

As we close out this summer series this AM, I want to remind you of what 2 Timothy is about. This letter was a deeply personal letter from the Apostle Paul to his protégé in the faith – and he was writing to encourage Him in his pastoral ministry to the church to be faithful to the call.

Its application for us today is two-fold. It's a wonderful encouragement for churches to remind us of the primary responsibility of the pastor w/in the context of the local church. And second, I think this book provides insights for the entire church by reminding us of the priority of making disciples through the personal investment of Jesus in us into the lives of others desiring to know and follow Christ.

Throughout the letter, Paul has challenged Timothy to do one thing – **COMMIT** his life fully to the cause of Christ.

Now the idea of commitment is a curious concept in our culture. In many places it's become nearly extinct or at best conditional. Couples who committed to be husband/wife until death do they part are parting ways. Companies who swore allegiance to their employees are throwing them to the curb just prior to retirement. We've become so "me-centric" the idea of commitment basically means, "I'll align myself w/ you so long as it's convenient and/or profitable for me."

Yet when I think of commitment, I'm reminded of the story of the hen and the pig who were walking together when they saw a sign about a church preparing to feed the poor. In a moment of benevolence, the hen suggests to the pig that they make a contribution to the meal. After a moment of reflection, the pig replies, "There's just one problem w/ your idea – to make bacon and eggs, you only have to make a contribution while I have to make a total sacrifice."

When it comes to following Christ, we need to remember that God only expects of us what He expected of Himself – total commitment! Jesus didn't step out of heaven and into flesh b/c it was convenient or popular, He laid down His life b/c it was necessary. He didn't offer a partial commitment; He completely surrendered His life for our forgiveness.

So in Paul's encouragement to Timothy, he reminds us that following Christ isn't a commitment of convenience; but a daily moment-by-moment abandonment to God.

James Calvart, missionary to the Fiji, on arriving to the islands for the 1st time, was told by the ship's captain that he and his men were going to die at the hands of head-hunting savages. Calvart replied, "We died before we came here."

No man is a fool who gives up what he cannot keep in exchange for that which he cannot lose. *Jim Elliot*

As Paul closes out his letter, he charges his protégé in the faith to finish well by remaining committed to the truth of God by **SPEAKING** the Word, **STANDING** on the Word, and **SUCCEEDING** in the Word.

I SPEAK the Word

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing; and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word;

A Be MOTIVATED

Notice how Paul starts – b/c Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected, and now sits at the right hand of the Father as our judge and Priest, and b/c He will one day return to establish his Kingdom – **you have a purpose in life.**

Do we really need any more motivation than the knowledge and reality that Jesus laid down His life to redeem us into a personal relationship w/ the Father – that He rescued us from eternal death and damnation into eternal life?

For Christ's love compels us, b/c we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Cr. 5:14-15

B Be MISSIONAL

preach the Word (*kerusso*) that is... proclaim as a herald.

In Paul's day, every ruler had a special herald called to proclaim his announcements to the people. This man would walk the streets proclaiming the news of the king for all to hear. In like manner, as Christians, we're called to herald the Good News of the Eternal King as we walk in this world.

SPEAK (use words) to others about the love of God found in Jesus. We don't have to beat it into people – just live it and share it whenever God affords us the opportunity to share the hope that is w/in us – w/ gentleness and love.

Our job is to convey the message in word and in deed; it is God's job to convince, convict, and convert.

C Be MINDFUL

...be prepared in season and out of season;

instant (*ephistemi*) to be prepared and alert – like a sprinter in the blocks awaiting the starter's gun or as a soldier who's prepared on guard against an attack – *be mindful for action!*

in season and out – at all times and in all situations – on the look-out for divine opportunities.

Just this week at the beach, God gave me an opportunity to speak to a guy while waiting for our take out. I wasn't anticipating the opportunity when I walked into the restaurant, but God afforded the circumstances and I testified of His goodness and faithfulness. I got to plant a seed.

But we have to be more than prepared to share, we must be patient/gentle as we share realizing our role and limitations. We're not the H.S. but we are messengers to the truth.

D Be METHODICAL

Paul tells us how – *...correct, rebuke and encourage—w/ great patience and careful instruction.*

1 CORRECT

correct (*elegmos*) to reprove misbehavior and to clear up inaccurate teaching. It is to clearly define God's truth.

Now more than ever, our world needs for us to provide gentle correction. It needs for us to help clarify for them what God says about right/wrong and good/evil.

2 REBUKE

rebuke (*epitimēson*) to confront a person in error to move them to agreement w/ God.

Whereas to *correct* is to disclose the sinfulness of sin, to *rebuke* is to disclose the sinfulness of the sinner. It's the difference b/w teaching a person to distinguish right and wrong versus disciplining them for doing wrong.

3 ENCOURAGE

encourage (*parakaleo*) to challenge, exhort, and comfort. It is to lead another person who's been reprovved and rebuked to a change of attitude and activity – **to walk alongside of.**

We're NOT to be like the man visiting death row inmate. When it came for the man to say good bye and get strapped to the electric chair, the friend said, "More power to you!"

As believers, we're to be prepared to come alongside of others to spur them along to change. We're not solely to confront people in their sin; we're to help them through it.

II STAND on the Word

Equally critical to speaking the Word of God is remaining faithful to its teaching in a changing world where the Word is under constant assault both w/in and outside of the church.

A A Clear CAUTION

For the time will come when men will not put up w/ sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

The Bible reads us; it penetrates to our core and exposes who we are. If you ever find yourself reading your Bible and not changing, then you can be sure that you're approaching the Bible in a wrong way. It's not about finding support for your lifestyle or way of thinking; it's about approaching the mind of God and letting Him change and redefine who you are.

Francis Chan – Multiply

I don't have time to share my thoughts on what is happening inside/outside the church in the watering down of the Gospel for the sake of building earthly kingdoms – but I do want to provide for you (3) important filters.

1 – Any church that expects nothing of you and teaches you can have Christ w/out commitment is tickling your ears.

2 – Any church more concerned about what you can do for them instead of what God can do in and through you for His kingdom is leading you astray – the purpose of the church is to help you to become a disciple of Christ – MOVE ON!

3 – Any church teaching pop culture theology and telling you what you want to hear instead of what you need to hear to align rightly w/ God and His Word is wrong – GET OUT!

B Some Concise COUNSEL

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

1 Be LEVEL-HEADED

keep your head (*nepho*) sober-minded – having a balanced and healthy perspective of the truth free of delusion.

It means Christians are to make the decision to be a God-pleaser instead of a man-pleaser. Not compromising the truth by tickling the ears of others to gain their approval.

2 Be TOUGH-MINDED

Endure hardship – willing suffer harm to proclaim truth

Following Christ requires tenacity b/c many people will not want to hear what you have to share. Sinful people don't enjoy having God's light turned on to their sinful ways – so they often resist the message and the messenger.

Yet for the sake of the eternity of others – we must be lovingly tenacious instead of cynical and disgusted. We can't give up or give in when times get tough – we must fight the good fight b/c the souls of men hang in the balance.

3 Be GOSPEL-DRIVEN

do the work of an evangelist (*poieo euangelion*) verbally share the message of Jesus to anyone who will listen.

Paul wasn't calling Timothy to be an evangelist, but to readily share his faith as the opportunity arose – to be prepared to share the hope that is w/in you (**1 Pt. 3:16**).

I hear more excuses as to why people never share their faith, but ultimately boils down to one thing – LOVE. People talk about what they love – and our business is the love of God.

D.L. Moody once asked a man if he was a Christian. The man told him to mind his own business. Moody replied, "I'm a Christian – this is my business."

On another occasion, it said that Moody was being openly criticized for his methods for reaching others w/ the Gospel. He explained he didn't like his methods either but asked the lady to share her method. When she said she didn't have one. Moody replied, "I guess I'll just stick w/ the one I have."

Here's something we all need to understand – God has called His people to be His hands, feet, and voice to this world. He has entrusted the message of His love and forgiveness to us. How we live and what we share makes an eternal difference. **God has no Plan B. We are His method.**

III SUCCEED in the Word

Success is determined by how a person finishes the race. Paul concludes his letter to Timothy (and to us) by calling us to follow in his footsteps and finish well.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing.

A FIGHT the Good Fight

There is only one fight worth fighting – the fight for the Gospel. Only the Gospel can transform a life. To live for the sake of the Gospel is the highest calling.

Have you ever thought about the remarkable privilege we have to stand w/ Christ and in the gap for others? Where would you be if someone wouldn't stand w/ God for you?

To live w/ all my might while I do live; Never to lose one moment of time; Never to do anything which I should despise or think meanly of in another; Never to do anything out of revenge; Never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life. J. Edwards

B FINISH the Race

The Bible often refers to this spiritual life as a great race. And each of us has a leg to run and a difference to make.

Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 9:24 why to run – *In a race, all the runners run. Run in such a way as to win the prize.*

The writer of Hebrews tells us how to run: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run w/ perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus...*

Each one of us has a Divine calling on our lives and we each must run our leg of the race to completion.

C Keep the FAITH

It means to be diligent in preserving the ministry of Christ by striving after His mission and keeping one's self free of sin.

In keeping the faith **you are keeping your focus**. We see in Paul that he had no regrets and no second thoughts — he had accomplished his purpose and he kept the faith.

What is your Divine purpose? Why has God breathed life into you, placed you on this earth, gifted you as He has, and called you unto Himself? **No matter the call – be steadfast! Keep the faith! Fulfill your commitment!**

I love the story of the missionary, who after 40 yrs. was coming. On his journey home, he dreamed and anticipated a grand welcome. But when he arrived to America there was a grand celebration; only it wasn't for him but for a movie star on board the ship. After everyone had left the old man looked toward heaven and asked, "O God, after giving all of those years of my life to serve you and my fellow man, was it too much to ask that one person – just one – be here to welcome me home." Then, in the quietness of his heart God whispered to him, "But you're not home yet; but rest assured my child, when you finally arrive home to me, you will be welcomed grandly as one of my good and faithful servants."