

Paul's Final Instructions

Text: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Introduction:

1. The Epistle now reaches its climax in Paul's final recorded charge to Timothy, his son in the faith (Vs. 1-8). This chapter contains the last words the Spirit of God lead Paul to write and are therefore of great importance and significance.
2. Paul has already delivered 3 charges to Timothy his son in the faith (1. Tim. 1:18; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Tim. 6:13). Paul now delivers his final charge before passing through the gates of death into eternity.
3. In these verses, Paul continues his charge to Timothy, outlining invaluable instructions concerning his pastoral duties and inspiring him with his own life and ministry example.
4. We can summarize this charge of Paul's under three headings.

I. The Injunction to Preach (Vs. 1-4)

Refer previous sermon for details.

A. The Mindset for preaching (Vs. 1)

B. The Mandate for preaching (Vs. 2a)

C. The Method for preaching (Vs. 2b)

D. The Motivation for preaching (Vs. 3-4)

II. The Instruction for Ministry (Vs. 5)

Timothy's life was to be lived in contrast to the apostates described in Vs. 3-4. There are four duties he is to maintain in pastoral ministry.

A. Vigilance (Vs. 5a)

1. 'watch' = word literally means to be sober, an abstainer from wine. Concerning one's attitude it referred to being alert and circumspect.
2. Much of a shepherd's duty involves watching over the sheep. Remember the picture of a shepherd in the ancient world. Careful monitoring and oversight of the sheep has nothing to do with dictatorship, being overbearing or micro managing. It has everything to do with being a faithful shepherd of God's sheep. The word 'bishop' means 'overseer', 'superintendent' and reveals one of the central functions of a pastor.
3. We are to watch in several areas:
 - a. Watch over the flock **in prayer** – Col. 4:2 "Continue in prayer, and **watch** in the same with thanksgiving;" Eph. 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching** thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" Matt. 26:41 "**Watch** and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak."

- i. The duty to watch in prayer is for every Christian, but it is particularly important for those in pastoral leadership.
 - ii. Much of the under-shepherd's time needs to be spent in the presence of the Chief Shepherd, pleading for His intervention in the flock.
 - iii. Illustration: Sat night prayer (e.g. praying at particular chairs)
- b. Watch over their souls – Hebrews 13:17 “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: **for they watch for your souls**, as they that must give account, that they may do it with you, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”
- i. The preacher's responsibility – to watch for the souls of those under his care. He is to be keenly interested in their spiritual welfare. Are they progressing in their walk with Christ? What trials are they going through? What is it that threatens their spiritual vitality? If you are called to the ministry, start practicing this watch care now in the church you serve. Help shoulder the burden with your pastor and wife.
 - ii. The member's responsibility – to consciously submit to their pastors' oversight. The word 'submit' means “to yield under, to give up, to resist no longer, to yield.” It is a compound word made up of 'under' and 'yield'. The world has conditioned us to see oversight and authority as a bondage to be avoided but we need to see spiritual leadership as a wonderful blessing and consciously place ourselves under such oversight. The Lord gives his under-shepherd's certain insights and perspective as his watchmen. Listen to their perspective and don't be in a hurry to dismiss it. Be open to their loving reproof.
- c. Watch over the flock for the infiltration of false teachers and false teaching – Acts 20:27-31 (27) “For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (28) Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to **all the flock**, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (29) For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (31) Therefore **watch**, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”
- i. False teachers are subtle and sly and can go undetected if a pastor is not a careful watchman. Christ warned that

- they are as wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15). Jude warned that false teachers "creep in unawares" (Jude. 1:4). Paul warned of the same thing in Galatians 2:4 "And that because of false brethren **unawares brought in**, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:" False teachers are creeping creeps! (2 Tim. 3:6)
- ii. The preacher today is presented with a mammoth task to protect the flock against error when the false teacher can so easily infiltrate the homes of the people through the medium of digital technology (e.g. YouTube, social media, blogs).
 - iii. Challenge: We hear much today about "getting connected" with people online. Get connected with your local church and look to it as your primary source of instruction! Don't be a YouTube theologian. If you want more sermons to listen to, ask the pastor for sound recommendations.
- d. Watch over your family and your own personal life – 1 Tim. 4:16 "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee." Acts 20:28 "Take heed therefore **unto yourselves**, and to **all the flock**, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers**, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Take the time to nurture your own soul and that of your wife and family.

B. Endurance (Vs. 5b)

1. "endure afflictions" = suffer hardship, evil, ill treatment, that which is bad.
2. Paul has already exhorted Timothy to endure the "afflictions of the Gospel" (1:8) and to "endure hardness" (2:3). Paul said "I suffer trouble" (2:9) as "an evil doer" for the sake of the Gospel. All of these phrases come from the same root word translated here as "endure afflictions" (4:5).
3. Timothy is to patiently bear the many trials of the Gospel ministry; he is to faithfully weather the storms. The ministry is not for the fainthearted. It is demanding on the preacher's whole person, spirit, soul and body.
4. There are many afflictions the faithful preacher must bear with in the ministry. There are...
 - a. Spiritual pressures – For example:
 - i. Being on the frontline of the battle, enduring the devil's darts and buffetings. 1 Cor. 16:9 "For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are many*

- adversaries.”** 1 Thess. 2:18 “Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but **Satan hindered us.**” The preacher and his family are special targets of Satan. If he can topple the preacher, then it is much easier to get to the flock. As a preacher, you enter into the battle in the heavenlies in a dimension that few in the congregation can understand at times.
- ii. The weight of the responsibility of preaching the Word of God.
 - b. Mental pressures – carrying the burdens of the people, thinking about their problems and how to help them, staying on top of the church calendar, administration, dealing with church problems (keeps you awake at night sometimes!).
 - c. Emotional pressures – For example:
 - i. Counselling people (e.g. helping people through their trials, dealing with wounded sheep).
 - ii. Confrontational meetings (e.g. church troubles, doctrinal division, carnal members).
 - iii. The reproach of the tongue (e.g. slander and misrepresentation). It is amazing what a faithful preacher will be accused for – being a liar, domineering, insecure, in it for money, destroying the church etc... Or the really cute one is when people say “we know too much but we can’t say anything about it” unjustly leaving a massive question mark over the preacher’s life and ministry and thereby abusing the minds of those under the preacher’s care.
 - iv. The suffering that comes on the wife and children from people out of sorts with the preacher (e.g. the cold shoulder treatment).
 - d. Physical pressures – all of these challenges are a drain on the physical resources.
 - e. The blessings of buffetings:
 - i. They keep you humble and thereby usable. The self-life is never far away and can easily get intermingled in our service for the Lord. Christ made himself of “no reputation” and we also need to learn to die to our reputation (Phil. 2:7)
 - ii. They keep us dependent on the Lord.
 - f. The solution?
 - i. Endure with God’s grace and help!
 - ii. Take time out to rest (Mark 6:31).
 - iii. Read a good book, listen to good sermons, encourage yourself in the Lord.

- iv. Talk to other preachers. Share your burdens with the faithful supporters and helpers in the church (e.g. assistant pastor, deacon, office bearers).
- 5. 1 Cor. 15:58 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye **stedfast, unmoveable**, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

C. Evangelism (Vs. 5c)

- 1. ‘evangelist’ = a proclaimer of good news. Root word is ‘Gospel’. An Evangelist’s primary role is to preach the Gospel (Note example of Philip the Evangelist in Acts 8:5). Timothy is not to **be** and evangelist as this is a separate calling (Eph. 4:11) but is to do the **work** of an Evangelist.
- 2. This means a pastor needs to be a soul-winner. Amidst all his other duties and responsibilities, he needs to have a heart that’s warm for souls. He is to be a personal soul-winner as well as being a Gospel preacher.
- 3. Illustration: OPBC soul-winning requirement

D. Diligence (Vs. 5d)

- 1. “make full proof” = means to bear or bring full, to make full and therefore means to fully perform, carry it out to its end, to fulfil. He is to complete all its demands and requirements.
- 2. “thy ministry” = Christian work in general, covering every mode of service.
- 3. There is no place for laziness and sloppiness in the ministry. It is the highest vocation on earth! “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who **labour** in the word and doctrine.” (1 Tim. 5:17)

III. The Inspiration for Ministry (Vs. 6-8)

The Apostle now gives a word of testimony to inspire Timothy to faithfulness in ministry. There is a tremendous victory note in these words.

A. His Present (Vs. 6)

- 1. “ready to be offered” = ‘offered’ means to be poured out as a libation or drink offering. Paul viewed his impending martyrdom as an act of sacred service to God. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21)
- 2. ‘departure’ = to loosen, release. Word used of the slackening of tent ropes when breaking camp or of a ship hoisting anchor and setting sail.
- 3. “The ring of triumph and noble self-assurance is intended to rouse Timothy, as the dying cry of a general inspires his flagging followers to new courage and daring.” (Pope)

B. His Past (Vs. 7)

Paul sums up his life using 3 figures:

1. A Greek wrestler – “I have fought a good fight”
 - a. Figure not drawn from the battle field but from the Greek games. It is a picture of an athlete struggling and contending for the prize. Paul had wrestled and fought all his life for the Gospel, contending with the sin and Satan.
 - b. ‘good’ = reveals the character of this contest. This is no fleshly warfare, no carnal contest but a Spirit-filled, God-honouring fight for the truth. This is a fight that all Christians are commanded to be a part of (Jude 1:3).
2. A Greek runner – “I have finished my course”
 - a. Figure is that of a foot race. Paul had run his race well, fulfilling the mandate of Hebrews 12:1-2
 - b. “my course” = Paul had completed the specific track God had ordained for him to run. We are all to run according to the rules (2:5) but God’s specific will is different for each one of us. We need to find out what that is and seek to fulfil it faithfully.
 - c. Illustration: Christ testified in John 17:4 “...I have **finished** the work the work which thou gavest me to do.”
3. A Roman soldier – “I have kept the faith”
 1. Picture is of a Roman soldier standing guard.
 2. ‘kept’ = to keep by guarding
 3. “the faith” = the sacred deposit of truth entrusted to Paul. Paul had faithfully guarded the truth from the attacks of false teachers. Now Timothy was to continue that guardianship of the truth (Note 1:13-14).

C. His Future (Vs. 8)

1. The gift (reward) (8a)
 - a. “crown of righteousness” = the ‘crown’ was a victor’s crown, a laurel wreath made of oak leaves or ivy and given to a winner in the games.
 - b. Paul was anticipating rewards for faithful service.
 - c. There are 5 crowns mentioned in the N.T.
 - i. The incorruptible crown for living a disciplined, faithful Christian life (1 Cor. 9:25)
 - ii. The crown of rejoicing for successful soul-winning (1 Thess. 2:19-20)
 - iii. The crown of righteousness for loving Christ’s appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8)
 - iv. The crown of life for enduring temptation (James 1:12)
 - v. The crown of glory for faithful pastors (1 Peter 5:1-4)
2. The Giver (8b)
 - a. “the Lord” = the real value of the gift is due to the One giving it. How infinitely more precious than the gift itself will be the joy of

standing in His presence and hearing His voice saying, “well done thou good and faithful servant.” As expressed in the words of this hymn: “The bride eyes not her garment, But her dear bridegroom’s face. I will not gaze at glory, But on my King of grace. Not at the crown He giveth, But on His pierced hand: The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.”

- b. “the righteous judge” = figure of athletic games continued. Christ is the perfect judge (umpire) who will be perfectly fair and just in the rewards that He gives on that day. He stands at the finish line waiting for us, his rewards in hand.
3. The Guarantee (8c)
- a. “not to me only” = this reward is not exclusively for the Apostle but is available to all believers – “to all those also”.
 - b. “love his appearing” = the qualification for this crown is to love his ‘appearing’.

Conclusion:

1. Are we involved in the contest for the truth?
2. Are we running our race for God’s glory?
3. Do we love Christ’s appearing? Are we living for eternal rewards or temporal gains?