

Induction Sunday

*“and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.”
(2 Timothy 2:2 ESV)*

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”
(2 Timothy 2:15 ESV)*

Entrust To Faithful Others

September 11th, 2022

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Good morning everyone! If you have your Bible with you, I would love for you to open it now to 2 Timothy 2:1-13. As many of you will know we were supposed to be hearing from our primary partner in African leadership development, Pastor Shadrack Khumalo today, but due to a backlog in the Canadian VISA department, we have had to reschedule his visit for November. Hopefully the post COVID travel boom will have somewhat dissipated by then. As such, we found ourselves with a free week before beginning our new series in the Book of Acts next Sunday. Given that tonight is an induction service for Pastor Rob and Pastor Matt and given that I was having a hard time settling on a passage from 2 Timothy to share, and given how much material there is there to choose from, I have decided not to choose at all and to cover both halves of 2 Timothy 2; the first half this morning and the second half later this evening. Rob and Matt, you should be well and truly inducted by the time we reach the end of this mini-series. But the rest of us will need to pay attention as well. John Calvin says in his commentary on this chapter:

“Paul’s statement applies to everyone, but in particular to ministers of the Word.”¹

¹ John Calvin, *1 & 2 Timothy & Titus* in *The Crossway Classic Commentaries* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1998), 132.

So we should all be listening; no one more intently than pastors Matt and Rob. Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 1.

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

¹¹ The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us;

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:1–13 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

2nd Timothy is almost certainly the last letter ever written by the Apostle Paul. He wrote it from prison in Rome shortly before he was executed by beheading in the short but intense persecution under the Emperor Nero. The letter is addressed to Timothy, Paul’s beloved son in the Christian faith.

Paul had first encountered Timothy in Lystra on his first missionary journey and had taken him on as an assistant during his second missionary journey – you can read about that in Acts 16. The two worked closely together for the rest of Paul’s life and career. There was an amusing meme going around the internet last week that rather accurately sums up most of Paul’s Epistles in the New Testament. I believe I have it for you. (Show picture).

General Pauline Letter Outline:

Grace.

I thank God for you.

Hold fast to the Gospel.

For the love of everything holy, stop being stupid.

Timothy says hi.

And of course, if you are a Bible reader, that rings true, doesn't it? Paul and Timothy were lifelong collaborators and now as Paul comes to the end of his journey, he wants to buttress and encourage his friend for the challenges and dangers that lie ahead. And so, what we have here in 2 Timothy is a Master Class in Christian ministry. Here in chapter 2 the Apostle speaks about the basis of Christian ministry, the essence of Christian ministry, the cost of Christian ministry, the look of Christian ministry and the law of Christian ministry and we'll spend our time now looking at each of those subjects in their turn. We begin with the basis of Christian ministry.

1. The basis of the Christian ministry

Look again at verse 1:

You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1 ESV)

I love the prudence and perspective of the Bible! Reading the Bible is like opening a window to the fresh air of ancient wisdom and timeless truths. Paul knows that the road ahead will be difficult, but he prays, not that the hardships would be diminished, but rather that Timothy's strength in the Gospel would INCREASE. Isn't that wonderful? There is an old saying: prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child – that is precisely what Paul is doing here! He

tells Timothy to grow up so that he can be useful to the church in her hour of need – specifically, he tells him to grow up in his Gospel graces.

John Stott says helpfully here:

“Timothy is to find his resources for ministry not in his own nature but in Christ’s grace. It is not only for salvation that we are dependent on grace (1:9), but for service also.”²

I remember someone telling me, rather early on in my ministry that “your sanctification is the best gift that you can give to your people” and I believe that to be correct. Every time a pastor collapses into sin there is a world of fallout and consequence within the wider church. Spare the people of God that injury by growing up in your Gospel graces.

Become stronger than the temptations of the flesh.

Become tougher than the slings and arrows of the evil one.

Become wiser than the wisdom of the age.

Grow up in your Gospel graces.

In chapter 1 of this letter Paul said something similar, he said:

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.” (2 Timothy 1:6–7 ESV)

It is not enough to be gifted – Rob and Matt, you are both incredibly gifted young men – but gifts and talents can only take you so far. To those gifts you must add **HARD WORK**. You must add **VARIED EXPERIENCE** and **WISE REFLECTION**. That is how you nurture the delicate coal of

² John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 50.

a ministry gift. You FEED IT, you USE IT, you TALK ABOUT and REFLECT UPON IT with other people. And you breath on it – you pray power down from the Holy Spirit upon it.

It is the grace of God IN YOU through faith in Jesus Christ that will form the basis of your Gospel ministry in this church and where ever else the Lord might lead you in his perfect time. All ministry is INCARNATED – it is GRACE, IT IS SPIRIT, IT IS DIVINE ENERGY – through you! God will not feed this church by sending tweets or texts. He will not lead this church by dropping leaflets or tracts from the sky. He will lead them and feed them through PEOPLE. Through leaders. Through you. Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones said famously:

“Preaching is theology coming through a man who is on fire.”³

Through a man who is on fire.

The same could be said for ministry in general. It has to come from inside you! It has to pass through you before it can bless, touch, impress and impact upon other people. So – GROW. Grow in your Gospel graces. May the love of God be poured into your hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to you and may it leak out from there into the lives of other people. This will be the basis of your ministry moving forward.

From there the Apostle begins to speak to young Timothy about the essence of the Christian ministry.

2. The essence of the Christian ministry

Look at verse 2, he says:

“what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” (2 Timothy 2:2 ESV)

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Preaching & Preachers* and elsewhere.

That's Christian ministry in a nutshell isn't it? Stewardship and transmission. We are to GUARD the Gospel from those who would seek to change it and we are to pass it on to others who will be able to steward it and pass it on to others in their turn. As Christians we are involved in the world's longest relay race. Therefore, we mustn't fumble the baton, and neither must we scatter into the stands at the first sign of trouble. We must keep running; we must manage the handoff, and we must continue trusting that God himself will ensure the ultimate success of our venture.

Now, most immediately, we are probably to understand this as a charge to Timothy to continue raising up Gospel preaching and Gospel protecting pastors and elders. In 1 Timothy 5:17 Paul had said:

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17 ESV)

Paul wrote to another young pastor under his care and said:

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1:5 ESV)

He then provided a list of character requirements, very similar to the ones we find in 1 Timothy 3, before going on to say:

“He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it. For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers” (Titus 1:9–10 ESV)

Pastors and elders are required to exercise the POSITIVE ministry of instruction AND the NEGATIVE ministry of rebuke and sanction. They need to be strong enough to say: “That's nonsense and you shouldn't be paying it any mind.” Pity the church that has pastors and elders too weak to do that because there are many teachers and leaders out there – wolves in sheep's clothing – who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers – and they will infiltrate and take over the church if they are not shut down and turned away decisively at the front gate.

And so the Apostle Paul understands that, humanly speaking, the health and survival of a church depends upon the maintenance of a strong and faithful plurality of elders. A church that does not have faithful preachers and faithful stewards is on the fast track to disaster and extinction, so we are right to understand Paul speaking primarily in that sense here. He is telling Timothy that he must continue to recruit, train and develop Gospel preachers and stewards.

And yet I think it is entirely fair and appropriate to understand this instruction in a general sense as well. Paul has already spoken warmly of the Gospel stewardship exercised by Timothy's mother and grandmother. In 2 Timothy 1:5 he said:

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” (2 Timothy 1:5 ESV)

The job for parents and grandparents in the family is exactly the same as the one given to pastors and elders within the household of faith. We are to steward and transmit the Gospel. We are to pass on to the next generation, the very same Gospel faith that we received from those who came before. The challenge may vary from season to season and from age to age – the Apostle Paul senses that Timothy's course may be particularly challenging and therefore he begins to speak to him about the cost of the Christian ministry beginning in verse 3.

3. The cost of the Christian ministry

He says:

“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:3 ESV)

Paul is here returning to a theme he introduced in chapter 1. In 2 Timothy 1:8 he said:

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but **share in suffering** for the gospel by the power of God” (2 Timothy 1:8 ESV)

Share in suffering. Share in suffering – commentators generally agree that this really the overarching theme of the entire letter. I mentioned that Paul wrote this letter to Timothy from prison – an imprisonment that led ultimately his death and the content of the letters does seem to indicate that Paul had some concerns as to Timothy’s READINESS to face the new reality that was now upon them. In the first generation the church had only to worry about pressure and persecution from one direction - the direction of the Jewish synagogue. In many of the church planting narratives we have in Acts we see that Paul would begin his campaign in the synagogue itself - and sometimes he would win and extended hearing and on occasions, many Jewish people were converted. But eventually, the conversion of a significant portion of the synagogue membership to faith in Christ would create divisions and Paul and his companions would be asked to leave - sometimes they faced threats of violence - sometimes they faced ACTUAL VIOLENCE. Of course Timothy knew all about that, in Acts 14 in the town of Lystra - where Timothy was from and where he encountered the Apostle for the first time - Paul and Barnabas had initially received a very warm welcome - almost too warm, you may recall. Many people were very excited about their ministry, particularly after a crippled man had been miraculously healed. However, that didn’t last very long, as Luke goes on to tell us later in the chapter. Acts 14:19 says:

“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.” (Acts 14:19 ESV)

So Timothy KNEW, going in, that he was likely to face opposition from the leaders of the Jewish community. But now, here in the mid 60’s, the Christians were starting to feel the heat from another direction - from the direction of Imperial Rome. Up until this point the Romans had viewed Christianity as a Jewish sect - the whole conversation about Jesus was, to them anyway, an intramural debate within Judaism. And Christianity initially took full advantage of that. The Jews had won certain legal freedoms and protections and the Christians - most of whom were Jews anyway - made use of that to pursue the Great Commission at maximum speed. But then, all of the sudden, the Romans began to regard Christianity as a separate thing. The Roman historian Suetonius tells us that the Emperor Claudius evicted Jews from Rome in the early 50’s for rioting

in the name of Chrestus - that's one of the earliest references we have to the tumult happening within the Jewish community over the identity and significance of Jesus - and, as you might expect, Rome was not amused. The Christians in Rome - who kept coming back and who kept popping up in ever greater numbers - became a source of concern and the Emperor Nero, the adopted son and successor of Claudius, decided to use the Christians as scapegoats for the devastating fire that wiped out a huge swath of the ancient city in July of AD 64. He rounded up as many prominent leaders from within the community as he could find, and he executed them - often in gruesome and grizzly ways.

Paul, of course was one of those people. He knew what time it was and he knew that Timothy was not as naturally RESOLUTE as was Paul himself and so he wrote this letter to FORTIFY HIM in advance of the coming trial. Wise older leaders, who can read the signs of the times will often do that. In 2010 retiring Catholic Cardinal Francis George told a group of pastors:

"I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square."⁴

The cost of faithful Christian ministry is getting STEEPER and therefore younger Christian leaders – pastors, elders and parents too - need to be encouraged in their resolve.

Fourthly now, and in support of what immediately precedes it, the Apostle begins to describe the essential LOOK of the Christian ministry by means of 3 overlapping metaphors and 2 well-known examples.

4. The look of the Christian ministry

Look again at verses 4-6:

⁴ Cardinal Francis George. Interestingly the rest of the quote reads as follows: “His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history.” For full citation see here: <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/tim-drake/the-myth-and-the-reality-of-ill-die-in-my-bed>

“No **soldier** gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An **athlete** is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working **farmer** who ought to have the first share of the crops.” (2 Timothy 2:4–6 ESV)

The soldier of course, is characterized by focus and dedication. When he is on a mission he is completely focused on the task at hand. He doesn't run for mayor; he doesn't apply for a job at the local car wash; he doesn't bag purchases at the mall – he has one job and one job only and he hopes to complete it so that he can please his commanding officer and then go home. You must be like that Timothy!

In the old Anglican service of ordination a charge was read to the candidate that said:

‘Consider how studious ye ought to be in reading and learning the Scriptures ... and for this selfsame cause how ye ought to forsake and set aside (as much as you may) all worldly cares and studies, ... give yourselves wholly to this Office, ... apply yourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw all your cares and studies this way.’⁵

Be all in or all out. Now of course, this doesn't mean that you can't have a family or cut your grass – of course you can – the issue is ENTANGLEMENT. You cannot be involved in anything that takes away your focus, your devotion or your loyalty from the call and priority of Gospel ministry. You have to be like a soldier, in that sense.

And you have to be like an athlete. The athlete must agree to compete according to the rules. In soccer if you pick up the ball and throw it into the net you will be given a Red Card. You must agree to only use your feet and your head to strike the ball – those are the rules. And so it is with the Christian ministry. John Bunyan in *Of Antichrist And His Ruin* said:

“The church therefore, as a church, must use such weapons as are proper to her as such; and the magistrate, as a magistrate, must use such weapons as are proper to him as such. When the church of Israel were prisoners in Babylon, they did not fight their way through their foes, and

⁵John R. W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 54.

the countries to Jerusalem, but waited in their captivated state with patience, until the kings of the Medes and Persians came to deliver them.”⁶

We are not in the “grab them and stab them” business, we are in the sow the seed and set an example business, and therefore we must use the tools and follow the rules associated with our particular discipline.

The Christian minister must also be like the hard working farmer – that’s the 3rd of the overlapping metaphors. The farmer wakes up early and has to go out in the field no matter the wind or weather – and so too must the pastor. The Christian ministry is not the place for a lazy person. You need to be early at your Bible. You need to be often on your knees. You need to be steadfast and consistent in your prayers. You must be like the hard working farmer – but if you do, generally speaking, you will enjoy the first share of the crop. Scholars seem to think that by that metaphor Paul means both the fruit of personal character and the fruit of conversions and Christian growth, and I see no reason to disagree with that.

To complete this picture of the Christian ministry the Apostle appeals to the example of Jesus – who was RISEN FROM the DEAD though he was the seed and offspring of David. Imagine that! Even the offspring of David - who ought to have had a soft upbringing in a palace - who ought to have been celebrated everywhere he went - who ought to have reigned over a thankful and adoring nation - even Jesus, the offspring of David had to suffer before he rose from the dead and entered into his glory. If Jesus had to do that – how much more you? How much more me, Paul says, and of course his own story illustrated very well that general principle. I am in chains, he says – though thanks be to God the Word is not chained.

“I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10 ESV)

And that leads us to the final thing that Paul speaks of here:

5. The law of the Christian ministry

⁶ John Bunyan, *Of Antichrist And His Ruin* (Bolton: First Rate Publishers, 2022), 47.

I have a trustworthy saying to share with you, the Apostle says:

“If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.” (2 Timothy 2:11–13 ESV)

Most of the commentators say that this was likely a line borrowed from a well-known early Christian hymn, which the Apostle here endorses. The basic connection is the idea that ENDURANCE LEADS TO REWARD and GLORY whereas FAITHLESSNESS leads to ruin and regret.

The hymn itself was probably inspired by a saying of Jesus, recorded for us in Matthew 10:32:

“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32–33 ESV)

Jesus often said things like this – we talked about this last week, the one who builds his house upon the ROCK will survive the storm that is coming and will enter into eternal life – whereas the one who builds his house on sand will be washed away – and great will be the fall of that house. You don’t have to be a keen Bible scholar to realize that according to Jesus the difference between REAL faith and FALSE faith comes down to the matter of ENDURANCE. He taught that on many occasions. In Matthew 10 he said:

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22 ESV)

In Matthew 24 he said:

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:13 ESV)

Endurance is everything. Storms are going to come Timothy, hardship is going to come. Prison, beatings, tortures, executions – all of that is going to come!

“But the one who endures to the end will be saved.” (Matthew 24:13 ESV)

Whereas the one who turns aside when the road goes through the valley, the one who shaves off the hard edges under pressure, the one who throws all the heavy stuff overboard when he comes to a set of rapid, the one who denies Christ to save his own skin, will be cast into outer darkness. So – stay the course Timothy. Take your lumps and fulfill your ministry.

To quote one more time from John Stott, he says helpfully here:

“Looking back over the first half of this chapter (verses 1 to 13), the apostle Paul seems to have been hammering home a single lesson. From secular analogy (soldiers, athletes, farmers) and from spiritual experience (Christ’s, his own, every Christian’s) he has been insisting that blessing comes through pain, fruit through toil, life through death, and glory through suffering. It is an invariable law of Christian life and service.”⁷

Let me repeat that last line:

“It is an invariable law of Christian life and service.”⁸

Glory through suffering. Life through death. Fruit through toil. Blessing through pain – and all by the grace that God supplies. That is an invariable LAW of Christian life and service. That is a FEATURE not a bug. That is your calling, your commission and your context, brothers and sisters – O God, help!

Let’s pray together.

⁷John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 65.

⁸John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 2 Timothy*, The Bible Speaks Today. Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove.: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 65.