

Set an Example

Key Verse: *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*
—*I Timothy 4:16*

Selected Scripture:
I Timothy 4

bride of Christ, as well as to be an example to others who would be witnesses of his determined efforts, and be blessed accordingly.

In this first epistle to Timothy, the apostle pointed to a future time at the end of the Gospel Age when some would depart from this position of faithfulness to seek other nonspiritual pursuits and teachings. “The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”—*I Tim. 4:1-3*

This warning of a worldly spirit entering into the congregations of the Lord’s people in the ‘latter times’

IN THE KEY VERSE OF THIS

lesson, the Apostle Paul encourages his beloved younger brother Timothy to maintain diligence in the growth and development of his Christian character, and to uphold the doctrines of Truth by faithfully defending and declaring them. To follow this wise counsel, would assure Timothy of receiving an abundant entrance into the spiritual inheritance of the

prompted Paul to admonish Timothy to be careful with the doctrinal teachings that he had once received. "If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." (vs. 6) Paul's concern seems to take on added meaning to those who would be guided by his wise counsel in the latter times, or end of the Gospel Age calling to the church.

Concerning the seriousness of this impending worldly spirit that would come upon the Lord's people, we note the apostle's words on the matter of doctrinal teachings in his second letter to Timothy, where he again writes, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (II Tim. 4:2-4) Although the Lord's people have undergone trying experiences throughout the Gospel Age, there would be the need for increased diligence and combativeness at the end of the age.

Paul continues with these serious words of advice to his beloved Timothy by saying, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." (I Tim. 4:12,13) No better counsel could be given, nor heeded, than these encouraging words from the pen of the great apostle.

As we contemplate the increasing level of violence and indifference to spiritual teachings during these closing years of the Gospel Age, let us consider well the wise counsel of Paul's admonitions in this wonderful epistle written so long ago. Let us strive to set a good example in our characters and in our doctrine. ■