

TITLE: AN EXAMPLE IN CONVERSATION

TEXT: 1 TIMOTHY 4:12

THESIS: Paul commanded Timothy to be an example in conversation. We will define "conversation," look at Paul & Timothy as examples in conversation, and stress the church's responsibility to be examples in conversation.

INTRO: "Be thou an example..." A member recently was telling me about a congregation that had a member who had been publicly cheating on his wife for years, and many people knew about it. Apparently the church knew about it and refused to do anything. Later this member studied with a non-Christian in the community who said that he believed the truth being presented to him, but that he could never become a member of that particular congregation because of the example of this man who regularly cheated on his wife, seemingly even with approval of the church.

Paul told Timothy to be an example in word...in purity. As usual, these list items have some overlap in characteristics. Paul wanted there to be no gaps in Timothy's good example. The word "conversation" means "behavior, conduct, way of life." It's easy to see then how Timothy's good 'conversation' included being an example in all the other areas. Our behavior displays the qualities that are inside. We can see then how important our 'conversation' is.

"Let no man despise you (or look down on you)." People will look down at you for any reason (youth, age, gender, color, income level, education level, etc.), especially when you're a Christian. Don't let them despise you! But rather, be thou an example in your conduct / behavior / way of life!

I. PAUL, AN EXAMPLE IN CONVERSATION:

A. His past conversation

1. **Acts 7:58; 8:1, 3** – Paul approved of Steven's stoning, and made havoc of the church, taking Christians to prison.
2. **Gal 1:13** – "ye have heard of my conversation in time past...I persecuted the church of God and wasted it"
 - a. Notice, "ye have heard" – here is example of the seriousness of what this word really means. They had heard of Paul's actions!
 - b. *Your* conversation may be better known in the community than you are aware! "Isn't he a Christian? Why is he acting like..."
 - c. Paul's conversation (way of life, behavior) was known to the Galatians (not just one small congregation)
3. **Acts 23:1** – Yet Paul said he had "lived in all good conscience before God..." He thought he had been doing right.
4. **Acts 9** – The transformation begins. Now his conversation (way of life, behavior) will be one that can be imitated.

B. His current conversation

1. **1 Cor 11:1** – imitate ('mimic') me *as I imitate Christ*
2. Paul's conversations, his way of life, was to suffer for Christ's name & His church
 - a. **Acts 16:25** - What was his conversation like in jail? He and Silas prayed & sang songs of praise, & the prisoners heard it!
 - b. **Acts 26:29** – "I wish all were as I am, except these chains."
Paul could've been set free, if he hadn't appealed to Caesar (**26:32**). But, he was dedicated to the mission (**23:11**).
 - c. The rough trip to Rome -**Acts 27:35** - amongst 274 unbelievers, he "*gave thanks to God in presence of them all*"!
He then went to Rome & testified. This dedication had great results, even in Caesar's house (**Phil 1:13, 4:22**)!
 - d. His conversation was such that he endured trials, attacks, perils, etc., all on top of his continual concern for the church (**2 Cor 11:23-28**).
No wonder he could say "imitate me as I imitate Christ!" If the church would only do this!
*Imagine how strong the church will be when we follow the example of Paul's conversation (his way of life)!

II. TIMOTHY, AN EXAMPLE IN CONVERSATION:

- A. **Acts 16:1-2** – Timothy was well known by brethren in other cities, and well reported of by these brethren. They knew his conversation.
- B. Why was Timothy's conduct so exemplary? **2 Tim 3:15** – He had known the Scriptures from childhood. ***Parents, instill in your children this example of Timothy's 'conversation'—"that from a child he had known the scriptures." **Will that be said of your children?**
- C. **Phil 2:19-24** – Paul knew Timothy's conversation well enough to use him to communicate with the Philippian brethren.
 1. (v. 20) Paul knew Timothy was more "likeminded" ("of the same mind") than any others
 2. Paul knew Timothy would naturally (genuinely) care for their state. **Would Paul have picked you for this job?**
 3. (v. 21) "all seek their own..."(except Timothy). Does your conversation tell people that you seek your own, or Christ's?
 4. (v. 22) Paul (& the Philippians) knew Timothy's conversation (the "proof") -that he served with Paul in the gospel.

III. THE CHURCH, EXAMPLES IN CONVERSATION:

- A. Elders (**1 Tim 3:2** "blameless, vigilant, sober, of good behavior"; **Heb 13:7** "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*")
- B. Christians
 1. **Mt 5:16** "Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." This doesn't mean that we should build our church buildings on hills and wait for the people to come. It means your life is a light and is not to be hidden.
 2. **Eph 4:22** "Put off concerning the former conversation the old man..."
 3. **James 3:13** "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom."
 4. **1 Pet 1:15** "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."
 5. **1 Pet 1:18** "...redeemed...from your vain conversation..."
 6. **1 Pet 2:12** "having your conversation honest...that they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God"
 7. **1 Pet 3:1-2** – Unbelieving husbands may "be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."
 8. **1 Pet 3:16** "whereas they speak evil of you, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ."
 9. **2 Pet 3:11** "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation & godliness..."

CONCLUSION: WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT WE TO BE? Peter answers this question in the same verse (2 Pet 3:11) – in all holy conversation and godliness. ALL holy conversation; All holy conduct; All holy behavior! Our topic this morning, this word "conversation," shows the **extreme importance of how a Christian lives...as an example**. Everyone who knows that you are a Christian watches your conversation, your life, your actions. People who live their lives in rebellion to what God says in His Word don't like to be told they're wrong...either directly or by a Christian's lifestyle. So they will watch what you say and do, and whether they ever mention it or not, they've logged in their minds any time you have messed up. Because if you've sinned, then it's OK for them to sin. *This is why your conversation is SO IMPORTANT!* Work on this. Be aware of what you're saying and doing at all times!