



Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for November 23, 2008 Released on Wednesday, November 19, 2008

"A Good Example"

DEVOTIONAL READING: Acts 4:13-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: 2 Timothy 2 – 4

SCRIPTURE LESSON: 2 Timothy 2:1-3; 4:1-5

2 Timothy 2:1-3

1 Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

LESSON AIMS

Facts: to analyze Paul's concern that Timothy endure hardness as a soldier of Christ, teach sound doctrine as a minister of Christ, and bear up under afflictions as an evangelist of Christ.

Principle: to show that faithfulness is essential for anyone who wants to serve Christ.

Application: to use our Christian experience and insights to encourage others who will someday replace us in ministry.

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, there was a leadership training program popular in some churches that used 2 Timothy 2:2 as its touchstone: "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." In one church, this was made into a catchy slogan: *2-Tim-2-2*. This helped people remember that text and the core teaching on which the program was based: training across generations. Provision for continuity in good leadership must take a multigenerational view.

For the church to survive from one generation to the next, it must have an ongoing, unending program of identifying and nourishing the leaders of the future. The book of 2 Timothy is a treasure for those who strive to have effective and godly leaders within the church. It is the mature reflection of the apostle Paul as he faces death and the

prospects for the church's survival without his guidance. He was not discouraged. He was ready to entrust leadership to Timothy's generation. Paul knew that Timothy would be called on to do the same thing later.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Time: A. D. 64

Place: from Rome

Timothy first appears in Acts during Paul's second missionary journey, in about AD 51 (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy was probably a teenager at the time. Amazingly, Timothy's mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (see 2 Timothy 1:5), allowed Timothy to leave his home and become a traveling companion of Paul. Timothy then emerged as one of Paul's most important coworkers, often entrusted with important visits to churches, representing Paul (see Acts 19:22). Paul described Timothy as his "beloved son, and faithful in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:17).

Paul wrote 2 Timothy in about AD 67, shortly before his death in Rome. It was thus something like 16 years after their first meeting, and Timothy was far beyond being the raw teenager whom Paul initially took under his wing. Timothy became the primary leader of the important church in Ephesus, founded by Paul on the third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10).

Timothy is described as an "evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5), literally a "preacher of good news." Whether because of this title or due to his association with Paul, Timothy seems to have been accorded extraordinary authority to oversee leadership issues in the Ephesian church. This is seen more in 1 Timothy, where Paul encouraged Timothy to be engaged in corrective actions with poor or deviant leaders (see 1 Timothy 1:3). In 2 Timothy, Paul's emphasis is more upon the leadership example to which Timothy should aspire (see 2 Timothy 3:14).

SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL (2 Timothy 2:1-6)

1. Where do strong leaders find their strength (2 Timothy 2:1)?

Paul testifies in his letters that his strength came from the Lord, not himself (see 1 Timothy 1:12). This is a matter of faith, of trusting in the grace and mercy of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Paul encouraged Timothy to be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1). Although we are saved by grace (Acts 15:11), grace also sustains and strengthens us in the Christian life (2 Cor. 12:9).

"There is grace enough in him for all of us. We must be strong in this grace; not in ourselves, in our own strength, or in the grace we have already received, but in the grace that is in him" (Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Hendrickson).

Perhaps Timothy needed such encouragement more than others since he seems to have been somewhat timid and more reserved than Paul (2 Tim. 1:6-8). Anticipating future persecutions, Paul wanted to prepare him for the inevitable (3:12). In spite of past afflictions, Paul knew that God would deliver His servants from all such difficulties (v. 11). That deliverance may come through death; nevertheless, "if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2:12).

2. Why was it important for Timothy to teach others? Why must we do the same (v. 2)?

Since Timothy had traveled with Paul on numerous occasions, he had heard the apostle preach and teach in the presence of "many witnesses." Paul had taught the gospel to Timothy, and now it was Timothy's turn to pass it on to a new generation of pastors and teachers.

The church also needs to replenish its leaders constantly. The wise church is the one that understands this need and acts on it. When it does, it will not find itself with a leadership

vacuum.

Paul identifies two parts to the process of leadership replication. First, the current leader must be sure of what he is doing and teaching. For Timothy, this refers to what he has heard from Paul. For us, it is solid knowledge of God's Word and God's will for the church.

Second, the current leader must identify future leaders who have three important characteristics. Uppermost, they must be *faithful*. They must have a track record demonstrating their commitment to the cause of Christ. They should exhibit a lifestyle of Christlikeness. Next, they must be teachable. Good leaders never outgrow this quality. They remain learners for a lifetime. The stubborn person who is resistant to correction or instruction is a poor choice to be a leader. Finally, they must be capable of teaching the next generation of leaders. Young leaders must have an eye to even younger potential leaders.

3. What are some ways you can help pass the mantle of church leadership on to the next generation?

Start by examining your attitude and perspective. Every generation, it seems, looks upon the following generation as being far worse than theirs is. We can have very short memories when it comes to our own lives as adolescents and young adults. It is important to remember how we bristled at the blanket condemnation by our parents and grandparents on all young people. Then we can avoid the same attitude. We must take time to commend our young people instead of condemning them.

The most foundational thing in developing the next generation of church leaders is to model them the Christian life at all times. When young people see Christians acting in unchristian ways, leadership and faith development are hindered.

4. Besides the soldier, what other figures did Paul use for God's people? Why do you think he used the soldier here (v. 3)?

In his letters, Paul used a number of figures to illustrate the Christian life. Among them are the farmer (1 Cor. 3:6-9, 2 Tim. 2:6), the builder (1 Cor. 3:10), the runner (1 Cor. 9:24), the boxer (1 Cor. 9:26), the soldier (Eph. 6:13-17; Phil. 2:25, 2 Tim. 2:3), and the athlete (2 Tim. 2:5).

As one who was imprisoned by Roman authorities, Paul was frequently in the presence of imperial soldiers. Sometimes he was actually chained to a soldier. Paul, therefore, had observed and knew the habits of a good soldier. A good soldier is one who focuses on duty. A Roman soldier in Paul's day was expected to endure extreme deprivation which might have included, sleeping on the ground, eating what was available, and marching long hours carrying heavy equipment. Seeing Roman soldiers on a daily basis caused Paul to think of believers as soldiers for Christ.

As a Christian evangelist, Timothy was on the front line of the battle for people's souls. Therefore, it was necessary to endure hardship for the cause of Christ. This requires both sacrifice and commitment.

SHARING THE GOSPEL (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

5. What personal charge did Paul give to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:1)?

As Paul contemplated finishing his earthly race (2 Timothy 4:7), he charged Timothy with the awesome task of proclaiming the everlasting gospel. To impress upon him the seriousness of the enterprise, Paul issued this charge "before God, and the Lord Jesus" (vs. 1). Christ is our Saviour *and* our Judge. At the time of "his appearing and his kingdom," He will judge both the "quick," or the living, and the dead.

As Jesus said, "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). It is to God and to the Anointed Savior that Timothy will have to render an account" (Hendriksen).

6. What was the “word” (v. 2) Timothy was called upon to preach?

Paul told Timothy to “preach the word.” The word “preach” means “to herald”; it carries with it the idea of a public proclamation. When should we preach the gospel? We should preach the gospel every chance we get! Preaching the word does not go out of fashion and will never become obsolete. There were some in the twentieth century who believed that the age of preaching was past, but they have been proven wrong. There will always be a need for public proclamation of the good news about Jesus Christ. Leaders, whether preachers or not, must see this as the primary task of the church.

Paul commanded Timothy to “be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). This means that he was to be ready to preach the gospel when it was favorable or unfavorable, popular or unpopular, convenient or inconvenient.

Leadership can require confrontation, which is implied in the terms *reprove*, *rebuke*, and *exhort*. Leaders in the church cannot allow serious error to grow and become strong. Leaders must be watchful and patient in guarding correct doctrine. The church may have diversity in membership, but should have unity in the faith.

SAFEGUARDING THE GOSPEL (2 Timothy 4:3-5)

7. What is meant by “sound doctrine” (vs. 3,4)?

“Sound doctrine” means healthy teaching (literally, healthy doctrine). It is teaching that is in accord with the truths of the gospel, leading to the salvation of sinners and growth among the saints. Paul envisioned a time when such teaching would be at a premium. Perilous times were on the horizon (3:1) when some would have a “form of godliness, but [deny] the power thereof” (v. 5).

Sound doctrine leads to spiritual vigor. The opposite of this is to teach fables for those who don’t want to hear the truth. Instead of listening to sound doctrine, people would prefer teachers who would simply tell them what their itching ears wanted to hear. But what people want to hear is not necessarily what they need to hear!

8. Why was Timothy encouraged to be watchful (v. 5)?

Paul’s final words in this section are for Timothy’s ears, but ring true for anyone committed to ministry. Timothy is called to be watchful, careful, and clearheaded. There will always be those who seek to bring him down. He is expected to *endure afflictions*, not to be surprised or deterred by the hardships of ministry. This may include emotional, physical, or financial suffering for the cause of Christ.

Timothy must never stray from doing *the work of an evangelist*, which is bringing people to Christ. Ministry has many tasks, and it is easy to be sidetracked from the most important thing: saving lost souls through the power of the gospel.

Finally, Paul tells his protégé to *make full proof of thy ministry* (compare Colossians 4:17). He means that Timothy should work his ministry to the fullest. He should fulfill the great potential that Paul saw in him some 16 years before.

CONCLUSION:

Paul was concerned about spreading the gospel, and he endorsed the multiplication of teachers. Today we have many ways of training such teachers and communicating the gospel. It is vital that teaching of the gospel be faithfully passed on in a consistent manner to new believers – just like the passing of the baton in a relay race.

A relay race is a team effort that requires the tricky maneuver of handing a baton from one runner to another. Sometimes the baton is fumbled and the runners must slow down. Sometimes the baton is dropped, and the runners stop. But if the runners trust each other and practice together the baton may be passed with runners sprinting at nearly full speed. Thus the winning team is one that is successful in passing the baton, even if its runners are not as fast as some of its competitors.

The leadership needs of the church are best served when there are smooth transitions. Veteran leaders must realize when their time is ending; then they can ready themselves and the congregation for change. If they stay too long and refuse to pass the baton, they hinder the work of the church.

Younger leaders must understand the need for training and the value of experience. They must not alienate older leaders, but instead draw upon their wisdom and knowledge. When these transitions are made according to the biblical model, the church will not miss a step. She will proceed with the ministry to which Christ has called her.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We can remain strong amidst trials only as we rely on the Lord's grace (2 Timothy 2:1).
2. A faith worth having is a faith worth passing on (v. 2).
3. A faithful life of service will never be easy (v. 3).
4. God's Word must be the source of our instruction, rebuke, and exhortation (4:1,2).
5. We must take advantage of opportunities to minister, for those opportunities will not always be available (vs. 3,4).
6. Consistent, determined service to the end will glorify God (v. 5).

PRAYER

O Lord, give us strong leaders who are good examples. Give us leaders who are grounded in Your Word. Give us leaders who will guard their lives from sin. Give us leaders who will love the lost and seek them out for salvation. Give us leaders who are willing to pass the baton when the time is right. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Is your church getting ready to pass the baton?

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "**Grace in Times of Trouble.**" We, like Paul, must rely on God's power when faced with problems, challenges and even persecution. It is through these that we learn of God's enduring grace and how to find strength in weakness. Study 2 Corinthians 11:16 - 12:10.

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