

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/7/92
II Timothy 2:1-2 "Pass It On"

Scripture: II Timothy 2:1-7

Intro: I look forward to an event that occurs every 4 years. It started even as a child. It's an event that grips the world. The Olympics (although we'll enjoy Olympic competition every 2 years now since they are staggering the Winter and Summer games). One of the most dramatic symbols of the Olympics is the Olympic Torch. Usually hundreds of countrymen participate in the grand ceremony of running with the flame, one at a time. Each does his or her part, and then passes it on to the next. Does that scene fascinate you? It does me. And then the climax comes when the final runner enters the Olympic stadium. He laps the track. Then he treks up the scores of steps as the silent crowd watches in anticipation. Until finally he reaches the top, stops, turns, and faces the audience. Then in jubilation, he leans over, and with his flame, lights the Olympic Torch. And the crowd goes wild!

That's the scene I have in mind when I read II Timothy 2:1-2. Who is the Light of the world? Jesus Christ (Jn 8:12). What did Jesus tell His followers to do? Matt 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men." That's what Paul had done for 30 years. He had carried the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ all over the known world.

But when he wrote II Timothy, his days were numbered. He was imprisoned in Rome. Why? Because of his commitment to the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Like a dangerous, wild animal, Paul was chained in a dungeon, awaiting execution.

He wrote his last God-breathed letter to Timothy. Why Timothy? Because Timothy was not only his ministry companion of 15 years, but also his spiritual son. Timothy was in Ephesus, hundreds of miles away from his mentor.

What does Paul say to Timothy in this letter? Just this--"Timothy, I'm passing the torch of the gospel to you. Take it Timothy. Take it, and pass it on to others."

I want to pose a sobering question.

Q: Will WBC be a prospering church 20 years from now?

I thank God for He's doing in our midst. People are being saved. Many new people are coming. There's a great hunger to be taught the Word of God. Thank God! But should our Lord not return before then, what will the condition of this church in 20 years? Furthermore, what about the church at large in America? I think of this often. I can't get it off my mind.

That was the very issue that gripped Paul too. As he faced execution, his heart bled with this question--"What will happen to the gospel after I'm gone?"

That's what II Timothy is all about. As commentator John Stott points out, Paul gives Tim 4 charges relating to the gospel of Jesus Christ:

Chapter 1--The charge to guard the gospel (1:14).

Chapter 2--The charge to suffer for the gospel (2:3, 8, 9).

Chapter 3--The charge to continue in the gospel (3:13, 14).

Chapter 4--The charge to proclaim the gospel (4:1-2).

Q: What did Paul want Timothy to do to ensure the future success of the gospel? What must we do as a church if we are to prosper as we move ahead?

Proposition: In II Timothy 2:1-2, Paul explained for Timothy that there are 2 responsibilities we have if we're going to pass on the torch of the gospel.

I. Depend on the Lord (1).

II. Develop Leaders (2).

A. Character

B. Competency

C. Commitment

1. To be taught

2. To teach others

I. Depend on the Lord (1).

V 1 "Thou, therefore, my son..."

"therefore"--remember the context

1:8 Don't be ashamed of the gospel ministry, Timothy!

1:13 Hold onto the Gospel Timothy!

1:15 Don't be like the crowd Timothy! Don't be unfaithful like Phygelus and Hermog!

1:16 Be faithful, like Onesiphorus!

But how? How can I suffer for Christ? How can we be faithful? We're not super-Christians! We're prone to wander, prone to fail. We're weak, incapable of such a task. So how can we do it?

"Thou therefore"--The "you" is emphatic. As for YOU, Timothy! You be different! Why am I concerned?

"my son"--a dear term which speaks of an intimate relationship; Paul speaks to Timothy just like a father on his deathbed would speak to his son--with warmth, and admonition.

Q: What did Paul want Timothy to do?

A: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"

"be strong"--Passive; Lit. "Be empowered. Be strengthened."

Listen. Paul is not telling Timothy to pull up his boot straps. Nor to look deep within yourself and find strength for facing the pressures of life.

Illust: Psychology today--"Look within yourself for strength..."

Q: What is to be our source of strength?

A: "Be strong IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS."

Wow! What a packed phrase! What does it mean? What does it mean to "be strong in grace"?

What is grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor. Grace is God giving us what we don't have and don't deserve. Grace is God's provision, God's supply for our need.

What does it mean to be strong in grace? I listened to a tape by David Hocking this week. He observed the opposite. The opposite of being strong in grace is to be what? Strong in works. That is, to try and live my life depending on my own merit, my own ability, my own productivity.

Grace living is just the opposite. When we live by grace, we're admitting our own inadequacy. Listen. Grace is much broader than we think:

1. We need grace for salvation (Eph 2:8).
2. We need grace for sanctification day by day.

II Pt 3:18 "But grow in grace..."

II Cor 12:9 Jesus told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you."

3. We need grace for service.

Heb 12:28 "...let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably."

Where can we find this grace?

V 1 "...which is in Christ Jesus."

Key: Listen. Paul is reminding Timothy of the key to the Christian life. Here it is--Christ lives in me.

Gal 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ...Christ lives in me..."

Phil 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Phil 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need acc to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

There it is. II Tim 2:1 is the essence of living the Christian life. Paul says to Tim, "My son, I'll soon be gone. If you're going to prosper in life and ministry, you must **DEPEND ON THE LORD**. Day by day. Moment by moment. Tap into His grace Timothy! Be empowered by His grace!"

Q: Are you experiencing the power of God in your life? Are you?
Or are you running on empty? Is your soul barren and dry?

Q: Do you make a decision daily to tap into the grace that is in Christ Jesus?
You say, "How do I do it?"

I'm not totally sure all that's involved in "grace living." But I do know the Bible teaches there are specific **MEANS OF GRACE** we must utilize:

1. Prayer--Heb 4:16 "Let us come...throne of grace..."
2. God's Word--Acts 14:3 "...the word of His grace..."

Q: Do you make it a priority to schedule into your daily routine time for prayer and the study of God's Word? Grace living starts right there.

Why? Because if I'm going to prosper in my life, I must accept the fact that I must learn to **DEPEND ON THE LORD**.

Illust:

Tran: If we're going to pass on the torch of the gospel, here's where it starts. Timothy needed to learn to **DEPEND** on the Lord. But it mustn't stop with him. He would have to motivate others to do the same. Notice v 2...

V 2 "And the things that...commit..."

II. Develop Leaders (2).

V 2 has been greatly used by many to support the need for discipleship of new Christians. That is important. Every new believer in Jesus Christ needs to be disciplined. But v 2 has something specific to say to us in light of the context.

II Tim 2:2 is God's method for propogating the Good News.

II Tim 2:2 presents the ministry of multiplication.

Think of the verse like a relay race. There are 4 runners on the team.

Paul > Timothy > Faithful men > Others

Don't miss the urgency of 2:2. It has "TOP PRIORITY" stamped all over it!

"Timothy, if the church in Ephesus is going to prosper in the future, here's what you must do..."

Main Verb--COMMIT = "to place beside, to set before" (a command)

The word is used in another context of setting food before a guest whose being entertained. In the LXX, the word appears in Ex 19:7. Look at it:

19:1 At Sinai

19:3 God speaks to Moses on the mountain...What did Moses do?

19:7 "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and

LAID BEFORE THEIR FACES all these words which the Lord commanded him."

That's it. God gave Moses His Holy Law. What did Moses do with it? Add to it? No. Subtract from it? No. He passed it on to the elders. He passed it on just as he had received it from God.

What was Timothy to pass on?

"the things you have heard from me among many witnesses"

1:13 "Hold fast the form of sound words...heard from me."

What was Timothy to pass on? Timothy knew. Tim had traveled with Paul for 15 years. He'd heard Paul speak to groups all over the world, in places like Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus. And everywhere he went, the message was the same. The people changed, but the message never did. The culture changed, but the message never did. The message was the Good News of Jesus Christ!

Here's what Paul's saying. "Timothy, I'm not going to be around forever. So I am passing the gospel torch to you. And Timothy, YOU aren't going to be around forever either! So here's your task. Find people to whom you can pass on the gospel torch. Find them, and develop them!"

I will be blunt. I'm convinced that few churches are practicing II Tim 2:2 today. Few churches take seriously the need to train the next generation of leaders.

Illust:

Q: Who are the potential, future leaders in the church? Who are the individuals that are qualified to pass on the torch of the gospel? Who are they?

Listen. They're not necessarily the most talented people. No. Or the most educated people. Not necessarily the people with the most smarts, or the most money, or the most charisma. No, no. That's what the business world says is true of leaders.

Illust: "Memo to Jesus about his choice of the 12..."

Q: What type of people did Paul tell Timothy to find? Three marks...

A: Timothy, find people who possess 3 marks: Character, Competency, Commitment.

A. Character

"FAITHFUL MEN"--dependable, reliable, trustworthy, steady (like Ones)

Timothy, find faithful men, and develop them. Here's where it starts. Find faithful men. There are too many 100 yard dash Christians! But the Christian life is a marathon!

There's a desperate need for people with this type of character--Faithful.

Q: How do you test a person's character? How do you test for faithfulness?

A: You test faithfulness in these areas--How do you handle opposition, criticism, difficulties, and conflict?

Did you ever notice how many times Jesus told people to go home? Why? You can't force faithfulness. You can't make someone be faithful. You can't talk people into being discipled if they don't want to. If you do, what happens? After meeting a couple of times, they fizzle out!

It's amazing how many Christians bomb out of the ministry in the last half of their lives. As Howard Hendricks put it, look out for those that start out like a rocket, and fall like a rock!

Quote: Howard Hendricks put it this way, "It's not what a person is, but in what direction he is moving that counts."

Illust: Missionary Carey, "I can plod..."

B. Competency

"WHO SHALL BE ABLE"--the word "able" means sufficient, fit, or competent. Timothy was to find people who were not only faithful, but qualified.

Our competency is not in ourselves...

II Cor 3:5 "...not sufficient of ourselves, but of God"

We need to recruit people whose lives are qualified.

Challenge: In marriage--On a scale of 1 to 10 where are you in your marriage (1 being disaster, 10 being the millenium)?

Illust:

C. Commitment

Q: What type of commitment? Involves a willingness to do 2 things...

"to teach others also"

1. To be taught

Are you a teachable person? Do you have a hunger to learn? Or do you think you've arrived? The best leaders are those who realize they need to learn. They have a commitment to be taught.

2. To teach others

"to teach OTHERS"--There's the 4th generation. Paul, then Tim, then the faithful men, then the others. Watch this. By others, Paul has in mind people who aren't even saved yet. The others are the ones that will be reached by the efforts of those faithful men that Timothy trains.

Key: Teaching is key. People don't grow if they're not taught. Timothy needed to find and train people to teach the Word in practical terms.

Quote: (Hendricks) Jesus said, Feed my sheep...not my giraffes!"

See also:

Paul told Titus to do the same thing in Titus 2. He told Titus to have a teaching ministry with 4 key groups in the church at Crete.

1. Older men
2. Older women
3. Younger women
4. Younger men

Listen. If Timothy needed to do it in Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, we must in W'burg. We must develop people who can lead the church in future generations.

That kind of leadership training doesn't take place merely by sitting in a pew on Sunday AM or even PM. How do you develop leaders? How did Jesus do it? In a small group. He chose 12 men, and poured 3 years of His life into them.

Q: What made Paul such an effective church planter?

The Lord obviously. But what was his strategy, his focus? Just this--Wherever he went he found a few people that God had prepared. He focused on the few, and disciplined them, and trained them for ministry, and then turned the ministry over to them (See: Acts 14:21-23).

Now let's be honest. Most churches do very little of this. On Sunday AM people come to church to be entertained (by the music, by an interesting speaker). And others may come with more noble ambitions--to be fed the Word, to see people get saved. But how many view the Church as a Training ground? A place to grow, a place to develop?

Illust: George Marshall's black book...

Q: What are we doing right now to ensure there will be qualified leaders for this church 15 years from now?

Challenge: Paul told Tim his priority needed to be the training of faithful, competent, committed men. That must be our priority.

1. Sunday School classes take this focus.
2. Start small accountability groups (6-10 men, 6-10 women)--for training, for accountability, for teaching, for prayer
3. Older men with younger, older women with younger...