



**Sunday School Lesson for February 19, 2006
Released on February 16, 2006**

"Follow a Good Mentor"

Printed Text: 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8
Background Scripture: 2 Timothy 3, 4
Devotional Reading: Psalm 119:9-16

Time: A.D. 64
Place: Rome

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

2 TIM. 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, Iongsuffering, charity, patience,

11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at I-co'ni-um, at Ly'stra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Je'sus shall suffer persecution.

13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 4:1-8

4:1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Je'sus 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 Iongsuffering 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.

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Today's Aims

Facts: to examine verses that reveal Paul as a good mentor.

Principle: to teach that a good mentor not only instructs but also leads by example.

Application: to help class members appreciate those who have mentored them and to challenge them to be good mentors of others.

Introduction

The Scripture text this week records some of Paul's final words in this life. One word that summed up Paul's life is the word "faithful." He was near death, but rather than despair, he faithfully mentored Timothy. He had been beaten and nearly killed many times, but he was always faithful.

By contrast, the world around Paul was anything but faithful. Most people worshiped created things instead of the Creator. Even in the churches, false teachings were becoming a problem. Many believed lies rather than the truth.

Most people will never learn about the Bible without preaching and evangelism. Paul charged Timothy to preach and evangelize, teaching doctrine to the people in the church and the message of salvation to those outside.

Paul had lived what he commanded Timothy to do. Paul was about to meet the executioner. Yet the faithful have a great reward, a crown of righteousness from the Father. Paul was about to receive some of the greatest promises that he had preached to others.

Lesson Background

While 2 Timothy is difficult to date exactly, we usually understand it to have been written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. This was his second Roman

imprisonment, not where we find him at the end of the book of Acts. Tradition tells us that Paul was released from that first imprisonment, perhaps because his accusers from Judea never arrived to present their case.

Paul probably returned to Rome in about A.D. 65 or 66. He apparently was caught up in the persecutions by Emperor Nero while there. This second imprisonment would have been relatively brief, ending with Paul's execution in A.D. 66 or 67. This was when he wrote to Timothy a second time. Paul now had given up all hope of release and expected to be put to death (2 Timothy 4:6). His only hope of seeing Timothy again was dependent upon Timothy's coming to Rome (2 Timothy 4:9). We don't know if Timothy made the trip or not. But we do have Paul's letter to him.

A Faithful Example (2 Tim. 3:10-13)

1. Why would it be difficult to make the claim that Paul did in II Timothy 3:10?

Not many people could say what Paul did. He did not merely claim to be a faithful example of godly virtue; he was a living testimony. Paul's life was proof of who he was in Christ. The life that he lived in Christ was a story all its own. Paul, in II Tim. 3:10, writes to Timothy, "But thou hast fully known", meaning: Timothy, you are completely aware and have experienced my position in Christ. I have demonstrated before you my faithfulness in doctrine, lifestyle, purpose, faith, tolerance, self-giving love and patience.

Paul could definitely use this saying without a shadow of doubt - "Let the life I live speak for me". How many of us can truly rely on our lifestyle as a testimony of who we are in Christ? We, as believers in Christ, must realize that we are the way people see Christ. By telling someone about Jesus, is not good enough. We must demonstrate Jesus in our walk as well and never compromise our Faith. As Paul, we should be models of godly qualities.

2. What is charity, and how did Paul exemplify it?

Charity is self-giving love; brotherly love. Paul was indeed an example of charity. He labored and spent himself for the benefit of others with no thought for his own benefit. An example of Paul's self-giving love can be seen in his second letter to the Corinthians (Ch. 12 v. 15) - Paul said "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you- "Be spent" describes Paul's willingness to give of himself even to the point of sacrificing his life which is how we as believers in Christ must be.

3. What happened to Paul at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra? (vs. 11)

Paul faced severe persecution and afflictions. During his first missionary journey, Paul endured a terrible ordeal while preaching in Lystra. Men from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium came to Lystra and stoned him. Stoning was often done by throwing the victim in a ditch and bombarding him with large stones until he was dead. After the stoning, Paul was carried out of the city, and his body left on the ground for dead (Acts 14:19). Not only did Paul survive these persecutions, he continued on his missionary journey.

The Lord's repeated deliverance of Paul should have encouraged Timothy in the face of persecution. This account was told to Timothy to inspire him to be faithful as well. Persecution is a mark of faithfully following the Master and we must always remember the words of Jesus in John 15:20, "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you". Faithful believers must expect persecution and suffering at the hands of the Christ-rejecting world.

4. How is it true that seductive doctrines are increasing in churches? (vs. 13)

Doctrinal corruption was foretold by the apostles. So-called preachers denying the uniqueness of Jesus, denying the Trinity, denying the personality of the Holy Spirit, or corrupting the gospel by adding to it, is very much prevalent in churches today. False teachers will become increasingly more successful until Christ comes (2 Thess. 2: 9,10). People who prefer to love sin and lies rather than gospel truth will receive severe, divine recompense, as do all sinners. God Himself will send judgment that insures their fate in the form of a deluding influence so that they continue to believe what is false. Many times a church based on seductive, selfish teachings will be larger and have more money and influence than a dozen faithful churches holding fast to God's Word.

The Faithful Word (II Tim. 3:14-17)

5. Why did Paul instruct Timothy to continue in the things he had learned? (vs. 14)

Due to the widespread of seductive doctrines, Paul knew Timothy was not immune to error. He encouraged Timothy to remain in the truth of the scriptures. That is to stand firm and stay connected to the Scripture and the doctrine it teaches. Paul goes on to remind Timothy of his godly heritage "of whom he learned", suggests that Timothy was indebted not just to Paul but to others as well such as he mother and grandmother who taught the Scriptures (the essential truths of salvation) as a child.

6. What does God's inspiration of the Scriptures mean? (vs. 16)

Literally, "inspiration" means breathed out by God or God breathed. Sometimes God told the Bible writers the exact words to say (example - Jer. 1:9), but more often He used their minds, vocabularies, and experiences to produce His own perfect infallible, inerrant Word. Human writers wrote as God directed them through their personalities to write inerrant truth. They wrote what God inspired, and the result is trustworthy for doctrine and correction because it is as perfect as God is perfect.

7. In what sense do the Scriptures equip us for godliness? (vs. 17)

The Scripture provides the comprehensive and complete body of divine truth necessary for life and godliness. The Scriptures enable man to meet all the demands of godly ministry and righteous living. The Word not only accomplishes this in the life of the man of God but in all who follow him.

Faithful Preaching (II Tim. 4:1-5)

8. Why do some preach man-made ideas and doctrines instead of the Word? (vs. 3)

Some professing Christians and nominal believers in the church follow their own desires and flock to preachers who offer them God's blessings apart from His forgiveness, and His salvation apart from their repentance. They have an itch to be entertained by teachings that will produce pleasant sensations and leave them with good feelings about themselves. Their goal is that men preach "according to their own desires". Under those conditions, people will dictate what men preach, rather than God dictating it by His Word.

A Faithful Reward (II Tim. 4:6-8)

9. How could Paul's death be compared to a sacrificial offering? (vs. 6)

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, this was the final offering that followed the burnt and grain offerings prescribed for the people of Israel (Num. 15:1-16). Paul saw his coming death as his final offering to God in a life that had already been full of sacrifices to Him. In the sense that his death resulted from doing good for others, Paul was about to become an offering.

10. What does it mean to win a crown of righteousness? (vs. 8)

The Greek word for "crown" literally means "surrounding", and it was used of the plaited wreaths or garlands placed on the heads of dignitaries and victorious military officers or athletes. Linguistically, "of righteousness" can mean either that righteousness is the source of the crown, or that righteousness is the nature of the crown. The context here seems to indicate that the crown represents eternal righteousness.

Paul worked hard with the things God gave him. He was a faithful servant and would receive a crown of righteousness. When Paul finished the race, Christ would declare him a victor not in athletics, but in righteousness.

Paul is not the only one who will be judged and rewarded. The promised reward is to all who love Christ's appearing.

Conclusion

There is a church in my area that has a reputation for chewing up ministers. What surprises me most is not that this church does this, but that it is able to find anyone to come and be its preacher! Churches earn reputations (as do ministers), and these are often very difficult to overcome. Maybe you know a church like this--a church with sharp-tongued evaluators and unrelenting criticism. Maybe your church is like this. Maybe you have experienced a parade of ministers, all of them run off because of perceived laziness, stubbornness, or inadequate preaching.

There is another church in my area that has a reputation for nurturing young people into full-time ministry. This church has produced dozens of ministers from within its own ranks. It has patiently trained other ministerial greenhorns and then released them to serve. It is not a big church, but its impact is felt around the world.

Some churches are consumers of ministers, and others are producers. Which kind of church is yours?

One thing that separates these churches is an attitude of gentle mentoring. At the first church, ministers are expected to fail and their critics wait eagerly. At the second church, ministers are allowed to fail, and leaders are there to pick them up and help them learn from their mistakes. The hapless ministers of the first church have no one within the congregation whom they feel they can trust or talk to. The fortunate ministers of the second church have leaders who befriend and encourage them from day one.

Now think of your minister (or one of them). Is this individual (as seen through human eyes) a pathetic, hopeless kind of person who seemingly does not belong in ministry? Maybe. Are you willing to risk yourself to speak sincere words of encouragement, to look out for his welfare, to pay loving attention to his family? Are you willing to allow for blunders and push him for excellence and faithfulness? Are you willing to give him opportunities for further education in the richness of God's Word? Do you pray for him daily? If so, you have begun to catch the vision that Paul has presented in today's lesson.

Prayer

Great God our teacher, as You have given to us of Your mighty treasures of wisdom and grace, may we find others to pass these riches to. May we appreciate our teachers. May we continue to follow their examples. May we leave behind children and grandchildren in the faith who love You as dearly as we do. We pray this in the name of Your Son, Jesus, amen.

Thought to Remember

Spiritual investment in the life of another is expected from every believer.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

Paul gave Titus instructions for leading the Christian life and providing a godly example. Next week's lesson has something for everybody. Study Titus 2:1-15.

Lesson Summarized by

Veronica Jasper, veronica@jesusisall.com