

# MBC MEN'S STUDY

## LEADERSHIP 9: THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

### CLASS 4: 2 TIMOTHY 2

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- January 19<sup>th</sup>: Introduction and Titus 1
- February 16<sup>th</sup>: 2 Timothy Introduction and Chapter 1
- March 16<sup>th</sup>: Titus 2-3
- **April 13<sup>th</sup>: 2 Timothy 2**
- May 4<sup>th</sup>: 2 Timothy 3-4

### INTRODUCTION

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The simple outline of this letter is Paul appealing to Timothy to suffer as a good soldier of Christ and to engage in the tasks of his calling in vv. 1-13. Then Paul exhorts him to not quarrel over words in vv. 14-26. So, a pretty basic outline but this chapter has a couple foundational and extremely relevant passages for those who desire the work of a church leader or elder.

It is very important to remember that this was Paul's final letter before his execution and he is writing his final exhortations to his son in the faith, his fellow laborer and co-heir of the kingdom of Christ. As Paul is getting ready to be shortly executed for his faith, you can tell that he wants to give Timothy a bunch of final commands.

*Imagine if you knew that you were going to face your final days shortly, what would you want your family, friends and church to know? What is the most important information you could pass down to them in the hopes that they would continue the race with Christ?*

Paul knew that false teachers were circling the church in Ephesus and that some had made their way inside. He also knew that Timothy was not the most outspoken man nor was he a man that would be a strong confronter of evil in the church.

As these things were in Paul's mind, in chapter 2 he lays out **11 imperatives for Timothy**. 11 commands which would have shaped him, and subsequently us, into the men that God desires to lead His churches. We are to be men who rely on the power of Christ, teach men who can teach others, who suffer well and stay away from temptations by pursuing the things which glorify and honor God.

## Verse 1: A Command For Functioning With Power

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- Paul starts in **verse 1** with an imperative...*be strengthened*
- After an endearing statement by calling Timothy *my child*, he firstly addresses this imperative command rightly at him by saying...*you then*.
- After all they had been through together and all that was facing the church in Ephesus, Paul was reminding Timothy that he was the man whom God called for that position.
- Simply being an elder or pastor is not enough for the rigorous demands of the ministry. ***You must, just as Paul told Timothy, be strengthened by the Lord.***
  - Because this is in the imperative, it is a command...and because it is a passive verb it means that the strength is coming to you, not something that you yourself have to produce.
  - To be sure, you are responsible for making sure that you are acting in accordance with what the Scriptures command, but the means by which you do that are given through the power and grace of God.
  - As Paul says in **Ephesians 6:10**, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.”
    - This is the same command, *be strong*, that Paul uses when addressing spiritual warfare with the church at Ephesus.
    - Paul adds the means though, *in the Lord and in the strength of his might*. Here is where you as an elder/pastor are going to gain your strength for the ministry which is laid before you.
- To be strengthened by the grace of God is to be in the Word daily, not just for study purposes but for your own health and strength. (**Psalm 1**).
- You must have fellowship with other believers who can encourage you, exhort you and keep you accountable.
- Daily prayer and communion with God.
- These are all invaluable means by which God continues to give us strength to continue on in the ministry and also to ourselves grow in grace and godliness.
  - **1 Corinthians 15:10** “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but **I labored** even more than all of them, yet not I, **but the grace of God** with me.”
  - **1 Corinthians 3:9** “For we are God’s **fellow workers**; you are God’s field, God’s building.”
  - The presence of hard work and labor does not mean there is an absence of God’s grace or company with us.
  - Do you want to be empowered by God’s grace and strength to do the work that He has for you?
  - Then you step out in faith and keep walking in the direction that He pointed you.

- People whom you have charge over will know when you are lacking in these areas, it will show itself in your teaching, your prayers, your leadership, and in your counseling and discipleship.

## **Verse 2: A Command for Furthering Posterity**

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- **Verse 2** is one of the most important verses we can talk about in the pastoral epistles and how it relates to the health of the church.
  - Notice that it is Paul who taught Timothy, is to teach others and they are to carry on teaching to even more men.
  - This is the proper working order of the church. Men training men, who then train more men.
  - *The church is moved forward by the church.* Men using the means of Christ.
    - If you were to simply read through the New Testament you would see how the church is to be the training grounds for ministry and body life.
    - Though brick and mortar training places may have their benefits, there is no better place to get trained than by the elders and church leaders who are caring for and watching out for your soul.
  - This is the heartbeat of the New Testament.
    - Paul met and trained Timothy and Titus. He brought them along as he did ministry and no doubt was teaching them along the way.
  - *Jesus disciplined the apostle John who then disciplined both Ignatius and Polycarp. In fact, there is this great legend in church history that as Ignatius was John's disciple, and Polycarp was John's disciple, then Polycarp was also Ignatius' disciple.*
  - Polycarp would go on to disciple Irenaeus.
  - And Irenaeus would go on Hippolytus. There we have this great length through the first two centuries of the church's life back to John.
    - Jesus (33 AD) – John (98 AD) – Ignatius (108 AD) - Polycarp (155 AD) – Irenaeus (202 AD) - Hippolytus (235 AD). You can see the succession of men who were training others right from the time of Christ.
  - You should be constantly looking out for men who have a desire to learn and teach others. The pastor should always have people they are discipling and training for future ministry opportunities.

## **Verses 3-7: A Command For Fueling Perseverance**

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- Once again, this section starts with a command...Suffer hardship...
- In **verses 3-7**, Paul uses three illustrations, a soldier, an athlete and a farmer, to further explain what a life of faithful ministry looks like.

- Paul says a good soldier:
- “*For, anyone who offers to obey Christ, must be ready to endure hardship; there is no perseverance without patience in enduring evil.*” – Calvin
- As a soldier, you must have a readiness for battle, but the patience to be able to withstand the attacks.
- You should be a single-minded man, only seeking to please the one who is in control...the Lord Jesus.
- An athlete:
- An athlete is known because of their training. To excel at athletics, he must be someone who puts exceptional time and effort into training.
- An athlete is disciplined, not allowing failure or discouragement to keep him from striving towards his goal.
- The athlete looks forward to the crown, as does the good servant of Christ.
- A Farmer:
- A farmer plants a seed in the hope that a crop will come. There is never a guarantee that there will be enough rain, that the soil will remain fertile or that the seeds are good. But he knows that there is a promise at the end, the crop of his hard work.
- This is the same mindset we must have as leaders in the church.
  - We may not know much about the soil where we are planting the seeds of the Word. We may not know the people’s attitudes towards the Lord or even if the seeds are making an impact.
  - But we are promised that the Lord will one day bring all this together for our salvation and final consummation.
  - That is what the farmer looks forward to, as should the good servant of Christ.
- He concludes this section in verse 7 with another imperative for Timothy to *think* or *consider* what Paul has just told him.
  - This imperative means to *think over with care...to consider...to take note of...*
- This is not just some helpful advice that Paul is passing along, but he expects Timothy to really ponder this over. He wants him to see if his life and attitude matches what he has just told him.
- The life of ministry (no matter to what degree you are involved) is going to be one that is constantly under spiritual attack.
- When one steps out of the “normal” workings of the church, they are going to ***automatically*** come under attack for their work.
- “Do not be deceived, Wormwood. Our cause is never more in danger than when a human, no longer desiring, but still intending, to do our Enemy’s will, looks round upon a universe from which every trace of Him seems to have vanished, and asks why he has been forsaken, and still obeys.” (C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape letters*)

## Verses 8-13: A Command For Finding Purpose

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Verses 8-13 are really governed by the imperative verb *remember*. After all Paul has explained and exhorted Timothy to do, he now answers the *why* question. ***Why should he be like the good soldier or the athlete or the hard-working farmer? Why does any of this matter to the church and the furtherance of the gospel?***

- Paul calls on him to *remember*...in **verse 8** it is to remember Jesus Christ,
  - **verse 9** to remember that the Word of God is not bound,
  - **verse 10** to remember that Christ's elect need to hear the gospel in order to be saved and finally in
  - **verses 11-13** to remember what we are promised, eternal life with Christ.
- This word for *remember* means *to keep in mind...to think of*...in other words, Paul is telling Timothy and all who would labor for the gospel to meditate on Jesus Christ and the gospel.
  - "There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against the Enemy. He wants men to be concerned with what they do; our business is to keep them thinking about what will happen to them." (C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*)
  - Our minds are going to be under constant attack from the enemy.
  - We must not just put off the bad thoughts but remember to put on or think about things which are pleasing to the Lord.
- These things should be the motivation for all our ministries as we seek to serve the Lord Jesus Christ through the church and by the faithful preaching and teaching of His Word.

## Verses 14-21: Commands For Faithful Pastoring

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Now in **verses 14-16**, Paul lays out some more qualities or traits of a faithful and good workman.

- Once again, he starts the section with an imperative...*remind them*. This is in the present tense which means the act of reminding the people needs to be part of the regular practice of Timothy.
  - To be honest, the idea of reminding the church is popular for Paul and others in the NT.
  - **Romans 15:15** "But I have written very boldly to you on some points **so as to remind you again**, because of the grace that was given me from God..."
  - **1 Corinthians 4:17** "For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and **he will remind you** of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church."
  - **2 Timothy 1:6** "For this reason **I remind you** to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

- **Titus 3:1** “**Remind them** to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed...”
- **2 Peter 1:12** Therefore, **I will always be ready to remind you** of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.
- **Jude 1:5** “Now **I desire to remind you**, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe.”
- While each of the above acts of reminding have different purposes, faithful leading in a church means that you are going to be reminding people of the same things quite a bit.
  - We are not tasked with coming up with new fads or beliefs, but we need to be able to reinforce what we already know to be true and make sure people keep it in their minds.
- **So, in this text, what is the content that he needs to remind them of...these things.**
  - He is to remind the church at Ephesus to pass on God’s truth to others, to share in sufferings as a good soldier, an athlete and a hard-working farmer.
- He should be reminding them about who Christ is and the Word of God is not bound. He should also be reminding them that one day they will stand before their God and judge and give an account for their life.
- He then has a stern warning, *charge them before God* he tells Timothy.
  - So not only is Timothy to encourage them but also to warn them. They are not to quarrel about unprofitable words with one another.
  - **This theme is popular in the pastoral epistles, false teachers are not to be argued with because no good comes from it.**
  - Interestingly, Paul says that when one wrangles about words it leads to the ruin of the hearers.
  - The word for *ruin* is the Greek word **καταστροφή**.
- Moving on to Timothy himself in **verse 15**, Paul exhorts him to be the teacher that can rightly handle God’s Word...unlike the false teachers.
- ***Do you best or be diligent* is the imperative verb that Paul commands him with.**
- Every teacher of the Word should take this verse to heart and put it to memory.
- This is what we are called to do every time we open the word of God.
- Our diligence is not there so we look good for our teachers, friends or family.
- We should not try and impress our congregations or other pastors.
  - **We have the solemn responsibility of striving to be approved by God.**
    - When it is all said and done, you must be able to pass the inspection which God will one lay upon you.
  - When you strive and labor for the Lord in your study, you need not be ashamed.

- As long as you are correctly handling the word of God, it matters not what others may say about you. Our focus is to serve and please the Lord.
- We do this by *rightly handling the word of truth*.
  - This means *to cut a straight line*. It is unclear **exactly** what Paul had in mind using this word, but the point is that the handling of the word of God is serious business.
  - “Elsewhere in Greek literature it is used in such contexts as a farmer plowing a straight furrow or a mason cutting a stone to a correct pattern. In our present context it means handling the word of truth in a straightforward manner, that is, without deviating into the crooked paths of the false teachers. It does not refer to dividing Scripture into time periods or dispensations for the purpose of correct interpretation.”<sup>1</sup>
- On a side note, the NKJV or KJV translates this passage as “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth*.”
  - This is what the above quote was referencing, we are not to *divide* God’s Word into different dispensations but in the context of the passage referring to the fact that the false teachers are all over the place with their beliefs but the man of God plows straight forward.
  - There are no other NT uses of this word...but the OT:
    - Proverbs 3:6 NASB95 - In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.
    - Proverbs 3:6 KJV - In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.
    - Proverbs 11:5 NASB95 - The righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.
    - Proverbs 11:5 KJV - The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.
    - “...where it is used with ὁδούς and plainly means ‘cut a path in a straight direction’ or ‘cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction’, so that the traveler may go directly to his destination.”<sup>2</sup>
    - ὁδούς (from the Septuagint) which means a literal way to travel or course of conduct (a way of thinking, feeling and deciding.)

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *Pass It On: A Bible Commentary for Laymen: First and Second Timothy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 126.

<sup>2</sup> William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 722.

- If rightly handling brings approval from God, then one who decides to mishandle the word of God is shameful before God.
  - We must never be those who seek to push our own agenda nor those who use the Word as some sort of tool to allow sin.
- Continuing in **verses 16-19** Paul goes back to the type of speech which is not to be among those who are in the church.
- Timothy is to teach the word because it will lead people into right living. If there is irreverent babble, literally *worthless* and *empty talk*, it is going to lead people into more and more ungodliness. This is what Timothy (and us) need to be on the lookout for in the church.
- We are to *avoid* this talk (v. 16).
- **Remember, this is a command to Timothy, he is to avoid speaking in such a way.**
  - Notice the contrast between **verses 15 and 16**. One way is approved by God and brings honor.
  - The other way leads people into ungodly living.
- Men, we need to make sure we do not use the pulpit or other teaching opportunities in such a way that brings dishonor to God and leads people into more and more ungodliness.
- No matter what is popular, no matter what pressures you are under, your command is to handle the word of God rightly. This is what we strive for and what our only desire should be.
- In **17a**, Paul gives further results of teaching carelessly, it spreads rapidly.
- “False religion and satanic lies spread faster than the truth, because the sinful human heart is more receptive to them.” John MacArthur.
  - If this false teaching is not cut out, it will spread like gangrene, feeding on itself until it is finally eradicated by amputation.
- This is what Paul shows here with Hymenaeus and Philetus.
  - We know nothing of Philetus but Hymenaeus was mentioned by Paul in **1 Tim. 1:20** when he said he should be handed over to Satan for chastisement.
- We read in **verse 18** that they *swerved from the truth or gone astray from the truth*.
- This verb means to *deviate or depart*. They left the truth of the resurrection and told people that it had already happened.
- By doing so, they were causing division by upsetting the faith of some.
- This is not to say that people were losing their salvation but that they perhaps were distorting the gospel or causing some true believers to be weakened in their faith with regards to the resurrection.
- As Paul says in **1 Corinthians 15:13-14** “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.”



- The resurrection is an important part of the overall gospel message.
- Without it, we are simply dead in our sins.
- We do not know if they were teaching that the resurrection was only a spiritual event or what they thought.
- But we do know that their particular teachings were destroying people's faith and they were to be avoided.
- Just so young Timothy is not discouraged, Paul says in **verse 19** that God's *firm foundation stands*.
  - Paul is contrasting the faith of those who followed Philetus and Hymenaeus and those who are truly born again.
  - The ones who are truly born again will by no means fall, they are part of the true church. As Paul says in **1 Timothy 3:15** "...if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, *a pillar and buttress of the truth*."
    - The Church is built upon and stands upon the truth and there are no false teachers who will ever change that. We can have the utmost confidence in this.
  - Paul says that our confidence is also in the fact that *the Lord knows who are His*.
    - This speaks to the doctrine of election, which the New Testament teaches all over (**Jhn. 15:16; Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:28-30; Acts 13:48; 2 Thess. 2:13**).
  - Furthermore, those who are truly His will desire to *depart from iniquity*.
    - This speaks to sanctification. Those who are elected and part of the true church which stands on the truth of gospel will be sanctified.
  - So even though Timothy may be running into some troubles with false teachers, and he may have to kick some people out of the church, he should be encouraged that the Lord knows all that is happening and none who are appointed to salvation will be lost. It is the Lord who builds the church.

Continuing on with what it takes to be faithful in ministry, Paul now uses the imagery of a house and vessels. In the previous section he talked about the church and how the Lord knows those who are His. Perhaps this would have caused the question of why people like Hymenaeus and Philetus were in the church.

- In **verses 20-21**, Paul continues to use the church, calling it a *great house*. In this great house there are both vessels which are used for honorable and dishonorable purposes.
  - "The **large house** would therefore represent the entire church of God, the body of Christ, composed of all true believers, the **vessels** in which represent individual believers—the honorable **gold and silver vessels** and the dishonorable **vessels of wood and of earthenware**."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 86–87.

- In the church there are those whom God uses for honor and those who are stained with sin and not able to be used for honor.
- Those who are honorable are those who Paul talked about in the beginning of the chapter; the good soldier, the athlete and the hard-working farmer.
  - Those who are dishonorable would be, by the opposite definition, cowards and lazy.
- “**Honor** and **dishonor** do not refer to true and false Christians, respectively. Jesus makes clear in the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24–30) and in His teaching about the sheep and goats judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31–46) that the visible church on earth will contain both unbelievers and believers until He returns and orders the final separation. But Paul is not speaking about that distinction.”<sup>4</sup>
- In **verse 21**, Paul connects this together with *therefore*. Because there are two types of believers in the church, we should not be like those who are lazy and cowards. We should be striving to be like those who are used for honor, set apart and ready for every good work.
- Also in **verse 21**, Paul says *if any man cleanses himself from what is dishonorable...* this is not speaking of being born again (as man has nothing to do with that) but it is about denying our flesh and getting sin out of our life.
- In order to be in a state of readiness for the Lord and His good works, we must constantly be keeping sin away and striving in holiness.
  - Good works is a constant theme in the pastoral epistles. Christians then, and now, seem to have struggled with laziness with regards to good works.
  - When laziness comes, so does sin. When we are undisciplined in one area of our life, it will allow other areas to go unchecked as well.

## Verses 22-26: Commands For Fruitful Practice

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- With all that being said about the church and the congregation, Paul now turns back to Timothy. There are two final imperatives in **verse 22...flee and pursue**.
- After just talking about sanctification and false teachers, Paul’s admonishment to Timothy is similar to what he said in 1 Timothy 6:11...*flee these things...pursue righteousness, godliness, etc.*
- He tells Timothy to *flee youthful passions*.
  - **Because flee is in the present active imperative, there is an expectation from Paul that Timothy will be continually fleeing youthful passions.**

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<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 87.

- We should not think of youthful passions as purely sexual in nature. These passions would include things like pride, envy, power, wealth and jealousy.
  - Perhaps Timothy was at times embarrassed about his relationship with Paul or maybe fearful of the persecution which was going to come upon him.
- We do not only need to run away from sin, but we must run to something.
- If we simply flee from sin without a plan, we will inevitably end up in sin again.
- Therefore, Paul tells him to pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.
  - Paul also says at the end of **verse 22**...*along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart*. Not only was Timothy to pursue these intangible things, he was to also pursue others who were vessels of honor, those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
  - Having a pure heart means they had cleansed themselves and were vessels for honor.
- By pursuing those who have a pure heart, Timothy will naturally be able to stay away from foolish and ignorant controversies (**v. 23**).
  - This comes down to discernment on Timothy's part. He must be mature in the Lord in order to discern the vessels in the church.
  - One is going to lead him to further serve the Lord, the other is going to *breed quarrels*.
    - **You must be able to discern these people in the church.** This does not mean you do not discuss theology and doctrine but stay away from foolish and unfruitful arguments.
    - They simply breed quarrels in the church.
- In the final verses, **24-26**, Paul once again talks about the character and actions of those who are leaders and servants in the church.
- Church leaders should not be quarrelsome but rather known as kind.
  - You should be promoting unity in the church rather than being divisive.
- We are most certainly to speak out against false teachers and defend the faith, but we need to do it with kindness.
  - We should never compromise our Biblical convictions but be ready to defend them with a meek heart in compassion.
  - Notice the qualifier on being kind...it is to everyone. We must have a disposition of kindness, even when we are wronged.
- He also says *able to teach*.
  - The actual meaning is *skillful in teaching*. This is what Paul told Timothy a requirement of elders was in **1 Timothy 3:2**.

- Church leaders must be able to communicate effectively when dealing with false teachers and those believers in the church who are not acting in accordance with their salvation.
- They must be able to communicate Biblical truths in such a way that they can refute those who contradict and exhort others.
- He must *patiently endure evil*.
  - This is, by far, the hardest qualification which is mentioned here. In order to be a vessel for honor, one must not give into the flesh and react in haste when wronged.
  - If you desire to live the way that Paul has described here, as vessels for honor, then you will come under attack and most likely will need to endure evil.
  - ***Do not worry about attempting to justify yourself or vindicate yourself, rest in the Lord who is the perfect judge.***
  - If you are *rightly handling the word of truth*, you will be able to patiently endure evil.
- In **verses 25-26**, the leader must have humility and compassion.
  - When correcting another believer's wrong way of thinking or acting, it must be done with kindness and gentleness.
  - ***You will have great convictions and great knowledge, but they must be tempered by even greater kindness and gentleness. If not, no one will desire to hear you.***
  - Paul is talking about you as a vessel for honor confronting a vessel for dishonor with the hope that they repent.
  - We should never have the attitude that we just want to win an argument or prove to everyone that we were right. Our hope is that this brother in the Lord will be granted repentance from God so that they may come to their senses and escape the snares of the devil.
  - We must always have restoration on our minds when we confront others who are in the church. Our hope is that they confess their sins and return to serving the Lord.