

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth One Verse at a Time*

A True Child in the Faith, Part 3

Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:1-2

Code: 54-3

Let's open our Bibles to 1 Timothy. In preparation for our communion service in a few moments, I do want to go back to our passage in Timothy. We really began two weeks ago to examine this great epistle. We've been centering our thoughts around the theme, Timothy, a true child in the faith, which is how Paul describes him in verse 2 in the very opening of this great letter. We're looking then at what it is to be a true child in the faith as illustrated by Timothy.

Friday I wrote a long letter to a very great man, a man that I love and appreciate in the Christian ministry. And he had sent me a stack of letters, correspondence, discussion that concerned him greatly. There was a Christian organization, is a Christian organization in the United States that's had a great and wonderful heritage, but in his view it's beginning to drift from its original standards and foundation. And he's very concerned that it will abandon its strength, its effectiveness, its blessing from God as it transitions. And as I sat and thought in response to all that I read and in response to his letter and even later in the day a phone call from him, my response was this, it is normal, sad to say, that at the passing of a great visionary leader, a great man of God, an unusual servant whom God has blessed in great ways, that when that person passes on to glory the organization that he has founded very usually will make dramatic changes. And sadly very often those changes involve compromise. And that occurs because in many cases there is no true child of that great man, there is no replica, there is no reproduction so that when new leadership comes in, the vision changes. And maybe some of the strength is lost that once made the work so great.

Paul I know had that concern. Paul by the grace of God was used to establish a great work, a marvelous work, of planting churches all over the Gentile world. And of all of the things that burdened his heart, perhaps none burdened his heart more than the fact that he knew he was going to leave that in the hands of others when he went on to be with his Lord, and he had great concern that there not be a drifting away from the strength that was established originally. And so he invested his life in men, men who could be his replica, men who could be to the next generation what he was to his generation. He desired to reproduce himself.

And one of those men, perhaps the most uniquely like Paul of all that he ever disciplined, is this man Timothy whom he calls "a true child in the faith." And he's not referring to the idea that Timothy is a child of God as much as he is that he's a child of Paul. In other words, he is really my son in that he bears my spiritual resemblance. He carries my convictions. He holds my attitudes toward ministry and truth as revealed by God. And like Elijah who passed his mantle on to Elisha, Paul desires to

pass the mantle of ministry to Timothy. Timothy had spent nearly 20 years with Paul. And Paul had made a maximum investment in him not only of teaching but of setting an example and setting a pace and building him to be a reproduction.

And now as Paul writes 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy and Titus, he's nearing the end of his life, he knows that. It won't be long until his life will be taken from him violently. He'll be executed for the proclamation of the gospel. Timothy is now around the age of 35 and Paul is going to leave to him the task of carrying on the work. And I believe that he left him as verse 3 says in Ephesus to give him a very important test, to see how he would handle a very difficult situation to enable Paul to know how ready he was to take over when Paul left. So Paul leaves Timothy in Ephesus to correct some things, to strengthen some things, to set some things right. And it is essential not only that the Ephesian church be set right but that Paul see the strength of Timothy in action in a very difficult ministry.

It isn't long after Paul has left Timothy in Ephesus but he writes back to him this epistle. And later on a second epistle to assist him in the work and to assist him in his own strengthening process.

Now as we saw in verse 2 he calls him "a true child in the faith," a true reproduction, a true replica, a living example, a model of a genuine follower of Paul who was a genuine follower of Christ. In fact, as you'll remember in 1 Corinthians he sent Timothy to bring the Corinthians into remembrance of his own ways. To the Philippians in chapter 2 he said "I have no man who is like minded except Timothy, he is most like me."

And so, Timothy is that true child who is to do this ministry. And in saying he is a true child of the faith, in a sense, I pointed out last time, that Paul sets Timothy in contrast to some of the untrue, ingenuine people that were really a part of the Ephesian congregation. Timothy then becomes the standard or the pattern or the model by which others can be measured because of his genuine character and commitment which is so reflective of Paul who was like Jesus Christ.

Now we've been noting that there were five things that marked Timothy as a genuine child in the faith...five things. The first one we saw was saving faith and we demonstrated out of this epistle that Timothy's faith was real. In chapter 6 verse 12 Paul reminds Timothy that he was called and had professed a good profession before many witnesses. In other words, Timothy was known as a believer, from his baptism on he was one who exercised saving faith. In verse 11 of chapter 6 Paul calls him a man of God...a man of God, and we'll look at that phrase a little later in connection with another point. So Timothy was genuinely saved. In fact, back in chapter 1 verse 1 and 2, Paul speaking to Timothy says, "God our Savior, Christ Jesus our hope," and then in verse 2, "God our Father, Christ Jesus our Lord." And the use of the plural pronoun pulls Timothy together with Paul as those who commonly know God and the Lord Jesus Christ. So Timothy possessed saving faith.

Now that was not true of everyone in the Ephesian assembly. There were unquestionably some whose faith was not legitimate. Chapter 1 verse 3 indicates that some were teaching false doctrine. Verse 4, they were following fables and endless genealogies. Verse 7 and following, that they wanted to teach the law but had no idea what the law was about. Chapter 4 verse 1, they had departed from the faith and were listening to the seducing teachings of demon spirits. Chapter 6 verse 20, some were following profane and vain babblings and the opposition of knowledge falsely so called. And verse 21 says they have erred concerning the saving faith. So in Ephesus there were some less than genuine and over against them, Timothy a true child in the faith.

The second of those marks we noted was continuing obedience. Genuineness is marked in Timothy by continuing obedience. He is one who follows through. He is one who obeys the Word of God. He has the character that is manifest in continuity. When a person is saved there should be a continual pattern demonstrating that. Chapter 4 verse 6, Paul says if you put the brethren in remembrance of these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine which you have always affirmed, or which you have always continued to observe. It is the pattern in Timothy that he lives true to his doctrine, he lives true to his faith. Now that is not the case of all the people in the Corinth...in the Ephesian assembly either. Some have departed from the faith, chapter 4 verse 1 says, as I read a moment ago. In chapter 5 verse 15, some are turned aside after Satan. So Timothy again is set up as a genuine child as over against those who were not genuine, as indicated by their failure to continue in obedience to the truth they once affirmed.

The third thing that marked Timothy, and this is where we closed last time, was humble service. A genuine child in the faith has an attitude of humility in which he serves. And Timothy certainly demonstrated that. We know from the overview of this point last time that there were in Ephesus some leaders and some elders who lacked humility and whose service was purely to lift themselves up. That's implied in chapter 3 verse 6, there were some, no doubt, who were lifted up to an elders position too soon and they were demonstrating pride and in danger of falling into the same condemnation the devil did when he exalted himself. Chapter 6 verse 4 again speaks of those in the congregation who were proud but knew nothing. They thought they knew everything, they actually knew nothing. They liked to argue. They were full of envy, strife and so forth and so on.

So there were some sinning elders who were not proven to be humble servants but self-exalting seekers of prominence and the respective people which they did not by any means deserve. In chapter 5 verse 17 to 25 Paul has to tell Timothy that such need to be rebuked and they need to be rebuked before the whole congregation for their sin. Chapter 6, some of them had gotten in to loving gold more than God, and so forth and so on.

But Timothy was a real servant, he had a humble heart. He desired to serve the Lord. The very fact that he stayed in Ephesus indicated his humble service because it was a very very difficult place. The fact that he had been called by God, gifted by God, affirmed by the church, the gift of prophecy, a

divinely authored utterance had indicated his call. His sort of ordination occurred when men of God laid hands on him. And he set out to serve humbly in the service of God. Again in chapter 6:11 he is called "a man of God," a marvelous and rich term that identifies Timothy. That term, by the way, is used in the Old Testament for several of the particularly unique prophets who spoke the Word of God. And so Timothy was one who spoke the Word of God in humble service, as over against those who acted in pride. In 2 Timothy 2:24 Paul even says to Timothy in his later letter, "The servant of the Lord must not argue but be gentle unto all men, skilled in teaching, patient," and then he mentions "in meekness instructing." So he needed to be a meek servant and we see indications that indeed he was.

Now this humble service, by the way, was not easy because Timothy was in a very very difficult place. In Ephesus there were those teaching false doctrine. It was very sophisticated false doctrine. It was somewhat philosophical and Timothy felt, at least to some extent, inadequate to handle it. There was persecution of the truth. There was no doubt persecution of Timothy because in 2 Timothy Paul says that if you're a good soldier you will learn to suffer hardship along with me. That's the way it is. And when Timothy is the recipient of 2 Timothy, the whole epistle is given to him to strengthen him for a very very difficult task. But Timothy demonstrates the heart of a true servant. And therein lies his genuineness.

When you're looking for someone to pass the mantle to, when you're looking for someone to be brought to maturity, to take care of carrying on your ministry, or extending your ministry, or representing you, what you want is someone with genuine saving faith, someone who continues in obedience and someone who demonstrates humble service. There's a fourth of the marks that mark Timothy and I think it's so important throughout this epistle and that is this, his genuineness was marked by sound doctrine. And let's pick it up there for just a brief few moments and see what the Word of God has to say.

His life was marked by sound doctrine. Now true believers are those who adhere to sound doctrine, who do not sway away from the truth. Jesus said, "You demonstrate that you belong to Me because you hear My words." And He said to the Pharisees, "You show that you don't belong to God because you don't hear My words." When the early church was born on the day of Pentecost, they continued in the Apostles doctrine. When Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders on an earlier occasion, many years before the writing of this letter, he said, "I commend you to the Word which is able to build you up." The Word of God and sound doctrine is essential. But obviously in Ephesus there were some who had departed from that. Again chapter 1 verse 4, they were listening to fables instead of the Word of God. They were following some long lines of ancestors. They were ministering simply questions rather than answers, debating, discussing, arguing. And as a result in verse 6, some had willingly turned aside from the truth. In verse 7 it says that there were some who presumed themselves to be teachers of the law and the truth was they didn't even understand what the law was all about.

Over in chapter 4, again we are reminded that there were some who were giving profane and old wives fables. In other words, fairy tales, useless, unable to edify.

Over in chapter 6 verse 3, there were some giving unwholesome words, words that don't build up, words that don't strengthen, words that aren't spiritually helpful. And they had violated true doctrine which is connected with godliness. And it says again in verse 4, disputing and arguing and debating. And verse 5, their disputings were corrupt because their minds were corrupt. And they were destitute of the truth, and so forth and so on. And then down at the end of the chapter again, he mentions the profane vain babblings, the science or knowledge falsely so called and the erring from the faith.

So in Ephesus there was a lot of unsound teaching that needed to be dealt with, godless legends not worth telling, confusing debates and arguments, myths and long lists of ancestors. And this appears to be some kind of...some kind of Jewish legend, some kind of Jewish concoction of legends and genealogies and fights about the law that really opposed true doctrine and godliness. We don't know what form this heresy took, we can't give it a name. There's no way we can recover that historically. But apparently it was a mixture of Judaism and some pagan Hellenistic thinking that came together to form some false theology that had crept in not only in Ephesus but perhaps in other places as well. These mindless heretics with their Christless legends were denying not only the words of Christ, verse 3 of chapter 6, they were denying the very words of Christ, but it seems to me from chapter 2 verses 5 and following they may have been denying the mediating work of Christ and in chapter 3 verse 16 they may have been even denying the deity of Christ. So there was a heresy that really attacked the very heart of Christian doctrine.

But on the other hand, as over against that, Timothy was a true teacher of sound doctrine. Look at chapter 4 and listen to what Paul says. Chapter 4 verse 11, "These things command and teach and let no one despise your youth, you teach what you know to be true." Back in verse 6 he says, "To be a good minister you must be nourished in the words of the faith and the good doctrine unto which you continue to be connected, or in which you continue to affirm." So Timothy was solid in terms of doctrine. And in verse 13 of that same fourth chapter he says, "Until I get there, give your attention to reading the text, exhorting the people and teaching doctrine." Keep on all of those indicate, they're all present tense. Keep reading and keep teaching and keep exhorting.

Timothy was faithful in that regard. In chapter 6 verse 2 he says, "These things teach and exhort," and again calls on Timothy to bring to bear on the situation sound teaching, sound doctrine. The mark of a genuine child of Paul would be one who taught sound doctrine...contrasted to the false teachers.

So, the true child of faith has saving faith, continued obedience, humble service and sound doctrine. I don't believe for a moment that Paul ever would have left Timothy there if he hadn't been a teacher of

sound doctrine. If anything is representative of Paul it is that.

I can be very personal at this point and tell you that when I think about my own life and ministry and what God has given us here, when I think about the church and the Master's College and the radio and the tape ministry, I often ask myself the question: who will follow after? It isn't that I doubt God, it's just that that's a very natural thing for my own heart to desire to know. Who will carry on the work? Who and where is a true child in the faith? Or maybe more than just one, who can take it from here and carry the same kind of commitment, one with saving faith and continued obedience and humble service and one who understands sound doctrine.

And there's one other, a fifth that is so vital...courageous conviction. I really believe that the Movers and the Shakers in the spiritual dimension are those who have great conviction. Everybody else is just sort of along for the ride, any dead fish can float down stream. It takes a live one to fight the current. And courageous conviction is an element of spiritual strength that is essential to any kind of effective ministry because you have to realize you're in a battle and a war. Spiritual growth leads to strength. Spiritual growth leads to strong conviction. And you show me someone without strong conviction and I don't care how long they've been a Christian, I'll show you someone who is not mature because maturity and strength go together. Jesus had the spirit of no compromise. In Matthew chapter 10, marvelous chapter where the Lord lays out the patterns of discipleship not only for His own but for us as well. He speaks very pointedly. "Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I deny before My Father who is in heaven, think not that I am come to send peace on earth, I am come not to send peace but a sword, I am come to set a man at variance against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, as a man's foes shall be, they of his own household. He that loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy to be My disciple," He goes on and He says, "And you have to take up your cross and follow Me, and if you're not willing to do that, you're not worthy of Me and you need not to find your life but to lose your life for My sake and truly find it."

In other words, it's all very sacrificial. And it demands an uncompromising spirit. And in 2 Timothy Paul reminds Timothy that he's going to have to have that uncompromising spirit if he's going to know real victory and real joy in his ministry, he has to recognize that persecution and reproach and rejection go along with it, but conviction must stand. Now many in Ephesus lacked the courage of conviction. They were compromisers.

In fact, in chapter 3 verse 13 when Paul talks about a deacon, he says that the people who have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. One thing you know about one who is strong in Christ and that is that he has a boldness. I don't mean by that he's unkind, or ungracious or lacking in sensitivity or cruel. I mean that when it comes to the negotiable...the non-negotiables of Scripture he is unbending. Some apparently in that congregation had reached the office of deacon and were not bold. And Paul wants

to correct that.

Back in chapter 3 verse 2 when he begins to outline the characteristics of an elder or a pastor, or an overseer, he speaks of the uncompromised life. He must be blameless, a one woman man, that is he is completely committed to the woman who is his wife. Temperate, sober minded, good in behavior, given over to hospitality, that is the love of strangers, skilled in teaching, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy of money, but patient, not a brawler or a fighter, not covetous, he has to show that he rules his house well. I mean, this is an uncompromised life. This is a life of great integrity that reaches this level of spiritual leadership. And verse 10 says, "These must be proved." They must be verified, they must be tested to see that they hold and live the truth. Then let them be an elder, then let them be a deacon. Obviously there were some elders and deacons who were compromisers. And that's the issue to which he speaks.

Let me give you another illustration of it in chapter 5 verse 6. There were some...some widows living in pleasure who were dead while they lived. Some people lived for pleasure and were spiritually dead. They were in the congregation. But their whole life was all about pleasure. And while it was apparent that they wanted to make people think they were alive, the truth was the fact that they lived in pleasure indicated they were really spiritually dead. That is the life without conviction. That is the life of compromise that says I do whatever feels good, not whatever is right.

This is further indicated in chapter 5 verse 11. Notice this, the younger widows don't put on the list of serving in the church, on the support list of the church, for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they'll marry. In other words, what will happen is a woman will lose her husband. And she'll make a vow to serve the Lord. So she'll come into the church, she'll make this commitment, this vow to serve Christ with all of her heart. And then soon she'll be sorry she made the vow, she'll get angry with the Lord, she'll desire to be married, she'll want a husband. And passion rises up within her and causes her to violate her vows and she becomes guilty of breaking a promise to God and really casting off her first commitment.

Verse 12, they'll cast off or repudiate their pledge and then they will learn to be idle, wandering around from house to house and not only idle but tale bearers and busy bodies, speaking things they shouldn't speak. In other words, they'll drift from their original commitment. This will happen to some. So verse 14 says, "I want them to marry and have children and rule a house," in other words, young widows are to remarry.

Now this is a very interesting thing. The implication here is that casting off their first faith means they will wind up marrying an unbeliever. They'll vow to be a servant to Christ, they'll float away, drift away, passion rises up, they cast off their first faith, they become dominated by lust and they will wind up perhaps being a gossip or a tale bearer and worse yet, marrying an unbeliever, is implied, and we'll see that as we study the passage later on. Verse 15 says some have already turned aside after

Satan in immodesty, lack of submission, in lust, false doctrine, seeking pleasure, deceived by demons. All these forms of compromise. Chapter 6 verse 10, others had compromised with money and pierced themselves through with many sorrows and so forth. You get the idea.

So in the Ephesian congregation and in any congregation there are those who are without the courage of conviction. And they are compromised by their lust and desires, they want pleasure, they want money, they want fulfillment. They make promises they never keep. They don't hold the line and that kind of thing is undesirable and unacceptable and so Timothy is set in that congregation to be a pattern by which such people can be exposed by comparison. Timothy was a fighter...he was a fighter. And Paul tells him in chapter 1 verse 3, you charge those that they teach no other doctrine. And over in verse 18 he says, the charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which pointed to thee that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. Timothy was to be that uncompromising strong man of God.

Over in chapter 4 verse 3 he says...verse...chapter 4 verse 13 rather, he says, "Keep reading, keep teaching, keep exhorting, don't neglect the gift, meditate on these things," verse 15, "give yourself wholly unto them." And verse 16, "Take heed to yourself and the doctrine, continue in them." In other words, what you teach and what you are, be an example of the believers, all of that. In chapter 6 verse 20, "Keep what's committed to your trust, Timothy." And he calls for Timothy to maintain the spirit of a defender of the faith.

By the way, tradition says Timothy was killed in Ephesus, later on, 97 A.D., for opposing the vile perversions of idolatry in the cult of Diana. He was a man of courage who had great boldness in the faith which is in Jesus Christ.

This is the man to whom Paul writes this great epistle. And may I say to you, this is the man and the woman that God wants us to be? Marked by saving faith, continuing obedience, humble service, sound teaching, courageous conviction...may we be so blessed to be those kind of children. Those are the kind of children I wish to have in the faith. I pray those are the kind of children you wish to have as well. I pray those are the kind of children you are. Let's bow in prayer.

Lord, in our brief meditation in the Word this morning, our hearts again are reminded that Jesus Christ died for us but He died not only to save us from hell and save us from sin, but to make us the people He wanted us to be, people of great character, true children in the faith. Lord, we ask that it might be that we are so much like Christ that it is made manifest to everyone around us that we are His children, that we belong to Him, that we bear His mark. We thank You, O Father, that Christ died to make this possible. We bless Your name and we ask that as we come to Your table this day we might come with thankful hearts for what You have done and we might come confessing what we have failed to do, failed to be in coming short of being Timothys, genuine in every aspect. If there are here, Lord, those whose faith is not true faith, those whose obedience is not continuing, those whose

service is not humble, those whose doctrine is not sound and those whose conviction has no courage, Lord God, speak to us as we look to the Savior who died to make us true children who really do represent Him by showing His character.

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