

2 Timothy 3:10-17
1 Kings 13
Psalm 119:49-56

“Preach the Word”

January 8, 2012

In 1 Kings 13 we hear about a “man of God”
who came and spoke the Word of the LORD to Jeroboam.
In 1 Kings 13 we also hear of an old prophet who lived in Bethel.

What is the difference between a “man of God” and a prophet?
In terms of what they *do* there is no difference.

Moses is said to have been a “man of God” (Dt 33:1; Josh 14:6; 2 Chron 30; Ezra 3; Ps 90);
the angel of the LORD who announced the birth of Samson is called a “man of God”
(Judges 13);
various prophets are referred to as “man of God”
(1 Sam 2:27; 1 Kings 12, 13, 20; 2 Chron 25)
Samuel is called ‘man of God’ (1 Sam 9),
as are Elijah (1 Kings 17, 2 Kings 1) and Elisha (2 Kings 4-8, 13)
David is called a ‘man of God’ (Neh 12:24) –
particularly in relation to his prophetic function
in establishing the ministry of music in the temple.

The reason why you would call someone a “man of God” rather than a “prophet”
is because “prophet” is a bit more ambiguous.

The old prophet who lived at Bethel in our story in 1 Kings 13
was certainly a prophet:
he speaks forth the Word of the LORD.

But was he a man of God?
Sure, he’s useful for confirming the man of God’s words,
but his own deceit leads to the death of the man of God.

There are lots of ambiguous prophets in the Old Testament.
You will find no ambiguous “man of God.”
The man of God is one who is so filled with God’s Spirit
that he speaks the word of God completely.

You can always trust what a man of God says.

The only two NT uses of this phrase are in 1 Timothy 6:11,
where Paul addresses Timothy and says,
“But as for you, O man of God,
flee these things. [referring to the love of money and false doctrine]
Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.”

The other will be found in our NT reading from 2 Timothy 3.

So consistently throughout the scriptures
“man of God” refers to the one who faithfully proclaims the Word of God.

So when Paul says that the scriptures are useful – profitable –
“that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” –
Paul is saying that the scriptures will prepare *Timothy* for his task.

Now, as we’ve seen throughout the Pastoral Epistles,
the pastor is simply supposed to be an exemplary Christian –
so it is *also* true that scripture will prepare every Christian,
but Paul says that it is *through* Timothy’s preaching that the church will be edified.

Sing Psalm 119:49-56
2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

Last time we talked about Paul’s warning to Timothy
that in the last days, people would be lovers of self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure –
rather than lovers of God.

And we saw that these people would have “the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.”
They have the outward appearance of one who is a follower of Jesus,
but they deny the power of godliness – they deny Jesus himself.

And Paul uses as his examples, Jannes and Jambres –
the names given to the opponents of Moses in Egypt and in the wilderness –
those who were part of the people of God,
but in fact were rebels –
they were apostates who opposed the truth.

And Paul tells Timothy, “Avoid such people.”
Literally, “turn yourself away from these.”

Paul is telling Pastor Timothy,
turn away from those who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power.

What does he mean by this?
I want you to see what Paul is saying should characterize pastoral care.

At the end of chapter 2, Paul said that the Lord’s servant should not be quarrelsome.
Don’t get involved in quarrels and controversies.
But be kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil,
correcting his opponents with gentleness.
Because God *may* grant them repentance.

What does this refer to?

We know from Acts, Ephesians and John's epistles,
that there were a variety of teachers running around the province of Asia.
There were lots of groups claiming to be "Christian."

In chapter 1, Paul referred to Phygelus and Hermogenes
as those in Asia who had turned away from Paul.
In chapter 2 he spoke of Hymenaeus and Philetus
who had swerved from the truth
by claiming that the resurrection had already happened.

But all of these groups would have claimed to be Christian –
they just disagreed with Paul – and with the other apostles!

So if you put together all of Paul's admonitions to Timothy,
he is saying that whenever Timothy encounters these "opponents"
he should gently correct them (without getting dragged into a quarrel),
but that he should "turn away from them" –
and not have Christian fellowship with them.

The contemporary application should be clear:
Muslims, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Unitarians –
these are not Christians.

With others it's harder to know where to draw the line.
Roman Catholics and eastern Orthodox are plainly "Christian"
(though in serious error at points);
Protestant Liberalism (those who deny the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, etc.)
plainly is *not* Christian – they have rejected the heart of the faith –
but, of course, many pastors and members in the mainline churches
are still committed Christians!
But there are many odd groups that are harder to deal with:
the Salvation Army rejects the sacraments;
some charismatic groups place their own revelations dangerously high;
there are Messianic Jewish groups that have embraced the old Judaizing heresy;
while some ostensibly evangelical teachers have denied the uniqueness of Christ,
and now teach that salvation comes through any religion

What I want you to see
is that while there are plainly *more* denominations and *more* wackiness today,
Paul told Timothy that *this* is what he would face.

And, in fact, the way that *I* need to lead you today,
is precisely the same way that Timothy needed to lead the church of Ephesus
1950 years ago.

When Paul talks about contentious and quarrels,
he is not talking about the good, robust theological discussions
that draw us together more and more toward Christ and toward one another!
We don't have to agree with one another on every jot and tittle
in order to grow together in Christ!

What we need is a resounding commitment to *hear* the Word of God.

Today we are looking at Paul's focus on Timothy
by pointing out that Paul is writing to a pastor,
and is talking about what sort of pastor he should be.

1. In the Last Days There Will Come Times of Difficulty (3:1-9)

2. Why You Need a Pastor Who Knows the Scriptures (3:10-17)

a. You Have Followed My Teaching, My Conduct, My Aim in Life... (v10-11)

¹⁰ *You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,* ¹¹ *my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.*

We saw last time how Timothy had followed Paul's teaching, conduct, *aim in life*.

Timothy understands what Paul is all about –

and how Paul had endured steadfastly through persecution and suffering.

b. Expect the Same Thing to Happen to You (v12-13)

¹² *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,* ¹³ *while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

And so Paul says,

Don't be surprised when the same thing happens to you.

Because "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."

There are those who have the appearance of godliness, but deny its power.

What is the power of godliness?

The power of godliness goes back to the mystery of godliness in 1 Tim.

"He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit,

seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations,

believed on in the world, taken up in glory." (3:16).

The mystery of godliness – the power of godliness –

is nothing less than Jesus Christ himself!

Remember what Paul said earlier in 2 Timothy:

"do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner,

but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God,

who saved us and called us to a holy calling,

not because of our works

but because of his own purpose and grace,

which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,
and which now has been manifested
through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus,
who abolished death
and brought life and immortality to light
through the gospel.” (1:8-10)

If the power of the gospel – the power of godliness –
is found in the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection and proclamation of Jesus –
then do not be surprised when the *substance* of godliness
consists in sharing in Christ’s sufferings!

Because there is no way to glory – except the way of the cross –
the path of sharing in Christ’s sufferings.

**c. And Continue in What You Have Learned – Knowing from Whom You
Learned It (v14-15)**

And so Paul says, Timothy,

*¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from
whom^{a1} you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred
writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Notice again the connection between *what you have learned*
and *knowing from whom you learned it*.

We saw in chapter 2 that Paul affirms a sort of “apostolic succession” –
the idea that you need *both* apostolic *content* to your teaching,
but also an apostolic *teacher*.

In 2:2 Paul said,
“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses
entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

And through all centuries this has happened.
We sometimes hear that the church almost vanished in the middle ages –
and certainly there were some pretty awful things
that were taught and practiced then (like now).
But I want you to hear the 7 questions to be asked of a dying man
(from a pastoral manual written around 1400 –
more than 100 years before the Reformation).

I think these questions are so good, that I want to ask them of you!
(I’m paraphrasing slightly because of the difference in language between then and now)
but since all of you are dying – I think you need to hear this!

First, do you believe the articles of faith [the Apostles' Creed]?
 Second, "Do you know how often, in what ways, and how grievously
 you have offended the Lord your God
 who created you from nothing?"
 Third, "are you sorry in your heart for all the sins you have committed
 against the high majesty and love and goodness of God" –
 and are you sorry for your sins of omission –
 for the things that you should have done, but didn't –
 and do you ask forgiveness from God?
 Fourth, are you resolved that if you live longer,
 you will strive not to continue in these sins,
 and do you pray that God will give you the grace to do so?
 Fifth, do you forgive anyone who has sinned against you,
 "for the love and worship of our Lord Jesus Christ
 from whom you hope to have forgiveness yourself?"
 and do you ask for the forgiveness of others
 whom you have offended?
 Sixth, are you willing to forsake all your worldly goods to have Christ?
 Seventh, and this is the key one:
 "Do you believe fully that Christ died for you
 and that you will never be saved
 except by the merit of Christ's Passion,
 and do you thank God as heartily for this as you can?"
 [Shinners and Dohar, 196]

Do you know why the Reformation happened?
 Because all through the Middle Ages, people on their deathbeds heard *this*.
 They heard that "you will never be saved except by the merit of Christ's Passion."
 The preaching of the *gospel* continued all through the Middle Ages.

At the Reformation the Reformers did not just appoint themselves!
 The Reformers were pastors and teachers
 (most of whom had been ordained Roman Catholic priests) –
 most of whom had been *preaching the gospel*
 long before they had heard of Luther's teaching.
 They were part of a widespread movement over a period of several hundred years
 that was working for the reform of the church,
 seeking to bring the church back to the apostolic teaching
 in places where the church had strayed.

The fact that the bishop of Rome disagreed is too bad, but it is not especially relevant!
 Our apostolic succession does not come from *Rome*, but from the apostles!

Paul does not tell Timothy –
 "Make sure that all bishops are approved by the bishop of Rome" –
 he says, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses

entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others.” (2:2)

he says “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believe,
knowing from whom you learned it.”

And that is why apostolic content is absolutely essential:
because it is “the sacred writings” which “are able to make you wise for salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Of course, when Paul says “sacred writings” he is almost certainly thinking of the OT,
which should make us think!

Children,
how well do you know the Old Testament?

Paul says that “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings.”
In those days, copies of the scriptures were really expensive.
When Timothy was a child,
he did not have his own copy of the scriptures.
He was *acquainted* with the scriptures
because he went to the synagogue with his mother and grandmother
to hear the teaching and discussion
(like a “Sunday school” class today).

But Paul does not merely say that Timothy knew the scriptures from a “young age” –
he says from *infancy* – actually, the word used here
can mean a foetus in the womb,
or a nursing child.
You would not generally use this word of a weaned child.

Paul’s point is that Timothy has been acquainted with the sacred writings
since his infancy – since the day he was born.

You drank this in with your mother’s milk.

Parents,
take the time with your children – while they are infants –
to start teaching them the scriptures!

If you do not yet have a regular pattern of family worship – start *now*!

For several years we took a random pattern
but about 7-8 years ago we decided to go cover to cover from Genesis to Revelation.

It takes us about 4-5 years, as a family, to work through the Bible from cover to cover.
We’re now on our second pass, and it is fun

to hear how well-acquainted these children are with the sacred writings.

But it's not just a matter of acquiring information.

Paul says that the OT sacred writings can make you wise for salvation –
through faith in Christ Jesus.

As you read through the scriptures together,
talk about how the scriptures fit together –
and how they all speak of Jesus!
Every page of the Bible is all about him.

Part of the reason why I am preaching through the whole Bible in 17 years
is because I am convinced that the whole word of God can make you wise for salvation.

The whole of the scriptures,
from Genesis to Revelation,
is all about Jesus – it is all about the gospel!

My goal is to provide for *you* the sort of preaching and teaching
that will enable you to teach your children –
so that they (from infancy) might be acquainted with the sacred writings
which are able to make you wise for salvation
through faith in Christ Jesus.

So yes, Paul has a very high view of the apostolic ministry –
of a sort of apostolic succession – (the importance of “from whom” you learned it)
but long before Paul came on the scene and taught Timothy anything –
he had been acquainted with the sacred writings
through his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois
(don't forget her!
You grandmothers – you have a very important example in Lois!
Her daughter had married a Gentile –
apparently an unbelieving Gentile –
and yet, Lois did not disown her daughter!
We don't know the story of Eunice and her husband –
but we do know that Paul pays tribute in 1:5
to these godly women whose faith now dwells in Timothy!)

You see here three generations of believers –
with the third generation coming to fruition in Timothy.
And so Paul says to Timothy in verses 16-17,
that the same scriptures that he learned as a child
will continue to equip him in his ministry.

d. Because Scripture Is Useful for Equipping You for Every Good Work (v16-

17)

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^[b] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Because the scriptures are breathed out by God.
“theopneustos” – “God-breathed” or “inspired”.

The word “inspired” can be somewhat misleading,
because “inspire” sounds like something was breathed into it –
whereas the point Paul is making is that God “breathed out” the scriptures.

The scriptures are the very words of God.
Yes, there were human authors
whose personality and writing style comes out clearly in their writings –
but God is the divine author of the sacred writings.

The inspiration of scripture (or perhaps better, the God-breathed-ness of scripture)
is not a matter of dictation, but of concursus (or concurrence).

Think of the person of our Lord Jesus:
Jesus is fully God and fully man.
His humanity is a genuine and true humanity –
but a humanity that was taken up into the second Person of the Trinity.
Therefore his humanity is also a perfect humanity.

In a like manner, our salvation is fully and wholly the work of God.
Only God can save.
Salvation is entirely a work of grace –
and yet we must “work out our salvation with fear and trembling,
because it is God who is at work both to will and to do for his good pleasure.”
(Phil 2:12-13).

In the same way we see the scriptures as God-breathed –
so that the whole of these 66 books comes together as *one book*
with one story told by many voices
(not particularly surprising for a Triune God to tell one story in many voices!)

Now, I want you to think about what Paul says here about the scriptures in verse 17.
Paul’s point is that the scripture is useful for *Timothy* in his work.

Now, Paul is not denying that scripture is useful for everyone else too!
(after all, he has just stated that even the *child* Timothy knew the scriptures –
long before anyone knew that Timothy would be a minister!)

But as we saw earlier, every other time “man of God” is used in the Bible,

it refers to a preacher – a prophet – someone who is set apart to preach – someone who will reliably, faithfully, proclaim the Word of the Lord.

So Paul’s point here is that the pastor needs to be diligent in his study of the scriptures, so that *he* may be complete and equipped for every good work.

And *because* it is useful in equipping me
for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,
therefore it is useful for you as well.

Because my task is to teach you – to instruct you in the doctrine of Christ;
my task is to reprove you – to show you when you have strayed
(the idea is to “convince” you)
my task is to correct you – to correct your faults –
and my task is to train you in righteousness – the way of discipleship
(deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus).

If the man of God (the pastor) is going to be competent at these things –
equipped for the good work that Christ has called him to –
then he must be a devoted student and expounder of the sacred writings.

Paul is saying that the pastoral office is *necessary* for the proper function of the church.
We live in an egalitarian age where we tend to emphasize the priesthood of all believers,
and downplay the necessity of the ministry.

But this has never been the approach of the Reformed churches.
The Reformed have always distinguished between priesthood and ministry.

The Second Helvetic Confession (used in Switzerland since the 16th century) says:

“To be sure, Christ's apostles call all who believe in Christ "priests,"
but not on account of an office, but because,
all the faithful having been made kings and priests,
we are able to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ.
Therefore, the priesthood and the ministry are very different from one another.
For the priesthood, as we have just said, is common to all Christians; not so is the ministry.
Nor have we abolished the ministry of the Church
because we have repudiated the papal priesthood from the Church of Christ.” (ch 18)

This is why our Larger Catechism says,
“The Word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted,
and also duly approved and called to that office.” (Q158)

Chapter 14 of our Confession says
“The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls,

is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts,
and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also,
and by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.”

After all, faith comes by hearing – it is through the preaching of the Word –
it is through the preaching of the ordained ministers of the gospel –
that faith *ordinarily* comes to the people of God.

(notice that we say *ordinarily* – there can be exceptions!)

But the Reformed churches have followed Paul’s emphasis on the ordained ministry.

You might say, “okay, that’s good to know,
but what should I do with that?”

Our Shorter Catechism has a useful suggestion:

Q. 90. *How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?*

A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence,
preparation and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our
lives.

It feels really weird to say this,
because I’m just as egalitarian as you are!

But you need to pay careful attention to what I say –
always testing it by the scriptures! –
(that’s part of “attending thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer”)
but then you receive it with faith and love,
lay it up in your hearts,
and go do it!

How much preparation do you make for hearing the Word?

How do you receive it?

(Is your drive home spent criticizing the sermon – or receiving it with faith and love?)

How much time do you spend meditating on the Word – laying up the Word in your hearts

(both memorizing the scriptures, and meditating on the *message* of the scriptures)?

And are you practicing it in your lives?

Do you see the fruit of the word?

If not – then let’s talk.

If the teaching of the Word is not having the proper effect,
you may need reproof or correction

in order that your training in righteousness may progress aright!