

2 Timothy 2:1-13 “Offspring of David, Part 1”
Isaiah 7
Psalm 132
Matthew 1:1-17

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There has been a lot of debate over whether Isaiah
was thinking of a virgin, or merely of a young woman,
when he said that the “virgin [or young woman] would conceive and bear a son.”
Now, it’s true that the Hebrew word in Isaiah 7 does not have to mean “virgin.”
It can mean “young woman.”
But it really doesn’t matter –
because Matthew and Luke clearly affirm that *Mary* was a virgin!
In fact, if Isaiah 7 does not predict the virgin birth,
then the reality of the virgin birth is even more marvelous –
and even more important,
because then Matthew is saying something like this:
“Do you remember that marvelous birth spoken of by Isaiah –
do you remember all those barren women who were unable to conceive in the OT?
All of those were shadows – pictures designed to prepare you for this day.
Because this day, it was not merely a barren woman –
it was not merely a marvelous birth –
it was an impossible birth!

All those barren women still had husbands!
All those marvelous births still happened in the ordinary way!

But the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin.
The Son of God took on human flesh as the Seed of the Woman –
who had no human father.

And through this virgin birth, salvation has come through the offspring of David.

Psalm 132 retells the story of the Davidic covenant,
as the Psalmist asks the LORD to remember David – and his sufferings –
because it is only through the suffering of the servant of the LORD
that life will come to God’s people.

Sing Psalm 132
Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13

When Paul says “remember Jesus Christ” – as preached in my gospel,
he includes two things for us to remember.

He says remember Jesus Christ
risen from the dead,
the offspring of David.

The resurrection and the incarnation are the two things that Paul wants you to remember.
And when he speaks of the incarnation, he focuses especially on what it means for Jesus
to be the “offspring of David.”
In Jesus, God has remembered David,
and he has done what he promised to David.

Therefore, we remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David.

And we hear of this in our gospel lesson from Matthew 1.
Read Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew’s genealogy and Paul’s comment to Timothy show us
that if you do not understand the basics of OT history,
you don’t really know who Jesus is.

Remember Jesus...the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel.
What this means is that Paul regularly preached and explained who Jesus was
in the light of the Old Testament.
Paul’s preaching retold those OT stories with Jesus as the goal and purpose –
with Jesus at the center of the narrative.

That’s why I’m currently preaching through the book of Chronicles Sunday evening –
because if you are going to understand who Jesus is,
you need to see how he is the fulfillment of Israel’s story.
And it is only because he fulfills Israel’s story that he can bring salvation to all the nations,
because it is only as the Seed of Abraham
that all nations will be blessed through him.

And this is why Paul writes to Timothy and urges him to make sure
that the things that Paul has preached will continue to be preached through all generations.

Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David –
this message must continue to go forth to the nations;
and Timothy’s role is to entrust the apostolic doctrine to faithful men
who will be able to teach others also.

And the only way that Timothy will be able to do this,
is if he is “strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus”:

1. The Succession of Apostolic Doctrine (2:1-7)

a. What You Have Heard from Me, Entrust to Faithful Men (2:1-2)

¹You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

“Be strengthened” is a present passive imperative.

It may sound a little odd.

You might expect Paul to say, “Be strong and courageous” –

like Moses said to Joshua –
or David said to Solomon.
But he doesn't.

In some respects you might be tempted to see parallels between Paul and Timothy
and Moses and Joshua,
or David and Solomon.

Moses really wanted to lead Israel into the Promised Land –
but God said no, Joshua will do it.

David really wanted to build the temple –
but God said no, Solomon will do it.

But the succession between Paul and Timothy is of a different sort.

Joshua prefigured Christ – and so Moses said, “be strong and courageous,
for you will cause Israel to inherit the land.”

Solomon prefigured Christ – and so David said, “be strong and courageous,
for you will build the temple for God's holy name.”

But now the Christ has come.

Jesus (the new Joshua) has caused his people to inherit all of God's promises!

Jesus (the one greater than Solomon) has become the new temple,
the holy dwelling for God's name.

And so Paul does not say, “be strong and courageous,”
because what Paul is about to command Timothy to do
is something that no earthly power can accomplish.

“Be strengthened by the grace that is in Messiah Jesus.”

In other words, Christ Jesus – the head and king of the church –
is the one who will accomplish what Paul says.

But he will accomplish it *through* Timothy.

God will do it –

but he will do it through the means that he has appointed:

²and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

We have heard throughout the Pastoral Epistles
Paul's concern for the succession of the gospel ministry.

In previous passages we have heard that Timothy
was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery – (the eldership)
including Paul's own hands.

Now we hear that Timothy is to hand on the teaching to others
who will be able to continue the work that Paul and Timothy had begun.

This is commonly known as the doctrine of apostolic succession.

There are different versions of “apostolic succession” out there.

All versions start with the premise that only those who are ordained should ordain others.
In other words, when Paul commands Timothy to hand down the doctrine to others,
he means that Timothy should ordain faithful men to continue the work.

There are two basic variations on the doctrine of apostolic succession:
the Episcopal and the Presbyterian.

Episcopalians (whether Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or Anglican)
believe that only bishops can ordain.

And since only bishops can ordain,
therefore there must be a succession of validly ordained bishops.

Presbyterians reply that Paul was very clear in 1 Timothy
that Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the *presbytery* –
the eldership.

Nowhere does scripture suggest that only the bishop may ordain.

So the Episcopal view (as held by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Eastern Orthodox)
goes beyond what scripture says.

The Presbyterian view of apostolic succession
agrees that only those who are ordained may ordain,
and particularly sees ordination as the particular responsibility of the gospel minister
(since Paul emphasizes the handing down of the *gospel*).

That’s why I have titled this section “the succession of apostolic doctrine.”

In the early church, the reason why they emphasized ordination
by someone who was ordained by an apostle,
was because that was the way that you could be sure
that your pastor was teaching apostolic doctrine.

If you pastor was ordained by someone who was ordained by an apostle,
and he was in fellowship with other faithful men,
then you would have some confidence in going to that church.

(Remember that not everyone had a Bible at home!

And the NT documents were still being circulated –
and there were *lots* of people running around teaching *all sorts of things*,
claiming to have learned it from the apostles!)

But what happens if the leadership of the church gradually drifts away from the gospel?

We’ve seen this in the PCUSA – the mainline Presbyterian church.

It started in the early 20th century,
and interestingly enough, it started with the doctrine of the virgin birth.
Some Presbyterian ministers and elders drafted a document that said
that the virgin birth was only a theory –
and that it was not necessary for ministers to preach and believe
that Christ was born of a virgin –
that “other theories” of the incarnation were just as good.

They also said that the bodily resurrection of Jesus was only a theory.
And that if a minister didn’t believe in the physical resurrection,
that was fine.

In other words, the two things that Paul emphasizes here –
Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David –
were declared “optional.”

The reason why the northern wing of the PCA exists today
is because when certain ministers and elders objected and tried to deal with this,
they were kicked out of the northern Presbyterian Church in 1936;
and 35 years later, when the old Northern and Southern Presbyterian Churches united,
the southern wing of the PCA withdrew over the same basic issues.

So we should be clear that apostolic succession (being ordained by someone who was ordained)
does not guarantee anything in itself.
There is no promise that those who are ordained by someone
who was ordained by an apostle will remain true to the gospel.
But that doesn’t mean that we should reject the principle.

And the biblical principle of apostolic succession is that
the apostolic doctrine should be entrusted to faithful men
who will then teach others.

b. Share in Suffering: Soldiers, Athletes, and Farmers as Examples (2:3-7)

But not only is there a succession of apostolic doctrine.
There is also a succession of apostolic suffering.

³ *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

We saw earlier that Joshua and Solomon were pictures of Christ –
they prefigured, in certain ways, aspects of who Christ is.

Paul uses a different way to talk about our relationship to Christ.
We *share* in Christ’s suffering (we *postfigure* Christ!).
Paul speaks of Christian suffering both in terms of *participating* in Christ,
and in terms of *imitating* Christ.

Here the focus is on the imitation of Christ.

Timothy is to “share in suffering” (with Paul) as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
Now, it is not our *goal* to suffer.

Think about the examples that Paul gives:

⁴*No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.*

The goal of the soldier is to please the one who enlisted him:
the soldier does not go into battle in order to be wounded and killed!
The soldier goes into battle to accomplish the mission of his commanding officer.

⁵*An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.*

The athlete may endure great hardships and pain –
but hardship and pain is not what he seeks:
he seeks the prize – the victor’s crown!

But there are no shortcuts.

You have to compete according to the rules –
and that may involve great toil and difficulty.

⁶*It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.*

Likewise, the farmer does not work hard at his farm for the sake of working hard!
He works hard for the sake of the harvest – for the sake of the fruit of his labors.

In the same way, the Christian does not suffer because he longs for suffering!

Timothy is to share in suffering
because he desires the harvest;
because he seeks the victor’s crown;
because he longs to see the triumph of King Jesus.

In all Christian suffering,
we follow the pattern of our Savior,
who *for the joy set before him, endured the cross!*

Paul is confident that this way of thinking will commend itself to Timothy:

⁷*Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

In verse 1 Paul commanded Timothy to “be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,”
now he promises that the Lord will also give him “understanding in everything.”

Verse 7 shows us a very simple approach to biblical interpretation.

There are three parts to biblical interpretation:

- 1) “What I say” – the apostolic text
- 2) “think over” – the one who reads/reflects on the apostolic text
- 3) “the Lord will give you understanding” – the Spirit who illumines his people

Paul does not say that everyone will “get it” immediately.
He says “think over” – “consider well.”
It may take time – not everyone will get it at first.

But if Timothy is going to pass on the apostolic doctrine,
then he needs to think over Paul’s words –
he needs to consider carefully what Paul has said,
and he also needs the Lord to give him understanding.

Reason alone cannot teach us the meaning of the apostolic teaching.
We need the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
We need wisdom.

We are seeing in our study of Chronicles
that Solomon was given wisdom *so that* he might build the temple;
even so, the Lord gives us wisdom to understand his word,
so that we might participate in *his* work of temple-building today!

This is why you need both *careful* study of the Word of God
and *prayerful* study of the Word of God –
since you need the Lord Jesus Christ to help you understand
what he has said through his apostles.

And again – as we have seen repeatedly –
we need to remember that Paul speaks this first to *Timothy*,
and so it is true first for me, and for others who preach the gospel;
but while it needs to be true first for me and for other ministers of the gospel,
it is also true for you.

As Ed Clowney put it,
what is true in a special way for those who hold special office in the church,
is true in a general way for those who hold the general office of believer –

that our Lord Jesus Christ would give us strength and wisdom together
as we bring the gospel of Jesus Christ, the offspring of David,
to the nations.