

Dear Friends,

Young preachers need wise examples and teaching from sound older men in the faith and ministry to guide them in the Biblical path of edifying faith. Godly faith--and the inseparable faithfulness that accompanies it--does not grow spontaneously in our lives. That we have three letters in the New Testament to young preachers speaks volumes to us of this necessity. I have long observed a growing indifference in older preachers to their Biblical obligation to father younger men under their supervision in their own faith and ministerial journey. Given that neglect, I have also sadly observed a growing residual pride in many of the younger generation of preachers, a quality that Paul associates with being a novice, someone new and inexperienced in the faith, not to be ordained until he has grown in humility and wise, stable grace. (1 Timothy 3:6 KJV)

Biblical soundness should be measured by New Testament teaching, not by the latest fad or by popular opinion. Paul charged Timothy in our study

passage to remain faithful to his teaching, as well as to "charge" others in the Ephesian Church that they hold faithfully to that teaching, not amend or abandon it for their own ideas.

In our culture and in our churches today, both pastors and wise churches must take young promising spiritual gifts under their wings, and their teaching and examples, to grow them soundly into the godly potential that will honor the Lord and edify those who hear them. The Lord gives every man He gifts or calls into ministry with amazing potential. Our task is to grow to that potential, and to help others grow to it in their gifts. We have much to learn and much to do in this area. Lord wisely guide us to take our New Testament task to heart and to help those around us grow strong in their faith and in their spiritual gifts.

Lord bless,
Joe Holder

1 Timothy

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. (1 Timothy 1:3-4 KJV 1900)

Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are referred to as the "Pastoral" epistles. Both these young preachers regarded Paul as their mentor or father figure in the faith and in their ministry. In 1 Timothy 1:2, Paul refers to Timothy as "...*my own son in the faith.*" In Titus 1:4, he refers to Titus as "...*mine own son after the common faith.*" These letters are full of wise instructions to any preacher, especially a young man beginning his journey in the ministry.

In February, I will begin my sixty-eighth year in the ministry. In almost seven decades, one observes many things. Hopefully, if he observes with his mind engaged and with his mind focused on Scripture, he should learn along

the way. When I started speaking in the church at a young age, I was immediately surrounded by caring men whom I regarded as father figures or mentors. I doubt that I would have survived in my journey were it not for the care, examples, and guidance those men freely gave me. During this six plus decades, I have observed a sad and troubling change. Older preachers became more focused on their own ministry and far less willing to take a young preacher under their wings and teaching. Void the wise counsel from father figures, young men seem increasingly prideful and even more self-focused than their seniors. In both cases, we have ignored sound Biblical teaching with predictable decline and failure in the faith ever increasing.

Primitive Baptists do not support formal seminary training of their preachers. However, this does not mean that we favor an ignorant ministry. We should not tolerate such men in ministry at all. A key feature of a man with the spiritual gift of ministry is that he lives with a passion for Scripture that drives him to spend much time in his study of the Book. A man who claims this gift but fails to so study likely does not

have the gift, or he has chosen an unbiblical path that will destroy any potential he has for edifying his hearers. This requirement for study is lifelong. We never reach the point of not needing daily and extensive study. No man can serve his church wisely and effectively apart from much current study of Scripture. The preacher who thinks he has studied enough, so he stops daily intense study, if he continues to speak to the church, will deliver sermons that, if compared to food, are more like a cheap TV dinner than a gourmet meal. If I were allowed to leave this world with one word of counsel from my experience and studies, it would be twofold. 1) I'd urge men who have reached a degree of maturity, stability, and soundness in the faith to make themselves available to the younger men around them who are beginning in their ministry. Be long-suffering and gentle with them, but also be firm in your teaching them to follow Scripture, not their private opinions or ideas. Do not cling to your opinions and work to find passages that you twist to rationalize them. Seek the Bible pattern and doctrine with no rationalization whatever. 2) I'd urge those younger men who are

just beginning their ministerial journey to seek out father figures in the faith and in ministry, men who have proved over their years to be faithful, sound, and kind. Become their student. Regard this mentoring process as a long commitment, not a brief necessity. Sadly, I've observed far too many heart-breaking examples of young men who showed good promise in ministry who neglected this mentoring example from Scripture. Not one of these men survived and grew into a stable, profitable gift. While we do not support seminary training, we do support—we should demand—a studious, sound, and faithful ministry.

This mentoring relationship is not a nice option for a young ministry. ***It is a New Testament requirement.*** Consider Paul's words to Timothy in his second letter to the young preacher.

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2 KJV)

How can a young man in the faith become strong in the grace that is in Jesus? Paul charts the course for Timothy and for every young man who believes the Lord has gifted him for this work. Consider the weight of this charge to the young preacher.

1. Timothy learned from Paul, both by personal teaching and by example, how to be strong in the faith and the ministry in the face of adversity.

2. Paul charged Timothy, as he grows in his ministry, to become the same faithful father figure to other younger men who are just beginning in their ministry. As Paul charged Timothy in these two letters, so Timothy is to charge these men.

Further, Timothy is to wisely choose young men who are faithful. If a man is to enter a godly ministry, long before he starts speaking in the church, he must demonstrate a consistent and faithful “speaking” with his feet, with his lifestyle.

3. Timothy is to charge these men, not only to be faithful in their ministry, but to include in their charge the same mentoring of younger men that Paul exemplified with Timothy, and that Timothy was to exemplify with these young men.

Contemplate what we have in this lesson. Paul was a faithful man and preacher, as well as an apostle. While he learned much directly from the Lord during his years in the desert prior to meeting with the other apostles, he deliberately sought out a relationship with those apostles. Being a New Testament preacher is not about being a “Loner” Rambo-type personality. Paul taught Timothy. He charged Timothy to teach the next generation. And that generation was to teach the generation following them. In these two verses, Paul teaches a principle that he specifically extends for at least three generations into the future.

I’ve known a few young men who started their ministry with the naïve and wrong idea that they merely need to read their Bible and wait for direct revelation from the Lord. To those young

men, I would caution. You are not an apostle. You stand in a very long line of men in the Timothy example. If you hope to grow into a beneficial servant of the Lord and of His people, you must actively commit to faithful and intense study of the Scriptures. You must also put yourself under the wise teaching and supervision of a faithful mentor. This is a New Testament necessity, not a nice convenience. If you neglect this strategy, you will either fail in your pursuit, or you will shipwreck in both your faith and in your ministry. You cannot—and will not—grow into an edifying spiritual gift for the Lord and His people apart from these two long-term Biblical habits.

In 1832, our Primitive Baptist ancestors broke with those who had introduced a variety of unbiblical teachings and practices in the church. The two groups first referred to each other as “Old School” and “New School.” Given the brokenness of humanity, over time the two groups fell into more disrespectful references to each other. However, in 1883, William Cathcart, a “New School” respected man, compiled a comprehensive work, “The Baptist Encyclopedia.” He included in this work a

thoughtful description of our Primitive Baptist, or “Old School” ministers and people. Below I include a brief excerpt from the closing paragraph of the article.

Many of the Old-School brethren in the ministry possess decided ability as expounders of Scripture, the members of their churches are commonly persons of deep piety, and of extensive Biblical knowledge.

To each of us in both the pulpit and the pew of our churches today, do we live up to Cathcart’s description? I fear that most of us fail that question, both in the pulpit and in the pew. Let me offer an example from my youth. In my early years in the ministry, I knew a wise older man who was a deacon and member of a small country church about fifty miles south of where I grew up. One spring I was visiting with him in his home. We were reflecting on an unusually cold winter. He shifted my attention by pointing to a simple bookshelf across the room where I observed a set of John Gill’s commentary on the whole Bible. This dear man shocked me by his

next comment, “I spent my winter reading that set.” Yes, he read the whole Gill commentary on the Bible in a matter of four or so months! He proved by his reflections on the commentary that he had read it with his Bible open and his mind engaged, as he spoke of various ideas that Gill held, some he agreed with and liked, and some he disagreed with. He explained by Bible lessons why he disagreed with Gill in those areas. How many of us have read all of Gill’s commentary in our lifetime, much less in one winter? This man anchored his assessment of Gill’s writings in his lifetime of serious and thoughtful study of his Bible, not merely his opinions. Dear old Brother Neal lived up to Cathcart’s respectful assessment of our people from 1883. How do you and I compare to that description?

If we hope to fulfill Paul’s description to Timothy, not to mention Cathcart’s description of our Old School ancestors, we must face our deficits. But, more than that, we must commit to a dramatic change in our lifestyle and in our use of our time and mental/spiritual energy.

We normally read Ephesians and think they were among the most sound and faithful of

the churches we see in the New Testament record. The Lord's message to the angel (Likely the pastor) of the Church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7 KJV) cautions this assessment of the Ephesian Church. I suggest that Paul's letter to Timothy also might serve to revise our impression of this church. In Acts 20, likely Paul's final address to the elders of the Ephesian Church, he warned the elders of future threats to their survival, both from "grievous wolves" from outside the church, and from unfaithful men within the church. That Paul would instruct that church's elders, as well as Timothy in our study passage to teach the Ephesian Church to remain steadfast in their doctrine, as well as to avoid fables and genealogies which foster more schism than sound faith, is quite revealing. Paul would not address such grave matters had he not been aware of an imminent danger to the church. Rather than reading Ephesians and becoming smug in our self-assessed impeccable soundness, we would more wisely read the letter and pray for the Lord's wise teaching and godly examples to keep us safely in the faith. I've observed the outcome, the eventual "Harvest" of

sincere believers who chose to abandon Biblical and sound faith for other teachings or for ideas that have no support whatever from Scripture. It always ends with spiritual disaster for those who choose that path, as well as for others who follow them.

In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul referred to the church as “***the house of God.***” Contemporary believers, including some of our own dear people, have forgotten this Biblical description of the Lord’s Church. It is not your church or mine. ***It is His house!*** When we consider what to believe and how to conduct our “Business” as a church, wisdom demands that we consult the Head of the house and His Book. Church is not about you or me getting our way in the church. It is about the Lord getting His way.

If you’ve raised children, you no doubt will recall a season when your child thought he/she knew more about life than you, ignored your teaching, and chose their own path. How did that turn out? Not good, right? So, what kind of “Child” shall we be in the Lord’s House and family? The self-willed child who thinks he/she knows more about church and spiritual things

than the Lord? Or the respectful and obedient child who studies the Lord's Book and strives to order our lives according to His teaching in His Book to us?

Elder Joe Holder