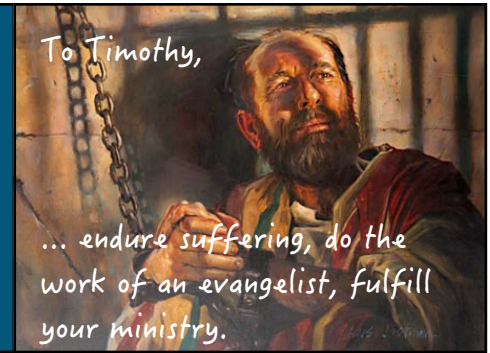


2 Timothy

Fulfill Your Ministry

Lesson 4



In lesson 3 Paul instructed Timothy to guard the good deposit of the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. He wrote to Timothy the poor example of those in Asia who had deserted him in his time of need, and he commended Onesiphorus for refreshing him time and time again.

Building an Enduring Church 2:1-7

It has been said that the church is only one generation from extinction. This may be a bit inaccurate since Jesus says the church will prevail till he comes again, but the vitality and growth of the church is dependent upon church leaders who will equip the next generation of leaders. While the church (universal) will never face extinction the same cannot be said of individual congregations which can and do sometimes fail and die.

Throughout chapter one, Paul has prepared Timothy for what he is about to write. He has stressed his personal love for Timothy as a beloved son in the faith. He has urged Timothy to fan into flame his spiritual gift. He has called on him to suffer for the gospel. He has urged him to remain true to sound doctrine and has reminded him of those who were faithful and those who were not. Paul has shared his own struggles with Timothy. He is in prison. He is suffering. He has been deserted.

Paul begins chapter 2 saying, “**You** therefore” indicating this is strong and personal appeal. The majority have deserted Paul in his time of need and have fallen away from the Lord’s service. These are perilous times and Timothy will need to stand against the swelling tide of deserters and reject popular opinion.



The affection within Paul’s address is seen as he again refers to Timothy as “*my child*” and exhorts him to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Christ has provided his grace (meaning his help or assistance) to give Timothy the power to accomplish his ministry.

Timothy is now prepared to hear the charge to faithfully mentor men as teachers of the gospel. He is to choose men who, when trained, can pass on their training to others. This is the method by which the church will endure.

📍 **The content of the teaching.** Paul tells Timothy to entrust to other men the teaching he had received. In the previous chapter Paul said that he had provided Timothy with a pattern of sound teaching. Timothy was not to teach his opinion nor to devise something he thought church leaders needed. The teaching he was to pass on was the message Paul had taught as he was inspired by the Holy Spirit (1:13,14.)

Paul's teaching was conducted publicly. Many people including Timothy heard Paul speak in the presence of many witnesses. The individuals who teach and those who are taught will change, but the content of the teaching is to be unchangeable across the generations.

1. Describe the importance and stability of an unchanging gospel.

📍 **Qualities of those who are to be taught.** Paul says to entrust this message of the gospel to faithful men. The word translated as “*entrust*” (or “commit” in some translations) is a word that means to place in the charge of another for safe keeping. Only those men who have the correct spiritual maturity and giftedness for this ministry are to be entrusted with this duty.



Character: The character of those men to whom the message was to be entrusted is described as “*faithful*.” This refers to men who are loyal to the truth. Their desire is to be obedient to God’s Word. Being faithful is a character issue. Does one have a Christ-like character shaped by love for God and Scripture?

2. What are some ways in which Christians demonstrate their character?

Ability: A second qualification of these men is that they be “*able*” to teach others also. Here, a significant amount of discernment will be necessary. One can have a great character, but not be gifted in such a way as to be a teacher in the Lord’s church. This ability is seen in a demonstrated aptitude.

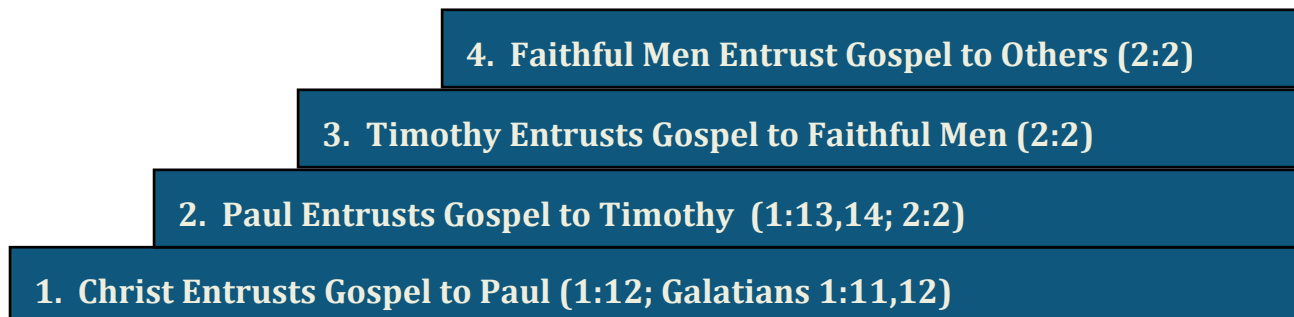
Whether or not one has the ability to teach does not refer to their value in any way. Every brother and sister in the church is a part of the body and the body has many parts and not every part is tasked with the same role.

3. List some of the ways that teachers, in the church, can identify those who have the ability to become teachers.

Paul is not saying that some people in the church are more valuable than others, nor is he saying that every Christian should not be learning and growing. Timothy had a limited amount of time and energy so it was essential that he accurately determine in which men he should invest his time and energy.

If church leaders spend their time with men who lack the the faithfulness and capability to become godly teachers they will find these men are not able to accurately and effectively pass on the message of the gospel and lead the church to maturity.

Paul describes a four step process to developing an enduring church as illustrated below:



4. Which steps above are most or least important?

5. Why does the model above sometimes fail?

Paul illustrates his charge to Timothy with three illustrations. These vivid illustrations reinforce to Timothy that his task will be difficult, opposed, and rewarded.

The first illustration is that of a **soldier**. Paul had a great deal of experience with soldiers and was now under constant guard. The Greek word translated “*share in suffering*” means to “suffer evil together, to endure affliction together, to take one’s share of rough treatment.”¹ We know from Hebrews 13:23 that Timothy was arrested and imprisoned just like Paul, his mentor.

6. Why is it important that Paul not ask anything of Timothy that he was not willing to endure himself?

The rigors of training are difficult, but the battlefield is worse. Soldiers face conflict with little comfort and constant danger. Christian teachers should expect difficulty and danger.

Soldiers must not get involved in “*civilian pursuits*.” This does not mean that Christians cannot enjoy life in this world, but that there must be focus on the mission at hand. The civilian world and the pressures of life in the world must never take precedence over the ministry with which Timothy had been entrusted.



¹ Smith, James E. Exhortation Epistles, p. 212.

Soldiers perform their duties in order to please the commanding officer. In the first century soldiers were personally recruited by the commander to serve alongside him in battle. The Lord Jesus Christ is our commander and has chosen us through the gospel to join the battle against our adversary the devil. Our desire is to “conquer the world with the message of salvation.”²

7. What makes a soldier an apt illustration to describe service for Christ?

Paul’s second illustration is that of an **athlete**. Paul often uses athletic illustrations and some think it is quite possible he competed in athletics at some level. The athlete strives for a “crown” which had no monetary value in first century competition. The Christian’s crown is of eternal significance. Another notable difference is that athletes compete against one another and there can only be one victor. Christians serve alongside each other and all can be victorious.



8. Athletes compete according to the “rules.” Why are rules essential and what do they illustrate regarding service for Christ?



The third and final illustration is that of a **farmer**. Farmers are described as “*hard-working*.” No one who is familiar with farming would describe these labours as easy. Farmers are subject to droughts, floods, pests, and the breakdown of equipment.

The farmer who harvests a crop can expect to the first share of the crops. The idea is that he receives benefit from his work. Likewise, Christian workers are entitled to financial benefit in this life and eternal reward in the life to come.

In each of these illustrations we see that the task is difficult, adversaries are always present, but rewards come to those who complete the task successfully.

In 2:7, Paul calls on Timothy to think about what he is saying and then the Lord would provide understanding. Note the two-fold method of gaining value and insight from Paul’s letter. First, Timothy must think. God made humans in his likeness with the ability to think and reason. We can learn more of God and what he wants as we listen to his word and think about what he has said. Then, the Lord will provide understanding in everything.

An enduring church can be built, but it requires God’s strength which comes from his grace. It requires men who will faithfully pass along the teaching of Scripture to those able to teach others. It requires diligent service in difficult times as illustrated by soldiers, athletes, and farmers.

² Ibid. p. 213.