

The Rock: 08-15-2021**Philippians: The letter of joy**

(This word / scripture came to one of our prophetically gifted people with regards to you)

First reading:

Title: A good servant

Scripture: 1 Timothy 4:6-16

Theme:

The calling of a pastor is a unique, God ordained gift. This is solemn calling of God for the benefit of His people.

Introduction:

An old Scottish preacher once said: "The pulpit draws the pastor like the sea draws the sailor."

I have discovered this to be true. Within that comes the dynamic tension of always at some level, this feeling of inadequacy to the task which God has assigned.

The calling of pastoral ministry is a unique thing, one that I see as being lost in the notion that it is simply just another job which someone chooses.

In my teaching and training of those who are called to ministry, I tell them: "If

there is anything else that you think you could do, do that instead.

Why would I say something like that?

Well, because being called to full time pulpit ministry is exactly that: a call. It's not a job that we can take or leave.

There is a Holy Spirit passion that's given to those who are called which drives them onward. There is a heart that is given for a people whom God has set us down with to serve and disciple.

Paul talks about this in his first letter to the Corinthians, as he tries to help them understand that his role, and that of anyone else called to this type of ministry, is a unique one.

He talks about how those who are called should make their living in and by that calling, so that their hearts aren't divided as they seek to grow a community of believers:

"In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel."

-1 Corinthians 9:14 ESV

Your faithfulness in tithing and giving even beyond your tithe sometimes allows for that to happen here.

Thanks to your continued obedience and faithfulness to give, myself and now Marty, seek to be faithful to that call, serving this body as God has set us down here for full time ministry.

Say nothing of the fact that you also support two other pastor's on staff at a part time level.

The Story:

We really have two tasks as pastors. To preach the gospel and to equip the saints for the works of ministry. There is a lot to those two things, but those are certainly the headers of our tasks:

"For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"

-1 Corinthians 9:16 ESV

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."

-Ephesians 4:11-12 ESV

So, I think it's good as the as the Spirit led, to take time this morning to speak on that and to give you, Marty, the

charge Paul gave his young friend Timothy.

Circling around these three things Paul told Timothy, and then charge the congregation, as you too have responsibility in all of the success of the church as well as the success of your pastors. More than you know, actually.

So back to Timothy, and we will notice:

1-Focus, focus, focus. Make the plain things, the main things. Why? Because the main things are the main things, and the plain things are always main.

The prime mission of any pastor is to focus on the call of God given to them. Why is that so important? Because many things and people will seek to pull you in every sort of direction.

After explaining to Timothy, a bit about what the culture of the last days will look like, he directs Timothy's focus:

"If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness."

-1 Timothy 4:6-7 ESV

You are not called to take on and tackle every single thing that comes your way, nor the things which everyone demands of you.

We are not called to tackle every issue, every concern and every dream. Pastors who lose focus and try to manage every thing, every idea and every opinion that comes their way, will soon find themselves spending a ton of time on non-essential things.

Focusing on things that are not prime to the pastoral task at hand, is the biggest issue we will face in ministry.

Proper focus is kept in constant prayer and study. You have to create space for this and make sure good habits are formed here. They will serve you as ministry gets busier as your community grows.

(My study habits)

2- Become the best teacher God has called and gifted you to be.

You need to understand that good relationships AND good doctrine are key to this. Building trust through good and genuine relationships by being consistent and caring for those God puts under your care.

The worship team and youth and their families specifically for you, and the greater community here generally. Together we are better.

I read a blog once where the preacher posted: "More relationship, less doctrine is what teens need."

That is not only scary, it is patently false and dangerous. To sacrifice doctrine in order to build good relationships, or to minimize the necessity of relationships for Biblical knowledge -you will actually lose both, every time.

It is one of the reasons why an entire generation is Biblically illiterate, and simple consumers. Not servants and disciples of Jesus.

I never sacrificed one for the other. I have focused on both and experienced growth, fruitful ministry, and healthy young Christians.

Thanks mostly to those who have come along side of me and ministered not only to the teens, but to me as well. As always, we are better together.

You need to build genuine healthy relationships and teach strong Biblical conviction to a confused and blurry world. Genuine love always does both.

Paul is clear here as well. Trust and friendship are earned and built over time, but faithfulness to your call will mature both:

"Command and teach these things. Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching."

-1 Timothy 4:11-13 ESV

I've said it before, but this charge was given to me when I was in my mid-20's and now, here I stand. An older man now passing on to you what was given to me, by some of the faithful men who are still here even today.

Do not let this be lost on you. This is how the church grows, and it will sustain you in those times of doubt, struggle and are wanting to quit or move on.

The next generation of pastors and disciples of Jesus built into the next generation this very command of God, given through the Apostle Paul. It is how we came to be here today.

You, I pray, with God's help and goodness, will someday be doing this very same thing. This is why it is so

important to keep this charge. Paul gives Timothy one more thing here in this text:

3-Train yourself for Godliness

"Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers."

-1 Timothy 4:14-16 ESV

4-To the congregation:

This is a call that can often times be very lonely, even being in the midst of people all the time, ministry can become very lonely.

It is also a very stressful and at the same time a very joy-filled calling. This is why it is so important that we know we are called. Not only that, but that we are called to be where He has put us.

I've said this many times, and its worth repeating again. Spurgeon said that there is no good place to serve the Lord, except where He sets you down.

Well, here we are, called of God to serve you, and I pray for a very long time. Good, bad, easy, and tough times. Through marriages, funerals, dedications and like today, baptisms.

But we cannot do this alone. No community can really. We are a hodge podge group of individuals who understand that God has put us together, and as unique as each of us are, we are better together.

The most successful pastors are those who have congregations who pray for them and their success in the call God has placed on their lives.

I know this to be true, in all of my ministry experiences, and especially as we transitioned last year into new things in the midst of a pandemic.

Your care, your prayer, your support was what covered me and what sustained Lisa and I in some of the most stressful things we tackled.

A congregation can make or break a pastor by how they act, respond, pray and participate. Paul had the gambit in his ministry. The church at Philippi blessed him, and Thessalonica did as well. Corinth and the small churches in Galatia kept him up at night with frustration and anxiety.

He loved every one of them, and ultimately, they all loved him. Sometimes they were just a bit more difficult than they could or should have been.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews writes with this admonition:

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.”

-Hebrews 13:17a ESV

Which is why I say this is no ordinary job, it's a call with eternal consequences and present worldly responsibility. As much as it depends on him or her, it is the responsibility of the pastor alone who is responsible before God for the souls under their care.

That is why, Marty, we give all we have to the Lord first, then to our family, and then to those under our care. It is not to be taken lightly this task we have, and the congregation makes it an easier thing for us.

Again, the writer continues to address the church:

"Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you."

-Hebrews 13:17b ESV

In other words, we are in this together and we are much better united than we ever are arguing and divided.

This is one of the reasons why Paul had to write to Timothy as he grew in the position of pastor in Ephesus.

Timothy was young, timid, not as confident as he should have been in the call, and was struggling with some folks there who were taking advantage of him because of that.

Ministry suffers as a result, every time. Don't let people look down on you because of your age. Your call doesn't come from them, it comes from God, Timothy.

Focus on the important things -teach them to those under your care. Trust and friendships always grows from that.

Train yourself. Learn over the years to be a servant to all, but to only be mastered by ONE -namely Jesus. This way you aren't pulled in all directions, rather you will be drawn to the master's will and His call.

Then, everyone will benefit because of your obedience to Him. You see, a praying congregation (which you have here), strengthens, encourages, protects and blesses you.

Don't forget, even the Apostle Paul was discouraged at times in his calling, yet he recognized the importance of a good support group of friends and a praying congregation.

In his second letter to Timothy, most likely some of the last words he ever wrote, he is alone in the dungeon writing this letter to his young friend (son in the faith) encouraging him to the last - even though not everyone was pleased with him.

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some."

-2 Timothy 2:15-18 ESV

Right up to the very end, Paul was concerned about those under his care, and his pastor's heart shows here. The executioner awaits Paul in the very near future, but his concern is for the spiritual well-being of his people.

Onesiphorus, on the other hand, understood his role in light of Paul's calling. One of refreshing, prayer covering and support. Paul's call was to teach and serve people like Onesiphorus.

I personally want to be remembered as an Onesiphorus when my pastor looks back over his ministry, and I pray that for you all as well.

Marty, dream big, have the long view of ministry here, grow relationships, teach the gospel, surround yourself with encouragers.

Not yes men and women, but genuine, prayerful encouragers who speak in love, knowing you have been called by God.

Understand that you will make mistakes, after all, everything is an experiment and sometimes things just don't work out. Failure is only final if you refuse to step out and try again.

God's grace is always there and is always sufficient for you. You stand or fall before Him, and Him alone.

Teddy Roosevelt once said: "It's hard to fail, but it is worse to have never tried to succeed." If we aim at nothing, we will hit it every time.

A praying, dedicated pastor, covered and supported by a praying, dedicated congregation is and will always be the most successful, even in failures.

It is long-term faithfulness that we are called to. I leave you with that. Paul told Timothy to be faithful, not fruitful, but faithful. Why? Because if you focus on being faithful to God and His call, He will always make you fruitful.

If the Elders could join me, please, as we anoint Marty for service.

CHARGE:

"As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry."

-2 Timothy 4:5 ESV

Present Bible

