

Fight the Good Fight and Finish Your Course

By Mike Lorence

Dios los bendiga en el nombre de Jesucristo. Gracias por el privilegio de enseñar la Palabra de Dios.

Paul's Final Words to Timothy

One of the great relationships in the Word was between the Apostle Paul and Timothy. Paul refers to him as “my true child in the faith” and also as his “dearly beloved son.” You can see the love that Paul had for this man. We don't know for sure, but it is thought that Paul was about twenty to twenty-five years older than Timothy. You can understand the fatherly care Paul would have for the young boy of around sixteen to twenty years old when they first met.

Yet when Paul wrote the book of 2 Timothy he knew his life was coming to an end, therefore whatever he wrote would have been very important. He would make sure that only the most essential things would be shared with Timothy. The books written to Timothy are Pastoral Epistles about how to properly shepherd a body of believers and how a man of God is to care for the flock, the believers within the Church.

So today as you finalize your training in the EISYS program, it would be good for you to pay close attention to what the Apostle Paul emphasized to Timothy in his final words.

Paul's Instructions for Timothy

I wish we had time today to look at this whole book of 2 Timothy, but since we only have a few minutes we will look at verses that I want you to deeply consider as leaders and pastors of God's people. I'm sure Timothy thought back on these words throughout his life in order to help him with his ministry.

2 Timothy 1:5 (KJV)

⁵ When I call to remembrance the unfeigned [without hypocrisy] faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.

Timothy walked the walk with his believing. It wasn't just talk. He learned it from his mother and from his grandmother. There is a legacy described here where the living of faith and believing God was passed down from one generation to another. Three generations of believers are listed here. We need to do the same thing and raise our children in the instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)¹. Juan and Leilian have done that with their children and now their grandchildren. They are a great example.

2 Timothy 1:6 (KJV)

⁶ Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Paul is telling Timothy to “stir up” the gift. Don't allow your ministry to go dormant. This stirring up is to rekindle it, like stirring up the coals of a fire to get the flame going again. In the fifty years of my life as a Christian, I've seen way too many men and women allow the fire of God to burn out. They were hot and on fire one day and cold the next. Why? They still have the same

¹ Ephesians 6:4 - And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

spirit of God with the ability to operate all nine of the manifestations. They are still called to the ministry that given to them. God is still willing and able to energize them. So how could they allow it to happen?

I've thought about that question many times because I don't ever want to end up there myself. In all my thoughtfulness on the topic I should have just read the next verse.

2 Timothy 1:7 (KJV)

⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear [timidity] or cowardice]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Whenever and wherever we allow fear to rule in any area of our lives our ministries will deteriorate, at times to the point we may need to stir it up again – to rekindle it. We must reignite it with the power and love of God by putting on the sound, whole thoughts of God's Word.

God has made you able to carry out your ministry regardless of anything the Adversary will throw at you. Don't be timid or cowardly when you are attacked. You are MORE THAN CONQUERERS in each and every situation. Later in this book, Paul continues to tell Timothy how to stir up the gift.

2 Timothy 1:9 (KJV)

⁹ Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

You have a holy calling – one that was ordained in Christ Jesus before the world began. So don't EVER think less of your ministry or compare it to someone else's ministry. God's called you to your own special one so give it all you've got.

2 Timothy 1:13 (KJV)

¹³ Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

We are told in verse 7 that we are to have a sound mind. We do that by holding fast to sound words. These come from God's Word rightly-divided, from the spirit of God within us, and from other believers who are speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)². This is where it all starts in our walk as a leader and pastor. WE must grab hold of those sound words with everything we've got. Once we lose the integrity of God's Word in our lives it's a downhill from there and your ministry will eventually deteriorate.

2 Timothy 1:15 (KJV)

¹³ This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

If you stand for God's Word long enough, this will happen to you. People you taught and loved will turn away from you, even the leaders you loved and followed. Sometimes even the people you are closest too will walk away or even turn against you. It's very hurtful and you may feel like it's just you out there by yourself. Remember Elijah felt that way to the point he wanted to

² Ephesians 4:15 - But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

die (1 Kings 19:4)³. You must be firmly grounded in your personal relationship with God so you won't be pulled away by your relationships with others.

2 Timothy 2:1 (KJV)

¹Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

How do you stand when others are falling away? You strengthen yourself in God's grace. You remember what God forgave you for and how He allows you the privilege to serve and speak for Him. God's grace is limitless. Remember when the messenger of Satan was sent as a thorn in flesh to Paul and he prayed three times for God to remove it. God responded saying, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:8, 9)⁴. This is how you stand through adversity, even when it seems unbearable. You stay strong in God's grace so His strength will get you through.

2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

²And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Look for those who have proven themselves to be faithful and commit to them what was committed unto you. Then they can teach others the SAME, not something different, but the same. Then they can continue by teaching others the SAME so that they can teach other faithful believers. It's a cycle of spiritual longevity.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

¹⁵Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Another translation is from Walter Cummins that clarifies the wording.

2 Timothy 2:15 (Cummins Working Translation⁵)

¹⁵Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God, and unashamed worker, rightly dividing the Word of God.

We can never be lazy in our minds when it comes to standing before God if we want to be approved and not ashamed as we work the Word of God. We come to it with meekness and humility not a haughty, know-it-all attitude. The Word has such breadth and depth that we can always learn more. If we don't, we will end up growing in more ungodliness in our lives and we will see it also in the lives of those we teach.

2 Timothy 2:16-18 (KJV)

¹⁶But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

¹⁷And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus;

³ 1 Kings 19:4 - But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:8, 9 - For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

⁵ Cummins, W. J. (Ed.). (2006). *A Journey through the Acts and Epistles: The Authorized King James Version with Notes and a Working Translation of the Book of Acts, the Church epistles and the personal epistles of Paul* (Vol. 1). (W. J. Cummins, Trans.) Franklin, Ohio, USA: Scripture Consulting. p. 519.

¹⁸ Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

We have only two choices. We either rightly divide the Word of God or we will follow after profane (unholy) and vain babblings (sounds containing nothing – empty discussions). One is the Word of Life and the other is the word of death and it eats away like a cancer in the Body of Christ.

Again Paul points out leaders who, through their words have overthrown the faith of some of the believers. We MUST uphold the integrity of the Word regardless of what other leaders teach. Here Paul names them as a warning to Timothy. As leaders, at times, you may have to sound the alarm even when it may be against leaders you've stood shoulder-to-shoulder with in the past. It's times like this that truly separate those who want to stand approved before God from those who want to stand approved before men. We must stand faithfully day-by-day.

2 Timothy 2:22 (KJV)

²² Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

What are youthful lusts? As children we are drawn to everything we see and we want it. It's just like a small child in a store when the child keeps saying, "I want that! Give me that!" It's the same when it comes to young believers or leaders. Their attention can be pulled to the "shiny objects" and they lose focus on the important spiritual things that really matter. As leaders you must grow and become spiritually mature adults. A child hasn't learned to control his passions, but an adult should be able to. We bring every thought unto the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5)⁶.

As spiritually mature leaders we chase or pursue after righteousness, faith, charity and peace. There is one way to tell who is spiritually mature – look at what are they diligently pursuing in their lives. And we shouldn't be doing it by ourselves but with others of a pure heart. Have you looked closely at who you choose to spend your time with? Are they also pursuing faith, charity and peace? Be with spiritual people if you want to be spiritual. That's why I love being with Charlie Quillen, Jeff Wendling, Leilian Cabrera and others because they have demonstrated spiritual maturity in their lives.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (KJV)

¹⁴ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

¹⁶ All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The opening verses in chapter 3 warn Timothy about men who have a form or an appearance of godliness but in their lives and ministries they don't operate the power of God. Paul tells Timothy to turn away from them. At times we can be deceived in our lives by leaders who by all appearances seem to be walking with God. We can be swayed by their great teachings or

⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:5 - Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

knowledge of the Bible. Don't be swayed by their outward appearances, but take a deeper look and you will see there is no real power in their ministry or in their lives. When you see that then turn and walk away.

Paul instructs Timothy to continue in the things of God that he has already learned and is convinced of from God's Word. We just stay put on that Word that we know. It's always profitable for us and it's what will fully equip us as a leaders to fulfill our ministerial work.

2 Timothy 4:1a (KJV)

¹ I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ,

After everything that Paul has already told Timothy, he now admonishes him with God and Jesus Christ as witnesses. Whatever Paul is going to say next is very, very significant. What could be so important that Paul would call for God and Jesus Christ to be witnesses? As leaders and as pastors of God's people, we need to listen intently to what Paul is going to say to make sure we catch every word of it.

2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV)

² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.

What? Is that all? I thought it would be something astounding! Maybe a great secret God shared with only Paul that he is now passing on to his dearly beloved son in the faith.

What Paul tells Timothy is what he needs to do to stir up the spirit within, to energize his ministry, to stand faithful when others turn away. TAKE ACTION! Each one of these is a commandment. It could read, "Timothy, you preach the word! Timothy you be instant in season! Timothy you be instant out of season! Timothy you reprove! Timothy you rebuke! Timothy you exhort with all longsuffering! Timothy you exhort with all doctrine!" Now insert your name in place of Timothy's when you read this verse. YOU GOT TO DO IT!

- YOU must herald or proclaim the Word
- YOU must stand ready when it's convenient and stand ready when it's not convenient
- YOU must reprove with the Word where believers aren't on the doctrine and practice (2 Timothy 3:16)⁷
- YOU must rebuke by admonishing strongly in the effort to restore (Galatians 6:1)⁸
- YOU must exhort and encourage with patience and with the doctrinal truth which you have been taught and been assured of

2 Timothy 4:5 (KJV)

⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Paul now tells Timothy that he will need to be sharp and clear-headed in everything. Stay sharp. Don't get sloppy in your thinking and in your habits.

⁷ 2 Timothy 3:16 - All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

⁸ Galatians 6:1 - Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

Many times in your ministry you will need to endure what may seem to be unendurable. God has given you the spiritual strength to endure just like Jesus had to endure the crucifixion (Hebrews 12:2, 3)⁹. We have Christ in us. We can endure also.

Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist. He wasn't one but there was a need for one. At times we must do whatever needs to be done in order to care for the Body of Christ. You can't just say that "I'm an eye" or "I'm a foot" within the Body so that's all I'm going to do. We step up and fill the gap. (Ezekiel 22:30)¹⁰.

Finally Paul told him to bring his ministry into its fullness. Sell out to what God has called you to do. Give it all your heart, soul, mind and strength. There's nothing else that's worth dedicating your life to. Accomplish your ministry.

Paul's Ministry Is Completed

After Paul charges Timothy to bring his ministry into its fullness and to do what God has for him to accomplish he tells Timothy that his own ministry is coming to an end.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 (KJV)

⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Paul's life and ministry are almost completed. Yet by revelation he can state that he has fought a good fight. He was in the competition. He competed to win because he already knew he was more than a conqueror in every situation (Romans 8:37)¹¹.

He finished the course that God had set before him. He crossed the finish line. He kept his eyes on what God had called him to do back on the road to Damascus. And he did it regardless of the obstacles that got in his way (Acts 9:15, 16)¹². Paul kept the faith. He was faithful. It's a minute-by-minute, day-by-day decision to stay faithful. And Paul will be wearing the crown of righteousness because he looked forward to the appearing of the Lord.

At the end of your life, your ministry will end. Mine will end when I am gone. We can do no more once we are gone. We will be asleep waiting for the return of the Lord. At the gathering together you and I will want the Lord to say to us, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You fought a good fight, you finished your course and you kept the faith. And by the way, here's your crown of righteousness." See you at the finish line.

⁹ Hebrews 12:2, 3 - Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds

¹⁰ Ezekiel 22:30 - And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.

¹¹ Romans 8:37 - Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

¹² Acts 9:15, 16 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.