

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

CHAPTER IV. VERSES 6-16.

VERSE 6.—*By submitting these things* (these predictions and the principles by which the apostacy may be countermined and averted) *to the brethren thou wilt be a good minister* (διάκονος) *of Jesus Christ, nourishing thyself up with the words of the faith and the good instruction which thou hast carefully followed as a disciple.* (Compare Luke i. 3; Mark xvi. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 19.) While this verse referred to the future dangers of the Church, which might be arrested by timely warning and the apprehension of just principles, Timothy was personally warned against a widely-diffused corruption of the simplicity of the Gospel. The supposed evil and defilement of marriage, and the arbitrary sanctity of certain conventional abstinences, might not be proclaimed by open-mouthed apostacy; *but* there were current already many *profane fables, the veriest chatter of old women*, which (says Paul) *thou must avoid.* The speculative myths of the Gnostics of the second century were not in the mind of the writer. We have merely a recurrence to the anile and senseless stories with which the truth of God was being overlaid. Although it is granted that some treasures of thought are discoverable in sundry treatises of the Mishna and apologues of the Gemara, like diamonds in wastes of arid sand, yet Hebrew literature is full of rambling and profitless enlargement of Scripture thought and narrative; and the boast, moreover, made concerning them, is, that they were handed down from

early times. There is, independently of the Pastoral Epistles, historical justification of the statement that Jewish fables may have vexed the common sense and spiritual intelligence of Paul; and while Timothy is warned against them, the Apostle adds: *But exercise thyself*: perform the functions of a gymnast unto practical piety or *godliness*. *Εὐσέβεια* is not a rose-water luxury, and godly energy cannot be fed on sweetmeats and prettinesses. This term, *εὐσέβεια*, which was commonly understood to mean the whole of man's relation and behaviour to the Divine Being, had been used by St. Paul to express the sum total of human relations with God effected through the mediation of the Incarnate Word. To cultivate these, to give them full sway, involved conflict, daily effort, spiritual gymnastic, and much stirring up of the soul to take hold of God.

In *Verse 8* the Apostle adds, in confirmation of the previous contrast: *For the training of the body is profitable for a little*, for a few purposes, easily grasped and secured. Considerable difference of opinion has arisen as to the meaning of this "*gymnasia* of the body." Chrysostom, Mack, De Wette, Huther, Alford, and Fairbairn have, with different motives, urged that Paul here refers to physical and athletic exercise, for the purpose of securing health and vigour of body. Some have thus supposed that no sanction, not even the slightest, can be extracted from these words for any semblance of the ascetic physical regimen which had just been condemned as a doctrine of devils and denounced as hypocritical, false, and deadly.

Others, in virtue of the smallness of the advantage here attributed to the ascetic exercise, have been tempted to excise all reference to what is so highly commended by them on other grounds.

This view, however, appears to involve great difficulty. If Paul were supposed to say that "bodily exercise" will originate a slight or temporary advantage to the spiritual life, he makes use of a remark out of harmony with the form of the preceding argument. It is not true, and if it were true it would be utterly irrelevant, to say that bodily exercise is profitable for very little to the physical life or well-being. The view of Calvin, Wiesinger, Heydenreich, Ellicott, and Bengel seems to me to shew the breadth of the Apostle's mind and the ease with which he could discriminate things that differ. He foretells that the Christian Church would be harassed by vexatious, hypocritical, and perilous profanations of holy things, by "doctrines of devils," touching the impurity of marriage and of God's good gifts; but he does not thereby condemn all the existing and current Christian practice of keeping the body in subjection. Certain bodily austerities and a wise self-repression may be justified in the same breath which denounces the morbid and treasonable extremes into which these ascetic ideas might easily run. Physical training has a certain limited advantage which cannot be gainsaid. A man who has learned to moderate his physical desires and artificial needs will have fewer temptations to self-indulgence, and greater capacity of ministering to the necessity of others. But the entire process, which is not

deprived of all sanction from the example of the Apostles and of the Lord Himself, is yet of far less importance than the *godliness* which is *profitable with reference to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come*: i.e., godliness is the pledge, the foretaste, the earnest of LIFE in its fullest sense. If *life* be the enjoyment of the conscious favour of God, then even the "life that now is" is deepened, enriched, and hallowed by "godliness." Its bitterness and disappointments, its mysteries, its brevity, and its ending, as well as its pleasures and possibilities, are alike sanctified by godliness. But godliness, as Paul understands it, is the beginning of an endless life, and confers upon us a conscious blessedness which is, in its own nature, incorruptible.

*Verse 9* contains the *formula* on which we have already commented more than once. *Faithful is the saying and worthy of every kind of acceptance.* St. Paul himself, or some prophet of the early Church, had given birth to a mighty word which already was passing current as minted coin of the kingdom of heaven. The question arises, whether the "saying" is that which has just been recorded, or whether it refers to that which now follows. Generally the "formula" introduces the "saying;" but if this is the case here, it is still further pre-faced by,—

*Verse 10.*—*For this purpose*<sup>1</sup> (looking or trusting to this) *we both labour unto weariness, and suffer reproach* (and so far the writer must be supposed to justify the gracious fulness of the "saying"), *namely,*

<sup>1</sup> Cf., for construction, Rom. xiv. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 9.

that (ὅτι) we have put our hope in the Living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who are faithful or believing.

It seems, however, more consonant with the argument to regard the whole of the verse as a further confirmation of the faithfulness and acceptance of the divine words, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

The tenth verse, then, will explain and expand the practical nature of *godliness*. Labour and reproach,<sup>1</sup> in combination with this great possession, can be bravely borne with, BECAUSE (ὅτι) we have but our hope in the Living God.

The perfect tense (ἠλπικαμεν) implies a fully confirmed and permanent hope, which began at some period in the past, but is, when uttered, a present experience. The preposition (ἐπὶ, with dative) expresses the resting-place and ground of the hope. (Cf. Rom. xv. 12 with Chap. vi. 17.) The predicate, "the Living God," indicates the noble contrast between dead idols, vague abstractions, or dim impersonal powers and tendencies, and the living, loving, personal ground of all our hope, *who is the Saviour of all men*. This is his glorious prerogative: because He has loved all, He has revealed Himself with more or less of adequacy and fulness to *all* men; He has given his law, and He has given his only begotten Son to all; He has not restricted his love to Jews or Pharisees, to the spiritual or

<sup>1</sup> If *καὶ* is, with Ellicott, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, to be retained before both verbs, the two ideas are regarded as separable, and not necessarily connected elements of life, but as simultaneously presented.

the cultivated, to the elect or to the susceptible, to the good or to the faithful. He has vindicated for Himself this supreme glory against all the prejudices and exclusions of men, just as He has caused the sun to shine on the evil and on the good; but *He* is *specially* more abundantly *the Saviour of believers*.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly He is "Saviour" of those who accept his love, who realize his true nature, who are "faithful," loyal to his claims, in a special and more abundant sense than He is to those who never appreciate or respond to his self-manifestation, who cherish grave suspicions of his character and spurn his love. Similarly, God is everywhere, and is actively energizing in every atom of the universe, in every point of time; but he who realizes this stupendous and transcendent fact finds in it moral support as well as continued existence. Such an one enjoys consolation and ecstasy, as well as providential co-operation. It is one thing to live in the dominion of the omnipresent Deity, or even to hold as a dogma that God is everywhere; it is another to cry from the depths of a conscious faith, "Verily, the Lord is in this place; this is none other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven." The faith-faculty, the energy of spiritual union with God, transforms the universal love of God into a consciousness of salvation.

*Verse 11.*—*These foregoing things utter with authority, and teach.* Timothy had to do two things, to be a channel for this Divine communication, to lay it down with commanding force, to insist upon these principles whether men would hear or forbear;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Acts xxv. 26, xxvi. 3; Gal. vi. 10.

but he was also called upon to *teach* them. Every minister of the Gospel has a message to deliver, indefinitely more impressive than are the speculations of his own fancy, the flowers of his own rhetoric, the persuasions of his own experience; he is also commissioned to teach. By repetition, by illustration, by patient exposition, by a study of the perplexities and prejudices of his hearers, by sympathy, by ready wit, by fecundity of resources and steady persevering toil, he is to *teach* those whom he has summoned to hear his message.

*Verse 12.*—Such a charge might make Timothy painfully alive to his own youth and inexperience. We have seen in our Introduction to these Epistles<sup>1</sup> that there was sufficient distance in years between the venerable Apostle and his “son Timothy” to render the advice, which is undoubtedly addressed to him, and not to the Church at Ephesus, most pertinent. “*Let no man despise thy youth.*” There is some difficulty in placing the pronoun (*σου*) in immediate connection with the noun (*νεότητος*). It is said that the enclitic pronoun is never placed before the noun with which it is associated, unless for the purpose of special emphasis; but Winer has collected some thirty or forty passages in the New Testament where there is no such special emphasis; and here we need none. Timothy was to conduct himself in such a manner that it would be impossible for any onlooker to despise his youth. Childish timidity and pretentious assumption, feeble substitution of his own self-originated ideas in place of God’s truth, any forgetfulness of the solemn appeal which God,

<sup>1</sup> THE EXPOSITOR, vol. i. p. 59.

not he, was making to the conscience, any aping of the powers of an apostle, any moral improprieties, any weak paltering with principle, would expose him to despute. Consequently he is warned against such compromise of his position, and the Apostle urges further : “ *Be thou a pattern<sup>1</sup> of believers, in word, in conversation, in love, in faith, in purity.*”

The *words* of the mouth cover a large proportion of the outward manifestation of the inner life. If every “word” uttered by Timothy should be acceptable to God, be true and faithful, be generous and brave, be free from spite, passion, or uncleanness, be seasoned with salt, and be neither vapid, vain, nor “idle;” if in his “word” he should be an ideal Christian, a “pattern of believers,” he would all but have satisfied the claims of conscience : but “conversation” includes the whole of his outward bearing ; while “love and faith” involve the principles from which right words and holy actions spring. The last term, “purity,” includes chastity of mind as well as of body, and is a warning of consummate importance to a young man occupying a prominent position in a city like Ephesus.

*Verse 13.*—*Until I come* (the form of the expression suggests a strong expectation that Paul would shortly return to Ephesus) *give heed to the reading*, the public reading of God’s Word in the Christian assembly. Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Origen, the “Apostolic Constitutions,” Chrysostom, and others, alike shew that this exercise formed a most essen-

<sup>1</sup> See Passow, *sub voce*, τύπος. It first means “a blow,” then “the mark made by a blow,” then “an impression on a seal,” then “a copy,” “a specimen,” “a type,” “a pattern.” (See 1 Pet. v. 3 ; Phil. iii. 17 ; 1 Thess. i. 7.)

tial part of the public worship of the Church. There is no more effective commendation of God's truth than reverent, accurate, intelligent reading of the Word of God in the audience of the people. The custom had been transferred from the synagogue, and credit was given to the New Testament writings by the habit early formed of placing them on the same level as the Sacred Books. (Cf. Acts xv. ; Col. iv. 16.)

The Apostle adds : *Give heed to the exhortation and to the teaching* : the first term applies possibly to the appeal made to the feelings, the second to the consecutive instruction administered to the understanding by the public teacher. The Church requires to be warned, warmed, roused by an utterance of well-known truth ; and, further, it always stands in need of exposition, expansion, illustration, and development of truth.

*Verse 14.*—*Neglect not the gift*—the charism of the Holy Spirit, the special bestowment of energy, faculty, and organ of service—*that is in thee, which was given thee through prophecy with the imposition of the hands of the presbytery.* The prophetic voice of the Church had been the call of the Holy Spirit to Timothy. Special duties were often thus discovered for individuals in the early Church (cf. Acts xiii. 2) : and to the present day there is no more vivid assurance and guarantee of the inward monition of the Spirit than this prophetic summons and injunction of the Church of Christ. It was confirmed in the case of Timothy by the imposition of hands on the part of the elders of the Church. Paul may himself have been one of the elders of the Church

who joined in this symbolic act of dedication and prayer. (*Cf.* 2 Tim. i., 5.) This "laying on of hands" is frequently referred to in the New Testament. It was occasionally, though not universally, the symbol of miraculous healing and of the gift of the Holy Spirit to new and previously excluded classes of believers. The Apostles "laid their hands" upon the seven Evangelists. (Acts vi. 6.) This did not, however, confer any power to communicate the Holy Spirit, for we read (Acts viii. 17) that when the Samaritans, from the lips of Philip, received the Gospel, two of the Apostles went down from Judæa to Samaria for the purpose of communicating the Holy Spirit. (*Cf.* Acts xix. 6.) Appointment to ministerial service, or dedication to a missionary career, was also thus expressively attested; but on two remarkable occasions it was not the possession of superior ecclesiastical rank, but the specialty of Divine Providence, which recommended the adoption of this ceremony of decisive confirmation. Thus Ananias (Acts ix. 17) is the means of conferring a grace upon Saul which Philip could not confer on the Samaritans; and "the prophets and teachers" of the Church at Antioch "laid their hands" on Barnabas and Saul and "sent them away" (Acts xiii. 1-3). All the preparation and ordination for the great work of Apollos at Ephesus and Corinth must have been effected by "the brethren" at Ephesus during Paul's absence. It would be difficult, therefore, from these statements to draw forth any definite instructions on the value of the rite as an apostolic method or guarantee of ordination; nor is this the

place to discuss the subsequent adoption of the ceremony by bishops, who thus proceeded to admit catechumens, or *lapsi*, into Church communion.<sup>1</sup>

*Verse 15.*—*Meditate on, or practice, these things.* The interpreters differ as to the precise meaning of the word. The numerous illustrations given by Passow sustain the latter signification in classical Greek.<sup>2</sup> *Be* (engrossed) *in them*;<sup>3</sup> let them be the all-absorbing theme of thy life, the aim and bent of thy whole being, *that thy progress* (in grace or faith) *may be manifest to all.*<sup>4</sup>

Progress is essential to success, and, if made, it ought to be evident, not merely to the conscience of the worker, nor to brethren in office, but “to all.”

*Verse 16.*—*Hold thyself well occupied with* (have thy attention thoroughly absorbed with) *thyself and the teaching* (that is, the culture of thy own life and the function and duties of religious instruction); *continue in them.* Habitual, not fitful and spasmodic, exertion, steady persevering labour will alone meet with the reward of service: *for in doing this thou wilt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*

The salvation of others closely connects itself with that of the preacher’s own soul. Nothing brings a man so close to God, reveals his power, his heart, his accessibleness, his glorious welcome of whosoever will come to Him, like the eager per-

<sup>1</sup> See Suicer, “Thesaurus,” art. *χειροθεσία*.

<sup>2</sup> Leo gives *hæc meditare*; so also Heydenreich and Davidson. Cf. Psa. ii. 1; Acts iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Wettstein quotes Hor. Ep. i.: “Quid verum et decens curo et omnis in hoc sum.”

<sup>4</sup> The word *προκόπη*, from *προκόπτω*, to cut down wood in the way of an advancing army, is used in this sense by later Greek writers, and it occurs thus in Phil. i. 12, 25.

severing search after the souls of men. If a minister so speaks and lives, so exhorts and teaches, that a multitude believe unto life eternal, he quickens his own faith and enters into the joy of his Lord. Notwithstanding all the dire temptations to deal with the mysteries of Divine Love in a professional and perfunctory spirit, yet no man with deep human sympathy and humility can absorb himself in these things and "continue in them," without being ready to admit his infinite indebtedness to the very calling itself. Thousands would allow that if they had not thus cared for others they might have lost their own souls.

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#### NOTES ON COMMENTARIES.

I REGRET to withdraw even a few pages of THE EXPOSITOR from the proper work of the Magazine,—that of expounding and illustrating Holy Scripture. But as I am often and urgently pressed to point out the Commentaries most likely to be useful to students of the Bible; as, moreover, I have promised<sup>1</sup> to indicate "the Commentaries which I myself have most constantly in use," and especially those—since these are most in demand—which the unlearned student of Scripture will find to be most helpful to him, I proceed very briefly to place the results of my experience at the disposal of my brethren. I must beg them to bear in mind, however, first, that I am about to speak only of books which I have had, or have, in constant use; and, secondly, that my library is necessarily a small one, and that for many years I have had no access to the well-stored shelves of such libraries as may be found in London or in the University towns:<sup>2</sup> so that my suggestions will have little value except for students of the humbler grades.

At the very outset I would warn the inexperienced student, especially if his books must needs be few, against any Commentary which professes to treat of the whole Bible, if at least it be written

<sup>1</sup> THE EXPOSITOR, vol. ii. p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> I think I have never gone so near to coveting my neighbours' goods as when I have stood in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge.