

“DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY”

(Notes from a lesson delivered by John Temples to Bear Valley School of Preaching students at the Workshop In The Word, Durango, Colorado, May 2002)

(Read 2 Timothy 1:1-13)

1. WHEN YOU THINK OF TIMOTHY, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND?
 - a. Young, energetic, talented gospel preacher. “Solid credentials.”
 - b. A third-generation Christian (Paul spoke of the faith of his grandmother Lois & mother Eunice).
 - c. Paul’s trusted troubleshooter. He was sent to Corinth & Ephesus to deal with problems & false teachers.
 - d. He was honored by having his name associated with Paul in salutations of six NT letters (2 Cor., Phil., Col., Philemon, 1 & 2 Thess.)
 - e. There were very few disciples besides him who stuck with Paul through thick & thin.
 - f. There was a real bond between the battle-scarred, old apostle and the young, trusty side- kick (like Batman and Robin–Lone Ranger and Tonto).
 - g. Wesley said, “Of all whom Paul ever converted, Timothy seems to have been the disciple who was most loved and most trusted.”

2. YET IF YOU READ OUR TEXT CAREFULLY, YOU SEE SOME CRACKS IN TIMOTHY’S ARMOR.
 - a. In fact, you see at times a troubled, fearful, confused, and discouraged young preacher.
 - b. Go back through 2 Tim. 1:1-13 and note these markers:
 - i. “Mindful of your tears...” (V. 4)
 - ii. “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you...” (V. 6)
 - iii. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear...” (V. 7)
 - iv. V. 8 we will come to in a moment.
 - v. V. 13–“Hold fast the pattern of sound words...”

- c. This does not sound like the Timothy we thought we knew!
3. WHEN YOU START READING FROM THIS VIEWPOINT, YOU BEGIN TO FIND MARKERS ALL OVER THE PLACE:
- a. 2 Tim. 2:15—"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."
 - b. 1 Tim. 4:14—"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."
 - c. 1 Tim. 4:12—"Let no one despise your youth."
 - i. If you are a young preacher, and you have had older people look at you after a sermon with that "don't tell me how to live, you young whippersnapper" look, you know what this is about.
 - ii. If you have had some older Christian tell you to be a "good little preacher" and don't step on any toes, you know what this is about.
 - iii. When Timothy went to Corinth, Paul felt it necessary to put this in the letter he carried: "Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore let no one despise him, but send him on his journey in peace." (1 Cor. 16:10,11)
4. SO WHEN YOU REALLY PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO 1 & 2 TIMOTHY, YOU SEE A YOUNG GOSPEL PREACHER WHOSE CONFIDENCE HAS BEEN BADLY SHAKEN.
- a. He seemed to have a real problem understanding Paul's imprisonment (our text, 2 Tim. 1:8).
 - b. The constant stress of fighting false doctrine was sapping his confidence & energy.
 - c. He evidently had been intimidated and worn down by constant opposition.
 - d. He was even neglecting his spiritual gifts.
 - e. His youth was a factor, as we noted.
 - f. Paul spoke of his (Timothy's) tears—tears of frustration, discouragement, and fear.

5. WITH THAT AS A BACKGROUND, I BELIEVE OUR TEXT HAS SOMETHING OF VALUE TO SAY TO US.

- a. When I say “us,” I am identifying myself with most of you here who are young preachers or who are still in preaching school.
- b. In 1970, I graduated from the Nashville School of Preaching.
- c. I remember what it was like to be a new, young preacher in a big, intimidating world. (I’m now a middle-aged preacher in a big, intimidating world.)
- d. And I can tell you this after 34 years of preaching—you gain confidence and courage as you get older, but you never completely get over the “fear factor.”

6. IN OUR TEXT, PAUL TOLD TIMOTHY NOT TO BE ASHAMED OF TWO THINGS:

- a. The testimony of our Lord (the gospel);
- b. Me, his prisoner. (Timothy was evidently having a real struggle with his hero being imprisoned under Nero and facing execution.)
- c. Interestingly enough, Paul does not consider himself a prisoner of Nero but a prisoner of CHRIST. He simply viewed his imprisonment as something allowed by the Lord for his good and the furtherance of the gospel.

a. Fellow preachers, you and I are going to be constantly tempted to become ashamed of the testimony of CHRIST.

b. We need to heed what Paul says!

c. In the remainder of this lesson, I want to share with you some experiences gained in 34 years on the firing line and point out some areas where Satan is going to concentrate to try to discourage you.

d. I want to share with you some things not to be ashamed of or intimidated by.

7. DON'T BE INTIMIDATED BY CRITICISM—OF YOUR PREACHING, YOUR LIFE, YOUR EDUCATION, YOUR FAMILY, ETC.

a. In the 1970s, I was preaching for a small congregation.

b. I got up a lesson that I was extremely proud of: an all-Scripture and only-Scripture lesson.

c. I asked doctrinal questions and answered them by quoting Scripture—no

comments.

- d. I memorized 90-something passages for this lesson.
 - e. After I delivered it, an “elder” (the same elder that sat on the front row every Sunday morning opening and reading the church mail during the sermon) said to me, “What was the point of that lesson? What good was it?”
 - f. You are going to preach the good old Restoration gospel and have people say to you, “Why don’t you preach something new? We’ve heard all the arguments on instrumental music, baptism, etc.” Memorize two passages:
 - i. 1 Tim. 4:6–“If you instruct [keep on instructing, Greek present tense] the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.”
 - ii. 2 Pet. 1:12–“Therefore I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them and are established in the present truth.”
 - g. Remember this old saying: “The church is never more than one generation away from apostasy.” We must keep reminding folks.
 - h. How do you handle criticism? Evaluate it—learn from it—if it is valid, make some changes. If it is invalid, let it go and just do your job.
8. DON’T BE INTIMIDATED BY PEOPLE WITH MORE EDUCATION THAN YOU.
- a. I confess to having been weak in that area. (I only have an Associate college degree, and a diploma from NSOP.)
 - b. But I have had the good fortune in my secular work career to work with PhDs and medical doctors.
 - c. I came to understand that these people put their pants on one leg at a time just like I do.
 - d. They have had a lot of intense training in one very narrow area. Outside that area, they are just like anybody else—especially in knowledge of the Bible and spiritual matters.
 - e. Will Rogers said, “We are all ignorant, just in different subjects.”
 - f. What do you do if you find yourself preaching in a highly-educated congregation?

- i. Learn to speak, write, and spell correctly.
- ii. But don't be afraid to preach the plain old gospel to PhDs.
- iii. And don't feel that you have to argue or preach on their level. You are not debating them; you are helping them understand the Bible better.
- iv. The Corinthian church was an affluent, highly-educated congregation; yet Paul said: "I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God; for I determined not to 'know' anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

1. DON'T BE INTIMIDATED BY RICH PEOPLE.

- a. More good advice: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Tim. 6:17)

2. DON'T BE INTIMIDATED OR DISCOURAGED BY A SEEMING LACK OF RESULTS FROM YOUR PREACHING.

- a. Even some seasoned preachers resign every Monday morning. (Seems like once again, no visible response, no change of life, no increase in attendance; when I preach on giving, the offering goes down.)
- b. You may be having more effect than you realize. (Several years ago, I preached a sermon on bettering your life, taking advantage of opportunities. I shared a slogan—"If it is to be, it's up to me." Two years later, a lady came up to me and reminded me of that lesson--she said it made her make up mind to finish her degree.)
- c. More good advice: "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...." (2 Tim. 4:2,3a)

3. DO NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY CHANGE AGENTS AND THE IDEAS THEY ARE PROMOTING—DILUTING THE INTEGRITY OF THE NT CHURCH, CHANGING THE WAY WE INTERPRET THE BIBLE, AND SO FORTH.

- a. Don't reject and be ashamed of the Restoration movement, the five steps of

salvation, the items of worship, and the good old “direct statement/approved example/implication” hermeneutic.

b. What did Paul tell Timothy? “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.”

4. DON'T BE INTIMIDATED BY PERSECUTION FROM WITHOUT.

a. Expect it! 2 Tim. 3:12—“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”

b. Persecution from the world may be emotional (ridicule, mockery), or physical.

c. How do you handle persecution?

i. Do not place yourself or your family deliberately in physical danger. (If they persecute you in one city, flee to another.)

ii. Use the civil law to protect yourself and your family.

iii. Do not retaliate, but leave vengeance to God.

5. SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS:

a. When I say don't be intimidated by the things I mentioned, I don't mean to ignore them.

i. Learn from criticism; respect genuine Bible scholarship and benefit from it.

ii. Learn how to spell, write, and preach with proper grammar. Don't be sloppy.

b. Don't ever stop being curious and inquisitive. One of the first words you ever learned was “Look.”

c. Prepare your lessons with your Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

d. Minimize stress in your life.

e. Learn how to relate to people of all levels—from PhDs to children. Rom. 12:16—“Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”

f. Always preach the truth in love, and don't worry about the consequences.

g. If you are going to state a proposition in a sermon, or present some idea as truth,

be able to back it up Scripturally. Do your research.

- h. It's okay to state your opinion—just alert the brethren that it is your opinion.
- i. Some good advice I received at the NSOP—"Preachers should be exclamation points, not question marks." Be bold and say, "This is what the Bible teaches." People are looking for authoritative answers.
- j. Don't get involved in personal or family squabbles.
- k. If you do counseling, keep your standards high.
- l. Be careful in your relationships with women. Paul told Timothy, "[Treat] the younger women as sisters, with all purity." (1 Tim. 5:2)
- m. If somebody ridicules you, do not respond in kind.
- n. Learn how to manage your money and provide things honest in the sight of all men. Pay your debts and live within your means.
- o. Enjoy your ministry. Thank God for the opportunity to enlighten people on what the Bible teaches. It is the greatest work in the world. –John Temples