

Sometimes we might think of the men who wrote the Bible as living up in an ivory tower, completely detached from real life. But that's definitely not true. The people who wrote the Bible were street missionaries. They were pastors of real life congregations. Today in his letter to pastor Timothy, we see some of Paul's Advice for Pastors. Today Paul says to all pastors: 1) Shed lots of tears. 2) Keep a sincere faith 3) Develop your gifts.

First, shed lots of tears. Timothy was an important co-worker of Paul. If there was a problem in one of the congregations Paul would sometimes send Timothy to help the congregations work through those problems. For example, Paul once sent Timothy to help the church in Corinth. He said in 1 Corinthians, **"I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. ... When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am."** (1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10). So Paul sent Timothy to help the church in Corinth. At the time when our passage was written, Paul had sent Timothy to Ephesus to help the church in Ephesus to be well organized and to guard against false teachers. So Timothy was very involved in working with congregations.

Paul says to Timothy, **"Recalling your tears, I long to see you."** (2 Timothy 1:4) On the one hand, Paul and Timothy were really tough guys. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, **"I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea."** (2 Corinthians 11:23-25) It takes a pretty tough guy to go through all that and still keep going. So on the one hand, Paul and Timothy were really tough guys.

On the other hand, Paul and Timothy were not afraid to cry. Paul says, **"Recalling your tears, I long to see you."** I get the impression that Timothy was a gentle soul. Paul had to tell the Corinthians, **"See that he has nothing to fear while he is with you."** There's another time when Paul tells Timothy, **"Don't let anyone look down on you because of your youth."** Don't get me wrong, Timothy was no wimp. He must have been tough as nails and very brave to go on all those missionary journeys. But he was also vulnerable. He cried a lot and so did Paul. And why did they cry so much? Because they were so emotionally invested in their congregations. When their people were suffering, they were sad. When their people were behaving with non-Christian attitudes, it ate them up inside. But they were also very proud of their congregations. Even when their congregations had problems they always addressed their congregations as people who in Christ. They cried tears of joy when they thought about how happy they would be to see their congregations shine on the day of the Lord Jesus. Paul and Timothy loved their people so much. In the same way both of your pastors love you all. We are very proud of you and we can't wait to see you shine on the day of our Lord Jesus.

Paul's second advice to pastors is to keep a sincere faith. He says to Timothy, **"I am reminded of your sincere faith."** (2 Timothy 1:5) Timothy had a great example of sincere faith in his mother and grandmother: **"I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also."** (2 Timothy 1:5) What an enormously high calling for Christian mothers and grandmothers! Set an example of sincere faith. You can't believe for your kids, But you can set an example of sincere faith and very often that example rubs off. This faith was passed down from at least three generations: from mother to grandmother to son. Some of you have three generations sitting in the same pew right now. All of you Christian parents keep up the example of sincere faith, because you never know what God will bring out of it.

It must have been hard for Paul to keep his sincere faith. He wrote this letter from prison. Now Paul had been in prisons all over the world (not because he had done anything wrong, but because he was preaching about Jesus Christ). Paul had been in lots of prisons, some of those prisons were rather comfortable. This one was not. This was a rough prison. And on top of that, Paul thinks that the time is getting very close for him to give his life for the Lord Jesus. On top of that there are a couple of indications in this letter that Paul is a little depressed. He says in 1:15, **“Everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me.”** And in 4:16, **“In my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength... I was delivered from the lion’s mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (2 Timothy 4:17-18)** Paul was able to keep his sincere faith because of what he said in verse 1: **“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.”** Even though he was depressed, he had the promise of life in Christ Jesus. So Paul encourages pastor Timothy to keep his sincere faith.

Finally, he encourages Timothy to develop his gifts. Paul says, **“Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on my hands.” (2 Timothy 1:6)** When Timothy was first recruited by Paul to join his ministry team, Timothy was ordained. I remember when I was ordained right here in this sanctuary. And when Timothy was ordained Paul placed his hands on his shoulders or on his head. And when Paul did that, God gave to Timothy a gift of some kind. We don’t know what that gift was. It must have been some gift to equip Timothy for the ministry that he was about to start.

The Lord Jesus has given to each pastor a different set of gifts. Each pastor has strengths in a particular area. And these strengths are gifts from God. The word “gift” is important. **“Fan into flame the gift of God”** A pastor might have strengths in one area, but those strengths are undeserved GIFTS that he has been given. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, **“What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (1 Cor 4:7)** God has given to each pastor a set of undeserved gifts. And God wants each pastor to develop his gifts not for self-advancement, but for the benefit of the congregation. Paul says to Timothy, **“Fan into flame the gift of God.”** Paul wants Timothy to develop that gift so that it grows and increases just like a flame grows when you feed it. There’s a big emphasis in our synod now on called worker professional development and continuing education. The synod really sees that there is a lot of benefit in that for congregations. So if you notice a gift in one of your pastors or in your school teachers it would be great if you would encourage them and say, “I notice that you are really good at this. Are you getting enough time to develop that so that you can fan into flame this gift that God has given you?” If you encourage your called workers in that way you will be benefiting the whole church.

Today we are thinking about Timothy and about pastors. One time a group of Greeks came to two of the disciples and said, “Sirs, we would like to see Jesus.” And the disciples brought them to Jesus. You come to Pastor Lahmann and I every Sunday and you say “Sirs we would like to see Jesus.” So today as we think of Timothy we thank God for all of the pastors who have brought us to see Jesus. Amen.