

The Antidote to Immaturity – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul instructs Timothy in the antidote to the self-love of the imperfect church
2. aim – to cause us to seek discipleship in and around the Word of God in the face of opposition
3. passage – 2 Timothy 3:10-17

b. outline

1. The Mentorship of Paul (2 Timothy 3:10-11a)
2. The Reality of Persecution (2 Timothy 3:11b-14)
3. The Value of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15-17)

c. opening

1. the **convergence** in the chapter
 - a. on the exact anniversary of Deb and I being married 35 years, we come to a passage whose *point* has been central to most of those years – the ministry of preaching and teaching (the Bible)
2. the **transition** in the chapter
 - a. the first half of the chapter (**vv. 1-9**) is a **reality check** – the harsh reality that, although the church is the instrument of the Spirit to advance the cause of Christ, it will *not* be a perfect organism
 1. **i.e.** many in the church will continue to be *self-lovers*, more concerned about themselves and what *they* can “get” from the church rather than the work of Christ in them and through them
 - b. the second half of the chapter (**vv. 10-17**) is the **antidote** – although the church will be imperfect, Paul reminds Timothy of *what matters most in the midst of “evil people and imposters”*
 - c. what should be Timothy’s **focus** as he faces those in the church only *focused* on themselves?

I. The Mentorship of Paul (2 Timothy 3:10-11a)

Content

a. the mentorship of Paul over Timothy

1. **note:** the single sentence of these two verses is designed to *contrast* against the statement of **v. 9**
 - a. the immature will be *demonstrated* as such because the “*folly*” of their self-love will become plain
 - b. or, you can tell who is truly mature (or maturing) in Christ by what their “needs” are:
 1. the maturing person needs more of *Christ*, the maturing person desires more godliness – such persons surround themselves with that which will grow holiness and understanding in them
 2. the immature person needs more *superficiality*, the immature is only concerned about those things that make them “feel” loved or needed or complete – they *expressly avoid* anything that will require discipline or effort, **especially those things that may lead to ridicule from others who are also bent on self-love**
 - c. **IOW:** the mature is concerned about what *Christ* thinks of them – the immature is concerned about what the *world* thinks of them, so
 - d. **the contrast is between those who demonstrate their immaturity because of the reaction of others vs. those who demonstrate maturity regardless of the reaction of others**
2. Paul commends Timothy for having “*followed my [example] ...*”
 - a. **question:** is Paul “bragging” here about how successful he has been in each of these areas – is Paul suggesting that Timothy is a great protégé because *he* has been perfect in all of these?
 1. the context suggests a strong “no” – if Paul had been the *perfect mentor*, there would be no need to write the letter (or even the paragraph itself!)
 2. it is highly likely that Paul would *readily admit* that he was never “perfect” in any of these things, but that his *focus within each of them* was consistent enough that Timothy could learn from him
 - a. **e.g.** although Paul says elders should be “*above reproach*” (**1 Tim. 3:2**), that *cannot* imply that only men who are *perfect* in every aspect of life are qualified to mentor the church
 3. in fact, Paul is presenting himself as a mentor in each of these *in order to get to the final element in the list*: his endurance of persecution, *from which he needed to be “rescued”* (**v. 11**)
 4. Paul believes that he has been “successful” enough in mentoring Timothy, and it is this work that *should* give Timothy what he needs to face the “imperfect” church of self-loving people

- b. mentor = an experienced and trusted advisor; a guide or counselor; a spiritual leader over someone (typically) younger and less experienced in the faith, often for the purpose of “passing on” the work to the protégé (**remember 2 Tim. 2:2**: “[entrust] what you have heard from me ...”)
 - 1. in **Eph. 4:11-14**, apostles, prophets, shepherds (pastors), and teachers are all mentoring positions = helping others to “grow up” by *demonstrating* the connection between faith as an *intellectual matter* and faith as *lived out day-by-day*
 - a. **i.e.** protégés “mimic” their mentors – they strive to *think* and *act* like them – more than just a “lecturer”; someone who molds *every aspect* of the mind and heart and life of the student
 - b. **e.g.** disciple = follower/learner – someone learning from, imitating, and obeying a master
 - 1. **e.g.** the *goal* of being conformed to the **image** of Christ (**Rom. 8:29**)
- c. the elements of [Paul’s] Christian mentoring [of Timothy]:
 - 1. “my teaching” = the **primary element** of mentoring: teaching the wide breadth of Christian doctrine to the student – the beginning point of all *discipleship*
 - a. **note**: the *anti-intellectualism* of our *post-Christian* culture seeps into the church and causes it to *skip* this element or to *downplay* the importance of doctrinal depth in the believer
 - 2. “my conduct” = the **day-to-day application** of belief to life; actions consistent with belief: conforming the student to “live out” what he or she now believes (**i.e.** *imitating* the mentor)
 - 3. “my aim in life [plan or purpose]” = the **worldview** implications of the mentoring act: causing the protégé to recognize the *life-long* implications of what he or she is learning (**i.e.** *goals*)
 - 4. “my faith” = the **courage** implicit in the passing of responsibility to the protégé: getting the student ready to “take up the mantle” and (eventually) step out on his or her own to teach others
 - a. **note**: not “saving” faith, but a trust in Christ that causes one to take risks for him; the *courage* of the protégé to step out from the “shadow” of his teacher and begin to serve Christ *directly*
 - 5. “my patience” = the **slow process** required in mentoring others to maturity: the patience that it takes to withstand the natural “ups” and “downs” of spiritual growth – recognizing that the student will not mature instantly or even consistently over time
 - a. **note**: *emotional* responses to preaching are *always* temporary – preaching is a *long-term* project designed to “move” the hearer little-by-little over time
 - 6. “my love” = the **core motivation** in mentoring: the “why” one struggles to see another mature in the faith – a love of Christ inherent in the mentor that is poured out into the protégé so that he or she loves Christ more and more
 - 7. “my steadfastness” = the **consistency** needed in every aspect of a mentor’s work: an unwavering commitment to truth, to teaching, and to *living* as an imitator of Christ – a consistency that builds up genuine understanding and hope in the protégé
 - 8. “my persecutions and sufferings ... I endured” = the **endurance of difficulty** that is inevitable in the course of helping another to maturity: recognizing that opposition *even from the student* may be possible, but to hold fast to the goal – to get the protégé to understand that opposition to him or her is *also* inevitable to being a *genuine* follower of Christ
 - a. **note**: this is the *primary* element that Paul is getting to (**see below**)
- d. the essential nature of each of these in the Great Commission
 - 1. the “make disciples” imperative of **Matthew 28:18-20** is for the church to go into the world and do these things in the lives of the elect – not just “get people into heaven,” but to **convert** the elect into **fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ** ... by:
 - 2. teaching doctrine to them, applying that doctrine to everyday life, establishing a proper biblical worldview in them, building faith in them that is courageous in serving Christ, being patient in seeing them mature in that faith, to love them enough to hold them accountable, to be consistent so that they become consistent in faith and action, and to endure the inevitable opposition that will arise *from within them and from those they are leaving behind*
 - 3. **principle: to be a true disciple of Christ one must come under the mentorship of the church – a true disciple of Jesus “takes up the cross” of obedience, and that obedience only comes through training, specifically, training to *disregard what the world thinks!***

II. The Reality of Persecution (2 Timothy 3:11b-14)

Content

a. the types of persecution (vv. 11b-12)

- 1. Paul refers to persecutions that happened to him in central Asia Minor
 - a. Antioch (of Pisidia), Iconium, and Lystra (Timothy’s hometown), are cities that Paul preached in on his first missionary journey (**Acts 13-14**)

- b. he was opposed by the Jews at Antioch (**Acts 13:50**), he was *nearly* stoned at Iconium (**Acts 14:5**), he was stoned and left for dead at Lystra (**Acts 14:19**)
- 2. as this was Paul's *first* missionary journey (after coming out of Tarsus), these would be some of the most *memorable* persecutions he would endure (mentioning them here at the end of his life)
- 3. however, Paul applies an **interesting twist** to his view of these persecutions (**v. 11b cf. v. 12**): he does not attribute them simply to his *preaching of the gospel*, but rather *to living a godly life*
 - a. **i.e.** that preaching of the gospel is *more* than just "getting people saved" – it is living a godly life in discipling others to live godly lives
 - b. however, living godly will bring *opposition* from "*evil people and imposters*" – a reference to those mentioned in the previous section: the lovers of self, lovers of pleasure *in the church*
- b. the reality of persecution (v. 13)**
 - 1. so, Paul advances the principle above: **that the true disciple of Jesus will experience the ridicule (opposition) of others who are bent on self-love (in this context) even in the church**
- c. the antidote to persecution (v. 14)**
 - 1. so, Paul instructs Timothy to "*continue*" in what he has received from many ("*whom*" is plural)
 - a. **i.e.** to take the mentorship he has experienced under men like Paul and put it into action
 - 2. **the antidote to the poison of self-focus and the opposition of true spirituality is continued discipleship and training – to come under good mentorship and be led to "*firmly believe*" all that is revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ**