Taking Heed

Dear Culture Contrarians,

It seems like a lifetime ago; actually, it was. I began serving the Lord in full-time vocational service on January 1, 1980. My home church in Phoenix ordained me, and my pastor, Dr. John L. Mitchell, who has been with the Lord for a generation, spoke from 1 Timothy 4:16.

These are troubled times in which we live, and we manage to fight the good fight against the “mystery of iniquity” at work all around us. Then something personal hits us. All the air goes out of us and we are down for the count. This happened to me recently. At my age we have come to expect our friends to be promoted to Glory…it is the unexpected losses that catch us.

So, I am reminding myself, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” There are two imperatives, or commands, in this verse. The first is to “take heed”; it literally means *to have* or *to hold* and in the New Testament it means *to fix the mind upon*. In my thinking it means, “make this a focal point.” Paying attention to yourself is actually a very biblical and necessary concept. If I am a wreck, I most likely will not “continue” (the second command) in the doctrine. By this second command, Paul indicates that Timothy’s doctrine is good and he must not allow anything or anyone to move him away from it.

“The doctrine” of 1 Timothy, that Paul refers to is the Gospel: The God-man died for our sins and rose again from the dead, and all who believe in Him receive the gift of everlasting life. But this treasure is held in earthen vessels that grieve and sorrow over losses and the turns of events of life as it drags us where we don’t want to go.

Therefore, take heed to yourself. The pressures of this world or the impact of personal losses take a lot out of us, but we can go to the Lord and He will restore us. Don’t drift from the glorious gospel. *Deliverance* (a better translation of “save”) *will come* (note this is a future tense, meaning our deliverance is in the future, not the present) to both ourselves and anyone else who listens to the Truth.

My love to you all,