

I guess you could call this a Pastor's privilege, but today we are jumping over to second Timothy for a text that I thought was extremely appropriate for today's events. Let's look at 2 Timothy 3:10-15.

As you turn there, let me set this up. There is a special relationship between these two men, Paul and Timothy. And this letter is Paul's valedictory message, his farewell to Timothy, and the last letter we have from Paul. Paul knew how unlikely it was that they would ever see each other again.

There is a place in Philippians – after that famous mountain peak of a passage that explains the gospel and how one can have with others, the mind of Christ. That is through the cross we are not only reconciled to God, but that we can share the same joy, the same love and the same mind. And then Paul goes on to say – this is Philippians 2:19-24 – that he and Timothy have this very thing: Paul writes, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ***For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.*** They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ***But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.***

Timothy was like a son to Paul. There is, Paul says, no one like him. Not being a son by blood, you see, he has become a son because there has been no one like Timothy who wanted to know and learn all that Paul had to teach about the mysteries of the gospel.

With that in view, let's look at what Paul says in our passage, in this farewell to his son in the Lord, Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:10-15

¹⁰ You, however, have followed *my* teaching, *my* conduct, *my* aim in life, *my* faith, *my* patience, *my* love, *my* steadfastness, ¹¹ *my* persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra--which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³ while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

Back in September of 2006, I had the honor of preaching at Reverend Altman's ordination service at the University chapel – that is, Pastor Blake's ordination! And it is an honor to preach now, again, at Matt's. Or as he will be known in a few minutes, "Pastor Matt."

This passage is so relevant because it marks a momentous turning point in the life of Timothy, just as today marks a turning point in Matthew's life.

Paul's overriding concern here is not to focus on himself, as it might sound – "You, however, have followed *my* teaching, *my* conduct, *my* aim in life, *my* faith, *my* patience, *my* love, *my* steadfastness, *my* persecutions... but rather he is saying, "Here is all that I gave you. You have it all." It's almost like that place in John 20, where John writes to HIS followers and students, that "Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but *these* are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."¹ So now Paul says, "I could tell you more, but I couldn't tell you any more that would help you any further. You have it! You have all you need. And so now that I have poured my life into you, son, it is time for you to learn the importance of pouring yourself into others."

This is it – an important hinge in redemptive history. It is the apostolic succession. You're witnessing here in this passage, the original deposit that was made, and Paul is teaching Timothy how to reinvest it.

This morning I have just three brief points on this process.

- How a Christian is taught
- How a Christians learns what they are taught
- How a Christian knows what he knows is true.

So first, how a Christian is taught. This passage, which starts off, "You, however, have followed *my* teaching," is really a crescendo to what Paul has been telling Timothy in the letter all along. Earlier in 2nd Timothy 1, Paul wrote, "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. 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, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."²

At the time, you see, of Timothy's long-distance ordination, Paul reminds him of where it all began.

Matt you have had something very similar. With a man of character for a father, who worked diligently, it was your mother, and her mother before her, your grandmother, who poured these truths down, from generation to generation, into you.

Friends, in each generation, God brings a gracious visitation of his spirit upon his people. But if those sparks are not fanned – if that flame doesn't spread, if Eunice doesn't take the time to teach Timothy, or if Mrs. Harmon doesn't instruct Matt, then there is no flame to fan. Matt is here because of the faith once delivered. If his parents never pass on what they have, there is no church attendance, there is no youth group, there is no Navigators (as there was for Matt), there is no sense of calling, no seminary, and therefore no new leader of the church.

¹ John 20:30-31

² 2 Timothy 1:5-7

Are *you* passing on what you have? And not just through Sunday school, but at the table at home? Matt's mother is here! She can tell you how. Speak to me if you want ideas. But it is in the home, Paul is reminded, that it all began for Timothy, and where it all began for Matt, and where it is beginning now with Anastasia. On and on until our Lord returns.

Matt can tell you that whether through men like he had in Navigators at Dartmouth, or those he had in seminary like the late Al Groves or Dr. Gaffin, or the elders here at Hope that there is a principle that applies to us all: Without faithful investment of older Christians into our youth, young Christians simply do not grow.

In 2nd Timothy 2:2, Paul 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.***

Matt, you have taken the time to invest into the youth of this church – and it is one of the things the elders here at Hope recognized as an indicator and affirmation of your call to ministry – a ministry of time and fun, yes, but most profoundly in a ministry of the Word. A *faithful* ministry of the word. I don't mean faithful in showing up, but rather being faithful to the word itself.

This week I began to teach a class at the seminary that Matt and I attended. And one of the scariest things to see – and something that has to be remedied quickly in the hearts of those going through it – is meeting the 1st-year seminary student who has arrived fresh from a mountain top experience of faith. And they are aflutter with expectation, but they have no grounding. No spiritual mothers or fathers. No building blocks. And in these classes on the nature of scripture and the thorny problems of the bible, they are about to be hit with the heaviest weight of theological issues.

And then in ministry they will be hit with the heavy hearts of the people they serve and the problem of their own sin, too. It's scary! And no one has yet had the opportunity to invest themselves in these sorts of students. They lack the fundamentals and stability that is so necessary for real Christian growth.

Our old professor, Sinclair Ferguson, was teaching in sanctification one day and told a story to illustrate it. He told of being 14-year-old boy when Arnold Palmer came to his town of Tron (troun), Scotland, in the early 60's, to play in the British Open. And he was able to go to the tournament and follow the great golfer as Palmer played 36 holes. The next day, young Sinclair Ferguson shot what he thought was a breathtaking round of golf for someone of 14 years of age. He played, truly, beyond his own abilities, just because the day before he spent the day under the powerful inspiration of the man who at that time was the world's greatest golfer. He put everything he saw into action. It's a spiritual analogy.

Matt today is the day that marks the time when you go from the one observing, to the one being deserved. You go from being the one who has received the deposit – the faith once delivered – and become an investor in God's people. You're already doing it, but now it is your true calling. Starting today, there will be those that follow *your* teaching. So don't ever let your teaching, your theology, be speculative. Starting today, people will watch closely *your* conduct. Be a man of integrity, and know that anyone could be your brother – even a weaker brother.

So you must be careful to guard your heart and not lead anyone into temptation. Today, you start your ministry with people watching your aim in life. You see what I mean. People are watching and following, *your* faith, *your* patience, *your* love, *your* steadfastness, and yes, *even your* persecutions. Everything is different today. Even today in your home, Anastasia becomes a preacher's kid, and Rebecca becomes a pastor's wife. Dare I say, people will be watching them, too. You have to lead them well and protect them.

Second, we need to see **how a Christians learns what they are taught**.

I recently heard an interview with a rookie on Matt's favorite football team. No, not the Dartmouth Big Green machine – that's not even, really, football. No, I'm talking about the New England Patriots. And this rookie – and I actually try *not* to remember the names of their players – said something interesting. He said, I need to get out of the play book. I need to get out on the field and play, and even makes some mistakes. I need to get knocked around a little, so that I will go back and try to remember what they're trying to teach me. That's how the playbook is going to sink in. Through mistakes and taking a hit."

And there you have it. It's the persecutions of verses 11 and 12 – persecutions from which the Lord rescued Paul – these persecutions and trials are opportunities ***to continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed***.

It's the testing. Our deacons went through training. And now Brian and Ray and Ed and Jason will put it into effect, such that it becomes real with each trial. Matt, you studied many, many hours for ordination. And it was knowing that the test was coming that ground those truths deep into your memory. Each trial you have now will develop your spiritual memory. Each persecution, each time of suffering, each personal struggle will make it so that what you believe, you now firmly believe.

Matt, does your view of the gospel have room for suffering on behalf of the gospel? (repeat) Because it must. You know, at the beginning of this letter, Paul said to Timothy, "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." In other words, Paul's imprisonment was likely an embarrassment to Timothy. He probably heard things like, "If your God and your gospel are so great, then why is Paul in jail?" Embarrassing!

But later in life – and you can see this at the very end of the book of Hebrews – the last three verses – the writer says there that the reader "should know that our brother Timothy has been released." That is, released from prison! Timothy would soon suffer, you see, the same way that Paul had, for the sake of the gospel. And you now serve in a long line of servants of the gospel – and you will suffer such that each trial becomes that opportunity to express your faith, and then set you up to give that faith away, and watch it grow in someone else.

Finally, how a Christian knows what he knows is true.

Many years ago, in the mid-70's when I was little guy, my older sister and mother went to Luxembourg on a school trip. When they returned, I remember my sister speaking about the differences between European and American culture. One of those differences – and it still is – is the concept of what is old. Back then, in the 70's, we were about to celebrate the bi-centennial of our country. 200 years!

But in Europe, if you see a building that's three hundred years, it's just now just starting to get old. 300 years in Europe is puberty in architectural years. My sister recalled driving in a bus with the other students to visit something REALLY old. I think it may have been something like a 14th c. castle. Actually, it looked like a ruin, with certain walls starting to crumble. As the bus pulled up, one of the students saw someone in the building – in the castle – who must have seen the bus, and pulled a curtain across their window. And the student said, "Wow, that old ruin is alive!" She was shocked. This was more than a tourist attraction. The building was actually being used for what it was originally intended to do. It was lived-in. It was inhabited for the very purpose it had been made for. And this excited my sister, and all of the others.

There are many people who when they open the bible, have had the same experience. They expect to find ruins and all kinds of odd bits of things they've heard of – random verses that stand like the tall stones do at Stonehenge. But who can really understand what goes on here in this book? It's just so *old*. But if you keep reading you start to see shadows. Moving shadows. Things start to move. Your imagination opens up, and then you realize, this is alive. It's active. This old ruin of a book – it's alive!

This isn't a notion you might notice even so well in the verses that follow our passage, if you don't also have the words here in verses 10-15. *Those* famous verses that say, on their face, something amazing and true: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." But you see, Paul ends with that sort of didactic teaching because he reminds Timothy of what happened when he first came upon this old ruin of a book: "...*continue* in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and *how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation* through faith in Christ Jesus.

You've studied the word so long and hard, Matt, that this seems hardly likely. But in your work as an ordained servant, you will come across situations where the bible seems like the last place you would look for wisdom. I could give you a list! But whenever I was tempted to think this, I was wrong each and every time. This old dusty book of writings ... these are words that are *able*. They are alive. They have the power to open up a world of salvation. They have the power to guide you to live your life under God and unto God. God's word will always give you the skill you need to know how to resist evil, and embrace what is good.

When Bill Edgar preached to Rev. Kim and I at our graduation, he said that in one way, "ministers must be extremely conservative people – because that is when they are the most radical." Because we are not in the business, Dr. Edgar said, "of inventing new truths, but

preserving old ones." *But*, we are conservatives who are *extremely* liberal – we apply the gospel to *everything*. We give the gospel to *every one*. Matt, be extremely conservative with the truth of God's word, because when you preach it truly, you will be as radical a person as there is.

Let's pray.