

The Protégé Week 10 Walking Miracles

Walking Miracles

Introduction

As we studied last week, Paul has turned his attention to the threats facing the Church at Ephesus. He warned Timothy last week about those who were specifically forbidding marriage and restricting diets in order to prove godliness.

He gave two examples but essentially warned Timothy that there is only one truth...one gospel.....handed down to us...entrusted to us.... and we must do everything in our power to guard, protect, cherish, and share God's truth.

Paul is teaching Timothy that the specifics of the false teaching are not near as important as his response to them. A recurrent theme throughout Timothy is that how we live our lives is as much of a testimony as the words we share. The truth of God should permeate everything about us, just like the lies of Satan permeate those sent to destroy us.

Remember that Jesus had told us that we would know them by their fruit. Those who are Spirit led, surrendered, and abide in Christ will produce much fruit...

John 15:5 (ESV) 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Of course the contrary is true as well....

Matthew 7:15–16 (ESV) 15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16 You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?

Paul is going to give Timothy and Us a lesson in fruit recognition.

1 Timothy 4:6 (ESV) 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.

Notice that the pastor’s job is primarily instruction of the brothers....believers..; but “instruction” should be understood in a broad sense, not only as classroom-style teaching. Jesus instructed His disciples, but with life and practice as well as words. Being trained in the words of the faith and the good doctrine means not just knowing them but being trained by them...allowing your life to be impacted and changed by the truth that you learn.

If Timothy is to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, he must remain anchored in God’s word, carefully following the good doctrine. That means that he must learn to guard his time, energy and efforts. He must be able to sort out what God is calling Him to do and what are distractions from that call. He must be careful on what he chooses to focus on. If Satan can't change his life trained by God's truth...then he will try to distract him.. People are often attacking the church with distractions. To get us focused on things...even good things...that keep us from doing the great things of God. So Timothy must be on guard.....

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When you are training for something you can't spend your time doing things that compete for your time....If you were to decide to run a marathon, you can't spend your training time lacing your shoes and then wasting time on social media or the hundredth rerun of a TV show. You must focus to train.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV) 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.

Paul refers to the false teaching, but instead of expanding on this he immediately speaks of the way Timothy is to live and to respond to that teaching. The antithesis to becoming involved with these myths and tales is not, in this context, to bring an arsenal of theology against them but to be godly. The rigorous but strange lifestyle of the heretics has to be met with an equally rigorous lifestyle of godliness

What is still sometimes neglected in both church and school is the development of character. Prayer, Bible reading, meeting attendance, witnessing, worship, obedience to specific biblical texts, moments of spiritual insight, and even revival are all tremendously important. Isolated acts and events, however, do not necessarily develop character. Character is developed by bringing these spiritual disciplines to bear together on our lives, on our attitudes and decisions, and on our relationships and actions

And so here he now exhorts Timothy—not to develop elaborate arguments disproving the false doctrines—but to a way of teaching and living which will point clearly to Jesus Himself.

The priority must be on God's Word, not on the words of man. Paul cautioned Timothy to keep focused on the Word, not on things that come from man. The greatest effort must be put into God's Word, not man's word.

Ancient Greek and Roman culture put a high value on physical exercise. Paul tells Timothy that the same work and commitment that others put towards physical exercise should be put toward the pursuit of godliness

Spiritual development and physical development share some similarities. With each, growth only comes with exertion and proper feeding

The word godliness comes from the old English word Godlikeness; it means to have the character and attitude of God. This was a worthy goal, much more worthy than the potential attainments of physical exercise. bodily exercise is good for a while, while exercising unto godliness is good for all eternity.

Though godliness does not make this life the most comfortable, or richest, or most pleasurable, or easiest in our time on earth, it undeniably makes it the best, the most contented, and the most fulfilling life one can live in this world

Godliness is the only guarantee of a profitable life which is to come. There are many pleasures or achievements in this world that do not even pretend to offer anything for the life which is to come.

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Only godliness is the path to eternal life and happiness. • Sin and vice offer nothing for the life to come. • Genealogies and pedigrees offer nothing for the life to come. • Worldly success and wealth offer nothing for the life to come. • Personal fame or beauty offer nothing for the life to come. • Achievements in learning or the arts offer nothing for the life to come.

1 Timothy 6:3–4 (ESV) 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.

Paul referred again to a theme he mentioned in the first chapter—that Timothy must be on guard against those who would misuse the word of God.

As believers, we are to remain in the truth and spend our lives there. We need to be saturated in the gospel of Jesus Christ, His life, His death, His resurrection, His commands, His teachings, and His Word. If we hold fast to this gospel, then it will produce godly minds and godly lives. There is no need to crave anything else. Be content in the gospel.

Teaches otherwise in this context may mean replacing the plain teaching of God's word with a focus on prophecies and visions and strange spiritual experiences people claim. This was a great danger that Paul warned Timothy against. Some of the most dangerous teaching in the church isn't done from a pulpit, but in informal, private conversations.

Paul warned Timothy against the argumentative heretic, who has left the word of God to promote his own ideas—who does not consent to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. He warned Timothy against those who seemed to treat the Word of God more as a plaything instead of as a precious gift.

You don't have to be an active opponent of God's word to be an enemy of it. If we fail to give the Bible its rightful place in our life and in our preaching, we oppose God's word.

Even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: This might seem like an unnecessary warning against an obvious danger. Yet the warning was necessary, because those who misuse God's truth don't advertise themselves that way. They often claim to honor God's word while in fact misusing it.

There are different ways that people do not consent to the truth of God's Word. • Some deny God's Word. • Some ignore God's Word. • Some explain away God's Word. • Some twist God's Word using it as a toy to be played with in debate and disputes.

One can be surrounded by God's truth; one can even memorize the Bible, and not have it effect the life for eternity. Curiosity or interest in God's Word without submission to it is a grave danger.

In our day—a time when we are overwhelmed with useless information—it is easy to regard the Bible as useless information or as a source of answers to trivia questions, but not as a book with truth that confronts and transforms my life. Bible study is not trivial pursuit; to treat the Bible as a book of useless information is to misuse it.

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Paul says...look at his life....You will see pride instead of the Spirit. He is puffed up with conceit....He is misusing God's word to advance his own agenda. He understands nothing....Just as Jesus said....Apart from me you can do nothing.

They don't see or admit to their lack of knowledge. And, like most proud people, they are able to convince others that they are experts in God's truth, when they actually misuse it.

To not allow God's Word to speak for itself—to put your own “spin” on it as modern politicians and public relations people do—is the worst kind of pride. It shows someone has more confidence in their own wisdom and opinions than in the straightforward truth of God. Surely, these proud people are those knowing nothing.

The teaching of God's word is a no spin zone.

It is nothing but pride that could make me think that my stories, my anecdotes, my opinions, my humor, could be more important for you to hear than the plain Word of God.

1 Timothy 6:4–5 (ESV) 4 He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, 5 and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

Those who misuse God's Word may be expert debaters on their current doctrinal hobby-horse; but their desire to constantly debate some aspect of doctrine shows their unwillingness to humbly receive the truth.

Paul isn't speaking about people who inquire or question in a genuine desire to learn; but those who ask questions or start discussion mainly to show others how smart they are. They often try to wrestle away the focus from the teacher of the Bible study to themselves. Some of you may remember a Wednesday night a few years ago when I had to shut down just such a false teacher.

Their discussions never lead to unity, understanding and wonder at God....Paul says they always leave a wake of envy, strife, dissension, slander, and Evil suspicions....these are the fruit of the false spirit and false teachers....They thrive on friction and disruption.

Their presence in a church body is the source of all kinds of division and discontent; though they may appear to be experts on the Bible, they actually do damage to God's church.

Timothy should expect that such men would:

- Envy him and his office (without admitting to it).
- That they would create strife among the Christians.
- That they would promote criticism of Timothy and other leaders in the church.
- That they would be the source of evil suspicions—always suspecting Timothy and other leaders in the church of evil motives and plots.

They can do nothing unless they can find an audience to empower them. They can be very persuasive particularly to those new in the faith....They are Spiritual Child Predators and must be stopped. Timothy needed this warning, because such dangerous people are not as obvious as one might think.

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Who suppose that godliness is a means of gain: This is another characteristic of those who misuse God's truth. Their interest in the things of God is not entirely for God's glory, but motivated in part by desire for wealth and comfort. They are misusing God's word to gain what they want...attention, money, comfort, power, prestige and others.

For these men all Christianity is to be measured by the gains it brings ... Paul forbids the servants of Christ to have any dealings with such men. Yet they often find itchy ears....

2 Timothy 4:3–4 (ESV) 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

Very commonly, Christianity is presented today on the basis of what you will gain by following Jesus: personal success and happiness, a stronger family, a more secure life. These things may be true to some degree, but we must never market the gospel as a product that will fix every life problem.

When the gospel is marketed this way, it makes followers of Jesus who are completely unprepared for tough times. After all, if the “Jesus product” isn’t working, why not try another brand? Also, this sales approach takes the focus off Jesus Himself, and puts the focus on what He will give us. Many have their hearts set on the blessings, not the One who blesses us.

While not ignoring the blessings of following Jesus Christ, we must proclaim the need to follow Jesus because He is God, and we owe Him everything as our Creator. What is right before God, and what glorifies Him, is more important than whatever benefit we may gain. We need to see Christians who are more concerned with what glorifies God than with what benefits me.

1 Timothy 6:6–8 (ESV) 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain, 7 for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 8 But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

“The word here used for contentment is autarkeia ... By it they meant a complete self-sufficiency. They meant a frame of mind which was completely independent of all outward things, and which carried the secret of happiness within itself. Contentment never comes from the possession of external things.

When one does not live by “the itch for more,” and one’s life is not dominated by shopping for and acquiring material things, we can have the kind of contentment in God and in His will for our lives.

This is a slippery area in the Christian life. It is very easy to come up with reasons—excuses, that is—why these sins of greed and materialism don’t apply to us. But whenever we think getting something material, or getting more of it, will answer our life’s needs, we lack this contentment. Whenever we are deeply grieved at material loss, we lack this contentment. Whenever we get an inordinate pleasure from buying or having some material thing, we lack this contentment

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Paul has had to learn what he is teaching Timothy....Look at what he told the Philippians.

Philippians 4:11–13 (ESV) 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Contentment is essential, and difficult for many reasons: • We can only find contentment when our hearts are rooted in eternal things; and contentment is essential because it shows we are living with an eternal perspective, not only trying to feather an earthly nest. • It is hard to be content, because our consumer culture feeds our lack of contentment, by rewarding us when we are discontent, and with advertising that tries to make us feel discontent without a product. • It is hard to be content, because we almost always desire far more than we need.

It's easy for many Christians to say they have this contentment; but whether they have it or not is often more truthfully known by their spending and shopping habits. How much of a place does shopping and buying have in your life? How does material loss affect your happiness? How happy do you get from having some material thing?

When we live and act without contentment, we are trying to fill needs in our lives—a need to be “somebody,” a need to feel secure or cared for, a need to have excitement and newness in our lives—most people try to fulfill these needs with material things, but they can only really be met by a spiritual relationship with the God who made us.

Real contentment isn't too difficult for those whose real home is heaven. “It requires but little of this world's goods to satisfy a man who feels himself to be a citizen of another country, and knows that this is not his rest.”

Contentment comes from the true content of your life.

We can carry nothing out—but we can send ahead eternal blessing and reward through wise use of our resources right now.

We most all become jaded over the years, and our over-stimulated culture is effective at producing this in us. Things that used to satisfy us are no longer good enough. The constant hunger for more and more, for more and better, for new and improved, all work against real contentment.

1 Timothy 6:9–10 (ESV) 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Significantly, the desire for riches is far more dangerous than the riches themselves—and it isn't only the poor who desire to be rich, it is the rich who want more riches.

Poor does not mean godly and rich ungodly; nor is it true the other way around. There were many remarkably godly men in the Bible who were almost unbelievably rich, such as Abraham,

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David, and Solomon. But the godly rich have the heart like the Psalmist in Psalm 62:10: If riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

This desire for riches tempts our heart away from eternal riches, and ensnares us in a trap few can escape—always dreaming of riches, and always setting one's heart on them. The desire to be rich can really only be satisfied in Jesus Christ, and satisfied with spiritual riches rather than material ones. Everything else falls short.

The love of money can motivate any evil on this earth. There is no sin that cannot be committed for the sake of money.

Pierced themselves through with many sorrows: This is the fate of those who live in the love of money. They are not satisfied. We sometimes want the opportunity to find out if riches can satisfy, but we should trust the Word of God and the experience of many.

1 Timothy 6:11–12 (ESV) 11 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Timothy was commanded to be different from those who lived for riches and material wealth. He was to flee the proud arguments of those who misuse God's Word and who suppose that we should follow God just for what we can get out of it.

Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness: Instead of pride and riches, Timothy was to make these things his pursuit. These are things which are often not valued in our present age, but are very valuable to God.

Fight the good fight of faith: Going God's way—against the flow of this world—won't be easy. Therefore, Timothy had to have a soldier's determination.

God calls us to be fighters, but to fight the good fight of faith—a fight where some may lose a battle here and there, but they will carry on the fight with great determination until the war is over—when we lay hold on eternal life.

Timothy was drafted into this war: To which you were also called. But Timothy also volunteered: And have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. Timothy had to consider both so as to set his thinking right for the fight. God had called him, and he had also freely chosen.

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1 Timothy 4:11–16 (ESV) 11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

This has the note of authority. Timothy was not to enter the pulpit with speculations and opinions and theories of men. He was to fearlessly bring God's Word before God's people and let the chips fall where they may

Timothy was young, he was vulnerable to the errors of youth which bring the often justified criticism of those older. To address this, Paul called him to live a life so that was so godly that no one could despise his youth. You can be very young in age and yet quite mature in faith.

Be an example by what you say (word), what you do (conduct), in love, in attitude (spirit), in faith (in the sense of faithfulness), and in purity.

These are the criteria by which to assess a pastor. If he is smart, if he is funny, if he is cool, if he dresses sharp, if he is popular, or if he is any number of other things matter little. You must look for a pastor who is an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Reading ... exhortation ... doctrine: These are the things that Timothy must give attention to these things—each of these things are centered on God's Word. He must give attention to these things in both his private life and in his public ministry

1 Timothy 4:11–16 (ESV) 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

This shows that there was definitely the possibility that gifts and abilities in him could be wasted for eternity. As with the parable of the talents, we should not bury what abilities God has given.

Do not neglect the gift has the idea that Timothy has been given supernatural gifts by God, and should trust that God will do great things through him—learning to flow with the moving and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Give yourself entirely to them: Timothy was encouraged to give it his all, to put forth a maximum effort, and by doing so, his progress would be evident to all. Often, progress is not evident because we do not give ourselves entirely to the pursuit of God and His will.

Often we fall short of all we can be for God because we are passive in our Christian life; we simply do not give ourselves entirely. Jesus warned against this passive attitude in the parable of the talents, where the servant who did nothing was severely rebuked.

A Christian might have a saved soul but a wasted life—but no follower of Jesus should ever be content with such a place.

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Keep a close watch on yourself....Timothy, and every pastor, must examine constantly the two great areas of concern—one's life and one's doctrine. Failing to do this would mean peril for both Timothy himself and for those in his congregation.

Those who hear Timothy as a pastor should be hearing doctrine. Timothy's primary call was not to entertain, amuse, or even help with practical things—it was to present Biblical doctrine, and to give heed to that doctrine.

Take Home

Paul is teaching Timothy what Jesus taught him. We are to examine all teachers....we are to be guarded about what we believe....Every teacher of the Bible is either a servant of Christ or of Satan. You and I must be able to discern the difference.

1 John 4:1 (ESV) 1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

I want to pause here and remind us of something that is true but that we rarely think about. The message that Jesus taught was radical, life transforming, incredible, and honestly too good to be true. When He taught people were blown away with its simplicity and its depth. They had never heard such authority and such a personal experience with God.

As people heard the message, they must have started asking themselves....could this be true? Is it possible that the promises of God could be for me? God is seeking to save someone like me? How could they be sure? There were a lot of false teachers and fake messiahs. So Jesus did something extraordinary....something undeniable....a stamp of authenticity on His message....

He performed miracles...not just any miracles like the magicians... He did God stuff....He did what everyone knew only God could do. As people were wondering about the message, Jesus gave them something they could not deny...the Miracles of God.

People heard His truth.....they saw His miracles and they knew God was in their midst. The truth had to be validated by something else....His miracles....He did what only God could do... calming storms, raising the dead, transfiguring on the mountain. They heard the message and they wondered....they saw the miracles and they believed.

So let me ask you this....What about today? We share the gospel message and our friends begin to wonder...could God really love me? What miracle validates the message today? What God sized miracles do people see today that tell everyone His gospel is true? We have been entrusted with the same truth shared by Jesus....He did God's sized miracles and people believed...What God sized miracle accompanies the truth that you share? Once people hear you share the truth of God's Word, what miracle are you going to show them?

The answer is YOU. You and I are the walking miracle that God will use to demonstrate His power and validate His message. They will look at you and me and people will know the message we share is from God. They learn of the transformation that God has done in your life....How you were once dead in your sins and have risen again....They see how you see and treat other people....and they know that you were once blind but now see....They see the sins that used to entangle you know have no power over

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you...You were captive but now set free.... they see God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and goodness in you and they know you have abided in Christ.

Jesus used miracles to validate the gospel message and to let others know it came from God. You are the miracle that validates the message to day. What God has done in our lives...is the greatest miracle of our time. The Spirit in us is the miracle that validates the message. Never forget that. They will hear the Gospel message and wonder....they will hear your testimony and believe.

How you live your life in the Spirit is as important as the gospel that was entrusted to you. They see the change in you and they know God must have done it. They know you were dead in your sins...and in you they see new life. Every day that you and I go out into the world we are inviting people to come and see what God has done.

Once we embrace the miracle that we are...it becomes much easier to see and recognize someone who is faking it. In essence, when we hear a message of Jesus we should then think....ok God show me the miracle that is in them. Show me the Spirit. Just as John the Baptist leaped for joy in the womb when he was near the Spirit of Jesus.... our Spirit should immediately resonate with those who are truly from God.

Romans 8:16–17 (ESV) 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Don't be persuaded by words that are not accompanied by changed lives. Trust your first instinct...The Spirit never misleads you and never has to come to a conclusion or see what happens. If you have to try to convince yourself that they are from God...they are not. I believe that God gives us the Spiritual gift of discerning spirits when we need it.

1 Corinthians 12:10 (ESV) 10 to another the ability to distinguish between spirits... 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apports to each one individually as he wills.

So one of the key messages of 1 Timothy is Paul repeatedly telling Timothy...Don't waste time arguing about unimportant stuff. Don't let distractions take you away from the message. Preach the Gospel but then realize that you must validate your message with the manner in which you live your life. They will want to drag you into arguments and debates about trivial stuff....Don't argue with them about those things....Let your life be your testimony and give them no where to engage.

No one will know the miracle that God has done in your life if you keep it to yourself. God has created millions of Spirit filled miracles and has entrusted the most important message ever given to mankind to them. The Gospel message has been gifted to them. The transformation that has occurred in their lives is the miracle that seals the message. So when people want to draw you into ridiculous arguments and silly myths...you keep teaching the truth and show them that to the very best of your ability that you are living the truth. Let God's miracle shine through you.

Just as you are examining them...they are examining you...not for perfection, but for the active living presence of the Holy Spirit in you....that is your miracle. When people see the Holy Spirit and His change in you...they know the message is from God and they can trust His truth. And as Spirit filled believers,

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we don't walk that walk alone. There are millions of us all over the world....walking miracles...sinners transformed by Christ...living in the Spirit and showing God's miracles to all they encounter.

They will hear the truth and wonder....they will see you...a walking miracle of God....and believe. Let's pray.