

Title: Who gives you the right?
Text: 1 Timothy 4.11-16
Theme: The power of truth
Series: 1 Timothy
Prop Stmnt: Truth spoken and truth lived is an unstoppable combination

Do you remember when the Pistons were the "Bad Boys"? The city relished the idea that they played with an edge and were hated by everyone else, because, they won. If you win, people will overlook all sorts of things, won't they? It is true in athletics and it can be true in the church. If a man is a draw, if he can raise money, build buildings, attract a following, generate excitement, sell books, develop a growing reputation, then, for marketing purposes, that man is the brand and the church learns to identify itself by that man. And, as long as the church appears to be winning, then it is easy to overlook character flaws and excuse certain behaviors. As long as the crowds come and the offerings are good, who is going to expose the fact that his marriage is strained, or that he is an angry control freak who yells at the staff in private conversations and throws things when he is challenged? After all, he is the brand. If he goes down, the whole thing goes down, right? But, is that how the church is really supposed to function? No. And the books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus deal with the polity, the practice and the pastors. Polity is a word that is related to politics. And in spite of all of the baggage that comes with that word, it is actually a good word, because it actually refers to the processes of governance. And when the processes of governance in the Scriptures are followed, then the church has structures in place that should keep one man from becoming untouchable. Even a man, who may be an effective communicator, is one of the elders and the elders are accountable to the congregation. But, speaking of elders and pastors, these letters, are known as the Pastoral Epistles because there is much attention given to the life of the pastor and elder. Such is our text today.

If I am going to preach this text correctly, then I need to preach this primarily to myself and to the pastors and elders. I would rather preach to you, it is less convicting ©! But, seriously, and this is really one of the main points of this text, you need to hear this. If you are a follower of Christ, you are called to join a church. And in joining a church, you place yourself under the authority of men who are to care for your soul. That is way more important than who is in the White House or the Supreme Court. How do you know if these men are qualified to care for your soul? Part of that question is answered if they are men who are willing to preach to themselves before preaching to you.

Read Text:

When a musical note is to be played with fluidity, flowing almost seamlessly, it is called legato. When it is to be played like a short burst and clearly disconnected from what is before or after, it is called staccato. When you read this text, it reads staccato doesn't it? The language sounds almost like a machine gun or a tommy gun blasting out short bursts of commands. And, there are a lot of commands, aren't there? In fact, Timothy is commanded to command (1 la).

I have heard it said that Timothy was a meeker, more timid, uncertain young man and that Paul wrote this letter to basically say, "Hey son, buck up! Get some re-rod in your back. Stand up straight, look 'em in the eye, don't take any junk from them, and get the job done." This is based on verse 12 and 2 Timothy 1.4.

But, "I'm not sure that this presentation of Timothy is fair or accurate. Clearly he is young. He is a generation younger than Paul. He is not Paul. And people, who do not want to listen to you, will find every reason not to. Timothy is Paul's fill in, until Paul can get back to Ephesus (13) and Timothy is sent on a mission to address and correct problems. When you put all of that together, you see why Timothy could you use some admonishing.

I. The ministry of the gospel is intimidating. (1 1-12a)
A. You have to speak up. (11)

A good pastor is more than a facilitator of a conversation. He is not a therapist who leads his patients on a quest to discover the answers with them. No, a good pastor has to know the gospel, be confident in the gospel, has to be growing in the gospel and must be willing to speak up on the basis of the gospel. In other words, he must be more certain of the words of God than he is the opinions of others. And he must be so certain of the words of God that he is willing to give clear orders.

1) Command

This verb is in a form that means to keep on doing it. It is not a matter of saying it once and that being that. An elder and pastor has to speak the gospel over and over and over. Do you ever get tired of repeating yourself? I think that parenting is basically saying the same 10 things a hundred thousand times. (Say please and thank-you, eat your food, stop that, say you're sorry, get cleaned up, go to bed, be home on time, do your homework, clean your room and get off your phone) There isn't too much more is there? But you have to say it over and over and over.

Here Paul commands Timothy to give orders and to keep giving orders. Of course, Timothy is not speaking on his own authority, but is speaking with authority on the basis of the gospel. But Timothy's responsibility and ministry is to say it and to keep on saying it. When the pastor or elder assumes the gospel, he is helping his church take a step towards losing it.

2) Teach

The pastor has to keep on explaining the gospel and explaining why we don't add anything to the gospel and explaining why we are to live lives of thanksgiving, rejoicing

in what God has made and provided for us. The pastor has to keep explaining this, because his people are prone to forget and he is prone to forget.

B. You can expect opposition. (12a)

Any form of leadership is going to face opposition and Paul anticipates the fact that some of the people will actually despise Timothy and use his age as an excuse. Do not be surprised by opposition. Be surprised when you aren't facing opposition. You are young and a bit inexperienced, so, what do you do when people that you are supposed to lead are refusing to follow? I want to remind you of two historical accounts that will serve as a transition between points one and two.

Do you remember the account of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon and the grandson of David. When Rehoboam became king, some of the leaders of the people came to him and requested that he dial back the taxes. After all, his dad, Solomon, as brilliant as he was, had really taxed the people heavily and it showed. Israel had a beautiful temple, magnificent palaces, defense fortifications all over the land and an impressive infrastructure. Much of this was one-time expenses, so, would he consider giving the people some tax relief. Rehoboam's response was absurd and arrogant. You will not threaten my leadership. You will not question my authority. In fact, you need to get one thing perfectly clear, I am the boss around here and if you think that the taxes under my father were bad, you haven't seen anything yet. What happened? Civil War happened! 10 of the 12 tribes split away and formed their own government and country.

Now, contrast that with Rehoboam's grandfather, David. The first time David is seen publicly is when he finds himself standing in a valley between the army of the Philistines and the army of Israel. He stands alone, facing Goliath. He is willing to lay down his life because he refuses to accept the fact that someone can mock God and mock Israel and not be challenged. And so, down into the valley this boy goes, armed only with a sling. His own brothers and thousands of soldiers are embarrassed and yet impressed. Here is a kid, willing to stand on his convictions. Imagine that you are a soldier in the army of Israel. For forty days, you have been at this impasse. Who is going to step up and challenge Goliath? It would be suicide, right? But, you have to admire the courage. If there is in your heart, even a wee bit of spot of affection for God, you have to admire the courage of this boy. To have the courage of conviction is not only courageous and convicting; it is contagious. And at the end of the day, David captured the heart of a nation and men were willing to follow this boy into battle, while in Rehoboam's case, most of the nation ran from him in rejection. The difference was obvious. David led not through force, anger or intimidation. He led by the power of example. That is exactly what Paul is saying here.

II. The ministry of the gospel is personal. (12-14)

Personal rejection is hard to face. (12a) But you respond with character and competence.

A. Personal character. (12b)

Paul is describing how the entire life of a pastor is to reflect the gospel. Since there is not a separate private life and public life for a Christian, but one life, it is both necessary and helpful for the pastor to be example of this. All of the qualifications for leadership that Paul addressed back in chapter 3 are summarized here. The pastor, even if he is young is to be an example to the congregation in his speech, conduct, love for people, faith in God and purity in life. When a man lives with the evidences of the gospel in every corner of his life, you tend to give greater weight to what he says. I am not surprised that Paul reminds Timothy of the undeniable power of a consistent testimony. In fact, notice again, that before Paul tells Timothy what he needs to focus on in his public ministry, he reminds him of the importance of his personal character.

B. Personal competence. (13)

The work of a pastor is private and public. What he does in public is going to be in many ways a reflection of what he does in private. "Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture." There is a lot behind that command. The pastor should be competent at reading the Bible in public, because he does it in private. He should be skilled at reading the Bible because he recognizes that he needs it and his people need it.

I heard John MacArthur say, that one Sunday in his church, the Scriptures were read publicly as part of the service, similar to what we generally do in the beginning of the service (which by the way, is one of the reasons why you need to be in here when the service begins. You need to hear the reading of God's Word with God's people.) In the service that morning was one of the leaders of the Gay Pride coalition of Los Angeles. The man had AIDS, and had come because someone invited him. The Scripture that was read was from the Psalms and spoke of being cleansed and made like new. John said that as soon as the service was over that this man found John and wanted to know how he could be cleansed and made like new. John said that the man really hadn't heard anything else in the service because he couldn't get that text out of his mind and the Lord used that to bring this man to faith in Christ. No wonder Paul told Timothy to devote himself to reading the Word. But the pastor is devote himself to exhortation (preaching) and teaching.

A pastor cannot be devoted to preaching and teaching unless he is given the time to do so. Every Sunday I am expected to stand up here and say something meaningful, engaging and relevant. Week after week after week. It feels as if Sunday comes every 3 days. Preparing a sermon takes time. And I think that this verse is in here to remind pastors of the importance of preparing their sermons and giving it good attention. If I love you, I will want to serve you good food. If I understand the power of the Word, then I will want to feed you the Word. And I cannot feed you what I have not first digested. You should expect and demand that the pastor preaches sermons that he crafts and writes. I know that life is busy and that some weeks are crazy. But, this is a non-negotiable. Guys that get their sermons off the internet, or are not doing their own work are not only cheating their people, they are starving their own souls.

C. Personal stewardship. (14)

Verse 14 probably refers to an event when the elders of Timothy's church formally recognized his qualifications and gifting for ministry and confirmed that. The language is good to stop and think about isn't. Do not neglect the gift you have. I do not take the gift to be the actual ability to do ministry, but based on what is said, I take the gift to be something that the elders gave to Timothy when they laid their hands upon him and prayed over him. They gave him the gift of recognizing him and naming him as a pastor or fellow elder. This is a gift given to him. Timothy, what you have, you have by grace. Like salvation, your ministry is a gift. Do not neglect that. Serve faithfully because you are accountable now to the gift that has been given to you.

When the elders gathered around Timothy and prayed over him, they now have hopes and expectations for him. What Timothy does with this gift is going to reflect for joy or discouragement on these men and the church. No Christian is an island. Everything we do affects the body in one way or another.

III. The ministry of the gospel is powerful. (15)

Verse 15 has a sense of urgency to it. Like verse 11 it has two commands, but here the reason for the urgency is not to foil those who would despise but to encourage the church. When people see their pastors and elders growing in love, and holiness, and affection, and joy, then they will be encouraged to know that they can grow.

Go back to v.6. "If you put *these things* before the brothers (and sisters)" is referring to clearly preaching the gospel. The gospel is the good news, that God created us for the purpose of enjoying a perfect relationship with him. But every single one of us rebelled against our Creator King. Our rebellion is called sin. And our sin is offensive to God because he is infinitely righteous. But, God is not only infinitely righteous, he is merciful. So in order to satisfy his justice and demonstrate mercy, he sent his own Son, Jesus Christ to this earth to live the life that you could not live and die the death that you could not die. The death of Christ was a sacrifice in your place. The death of Christ was an infinitely righteous payment for your sin. So that if you will acknowledge your sin and turn from your rebellion and trust in Christ, you will be forgiven of your sin, and declared righteous in the eyes of God. This gift of forgiveness and righteousness is called salvation. This salvation is a gift for you to receive by faith. This is what I am preaching to you because this is what the Bible says that pastors are to preach to their people. Here Paul is warning people not to add anything to the gospel and reminding people to live thankful lives in light of God's generous mercy. In v. 11 Timothy is commanded to command and to teach "*these things*" And now in verse 15 he is commanded to "practice *these things*" His own life is to be immersed (good word) into the gospel, carefully avoiding anything that would be an addition to the gospel and marked by thankfulness for God's generous mercy in his own life. He is to do what he tells others.

When you know someone who clearly speaks the truth and consistently lives according to that truth, then the impact of that life is virtually unstoppable because there is such a marked difference between them and the world. For example, Paul tells Timothy to let no one despise him for being young. But, how exactly is Timothy supposed to not let that

happen? Does he defend himself? Does he attack his attackers? No, he is to live as an example (12) and he is to keep living as an example (15) and if he does that, then the message of his life will reveal the fact that those who despise him are wrong and perhaps they will repent. And if Timothy is an example of love and he practices these things, then when they repent, Timothy forgives and helps the church see another aspect of Christ. But, if Timothy attacks them, then he would not be an example in conduct or in love. In fact, that is what we would expect.

This week a prominent NBA player was angered by some comments that a former NBA player made about him. The current player vowed that he was not going to let that guy disrespect his legacy like that. Paul would simply say, "Play hard and silence your critics with your consistent effort."

IV. The ministry of the gospel is worth it. (16)

I am saying it again, because the text is saying it again. The pastor/elder is commanded to keep a close watch on his life and on his teaching (doctrine). In fact, he is to persist in this. You never stop doing this. He is never out of the woods and he is to never stop studying. This is a sacred and dangerous calling. On the one hand I am tempted to say that if I knew back then what I knew now, I don't know that I would have done this. But, then, I look at the end of this verse and it really resonates with me. The ministry of the gospel has been good for my own soul.

A. For your own life.

After all of these years of serving you, I believe the gospel deeper than ever. I am more convinced than ever that every single person needs to know Christ. I love Jesus better. I love my wife better. I love you better and at the same time, I have such a long, long way to go. But that does not discourage me because I am able to see the impact of the gospel in my own life. But, I am also able to see it in you.

B. For your people.

Your testimony to the power of the gospel in your own life is a foretaste of heaven, (dismiss men for communion) In a few minutes over 40 guys are going to serve you as we observe the Lord's table. I know these guys. I know their stories. I know their losses and their victories. I know what they have gone through and the cost of their faithfulness. And at the end, do you know why these men will stand down here in front of you and sing at the top of their lungs a song about the faith? It is because they know the power of the gospel in their lives. And as I stand here and join with them, and get drowned out by them and by you, I am reminded that persistence in ministry is worth it.