

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy. Our text for this morning is 1 Timothy 4:6-10. If you don't have a Bible there should be a black hardback one in a pew near you, feel free to grab that and turn to 1 Timothy 4, you'll find that on pg. _____. If you're new to reading the Bible the large numbers are the chapter numbers and the smaller numbers are the verses. Again, 1 Timothy 4:6-10.

And while you're turning to our passage this morning let me remind you of where we are in this letter. Paul is writing to Timothy a young pastor in the cosmopolitan city of Ephesus. He has comforted Timothy and encouraged Timothy to remember his calling and remain steadfast in his devotion to the Lord Jesus and to the true gospel. He has done this by exposing the different poisons that were moving throughout the church. The deadliest was the false teaching promulgated by the false teachers. As we saw last week, they were offering a phony holiness that required abstinence from marriage and dietary restrictions. Things that the Lord Jesus himself had blessed in His preaching, and they were promising a special spirituality that was fed by self-righteousness. They denied the living God and sold dead lies to this church. Timothy needed to face this challenge head-on with gospel courage and firmness. Likewise, as David has shown us, the church was confused and disunified about church structure, how should a local church conduct itself, how should it be ordered, who should be allowed to lead and who should be called upon to serve. The Holy Spirit through Paul gives timeless instruction to the church that was timely then as it is now. And we come now to an interesting exhortation that has both Timothy and the church as the target, so let's read 1 Timothy 4:6-10.

⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹

This is the Word of the Lord... Thanks be to God!

Well church, 7 days till Christmas 14 till the start of a new year. Some of you like me have been listening to Christmas music since last February...just kidding, I'm not a monster I wait till November like the rest of the sane people. But there's a line in a favorite Christmas tune that hits me each year when I hear it, the song is written to the Lord about his incarnation and the author is so honest when he writes what, I think, is the sad truth for so many disciples of Jesus. "*Here is where you're finding me in the exact same place as New Year's Eve, and from a lack of my persistency, we're less than half as close as I want to be.*"² I wonder if some of you are staring at the end of 2022 and ahead to 2023 and thought, I wanted to be closer to the Lord, I wanted to walk more closely with Jesus than I did previously. Maybe you could say I am not half as close to the Lord as I hoped I would be this time last year.

Christmas will come, and we will have that little window where some of us will reflect on the year past, look the year ahead and think about the "R" word. Maybe someone will ask you, Do you have any new years resolutions? What are they?

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:6-10.

² Relient K, "I Celebrate the Day"

Now, you'll run into the occasional weirdo who says, "I'm going to love more" or "I'm going to get to know myself better this year" – Listen...Avoid those fruitcakes like you avoid fruitcake. That's silliness, and largely unmeasurable.

But even good resolutions can be unrealistic and unhelpful, like January gym memberships. I used to have a gym membership till I realized I don't like people that much and would rather work out at home alone, with my music choices, and January was the worst, all the newbies taking up the treadmills and weight benches, using the machines the wrong way, which is actually hilarious, not wiping down equipment and talking to strangers...but it made the committed gymgoers irritated so that you tried to schedule your workout at the least busy times.

But how many Christians have made the commitment "I will read the whole Bible this year" – and their Bible reading plan died on the altar of Leviticus. And I am speaking from experience. I'm going to be more involved in church, or with other Christians, I will pray more, I will read more good Christian books, I will make Bible study a priority, I will be more hospitable. These are all excellent and even necessary commitments that you should make, and the new year is a good marker for you to start, but that is an arbitrary cultural occurrence. Following Jesus is not a commitment we renew once a year, no, as we see in our text, following Jesus is a day in day out devotion to the Lord that is fueled by the gospel and will cost you effort every day. And Paul's big message here is, it's worth it. So let's dig deeper into the text now. I have two points for the rest of our time this morning...Point #1 "**Our Costly Investment**" – Point #2 "**Our Incredible Return**"

Point #1 – Our Costly Investment

First, I am using the word "our." You may think wait, Mike, this is for Timothy what do you mean "our" – well look at the first phrase, "*If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of the Lord Jesus*" – yes the direction was for Timothy and by extension for the whole church at Ephesus. And you shouldn't be tripped up by the word "brothers" as if that excludes women. The term in the original was a general term used for the members of the church, the believers who were in the church at Ephesus. So, Timothy would demonstrate faithfulness to the Lord Jesus if he put "these things" before the church. He was *to receive* and *to give*, this was his pastoral charge. What are "these things" that Paul refers to? Broadly, it meant the contents of the letter, the rebuke, the exhortation, the doctrinal truths about God's Law the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and the order and structure of the church. This is broadly referring to the letter itself and very specifically to what Paul has just said about the Lord Jesus at the end of ch.3 and the of the demonic lies that were to be exposed in the verses we saw last week.

And he reminds Timothy that he had been trained for this. How does Paul know that because he did it himself. He had trained Timothy for the work and Timothy was to do the work, it was an encouraging reminder to his child in the faith to say, "that you have followed" – It's as if he says to Timothy, I know you can do this, I have seen your faithfulness on display, you have what you need, not in yourself, but in Christ whom you serve. This isn't a "ra-ra...go get 'em Tiny Tim" no its more focused than that. It's a gospel coach saying, don't quit, do the hard work of preaching and teaching because you know that Jesus has promised to build His church and he's going to do it through your commitment to Him. And

the church reaps the benefit of Timothy's work. You see the church is investing too as they hear and heed the pastor's instruction in the Scripture. This is why Timothy's faithfulness doesn't stop with his own personal accumulation of theological knowledge and understanding, but his faithfulness is displayed in serving the church with this good labor. And like the church at Ephesus, you as a local church are called to make an investment by receiving the instruction given by a faithful pastor.

And part of our investment is what we *don't do*. Timothy is charged not to have anything to do with irreverent, silly myths. These are the convoluted stories and theories the false teachers were using to justify their twisted lifestyles of self-righteousness. But just because Timothy should avoid the myths doesn't mean the church should entertain them. It's not as if Paul says, "Now Timothy don't you have anything to do with these crazies, but the rest of you its ok for you." Not at all, Timothy needed to avoid the ridiculous myths as an example to the church of not even entertaining the type of claims these false teachers were making. This helps reinforce what David showed us last week. Remember how he showed us that wrong trajectory, even slight, leads to a wide departure from what is true. Thus, Timothy was to avoid the irreverent silly myths himself for his own good, and also for the good of the church. If Timothy listened and associated with those who denied the gospel, the charlatans who infiltrated the church in some way he added validity to their lies.

Now I want to be careful here. We are not talking about those who are confused, or spiritually immature, those who need mentoring or growth. That's not what Paul is addressing here, he's talking about noisemakers and blowhards who are leading impressionable believers away from Jesus. Yes, people like that make their way into churches, and Paul tells Timothy – "Have nothing to do with their lies" – and by extension the church learns to have nothing to do with lies.

But Paul doesn't end with the negative, he doesn't merely say "don't do that" and leave it there, no, he redirects Timothy's energies and our energies as well with a metaphor. We see the word "Rather" there in vs. 7, Timothy don't waste your time there, spend it here...and what is Timothy to do, "...train yourself for godliness"³

For Timothy godliness required training. That word "train" carries the weight of discipline. One grammar text defines the word this way, "**to control oneself by thorough discipline**"⁴ If you have somehow come to believe that spiritual growth will happen without effort, you are wrong. To be godly, to be Christlike, to be mature in your Christian living will require effort from you. It requires training and discipline.

Now do not hear what I am not saying. I am not saying that you become more righteous, more loved by God, more accepted into the Kingdom of God, or more important to Jesus by training, but what I am saying is that Christian growth. Sanctification is not a passive process; it is the work of the Holy Spirit in you and through your efforts.

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:7.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 751.

So, godliness, maturity, spiritual growth is a costly investment. It will cost you time, effort, and energy. Growing as a Christian will take training. But the question we might ask then, how does one train yourself for godliness? What exactly is Paul telling Timothy and us to do?

Let me give you a four-part training program from this letter:

1. **Pray** – 1 Timothy 2:1, “*2 First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*”⁵ – Listen church, I put this first because this is where so many of us, myself included so desperately need to grow. We have somehow started to think that praying is easy, but Paul refers to prayer as a labor. It’s easy to try and jump in and fix everything ourselves, its hard to pray and trust the Lord. Train yourself to pray and you will look more like Jesus who often withdrew to pray.
2. **Read the Word** – 1 Tim 4:13, “*13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.*”⁶, the Scriptures were central to the ministry of Timothy which means they were central to his life, then in ch. 6, “*Teach and urge these things. 3 If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, 4 he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.*”⁷ How will we know the sound words of Jesus? By reading them studying them. Training for godliness means reading and studying God’s Word.
3. **Gather with the Church** – Look at 4:12, “*but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*” – Timothy’s life was to be known to the people he served. Again, there is a pattern here of training. We are to be a part of each other’s lives and that happens first when we gather each Lord’s Day to pray, to sing, to receive good teaching. You can’t really be an example or see a good example if you are not a part of a local church. This also happens in our Sunday School classes and D-groups and mission trips and service projects.
4. **Serve** – In that same verse we see Timothy serving the church through his example, and later in ch.5 Paul makes a clear means for how the church should care for widows. Even the raising up of elders and deacons points to training for godliness. The picture of the local church actively engaged in discipling one another and serving one another is the fertile soil of growth in godliness. This service extends beyond the church body, we can go to many other places in the Scripture to see how Evangelism and Hospitality is a way that Christians serve Jesus and grow in godliness. Serving others is training yourself for godliness.

So perhaps that four-part training pattern should be the template for your New Year’s resolution. Be resolved to train yourself for godliness. If you will not, you’ll get exactly the return on investment that you might expect, if the Lord preserves your life, without training you might end 2023 just like 2022 with no real spiritual progress to show, no real maturity taking place, no fresh closeness to Jesus, struggling with regret.

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 2:1–2.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:13.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 6:2–4.

Now I am not advocating something like a spiritual crash-diet, be realistic about where you're at, and then make the small incremental change that is challenging and costly, but not unattainable. Pick a realistic Bible reading plan, set aside dedicated time to pray, make gathering with the church a non-negotiable, and pick key areas where you can serve others – and brother/sister trust that the Lord will provide the growth. That's our second point, we've seen our costly investment, now...

Point #2 – Our Incredible Return

Money managers are always looking at the ROI, or return on investment. If I invest my funds in this company, or product, what will be my return on investment. And the financial markets are so fickle and unpredictable, and when they aren't it usually means there is someone doing insider trading, stacking the deck to make money, Martha Stuart anyone – that is funny though, did anyone really see Martha Stuart the financial deviant coming... I didn't. There are no sure bets, there are a lot of lucky guesses and savvy market strategies, and investing takes skill, but its never 100% guarantee.

But in our text we see that there is a 100% guarantee on investment backed by the living God. Notice how Paul uses an earthly reality as a metaphor for spiritual reality. Look at vs .8, *“⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”*⁸ – Paul continuing with the training motif uses physical fitness as a jumping off point to a greater reality, much like the Lord Jesus with parables. Paul says “bodily training is of some value” – In a Greco-Roman culture where many trained physically, Paul points to the bodily fitness of having value, but only “some” value. He doesn't demean physical fitness, it is good for us to engage in bodily training, so purchase that January gym membership and actually go, but recognize that investment comes with no real guarantee of everlasting life no matter how many protein shakes and supplements you take and how hard you train. Fit people die all the time. Now laziness and gluttony are still sinful and deny the Lord Jesus just as much as the obsessed gym rat...but the point Paul makes is one of contrast. There is value in bodily training, but it is limited.

Training for godliness is an investment that has unlimited return on investment. How so?

First, Look at what Paul says, *“godliness holds promise for the present life”* – this is the here and now Paul is speaking of, and I can explain this no better than Charles Spurgeon, so I'll let him preach to us for a moment, *“Everything that comes to the Christian comes by promise. He sees his daily bread, and he saith, “It has my Father's mark on it; he said my bread should be given me. Here comes the water from the crystal stream, it is flavoured with the love of God; he said my water shall be sure.” He puts on his raiment, and it may not be so comely as the dress of others, but he saith, “This is the livery my Father promised me.” He sleeps, and it is beneath the canopy of divine protection. He wakes and he walks abroad, angels according to the promise bearing him up in their hands. Afflictions come to him by promise, the broad arrow of the great King is set on each one of them, for was it not said of old, “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace”? He can see everywhere the trace of divine faithfulness in the keeping of the covenant promise... There is a vast difference between having the life that now is, and having the promise of the life that now is—having God's promise about it to make it all*

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:8.

*gracious, to make it all certain, and to make it all blessed as a token of love from God.”*⁹ Godliness reframes our entire life so that our every day is infused with the glories of God and the riches of Christ Jesus.

Second, “*and also for the life to come*” – what did Jesus mean when he said store up for yourselves treasures in heaven? I think we see some of his meaning here that as we train ourselves for godliness, we are investing in that eternal reward that is ours in Christ Jesus. Now I do not know what exactly that means for us, Paul doesn’t describe it, but nonetheless He says that the training for godliness, the costly investments we put forth in this life for Jesus bring an eternal heavenly return.

Now if a banker promises a return on your investment, you may have some measure of confidence. If a personal trainer promises a return on your investment of time and effort you can have a reasonable expectation of a return. But beloved when the living God makes a promise the guarantee is ironclad. No one has ever gotten to heaven and thought, “you know, I thought it would be a bit nicer around here.” That’s ludicrous, just read Revelation and how John is captivated by the sliver of glories he was allowed to behold, or Paul who received visions that were too wonderful for him to describe, or Ezekiel who sees the Lord’s war chariot... Peter James and John on the mount of transfiguration, where just a peek at a heavenly moment leads Peter to say, let’s build shelters and stay here forever. The glories of our eternal dwelling place with God make the value of this life, though meaningful, seem far diminished. No effort we give for training in godliness will ever end up with us saying, you know I wish I’d slept in more. I wish I’d scrolled on my phone more, I wish I’d watched more Netflix, I wish I had fished more, or vacationed more, you know I wish I’d taken more “me time” – No, beloved the promise for the life to come is too great to compare to whatever we must turn from in this life to attain it.

Paul then reinforces this by declaring this to be a trustworthy saying. And our passage finishes with a reminder of focus. Paul writes, “*¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*”¹⁰ What “end” or goal is Paul referring to? What he has just said, godliness, Christlikeness – that is the goal and promise of the Christian life, to be conformed into the image of Christ, to be more and more like our Redeemer. This is the end to which Paul says we “toil” and “strive” – the word translated toil means, “*to engage in hard work, implying difficulties and trouble*”¹¹ and the word translated “strive” implies struggle – the Christian life is hard. Jesus was not kidding when he said if anyone would come after me He must deny himself take up his cross and follow me. Taking up one’s cross was a horrific thing to say, we’ve cleaned it up because we make crosses pretty, but to take up one cross was to take up one’s own death.

Why would anyone sign up for that? Who wants a life of toil and struggle? Those who have come to see that whatever struggles following Jesus brings into our lives simply cannot compare with having real hope guaranteed by a living God. Did you catch that, Paul goes out of His way to say, “the living God” –

⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, “[The Profit of Godliness in This Life,](#)” in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Sermons*, vol. 16 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1870), 353–354.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:10.

¹¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 514.

this is no lifeless idol, no empty guarantee made by a temporary messiah – no the hope that causes us to toil and strive is hope resting on the living God who guarantees it. And remember beloved, “hope” in the Bible is not simply a well-wishing, it is a sure thing. We place the weight of our lives upon the God who lives and promises eternal life for all who come to Him.

Which is the beautiful ending of our passage, “*we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*”¹² Don’t get tripped up by the language here. Paul isn’t a universalist saying every person is saved. “All people” means all without distinction, not all without exception. God is the savior of all kinds of people, there is no special distinction required before God. there is nothing that hinders you coming to God as your savior except you own sin. But if you would turn from your sin and trust in Christ, he will be your savior. That’s what Paul means by “especially of those who believe.” That’s not a special group of Christians, no those who believe are those who have responded to the gospel in faith. And every person who has placed their faith in Jesus and set their hope on the living God finds in Him a sure and living savior. If you aren’t a Christian here this morning, the good news we offer to you is this Jesus came taking on flesh like us, lived the life we couldn’t and died the death that you and I and everyone deserve. Yet he did not stay dead, no he rose on the third day conquering sin and death and offering forgiveness and salvation to anyone who repents of their sin and trusts in Him. This is the good news of the gospel.

And yet if you’re here and you are a Christian, the gospel is your story and your treasure and you and I are called to grow in Christlikeness, to train ourselves for the sake of godliness. So then, will you? Will you focus your hope on the Lord and toil and strive for godliness that brings reward for this life and the life to come. It will be a costly investment, but beloved we have an incredible return, let us live for that together as the church of our Lord Jesus, lets pray...

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Ti 4:10.