s work shall be made manifest” (1 Cor. 3:13). At the judgment seat, the inner most thoughts and intents of our hearts will be exposed – whether we gave a wholehearted service to our Maker, or whether we had a living name, yet were dead.

In our considerations then, we have considered three aspects as they emerge from a consideration of Paul’s Epistles to Timothy. We have seen the importance of exercising or training ourselves in godly matters. After all, our life now is but a training ground for better days to come. As with any good athlete, we have seen the importance of maintaining a healthy spiritual diet – feeding richly upon the Word of Life. And we have seen how that all that we have done, whether good or bad, is known to our Father. All the preparation we have done will bring us to the Kingdom which is the primary focus of our lives. We can trust that every good work we do will not go unnoticed or unrewarded at the last. But we also have the trust and confidence that if we remain on the Way of Life, our sins will indeed be blotted out, will not be imputed to us, and be covered with the sacrificial work of our Lord.

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