

"LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE"

"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity." – 1 Timothy 4:12.

WE RECALL that St. Paul was the writer of these words, that they constitute a part of his first Epistle to Timothy, a promising young Elder in the Church, one who had labored much with the Apostle in his work of the ministry. On one occasion Timothy was referred to by the Apostle as "my son Timothy." This was due no doubt to the fact that it was through St. Paul's instrumentality that the Truth had reached Timothy. On account of his youth he may not have realized his responsibility. He might have felt that many others in the Church were older than himself and would therefore be better examples to the brethren and better representatives of the Lord before men.

But the Apostle here exhorts Timothy to be an example of what a true believer should be. He urged him to "flee youthful lusts," to "stir up the gift of God" which was in him. Timothy was to make a special use of the talents and opportunities which were his. And in so doing he would be a worthy example – not only *to* believers, but *of* believers, so that not only might the Church see his life and general course, but others, those of the world, might also see this, and thus have greater interest in the Lord's Cause.

This example was not to be the wearing of a particular shape of coat or a particular cut of collar, nor was it in manifesting to the world eccentricities of life and manner – not so. His example was to be in his Christlike character. He was to glorify the Lord in his words – in what he would say, in how he would say it – in wisdom of speech. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Whoever would be careless in his language would reveal a careless heart. If Timothy had been careless in his words, others might have said, "You

see that he thinks that he knows everything. See how he is always intruding himself." This would be especially unbecoming in one who was young. Thus he would have [R5860 : page 62] been despised as an example of believers, and others would be offended rather than helped.

Not only in word, but in his entire conversation was he to be an example. The word conversation, at the time our common version was translated, had the significance of conduct, manner of life. This advice is the counsel of wisdom in reference to us all as children of the Lord! The Apostle admonished Timothy with regard to his intercourse with the Church and with the world – Whether you eat or drink, whether you buy or sell, whatever you do, be a worthy exponent of the doctrine of Christ and of the effect of His Spirit in the heart.

In his charity, his love, Timothy was to be an example. This would include the ordinary thought of the word as now generally used, in the sense of dispensing largess. We do not know that Timothy had very much of this world's goods to distribute; but he could have charity in the sense of love, which is the comprehensive sense, the Bible sense, of the word. Love would not wish any harm to his neighbor, but would manifest interest in everybody, and even in the brute creation – wishing to do right, to be kind.

Love would serve the interests of others in spirit; it would come from the heart, from the inward disposition, not be merely in word or in outward conduct. Kindness and good-will would not be feigned from a sense of duty or to appear polite and thoughtful. It would be genuine. The spirit in which a thing is said or done has a great deal to do with its effect upon others. One who had wounded another might say, "There was not a word in what I said to which you could object." Ah, well! but it was the spirit in which it was said or done – the animus of it. This is an important matter to all the Lord's people. We are to remember the spirit of the Master – the spirit of consideration, of self-sacrifice, of righteousness, of love.

In faith, also, Timothy was to be an example to all with whom he came in contact. Of course the Apostle would mean here his manifestation of faith. One must have faith before he can manifest it. We have known Christians who, if they have a doubt about a certain feature of Truth or a weakness of faith, would discuss their doubts in the presence of those who were weak in the faith or who were of the world. This is a great mistake and productive of much harm. One never knows when a weak one may be present who might be greatly injured by words of doubt or distrust. Whoever is troubled by such doubts should go promptly to the Lord for help, that his faith may be firmly established; he should not discuss his doubts and fears with others unless as mentioned above, with the One who alone can help him. The Lord's people should not boast of how much faith they have – not so – but we should manifest our faith to others, our confidence in the Lord, by our peace under trial and difficulty. We should not merely say that we have faith, but should manifest it in our lives.

Timothy was counseled to be an example in purity. "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." (Isaiah 52:11.) As the typical priests and Levites were instructed to wash and keep themselves continually clean, so the people of the Lord today, the spiritual Priests, the spiritual Levites, should be pure, clean, in word, in action, in thought. Whoever is not pure in his thoughts is very apt to be impure, unclean, in his actions, his words. Out of the heart proceeds the impurity. One person of impure mind might poison the minds of many.

Impurity may be given a broad or a narrow view, as circumstances may indicate. In the broad sense, it would be uncleanness, dishonesty, insincerity, in general. But in every sense St. Paul would have Timothy be a worthy example, so that all who took note of him would see how they ought to deport themselves. The Apostle expressed the same desire concerning Timothy that he expressed concerning all the Church – that he walk as the Apostle himself walked, that he be as self-sacrificing as he saw St. Paul to be. This was not a Pharisaical attitude – "I am holier than thou." But the

Apostle demonstrated those principles of righteousness in the life that he lived, and he wished that Timothy should do the same.

Those qualities of character here enumerated by the Apostle should be shown forth – not merely by the Elders and the teachers of the Ecclesia, but by all who have made the same profession of being disciples of Christ. So far as our standing with God is concerned, we are all brethren one of another; and each of these brethren should seek to copy the Elder Brother, our Lord Jesus. Each one should seek to be a pattern to the whole flock of God.

