

“LIVING THE GODLY (GRADUATE) LIFE”

(1 Timothy 4:6-12)

© 2011 Rev. Dr. Brian E. Germano

[East Cobb U.M.C.; 5-15-11]

–I–

1. [BOTH Services (9:30 am MSG, 11am NRSV)] Read Text: 1 Timothy 4:6-12 and Pray.
2. [GRADUATE RECOGNITION TIME... *High School graduates are invited forward as their names are called out. After all are up front, invite college graduates to stand in place, then invite congregants to stretch hands towards a graduate to pray for them. PRAYER...*]
3. Well, today (on this Graduate Recognition Sunday) is certainly a day for us as a church to celebrate with and congratulate those who’ve completed an important stage in their life, and who’re moving on to the next – whether it be college, or graduate school, or the job market.

A–But it’s also a day for *all of us* to remember *our* call as God’s people to live a Godly life – a call which is increasingly difficult in today’s ungodly world.

B–So to help us with this, in today’s scripture we find the apostle Paul talking to his young apprentice named Timothy, reminding him of what it takes to live a Godly life in *that* day and time.

1–Now, we don’t know exactly how old Timothy was when he received this letter, but he probably wasn’t much past the age of our High School graduates.

2–And in Verse 12, Paul gives him some advice which could very well also be words for our own graduates today: (MSG) “*Don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young [but instead...] Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.*” (NRSV) “*Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*”

C–But *how* do we do this, though? How do we live a Godly life in today’s ungodly world? Let’s talk about three things that Paul told Timothy he’d need in today’s scripture...

–II–

4. First of all, it’ll take **COURAGE**.

A–That is: the ability to be and act *different* from the crowd, to “resist the temptation of others” to do things you know you shouldn’t – to say “No” to unhealthy peer pressure.

1–Now, that’s not just good advice for *graduates*, but for ALL of us, as well!

2–You see, courage isn’t the *absence* of fear, but the gutsy confrontation *of* it – of being willing to stand up for the things we know are right and good and Godly, in spite of how unpopular or “uncool” that stand might be appear to be.

B–So *how* do we do that, then? How can we be more courageous in today’s ungodly world?

1–Well, in Verse 10 Paul says that (MSG) “...*this is why we’ve thrown ourselves into this venture so totally. We’re banking on the living God, Savior of all men and women...*” (NRSV) “...*to this end [meaning, living a Godly life] we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God...*”

2–What I think he’s saying here is that courage comes from an awareness of the continual presence of God in our life – [9:30am] from a life in which we’re “*banking on the living God*” [11:00am] from a “*hope set on the living God.*”

3–So I believe He’s saying that when we know God is *with us*, then we can face *anything*, no matter *how* ungodly it might be!

4–It’s the same presence of God...

(a) ...that gave Moses the courage to face Pharaoh,...

(b) ...that gave Daniel the courage to face the lion’s den, ...

(c) ...that gave Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego the courage to face the fiery furnace,...

(d) ...that gave Jesus the courage to face the agony and suffering of the cross for you and me.

C–And the *best* way I know to have this sense of God’s presence in our life is through ***an active Prayer*** life.

1–So, graduates (and all of us, for that matter)... what’s your prayer life like? Do you take time to talk and listen to God on a regular basis?

2–If not, then you’re going to be vulnerable to peer pressure because you’re depriving yourself of the source of *courage* you’ll need to stand firm against temptation.

5. A second thing today’s scripture tells us we need to live a Godly life in today’s world is **DISCIPLINE**, defined as “*training that molds and perfects the moral character*” (Webster).

A–In Verses 7b-8 Paul says, (MSG) “*Exercise daily in God – no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever*” (NRSV) “*Train yourself in godliness, for while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come*” – e.g., Training/Discipline = Godliness.

1–Now I know the word “discipline” isn’t “cool” among young adults today – the whole concept seems like a straight jacket meant to hold us back & cramp our style.

2–But if it helps, all Paul is really talking about here is *a continual ability to consciously and intentionally choose the ways of God in our world.*

B–Now obviously, if we’re going to do that (*choose* the ways of God), then we have to *know* the ways of God.

C–And for our High School graduates, at least, this is where things like college campus ministries, Bible Studies, local college Sunday School classes, and other young adult ministries fit in – they are places and opportunities where you can continue to learn the ways of God so that you can apply and follow them daily.

D–So, don’t neglect the study of God’s Word, for in it you’ll find the way to *choose* God’s path – to have *Discipline* to live a Godly life in the midst of an ungodly world.

6. A final thing I think we all need to live a Godly life is what I call **SUPPORT** – that is: assistance and reinforcement in that task that comes from others like fellow Christian friends, a local church family, or even from home.

A–Throughout today’s scripture, in fact, we find Paul using words/phrases which imply that Timothy had some sort of spiritual support for Godliness:

1–(MSG/NRSV) For example, Verses 6 and 10b talk about him having other “*Christians/brothers and sisters*” and “*believers / those who believe*” who taught him “*sound teaching*” that he later “*followed.*”

2–I think Paul is saying here that Timothy could *not* have developed into the Godly man that he ended up being if it hadn’t been for the guidance, nurture, and even challenge of other people of faith who helped him grow into Christian maturity.

3–Well, it’s the same in *our* lives, as well – we *need* the guidance, support, nurture, and challenge of other Christian people in our family, friends, and church to be able to weather the temptations of our world today.

B–Now, we don’t use these people as an *escape from* the world, but we’re to use them instead to be sort of like a fortress/island of faith and Godly strength right *in the middle* of a sea of peer pressure that could easily overwhelm us.

C–And this is why I think it’s so vitally important for us to be active and involved in a church family (or if we’re in college, at least a campus ministry group)– because all of us *need* that kind of spiritual support if we’re to follow Christ in today’s world.

–III–

7. So then,... **Courage, Discipline, Support** – three things today’s scripture tells us that *all of us* need (graduates or not) in order to live a Godly life in today’s ungodly world.
8. My prayer for us all today (but especially for our graduates), is that we would all learn to trust God as we live out Paul’s advice in Verse 12: (MSG) “*Don’t let anyone put you down because you’re young [but instead...] Teach believers with your life: by word, by demeanor, by love, by faith, by integrity.*” (NRSV) “*Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*”
9. [PRAYER]
10. [HOLY COMMUNION]