

The Faithful Savior - 2 Timothy 1:1-14

There are a lot of things that I don't know about First Baptist Church, but I know a few things. I know the staff is really helpful, the mission team is thoughtful, and that the leadership of First Baptist is wise enough to make sure Pastor Brian has a sabbatical season. Way to go! The weight of pastoral ministry should crush a man, except for the sustaining presence of Jesus. And, the work of pastoral ministry can become addictive. A person needs to have strategic seasons without the role to know his motivation is the honor of Christ.

I know Brian's absence requires more from a lot of people so I want to encourage you to be faithful. For these next three weeks I want to talk with you about 2 Timothy. At least the first chapter and a half.

I've been moved over the last few years by this letter in ways I never had been before. As I deal practically with my current stage of life I study Paul's final letter with more focus. This brief letter was written under the Spirit's inspiration by a man who knew his life was near its end, written to his younger protege. It is an invitation to live with clarity, conviction, commitment to kingdom values. Things that carry the fragrance of eternity. A relationship with a faithful Savior.

A year ago this month I passed the baton of Lead Pastor of the church my wife and I planted in New Richmond. The church I provided point leadership for for more than two decades. In that process I was faced with the question of what God might call me to in the next season. Paul uses a phrase that God has written on my heart. Six words that have been life shaping.

So, I'd like to read 2 Timothy 1:1-14 and ask you to listen for a six word phrase that stands out to you as a potential phrase worth building your life on.

READ: 2 Timothy 1:1-14

Ok, so I think this passage gives us a phrase that simplified Paul's life in huge ways because it brings a singular focus. When we know with clarity, conviction, and commitment what guides our life decisions we know what we should say "yes" to and what we should say "no" to. This is quick... you can say something now and change your mind in the days, weeks, years to come, but I'd love to hear from you what stood out... Maybe we'll land on the same phrase. Maybe I'll change my mind.

The phrase that I think simplified Paul's life... **"I thank God whom I serve"**

Orientation of gratitude, of receiving, that life itself is wonder. How amazing are you?

You have been given the capacity to breathe. Our cells need oxygen to convert the nutrients we eat... oh yea, there's another wonder, WE GET TO EAT! We could compare notes about favorite food. Who likes to eat? Ok, but let's stick with breathing. Our cells need oxygen to convert nutrients into energy, so we order a bag of oxygen from Amazon Prime and isn't next day delivery amazing... no wait, we CAN'T WAIT THAT LONG. We simply suck air into our lungs it somehow gets stirred into the food we eat, and, marvel beyond my capacity, our body functions (more/less). In the process of making that energy there is waste gas. So... we exhale. Amazing!

We could talk about the miracle of eating. The fact that eating food is so enjoyable tells us something about the generosity of God. He didn't have to make eating so good. Even the opportunity to control our eating is instructive.

When the flag of my life is planted here... that I have been called by God as His servant... I thank my God whom I serve... the things I say "yes" to and the things I say "no" to become much more clear. These things will be refined over all the days of my life but suddenly I know why I say yes and why I say no to the vast number of things life throws at me.

Paul could face his execution with confidence and clarity. He could pour out his life into Timothy and others with every day God gave. He could write with purpose.

Three years ago I had a stroke. A lot of people don't survive strokes. It was a gift from God when I regained consciousness. EMT's were asking me questions and it was humbling to recognize I didn't have the capacity to even form a word. I could not speak. With all the words I've been gifted to speak over the course my life, laying on that gurney I saw each word in a way I never had... as a gift.

Write your name, they said. I can't move my arm and I can't even tell them.

Every breath, every bite, every moment of sleep, every glimpse is a gift from the One who made us. (Maybe we should stop to marvel and say thanks.)

Paul lived in the truth and the truth shaped his life.

READ: Romans 14:7-8

So, believing the truth that comes from God we are free to thank God whom I serve.

There is so much that emerges from this passage, but I want to point out three expressions of gratitude that come from a faithful man nearing the end of his life on earth. Expressions that point to the faithfulness of our Savior.

1. I thank God for... "whom I have believed" (v12)

VERSE: 2 *Timothy*

Paul was grateful to live in relationship with God! I know whom I have believed!

The Psalmist wrote, Psalms 27:4 *One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple..*

I've always lived in the Midwest... Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, and now Minnesota. Jill and I left Iowa with our son to go to Chicago, to go to Bible College when I was almost 30 years old. It was the first time I had crossed the Mississippi River. Since then, by our best count I have been in about 50 countries. My daughter and I have paraglided in the Swiss Alps and hiked Prekistolen in Norway. I've watched the sun rise on top of Mt Sinai, and baptized in the Jordan River. I've felt the earth quake in Guatemala, and ridden the Trans-Siberian Railway across Siberia. I've been dwarfed by the Rocky Mountains and the Grand Canyon. I've watched the sun go down on the Serengeti in Africa. Every marvel we see with our eyes fills us with wonder for one great reason. Creation is the work of God's hand. We see the tiniest reflections of the Maker and we stand in awe. Imagine the day we stand in His presence!

When I look at you, I see the wonder and the beauty of the God who invites us to know Him. He has told us of Himself, not a lesser god we might construct of our corrupted desires, but He has told us in His Word who He really is. And as we see Him we will be drawn to delight in the reality that you, and every human being we will ever lay our eyes on have been created in His image.

He is God... completely satisfied in Himself. Father, Son and Spirit in perfect community. Perfect Oneness calling us to know Him and delight in Him and enjoy Him. He needs nothing FROM us. He wants us to discover and delight in what we were made to be. Every distortion of the beauty of God robs us of joy. But, in Him is fullness of joy. That is true for us today and for Paul in a Roman jail. Paul invites us to thank God for "whom we have believed." Do you believe Him? Then, learn from Him, follow Him into grace, mercy, and peace of the gospel.

I thank God for whom I have believed. The God who called him to life in Jesus, the Savior who gave Himself for Paul and called him to grow in his likeness. And because of this gospel Paul understands mission and future and confident hope. Paul's life is coming to an end but his mission is not. He has poured out his life for others and there is no one like Timothy...

2. I thank God for... "Timothy, my beloved child" (v2)

VERSE: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

We read a clear expression of Paul's deep love and respect for Timothy. It seems to me that Paul was not a warm-fuzzy guy. Pretty task oriented, but the relationships he had were deep.

Paul would not have hesitated to look Timothy full in the face and tell him of God's great love and because of God's love, Paul's love for Timothy. God poured His life into Timothy. Paul did, his mom and grandmother poured their life into him, and God would call Timothy to pour his life into son's and daughter's in the gospel. And, now, at this point in my life I have a clearer view of the eternal importance of passing on gospel perspective to those who will outlive me. You too!

For the last year I've invested my energy training mostly younger leaders of Jesus' church who have so little access to any kind of training. I've been in Uganda, Liberia, Tanzania... I just got home from Haiti a couple weeks ago. International travel sounds exciting and it is, but it's hard! It was nearly 100 degrees every day we were in Haiti teaching in non-air conditioned rooms. The trip to Tanzania almost killed this old man. But when I get to be with these young leaders and the Spirit of God opens their eyes to the power of this Word and a vision for Jesus' Church and the beauty of gospel transformation, I fall on my knees and ask for the strength to do this for a while longer.

God will use you to pour your life into others in other unique ways according to your gifting but make no mistake God wants you to invest in others. Who would you point to? Who would you look in the face and say, "I thank God for you. I've poured my life out for you. Be faithful to the call of Jesus on your life. Carry the torch for me too."

Paul knew this all came as a gift from God. Paul was called to be an Apostle. For some that would be ego distorting, but that's only true if we own some of it. God would call Timothy to be the pastor of the church in Ephesus. That was not because of Timothy's competence, but God's.

Timothy had responsibility to fan into flame the gift God had given him, but it was God's gift. A Spirit-led ministry without fear, but of power, love, and self-control.

There was no fear in Paul's charge to Timothy even when he was confident it would both cost Timothy his life and give to him abundant life. So, Paul invited Timothy to join him...

3. I thank God for... "the testimony about our Lord" (v8)

VERSE: 2 Timothy 1:8-12

Distorted expectations will always get us in trouble. It was no strange thing for Paul to hear people mock him, "if God is with you why are you treated the way you are?" And, I can hear Paul saying, "Precisely because God is with me."

One of the great threats to the gospel in many parts of the world is the prosperity gospel that says Jesus wants you to be healthy and rich in this life, when Jesus has said...

READ: Matthew 16:24-25

Three quick things here. First, the death and resurrection of Jesus is our hope. Our hope and confidence in the gospel of Jesus stands on the power of God to transform death to life. If you've been born of the Spirit that comes from the death and resurrection of our faithful Savior. Without His death we would not know life. And, we are called to follow Him. Paul had seen God transform his beatings recognized his imprisonment as a gospel opportunity.

Second, Paul recognized his suffering as a gospel opportunity. Timothy had observed and participated in Paul's work. He was a witness of Paul's rejection, and beatings, and imprisonments. He knew what it meant to follow Paul as he follows Christ. This too will not be wasted.

Finally, don't waste your suffering. Your current situation, just like Paul's is an opportunity for the gospel.

I thank God whom I serve. Now, Live in grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.