

The Church Is United Under Godly Leaders

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God gives the church leaders who are called and empowered by Him to live, proclaim, and guard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 1:1–2:13

The church, since the time she was called out of the world and formed, has risen and fallen around her leaders. When leaders are following Jesus and living for His glory, the church tends to follow that example and flourish. When leaders aren't focused on rightly dividing the Word and preaching the whole counsel of God, the church tends to drift away from her strong foundation.



What are some ways you have seen leadership affect the culture of an organization?

Group Time

Point 1: Godly leaders live unashamed of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8-12).

⁸ So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. ⁹ He has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began. ¹⁰ This has now been made evident through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

¹¹ For this gospel I was appointed a herald, apostle, and teacher, ¹² and that is why I suffer these things. But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day.

What would encourage young Timothy to stand firm on the gospel? According to Paul, the answer was the gospel itself. God saves through the finished work of Jesus Christ, not by our works but by His grace through faith. Salvation is a gift from God, a rescue from the cords of death, and a pardon for our sentence of eternal damnation. Paul made it clear to Timothy that God saved him according to His purpose and grace determined before the beginning of time. Therefore, believers need not be ashamed nor afraid.



What are some ways believers live ashamed or afraid with respect to the gospel?

The apostle Paul began this letter focusing on the gospel because without it Timothy wouldn't have a foundation on which to persevere. It's through the gospel that we receive justification, adoption, and assurance. Paul was motivating Timothy to embrace the fact that ministry may take him down a road of suffering similar to one that Paul had traveled. Ministry could very well cost Timothy his life. But according to Paul, Timothy shouldn't cower in shame or fear because his future in eternity was sure.



What are some ways believers can encourage their godly leaders?

Point 2: Godly leaders guard the gospel through sound teaching (2 Tim. 1:13-14).

¹³ Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

The importance of the gospel is why the apostle Paul emphasized to Timothy to hold on to the pattern of sound teaching he had learned from Paul. This pattern was more than simply Paul's method of preaching and evangelism; rather, it is the truth and implications of the gospel. Like a treasure hunter holds on to a map, Timothy was to hold on to the gospel because it is God's gift to the church to steer her rightly. If leaders aren't holding on to and guarding the gospel, then they aren't leading well.

 How must the church evaluate her leaders to know they are guarding well the gospel entrusted to them?



Voices from Church History

"The Church ... though disseminated throughout the whole world, carefully guards this preaching and this faith which she has received, as if she dwelt in one house. She likewise believes these things as if she had but one soul and one and the same heart; she preaches, teaches, and hands them down harmoniously, as if she possessed but one mouth."¹

—Irenaeus (c. 130-202)

To hold on to the pattern of sound teaching, Paul let Timothy know that several ingredients are essential to guarding the gospel: **faith, love, remaining in Christ Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit**

Edification takes place through the _____ Christians share with one another and the church's preaching and teaching of _____, helping people understand and internalize the whole counsel of God. Edification is building up the body of Christ, _____ people to live on mission for the kingdom of God.

Point 3: Godly leaders find strength in the grace of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:1-7).

¹ You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer.

⁵ Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops.

⁷ Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong in the grace of God. Timothy needed strength because the last days—the period of time in which Timothy was ministering and up through our own day until Jesus returns—would be marked by difficult times and prevalent sin (2 Tim. 3:1-9). Timothy also would need the strength of God’s grace to take what he had heard from Paul and pass it on to others who would then be able to teach still more (2 Tim. 2:2). He needed to trust others with the truth.

Priesthood of the Believer: God’s intention for humanity is that we be a kingdom of priests, not just a kingdom with priests. His ultimate purpose is that we come to God _____, through the mediating work of _____, thus eliminating the need of another priest.

Paul gave three examples of what it looks like to be strong in the grace of Christ:

- The first metaphor was derived from the military. Paul encouraged Timothy to take on the mind-set of **a good soldier** for Jesus as he shared in suffering.
- The second metaphor was that of **a disciplined athlete**. Here Paul highlighted that being strong in the grace of Jesus looks like competing according to the rules.
- The third metaphor was of **a hardworking farmer**. Here Paul’s emphasis was on the fact that the farmer gets to experience his share of the crops.



What is the relationship between godly leaders and godly church members?

Daily Study

Day 1: Read 2 Timothy 1:1-12

Paul and Timothy had a special relationship. Throughout his letters, Paul referred to Timothy with much affection. In 1 Timothy 1:2, he used the phrase “my dearly loved son.” In 1 Corinthians 4:17, Paul said to the church at Corinth that Timothy was his “dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord.” A sign of a healthy leader is that he or she has healthy relationships with others. Healthy leaders can build deep friendships with others because their character is evident and their lives are marked by the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-24).

While Paul was in prison awaiting his execution, he wrote a letter to Timothy to encourage him and to give the church some of his last words. While doing this, he couldn't help but praise God for the sweet memories that he and Timothy had shared together and for the many ways God had gifted Timothy. Paul also knew Timothy well enough to speak to areas of his life that could hinder him from maximizing his call (2 Tim. 1:7).

Like Paul, leaders should have several people in their lives whom they have discipled and poured into (2:2). Other members of the church should follow their example and cultivate deep relationships and friendships where mutual encouragement, mentorship, and Christlike love are displayed. This example should make our churches attractive within a society where deep friendships and connections are becoming obsolete.



How is God inviting you to cultivate deeper fellowship with other believers?

Voices from the Church

“I've come to the conclusion that, with rare exceptions, the godly person is a busy person. The godly person is devoted to God and to people, and that leads to a full life.”³

—Donald Whitney

Day 2: Read 2 Timothy 1:13-18

In 2 Timothy 1:13-18, the apostle Paul expressed frustration for being deserted by fellow disciples in the province of Asia. Christians not showing up to care for Paul during his second imprisonment amplified his feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Paul's honesty about being deserted reminds us that godly leaders are not superhuman. Too often leaders feel isolated and lonely because people treat them as if they don't get lonely or have insecurities or needs. This is far from reality since even Jesus looked for the love and support of others during His ministry. Paul praised Onesiphorus, whom he said was a refreshing presence and did not feel ashamed of Paul's sufferings (v. 16). Onesiphorus modeled self-sacrifice and thoughtfulness because he served Jesus, who is the ultimate example of both. Let us love our leaders in the church, recognizing that they have great expectations laid upon them by Jesus and the church. Let us support and care for them so their ministry is a joy and our fellowship is a blessing.



How might God be calling you to serve as a refreshing presence to a leader in your church or elsewhere?

Day 3: Read 2 Timothy 2:1-26

Timothy was a young man and would soon have the responsibility of leading the church at Ephesus on his own as Paul would face execution and depart for the glory of God's presence. Paul was writing to Timothy hoping to encourage him to stand firm in the grace of the Lord. In short, Paul was calling Timothy to "flee from youthful passions" (v. 22) and to cultivate a pure heart to avoid the "trap of the devil" (v. 26).

Godly leaders are those who live honorable lives by modeling self-control and patience. Meaningless debates and quarrels do not easily sidetrack them. Too often churches are divided because their leaders don't create a culture of discipleship and grace-filled community, but rather, they get distracted by passions that are contrary to the gospel and God's Word (vv. 24-25).



How could Christians impact the world if we modeled civility and humility on social media according to 2 Timothy 2:24-26?

Day 4: Read 2 Timothy 3:1-17

The apostle Paul predicted that in the last days—which refers to the age after the resurrection of Jesus—people would be self-centered and godless while posing as godly (3:1-9). What was Paul’s remedy for Timothy to avoid having such a character?

First, it was for Timothy to continue what he was already doing (vv. 10-11). The apostle encouraged Timothy to continue in what he had learned and firmly believed, what Timothy had heard and found in the Scriptures that he had been discipled in since infancy (vv. 15-16).

As culture and trends in society steadily change, we need to remain stable by equipping ourselves through the Word and the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can live with confidence amid a wayward society because we know that ultimately God has spoken truly and has equipped us sufficiently to serve Him faithfully and effectively (v. 17).

 Why is it essential to the church’s health that we remain confident in Scripture’s authority and relevance even as culture changes and society opposes it?

Day 5: Read 2 Timothy 4:1-22

Paul began this passage by giving Timothy a “solemn charge before God and Christ Jesus” (v. 1). Like a coach’s speech during halftime of a championship game, Paul saved his most urgent call for a climactic moment. Paul charged Timothy to preach the Word at all times, whether in season or out of season. Due to their hardness of heart, people will multiply certain types of teachers because they have “an itch to hear what they want to hear” (v. 3)

Paul’s remedy was for Timothy to “exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill [his] ministry” (v. 5). The key to helping a young minister like Timothy is to stay focused on the day of judgment (vv. 1,8). In troubling times, it’s important that we remember that every day is a day closer to Christ’s return, when He will give all who love His appearing a “crown of righteousness.”

 How could contemplating the day of judgment serve as a source of motivation for maintaining your fidelity to Jesus and making Him known?

