

“Let No Man Despise Thy Youth ...”

“... but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:12f).

It is evident that all men are powerless to control the emotions of another -- to make a man repent, to keep a man from despising another so Paul's command to Timothy, *“Let no man despise thy youth,”* must be understood in the sense that Timothy was not to act in such an intemperate way that he became ineffectual because of the way he had acted. There are some youth who are given to arrogance, possessing a “know it all” attitude. Such were the young man who counseled Rehoboam, Solomon's son, to reject the requests of his subjects for an easing in the burdens Solomon's building had laid upon them (1 Kings 12:11, 14). Some are disrespectful to aged persons such as were the youth who mocked Elisha because of his “bald head” (2 Kings 2:24). Some are flighty and unstable as the wind, such as Jesus described His generation, like children in the market place (Mt. 11:16). Some are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14). Timothy was an earnest young man, none like him, according to Paul, but still he needed to be reminded to set the proper example.

“Of the believer,” “to the believer.” The first phrase *“of the believer”* would make the one who observed Timothy's ensample be any with whom he came in contact; *“to the believer”* would imply that Timothy was to set the proper example to his brethren. There is some doubt as to how the phrase should read: The ASV has it, *“To them that believe;”* the KJV has the phrase *“of the believer.”* It really is immaterial which is the thought of the apostle for both phrases are true. Youth, in fact all Christians, are to be ensamples to other brethren to give examples of what the Christian is supposed to be. Then Timothy was to be an ensample:

“In word.” David said, *“I will take heed to my words that I sin not with my tongue”* (Psalms 39:10). He prayed, *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah”* (Psa. 19:14). Words may be sharp, bitter, angry, sarcastic, blasphemous. They also may be kind, comforting, forgiving, understanding, peaceable, reverent. We will give account of every word we speak, thus we are urged, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer one another”* (Col. 4:6).

“In manner of life.” Manner of life is the way we live, walk, act. Peter wrote, *“Having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles”* (1 Pet. 2:12). Paul urged

the Romans, *"I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God which is your spiritual service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed ..."* (Rom. 12:1f).

"In love." Elsewhere Paul commanded, *"Walk in love"* (Eph. 5:2). Three things will abide: faith, hope, and love. But love is the greatest of them (1 Cor. 13:13) No writer, of any age, has ever approached the grandeur and elegance of Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. It is a passage worthy of reading and meditating upon.

"In faith." God's people are His by faith (Gal. 3:26). By faith we walk (2 Cor. 5:7), love (Gal. 3:11), and overcome (1 Jn. 5:4). And although should we have faith to move mountains, yet be lacking in love, we would be nothing, we must never forget that *"without faith it is impossible to please God"* (Heb. 11:6).

"In purity." To be pure is to be without alloy. Jesus said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"* (Mt. 5:8). A pure heart is necessary in order to have a pure body; we are what we think, so, let us love one another with a pure heart fervently (1 Pet. 1:22)!

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