

BaptistWay: Wake Up and Keep Going

November 6, 2014

- *The BaptistWay lesson for Nov. 23 focuses on 2 Timothy 1:6-14; 2:1-15.*

Insecurity. I think Timothy struggled with it. Why else would the Apostle Paul admonish his young friend to act with confidence and discipline in his calling (vv. 6-7), just as he did in 1 Timothy 4:11-14? Perhaps Timothy dealt with challenges to his leadership or wrestled with fear as he refuted heresies taught by false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3-4; 6:3-4). Every servant of God needs encouragement and support. That's exactly what Paul wanted to offer in his second recorded letter to Timothy.

Suffering for the gospel

Part of his support included allaying Timothy's concern about himself, imprisoned as he was for the sake of the gospel. Although many English renderings make it appear Timothy was embarrassed by Paul's imprisonment or ashamed of the gospel, that's not really the case. Instead, Paul was reminding him God was allowing the present circumstances for his purposes. Perhaps Timothy needed this encouragement as he contended with those who mocked the gospel or Paul, or he was disappointed God hadn't rescued Paul from captivity.

Nevertheless, Paul asks Timothy to "join with (him) in suffering for the gospel" (v. 8), warning him to expect difficulties, challenges and resistance to his ministry (see also John 16:33; James 1:2-5), all of which are rooted in spiritual warfare, according to Ephesians 6:12. The hazards and obstacles of ministry demand dependence on God's power for sustenance and help (v. 8). To prove the depth of that power, Paul paints Timothy a picture of the gospel (vv. 9-10), outlining the process (by grace through faith), purpose

(to destroy death and bring life) and basis of salvation (Christ's sacrificial act, not human merit).

That power brings salvation to everyone who believes. Paul believes this so fervently, desires it for others so deeply, he is neither ashamed of the gospel (Romans 1:16) nor of his chains (see also Philippians 1:12-17). He knows and trusts God's character to guard his soul and work. Paul's example is (1) a reminder of God's faithfulness, (2) what is orthodox in teaching, and (3) how to serve as a shepherd to believers, but it's not prescriptive. Timothy is invited, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to function according to his gifts, skills and personality (vv. 13-14).

Grace to guide the way

That's not to say the job will be easy. In verses 15-18, Paul lists individuals who deserted him and those who supported him in his time of need. Patient courage is required. Paul tells Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1). At first glance, this may seem contradictory. After all, how can one be strong and simultaneously exhibit grace? It could be our understanding of grace is inaccurate.

Grace isn't the same thing as mercy. When we're in trouble and ask for grace, what we usually mean is we want mercy. We want the consequences of our behavior to be circumvented, wiped away, erased. But grace is favor, creating an environment that persistently seeks to bring out the best in others.

Timothy's challenge as pastor of this group of Ephesian believers is to correct false doctrine, lead and disciple in such a way that relationships are kept healthy. He will need Christ's grace flowing through him, because there will be times of discouragement and exhaustion.

Serving Christ and his bride faithfully is arduous work—like a soldier, athlete or farmer attending to his/her responsibilities. It will be hard not to

get off task and focus on insignificant matters (v. 4). Good things are not always the best things. It will be tempting to sacrifice integrity, looking for shortcuts or easier routes to victory (v. 5). Self-discipline is required. It would be easy to sit back and let things happen instead of working hard toward results that may or may not be seen (v. 6).

Remember Jesus

And what will sustain God's servants? Remembering Jesus (v. 8). How different might our perspectives on and responses to life today be if we "remembered Jesus" more often? If we remembered:

- the depth of his love for humanity—for us.
- the kindness he exhibited to those in need of help.
- his patience with doubting followers.
- his sufferings.
- the way he dealt with those who opposed him.
- his fulfillment of prophecy (v. 8).
- he is not limited by time or space (v. 9).
- his promises for life now and eternity (vv. 11-12).
- his victory over death and sin (v. 8). Hope is not lost; hope is not without cause.

Remember: He...Is... Faithful (2:13)

Can't you just imagine Paul celebrating as he wrote these words (vv. 8-13), and Timothy jumping out of seat as he read them? Timothy's not called to serve out of his own wisdom and strength, but out of God's inexhaustible

reservoir. So, he can afford the energy it takes to “keep reminding” and “warn” God’s people who quarrel about semantics (v. 14). And, as he does his best, he can depend on God’s wisdom and strength to guide his conduct, biblical interpretation and teaching (v. 15).

Take a moment to journal your answers to the following questions: Where do you find yourself today? Are you struggling with insecurity in the roles God has called you to in your work, church, volunteer positions or home? List which and why. Put a star beside those in which you are faithfully fulfilling your responsibilities, but out of your own wisdom and strength, rather than God’s endless supply.

Maybe you refuse to accept the fact that obedience to Christ may include suffering. How can you get to a place where you accept this reality? Do you believe God is trustworthy to guard your soul and work? Or do you clamor for control so you don’t have to fear suffering or leave the unknown results to him? How is your grace quota? Do coworkers, fellow church members, family, friends and lost people around you recognize you as someone who prizes healthy relationships? Why or why not?

What about Christ’s life, teaching and example will help you today? If necessary, research it; then remember it. Paul called Timothy to focus on faithfully serving Christ. Pick a verse from this study passage that encourages you to toward the same. Write it on a notecard and place it where you’ll see it, or make it the background for your phone or computer until you have it memorized. Share it with another of Christ’s servants as a word of blessing and encouragement.