

CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

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CHAPTER NINE

PAULS PASTORAL PRESCRIPTION

“**Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine**” (I Timothy 4:13)

Paul was ever like a wise field general who keeps the offensive moving on all fronts. He, himself, was never recreant. Thus, he desired the utmost stability of all who serve the Captain of our salvation. However terrifying the opposition; the soldier of the cross must not quail. His voice rang out with clarity and firmness as he appealed, “**Stand fast, and having done all, stand!**”

During the first world war, General Foch issued a similar command. News had reached him concerning the preponderant German forces facing his lines. “Advance is impossible; retreat is unthinkable. Therefore, our position is favorable. Stand!” Yet, however renowned a leader, however inspiring his statements, it would be unmitigated folly to issue such a communiqué to untrained soldiers. Steadfastness is acquired and one usually pays dearly for it.

The Apostle put the matter straight to Timothy. “**If thou shalt remind the brethren of these things,**” he wrote, “**thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine.**”

A good minister, then, is one who trains his forces well. To “**remind the brethren of these things**” means to drill them well in the fundamentals. But there is always an *if* of condition.

- A soldier may be strong and able to endure hardship if he trains faithfully.
- An athlete may run well *if* he exercises constantly.
- An executive may succeed *if* he is acutely alert.
- A student may excel *if* he applies himself.

In each case, attention must be given to essentials in order to develop skill and competency.

The Christian servant needs more than the nutriment of doctrine. It has to be transmuted into action. He requires more than the assurance of faith. It must be put into practice. The runner may eat and sleep well, but he must also get on the track and run the laps. The principle is aptly expressed by James, who urged, “**Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only.**”

The text is, in reality, an assignment given to young Timothy by Paul who was then absent. The introduction is at once expressive of our Lord, Who said, “**Occupy till I come.**”

The two commands are synonymous. The application is for all Christians. We are, in the absence of the Saviour, to be occupied with His Word, His work and His will. But the importance attached to this threefold ministry is gathered from the manner in which Paul enjoined Timothy to proceed.

The word “**give attendance**,” [*pros-ekh-o*] means *to devote, to apply oneself or to pay strict attention*. That is, it calls for a concentration on or a specialization in certain particular matters. These matters were clearly designated and definitely designed to furnish a well-rounded Christian training which is equally needful today.

The early Christian leaders accomplished much because they dealt in productive essentials. They eliminated the irrelevancies and confined themselves to the Scriptures which are sufficiently able to fully furnish the man of God unto every good work. Today, valuable time is consumed in private study, in conversation among brethren and in convocations in an effort to magnify the theological differences which prevail. There was a day, when men like Paul were determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Give attention to reading.

It would be utterly superfluous to engage ourselves in a lengthy consideration of the value and blessing of the art of reading. He who cannot or does not read suffers irreparably. It is obviously true, however, that the finest of privileges suffer both through disuse and misuse. The art of reading is not excepted.

There is ample reason to believe that the ability to read, being of divine bestowment, is primarily for the purpose of appreciating and appropriating the divine revelations of Scripture; yet multitudes exclude the Bible entirely from their reading pleasure. One wonders if there is not to be found in missionary procedure some object lesson of the basic thought in the mind of God when he made reading possible as an endowment for man.

After years of intensive study in the native dialects, vocabularies are established and elementary laws of syntax and rhetorical procedure outlined. Then, with patience and much perseverance, lessons in reading are taught with one aim in mind—that the natives might peruse the sacred page and learn something of heaven’s message. What else but the law of the Lord did the children of Israel have? We are not contending that acceptable and approved types of literature, other than the Bible, should not be read; but certainly they should not take the precedence, allowing the Holy Book to be relegated to some insignificant place.

Paul’s main emphasis may have been upon public reading. Scrolls were few and reading ability limited. Timothy was to go before the flock, over whom the Holy Ghost had made him the overseer, and read the revelations of Divine wisdom.

This custom had long been followed at that time and had proved profitable.

When the returned remnant of captive Israel entered Jerusalem after the walls and temple had been repaired, “**Ezra the scribe stood up on a pulpit of wood . . . and opened the Book in the sight of all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up . . . so they read in the book in the law of God**” (Nehemiah 8:4, 5, 8).

In the little town of Nazareth, Jesus did likewise as He worshipped in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read, “**And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah**” (Luke 4:17).

This was an indispensable part of Jewish worship. When Paul was invited to preach in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, it was not until “**after the reading of the law and the prophets**” that he was presented to the congregation (Acts 13:15). This custom is still in vogue. What is more elevating than that of a godly man publicly and reverently reading from God’s Holy Word. There is a fine effect upon the moral feelings also when a congregation of earnest Christians read the Word in concert.

The word which Paul used is *anagnosis*, which means, literally, “*knowing again*.” It carries the thought of reading and rereading. What other book would permit of this? For millennia the dear old Bible has been read and reread by the countless numbers who have plodded the narrow road of obedience to God; and, yet today, there is a freshness, a new challenge and a deep blessing for all. Glorious Book this! Paul was laying down a principle in homiletics for young Timothy which has never become obsolete. He was saying something to this effect, “You cannot diagnose the Word of God until you first *anagnose* it.” It is always well to read and reread before making any attempt to analyze. It was with frequency of doing and faithfulness of devotion that the Apostle was urging him to proceed.

We read the Scriptures for refreshment of soul.

The Word of God is both meat and drink to the one who has been born again. Jesus stated that man must not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Job testified, “**I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food**” (23:12).

David spoke of thirsting for God even as a deer pants after the waterbrooks. He was longing for the courts of praise, since his predominating desire was to dwell in the house of the Lord. David wrote more about the glory of the Word than any other single, divinely-appointed penman: hence, it is of small wonder he missed the reading which was always the prominent part in their worship. No matter the sorrow, disappointment or burden, there is always refreshment for the longing soul in the exhaustless biblical storehouse of things both new and old. It was Paul’s daily companion and brightened the dark corners into which life’s vicissitudes forced him.

We read the Scriptures for renewal of faith.

They are faith-begetting and faith-promoting. They furnish stalwartness and fortitude for any eventuality. Reading and rereading about the unwavering faith of Paul in turmoil and trial cannot but fill one with an added determination to remain true to the Lord and to do exploits for Him.

The stimulant of Hebrews eleven to the faith of a believer is unexcelled. It is a tonic of rare quality which can inspire a weakened soul to new life and loyalty. One never tires reading of Abel and the faith of his more excellent sacrifice, of Enoch and his faithful walk with God, of Noah and his choice of faith, of Joshua and his Jericho victory through faith, to say nothing of those who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire—an endless delineation of faith’s victories which cannot be tabulated.

Such a chapter should be read preparatory to each conquest in which the Christian soldier must engage.

We read the Scriptures for remembrance of love.

The Bible is referred to as God's love letter to man, but the Bible is much more than the concept which such a statement produces. Jesus said, "**The words I speak unto you are spirit and are life**" (John 6:63).

They carry something of the spirit of Christ and of the life of God. It is indeed difficult at some points in Scripture to distinguish between the written Word and the Living Word. Throughout its pages there is something of the throb of love, a real love, a love that is divine.

- It underlies every warning and fills every promise.
- It moves men to sympathy and pity for the spiritually destitute and motivates them in sacrificial service.
- It opens before our spiritual vision the very heart of God which planned "**so great salvation**" for us.
- It is the key to Calvary and the answer to all the sorrow which there broke the heart of the Saviour.
- It is the basic meaning of every Christian sacrifice in mission and in martyrdom.

Love permeates the sacred page, and every perusal brings to the reader warmth of its radiance.

We read the Scriptures for a recognition of God's will.

The disciples walked with their resurrected Lord enroute to Emmaus. As they reviewed the wonderful experience and recounted the details incident to it, they testified, "**Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?**" (Luke 24:32). God talks to us through His Word; and, as we read it or hear it, the Holy Spirit indites to our hearts that which will enable us to know His will. The Bible is God's directive for man; and when we devote ourselves to its reading, we place ourselves in the right position to hear His voice.

"Think of it prayerfully,
Study it carefully,
Deep in thy heart let its oracles dwell,
Ponder its mystery,
Slight not its history,
None can e'er love it too fondly or well."

We read the Scriptures for the richness they furnish.

The 119th Psalm is a lengthy, coordinated testimony to the practical value of the Bible. The Divine statutes afford strength in trial, comfort in sorrow, preservation in temptation, and wisdom in difficulty, filling the mouth with praise and stirring the soul to a deeper dedication. The pregnancy of Scripture is proved by the Holy thoughts to which it gives birth.

To his fellow-believers at Philippi, Paul wrote, **“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things.”**

He is rich indeed who abounds in the knowledge of the Word. Devote thyself, therefore, to the reading of its precious precepts.

Give attention to exhortation.

The second part of the Apostle’s command to Timothy had to do with what Paul called the *paraklesis*. This particular use of exhortation meant a “*calling near or for*,” not so much a driving, forcing method of superimposing facts upon unwilling minds and hearts, but rather a passionate plea with a view to drawing the sheep into pastures green, near to the heart of the Great Shepherd.

In II Timothy 4:2, exhortation was specifically commanded by Paul who urged that it be done with the utmost patience. People, as a rule, are not quick to dedicate themselves fully to the Lord. The green pastures of God’s provision are to be preferred above all other allurements, but true spiritual values can only be proffered to needy hearts by careful and loving challenge.

The good minister of Jesus Christ must constantly remind the flock that there is something better ahead, then graciously urge a pressing on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Satanic obstacles must be surmounted. Christians must be encouraged by an assurance of sufficient grace. Every time one sues for higher territory, each step is contested, but the impelling exhortation is that the Captain of the Lord’s host ever leadeth triumphantly. When the glitter of worldliness would dim the true vision, then must the exhorter assure, **“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”**

The exhortation is *accepted* by some, thereby proving the profitableness of such a ministry. Titus is cited as a good illustration. **“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you,”** Paul explained, **“for indeed he accepted the exhortation”** (II Corinthians 8:16).

It is most commendable when the challenge of the Word of Truth is allowed to register in the human heart.

- It is always for man’s present edification and his prospective good.
- It brings him face to face with the will of God.
- It opens for him avenues of service and oceans of joy.
- It produces an everlasting gratitude in the willing recipient.
- It rewards the exhorter for his perseverance.

If one will faithfully exhort, and if the people will patiently give audience, the power in the heaven-sent message will sooner or later dissipate indifference and the exhortation will be accepted and practiced with joy.

While it is incumbent upon the servant of God to exhort, and while some accept the challenge, it is stated that the exhortation is *forgotten* by others. **“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children”** (Hebrews 12:5).

- This is the harbinger of backsliding.
- This is the reason why Israel went backward.
- This is the reason Demas forsook Paul and turned to worldliness.
- This is why the professing church is so impotent in this hour of the world's greatest crisis.

The exhortation is given, as by a father to his son, in all the kindness and parental love that can be shown. In fact, it is the counsel of God the Father to His children in the family of faith, but it is pushed aside with disinterest and inappreciation. When once we perceive the purpose of God in exhortation, there results a humble acknowledgment that it is **“for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness”** (Hebrews 12:10). Whether forsaken or accepted, the minister of Christ is duty-bound to exhort with all longsuffering.

Give attention to doctrine.

Here Paul treats of the matter of teaching (*did-as-kal-ee-ah*). This is the function of doctrine. It is intended to be didactical. Doctrine is the pavement on which dedication operates and is the groundwork of all productiveness in spiritual endeavors. It is the anchor of a steady testimony; hence, a constant necessity. This reveals why Paul commanded Timothy to preach the Word in season and out of season.

Concerning doctrine, the earnest student of the Scriptures will carefully ascertain whether or not there is congruity between the teaching he receives and the orthodox revelations of the Word of God. We must understand that many principles being propounded in our day are unbecoming to sound doctrine.

In Paul's pastoral epistle to Titus, chapter two, verse one, he says, **“Speak the things which become sound doctrine.”** Then, in verse seven of the same chapter, he shows three profound factors which are consonant with sound doctrine. **“In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing UNCORRUPTNESS [purity], GRAVITY, SINCERITY.”**

These are basic factors. Sound doctrine should produce purity, depth, and sincerity in one's life.

Indeed, this is verily the result of faithful proclamation and sincere reception. Paul was a past master in portraying the practical side of Christianity.

One of the strong warnings of Scripture is to beware of *contradiction*. While there is sound doctrine, there is also unsound doctrine. While there are doctrines of Deity, there are also doctrines of demons. The tares still grow amid the wheat and detection is not easy. With all the contradictory counterfeits which are ever multiplying, the welfare of those not bulwarked by the Word of God is in jeopardy. False teaching is often advanced, not by the addition of error, but by the omission of truth.

The Galatian believers were victims of clever deception which proved most disheartening to the Apostle. False teachers creep in unawares and bid for the confidence of God's people, perhaps through the employment of orthodox terminology. Then, they major in propagating error.

The best safeguard, always, is to stress, as did Paul, the teaching of sound doctrine.

Then, with regard to informative teaching which Paul enjoined upon Timothy, we call attention to the matter of cultivation. This word is employed with much careful advisability. Following the martyrdom of James and the persecution of Peter in the days of Herod the tetrarch, it is written, **“the word of God grew and multiplied”** (Acts 12:24).

When Paul preached with Holy Spirit unction at Ephesus during his third missionary journey, many believed, and **“so mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed”** (Acts 19:20).

This proves the virility of divine truth. Growth, however, requires cultivation if the product is to be the best. If the Word is to enjoy a proper growth and produce the fruit of which it is capable, there must be cultivation. The heart, which Christ termed the soil, must be kept free of the weeds of unbelief, indifference and unforgiveness. Daily prayer will furnish water of refreshment, while constant presentation of truth to others will add strength and stability. Reading, exhortation and teaching furnish the challenge which induces growth in matters of spiritual import.

The most prominent factor in the practical aspect of biblical instruction is its operative force. Paul denounced old wives' fables and discountenanced the vain traditions of the fathers; but, when he proffered advice, it was both workable and profitable. He lived by the faith of the Son of God (Galatians 2:20), and his life was a convincing attestation to the utility of Scripture. **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable . . .”** But it must be practiced.

Paul was an ardent advocate of exercise. The rigors of life as he knew it called for the best bodily care. Yet, the importance of physical exercise is dwarfed by the significance of spiritual exercise. **“Bodily exercise profiteth little [for a little time],”** he reasoned, **“but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”** (I Timothy 4:8).

Chinning the bar, punching the bag, running the laps add strength to the muscles and bolster the health; but reading the Word, exhorting men and teaching doctrine send us down the course with the stride and form of the faithful witnesses who compass us about. The Divine Umpire from the bema takes notice and has a fitting reward ready.

“Attention, please!” echoes the voice of the Apostle, “Specialize in reading, exhortation and doctrine.”

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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