

LIFE'S HIGHEST GOOD AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT

I Timothy 4:12-16

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The Apostle Paul, anticipating a great rise in false teachers and spread of false doctrines gives his son in the Faith, Timothy, a concerted charge of how to prepare for it, fortify himself against it, and deal with it when it would come. He not only gives admonition as to a defensive stand, but he challenges Timothy to an aggressive attitude.

In this brief summary of Paul's personal admonition, we have a kind of universal pattern for useful and successful living. Each verse in this context stands alone as a timely and timeless proverb; each full and forceful--yet pithy and concise.

"Let no man despise thy youth," he begins, "but be thou an example of the believer, in word, in conversation, charity, spirit, faith, and purity." Then follows the pattern whereby he can achieve that high state of useful and effective living.

1. "Give attendance to reading" is a unique statement that would include: Reading, study, thinking, meditations, and every mode of intellectual improvement. It would involve what you read, how you read, and when you read.

At no other time should more care be given to the selection of the books you read. Read the best books. Most books are rubbish--many books are pestilent, and few books are good. A book to be worth your while must be:

1. Enlightening--it should brighten the firmament and broaden the horizon of your soul.
2. Truthful -- whether history or fiction, it should be true to the great reality of existence.
3. Challenging -- It should involve more than it expresses and charm you into fresh fields of inquiry.

4. Character Building: It should ever hold high certain ideals and principals that lift your thinking into a higher vein and establish certain convictions that you may safely live by.

Having proper motive for reading:

1. To acquire useful information.
2. To improve the mind in knowledge and the heart in goodness.
3. To become qualified to perform, with honor, the duties of life.
4. To prepare for a happy immortality beyond the grave.
5. Sir Williams Jones said, "Books are good or bad, according to their tending to make you love and appreciate the Word of God, more or less."

No matter what you read, or how much, let the Bible be the first book in your life. Read it more than all others, and judge the content of all others by what you find in the Bible.

In your reading, remember one thing--that there are certain clear truths of God, man, sin, and salvation that are fixed and settled and no matter how feasible and attractive a theory may sound, some things do not change. They are fixed, eternally fixed by God in His Word and they never will be any other way.

When you select and read good books, you are in contact with the best society in every period of history. The wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, the purest, characters who have ever adorned humanity. "You become a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages." Through this, the world is yours.

GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING.

"NEGLECT NOT THE GIFT THAT IS IN THEE." From this I gather that there are natural gifts--yours by right of divine impartation. These gifts are known to God, and sometimes to Him only. Your father, mother, <sup>pastor or even</sup> ~~parent or~~ ~~corner~~

yourself may not know of these gifts. *Holmes*

You have been accepted in this School, not on the basis of what you can contribute to it, or on your family connections, or on who you are or on what you can do today. There was a higher motive. I have often wondered how the President arrives at these decisions. I think that here-in lies one of the gravest responsibilities of operating such a school as this.

I venture this explanation. You have been selected by the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit on the basis of what God alone knows about you and the gifts that are in you and what you can do for yourself and the world if you will take advantage of the opportunities offered you through this selection.

David was selected not only by what he looked like or what he appeared to be. God through Samuel selected him on the basis of what cultivation and faithfulness would make out of him.

David cultivated his physical strength as a shepherd lad and when the bear and lion took a lamb, he was strong enough to kill both and rescue the lamb.

He cultivated his skill with the sling through long years of practice and when he met Goliath, he was sure of himself. It took only one stone. He had developed an accuracy that saved his life and the freedom of a nation by neglecting not the gift.

He cultivated a knowledge of the landscape and learned to be as surefooted as a mountain goat so that when Saul searched the hills for David, in later years, he could not find him. He knew every secret rendezvous and thereby saved his life.

He cultivated the talent for playing the harp and he soothed wicked Saul by his music. He learned to sing to quiet the restless sheep and with his voice, he sang for Israel and a mighty nation was formed who loved him as they did no other king.

Today after long milleniums, the world still calls him the sweet singer of Israel. He cultivated the presence of God which gave him such a confidence that when he stood before Goliath, he knew no fear or failure.

He developed his poet soul and his keen power of mental production so much until after these long years, the world has not yet produced a greater writer.

He was so constant in his devotion to God until Jehovah himself paid him a tribute that still stands in a class to itself, "David, a man after God's own heart." He learned enough about God to write the 23rd psalm and if he had done nothing else, that alone would make him immortal.

#### TAKE HEED TO THYSELF:

Two of the things you must take heed to and they are placed in order of importance are:

To Thyself: This order here says before you can do good, you must be good. You might think that in your surroundings here, you can let yourself go; but if you don't learn discipline here, and take heed to yourself here, you will make a shipwreck in life.

While you are reading, cultivating the gifts, preparing to serve other people, Paul says--stop, and take heed to thyself.

Timothy was a chosen vessel. He was a select person. He was a prince among men. But nevertheless, Paul is urging him to give special attention towards self-improvement. His usefulness (however good he may have been) depended on self-improvement.

A man's personal character determines the degree of his perception of deep spiritual truths. Character not only affects a person's clear perception of truth, but it affects his power of expressing or communicating truth to others.

He is urged to TAKE HEED TO HIMSELF because language is not the only method of communicating truth and life to men. The conveyance of thought

and feeling from mind to mind depends not on mere verbal and oratory accuracy.

The greater way is a mysterious moral communication that is transmitted from heart to heart. When your life is quickened with a Divine fire by your habitual communion with Christ, who is the truth and the life, you will then know the highest point of human achievement in presenting Christ to men. For that reason, Paul concluded his personal admonition by saying "Take heed to thyself."

The second most important thing is the doctrine of teaching. When your life is in harmony with Christ and your teaching is underwritten by Godly conduct, then the result is--you save yourself and those that hear you.

Your first obligation is to be right yourself, and then to reproduce that rightness by word, and example to others. This alone can save you and them.

Now as a personal admonition: Take heed to thyself here in this school; to the minutes that you have here. They will pass all too soon. Don't count the years, the months, the weeks, the days--but count the minutes. Whatever you achieve in life, however great and full your existence may be hereafter, the moments on this Campus and in these Class Rooms are the most priceless and treasured you will ever know. Don't waste them. Make the most of every fleeting moment.