

In Conclusion... REMAIN FAITHFUL
II Timothy 1:11-18 (AFBC 1/27/19)

Last week, we began a series of messages I've chosen to call "In Conclusion." We read verses 1-7 of II Timothy 1 and focused on our need to "stay strong" in the Lord as First Baptist Church continues toward its 200th Anniversary and far beyond!

We talked about good relationships and memories, and the role they play in keeping us strong. And we also took note of the need for revival along the way—the "fanning into flame" of those gifts God has placed in our lives.

Paul knew his earthly life was nearly over. He was in Nero's prison. He would soon be executed; but he expected Timothy's life and ministry, along with that of the church he served, to continue right on for many years. Paul was concerned that the church and all those who serve it would remain faithful to the task.

He saw the right stuff in them, but he also knew that they would face tough challenges. They all, pastor and people, needed encouragement and reassurance in order to stay the course.

So with that, let's look at today's Scripture. As we read it, I want you to be listening for some examples of faithfulness and be reflecting on how these can help us stay true and faithful to our calling in Jesus Christ. Look with me, please, at ch. 1, vv. 11-18:

¹¹And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. ¹²That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

¹³What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. ¹⁵You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. ¹⁶May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. ¹⁷On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. ¹⁸May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from

the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

It sounds like Paul had hit a few bumps in the road, doesn't it? But Paul's focus was not on the hardships he faced, but on the grace of God that sustained him. Having the right focus helps us to remain faithful to the Lord and His work in this world. So, what is Paul wanting us to focus our attention on according to today's Scripture?

1. Well, let's begin by looking at **GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**. Verse 12 of II Timothy 1 is a foundational verse. It's quoted often and it inspired the hymn we sang earlier: "...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

What is Paul saying to us? This man who had endured so much suffering for the cause of Christ is stating as clearly as he knows how that we can always count on God, that we can trust God to be faithful.

When Timothy read those words and shared them with the church, he knew they were coming from a man who believed them and who lived his life accordingly. Paul was so radical in his faith and obedience to the call of Christ that two thousand years later he continues to inspire people like us to trust God with abandon!

When Paul speaks of what he has "entrusted" or "committed" to God, he uses the Greek word "paratheke." It simply means to place something of great value into the care of another.

If you've ever left your child with a babysitter, you have an idea of what this word means. And I'm not talking about your seven year old, but your seven-week old. And not your fifth child, but your first—when you still care! I well remember having to convince Pam to leave our first—Claire—with a babysitter—and the sitter was not someone we didn't know. It was family—MY family!

Later, she got over this. But I'm talking here about first child, first time, with a sitter! That's "paratheke." It's a "leap of faith"—the act of putting your total trust in someone else—like when you place your little one in the hands of another.

Paul is telling us that he has handed his life over to God. He has entrusted all of his life and eternity into the Heavenly Father's

hands. And God has never failed him. This is Paul's conviction even though he's been beaten and stoned, arrested and imprisoned, and now he's awaiting execution.

But Paul says, "It's okay—I'm okay--because God has hold of my life." Paul has handed his life over--"entrusting" it, "committing" it, to God. And what he wants Timothy and all the rest of us to understand is that God will always take good care of everything and everybody that we entrust to Him.

Paul summarizes his confidence in the Lord with these three words: "He is able." This is his faith, and he wants it to be our faith too. We're not so sure, though, so we question, "But what if this should happen?" And Paul assures us, "God is able."

"But how about this?" we continue. And Paul answers, "Don't worry. God is able." How liberating it is to know this, to take it to heart. When Paul speaks elsewhere of "peace that passeth understanding," this is where he gets it from: his complete, total confidence that "God is indeed able."

"I am persuaded," he says, "I am convinced" that "he is able..." We're not able, but God is. Friends, when this becomes our faith, there is a confidence, a security, and yes, a peace, that baffles the human mind. We don't have to understand it. It's so much better to experience it! God is faithful. He is able!

2. Well, we would be hard pressed to find anything that matters more than the faithfulness of God; but there are other important things to see in this passage, and we shouldn't overlook them. So next, let's consider **OUR FAITHFULNESS**.

We all understand, I'm sure, that even our very best efforts at faithfulness pale in comparison with God's. Still, we can each make faithfulness our aim; and to the extent we hit the mark, our own faithfulness will bring strength to ourselves and to this church we love.

Often when our faithfulness is discussed in Scripture, it relates to a gift God has placed in our lives. Now, whether the gift seems great or small, God expects us to be faithful with it.

Maybe we have only one small gift. Don't complain—be faithful. Maybe we've received many gifts. Don't boast—be faithful.

Whatever it is that God has placed into our care, we are to be faithful with it.

You remember Jesus' parable of the talents. We find it in the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel. One servant received five talents, another two, and a third servant was given just one talent.

You recall how that the number of talents was not the key to the story, but rather what each servant did with the talents he received. Each one was evaluated and blessed according to what he did with what he'd been given.

What the other servants had to work with didn't matter. Jesus was trying to impress upon us that God expects us to be faithful with whatever He entrusts to us.

I have no way of knowing how gifted Timothy was. Paul certainly saw potential in him or he would have never taken him on his missionary journeys or written him two letters to encourage him in his work.

So there were gifts present in Timothy's life. What I want you to see here, though, is that early in this letter, Paul reminds Timothy of the greatest gift of all—and the same is true for your life and mine, if we're Christians.

Look, please, at verses 13-14: "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."

What's the gift Paul is speaking of here? It's the Gospel. It's what Paul proclaimed and Timothy heard and believed. It's the sound teaching that leads to a life of faith and love. It's God's Spirit dwelling in our lives, helping us to "guard this good deposit" of Christ Jesus in us.

God wants us to be faithful stewards of all of His gifts, but first among these is the Gospel itself--a saving, life-changing relationship with God through Jesus Christ. First Baptist, be good stewards, faithful stewards, of the Gospel!

Sure, we should be faithful stewards of our money. If we can teach Sunday School, then by all means, faithfully use that gift. If we can sing, then sing!

If we have a servant's heart, then serve faithfully. But remember this: it's all for naught if we're not being faithful in learning, believing, growing in, and sharing with others the Gospel of Christ.

Being faithful to what God has called us to do matters! Being successful is not what's most important. Success is a nice bonus when it happens, but faithfulness is what counts with God. Paul tells Timothy to remain faithful to this "pattern of sound teaching."

Timothy knew what this meant. He was to keep on proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ: who was born of a virgin, who went about doing good, who died on a cross for the sin of the world, and rose from the dead on the third day. He ascended to the Father; and when the time is right, He'll come again.

Stay true, Paul says, to this "pattern of sound teaching." Paul entrusted the Gospel to Timothy; and now it's in our hands. We are commissioned to handle this remarkable gift faithfully. Our Lord is counting on us, friends, to be faithful!

Which means—and let's just be honest—this means that God is taking a big risk! In calling a new Pastor, it would have been hard for you to have found a BIGGER risk than Josh Hunt!

Now, you know I'm kidding—except to acknowledge the truth that we're all big risks! Josh took a risk when he came here as Associate Pastor. For the previous eight years, he'd served as Pastor of Ross Grove Church in Shelby, NC. They still liked him too! Nobody ran him off--we went up there and got him!

Now, Josh is taking an even bigger risk! He's taking a chance in assuming this new role as your Pastor—and here's why. Not everyone is going to be faithful.

He's taking chances with us, and here's why. Not everyone is going to be faithful.

Paul understood this. He'd experienced it firsthand. Look at verse 15 in our text: "You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes."

Every follower of Christ needs to understand the sad truth that not everyone will be faithful to Christ or to us. We have to know this, lest the lack of faithfulness in others should lead to diminished faithfulness in us.

Paul says his friends, his fellow-workers in Asia, had deserted him. Of course, the same thing happened to Jesus, right? His friends deserted him. Sometimes we're guilty of doing this too—but no, before you say it, retirement is NOT the same as desertion!

In Paul's case, though, we don't really know what happened. The only thing we're told in Scripture about the two men mentioned here is what Paul tells us: they were deserters!

What a way to be remembered! When we read a passage like this, it should cause us to pause and reflect on how we might be remembered someday. I hope to be remembered as a person who was faithful to his Lord, his family, his church, his calling—faithful to all the significant people and responsibilities in my life.

How do you want to be remembered? As a Christian, and as a member of this body of Christ, be remembered for your faithfulness. By all means, don't be remembered like Phygelus and Hermogenes—for a lack of faithfulness. That's such a sad way to be remembered.

I read a story about a young police officer, 27 years old, with a wife and three small children. He and his partner went to a house to serve a search warrant. They knocked on the door and called out, "Police. Open the door."

But instead, from inside that house, shots were fired. The bullets came through the door and one of them hit the officer in the chest. It ripped through an artery, and he quickly bled to death.

There's more to the story, though. A few weeks earlier, the same officer had been hit by another bullet, in about the same place. But on that occasion, he survived with just a bruise.

The difference? He was wearing a bullet-proof vest that day. But on the day he died, he decided it was too hot and uncomfortable, so he didn't put it on. It was in the trunk of his patrol car, parked about 30 feet away.

Now, this young officer had every reason to believe in bullet-proof vests, didn't he? But on this occasion, he and all those close to him, paid a terrible price for his failure to be faithful to what he believed in—which can yield tragic results in anyone's life.

Still, some will not be faithful. It's not a new problem, but it could be that it's getting worse. We certainly seem to be living in a low-commitment age. Even back in Paul's day, though, he had to warn Timothy not to let the lack of faithfulness in others discourage him.

3. Instead, Paul sought to focus Timothy on the opposite. He wanted him to see **THE FAITHFULNESS OF OTHERS**. Listen again to the example he gives:

"May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus." (vv. 16-18)

The Lord is always faithful to us; but it's so much easier to understand this when there are fellow believers around who are also faithful to us. This was Paul's experience with Onesiphorus. Here was someone he could count on!

Who are these people in your life? Who will be with you through thick and thin? Who shares words of encouragement with you when you need them most? Who lets you know that you really can go on when you're succumbing to self-doubt?

Do you have some "Onesiphoruses" in your life? Don't call them that—they may not understand; but do let them know how much you appreciate them and how much they matter to you. Thank God for their influence.

Once you identify who they are, then like Paul, you'll want to ask the Lord to grant them a special blessing... because they have been such a blessing to you.

And remember, God may work it out for their special blessing to be you. He may give you the sacred privilege of being a source of strength and encouragement for them.

Dear Friends, "Remain Faithful." Never lose sight of God's faithfulness in your life. And be inspired by the faithfulness you find in the lives of others even as your own faithfulness serves to inspire them. O God, find us faithful! Amen.