

Letters From My Father
Week 23
2 Timothy 1:13-2:2
“The Legacy”

Introduction

...I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day. **2 Timothy 2:12b**

Several years ago there was a very popular country song entitled “*Three Wooden Crosses*”. The basic story of the song was about four passengers traveling on a bus that was involved in a devastating crash. Three of the people were killed, but a fourth survived, hence the title, three wooden crosses. The message of the song was to show the impact that one life can have upon another. And there is a very powerful line at the end of the chorus that says:

*“Its not what you take, when you leave this world behind you,
its what you leave behind you when you go.”*

When Paul penned his second epistle to Timothy, he was in the Mamertine prison awaiting his execution. And as he sat in that gloomy dungeon, no doubt, he began to reflect upon the impact of his own life and ministry. The questions that haunt us all as we are nearing the end of our lives were no doubt filling his mind in the darkness of that place. “Have I done enough? Did I make a difference? How will I be remembered? Was anyone’s life changed because of my influence?” For you see, it is in the darkness of the pit that these things often seem to matter to us the most.

Now, I am fairly certain that those of us here today will more than likely not be beheaded for our faith. But I will say this, sooner or later, all of our lives will come to an end. And when that times comes, if we are able, I am sure that these very same questions will be weighing down upon us as well. At the end of our days, our legacy, what we leave behind, will be all that matters. And it is my prayer, that I will have had an impact upon this fallen world, when the time has come for me to cross over Jordan.

As a pastor, I have had the burdensome privilege of being present for many a soul’s final departure from this life into the next. It is simply part of the job. And what I have observed in those moments, is that no one, who is facing death, is concerned with how much money they have, or the next lavish vacation they will be taking. In fact, the only material things that concern the dying are of those which they are leaving to their loved ones. This is why so many people make detailed arrangements for the transfer of their belongings to their friends and family before they pass on.

But there is one concern that seems to be on the minds of everyone who is passing, whether they admit it out loud or not, and that is; if their lives mattered. And sadly, if we wait until the sand is almost out of the hourglass to concern ourselves with such matters, then it is far too late. If you wish to make a difference in this world, you had better start now. For when you are appointed to take your last breath on this earth, your time to leave a legacy has passed you by.

Paul knew that God had entrusted him with a job to do. And when the Roman courts pronounced his sentence of death, he knew that the time for this task was at an end. So what was his focus in this, his final hour? To ensure that those to whom he had entrusted with his mission would continue the work in his stead. He had spent a significant portion of his life, pouring his passion for the gospel into other men and women. And now, it was their turn to take up the baton in this relay race of grace. For Paul, at that point, nothing else mattered. His lap of this race was nearing the finish, and it was Timothy’s (and other’s) turn to run. And Paul wanted them to run well. So, with his final days, he transitioned from competitor to cheerleader. If he could no longer run, then he would encourage those who could with all the strength he could muster. Talk about commitment to the race, Paul is a powerful example for us to emulate.

As we read this passage together this morning, I want you to think of your own legacy. How are you running today? When the time comes for your final lap, will there be someone whom you have prepared to take the baton from your hand and continue to run for Christ? We are required to *Look After Our Entrustment*, to be *Loyal To Our Entrustment*, and to leave a *Legacy Of Our Entrustment*. *For it is not what we take when we leave this world behind us, it is what we leave behind us when we go.*

Looking After Our Entrustment (vs. 13-14)

Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

There is a word that Paul uses three times from twelfth verse of chapter one to second verse of chapter two. The first two times he uses it in the form of a noun, and the last time in the form of a verb. The word is “*paratheke*”, and it literally means “*entrustment*”. In verse twelve, Paul writes to Timothy that he is convinced that Christ is able to guard his entrustment.

For this gospel, I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what has been entrusted (paratheke) to me until that day. ***2 Timothy 1:11-12***

Paul’s “entrustment” was his calling to spread the gospel throughout the known world. He had faithfully given his all to see to it that everyone he came in contact with heard the message of God’s grace. I have no doubt that the guards in his prison cell heard about Jesus every day they were with Paul. It’s just who he was. No matter the circumstance, Paul was a herald for the gospel. The gospel was his “*entrustment*” (*paratheke*).

From his prison cell in Mamertine, Paul encouraged Timothy, his young son in the faith, to “**guard the good deposit**” (*paratheke*) that has been given to him as well. For you see, Paul’s and Timothy’s entrustments were the same. And just as Paul had looked out for his entrustment, he now encouraged Timothy to look to his own with the same due diligence. Timothy was charged to look after this sacred trust the same way that Paul had, not by his own power, but in the power of The Spirit (**vs. 14**). For apart from Christ’s mighty power, we can accomplish nothing of any lasting value (**John 15:5**). In order to be effective, we must effectively rely on Christ. And it is Christ Who will finish what He began in us. Paul was basically encouraging Timothy to stay prayed up in order to look after the sacred trust that God had given him.

Paul also instructed Timothy to “**hold on to the pattern of sound teaching**” that he had learned from Paul (**vs. 13**). The word that he uses for “pattern” in the Greek means “outline” or “framework”. Paul wasn’t instructing the young preacher to preach copy his sermons, but he was commanding him that the doctrines that he taught must not deviate from Paul’s doctrine. So many these days are watering down the truths of Scripture in an attempt to make them more palatable to the masses, as it were. This is a reckless and dangerous path to travel. God’s Word doesn’t need to be improved upon, it simply needs to be learned, taught, and lived. The false teachers who foolishly believe that they have the authority to change The Word of God will face a horrible reality upon their day of judgement. So Paul warned Timothy not to stray from the outline that he had been given. It would be wise for us to heed this advice as well.

So first and foremost, if we are to leave behind a legacy of faith, then we must learn, share, and live by The Word of God. Jesus said, “**If you love Me, you will obey My commands**” (**John 14:15-17**). Sadly, many who call themselves “Christians” today cannot even vocalize what those commands are. We need to guard our entrustment by the power of The Holy Spirit. And it begins by knowing exactly what we believe. For we cannot share with others what we do not possess ourselves.

Loyalty To Our Entrustment (vs. 15-18)

You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me. May the Lord grant that he obtain mercy from Him on that day. You know very well how much he ministered at Ephesus.

One of the many hard lessons that I have learned in the ministry is that a great deal of the people whom you trusted to be there for you, and to help you, will let you down in the end. So many times I have personally invested large amounts of time and energy into people, who abandoned me when I needed them most. And I will not mince words about this, it hurts every single time.

Many of Paul's most trusted companions left him, when he needed them the most. And we can actually feel the angst of his words as he describes some of their betrayals to his son Timothy. We know little of *Phygelus* and *Hermogenes*, who's names mean "fugitive" and "lucky one" respectively. But we do know that they were unfaithful, and God has kept a record of their disloyalty for posterity. The reason that Paul mentions them is undoubtedly to encourage Timothy not to be anything like these men, who in order to save their own skin, were willing to abandon their posts when the battle intensified. When we "get squeezed", what is truly inside will come out into the open. To love one's own life and comfort above that of our sacred entrustment is not the mark of a true follower of Christ.

The one who loves a father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of Me will find it.

Matthew 10:37-39

And so the question remains, "Will you be loyal to your entrustment?" Can you be counted on to stay at your post as the battle rages, or will you be found missing in action? Phygelus and Hermogenes did not pass the test, when their time of testing came. They were afraid to take a stand for Christ, when the enemy turned his sights in their direction. And now, they will forever be remembered as deserters. As disappointed as Paul must have been in them, just imagine how disappointed they will be when they stand before The Great White Throne of Judgment!

I love how the Scriptures often provide contrast so that we can see firsthand the path of destruction juxtaposed with the path to life everlasting. For Paul's trusted companion *Onesiphorus* proved himself to be every bit as faithful as his contemporaries were unfaithful. He would not abandon his sacred trust, even at the risk of his own life. Men (and women) such as this are a rare commodity indeed, and they are to be loved, praised, and appreciated. Onesiphorus who was more than likely from Ephesus and well known to Timothy, had journeyed to Rome and diligently searched until he found Paul. And there he ministered to him. He was not ashamed to be associated with his brother in Christ, but to the contrary he was proud to count him as a friend. That's what a family does in times of crisis. And we are of God's family, if we are in Christ.

Paul wrote that Onesiphorus had "often refreshed" him. The word in The Greek carries with it the meaning of providing a cool place to rest from the heat of day. Paul goes on to describe Onesiphorus as a "minister" (**vs. 18**), using the word "*diakoneo*", leading many to believe that the man was a deacon at the church of Ephesus, possibly having been dispatched by Timothy himself in order to bring fresh produce to Paul in his prison cell. If you have ever found yourself in a dark place, then you know just how much comfort that a dear friend, who is loyal to the faith, can provide. I know that I do. And I thank God for those people who have stood by my side in the most difficult of trials.

Paul blessed the "household of Onesiphorus" and prayed God's mercy for his faithful brother. Could this mean that the deacon had been arrested for his loyalty to Paul? It is quite possible that he

was, for the Roman government was rounding up Christians en masse. So this faithful man may indeed have forfeited his own personal freedom in order to take a stand for His Savior and comfort his brother in chains. What a wondrous testimony! No wonder The Spirit saw fit to record his deeds to be remembered for all time. Which begs the question, how loyal to your sacred entrustment are you today? When the times are difficult, can you be counted on to faithfully carry out your duty as a soldier of the cross? Or are you a deserter, allowing any wind of difficulty to blow you off course? God has called us to be loyal to our entrustment. When your time of testing comes, will you be ready?

Legacy Of Our Entrustment (2:1-2)

You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

As we have previously discussed, none of us will live forever on this side of glory. So then, it is incumbent upon us to make disciples who can carry on the mission after we are gone. Paul encouraged Timothy to “***be strong in the grace that is Christ Jesus***”, meaning that he should live out his calling in order to perpetuate the gospel. This can only be done by the discipling of others. And this is where we see Paul using the verb form of *entrustment* (*paratithemi*). He is simply telling Timothy to pass on his sacred entrustment to others, just as Paul passed it along to him.

For the record, the words that he used translated “*faithful men*” in the CSB are “*pistos anthropos*”, which in this context means “*believing people*”. Simply put, all of us who are Believers have been entrusted with the truth of the gospel. And as such, we must each find our own “*Timothys*” to train up in the faith, so that they can carry on after we are gone. In short, we are to leave behind a legacy of faith. Which begs the question, if you were to die today, who is your Timothy? Who will take the baton from your hand and continue to run in this, your relay of faith? You must realize that Christianity is always one generation away from disappearing. And you will not be here forever my friend, so to whom will you be handing off your sacred entrustment, when you have run your last lap upon this earth?

The time to think about our legacy of faith is not when we are about to draw our last breath. No, it is while we are still running in the race. Jesus has called us to go and make disciples. This is the very reason that we are here in the first place.

Jesus came near and said to them, “All authority has been given Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of The Father, and of The Son, and of The Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” **Matthew 28:18-20**

This *is* our sacred entrustment! This is what we must look after, be loyal to, and leave behind as our legacy. Let us not forget that *it is not what we take when we leave this world behind us, but what we leave behind us when we go.*

TRUTH!!!