

Chapter 30: The Final Equipping of the Man of God

1. The _____ of the man of God.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So you must never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. It is God who saved us and chose us to live a holy life. He did this not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan long before the world began—to show his love and kindness to us through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the coming of Christ Jesus, our Savior, who broke the power of death and showed us the way to everlasting life through the Good News. And that is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return. Hold on to the pattern of right teaching you learned from me. And remember to live in the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. With the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard what has been entrusted to you. 2 Timothy 1:8-15

For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him.

1 Peter 1.4-5

2. The _____ of the man of God.

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

Share in the troubles we have like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. A soldier wants to please the enlisting officer, so no one serving in the army wastes time with everyday matters.

Paul considered believers to be at war with three things: the _____, our own _____, and _____.

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:5)

Also an athlete who takes part in a contest must obey all the rules in order to win.

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:6-7)

Hardworking farmers are the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Think about what I am saying. The Lord will give you understanding in all these things.

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:15-16)

Make every effort to give yourself to God as the kind of person he will accept. Be a worker who is not ashamed and who uses the true teaching in the right way. Stay away from foolish, useless talk, because that will lead people further away from God.

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:20-23)

In a large house there are not only things made of gold and silver, but also things made of wood and clay. Some things are used for special purposes, and others are made for ordinary jobs. All who make themselves clean from evil will be used for special purposes. They will be made holy, useful to the Master, ready to do any good work. We do not preach about ourselves, but we preach that Jesus Christ is Lord... We have this treasure from God, but we are like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:5, 7

- _____ (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people. They should gently teach those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth.

3. Beware the _____ of the man of God.

In the last days there will be many troubles, because people will love themselves, love money, brag, and be proud. They will say evil things against others and will not obey their parents or be thankful or be the kind of people God wants. They will not love others, will refuse to forgive, will gossip, and will not control themselves. They will be cruel, will hate what is good, will turn against their friends, and will do foolish things without thinking. They will be conceited, will love pleasure instead of God, and will act as if they serve God but will not have his power. Stay away from those people. But you have followed what I teach, the way I live, my goal, faith, patience, and love. You know I never give up. You should continue following the teachings you learned. You know they are true, because you trust those who taught you. Since you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise.

2 Timothy 3:1-5, 14-15

How will you live in such a confusing world? You can rely on two things:

You can trust _____; and you can trust the _____.

This Week's Equipping Point:

"Am I doing anything now that would decrease your trust in me?"

"Is there anything I need to repent of that would increase your trust in me?"

4. The _____ of the man of God.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day...

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Discussion Questions

1. Why do people tend to focus on *their* performance, rather than God's power, to keep safe their reward?
2. Which of the presentations of the man of God are most challenging to you?
3. Write your one-sentence epitaph.

Teaching Script

[Show the Epitaph PowerPoint]

The last epitaph, of course, was the Apostle Paul's.

He was in a Roman prison, and had one more letter to write to his spiritual son, Timothy. His previous imprisonment in Rome was a minimum-security, house arrest kind of affair where Paul received visitors daily. This last incarceration, under the insane Nero, offered no hope of escape, much less privileges. The persecution of Christians had escalated significantly, and Paul had not been spared the effects.

Paul had been on three missionary journeys, four if you count his last trip, and had been through shipwreck, beatings, torture, everything. Now, the end was undeniably near, and his every word mattered. Nothing could be wasted, because there wouldn't be another letter after this one. Speak now or it will never be said. In Paul's final days and hours, what cream rises to the top? Of all that could be said, which words would he choose? Which words would you choose?

As men, there are few places in the Bible that warrant our attention more than the book of 2 Timothy. Just as you and I, in a foreign prison, or lying terminally ill, would weigh our last words carefully, so Paul's encouragement and instructions to Timothy are priceless jewels for the man of God. Given the weight on this last letter, we would do well to listen carefully.

Paul addresses four perspectives of the man of God.

1. **The *perseverance* of the man of God.** Listen from 2 Timothy Chapter 1:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. ⁸So you must never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. It is God who saved us and chose us to live a holy life. He did this not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan long before the world began—to show his love and kindness to us through Christ Jesus. ¹⁰And now he has made all of this plain to us by the coming of Christ Jesus, our Savior, who broke the power of death and showed us the way to everlasting life through the Good News. ¹²And that is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

¹³Hold on to the pattern of right teaching you learned from me. And remember to live in the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴With the help of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard what has been entrusted to you.

“A holy calling”—a sacred trust that HE will keep, guarded by Holy Spirit—that was not because of anything we did ourselves but because of God's purpose and grace.

Before Adam and Eve, his holy calling was on Bill to run Sysco, on Larry to run Harte-Hanks, for Bruce to walk through a time of unemployment to increase his trust in God, for Rodney to come out of retirement, purchase a few ties, and invest his life in teenagers at Geneva school. Whatever your place right now, in whatever condition, with or without

a job, with or without a clue where you'll be three months from now, your situation this morning is part of a plan he formed millennia ago for each of the billions of believers throughout time.

That is a God worthy of our worship.

Paul says, Timothy, the first thing you need to know is that the suffering I've been through as a follower of Christ is probably in store for you as well, but I am confident that

"He is able to keep what I've committed." God is able to keep the imperfect commitment I've made to Him until that last day. 1 Peter 1 says,

For God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him.

1 Peter 1:4-5

Your salvation is absolutely secure...not because of your power to keep all the laws, or obey perfectly, but because salvation is God's thing.

So he says in verse 14, "*Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*"

This is the echo of the promise from Ephesians where Paul said:

And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee (some versions say 'down payment') that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people.

Ephesians 1:13-14

In other words, Timothy, don't worry about God keeping His end of the bargain. The phrase "I am persuaded that He is able" doesn't mean, "OK, God has pretty much talked me in to the idea that my trust is secure." This word "persuaded" is more accurately translated "I am convinced, because of what He's done in the past..." It is an assurance based on past faithfulness. In other words, "I've seen it time and time again and I know it to be true." Timothy, if there were ever anything you could hang your hat on, it's God's faithfulness and His ability to keep your soul safe until that great day of His return.

And if I had just a few paragraphs at the end of my life to communicate something to my kids, this would be one of those things: Sweetheart, no matter what happens in your life, no matter how far away you might feel from God, no matter how much doubt Satan has introduced into your heart, of this I am convinced: He is able! He is able to keep the faith that you've committed, weak though it may be, He has reserved your place at His side, kept pure and undefiled in heaven for you, to protect what you have committed until you receive His salvation on that last day. No matter what happens, you can take that to the bank, because your inheritance is not kept by something as fragile as your obedience; it's kept by the seal of the Holy Spirit, given to you on the day you believed. Count on it.

Then, in Chapter 2 of 2 Timothy Paul illustrates...

2. **The presentation of the man of God.**

Throughout this chapter, he mentions time and again this “holy calling,” and the roles it takes. For instance,

- **Soldier** (2 Timothy 2:3-4)

Share in the troubles we have like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. A soldier wants to please the enlisting officer, so no one serving in the army wastes time with everyday matters.

The metaphor of Christian life as warfare is mentioned in several of Paul’s earlier letters. He considered believers to be at war with three things:

- 1) The evil world system, or fallen world we all inhabit
- 2) Our own sinful human nature
- 3) Satan and his demons and armies

A man of God first understands that war has been declared on the forces of evil, by Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. That war has been won, but Satan will continue to battle, deceive, undermine, and thwart God’s purposes until the last day when he will be thrown into the lake of fire forever. Until then, friendship with the world is enmity with God. And until we see this struggle as warfare: not a casual disagreement, not a power to be taken lightly or flirted with, but a matter of life and death where blood has been shed and will continue to be shed; until we see this as single-minded combat, we do not see it as Jesus sees it. Compromise, or dallying in enemy territory such as pornography or dishonesty is NOT an option.

- **Athlete** (2 Timothy 2:5)

Also an athlete who takes part in a contest must obey all the rules in order to win.

This is a picture of a spiritual race and untiring pursuit to achieve the prize, but only if you compete according to the rules. This is a call to obey the Word of God. As a second presentation of the man of God, using an athlete as a metaphor, he must compete on the playing field that God has outlined. Whether an athlete or a soldier, God gives the gifts, God equips His men, and God outlines the battles and races in which he has called us to compete.

- **Farmer** (2 Timothy 2:6-7)

Hardworking farmers are the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. Think about what I am saying. The Lord will give you understanding in all these things.

The Greek verb “hardworking” means “to labor to the point of exhaustion.” Ancient farmers put in long hours of backbreaking labor, under all kinds of conditions, hoping that their effort would produce a bountiful harvest. Paul is urging Timothy to “labor intensely,” just as he wrote the Colossians:

We proclaim Him, admonishing and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I *labor*, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me (Colossians 1:28-29).

- **Worker** (2 Timothy 2:15-16)

Make every effort to give yourself to God as the kind of person he will accept. Be a worker who is not ashamed and who uses the true teaching in the right way. Stay away from foolish, useless talk, because that will lead people further away from God.

Do you see how Paul is making the same point again and again, each time from a different angle? For a man of God, for every person here, if you're a soldier, don't waste time with everyday matters—focus on your battlefield. If you're an athlete, train according to the rules. If you're a farmer, labor intensely, striving according to His power, to bring in a spiritual harvest. If you're a worker, which is just about anybody, work so you are not ashamed, who rightly divides the Word, doing away with foolish talk, gossip, and slander. In other words, whatever hat you're wearing, Timothy, your objective is the same: give it all you've got, and stick to God's rules—compromise, laziness and surrender are not in our vocabulary!

- **Vessel** (2 Timothy 2:20-23)

In a large house there are not only things made of gold and silver, but also things made of wood and clay. Some things are used for special purposes, and others are made for ordinary jobs. All who make themselves clean from evil will be used for special purposes. They will be made holy, useful to the Master, ready to do any good work.

God not only equips you for battle, for the race you will run, the crops you will work, but also the *vessel* you'll be. The point is, it's not about your *composition*: made of gold or made of clay; silver or wood. "All who make themselves clean"—another version says, "If you keep yourselves pure," you will be used for special purposes.

Paul was probably remembering what he'd told the Corinthians:

We do not preach about ourselves, but we preach that Jesus Christ is Lord... We have this treasure from God, but we are like clay jars that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us.

2 Corinthians 4:5,7

And last, the role of a

- **Servant** (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and be patient with difficult people. They should gently teach those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth.

Serving people means kindness and patience. If you don't want your witness to be compromised, as a pastor or a farmer or a worker, speak gently to those who oppose the truth.

In chapter two, Paul says that the man of God has a pattern—a *modus operandi* that no matter what he's doing, keeps him focused on the battlefield where God places him, running the race where God enters him, working the field where God plants him, using God's Word faithfully and not to your own ends, speaking graciously, whether God made you a golden urn or a plastic trash can. It's all about purity: an athlete who obeys the rules, a worker who rightly divides the Word of truth, vessels who make themselves clean, servants who speak the truth.

Paul's third perspective from is from the 3rd chapter:

3. **Beware the *perils* of the man of God.** In 2 Timothy 3:

In the last days there will be many troubles, because people will love themselves, love money, brag, and be proud. They will say evil things against others and will not obey their parents or be thankful or be the kind of people God wants. They will not love others, will refuse to forgive, will gossip, and will not control themselves. They will be cruel, will hate what is good, will turn against their friends, and will do foolish things without thinking. They will be conceited, will love pleasure instead of God, and will act as if they serve God but will not have his power. Stay away from those people.

But you have followed what I teach, the way I live, my goal, faith, patience, and love. You know I never give up. You should continue following the teachings you learned. You know they are true, because you trust those who taught you. Since you were a child you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise.

2 Timothy 3:1-5, 14-15

You need to know, Timothy, that as a soldier you will encounter increasing opposition. They won't be servants who speak kindly, or diligent farmers, or disciplined like athletes. They will be "horizontally challenged," speaking evil against others, refusing to forgive and turning against their friends. And they'll also be "vertically challenged," acting as if they serve God but they will not have his power. Timothy, run, don't walk, to the nearest exit.

How will you live in such a confusing world, with this kind of behavior all around you? You can rely on two things:

- 1) **You can trust *me*.** You've seen what I teach, the way I live, the fact that I don't give up. Because of this consistency in me, because of my integrity, you can trust those who taught you. You can trust me.
- 2) **You can trust the *Word of God*.** Since you were small, you've known the Bible, and it, more than anything else, will make you wise.

Gentlemen, at the end of my life, if I have the opportunity to write one last letter to my girls, I want more than anything to have lived the kind of life that would

permit me to say, “You can trust me. You’ve seen how I lived my life, how my actions measured up to my words...how I tried to live with integrity by honoring God, honoring your mother, honoring others, even when no one was looking... Girls, you can trust the one who taught you.”

Your Equipping Point (or Equipping Task for this week) is to approach the person closest to you (in most cases your wife, but if you’re single, a trusted friend) and have the courage to ask them these two questions:

- **“Am I doing anything now that would decrease your trust in me?”**
- **“Is there anything in the past I need to repent of that would increase your trust in me?”**

What can you do this week to move you closer to the point where you *can* say, in good conscience, at the end of your life, “Remember what I’ve said—you can trust me.”

With all the perils that face us today, do we not all wish to speak the same words to our children, as Paul did to his son in the faith, Timothy?

And last... In this living testament Paul has urged Timothy to persevere as a man of God, to present himself as a man of God, to be very aware of perils as a man of God, and now, at the end, with these first three in place, he can have...

4. **The peace of the man of God.**

We’ve already read Paul’s epitaph once; let’s read it again:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day...

2 Timothy 4:6-8

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, the drink offering was the final step that followed the burnt offerings and grain offerings. His death would be the final offering in a life full of sacrifices to God. In fact, the word he uses for “my departure” is the word for loosening something, like the mooring ropes of a ship. It’s time to undock, he says, to be at home with the Lord—which is what Paul really wanted anyway.

The past tense verbs “have fought,” “have finished,” and “have kept” indicate completed actions, but with continuing results—sort of like ripples that fan out forever. Dare you and I hope that as we embrace our families for the last time, our influence, by the grace of God, might be felt by our grandchildren, and their children, and their children...

Here is the message of 2 Timothy. Son, if you can say that you know whom you’ve believed, and are convinced that He is able; if you, as a soldier, farmer, athlete, and vessel of the Lord will be filled and used by His Spirit; if you can recognize the perils of

the enemy and will trust me and the Scriptures...then the peace of God will be yours. You'll be ready to pass on to your children, to your church, a completed faith with continuing results, with ripples that extend farther out than you could imagine, multiplied by the Holy Spirit, so that the crown with your name awaits you on that day.

As the second to last time you and I will study together, can I make Paul's final letter part of my benediction to you? We'll continue this next week, but for now, these are our Equipping Points for today:

- As a man of God, every single one of you has been given a sacred trust—please do not take it lightly.
- Your priceless inheritance cannot perish, spoil, or fade, and is waiting for you.
- Live such that at the end, you can look your kids in the eye and say, “Of this I am convinced: He is able to keep what you have committed to Him.”
- You are a vessel that is priceless not because of you, whether you're made of gold or clay, but because of the treasure you contain: the Holy Spirit of God.
- Live your life so that in the end, you can also look at your children and grandchildren and say, “You can trust me. You've seen how I live my life. You can trust the one who taught you.”
- And last, live your life so that the battles you've fought, and the race you've run, will create ripples, influence, that will extend and multiply until Jesus returns for all of us.

[Prayer]

Lord Jesus, make us men of God, whose epitaphs speak not of ourselves, but of the One who saved us, who inspires us, and calls us into His marvelous light.