

Training Faithful Men

2 Timothy 2:1-7

The future of every faithful church is dependent upon its ability to train men to teach the pure word of God.

LTS: 1 Cor. 3:5-23

Last time we revisited the challenge of Timothy's assignment to serve as a pastoral leader in the church of Ephesus. We refreshed our understanding of the problems he faced in that church (unqualified elders, false teachers, passive men and aggressive women, just to mention a few).

We were also reminded of the critical detail that Paul is in jail - imprisoned in Rome for the last time. His life of ministry is just about finished, and he intends to hand his work over to Timothy. But this will not be an easy mantle to pick up. What Paul is asking Timothy to do will require great boldness, wisdom, and strength. But Timothy was struggling with Timidity and weakness, just as we so often do.

Weakness, however, in the economy of God, is not a disqualifier from ministry. In fact, the living Christ delights most to move in power in the world through those who are weak so that it may be obvious to everyone that the power is from God and the glory is to God.

Paul understood the dynamic of "When I am weak, then I am strong." And he knew Timothy was aware of it as well. In fact, we invested all of our sermon-time last week in addressing that one main theme found in the first verse of this chapter.

Before we dive back into this passage this morning, however, let's refresh on the text as a whole.

Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Now, last week I pointed out two themes and never made it past the first. This week I'm feeling a little more ambitious, so I want us to consider three themes that will carry us all the way through verse seven (7). And here they are:

I. Christ's Powerful Provision: (1)

II. The Pastor's Essential Mission (2)

III. The Christian's Preoccupation (3-7)

Now, the first one is easy because we covered it last week, so let's just take a few minutes to review.

I. Christ's Powerful Provision (1)

Read v. 1

1. The question we asked last week was: Where does a timid person find the power to be courageous when he finds himself face-to-face with a ministry opportunity that feels intimidating? We don't find that kind of power in ourselves. Rather we find it in the grace of Christ. Paul says, "Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And we learned last time that the kind of grace Paul is referring to is the unmerited gift of assistance available to us in Christ.
2. The point of the whole message last week was that this is how God wants us to minister – not from a position of personal strength, but from a position of dependence upon Christ. It's the kind of fruitful dependence exemplified in the relationship between a grapevine and its branches. Connected to the Vine (who is Christ – John 15) the branch can produce much fruit. Apart from the vine, however, (Jesus says) "you can do nothing."
3. This is the first thing Paul wants Timothy to remember as he prepares to take up the mantle of his mentor. He understands that faithful churches are always only one generation from losing the gospel. If the church of Ephesus is going to thrive into the next generation its leaders have to live and minister from a position of dependence upon Christ, because when we are weak, then we are strong.
4. This brings us to the second theme of the text:

II. The Pastor's Essential Mission: (2)

Read v.2

1. As the acting pastor of the church of Ephesus, Timothy's primary job was to make sure the church did not lose the gospel (or any of the whole counsel of God) on his watch. He needed to not only teach "sound words" to the present members of the Ephesian church, but make provision for their loyalty and fidelity to Christ even after both Paul and Timothy are gone.

2. If the church of Ephesus was going to remain faithful in the next generation, other men needed to be trained in the theology and doctrines of the Bible.

3. Notice how Paul states this charge. He says Timothy is to take what he has heard from Paul.

4. Notice Paul says, “What you have heard.” What exactly is it that Timothy HEARD from Paul? Well, if you were to take the time to trace it out in the four chapters of this letter, here is what you would discover. What did Timothy hear?

- 1:8 “The testimony of the Lord” & “the gospel”
- 1:13 “The standard of sound words.”
- 1:14 “The treasure (good deposit) which has been entrusted to you.
- 2:9 “The word of God.”
- 2:15 “The word of truth.”
- 3:7-8 “The truth.”
- 3:15 “The sacred writings.”
- 3:16: “The Scripture.”
- 4:2 “The word”
- 4:3 “Sound teaching”
- 4:7. “The faith.”
- 4:15 “Our message.”
- Then we could go back to 1 Tim. We would discover all these terms again, along with what Paul calls (1:11), “The gospel of the glory of the blessed God.”
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5. Let there be no mistake, beloved. What Christ had entrusted to Paul (1 Time. 1), Paul had entrusted to Timothy (1 Tim. 6:20), and now Timothy is commanded to entrust it to faithful men who will be able to entrust it to others also.

6. Teaching the word of God to men who will faithfully deliver it to the next generation is a sacred trust.

- A. The word “entrust” here means [to give something to another for safe keeping](#). This is really important because the transmission of biblical truth must never be left to chance. And in this context, it is NOT committed generally to every

Christian, but only to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.¹

B. The word “Entrust” is a stewardship word. Paul received his teaching as a stewardship from Christ. Timothy received it as a stewardship from Paul. Now other men will be called upon to be stewards of God’s treasure. Timothy’s mission is to successfully deposit the treasure into their care.”² Not an Easy Task!

4. This is difficult work. And it’s difficult for at least two reasons. FIRST because there are always forces at work to rob the church of the treasure of the Gospel and the whole counsel of God.

A. For example, in the years that preceded the Reformation it seemed that the light of the word of God has been all but extinguished.

B. The church had lost the clear teaching of Scripture. The established religious leaders of the day had hidden the Scriptures under the veil of a language the common people couldn’t understand. Moreover, whenever it was discovered that someone was attempting to translate the Scriptures into the language of the people (whether that be German, French, or English) the authorities sought to hunt them down and burn them at the stake.

C. In our day, the real danger is NOT that the word of God is unavailable but that it is hidden under the camouflage of pragmatic religiosity. People come to church NOT so much to hear the word of the Lord but to hear practical tips for life with Scriptures pasted on them to make it sound Christian; to make it feel like you are actually hearing the word of the Lord.

D. One day through the Prophet Amos God said, (Amos 8:11) “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, “when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but [a famine] of hearing the words of the LORD.”

E. And I want to suggest to you that we are living in a time of such spiritual famine today!

F. In this kind of spiritual climate, if you are to proclaim the gospel of the blessed God you will always be shouting INTO the wind and against the current of the

¹ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: and Introduction and Commentary 2nd Ed*, (England, Tyndale N.T. Commentaries, 1990), 151

² John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Gospel: The Message of 2 Timothy*, (Downers grove, Ill. Inter Varsity Press, 1973), 50

religious world. And there will always be evangelicals who will try to convince you that the Bible can't be trusted. Either it's wrong on Creation, or its wrong on Hell, or its unclear about justification, or that we need to distance ourselves from the O.T. It's wrong on marital roles, or human gender, or whatever else is perceived to be unfashionable, unscientific, unloving or insensitive to the spirit of the age.

G. So, the job of successfully passing gospel treasure to the next generation is difficult because of the spirit of the age. The work of the faithful pastor and the faithful church is always an uphill climb.

5. SECOND it's a difficult job because it's not easy to find men to do it. It may surprise you to learn that it has never been easy to find and train faithful men to fulfill this mission. And there are a number of reasons why?

A. Not all men are called of God to serve the church in this way. James says, "Not many of you should be become teachers, brothers, because you know that those who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (Jam. 3:1).

B. Some who might have been called are disqualified by sin. Now, obviously all men are sinners, but sometimes the sinful behavior of one's past causes so many complications that its either impossible or too painful to sort out.

a. How many men have we known over the years who have disqualified themselves from the ministry of preaching because they lost the reigns of their flesh.

b. Even within the last couple years it is stunning to me the number of men whom I have heard of who have shipwrecked their ministries

C. Many are not available. They may be gifted and above reproach but are just not available either because of the career God has graciously given them or because of illness, or some extraordinary needs at home.

D. I'm sure there are other reasons...

Nevertheless, my experience at Calvary Bible Church has been that God has always provided faithful men when we have needed them, and most of them have come out of our own membership rather than from a distant seminary.

6. This is all especially relevant right now as in the past two weeks we hosted two public examinations of a brothers in our own congregation who are finishing their path to eldership here at our church.

7. Part of our job as pastors/elders is to create teachers. God has NOT only called us to be faithful in preaching and teaching the word to this church for this generation, but to train other men who will preserve the purity and vitality of the church for future generations.

8. And Notice: There is a very definite apostolic succession in this verse, but it is NOT a popish succession. Rather, it is the succession of passing on the unvarnished, unadulterated truth of sound biblical teaching. And consider this, the only reason we are here today teaching and exhorting with sound doctrine is because of men who have gone before us showing us what it means to faithfully guard the treasure of God's word.

9. And beloved, you understand that this is a major component of our fallible, dependent vision for the future of this church. We don't want to become a BIG church. We want to simply grow as large as our facilities will allow and then send people out to plant new churches who will also be faithful to preach and minister word. But in order to do that we have to be faithful to this text. We have to be committed to take "what we have heard in the presence of many witnesses and entrust them to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

10. My only question is, who are those future men? I am confident that some of them are young and eager to begin training both here at the church and at the seminary level as well.

11. But I am praying that Lord will also raid up more older men who already know the Scriptures, love Jesus, and are devoted to shepherding the flock of God by their ministry of the word. **Where are you men?** I hope some of you are right now hearing through my voice the call of God upon your life.

12. And by the way, in case some may doubt there is any real danger of losing the gospel in the next generation, consider this.

A. The sad reality is that when we get to the book of Revelation, we hear Jesus say of the church of Ephesus,

*I have this against you, that you have left your first love.
'Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent
and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and*

*will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.*³

13. Today, there is NO church in Ephesus. Perhaps they were driven away by persecution. More likely, however, is the probability that the reason there is no true, biblical church in Ephesus today is because somewhere along the way the pastors of that church failed to entrust God's treasure to faithful men who would be able to teach others also.

14. Well, if you are hearing my voice and find yourself excited about the possibility that God may be calling you to pastor, there is one more thing you need to hear. We have considered I. Christ's Powerful Provision: (1)

II. The Pastor's Essential Mission (2)

Finally, we come to

III. The Christian's Preoccupation (3-7)

1. Perhaps I should have called this the Minister's Preoccupation. But there is a sense in which all of us need to be fully engaged at whatever level of ministry you are called to. If you are going to be faithful at any level of Proclaiming the excellencies of Christ in this world, you have to be all-in. You have to know there is going to be resistance. There's going to be pain. The question is NOT if you will suffer but when, with whom, how severely, and how will it affect you? Listen to how Paul says it.

Read 2:3-7

2. The Old preacher - church-planter is saying to the young one, "Come and assume your share of suffering. Ministry isn't about making a name for yourself. It isn't about drawing big crowds. It's about proclaiming the excellencies of Christ in all things, to the glory of God in the joy of all peoples.

3. If you choose to be faithful in ministry it shouldn't be to become a Celebrity. Actually, it's more like becoming a soldier, an athlete, or a farmer. What do these three analogies have in common? Simply this, that all three require hard work and suffering, but in the end, you get to share in the reward.

4. Consider the Soldier:

A. The term "good soldier" means "a common soldier. If you are a soldier

³ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Re 2:4-5). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

in active service, you need to forget about comfort. Forget about your civilian pursuits. Forget about that business you want to start. Forget about the school you want to attend. Forget about everything but pleasing your commander.

- B. “No soldier gets entangled. The word for entangled means to braid or to interweave. Every day of the soldier’s life he lives on mission. A good soldier doesn’t entangle himself with things that distract from the mission. His goal is to win the war!
- C. In fact, Roman soldiers weren’t even allowed to get married until their term of service was up.⁴
- D. The thing that drives you, if you are a soldier, Paul says, is pleasing the one who enlisted you. Your whole life you are striving to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Paul even said of Himself (2 Cor. 5:9) “Therefore, whether home or absent I make it my ambition to be pleasing to Him.”
- E. The idea here is NOT that you become some kind of Monk and place yourself under legalistic restrictions, but that you are willing to sacrifice much for the mission with which you have been entrusted. And pleasing your commander (Christ) is reward enough.
- F. In 2 Tim. 4:10 we learn that Demas was a bad soldier. He was a deserter. Paul said the reason he deserted was because he loved the present world. A good soldier, however, understands that to be a good soldier is to presume present suffering and future reward.

5. Consider the Athlete (Athos)

- A. Like the soldier, the athlete willingly sets aside his rights, privileges, and liberties for the sake of his goal. And what is his goal? The same goal every Olympic runner has: to win!
- B. First Century athletes put themselves through grueling training to prepare for the games. Their intense discipline and preparation were legendary. And right before their event, competitors at the Olympic games had to swear an oath before the statue of Zeus that they had been in strict training for ten months.⁵

⁴Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (2 Ti 2:3–4). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁵ Constable.

(Constable, 2/8).

- C. But here's the thing. You can train for ten years for the competition, but if you don't compete by the rules, you'll be disqualified.
- D. The mentions of "rules" points to the need for personal obedience and submission to the same word of God you preach to others.
- E. The athlete doesn't come to the race with clever ideas about what the course should look like, what accommodations should be made for the runners, what short-cuts might get you to the finish line faster. No, he comes to the games understanding that there are clear directives he must follow.
- F. The same is true in the ministry of the Word of God. Pastors are not free to do as they please in ministry. We have clear divine directives about how to minister the word of God, how to lead God's people. That doesn't mean there's no room for creativity, but it does mean that we are not free to R-imagine church in hopes of making it more relevant and appealing to this generation.
- G. Therefore, we preach the Whole counsel of God, NOT just the parts that are comforting and uplifting. We instruct, rebuke, and correct. We preach sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. We practice church discipline, and strive to be an example in Speech, Conduct, Faith, Love, Faith and Purity knowing that at the end of our race the Lord – the righteous judge – will render a verdict on how we ran the race.
- H. But once again, those who run well will receive the victor's crown. In other words, there will be a glorious reward for those who run well.
- I. And Paul emphasizes that point in the last analogy

6. Consider the Farmer (Read v. 6)

7. I can tell you from personal experience that while ministry in the Local church is hard, the rewards of serving Christ in service of His church is more than worth it.

The future of every faithful church is dependent upon its ability to train men to teach the pure word of God.