

1st Timothy 1:15,16; 3:1; 4:6-11.

INTRODUCTION:

Recently while waiting in the airport in San Francisco for my flight, I noticed a young man intently reading the Sayings of Confucius. Thousands of others today are reading the little red books of the sayings of Mao Tzse Tung. The older generation grew up on the sayings of Ben Franklin.

The greatest "Sayings" in the world are to be found in the Bible.

Some of them are in Paul's 1st letter to Timothy.

I. What are these "Sayings" which Paul passes on to us here?

(This phrase appears here three times, once in 2nd Timothy and once in Titus).

A. The Mercy of Christ's Salvation.

1 Tim. 1:15, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

1. The purpose of Christ's coming into the world was SALVATION.

2. Salvation is not received by the acceptance of a moral code or a religious creed; it is received by personal fellowship with the Son of God.

3. Paul calls himself the worst of sinners.

If God's mercy was extended to Paul although he was the worst of sinners, it was not for Paul's own sake; rather it was in order that Jesus Christ might display his "entire unlimited, ever-patient patience" with evil man, (v.16). Perhaps Paul felt that he was a sort of test case. If the grace of God could save him, there was hope for all.

4. Everything in the Christian life begins here (with Salvation).

5. But everything does not END here.

B. The Excellence of Church leadership.

1. This is a true saying -

"If a man is eager to be a church leader he desired an excellent work." (3:1)

2. The redeemed Christian should aspire to go on to a life of Christian service & leadership.

3. We should not stretch Paul's vocabulary here to imply the modern meanings we have given to certain ecclesiastical and clerical titles.

4. This may have been a current proverb, having originally nothing to do with an ecclesiastical office. It may have reflected problems of the church in a period of lay ministry where volunteers were few, compensation negligible, duties difficult & embarrassing, and there was no well-ordered tradition or plan in the church for ministerial support.

Furthermore, in times of persecution, the leader of the local church would be singled out first; so perhaps because of this responsibility of standing between the church & a hostile world, men were reluctant to offer themselves for the task.

5. So, bear in mind that his words which we translate "bishop" and "deacons" may mean to them in their time merely "leader" and "helpers" (NET)

6. Here is a plea for the right kind of ambition in the church.

Sad to say, the church is made up of human beings who are struggling with human weakness, egotistical pride, and excessive ambition.

7. Here the emphasis is put on the "noble task" which leadership in the church involves.

The best cure for pharisaical, pseudo-pious pettiness is a sense of vocation in a great work.

Ignatius of Loyola's prayer voices the humble ambition of the true disciple of Christ:

"Teach us, good Lord,

so serve thee as thou deservest;

to give and not to count the cost;

to fight and not heed the wounds;

to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do thy will.

C. The Value of Spiritual Exercise (4:9) 3

1. "Physical exercise has some value in it, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, for it promises life both for now and for the future."
2. The value of physical exercise.

3. The value of spiritual exercise.

a. What this spiritual exercise might be:

Prayer - (Little girl who said, "Daddy, I'm not praying for anything; I'm just telling God I love him.")

Personal devotions

Bible Study & reading

Public & corporate worship

Disciplines of daily Xtn living --

Religion is not speculation;
it is discipline.

--Including the discipline of forgiveness:

(Two little boys had been brought up in a Methodist Sunday School where they were taught to pray the Lord's Prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses."

On one occasion they visited a Baptist church and heard for the first time the word "debtor" used.

Coming home, they insisted to their mother that the Baptists had a different Lord's Prayer from the Methodists. According to the lads, it went, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive those who are dead set against us!")

The spiritual exercises, in addition to those I have mentioned, might also include:

Personal witnessing

Unselfish Xtn service

Just as athletes train for a contest, building up their bodies by nourishing food & strenuous exercise, so the contender for the Xtn cause must keep himself physically fit.

Emerson said that one of the functions of a friend is to make us do what we can.

Christianity gives us in Christ a divine Friend and Companion who can help us to do what we CAN'T. He helps us to overcome our spiritual weakness and failures and to achieve our highest spiritual aspirations (which we could never achieve without Him)

b. Promises for life here and now.

- (1) Brings joy and happiness
- (2) Brings inner peace & contentment.
(Story: "Sleeping while the wind blows")
--We cannot control the length of life,
but we can regulate its fullness.

- (3) Spiritual exercise strengthens us to resist further temptations & succeed in more spiritual victories.
- (4) It also keeps us from getting weak, soft, and sick spiritually.

(5) The linking of life on earth and the future life, is significant.

Often the two are set in sharp contrast.

Our present life is enriched because of the prospect for the future.

Indeed, the future life is credible because of our experience in this life of the love and presence of God.

c. Promises for the Future

- (1) Brings eternal rewards in heaven
- (2) Adds to the greater glory of God
- (3) The hard training endured and the effort expended by the Xtn in spiritual exercise is more than worthwhile.

II. WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT THESE "TRUE SAYINGS"?

A. Recognize that they really are TRUE Sayings.

B. Completely ACCEPT and BELIEVE them (1:15 & 4:9)

1. If we do we shall humbly recognize our sinfulness (1:15, 16 - "the Worst of Sinners -
"the foremost, greatest of sinners")
Compare with I Cor. 15:9-10,
"the least of the apostles"
2. If we do we shall attempt to conform our lives to the high standards expected of Christian leaders and helpers (3:2-13)
3. If we do, we shall exercise as much spiritual discipline as an athlete in training (4:7, 10), "struggle & work hard",
6:2 - "run your best in the race of faith."

5
the father asked, "Johnny, what is this?"
With keen insight that so often characterizes
children, he replied,
"That is the stuff that is made of the world."
C. TEACH them to others, 4:11

1. Xtn teaching is not merely to be accepted and believed; it is to be taught & passed on.

2. The Xtn is to "give TIME & EFFORT":

(a) To the public reading of the Scriptures.

Literacy was a requirement for the "servant" of Christ.

(b) To preaching, heralding, announcing the good news

(c) To teaching ---

Here is a "three-sided" ministry.

Today a generation which has been brought up in a nominally Xtn (but more truly pagan and materialistic) society, still needs to be taught what the Xtn life & the Xtn faith are.

There is no higher calling than to be a servant of Jesus Christ and at the same time a teacher of Christian truth.

Such a teacher's eyes have been opened to see the stars, and his ears have been touched that he may hear the weeping of a thousand hungry children. For him the Bible is a jeweled casket, and each printed page is a mystic messenger of the soul.

CONCLUSION:

While we recognize that many great and wise sayings are found in the literature and proverbs of many countries, we must admit that in the Word of God we find the True Sayings of the Gospel, which are able to make us wise unto salvation and guide us through the Xtn life here on earth and throughout eternity.

The Apostle Paul in these few passages has challenged us with true sayings about the mercy of Christ's salvation, the excellence of church leadership, and the value of spiritual exercise.

Without such truths life is empty and meaningless.

Once in a Xtn home grace was said at dinner and each one at the table had been served. Little Johnny sampled the potatoes & then said, "Please pass the salt."

The father asked, "Johnny, what is salt?"

With keen insight that so often characterizes children, he replied,

"Salt is the stuff that spoils the potatoes when there isn't any in them."

This is also an excellent answer to the question,

"What is the True Gospel of Christ?"

It is that which spoils life when there isn't

any in it.

(c) To teaching the good news

Here is a "three-sided" ministry.

Today a generation which has been brought up in a nominally Xian (but more truly pagan and materialistic) society still needs to be taught what the Xian life & the Xian faith are.

There is no higher calling than to be a servant of Jesus Christ and at the same time a teacher of Christian truth.

Such a teacher's eyes have been opened to see the stars, and his ears have been touched that he may hear the weeping of a thousand hungry children. For him the Bible is a jeweled casket, and each printed page is a mystic messenger of the soul.

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While we recognize that many great and wise sayings are found in the literature and proverbs of many countries, we must admit that in the Word of God we find the true sayings of the Gospel, which are able to make us wise unto salvation and guide us through the Xian life here on earth and throughout eternity.

The Apostle Paul in these few passages has challenged us with true sayings about the way of Christ's salvation, the excellence of church leadership, and the value of spiritual exercise.

Without such truths life is empty and meaningless. Once in a Xian home there was said at dinner and each one at the table had been served. In the Johnny spoiled the potatoes & then said, "Please pass the salt."