

LIFE: Start Here

Start Here

By Dr. Jeff Meyers

Bible Text: 2 Timothy 1:12-18

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I would encourage you to turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter one, picking up with the idea that we were meant to be world changers rather than being changed by the world and in verse 12 Paul says:

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.¹

And for the sake of the message today we are really just going to focus in on verses 12 through 15. And what I want us to address from this passage as we talk about changing the world starting here is more a collective or a corporate perspective than an individual perspective. That means that it is almost the idea of synergy, that you and I, that two people together can always do more in cooperation than they can added up in separation. And in this passage of Scripture I do believe that it addresses the individual aspect. I do believe that every one of us, no matter what local church or part of a church that we find ourselves, that we still have an individual personal relationship with God through the person of Jesus Christ. I will never ever deny that.

However, I am also reminded in Hebrews chapter 13 it says, “Do not forsake the assembling of the believers.” That the Lord has designed us to be a body.

In the book of 1 Corinthians it says that some of us are hands. Some of us are feet. Some of us are knees. Some of us are ears and others the various parts, designed not to work individually and separate from, but together in conjunction with one another. And the reason I say that from the beginning is everything that we address from this passage today is going to have a collective feel versus a more individual feel. And I want to show you what I mean in verse 12. He says:

¹ 2 Timothy 1:12-18.

“For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”²

Not only a great verse of Scripture, but one that we have great hymns of the past based on it. And there is a great individual promise there. That when we committed, when we give our lives to Jesus Christ, when we say, “I recognize that I am a sinner in need of saving,” when we recognize that we cannot get to heaven on our own merits, when we recognize we are sinners, he saves us and when we not only ask him to save us, but turn our lives to him, he keeps us. We get that and we understand that. But I think we need to take a little step back today and look at 2 Timothy from a stepped back perspective and realize that, yes, he was addressing Timothy’s individual relationship with the Lord, but he was also addressing Timothy in his relationship to the body of Christ that was literally world wide.

And so what I want to do today in speaking of the body of Christ, speaking of the Church of Jesus Christ, I want to look from just a simple time frame, I want to look at the Church in the past, the present and the future. And the first point is this. The Church of Jesus Christ has a history of hope.

Now let me share with you what I mean. In verse 12 it says that the Lord is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. That day is a phrase that is used in the book of Isaiah chapter two. It is used in 2 Thessalonians chapter two and in various places in between. Every time you come across that phrase, that day, it is referring to what we know as the Second Coming. It is referring to what we know as the parousia. It is coming at the end, the consummation of all things. And, yes, there are details. Yes, there is minutia, yes there is debate and arguments. But as a collective whole, the body of Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ recognizes that there is a day where Jesus Christ is going to physically return. Jesus Christ is going to split open the skies. He is going to step down out of heaven. He is going to step on the ground and he will reign and he will rule. And, according to the Bible, even the devil himself will be bound for a thousand years. That is a part of all of that day.

And the reason I want to talk collectively about that term is here the apostle Paul says, “That which I have committed unto the Lord, I am persuaded he is able to keep it against that day.” The apostle Paul physically is not present with us today. Timothy is not physically present with us today. However, there is an entity that was formed and created by Jesus Christ, that the person Paul dedicated himself, to that will be present and will be kept unto that day. For history teaches that though the world tries to rid, though people try to eliminate, the Church of Jesus Christ will stand through all things thick and thin. And when that day occurs, you may not physically still be around. I may not physically still be here on earth, but the body of Christ will be kept unto that day.

You may be thinking to yourself, Jeff, how do you get a collective concept out of that passage? Well, let’s look at the person of Timothy. This is individual who we find out

² 2 Timothy 1:12.

not only that Paul was his spiritual dad, that he had not only shared the message of Jesus Christ with him and he was saved under his leadership, but this was an individual who partnered with Paul at some level dealing with churches all over the eastern world in those days.

Let me give you some examples. In 1 Corinthians chapter 16 Paul talks about wanting to go to Rome, but he is writing to the church at Corinth and he says, “Don’t worry. I am sending Timothy to you to refresh you.”

In the book of Acts he says, “I have sent Timothy all over Macedonia.”

And if you were to go back a few pages into 1 Timothy, what you will notice is the apostle Paul teaches him that this is how you ordain pastors. This is how you ordain deacons. This is, “how you do church.”

Now if you haven’t been with us over the last couple of weeks we have been addressing that Timothy is an individual who has kind of lost some hope. He is an individual in whom the fire of his faith was burning bright at one point, but it is somewhat diminished. And yet here is a young man who traveled far and wide. Here is a man who served the Church of Jesus Christ faithfully in so many different ways. And you can imagine his discouragement if we were to go back in time specifically to the year and the date in which this was written and you saw a pagan Roman world that was taking Christians by the and thousands, making spectacles of them and burning them in public, eliminating and cutting the heads off those who claimed the name of Jesus and taking the very apostles themselves and putting them to the death.

You think our world is discouraging. Imagine Timothy’s. And I can imagine that he is looking around at the death that is around him and the persecution that is around him and he begins to wonder. Is this thing really going to make it? Is this thing known as Jesus Christ and Christianity, is it really going to make it? And Paul says, “I am persuaded that Jesus was right, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.”

And so we have a history of having hope. And time does not give us the ability today to go through the last 2000 years and see how the world has tried to eliminate the Church and tried to get rid of the Church. However, as my high school football coach taught me, blood makes the grass grow. And when the blood was spilt, the growth of the Church took root. The Church of Jesus Christ collectively has a history of hope.

But I want to talk about the present as well. What is the present state? Who is the Church of Jesus Christ? What is it to be about today? I want you to look down in verse 13. He says:

“Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”³

³ 2 Timothy 1:13.

Let me share with you what the Church of Jesus Christ is to be today distinctively different. If you have spent any time at all listening to the verbiage and the pundits of the media and the world over a course of time it doesn't matter, "what side of the aisle" they fall upon, they all start sounding the same, using same numbers, using same promises, using same this, using same that. However, at the core of the Church is the person and the message of Jesus Christ and the message of Jesus Christ is distinctly different from everything the world offers. And, to be honest with you, everything that all other religions and faiths offer.

And when he says here in verse 13: "Hold fast the form of sound words..."⁴

What he was communicating to him is even though there is this past history of hope, in the present, he should not give up. He should not give in, should not give out because the message of Jesus Christ is so distinctively different.

Allow me to give you a biblical word picture. If we were to go back to the book of Matthew chapter 16 somewhere toward the end of Jesus' earthly ministry, he takes the apostles up to the north area of Galilee to an area known as Caesarea Philippi. He takes them to a place where literally all the world came together, all different backgrounds, all different religions, all different nationalities. It was technically Roman, but you would find the Jews there and you would find people from Asia there all over there. And almost every religion known to man was worshipped and, "sacrificed" in Caesarea Philippi. It was a cesspool of thought. Every idea known to man was represented there. And if you go to that area you can see where this little section sacrificed this and this little section talks about this and this little section did this. And in Matthew chapter 16 Jesus takes his apostles up to this little area. In the middle of everything the world offers them, he says, "Ok, guys, I have got a question for you. Who does the world say that I am?"

And they begin to comment. They said, "Well, some people say you are this and some people say you are that and some people think you are doing this and some people say you are doing that."

And then Jesus makes this question, "Who do you say that I am?"

And Peter, one of the only times in his life that he does not have his foot in his mouth speaks up and says, "You are the Christ. You are the Son of the living God."

Let me tell you what Peter was saying there in Matthew chapter 16. He was saying in the midst of all these voices, you are the only one that is different. In the midst of all these beliefs, you are the only one that is distinct. And hear me clearly, church. In a world with thousands upon thousands of messages to hear, only the message of Jesus Christ stands alone. Only the message of Jesus is different. And if you personally or you collectively are putting your hope and trust that some other institution is going to change this world, you have got your hope and trust in the wrong place. Because only Jesus Christ says the gates of hell shall not prevail. He did not say the gates of hell shall not prevail against

⁴ Ibid.

democracy. He didn't say that. He said the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church. He turns to Peter and says "Peter, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father which is in heaven."

And then he makes what has been known as a very controversial statement. But I think it is actually a very simple statement. And he says, "Upon this rock I will build my Church."

Some people debate, well, that rock must be Peter and the succession of what we know as popes. And other people say, "No, no, no, it is the confession that he made that Jesus was the Christ."

It is one of the things that I think we forget as we get older is the difference between this and that. He didn't say upon that man. And he didn't say upon that statement. In the midst of an environment that was filled with rocks, he literally said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, upon the person of Jesus Christ." That is the message. That is what makes it distinct. And if the world is going to be changed starting here, listen to me clearly. The only entity that has the authority, the ability, the power to change the world is the Church of Jesus Christ. There is no other entity that the gates for hell shall not prevail against. So we have as a collective entity, we have a history of hope. We have the present of a distinctive different message. But the real question I want to ask today or present before you is about the future.

Where is the Church of Jesus Christ headed collectively, not just you as an individual person? And I believe today that that decision or that opportunity or that cross roads or that fork in the road leads to one of two destinations, either a falling away or remaining faithful. There is not neutral in this transmission. It is either forward or backwards. It is either faithful or falling away.

I want you to notice in 2 Timothy chapter one he has told him to hold fast in verse 13. But here we get to verse 14.

"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me."⁵

And the picture that we get from the apostle Paul is: Timothy, there are many who have fallen away, but you remain faithful. There are many who have decided to go backwards, but you go forwards. And he speaks of persons and entities that have fallen by the wayside. And if you read—and I know it is hard reading in our day—we read the last paragraph of all the letters of the apostle Paul, almost every one of them says, "This one went with me. This one went against me. This one stayed faithful. This one fell away."

And as you and I go forward in the future of our lives, the one entity, the one thing that is capable of changing the world, I believe, right now, is at the very crossroads of its existence.

⁵ 2 Timothy 1:14-15.

Now it will remain until that day. But the Bible speaks that there will be a falling away and the Bible does speak that there will be those who remain faithful.

Let's speak about the falling away for just a moment. 2 Thessalonians chapter two. By the way, if you are curious, it is a passage of Scripture that deals with what we know as the antichrist, this person, this son of perdition who one day will rise up and disguise and deceive the world into going completely against the things of Jesus Christ, but in that chapter of the Bible, in verse two of chapter two of 2 Thessalonians it says that the day is coming when Christ will return, his day. Verse three. That day shall not occur—listen to what it says—unless there first be a falling away. The Bible makes it very clear. As we get closer and closer to the return of Jesus Christ, as a collective entity there will be a massive falling away. There will be less adherence to the things of God. There will be more compromise and less conviction. There will be more holding hands with the world than holding hands with one another. That is what the Bible says that before the antichrist is revealed there will be a falling away.

But here let me give you some history. You and I, we collectively do not have to be a part of that mess. In fact, all throughout the Old Testament, even as you get into the New Testament we get this idea that there is always a remnant.

Now I know for some of you there is this word in the Bible that just makes you shudder every time you hear it. It is the word tithe. But did you know that the word doesn't have technically a real truth definition when it comes to money? Do you know what it is? It means 10 percent. And did you know in the book of Isaiah when it talks about bringing the tithe, in the context it is saying that that 10 percent is a statement that there will always be a remnant.

And can I just speak of the Meyers family as a whole? When that experience happens in our life and we worship through the giving our tithe, it is not so much saying, "God, you need this," as much as saying, "God, we are going to stay faithful." We are not going to be a part of the falling away. We are going to be a part of the remnant. We are going to speak up, show up, stand up, because the world is to be changed by us, not us changed by the world.

Now that being said—and speaking of this issue, the future of the falling away versus the staying faithful—there will be, as we get closer and closer to the return of Christ, there will be a greater falling away. But I believe that we, because of our history and because of our present, we have access to be faithful. We have access to be the remnant. We have the availability and the ability to be that which collectively and individually says we will be world changers, rather than the world changing us.

You say, "Well, Jeff, how does that happen? How do we not become like these guys in this chapter? How do we become like Timothy who was found faithful versus fleeing away?"

Just like we addressed last week, two things have got to happen in your life, my life and our church's life and collectively the Church of Jesus Christ's life. The first thing is this. we must have the proper attitude.

You say, "Well, what is that attitude? Is it like a go get them attitude? Sic him to a bull dog attitude? What is that attitude?"

Let me tell you what that attitude is. And it is subtle. An attitude of never ever becoming satisfied, never getting to the point where it is good enough, never getting to the point where saying, "Wow, this is better than I ever thought it would be," never getting to the point where we say, "I am living as I should live and I don't have anywhere to go. I have no place to go further. I am good. We are good. It is all good."

Since we are speaking collectively here this morning about the Church of Jesus Christ, I thought I would give you a little visual aid. I want to take you back to 1969 and I know technically attendance isn't the greatest or maybe the best measure of, "faithfulness" of a church's life, because you can get a bunch of people to do anything, but I want to show you. In 1969, 40 plus years ago, the 10 largest churches in America, these are the top 10. Some of you may or may not recognize them. But as you are perusing that list, as you are looking over those entities, let me share with you that none of them are in the top 10 today. One or two of them are in the top 20 depending on the survey that you look like. Most of them have fallen way behind as far as leading in the numerical category.

Now let me preface that by this. If you were to go and do some research on these 10 churches, you know what you are going to discover? They do some great ministry. They do some great missions. They are not dead. They are not falling apart. They are not splitting at the seams. They are not messed up, jacked up churches.

You say, "Well, why were they on the top 10 then and they are not the top 10 now?"

I will tell you why, because there can come a place in our spiritual life, in our church's life where we say it is good enough. And it always will be good enough. The idea or the thing of being satisfied could be the slowest killer of spiritual growth known to man. Let me repeat that again, becoming satisfied could be the slowest killer of spiritual growth.

Let me use some personal examples. I like sports. And in recent days we have seen a well known athlete in our community retire after 20 years of playing baseball. Do you think he ever would have gotten a check from major league baseball if he had hit the ball at 23 the same way he did at age 13? Imagine... oh, I am pretty good at 13. I am satisfied. Can you imagine as parents and grandparents when you see that precious child or grandchild at six weeks of age that is yet to be potty trained? Can you imagine saying, "Oh, I will always be satisfied with this"?

No. There must be progress. Why? Because when we are satisfied eventually all we end up with is something stinking and warm. That is it. Satisfaction breeds regression. Let

me say that again. Satisfaction breeds regression. So that is the attitude. So what is the action?

Before I actually tell you the action that the Church of Jesus Christ needs to import in their lives to solve our attitude issue, I want to give you an illustration. And the illustration must be prefaced by another visual image.

This is one of the blessings in my life that I get the opportunity to take advantage of about one or two times a year. This is the picture of the Georgia Dome during a Falcons game on my favorite event of the week outside of church, Monday Night Football. I love Monday Night Football. I will just be honest with you. On a secular level it is about the most religious thing I do, ok? There is something... I just really do enjoy it. I don't know what it is about Monday Night Football, but I just really like it.

There is an individual in our congregation who is an employee and has been an employee of the Atlanta Falcons for years. This individual knows that I love Monday Night Football. This person knows that I really can't make it to the games at one o'clock on Sunday. That is hard to do. So every now and then this person will contact me and say, "Hey, I have got an opportunity for you to come to the game."

Here is the best part about going to the game with him. Because he works for the Falcons, I get to sit with the people who work for the Falcons. I am not in the nose bleed section of that picture. I am in the press box.

And, by the way, in case you want to know, the food is fabulous. I just thought I would bring that in. Right above me are the commentators, those whom you have seen on TV. I have never gotten to meet them, but they are right above us. All around me are the technical people that make the game happen. These are the people who keep the statistics. These are the people who make sure that people get credit for what they did and not credit for what they didn't. These are the people who keep the lights on the video working and actually count the commercials that are on the billboard to make sure that those who paid for their time slot got what they paid for. It is a working entity. People are there to enjoy the game, but they are also there to do a job.

I was at the Monday night game a few weeks ago. But what I want to share with you is the conversation that took place just to my right midway through the second quarter. I am sitting at a table with a series of people. They have all got lap tops. They are basically the IT guys of the Georgia Dome and the Falcons. These are the guys keeping the lights on, keeping the air conditioning right, keeping everything happen so that everyday else can enjoy the game.

Midway through the second quarter an individual walks into the press box, very well dressed with a microphone in their ear, around their ear, with a cable coming out the back, an intern with a clipboard and a person with a camera. I am not a rocket scientist, but this is somebody who is going to be on TV some time tonight. They come to the booth where we are because they have a problem. The problem is that this news caster

cannot get their laptop on the wifi network in the Georgia Dome. He can't get it on. And so what better person to ask than the people who run the IT at the Georgia Dome?

So he comes to the right table and he gives his laptop to the people who know what they are doing and they start typing faster than I can talk. That is feasible. I promise. This guy is going to town. And after a few moments he turns the guy's laptop around, gives it back to him and goes, "Sorry, you are out of luck."

He said, "What do you mean I am out of luck?"

This is a guy who needed the internet. This is a guy who needed communication. His job is communication. He couldn't get on the wifi network. And he looked at him very disgruntled and he said, "What do you mean you can't get me online?"

And listen to what this man to my right said. I will never forget it. He said, "Sir, I hate to inform you, but we are out of bandwidth."

Now for those non techies let me share with you what that means. You can only turn on so many devices at one time and have access to the internet when it is wireless. There is not an infinite number of lanes on the highway. It is a finite number. And this very well spoken news reporter turns to this guy. He says, "I don't get it. How can we be out of bandwidth?"

And he points to that arena and he says, "Sir, there are 71,000 iPhones that are on right now and they have taken every last bit of it."

But it was the next part of the conversation that blew my mind. Kind of sarcastically he said, "Well, how do you get more bandwidth?" Because he was in a mess.

Listen to what this IT director said. "Buy me a bigger server."

There was nothing that could be done to change the situation as it currently was. Seventy-one thousand satisfied game attenders, but when you added one more, they couldn't be served. When you added one more they could not become a part of what was taking place.

Let me speak honestly. Let me speak transparently. Let me speak just forthrightly to you as the Church of Jesus Christ and in particular a local church of Jesus Christ. There is not much bandwidth left. Let me share with you what I mean. We as a church of Jesus Christ, guys, we are doing great. We are doing wonderful. We are doing more ministry than we have ever done. We are doing more missions than we have ever done. Every time we turn around something is happening on this campus, off this campus involving this campus. Everywhere I go, anywhere in this community, do you know what I hear time and time again? We are just amazed at how much your church is doing. We are just flabbergasted. Your hands are into everything. That is absolutely true and it is wonderful, but listen to me. We are out of bandwidth.

You say, “Well, Jeff, what does that mean?”

Seventy-one iPhones are on. And the next time we have a bright idea or a creative concept or something we want to do, I don’t know how and I don’t know where, because there is no resources to do it with.

You say, “Whoa, whoa, whoa. Jeff, are we having financial trouble?”

No. Are we going to start laying off people? No. Listen to me clearly. I do not want to be misspoken about this. We are not going backwards. But we are in a position where we can’t go forwards. Here me again. We are not in trouble. Listen to me clearly. We are not going to cut anything. Listen to me. Whatever you think is so wonderful that we as a church participate in, we are going to keep on doing it.

But here is the problem. If we keep doing it with what we have got now, 40 years from now we are going to be doing the same thing. And I don’t think anybody would be satisfied with that in their individual lives, their family’s lives. So why would we be satisfied with it in our church’s life?