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

The Elements of a Strong Spiritual Life, Part 1
Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1-2
Code: 55-5

It's our time now to turn to God's Word and I invite you to go back to 2 Timothy where we left off seven weeks ago. And I hope your mind is still retaining some of the things you learned so that we'll not need to take an undue amount of time to review. You remember that this wonderful second epistle to Timothy is written to Paul's son in the faith who at the time was giving leadership to the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus which was actually founded and pastored by the Apostle Paul had fallen into error doctrinally and sin in terms of behavior. There were leaders in the church who had no business being in leadership. They were teaching error and they were living ungodly lives.

So Paul, after being released from his first imprisonment, places Timothy in Ephesus and says to him, "Set things in order in the church." He wrote in 1 Timothy to tell him what to do and he writes back to him a little later this second epistle to strengthen Timothy because in the doing of the duty there Timothy had run into some tremendous opposition and was weakening. He was going through a time in his life when he was not functioning on all cylinders. He had fallen into weakness. And so the heart of this whole epistle comes to us in the second chapter with the words in verse 1, "Be strong." That's really what Paul wants to say to Timothy in this chapter. In fact, it's really the whole idea of this second letter. Paul now is writing the last letter he will ever write. He will give his life in the cause of Christ momentarily. He wants to pass the baton to Timothy and he doesn't want Timothy to take it in weakness. He wants him to be strong because he knows the church is in the midst of persecution from the Roman government. He knows that Timothy is being hit with those who don't want the change that Timothy wants to bring. He realizes Timothy is facing sophisticated philosophical opposition which is hard to handle. He knows he's young. He knows he is by nature a rather timid young man. And he wants him to be strong.

And so, as we come to chapter 2 then we come to a chapter that is intended to strengthen Christian leaders. It is written to a choice leader to help him be strong in the ministry God has given to him. These then are the elements of a strong spiritual life. We're going to begin by taking the first paragraph, verses 1 through 7, we'll look at it this morning and then next Lord's day as well. We want to be cautious and careful not to take too much because there's much here to be learned. And I confess to you that for many many years, this particular Scripture has been an important one in my own study. In fact, yesterday I was listening to a tape I preached over ten years ago when we were still in the Family Center on this very chapter. And it was interesting to compare my thinking now with my thinking then and see how little has really changed. But from the time I first taught this, well over

ten years ago, this chapter has been dear to my heart. So I say that to let you know that there's much in here that is in me and I don't know how fast it's going to be able to come out. But for this morning any way we'll get a start.

Let me read you these seven verses. "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also, suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, no soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of every day life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. And also, if anyone competes as an athlete he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."

I remember reading a shocking news account of two children who were found, discovered really in a make shift bedroom in an attic. They were chained to their beds. They had been chained to their beds since birth. And when they were found they were teenagers. The report went on to say they were immature, they were underdeveloped. They were malnourished. They were socially disoriented. They were confused. They were unloved. They were almost animalistic in their behavior. And all the worse things that you could imagine about behavior in that confinement had happened. Immature, underdeveloped, malnourished, socially disoriented, confused...and I read that and thought of the church and thought how the church is weak, malnourished, disoriented, confused, immature, underdeveloped in so many...so many cases.

And frankly, my summer ministry these past months has reminded me of the tragic weakness of the church. I've gone from place to place across this country from the east coast to the west and had people say to me repeatedly, "We don't have a church in our city that we can attend that we feel is powerful in the Word of God." Not any? Someone said to me yesterday, "Do you know of a good church in a certain area?" And I thought about it and said, "No, none that stands out in my mind." There are many popular preachers but I don't know how many powerful ones. There are many popular churches but I don't know how many powerful ones. I see the church as somewhat frail, even though it's popular, easily blown over by the smallest personal difficulty it runs for psychological bandaids because it doesn't understand its spiritual resources and how to apply them, easily lured by the world into sin and excuses for the love of it, unable to recognize sound doctrine and unwilling to defend the truth it cannot understand. It is unable to stand strong against Satan's attacks and therefore is prey to false teachers and false teachings, doctrines of demons.

And I recognize that behind all of this is weak leadership. Hosea said it, "Like people, like priests." And what I see in the church is a popular church but not a powerful church. I see a church that has a name but not the power or the strength that it ought to have. And I think it's a result of weak leadership in many cases, perhaps in most cases. Much activity but not much power. A lot of talk

about Christianity but not a lot of conviction, some preaching against things but very little confrontation, a strong doctrinal creed but a lot of compromise. And so I say to myself, this is a chapter for us today, this is a chapter for me as a leader in God's church, this is a chapter for all who would stand in any role of leadership because all of us need to be strong. If you reach down to the deepest point of my heart and wanted to get the strongest desire that I have in my very being out, this is what you'd find...my greatest desire is that I might know the strength of God and the power of God in my ministry. I don't necessarily want to be erudite or popular but I would like to be powerful. I would like to see the strength of God in my life, not for my sake but that He might move in a powerful way by His Word and His Spirit. And I really believe that the spoils belong to the strong, the victory is for those who are the strong, not the weak.

Paul knew that. And I think we know that in our hearts. And there's little doubt, as I said, that Timothy at this juncture of his life was in a time of weakness. He was in a time of vacillation in his life. He was in a time, maybe he was questioning his calling. He needed to stir up the gift of God that was in him. He needed to consider again the available resources...power, love and discipline...that God's Spirit made available to him. He needed to accept the fact that suffering goes with the territory. He needed to remember the power of his God. He needed to realize that he had a duty to perform and trust His Savior in the performance of that duty to bring about His will and glory. He needed to affirm his doctrine, not question it, and he needed to identity with those who were faithful, not with those who were unfaithful. And all of that he said to him in chapter 1, if you remember.

But summing it up he says in chapter 2 verse 1, "Be strong, you can't afford to be ashamed, you can't afford to let your gift fall in to disuse, you cannot afford to allow yourself not to use the resources available, you must be faithful to the Word of God, you must identify with the good and the godly and the noble people if you're going to be an effective leader in the church." In other words, you must be strong...be strong.

Now you can't just leave it at that. You don't just say to people "be strong" or they go away somewhat frustrated because they say to themselves, "I want to be strong or how do I do that?" And I suppose like me many of you have grown up hearing those kinds of exhortations. I would hate to try to count all the times I went to camp as a kid and heard some speaker tell me I needed to be dedicated, consecrated, devoted to Christ, strong in my faith...and I would walk out of there saying I want to be that. Some times I had tears in my eyes, sometimes I threw a stick in a fire, sometimes I made some public display of dedication, walked away and had no idea how to implement that. Didn't know where to go. Didn't know what to do. I want to be strong, Lord. And I was like the man who jumped on his horse and rode off madly in all directions. I had really no idea where I was going or how to get there. I didn't know how to apply what I heard. It's not enough to just say "be strong," you have to tell me how. And so Paul says, "Timothy, be strong and here's how, you have to see yourself as a teacher, a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer." And those are the four pictures that he gives us from verse 2 through 6. That helps me to crystallize in my mind what it is that I am to be. It gives me

a goal to move toward that is crystal clear.

Now notice that verse, verse 1, it starts with two words, "You therefore," now the therefore is there to take us back. In chapter 1 he has called for Timothy not to be ashamed. Three times in that chapter he talks about not being ashamed. He's calling for Timothy to be bold and courageous. He's calling for Timothy to identify with the house of Onesiphorus, people who were faithful, who were not ashamed. He's saying, "You therefore be strong because of all that I've said and all that God demands and all that God expects be strong, Timothy. Fulfill it all." Now that is a word of authority. You therefore be strong...that's an imperative, that's a word of authority. And Paul speaks to Timothy with authority. But he wonderfully balances it with the little phrase "my son," and that is love, that's the intimacy of love. On the one hand is authority, on the other hand is love and Paul is balancing the two. "You therefore, my son, be strong."

And there's a tenderness in the heart of Paul because there's a tenderness in the heart of God. And when the Lord God Himself would exhort us to be strong authoritatively, He would also in love cause us to remember our intimacy with Him. And so Paul says to his beloved son in the faith, that son who was the result of Paul's preaching to his mother and grandmother, that son into whom Paul had poured his life for a number of years, he says to him, "Because you possess a genuine faith," as he said in chapter 1, "because you are specially gifted by God, because you've been ordained by the leaders of the church, because you have the spiritual resources of power and love and discipline available to you, because you are called to preach, because you know true doctrine, you must be strong." In other words, it depends on you, Timothy, it depends on you.

It's an amazing thing...it's an amazing paradox that God should be sovereign and yet that He should depend on men to preserve, guard and pass on His Word, His truth, but He has. So Paul says, "Timothy, you must be strong because it depends on you."

Now look at that little phrase "be strong" and let me share with you what it means in the Greek language, original text. It's a passive, present passive, it would be translated "keep on being empowered, keep on being empowered." It's not being strong in your own strength, it's like Ephesians 6:10, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. It's not in your own strength that you're strong, it's in the strength of the Lord. So it's a passive, keep on being empowered. In other words, allow God's power to flow through you. Put yourself in the position to be empowered. It's just like Jude 20 where Jude writes and says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." What he means by that is stay in the sphere where you can receive the blessings of the love of God. And that's the sphere of obedience. When you and I apply the means of grace in our life, the study of the Word, prayer, sometimes fasting, meditation, when we apply the means of grace in our life, we put ourselves in the sphere of obedience, we receive the love of God and we know the power of God. So he's saying get in the position to be empowered, put the sin out of your life, draw close to God, draw near to Him He'll draw near to you, draw near to Him He'll empower you, is another way to say it.

Abide in Christ and let the power that's there in that abiding flow through your life.

So, the exhortation then is to continually draw on the available spiritual power provided by God to an obedient Christian. Notice what he says, "Be strong," a better translation here, "by means of the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Since you have been united to Christ you are in the sphere of grace. And that grace empowers you. Now let me give you a little perspective here. You were saved by grace, right? Ephesians 2:8 and 9, "For by grace are you saved through faith." You've been saved by grace. Grace is undeserved. Grace is God's favor given to you, God's salvation given to you apart from any merit, any earning, any deserving. You were saved by grace. But when you were saved by grace, grace didn't stop. If grace stopped you'd be damned now because what would your sin do but damn you. So you live as I do, as a believer, in a sphere of grace. God's grace is always being applied to my sin. He keeps on cleansing us, 1 John 1:9. Why? Because we live in a sphere of grace. When you were saved by grace, you entered the environment of grace where grace continues to operate.

Now grace operates in two ways. One, the grace of forgiveness...two, the grace of power. It is God's undeserved, unmerited grace that grants you the power to serve Him, just as it's God's grace that grants you forgiveness. Paul says in Romans 5:2, "This grace in which we stand," histemimeans we are fixed in it, we exist in an atmosphere of grace and it is God's unmerited, undeserved assistance and help because we're united with Christ that enables us to serve. So God's grace is there for forgiveness and God's grace is there for power. It is God's grace applied to my sin, it is God's grace applied to my service. So I live in a sphere of grace. I don't deserve to be forgiven and I don't deserve to be used by God, right? So it is grace that forgives me and it is grace that uses me. In my own strength I can offer God nothing. In my own strength I can do nothing, not by might nor by power but by Thy Spirit, says the Lord. So it is grace that forgives me and it is grace that empowers me. I need grace for constant forgiveness. I need grace for constant power. And when I confess my sin to the Lord, that grace of forgiveness cleanses me and makes me useful. And the grace of power then enables me to serve Him and that's what he's talking about here, the grace that is available to us for service.

So, he says, "Timothy, you must be strong, or you must allow yourself to be continually being empowered through the grace that is available to you in your union with Christ. And that comes to you as you're an obedient believer. You need to be strong."

Well, help me, Paul. Help me to see more clearly what that involves. All right, I'm going to give you four pictures and if you can realize that you have to live out these roles, then you're going to be in the place to be strong. This is so helpful to me. It's much like the teaching of our Lord when He used parables. Paul gives us vivid imagery that we can easily see and I say to myself that's what I am, that's what I'm to be, and when I begin to behave like that then I'm in the sphere where God's grace flows through me to powerful service.

Well, let's look at the first one. He says, first of all, "Timothy, if you're going to be strong you have to see yourself as the teacher...the teacher." Verse 2, "And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Although it comes at the end of the verse, the most important term here is to teach. It really describes the point of the whole verse, it's all about the teacher. The picture is a picture of teachers in process. Paul's saying I taught you, you teach faithful men, and able men who will teach others also. Four generations...Paul to Timothy, to faithful men, to others also.

See yourself as the teacher. The teacher is a living link in a chain that goes all the way back to Jesus Christ. By the way, that's the only true apostolic succession. Jesus taught and He taught His Twelve, and His Twelve taught the next generation and they taught the next and they taught the next and they taught the next and the living chain has gone on and on until somebody taught me and I'm teaching somebody else, and somebody taught you and you're to teach somebody else. We're in a living chain that takes us link by link all the way back to Jesus Christ. That's why Luke writes at the beginning of the book of Acts, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus," referring to the gospel of Luke, "about all that Jesus began." He finished the work on the cross, He only began the work of teaching and preaching. And the chain has gone on and on and on and on.

In my bedroom I have hanging the picture of my great grandfather in his ecclesiastical garb that he wore when he preached the Word of God in Scotland. And then there's my grandfather who preached the Word. And then there's my father who preached it to me and taught me. And I see that chain and I trace that chain back all the way to Jesus Christ, though I don't know every link in the chain from my own spiritual heritage, I know it goes all the way back to Christ and it's unbroken because I have the truth.

So he's saying to Timothy, "Timothy, you are in a process," it's like a relay race, somebody gave you the baton and you've got to give the baton to somebody else. In the past I've told you the story of my college days when I was running in the Orange County Invitational Relay and we were running the mile relay and I ran one leg and I ran basically second man, first man gets the lead, second man man loses it, you have two to make it up, that's the philosophy. But I ran second man, I was basically a baseball player but they had thrown me on a relay because I could run pretty well. So I had run a couple of other events, I had run the sprints that day and I think I was involved in a high jump event. But there were many colleges and universities involved, 35 or so and we got into the finals of the mile relay. We were excited. We thought we had a shot at it. Our first man ran a great leg...it was held out at Chapman College...our first man ran a great leg, came in, we made a perfect baton pass. I ran the best leg I had ever run in my life, came in a dead heat for first place to make the pass to the third man. And we knew he was good and the fourth man was a blur and we really thought we were where we wanted to be. I put that baby in the hand of the third guy, he went around the curve, came down the back stretch, stopped, walked off and sat on the grass. The race kept going.

I was horrified and so were the other guys on the team. We thought he had pulled a hamstring or something. I ran across the grass, I'll never forget it, I said, "What happened? What happened?" He said, "I don't know, I just didn't feel like running." I confess to you, my thoughts were all carnal. I mean, "You can't do that. You're not in this by yourself. You can't do that. Do you realize the effort that has already been put out and the training? You can't do that. Too much has been invested in you. You understand that."

Paul is saying to Timothy, "You can't do that either, don't tell me you're bailing out, don't tell me you're slowing down, don't tell me you're walking away from this thing. Don't tell me you're going to give up your ministry. You can't do that. You don't have that right. You're not in this alone. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses you must commit to faithful men who then must teach others also. You've got to keep this thing going, it's not going to stop with me. I don't want to be the broken link."

It's got to keep going. I don't want to walk off the track. You have to pass on what you've been taught. What is the phrase "the things which you have heard from me" mean? Just the doctrine that Paul had taught Timothy. I don't think there's any compelling reason to limit it to some special doctrinal charge at his ordination, as some would want to do. I don't think it's any kind of special event, I think he's saying everything that I entrusted to you as the revelation of God, you must entrust to others.

Now this is a very interesting thing. The verb he uses here is the verb paratithemiwhich means to deposit for safe keeping. And the noun form of it has already been used in chapter 1 where he talks about the treasure in verse 14 which was entrusted to you. It's the same word usage there...the deposit which was deposited with you. Back in verse 12, "Guard what I have deposited with you. Just like the Lord will guard what you have deposited with Him." Paul says the Lord's going to guard what I deposit with Him, that's my life verse 12, you guard what He's deposited with you, that's His Word. Chapter 6 verse 20 of 1 Timothy said the same thing, guard what has been deposited to you, the treasure, the truth, the sound words, hold on to those sound words he says in verse 13 of chapter 1, guard that truth. And we went into that in great detail both at the end of chapter 6 of 1 Timothy and in our study of chapter 1 of 2 Timothy.

So I don't think there's any reason to say that this refers to some ordination of Timothy. I just think the things you heard from me is a general way to say the deposit of truth of the revelation of God which I gave you. And then he adds, "in the presence of many witnesses." I wouldn't do any unjustice to the word diahere if I were to translate it "not in the presence of many witnesses," as if it were some ordination event where he was giving him a charge and a lot of people were listening. But if it were translated "supported by the confirming testimony of many." In other words, Paul's saying, "I gave you the revelation of God and you know it wasn't just my teaching because there were many others

who confirmed it as the Word of God," that's the idea. I gave you truth, confirmed in the mouth of many witnesses to be the Word of God. Paul, as you know, was accompanied by many teachers. In Acts 20 verses 4 it refers to the many teachers who were with Paul. And when God spoke to Paul and Paul spoke God's Word, they affirmed that indeed it was the Word of God. And when he was a pastor in Antioch, he was one of five and there was confirmation of the Word of God. So Paul is saying the things that you have heard from me, not just my ideas but the Word of God confirmed by many witnesses...that's the idea.

Peter himself in 2 Peter 3:14 to 16 says that Paul wrote the Scriptures. Paul gave the Scripture. He calls the teaching of Paul the Scripture, even though some of it was hard to be understood. So Peter was a witness to the validity of the divine authority of the Pauline teaching.

So, Paul is saying, "Look, the revelation of God, the deposit of truth confirmed to be the Word of God in the mouth of many witnesses as the Scripture would require, the mouth of two or three witnesses, I passed it to you, it can't stop there." Do you see again the whole theme running through these epistles is that the primary responsibility of spiritual leadership is to guard the truth, is to protect the truth? But now we're going to come to a second dimension, not only to guard it and to protect it but almost paradoxically to give it away. It's two fold. I am to guard its purity, I am to maintain its integrity, I am to be sure that its never deviated from or adulterated and I am to guard it with tenacity and at the same time I am to pass it on in its guarded form to a next generation. And so he says, back to verse 2 again, "These..." what does he mean by these? Well, King James says "the same," that is the teaching you got, the Apostles' doctrine, "entrust it to faithful men." Pass it on. Deposit it for safe keeping. There's that word, deposit it for safe keeping. It's the verb form of that noun in chapter 1 verses 12 and 14. God deposits His Word with us to be guarded, kept pure and we deposit it with someone else in tact with no impurity. Boy, what a sacred trust.

And I'll say it again, I've said it through this series all the way, the primary role of the man of God is to keep the Word pure and pass it to the next generation in its purity. That's the task. All the rest of the stuff is peripheral, to be sure. This is the heart of...this is the heart of the reason for a seminary. We're not having a seminary here, the Master's Seminary, because it's whimsical, it's a lark, it's a nice idea. It's because we feel God has mandated us to pass the truth to the next generation. And we have to raise up godly leaders. If the church is weak it's because its leaders are weak. If it's going to be strong, it has to have strong leaders. Where are we going to get strong leaders? We have to build them. We can't leave the job to somebody else, I can't leave it to somebody else, I have to do everything I can do. And why do we have the Master's College? For the same reason. We want to take choice young people and produce a generation of folks who will hold the truth of God entrust in purity. That's the vision. That's the purpose. They exist to guard the truth.

When God identified Israel as His chosen people, He said their primary role was to hold the oracles of God. Chiefly their unique identity, Romans 3 says, was that they receive the oracles of God. It is

essential then that Timothy hold to true doctrine and that he pass it on to the next generation. And do you realize that the historical setting here demands that Timothy hurry up with the task because Paul wants him to come to Rome? Over in chapter 4 verse...I think it's verse 9..."Make every effort to come to me soon," and what he would like is for Timothy to come. Verse 21 he repeats it, "Make every effort to come before winter." So if Timothy is going to come, he's going to have to get moving and leaving the truth with some other folks.

You know, this is the heart of my own compulsion, to raise up a new generation of people who will guard the truth. The reason I write books on the Bible or commentaries on the Bible, is in order to pass the truth on to another generation. We have tapes and we teach and we preach and we do radio and whatever else and have a college and a seminary and all of these things are to pass the truth to the next generation. That's a...that's a mandate, that's not an option.

Paul then tells us the kind of people that we ought to pass it to, okay? Look back at verse 2. What kind of people do we pass it to? He says, "Give the deposit for safe keeping to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Now you have to be selective, do you get the selectivity in this? He doesn't say give it to anybody and everybody. There's a sense in which a preacher preaches to everyone. But he's going beyond that. To Timothy here he's not just saying preach the Word, he'll say that in chapter 4, preach the Word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and so forth. He'll get to that. Right here he's not talking about the preaching ministry. He's talking about making teachers, being a teacher maker, a preacher maker. That's what he's talking about.

And that's really the two-fold ministry. I look at my own life and for nearly 20 years I've answered the question: what is the priority of your ministry? I've always said the same two things. One, to preach the Word of God to the people. Two, to build godly leaders. That's what I've spent my last twenty years doing and I'll keep doing it till I die. There's a public ministry and then there's a sort of an intimate private ministry. And, you know, you can't minister to everybody. I can't minister to everybody. I have to be selective. I wish I could be all things to all men in every circumstance, but that's not possible. So if I have to invest my life in someone, whom am I going to invest in? If I have to pour my life and other godly men pour their life into someone, who is going to be? What kind of men? What am I looking for?

Well verse 2 tells me. First of all, to faithful men. Now that speaks of their proven spiritual character...their proven spiritual character. That same word is translated in verse 11 trustworthy...same word, trustworthy men, men who can be trusted with the things of God, men who are reliable, men who are loyal to the Word of God. This speaks of their spiritual character.

Listen, if I want to spend my life with someone, I don't want to spend my life investing in an unfaithful man. I really don't want to have a lot of Phygellus, Hermogenes and Demases in my agenda. I don't

want to disciple people who forsake me having loved this present world. I don't want to disciple people like the Apostle Paul's heart breaks over verse 1:15 where he says "All in Asia turned away from from me, including Phygellus and Hermogenes." You want to have as few of those as possible because your life is so short and you want to invest in faithful men. That means the men who are loyal to the truth of God. You want to give them a trust and then they hold it.

I just heard this week of a man that I invested a portion of my life in who decided to default morally in his ministry, abandon his church and divorce his wife...unfaithful man, untrustworthy man, disloyal man who turned away from all of those who invested in his life, who walked off the track, sat on the grass, threw down the baton and said the chain breaks here. Fortunately the Lord has a myriad of chains running to the conclusion. You may break one but there's another to step in its place. But an unfaithful man...sad, tragic thing. When you set about to pour your life into someone, you want to see loyalty there. Not blind loyalty to you as a person, but loyalty to the Word of God. I love a person whose whole agenda is to stay true to the Word of God. That's the kind of man you want to spend your life discipling.

You know, but in a church, I'm telling you, many men in the church spend the vast majority of their time with problem-plagued marginal people who are not faithful. They spend a tremendous amount of their time trying to coddle people...I say this lovingly...who will never make a difference. Now I'm not saying discard those people, I'm saying let those people with the ministry of helps and exhortation and with loving kindness come alongside of them. But let me spend my life reproducing people who will guard the truth and articulate the truth. That's how it has to be. I don't want to be insensitive to others. But I want to understand the priorities.

Secondly, he says not only are you to invest yourself in faithful men but in those who are able to teach, or competent to teach, those who will in the future be competent to teach. It's a future form here. So you're investing...this is so clear...you're investing now in people who in the future will teach. So I have to be a teacher maker. Timothy has to be a teacher maker. That's the role of one who leads in the church. Now that speaks not of spiritual character but of spiritual giftedness. You're to invest in people who have the character and the giftedness to reproduce. So I want to pour my life into people who do what I do. The only thing I can teach people how to do is what I do. The only gift that I can tell people how to use is the gift that I have. I'm not very good at telling people about other gifts.

I remember when I counseled a fellow when I first came to the church here. After two sessions he came to me and said, "I don't know if it helps you or not, but I'd like to announce to you that you to not have the gift of counseling." And I said, "Well, I appreciate knowing that. I hoped it wouldn't come in this particular form after me counseling you twice, but I'm glad to know you feel that way. Maybe that will help me focus myself." I can't help you much if you want me to tell you about things that I don't do, I can tell you what the Bible says. But you may get more practical insight from someone who has

that gift and ministry. And so with me, the thing which God has gifted me to do is the thing I can best teach someone else who has that gift and help them refine that gift.

So Paul says, "Look, Timothy, as a spiritual leader, if you're going to be strong, you have to see yourself as a teacher and that means that you must find those who are loyal to the truth and able to teach it and pour your life into those people." Pretty clear. All of that distills down to being a teacher maker. And then they will teach others also. They'll pass it on. That will keep the chain moving. They'll reproduce themselves.

So, it's a two-fold thing. Here he's telling him make teachers, in chapter 4 he'll say preach the Word to everybody. So that's where I see the ministry. The one who stands in the pulpit preaches publicly the Word of God and behind the scenes pours the hours and days and energies of his life into the reproducing of others to do the same. That's the calling. And that's my vision. That's my heart. That's what I see God calling me to do...to permeate as much of the sphere of influence as I have of the Word of God and then to raise up godly teachers.

You say, "Well, how does that relate to me?" Well I think in a sense you have to remember that whatever the leader is, whatever the pastor is, whatever Timothy was to be he was to be in order to set the example for everybody else. In other words, if we're to be teaching God's Word and passing it along, it is so that you can see that that's what you're to be also. Maybe at a different point in life, at a different level in the church, a different function, but we're all involved in that. We're all to be involved in passing God's Word. We're all to be able to articulate the faith to an unbeliever, to nourish a new Christian, to strengthen a fellow believer in some area where he doesn't understand God's Word. We're all to be teachers of God's Word. We're all to be able to give to every man who asks us an answer for the reason of the hope that is in us. We're all to study to be approved of God, passing on His truth. But particularly, how can we expect the people to pass the truth from generation to generation if the leaders don't hold the truth and reproduce the teachers to set the standard for the people? My vision is to build strong godly teachers and preachers who are loyal to the truth and who are skilled at passing it on. What a tremendous challenge and an exciting one.

Summing up. Everyone of us are called to work hard in the area of passing truth to the next generation, particularly those who are elders. In 1 Timothy 5 he says the elders who work hard at teaching and preaching are worthy of double honor. The Lord wants to honor those who are faithful to hold the truth and pass the truth along. You need to do that wherever you are. You say, "Well, I don't know much." Well find somebody who knows less than you do and teach them what you know. Find somebody who knows more than you do and learn what they know. Get in the process. Get in the process, be a teacher. I'll tell you right now, what you teach you retain, what you don't teach you forget. I can read a book, close it up, I'll forget it very soon. I read a book, pull out of it truth, teach that truth, I'll never forget it. What I give away I keep, what I don't give away I lose. So learn to teach. Husband, teach your wife. Wife, teach your husband. You learning spiritual truth, he comes home,

unload it. Now unload some that doesn't apply to him...just so there's a little balance. You might even unload some that applies to you. Teach your children. Children, you're learning God's Word, share with your parents, teach your friends, your classmates, people at work, a fellow believer. Share God's truth in a Bible study, a prayer time. Write a letter to somebody and explode on the pages of that letter what you've learned out of a portion of God's Word. Be a teacher. It doesn't have to be too sophisticated. Get a group of little kids or young people or adults, be a Sunday School teacher, teach God's Word. Get a group of new Christians, teach them. Let's pass the truth to the next generation. It's the only hope we have, folks. I mean, we live in a world that's just literally coming apart in every dimension and the only thing that's gong to stand true and solid and give any kind of a plumb line to future generations is God's truth. And in order to pass it on we have to be committed to knowing it and then to passing it.

So, we could say that the elements of being a strong Christian involve seeing ourselves as a teacher. And let me just wrap it up as a summary, all right? Let me tell you what we've said in a little final summary form. If you're going to be a strong believer you have to see yourself as a teacher. And that means, one, you have to be a diligent student of the scriptural message. You've got to be willing to study it. He gets into that later on in the chapter in verse 15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of truth." You need to be a diligent student handling accurately the Word of truth. That's essential if you're going to be an effective leader, if you're going to be an effective Christian.

Secondly, you need to be able to clearly articulate it. You need to speak the things that confirm sound doctrine. You need to speak clearly. You need to understand. You need to be able, as I mentioned Peter's words, to give the people who ask you a reason for the hope that's in you. So you want to read and study the Word and you want to clearly articulate the Word.

Then it's necessary that you be loyal and faithful to that biblical message. That means not only in the articulating but in the living of it. If you want to be being continually empowered, if you want to know the power of God in your life, then you've got to live in accord with that Word. Study it, articulate it, and be loyal and faithful to it. Fight for it. But more than that, live it. And if it becomes a part of the warp and woof of your life, you'll fight for it.

And then lastly, you must be continually involved in the training of someone else, the equipping of someone else who can pass it on to someone else. You see, beloved, we're in a relay race. You're in it and you have the baton in your hand, somebody gave it to you, somebody gave you the truth and you've got it. You've got to give it to somebody else. You have to do that. You can't just walk off the track and sit on the grass. That's just not right, too much is at stake...you have to be a teacher. That's where it starts, Paul says. But there's much more and we'll look at that next Lord's day. Let's pray together.

Ask yourself the question in your own heart in just this brief moment, am I committed to guarding to the truth? Am I loyal to the truth? Am I a trustworthy vessel to hold the truth? Am I living that truth? Am I teaching that truth? Or am I just listening to it and remaining somewhat indifferent? I hope not. The Lord wants strong believers. And one of the elements of a strong spiritual life is to see oneself as a teacher with whom the truth of God is deposited to which we are to be intensely and permanently loyal and faithful to pass on. Are you doing that? Are you loyal to the truth? Do you live it? Love it? Defend it? Stand by it no matter what it cost? And are you passing it on?

Father, help us, help me to be faithful to this. Lord God, give us spiritual strength and power. We want to be being continually empowered by means of the grace that is ours in Christ Jesus. But in order to be so we have to commit ourselves to be teachers, into whom the Word is continually flowing and out from whom it continually flows to others. Help us to be faithful. Show us those who are able in whom we can invest our lives. I pray for our seminary, Lord, that You'd bring the faithful and the able, give us godly men who are competent to teach. Pray for our college that You'll give us faithful men and women there who can be strong, powerful, guardians and proclaimers of Your Word. And, Lord, wherever it is that we fit into Your plan and in Your body, may we see ourselves as teachers for whatever we know about You we must pass to someone else. Help us to do that faithfully for the sake of our Savior and His glory and Yours we pray. Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).