

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO 1 TIMOTHY 4

In this chapter the apostle foretells a dreadful apostasy which should happen in the last times, the particulars of which he gives; and on occasion of one branch of it, discourses of Christian liberty in eating all sorts of food fit for use; and delivers out exhortations to Timothy to various duties relating to himself, his doctrine, and his charge. The prophecy is in (^{<5408>}1 Timothy 4:1-3), the author of this prophecy is the Spirit of God; the manner in which it was delivered was very clear and express; the time when it should be fulfilled, the last days; the thing itself, a departure of some from the faith; the means whereby it would come about are, some giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, and the hypocrisy and hardened consciences of others, who would forbid marriage, and order an abstinence from certain meats; the evil of which last is exposed by their being the creatures of God, and by their being made for this purpose to be received with thankfulness by all believers, and who know the truth: and the reasons why they should be received and used follow; because they are all good, as they are the creatures of God; and because there is nothing to be refused, provided it be received with a thankful heart; and because every creature is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer, (^{<5406>}1 Timothy 4:4,5). And then Timothy is exhorted to put the brethren in mind of those things, by which he would show himself to be a faithful minister of Christ, and well instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel, (^{<5406>}1 Timothy 4:6), and to reject things profane and fabulous, but use himself to internal and powerful godliness, since outward worship signifies little, but the former has the promise of this, and the other world annexed to it; which is a true saying, and to be depended on, (^{<5407>}1 Timothy 4:7-9) and which is confirmed from the practice and experience of the apostles, and therefore should be taught with authority, (^{<5410>}1 Timothy 4:10,11). And then the apostle gives Timothy some advice, which being taken, would prevent his being despised, on account of his youth; as with respect to his life and conversation, so to behave as to be a pattern to others, (^{<5412>}1 Timothy 4:12), and with respect to the exercise of his ministry, to make use of such means, as reading and meditation, that his profiting might be manifest to

all, (⁵⁰⁴³1 Timothy 4:13-15) and with respect to the doctrines he preached, to abide by them, whereby he would be a means of saving himself, and others, (⁵⁰⁴⁶1 Timothy 4:16).

Ver. 1. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly*, etc.] The prophecy hereafter mentioned was not an human conjecture, but, as all true prophecy, it came from the Spirit of God, who spoke or delivered it; either in the prophets of the Old Testament, who, as they spoke of the Gospel dispensation, so of the defection that should be in it; and particularly of antichrist, and of the apostasy through him, which is what is here intended, especially in Daniel's prophecies, under the names of the little horn, and vile person, (²⁷⁰⁰Daniel 7:1-28) and (²⁷⁰⁰Daniel 11:1-45), or in the Lord Jesus Christ, who foretold that false prophets would arise and deceive many; or in some of the prophets in the Christian church, such as Agabus, and others, who might in so many words foretell this thing; or rather in the apostle himself, at this time, since this prophecy was delivered not in dark sayings, in an enigmatical way, in an obscure manner, as prophecies generally were, but in plain language, and easy to be understood, and wanted no interpreter to unriddle it; and seeing that it is nowhere to be found in so many express words elsewhere: and moreover, the apostle does not say the Spirit "hath spoken", but the Spirit "speaketh"; then, at the time of the writing of these words, in and by him. The prediction follows,

that in the latter times some should depart from the faith; that is, from the doctrine of faith, notwithstanding it is indisputably the great mystery of godliness, as it is called in the latter part of the preceding chapter; for from the true grace of faith there can be no final and total apostasy, such as is here designed; for that can never be lost. It is of an incorruptible nature, and therefore more precious than gold that perishes; Christ is the author and finisher of it; his prevalent mediation is concerned for it; it is a gift of special grace, and is without repentance; it springs from electing grace, and is secured by it; and between that and salvation there is an inseparable connection; it may indeed decline, be very low, and lie dormant, as to its acts and exercise, but not be lost: there is a temporary faith, and a persuasion of truth, or a mere assent to it, which may be departed from, but not that faith which works by love: here it intends a profession of faith, which being made, should be dropped by some; or rather the doctrine of faith, which some would embrace, and then err concerning, or entirely quit, and wholly apostatize from. And they are said to be some, and these many, as they are elsewhere represented, though not all; for the elect cannot be

finally and totally deceived; the foundation of election stands sure amidst the greatest apostasy; and there are always a few names that are not defiled with corrupt principles and practices; Christ always had some witnesses for the truth in the darkest times: and now this defection was to be “in the latter times”; either of the apostolic age, which John, the last of the apostles, lived to see; and therefore he calls it the last time, or hour, in which were many antichrists, (~~GAL~~1 John 2:18). And indeed in the Apostle Paul's time the mystery of iniquity began to work, which brought on this general defection; though here it has regard to some later times under the Gospel dispensation; to the time when the man of sin, and the son of perdition, was revealed, and when all the world wondered after the beast: and indeed, such will be the degeneracy in the last days of all, that when the son of man comes, as the grace, so the doctrine of faith will be scarcely to be found in the world: the means by which this apostasy will obtain and prevail will be through men's

giving heed to seducing spirits; either to doctrines which are of a deceiving nature; or to men who profess to have the Spirit of God, and have not, but are evil men and seducers, deceiving, and being deceived; that lie in wait to deceive, and handle the word of God deceitfully; and by attending on the ministry of such persons, through hearing them, and conversing with them, the defection was to begin and spread; and therefore such should be carefully avoided, and their ministry shunned; nor should they be received, nor bid God speed.

And doctrines of devils; such as are devised by devils, as all damnable doctrines be; and all lying ones, for the devil is the father of them; and as are all the false doctrines introduced by antichrist, for his coming was after the working of Satan; and particularly those doctrines of his concerning worshipping of angels, and saints departed, may be called the doctrines of devils, or of “demons”; being much the same with the demon worship among the Heathens, of which the devil was the inventor: unless by doctrines of devils should be meant the doctrines of men, who for their cunning and sophistry, for their lies and hypocrisy, for their malice, and murdering of the souls of men, are comparable to devils.

Ver. 2. *Speaking lies in hypocrisy*, etc.] Or “through the hypocrisy of those that speak lies”; for the apostle is still speaking of the means by which the apostasy should rise, and get ground; and it should be by the means of persons that should deliver lying or false doctrine under the

colour of truth, and make great pretensions to religion and holiness, which would greatly take with men, and captivate and lead them aside: and this plainly points at the abettors of antichrist, the Romish priests, who deliver out the lying doctrines of merit, purgatory, invocation of saints, fastings, pilgrimages, etc. and the fabulous legends of saints, and the lying wonders and miracles done by them, and all under a show of godliness, and the promoting of religion and holiness:

having their conscience seared with a hot iron; which exactly describes the above mentioned persons, whose consciences are cauterized and hardened, and past feeling; and have no regard to what they say or do, make no conscience of anything, but under a cloak of sanctity commit the most shocking impieties; and are men of the most infamous characters, and of the most enormous and scandalous lives and conversations; so that the metaphor may be taken either from the searing of flesh with an iron, or cauterizing it, whereby it grows callous and hard; or from the stigmas or marks which used to be put on malefactors, or such who have been guilty of notorious crimes.

Ver. 3. *Forbidding to marry*, etc.] Which points out not the Encratites, Montanists, and Manichees, who spoke against marriage; but the Papists, who forbid it to their priests under a pretence of purity and holiness, and at the same time allow them to live in all manner of debauchery and uncleanness; for these are the persons that forbid marriage in an authoritative way, and in hypocrisy: for that phrase is to be joined to all the sentences that follow it; as through the hypocrisy of those whose consciences are seared; and through the hypocrisy of those that forbid marriage to their priests, this being, by the common people, taken as an instance of great purity and holiness, and hereby they are drawn into the deception; as well as also through the hypocrisy of those that command

to abstain from meats: not from some certain meats forbidden by the law of Moses, as did some judaizing Christians; but from all meats at some certain season of the year, as at what they call the Quadragesima or Lent, and at some days in the week, as Wednesdays and Fridays; and this all under an hypocritical pretence of holiness, and temperance, and keeping under the body, and of mortification; when they are the greatest pamperers of their bodies, and indulge themselves in all manner of sensuality: the evil of this is exposed by the apostle, as follows,

which God hath created; and therefore must be good, and ought not to be abstained from: and besides, the end of his creation of them is,

to be received: to be taken, and used, and eaten; and therefore it is wicked to command men to abstain from them, and evil in those that do it: and the manner in which they should be received is

with thanksgiving; since they are the creatures of God, and useful to men, and men are unworthy of them, having forfeited them by sin; and since they are the bounties of Providence, and a free use of them is allowed; so far then should men be from abstaining from them, that they ought to take them, and use them with all thankfulness: and especially this should be done

of them which believe and know the truth: that is, who believe in Christ, and know the truth of the Gospel, which frees from every yoke of bondage, and from the burdensome rites, ceremonies, and inventions of men; for these have the good creatures as the fruits of divine love, through Christ the Mediator, and as blessings indeed; and who have the best right, claim, and title to them through Christ, being in him heirs of the world, and for whose sake all things are; and therefore these, as they know how to use them, and not abuse them, are to receive them at the hands of God, with thanksgiving, and not put them away, or abstain from them under a pretence of religion and holiness.

Ver. 4. *For every creature of God is good*, etc.] For food; and should be taken and used for that purpose, at all times, without distinction; even every creature which is made for food, and which is easy to be discerned by men:

and nothing to be refused; or rejected as common and unclean, or to be abstained from at certain times:

if it be received with thanksgiving: if not, persons are very ungrateful, and very unworthy of such favours; and it would be just in God to withhold them from them; and this they may expect at his hands, who reject them with contempt, or receive them with unthankfulness, or abstain from them in a religious way he never enjoined.

Ver. 5. *For it is sanctified*, etc.] Or set apart for use, and may be lawfully used at all times:

by the word of God; which declares that there is nothing in itself common, or unclean, or unfit for use, and that nothing that goes into a man defiles him; so that by virtue of this word of God, every creature may be made use of, that is fit for food: or else this designs the word of God, which gives a blessing to what is eaten; for it is not by bread or meat only, but through the word of God commanding a blessing on what is eaten, that man lives, (^{<404>}Matthew 4:4) and therefore this blessing upon our food should be asked for: wherefore it follows,

and prayer; this being used before eating for a blessing on the food, and after it, in a way of thanksgiving for it, sanctifies every creature of God, or gives men a free use of any, or all of them. So the Israelites, when they had eaten, and were full, were to bless the Lord, (^{<480>}Deuteronomy 8:10). And thus our Lord Jesus Christ, at meals, used to take the food, and bless it or ask a blessing on it, (^{<449>}Matthew 14:19). And so did the Essenes among the Jews ^{f56}, and the Christians in Tertullian's ^{f57} time; and the practice is highly necessary and commendable, nor ought it to be disused.

Ver. 6. *If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things*, etc.]

Either of all the main and principal things already mentioned in the preceding chapters; as that the end of the commandment is love; that Christ's coming into the world to save the chief of sinners is a faithful saying, and worthy of acceptance; that prayers should be made for all sorts of men, for the reasons given; and that there is salvation for men and women through the incarnate Son of God; that such and such are the qualifications of elders and deacons; and that the incarnation of Christ is, without controversy, the great mystery of godliness: or of the things which are particularly hinted at in the prophecy delivered in the beginning of this chapter; as that there should be a falling off from the doctrine of faith in the latter days; that this should come to pass through attending to erroneous spirits, and doctrines of “demons”, and through the lies of hypocritical, hardened, and infamous men; whose particular dogmas, by which they might be known, would be, to forbid marriage to certain persons, which is of divine institution and honourable, and to order an abstinence from meats at certain times, contrary to the will and providence of God. These the apostle would have Timothy propose, and subject to consideration, and from time to time refresh the memories of the saints with, who are apt, through negligence and inattention, and the weakness of the natural faculty, to be forgetful hearers of the word; that whenever such persons should arise, they might be on their guard against them. It is one part of the

business of Gospel ministers to put the churches in mind of what they have received and known, and are established in. By “the brethren” are meant the members of the church at Ephesus; whom the apostle accounted as brethren, being of the same family and household, and would have Timothy reckon and use as such, and not as subjects and servants, to be lorded over.

Thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ; a minister of Jesus Christ is one of his making, qualifying, calling, and sending; and who makes Christ, the doctrines respecting his person and offices, his grace, righteousness, and salvation, the subject of his ministry; and he is a good one, who, besides having a good work of grace wrought in him, has good gifts and abilities from Christ, and who makes a good use of them, and freely and fully imparts them for the good of others; and being employed in a good work, he abides in it, and nothing can deter or remove him from it; and such an one was Timothy, and so would it be manifest by doing what the apostle hints unto him; as well as he would appear to be

nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine: by which are meant the truths of the Gospel, called the words of faith, because they are things to be believed, hold forth the object of faith, Christ, and are the means by which faith comes, and is increased: and good doctrine, being the doctrine of the Scriptures, and of Christ, and of his apostles, and according to godliness; and contain good things, which make for the glory of the grace of God, and the comfort and welfare of immortal souls. These are of a nourishing nature; they are the wholesome and salutary words of Christ; they have in them milk for babes, and meat for strong men; by which both grow and thrive, when error eats as does a canker. So Philo the Jew^{f58} speaks of the soul, being “nourished with sciences”, and not with food and drink, which the body needs; and a little after he says, you see the food of the soul what it is, it is the continual word of God. Now Timothy, by discharging his work aright, would show to the brethren, that as he had been nourished and trained up, first under his religious parents, and then under the Apostle Paul; so he still continued in the same truths, and to live and feed upon them, and to be nourished by them: or the words may be rendered actively,

nourishing; that is, either himself, as the Syriac version renders it, or others; for though all nourishment comes from Christ the head, yet it is ministered by joints and bands to the members; it is conveyed by the means of the word and ordinances, ministered by the preachers of the Gospel,

who feed the church with knowledge, and with understanding; and none but those who are nourished themselves are fit to be the nourishers of others; and such an one was this evangelist: for it follows,

whereunto thou hast attained; he had arrived to a considerable degree of knowledge of Gospel truths, and was still pursuing and following on to know more of them, and was exhorted to continue in them, knowing of whom he had learned them. All this is said by way of encouragement to him to do as the apostle directs.

Ver. 7. *But refuse profane and old wives' fables*, etc.] Either Jewish ones, the traditions of the elders; or those of the Gnostics, concerning God, angels, and the creation of the world; or those doctrines of demons, and which forbad marriage, and commanded abstinence from meats before mentioned; which are called profane, because impious and ungodly, and old wives' fables, because foolish and impertinent; and which were to be rejected with abhorrence and contempt, in comparison of the words of faith and good doctrine.

And exercise thyself rather unto godliness; either to the doctrines which are according to godliness, and tend to godly edification, which the above fables did not, study these, meditate on them, digest them, and deliver them to others; or to a godly life and conversation, exercise thyself, to have a conscience void of offence to God and men; or to internal religion, inward godliness, the exercise of the graces of faith, hope, love, fear, reverence, humility, etc. or rather to the spiritual worship of God, according to his will, not in a formal, cold, and customary way, but with the heart, in truth and sincerity, in faith, and with fervency and purity.

Ver. 8. *For bodily exercise profiteth little*, etc.] Meaning not the exercise of the body in the Olympic games, as by running, wrestling, etc. which profited but little, for the obtaining of a corruptible crown at most; though since a word is used here, and in the preceding verse, borrowed from thence, there may be an allusion to it: much less exercise of the body for health or recreation, as riding, walking, playing at any innocent diversion; which profits but for a little time, as the Syriac and Arabic versions read; and the latter renders the phrase "bodily recreation": nor is the exercise of the body in the proper employment of trade and business, to which a man is called, and which profits for the support of life for a little while, intended; nor any methods made use of for the mortification of the body, and the keeping of it under, as watchings, fastings, lying on the ground,

scourging, etc. but rather mere formal external worship, as opposed to godliness, or spiritual worship. There ought to be an exercise of the body, or a presenting of that in religious worship before God; there should be an outward attendance on the word and ordinances; but then, without internal godliness, this will be of little advantage: it is indeed showing an outward regard to public worship, and may be a means of keeping persons out of bad company, and from doing evil things; but if this is trusted to, and depended on, it will be of no avail to everlasting life; (see ^{<1835>}Luke 13:26,27)

but godliness is profitable unto all things; to the health of the body, and the welfare of the soul; to the things of this life, and of that which is to come; to themselves and others, though not to God, or in a way of merit:

having promise of the life that now is; of the continuance of it, of length of days, of living long in the earth, and of enjoying all necessary temporal good things, the mercies of life; for God has promised to his spiritual worshippers, to them that fear him, and walk uprightly, that their days shall be prolonged, that they shall want no good thing, nor will he withhold any from them that is for their good, that is proper and convenient for them:

and of that which is to come; even of eternal life; not that eternal life is received or procured hereby; for it is the free gift of God, and is not by any works of men, for otherwise it would not be by promise; for its being by promise shows it to be of grace: there is nothing more or less in it than this, that God promises glory to his own grace; for internal godliness, which animates and maintains spiritual worship, is of God, is of his own grace, and every part of it is a free gift of his, as faith, hope, love, fear, etc.

Ver. 9. *This is a faithful saying*, etc.] A true one, and to be believed, that godliness has such promises annexed to it; (see ^{<1830>}1 Peter 3:10,11 ^{<1833>}Matthew 6:33 ^{<1841>}Psalms 84:11,12).

and worthy of all acceptance; by all godly persons, to encourage them to the exercise of godliness.

Ver. 10. *For therefore we both labour*, etc.] Not in the word and doctrine, though they did; nor in the exercise of internal godliness, though there is a work in faith, and a labour in love; nor with their own hands, at their trades and business, to support themselves, and others; but by enduring hardships and afflictions, as stripes, imprisonment, weariness, pain, watchings,

fastings, hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness; (see ^{<47123>}2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

And suffer reproach; with patience and cheerfulness. The Alexandrian copy, and another manuscript, read, “we strive”; or contend even to an agony, combating with sin, Satan, and the world, with profane men, and with false teachers; and to all this they were animated by the promises made to godliness; and therefore they showed it by their practices, or rather by their sufferings, that they believed it to be a true and faithful saying; and which is further conferred by what follows:

because we trust in the living God; for the accomplishment of the said promises, who has power, and therefore can, and is faithful, and therefore will, make good what he has promised; and since it is life he has promised, faith is the more encouraged to trust in him, since he is the living God, in opposition to, and distinction from, lifeless idols; he has life in himself, essentially, originally, and independently, and is the author and giver of life, natural, spiritual, and eternal, unto others. Wherefore there is good reason to trust in him for the fulfilling of the promises of the present and future life, made unto godliness.

Who is the Saviour of all men; in a providential way, giving them being and breath, upholding them in their beings, preserving their lives, and indulging them with the blessings and mercies of life; for that he is the Saviour of all men, with a spiritual and everlasting salvation, is not true in fact.

Specially of those that believe; whom though he saves with an eternal salvation; yet not of this, but of a temporal salvation, are the words to be understood: or as there is a general providence, which attends all mankind, there is a special one which relates to the elect of God; these are regarded in Providence, and are particularly saved and preserved before conversion, in order to be called; and after conversion, after they are brought to believe in Christ, they are preserved from many enemies, and are delivered out of many afflictions and temptations; and are the peculiar care and darlings of providence, being to God as the apple of his eye: and there is a great deal of reason to believe this, for if he is the Saviour of all men, then much more of them who are of more worth, value, and esteem with him, than all the world beside; and if they are saved by him with the greater salvation, then much more with the less; and if he the common Saviour of all men, and especially of saints, whom he saves both ways, then there is great reason to trust in him for the fulfilment of the promises of life, temporal and eternal,

made to godliness, and godly persons. This epithet of God seems to be taken out of (^{<4970>}Psalm 17:7) where he is called $\mu\upsilon\sigma\omega\iota\upsilon$ [ΥϞΩΜ], “the Saviour of them that trust”, or believe.

Ver. 11. *These things command and teach.*] What are to be commanded, command, and what are to be taught, teach; command to refuse and reject all profane and fabulous doctrines, and exhort to the exercise of true godliness, and teach the profitableness of that, and declare the promises made unto it, and assert the truth and acceptableness of them; command, order, and encourage believers to labour and suffer reproach for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel, in hope of enjoying the said promises, and teach them to trust in the God of their lives, and the Saviour of all men; and whereas to this authoritative way of teaching, Timothy's youth might be objected by himself, and others; it follows,

Ver. 12. *Let no man despise thy youth,* etc.] Timothy was now a young man; some think he was about three and twenty years of age; but he might be older, and yet be so called. Saul is said to be a young man, when he held the clothes of them that stoned Stephen, when he must be at least thirty years of age, some say thirty five; since thirty years after that he styles himself Paul the aged, when he must be sixty years of age and upwards, (^{<4478>}Acts 7:58 ^{<5009>}Philemon 1:9). Young men are sometimes honoured by God with great gifts, for usefulness both in church and state, as Samuel, David, Solomon, Daniel, and his companions: nor should they be despised on account of their age, when they have gifts suitable to their office, and behave well in it, but, on the contrary, ought to be esteemed for their works' sake; and such should take care that no man has an opportunity or reason to treat them with contempt on that account: the apostle's sense is, either that Timothy, being in office, should not suffer any man to use him contemptuously; but exert his power and authority, and magnify his office, and not allow men to trample upon him, or use him ill, though he was a young man; which sense suits with the preceding words: or rather his meaning is, that he would have him so conduct and behave himself, as he had taught him to behave, in the house and church of God, and so fill up his place and office, and live such an exemplary life and conversation, that there might be no occasion for any to despise his age, or him, on the account of it: and this agrees with what follows,

but be thou an example of the believers; the members of the church, before called brethren, from their relation to one another, and here believers, from

their concern with Christ, the object of their faith; a more honourable character cannot be given of men, though treated with great contempt in this age of infidelity. The Mahometans would engross this character to themselves, calling themselves the believers, and reckoning all others infidels; but to them only it belongs, who believe in Christ unto righteousness and life everlasting. Now sometimes young men may be examples to older ones; and all that are in office in the church, especially in the ministry, whether old or young, should be ensamples to the flock, and that in the following things: “in word”; meaning either the word of truth, the doctrine of the Gospel; by delivering that which is according to the rule of God’s word, showing in it uncorruptness, gravity, and sincerity, and by holding it fast; all which may for the imitation of others, to receive the pure doctrine and retain it: or rather this may respect common discourse; which should not be corrupt, filthy, nor foolish; but should be always with grace, Seasoned with salt, or should be grave and serious, wise and prudent, pleasant, profitable, and edifying.

In conversation; in the family, church, and world; which should be as becomes the Gospel of Christ, in all godliness and honesty, with simplicity and godly sincerity; so as to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, recommend it to others, stop the mouths of gainsayers, and obtain a good report of them that are without.

In charity; in love to God, to Christ, and one another; without which, if a man has the tongue of men and angels, or ever such great and excellent gifts, he is nothing.

In spirit; in the exercise of spiritual gifts; in spiritual talk and conversation; and in fervency of spirit, or true zeal for the honour of God, the glory of the Redeemer, the spread of his Gospel, truths, and ordinances, and the support of the same. This clause is wanting in the Alexandrian and Claromontane copies, and in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions.

In faith; in the exercise of the grace of faith; in holding fast the profession of faith; and in retaining the doctrine of faith, with all integrity, faithfulness, and constancy, standing fast in it, striving and contending for it.

In purity; or chastity of body, in opposition to all impurity of the flesh, by fornication, adultery, and the like; which was very proper to be suggested

to a young man: though this may also have respect to all that is before said, as to purity of language, conversation, love, zeal, and faith.

Ver. 13. *Till I come*, etc.] To Ephesus; where the apostle hoped to be shortly, but was prevented; he afterwards came to Miletus, and sent for the elders of Ephesus thither, when he took his final leave of them. He mentions this circumstance, not as if Timothy was to attend to the following things no longer, but to quicken him to an attendance to them from the consideration of his being shortly with him.

Give attendance to reading; that is, of the Scriptures, which the Jews call *arqm*, “reading”. ^{f59}

“Says R. Tanchum Bar Chanilai, for ever let a man divide his years or life into three parts; one third (let him spend) in the Mikra, (the Scriptures, and the reading of them,) another third in the Misna, and the other third in the Talmud.”

And this is to be understood, not of the reading of the Scriptures in public, for the advantage of others, a custom which obtained in the Jewish synagogues; (see ^{<H35>}Acts 13:15 15:21) but in private, for his own use and service, that he might be more perfect, and more thoroughly furnished to the work and office to which he was called; for the Scriptures are the fund of spiritual knowledge, as well as the test and standard of doctrine, out of which all must be fetched, and by which it must be tried; and if Timothy, who had known the Scriptures from a child, had been trained up in them, and was always conversant with them, had need to give diligent attention to the reading of them, then much more others: as also

to exhortation, to doctrine; as he was privately to read the Scriptures, for his own benefit, he was publicly to expound them, or preach from them, to the advantage of others; for these two, exhortation and doctrine, are branches of the ministerial work, which reading furnishes and qualifies for. “Exhortation” intends the stirring up of believers to the exercise of grace, and the discharge of duty; and is a considerable part of the work of the ministry, and on which a minister of Christ should much insist; and it becomes the saints to suffer every word of exhortation from them, and receive it kindly, ^{<542>}2 Timothy 4:2 ^{<518>}Romans 12:8. ^{<512>}Hebrews 13:22. The word signifies also “consolation”, and which is another branch of the ministry. Believers are oftentimes disconsolate through the prevalence of corruptions, the power of Satan's temptations, and the hidings of God's

face, and need comfort; when the ministers of the Gospel should be Barnabases, sons of consolation, and should speak comfortably to them; for which they are qualified by the God of all comfort, who comforts them in all their tribulations, that they might be capable of speaking good and comfortable words to others. “Doctrine” designs the teaching and instructing of the church in the mysteries of the Gospel; opening and explaining the truths of it; defending them against all opposers, and refuting errors and heresies contrary to them. This is the evangelic Talmud; and these three, “reading”, “exhortation”, and “doctrine”, may answer to the above three things the Jew advises men to divide their time among, the Mikra, Misna, and Talmud: reading answers to the Mikra, and indeed is no other; and exhortation to the Misna, or oral law; and doctrine to the Talmud, and which also that word signifies: but the apostle would have Timothy spend his time in, and give his attention to that which might be truly beneficial to himself, and profitable unto others.

Ver. 14. *Neglect not the gift that is in thee*, etc.] What qualifies men for the work of the ministry is a gift from God: it is not of nature, nor is it mere natural abilities and capacity; nor is it any thing acquired, it is not human learning, or the knowledge of languages, arts, and sciences; nor is it special saving grace; for a man may have all these, and yet not be apt to teach, or fit for the ministry; but it is a peculiar and distinct gift, it is a gift of interpreting the Scriptures, and of dispensing the mysteries of grace to the edification of others; which, when it meets in a man with all the rest before mentioned, makes him very considerable: and this gift is in a man; it is a treasure put into earthen vessels, a good treasure in the heart, out of which a good minister of Christ brings forth many good things, things new and old, both for the delight and profit of men: and this gift is by no means to be neglected; this talent should not be hid in the earth, or wrapped up in a napkin; it should not lie dormant and useless, but should be stirred up, cultivated, and improved, as it may by reading, meditation, and prayer. And in order to enforce this exhortation on Timothy, the apostle adds,

which was given thee by prophecy; that is, it was prophesied of before hand, by some of the prophets in the church, that a very extraordinary gift should be bestowed upon this young man, which would make him a very useful person in the church of God; (see ^{<5018>}1 Timothy 1:18) and since it was now given, he ought not therefore to neglect it: or it was given him, as some read it, with prophecy, that he should use it, and it should be of great advantage to many souls; or, together with this gift of preaching, he had

also a gift of foretelling things to come; or it may be, the words may be better rendered, “for prophecy”: that is, for preaching, for prophesying is frequently used for preaching; (see ^{<413D>}1 Corinthians 13:2 14:1,3,31) and then the sense is, that this gift was given him to qualify him for the interpreting of the Scriptures, the explaining of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and for the preaching of the Gospel; and therefore he should not neglect it, but use it for this purpose: and he adds, that it was given him

with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; or “of the eldership”, or elders. So *γερονσια*, “eldership”, is used by the Septuagint on (^{<413E>}Exodus 3:16,18) for the elders of Israel. Now of these elders Paul was one, (^{<5006>}2 Timothy 1:6) nor is it unusual to call the apostles elders; (see ^{<413E>}1 Peter 5:1 ^{<6001>}2 John 1:1 ^{<6001>}3 John 1:1). Who joined with the apostle, in the imposition of hands on Timothy, is not certain; I should think only apostles, since here was a gift of the Holy Ghost came along with it; and it was only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles that the Holy Ghost was given. Philip, an evangelist, laid not hands on the believing Samaritans; but Peter and John, apostles, were sent down from Jerusalem to Samaria to do it, whereby many received the gifts of the Holy Ghost, fitting them to take the care of those new converts, and to spread the Gospel further in those parts, (^{<413E>}Acts 8:5,12,14,17,18). And since gifts have ceased being conveyed this way, the rite of laying on of hands in ordinations seems useless, and of no avail. The apostle in calling those that joined with him, in putting hands on Timothy, the “presbytery or eldership”, may have some reference to *hd[h ynqz*, “the elders of the congregation”, which laid hands on the bullock for a sin offering, (^{<413E>}Leviticus 4:15) by whom some understand the great sanhedrim ^{f60}; others ^{f61}, not all the elders, but some particular persons, in number three; and so the ordination of a Rabbi was by three ^{f62}; hence we read of *μυνyqzb hkym*s, “imposition of hands by the elders” ^{f63}.

Ver. 15. *Meditate on these things*, etc.] Not only on those instructions, advices, and exhortations, which the apostle had given him, throughout this chapter, which might be very useful to him, often to think of, and revolve in his mind, and seriously consider and reflect upon; but upon the Scriptures, the reading of which he had recommended to him, and the doctrines contained therein; it becomes every man not only to read, but meditate on the word of God, and much more ministers of the Gospel. The Scriptures should be read with care, and be industriously and laboriously

searched into, as men dig in mines for silver or golden ore; and passages in it should be carefully compared together, the more obscure with those that are more plain and easy; and the whole is to be studied with great attention and application:

give thyself wholly to them: to the reading of the Scriptures, meditation upon them, and preaching the doctrines contained in them, clear of all secular affairs, or worldly business and employment. The apostles threw off the branch of deaconship, or ministering to the poor, that they might give themselves up wholly to the ministry of the word, and prayer; and much more should worldly business be cast off, where the circumstances of ministers and churches will admit of it; a Christian soldier, or minister of the Gospel, ought not, if possible, to be entangled with the affairs of this life; he finds enough to do without, in the discharge of his ministerial function; and though the apostles sometimes wrought with their own hands, yet it was not because they had so much leisure from the ministry, or time on their hands, or because they had not a power of forbearing working, but out of necessity, (see ~~406~~ Acts 20:34 ~~406~~ 1 Corinthians 9:6,7 ~~304~~ 2 Timothy 2:4), or these words may be rendered,

be thou in these things; let thine heart be in them; for if a minister's heart is not in his work, if he does not take delight in it, it will be a slavery and drudgery to him; spend all the time and strength in them, give thyself continually to them, and be always diligent and laborious in them:

that thy profiting may appear to all; that it may be manifest to all that attend the ministry of the word that there is an increase in gifts, a growing in spiritual knowledge, an improvement of the talents bestowed: or that this profiting or increase might appear in all things; in every branch of the ministry, both in exhortation or consolation, and in doctrine; or that it might be manifest among all; that is, all that hear might receive some profit, might learn, and be comforted and edified; faith might be increased, and the joy of it be furthered; and all under the ministry visibly thrive and flourish.

Ver. 16. *Take heed unto thyself,* etc.] Not as a man, or a Christian only, but as a minister; and as every minister should take heed to his life and conversation, that it be exemplary, as in ~~304~~ 1 Timothy 4:12 to his gifts, that they be not lost, or neglected, but used and improved; to the errors and heresies abroad, that he be not infected with them; and to his flock, which is the other part of himself, that he feed it with knowledge and understanding: and to thy doctrine: preached by him, that it be according to

the Scriptures, be the doctrine of Christ, and his apostles, and according to godliness; that it tend to edification, and is pure, incorrupt, and all of a piece; and that it be expressed in the best manner, with all boldness and plainness; and that he defend it against all opposition:

continue in them; or “with them”; the members of the church at Ephesus; or rather in the doctrines of the Gospel; which should be done, though a majority is against them; though rejected by the wise, learned, and rich; though not to be comprehended by carnal reason; and though loaded with reproach and scandal; and though persecuted, yea even unto death for them:

for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself; a minister by taking heed to himself, and doctrine, saves himself from the pollutions of the world, from the errors and heresies of false teachers, from the blood of all men, and from all just blame in his ministry.

And them that hear thee; by being an example to them in doctrine and conversation, a minister is the means of saving and preserving those that attend on him, from erroneous principles, and immoral practices; and by faithfully preaching the Gospel to his hearers, he is instrumental in their eternal salvation; for though Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, the only efficient and procuring cause of salvation, yet the ministers of the Gospel are instruments by which souls believe in him, and so are saved; the word preached by them, being attended with the Spirit of God, becomes the ingrafted word, which is able to save, and is the power of God unto salvation; and nothing can more animate and engage the ministers of the word to take heed to themselves and doctrine, and abide therein, than this, of being the happy instruments of converting sinners, and saving them from death; (see ^{<911>}James 5:20)