

# How to Save yourself and others

By Dr. Robert L. Thomas

**Bible Text:** 1 Timothy 4:11-16

**Preached on:** Sunday, May 13, 2012

1 Timothy chapter four verses 11 through 16. We need to read this passage together in order to try to organize a few remarks about how to save yourself and others. 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

Prescribe and teach these things. Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.<sup>1</sup>

My remarks this morning are geared mainly for Charlie, but also including the Calvary Bible Church and the Berean Bible Church and we trust that there will be a few lessons for everybody in what God's Word has said here.

I have called this sermon from verse 16, "How to save yourself and others." On the update New American Standard Version of which I had no part, reads this way.

"...ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."<sup>2</sup>

Which is a little bit interpretive for me. And I would prefer to go back to the original reading of the NASB when it first came out and that would be how to save yourself and others, which sounds a little bit heretical theologically.

A person, of course, cannot save himself. Only Jesus can do that, so let's be sure we have that in mind and, number two, no one but Jesus can save another person. Let's emphasize that in case of it should be anyone here who needs clarification on that issue. And then, thirdly, salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. If a person has trusted Christ for salvation he does not need to be saved, because he is already saved. So for sure we have in this verse 16 a reference to future salvation not to past or present salvation of believers.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

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To resolve these points of confusion let's remember that though it is true that only Jesus can save, the Bible sometimes attributes what Jesus did not do personally to what someone of his servants does in his place.

In John 19:1 we read that:

“Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him.”<sup>3</sup>

Now Pilate the Roman governor did not actually have a personal part in scourging Jesus, but he had someone else to do it. And so it is that while Jesus in person does not save everybody who gets saved, he uses people to do it. So Pilate... so Jesus uses saved people as his agents to reach those who are not saved.

Now let's observe also that according to the new people, according to the New Testament saved people, though already saved, need to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, Philippians 2:12. They need, according to 2 Corinthians 13:5 to examine themselves whether they are in the faith. These are already saved people that need to do that. And according to 2 Peter 1:10 to make their calling and election sure. And behaving in the prescribed way through his Christian life, a person will carry out the process of securing that future salvation that is spoken of in 1 Timothy 4:16.

Now in these verses we have two well defined steps which lead not only to one's own future personal salvation, but also to the salvation of other people. And we read the verse, verse 12 once again, 1 Timothy 4:12.

“Let no one look down on your youthfulness [or youth].”<sup>4</sup>

A leader such as Timothy aspired to be needed the respect of those who were expected to follow him. And so the first lesson we would draw is that a pastor must earn the respect of people which comes up repeatedly in this sequence of verses.

No one respects a wheeler dealer. We have plenty of those running around. No one respects a manipulator. No one respects a person who cuts corners, someone who is such a pragmatist that principles mean little to him. Deceptive or misleading words or actions are the most common way to lose respect with other people.

And if there is way to get me a little bit of sip of water I would appreciate that. Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> John 19:1.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Timothy 4:12.

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Paul warns Timothy about earning this kind of contempt from others. Timothy was especially vulnerable to criticism because of his age. Paul speaks of him as a youth. Charlie is still to some of us a youth.

In the culture of that time youth included people up to 50 years of age. And so I haven't checked on Charlie's age yet, but I think he is still less than 50. So he is, according to this culture, still a youth.

By doing a little chronology we can conclude that Timothy, when Paul wrote this epistle was in his middle 30s. So Timothy was still a youth when he wrote these words. You know, I went through that period of my life when I was an in between person. My age bracket did not fit anywhere. To the young people, I was an old fogey. To the senior citizens, I was just a youngster. Nobody claimed me. Now I am a bona fide senior citizen and I qualify for all the discounts. It is wonderful to belong. I get the feeling of belonging once again.

Victor Hugo, a French writer—Thank you kindly, sir. Victor Hugo of a past generation once wrote to a friend on his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, “You should rejoice, my friend, that you have escaped your 40s which are the old age of youth and have arrived at the age of 50 which is the youth of old age.” So there are bright sides both ways.

Someone has said that if you know that you are ready to retire when your bathroom mirror fogs up and you don't care any more.

So in Timothy's situation at Ephesus obviously a number of the people were older than he. His youthfulness could have been an obstacle to the respect that he received from his congregation.

Paul's command in verse 12 says, “Timothy, you are to make up for your lack of years through the seriousness of your devotion to Christ. Give them no occasion for feeling contempt for you.”

Now how was Timothy to earn their respect? Was he to do it through self assertion? Never. If a leader does not have the respect of those who follow him and he feels compelled to demand their respect, he has lost the battle already. So he respect has to be earned, but not commanded. Timothy was to earn their respect in the way that verse 12 describes. Show yourself to be an example. He needed to have an exemplary lifestyle. He was to be a model for believing people to imitate.

What is there about some people that bestows dignity on whatever position they hold? Whether he is a custodian or even a lowly seminary professor as I was for many years. This is it. A becoming behavior that unashamedly says, “Follow me and do as I do.” Not follow me and do as I say, but do as I do.

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Verse 12 in this text gives five errors where he is to show himself an example. Two of them deal with outward conduct, speech and conduct. Those are outwards conduct. That is the way you live. That is your behavior style. That is very, very important. One includes the ... there are two words for outward conduct, the word for speech and conduct or conversation, one the speech involves both public teaching and also conversation in private with people. So you are to be an example in speech. You are to be an example in conduct which involves non verbal invitation to people to do the same as you are doing. So it is a well rounded picture of your human life.

Verse 12 also gives three areas that deal with inward disposition. Now in the King James version there are actually six of these, but in the better manuscripts upon the NASB it is called the better manuscripts and left out the second which was intense spirit found in the King James version right after the term love. So the inward disposition includes love and faith, the second two items in verse 12.

And these are the motivating forces behind the outward conduct. Love is always seeking the benefit of other people. Not of yourself. Love is not self centered. That other person may not deserve it. He or she may have done something very negative in reference to your person. But you can't hold that against them. They have to... you have to love them in spite of that. Love is always seeking the benefit of the other party in spite of what he or she may have done to you in the past. This is a great challenge in every day life for everyone, especially for one who will be the leader of a congregation.

Purity, the fifth, the other item that is in this list, faith and purity, purity, of course, has to be a cleanliness of heart that is the soil from which faith and love spring.

I had the very unpleasant experience a number of times just in recent years of having men that were supposed to be an example who had secret habits that they indulged in that eventually led to their downfall. So purity means that you don't have any of those secret habits, very, very important. And those secret habits are really abundant in the day and time in which we are living in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

No one can fail to respect a life of this caliber. Be sure there will be some that will bad mouth you. No matter what, how pure your life is, how exemplary it is, but when all is said and done they will have done more damage to themselves than they have done to you.

So just hang in there. Be consistent in your purity of life.

In this paragraph of 1 Timothy Paul keeps coming back to the importance of earning the respect of others as we jump right down to verse 15. He says:

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“Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress may be evident to all.”<sup>5</sup>

As you grow up in the faith, Timothy, your progress is to be evident to all. That is how you earn respect.

In verse 16 he begins the verse by saying:

“Pay close attention to yourself...”<sup>6</sup>

Tremendously important for every one of us, but especially so of those who aspire to leadership. Earning the respect of others is of prime importance if you are going to save yourself and others.

Number two, a second emphasis we gain from these verses is that you need to implant God’s Word in other people. And this come sin verses 11, 13, 14 and 16. Verse 11 says:

“Prescribe and teach these things.”<sup>7</sup>

Now this includes teaching about the critical importance of godliness which Paul has just described in 1 Peter four verses six to 10. More generally it is the teaching of God’s Word. Without reading all five verses, let’s look at verse eight in particular.

“...for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.”<sup>8</sup>

Godliness is profitable for all things. And how do you implant God’s Word in other people when you implant God’s Word to other people you are doing that. You are implanting godliness in their lives because that is the means that God has chosen to use.

Now there are three other ... three main areas of a leader’s public ministry which are important to implanting God’s Word. And these that Timothy comes to in verse 13.

“Until I come, give attention to... reading”<sup>9</sup>

You notice the text has several words in italics. In the update version the public reading, the public reading of Scripture. The Greek text says only give attention to Scripture, excuse me, give attention to reading. The other words have been supplied by the

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 4:15.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 4:16.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 4:11.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Timothy 4:8.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Timothy 4:13.

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translators and in this particular case I think that is correct, because the other references in the verse are talking about public ministry so the reading should be public reading as well.

Timothy was to engage in the public reading of Scripture. This practice carried over from the Jewish synagogue services among the Jewish people. And we get a little bit of a taste of what the Jewish synagogue service included in Acts chapter 13 verses 14 through 16.

But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." And Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand, he said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:<sup>10</sup>

So the point of this section is that Paul's remarks were made, were based on the... what had just been read to that synagogue audience back in the first century. And we need to read Scripture. It is to have a prominent part in our services. And nothing more important than that. If we do nothing else, we need to read Scripture. And whatever we can do by way of comment to throw light on what we have read, that is just that much better.

So I am sure that Charlie will give plenty attention to the public reading of Scripture, but, of course, you can't do it just in public. You need to do it in private as well. If your public reading is to have any impact, you need to have read it privately at least a dozen times so that it has thoroughly sunk in and made its impact upon your own life.

Such is an important thing for a pastor in prescribing and implanting God's Word in other people.

But he is also to give attention to the word exhortation. Now this form of public address, again, in verse 13, this form of public address aims primarily toward the feelings and the wills of the listeners. In other words, you are shooting for their feelings and their wills that will infect their decisions and it finds its basis in Scripture obviously, not in anything that you have come up with by way of personal discovery outside of Scripture. Usually this will be the passage that this been read publicly. And so this will be the pastor's talent to persuade people to comply with the standards that are found in Scripture. And I am sure you have been persuaded to do that plenty often here in Calvary where you have read what God expects of you and to see what you can do publicly. And I am sure that those people who will benefit from Charles' ministry at Berean Bible Church will do the same.

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<sup>10</sup> Acts 13:14-16.

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And the final word is the word for teaching and reading, exhortation and teaching. This activity directs itself primarily to human understanding. It includes both doctrinal information and the principles of moral behavior. It gives a meaning of Scripture that has been read publicly.

Now there are some really sad situations in churches. I just know of one recently of a church in our neighborhood where they have lost some families recently and they will.... are about to lose their teaching pastor in the near future because the church has maintained a person who... in a teaching position who does not believe in the historical accuracy of Genesis one to three. It is all mythology. Can you believe that? And this was supposed to be a good church. But they have allowed their guard to go down and let this young man who just recently graduated from another seminary to teach his ideas that Genesis one to three are e mythological. That is very, very sad and I am sure that Calvary and also the Berean Church in Montana, they will never have this trouble with their leadership.

So every service should contain these three elements. From time to time someone will come along and bad mouth the emphasis on using church services to teach the Bible. And we have had that recently happen in our own church there in Anaheim. Our pastor is an excellent Bible teacher and he uses his sermons to teach the Bible. And they say we don't want that. It is too academic. But in the long run teaching the Bible is the way that you will grow spiritually, because it will have an inevitable effect on your conduct and your behavior.

It is wrong to downgrade teaching. It is true that teachers often neglect to apply what they teach to the lives of their listeners. This is a mistake. If teaching is accompanied by exhortation, then you will have plenty of application to go along with what you have taught. So it is a vital part of the leadership in a local church.

Teaching with its inseparable companion of exhortation is how people get saved and continue on the road to future salvation.

On verse 14 Paul tells Timothy to give him another tip.

“Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you.”<sup>11</sup>

Implanting God's Word involves the use of spiritual gifts.

As we read from the pastoral epistles Timothy's gifts included exhortation, teaching and ruling or governing.

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<sup>11</sup> 1 Timothy 4:14.

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I was reading on another viewpoint on this and {?} another commentary on 1 Thessalonians five on the plane coming here and the commentator or wanted to eliminate from the verses 12 to 14 in that section the reference to ruling. There is a Greek word προιστημι (pro-is'-tay-mee) which may have another meaning, something like take care of. And so on the basis of the context he sort of takes out that aspect of ruling, but Timothy had to get the ruling or governing and I think that it is very definitely a leadership quality that need to be included.

These gifts are reflected in various parts of 1 and 2 Timothy. They were given by God, but they were discovered by Timothy and others in connection with several different circumstances. Verse 18 says that the 1 Timothy 1:18 says that your... the gift that was given you, discovered through prophecy, 1 Timothy 1:18.

A prophet we do not know which prophet and we do not know which church in that day and time received a revelation from God about Timothy's gifts and made a public declaration of it. And so in verse 14 here we see that:

“...bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.”<sup>12</sup>

So the gift of prophecy in that early stage of the body of Christ was a miraculous gift which received direct revelation from God along with the apostleship which also received direct revelation from God. And so there was a prophet in one of the churches, perhaps it was the church in Lystra where Timothy came from. Perhaps was the church here in Ephesus where he was currently working. This was the Jewish custom there... that they would recognize humanly with the laying on of hands. That was the way of public recognition of gifts in a person, an outward sign of an inward communication of the Spirit or a spiritual office or undertaking.

The ... here it was done by a group of leaders called elders in verse 14. The presbytery is another word for the elders. And it was through the laying on of hands.

2 Timothy 1:6 indicates that Paul was involved in this as well. And Paul had a part in this recognition adding his agreement with what the others had indicated about Timothy's rich endowment.

We will acknowledge publicly the same thing regarding our brother Charlie who is being ordained today, the gifts that God has given him. And this recognition of Timothy's gifts probably took place in Lystra which was his home church, Acts 16 verse one. But it may have been in Ephesus where Paul left Timothy to minister according to 2 Timothy 1:2.

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<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 4:14.



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These gifts were special capacities for this by Timothy that enabled him to perform extraordinary service to others and thereby build up the body of Christ. It were as though Paul was saying, “Timothy, don’t neglect these, but kindle them afresh.” 2 Timothy 1:6. Fan that spark of fire into a roaring inferno. In other words, don’t neglect your gift. Use it and cultivate it and build on it. Magnify it. So this is an important lesson for Charlie, but it is an important lesson for all the {?} in our church. The Church of Jesus Christ badly needs such a commands today. We are suffering from a massive under implementation of spiritual gifts by Christians. Every one of us has one. God never intended for a local body of believers to be an invalid. He meant for it to be a miniature of the whole body of Christ functioning effectively.

Now what are those gifts? There are four speaking gifts. Evangelism, teaching, pastor teaching and exhortation are the speaking gifts. There are several, there are four auxiliary gifts as well. Helps, giving, governing and join mercy are the auxiliary gifts. Now if you are a member of the body of Christ and you are a believer in Christ today, I am happy to tell you that you have at least one gift and it is up to you to find out what that gift is and to use it for God’s glory and for the building up of the body of Christ.

The needs are multiple and will not be met by a single leader or by a few leaders in a church. Every Christian has a service to perform for the rest of the body of Christ. Some will say I am not spiritually qualified to serve. Then you had better get spiritually qualified.

This is where Calvary Bible Church and Berean Bible Church come into the picture. No local church is expected to be a one man show. Never. It is expected to be a team effort. To safeguard ourselves let me know that there are a few good reasons for not exercising gifts. These reasons basically boil down to consideration, growing out of our primary responsibility to love one another as Christ has loved us. If the body of Christ would be hurt in any way by my exercising my gift, then I must refrain. If for some reason someone would be offended I must hold off for the present. But rare is the case when a person’s reasons for not using his gifts have been justified. More often it is because his values have become skewed. He is unwilling to put the work of Christ first in his life. And I hope I am not speaking to anybody that is that way today.

Do you want to be an instrument used by Christ to bring salvation to yourself and to other people? You should want to. God wants you to be such an instrument. If you do, Paul says in verse 15:

“Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> 1 Timothy 4:15.

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Is your Christian service painful to you? I hope it is. Vigorous exertion is involved as you try to earn the respect of other people, as you try to implant God's Word in other people. By continual compliance with this words you will go to your Paul save both yourself and others.

Now today is Mother's Day. Today my mother is in glory and has been for a number of years. She was victimized during her lifetime by not hearing the gospel preached in her church for many years. After being brought to Christ myself having grown up in that church where the gospel was not preached, I prayed for her for 25 years for her salvation. And just six months before she died I did hear those wonderful words from her lips by telephone that she had Christ in her heart.

So she is in glory today and she is rejoicing in what God has done for her life and in the lives of many people. And I hope that every one of our mothers today is on their way to glory if they are not there already.

But remember this that in this process before anyone can be God's saving instrument he must be saved himself. And my mind went back to Ezekiel 33 verses seven through nine.

"Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you shall surely die,' and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand. But if you on your part warn a wicked man to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your life."<sup>14</sup>

If I am being heard today by anyone who has not received Christ as a Savior from wickedness, I trust that somehow that God will bring home to your life the important need for making that right decision. I urge you turn from your wicked way and turn to Jesus Christ who died in you place to provide forgiveness of sins.

May we bow for a word of prayer?

*Father, we thank you for your goodness to us. Thank you for your goodness to Charlie. Thank you for your goodness to Calvary Bible Church. Thank you for your goodness to the Berean Bible Church and pray, Father, that you will bless Charlie and these ministries to prosper for your glory to the salvation of many souls and for the building up of the body of Christ. We pray this in our wonderful Savior's name. Amen.*

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<sup>14</sup> Ezekiel 33:7-9.