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Reformation
& Revival



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There is great wisdom and great value in convening a fraternal for those men called to the Christian ministry. It provides a place where men can come together and study the things that are precious to the servants of God and learn from one another concerning their pastoral ministry. These practical exhortations were first written with such a fraternal in view and are shared now in hopes of ministering to God's servant pastors in a wider fashion.

Richard Baxter, in his classic *The Reformed Pastor*, in a section titled "The Pastor's Dedication," writes:

O brethren, watch therefore over your own hearts. Keep up the life of faith and love. Be much at home and much with God. Take heed to yourselves, therefore, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach. And lest while you proclaim the necessity of the Savior to the world, your own hearts should neglect Him. Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing. And lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food. Many a tailor goes in rags that maketh costly clothes for others. And many a cook scarcely licks his fingers when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes. Take heed to yourselves that you believe that which you daily persuade them to believe.

I believe that we need, as ministers of the gospel, to continually remind ourselves of those things most surely believed among us. There is a great necessity to do this in the day and age in which we live, because the very pressures of life and of pastoral ministry can cause us to neglect our own hearts. We, too, are in danger of what Baxter mentions, the danger of familiarity which often breeds contempt.

I remember the first time I visited the Tower of London to see the crown jewels. In order to see the jewels themselves

you must go into a kind of inner sanctum that is extremely well guarded. Here you see the Edwardian crown, various other crowns, the scepter, the orb, the swords of state, etc. They are all in glass cases on round turntables with the light playing upon them. It is almost a breathtaking experience to see for the first time the color, beauty, and magnificence of these crown jewels. I recall looking at them, and my breath was almost taken away, standing there in awe as I gazed intently. Then I looked across and there was one of the Beefeaters you see at the Tower of London. He was standing there yawning as if the whole thing meant absolutely nothing to him.

You see, it is possible to be so familiar with impressive things that they cease to be impressive to you. As Baxter says, we can neglect the very things that we who preach exhort others to do in our preaching. And one of the values of considering our preaching is to nurture our own hearts so that we do not become overly familiar in this undue sense.

I would like to turn your minds to Paul's second Epistle to Timothy in order to remind you of some of the charges he gives to those who labor in His service as ministers of the Word of God. This letter, regarded by many commentators as written just prior to Paul's death, takes on great importance when we consider the author's intention and purpose.

Paul is seeking to encourage Timothy in the ongoing work of the gospel. It seems that Timothy was in Ephesus when this letter was written, although the letter doesn't give us any indication of this.

Paul is quite conscious that he is about to die, and he is anxious for Timothy to come to him in Rome. He writes to him, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. Come before winter" (KJV). He is longing to see Timothy in order to encourage him in the ministry. In doing this he lays down a number of guiding principles for the young man in the

ongoing work of the gospel. What I propose to do in this article is to look at some of these exhortations given to urge Timothy to keep on in the gospel ministry. We will readily see parallels between Timothy's time and ours as we consider these words. In looking at such statements we see how very much like us Paul and Timothy really were. They did not live in some kind of vacuum. Their world was very much like ours in so many ways. And Paul is now an elderly Christian facing suffering and death. His response to these trials and pressures encourages those of us who likewise face them in our own ministries.

As we go through this Epistle we note immediately in the first chapter that Paul had a number of significant disappointments. For example, at the end of verse four Paul is mindful of Timothy's tears but desires to see him again in order that he (i.e., Paul) may be filled with joy! We need, at such times, to read a bit between the lines. Why was Paul, presently, not filled with joy? Why was Timothy filled with tears? Was it because Paul was not filled with joy? In verse 15 he writes: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes" (KJV).

Consider this with me for a moment. All of those who had believed in Asia through Paul's labors there had turned away, in some manner, from the very man who, under God, had brought them to faith in Christ. Imagine the feelings the Apostle must have had at this time. In 2:9, we read, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds" (KJV). And in 4:10, "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens [for what exact reason we simply do not know] to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia" (KJV). Paul is very conscious of all these things for in 4:14-15, he writes, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he

hath greatly withstood our words" (KJV).

Which one of us in the gospel ministry has not experienced these kinds of things? In pastoral work there are those who withstand our words. Paul experienced this too. "At my first defense," he says, "no man stood with me." At his first trial can you imagine that the very men to whom he was a spiritual father did not stand with him. He says, "Not one. . . ."

As he writes to Timothy he is in a very real situation. Timothy is in the midst of fierce opposition and persecution. He seems, most agree, to be a naturally timid person. He appears to have certain fears and anxieties regarding his own future. Paul's advice to this young man is relevant to all of us who are in the Christian ministry. Whether you are young or old, either in years or in faith, here is help, and definite advantage: Remember the basic humanity of these men of God.

Another reason for considering Second Timothy is that you will consistently find that there are distinct parallels here between Paul's time and our own. The problems that Paul and Timothy were facing are the same kinds of problems that we face in ministry today. As you read through this letter you will find that there was in Paul's own day a repudiation of sound doctrine. There were men who would not listen to sound doctrine. Parallels exist in almost every time since, but none, I think, any more so than in our own day, when so many of the basic fundamentals of the Christian faith are being denied and distorted. Doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, and the bodily resurrection of Christ are all under attack. The Bishop of Durham, not too long ago, spoke of the bodily resurrection as a "conjuring kick with bones." This man is one of Anglicanism's foremost bishops. The doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of hell and the eternal punishment of the wicked are also under attack. It is a very sad thing to

preach another gospel which is not *the* gospel. Yet this is exactly what is happening in the professing church in our day. And for this reason this letter is very important to us today.

There was also the problem, that we all face in our ministries, of a general declension in the lives of professing Christian believers. Consider, for example, Paul's words in 3:1-4:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (KJV).

These verses seem to describe people who are total pagans. Yet Paul is writing of those who have given some evidence of faith and are outward professors of His name. He tells us this in verse five where he says they have a form of godliness. They profess godliness but deny the power of it. The declension found here is true of many in our day as well. Having made profession they have not continued in the power of true godliness. Some, like Demas, had loved this present world too much. Others could not stand up under persecution. Others were not fully grounded in the faith, and consequently they were the target of the enemy.

None of these things should come as a surprise to us. Our Lord's first parable is that of the Sower. If you don't understand this, he said you will understand nothing of the Christian life. He teaches that there will be those who make profession, have all the appearance of true believers at first, but finally come to nothing. When such declension comes, even when men expect it, it still breaks the heart of a true

pastor. You labor over people, pray for them, nurture them through teaching, and then suddenly it all comes to nothing.

How does Paul help Timothy with all of this? His response is summarized in two words: *sound doctrine*. What is the answer to the problems Timothy would face in ministry? And the problems you and I will face? *Sound doctrine*.

William Hendricksen gives a very helpful analysis. He says chapter one can be titled, "Hold On to Sound Doctrine," and he makes verse 13 the key verse of the chapter, "Hold fast the form of sound words" (KJV). He then says we can title chapter two, from verse two, "Teach Sound Doctrine." Verse 14 is the key verse in the third chapter, "Abide in Sound Doctrine." Then, in 4:2, "Preach Sound Doctrine."

The whole epistle, then, is focused on this: Teach sound doctrine! Hold on to it, abide in it, preach it. Paul's concern is that the Word of God in all its breadth and depth be applied in every situation and circumstance in which Timothy would find himself. Is there going to be opposition to his ministry? Is there going to be attack from the cults and from atheism and secularism? From humanism and Islam? From materialism and Hindu "New Age" doctrine? What is Timothy to do? He must garrison his heart with the great doctrines of grace: the absolute sovereignty of God in creation, in providence, and in salvation. The God of the impossible, the God of revival. Is he going to encounter personal problems, pastoral problems of anxiety and distress, of bereavement, and so on? Then Timothy must lay hold of the sound doctrine of the glorious hope of the gospel of the resurrection of the dead, of life everlasting, etc. Are you seeking to witness to the lost man and woman of your time? Then lay hold of the glorious gospel doctrine of the person and work of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Ask the Spirit for His power in declaring these riches. Will you labor where people are blinded by Satan? Well, says Paul here, preach sound doctrine! All of this leads to the key

verse of the whole Epistle:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17 KJV).

It is most unfortunate that the chapter break comes here where it does. Chapter four and verse one must be linked to what Paul has just said. He writes:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom: Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2 KJV).

It seems plain to me that Paul is saying that one's genuine usefulness in ministry is linked inseparably to one's view of Scripture. If you have a high view of the Scripture your ministry will be more effective in the long run. That seems to be part of what Paul is saying. He is saying all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, *therefore*, it is profitable. You need this high view of Scripture. You need to preach sound doctrine. This is the obvious message of the counsel of Paul to young Timothy.

In Proverbs 29:18 we read, "Where there is no vision the people perish." The context indicates that the vision in view here is that of the prophetic Word of the Lord. Simply put, divine instruction. There can be a famine of the instruction of the Lord.

In recent years we have all witnessed the sad and terrible pictures of starving people in places like Ethiopia. Our hearts have been moved. Our nations have sought to alleviate this hunger. But we Christians need to recognize that there

is a famine which is much worse. It is the famine of the Word of God. There is a fate worse than death by physical starvation. That is the fate of all those who die outside of Christ. The fate which awaits them is eternal perdition. What could be worse?

When the Word of God goes and there is this kind of famine the candlestick of the church will often be removed. In Europe we see places that once had great light, now without any ministry of the Word of God at all. Here there is the felt darkness of superstition via Romanism. In vast areas of my country, Great Britain, there is no vision. The people perish without the instruction of the Word of God. In one of the most advanced and enlightened countries in the world there is great darkness, and people perish without the vision which comes from the Word of God. One translation says, "The people cast off restraint" (NIV). That is it. A perfect description of much of Western society. Each person does what he pleases because there is no *living ministry* of the Word of God. Even in so-called "places of worship" we see everything being done except the preaching of the Word of God. Hungry sheep look up and are not fed. They are entertained, but not fed.

Your responsibility as a minister of the gospel is to feed the sheep. Give them the Word of God. William Still, a Scottish evangelical minister, has written a little booklet titled, *The Work of the Pastor*, in which he writes:

The pastor is called upon to feed the sheep. (Now that may seem quite obvious.) He is called upon to feed the sheep even if the sheep do not want to be fed. He is certainly not to become an entertainer of goats. Let goats entertain goats, and let them do it in Goatland. You will certainly not turn goats into sheep by pandering to their goatishness.

There is an abundance of methods offered in our day for

reaching the lost. While we need to reach out to those who are not part of the flock now, we must do so not by appealing to their goatishness, but by offering them sound doctrine. "Preach sound doctrine!"

We must understand, further, that we are laying a foundation in our generation for those who will follow. Timothy worked among the churches of Asia. He encountered much opposition. Paul writes from prison: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day (2 Tim. 4:7-8a KJV).

But he says, "Timothy, you are still here. You must go on." And in a day and age when Christianity was a serious threat, in the eyes of imperial Rome, "Timothy, you must go on doing it. The church will experience persecution. It has and it still will. The blood of martyrs has been spilt and it will be until He comes. But Timothy, you abide in sound doctrine. Timothy would find, as I have often found, that being engaged in the work of the gospel is often very lonely work. This work of the ministry can be one of the loneliest places in the world.

In Iain Murray's second volume of the biography of D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones we read an account of several men sitting in the vestry at Westminster Chapel one day having a conversation. One of them said how lonely he really was in ministry. Dr. Lloyd-Jones turned around and said to him, "My dear man, I am the loneliest man in this room." Even for this significantly busy and widely traveled minister there was such loneliness. The calling to pastor can be one which leads you to a kind of felt isolation. When men of like mind are not near for fellowship, and when you must carry the burden of the work by yourself, you feel this deeply. I have experienced this. Men who are fellow leaders but who not once would come and say, "Pastor, how are you?" This can

be very difficult. Here Paul is saying to Timothy, "Your own future may have times which are bleak and lonely. But, keep on!"

Now, consider some of the actual exhortations that he gives to this young minister of Christ.

In 1:6 he writes: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (KJV).

The gift of God seems here to be a reference to the divine endowment that came upon Timothy at his ordination. In 1 Timothy 1:18 and 4:14 we read:

This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare (KJV).

Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery (KJV).

It seems that the Word of God was spoken powerfully at Timothy's ordination in such a way as to set before him much of what was involved in the work of the ministry. Now Paul is saying to Timothy, "Timothy I want you to remember that day. Remember the things that were spoken at your ordination." Do you who minister the Word as shepherds remember the day when you were set apart to the ministry of God's Word? Do you remember how you felt on that important day? Do you ever remember the things spoken at your ordination? How did you feel about Christ? About the souls of men and women? About the pastoral ministry itself? "Well," says Paul, "with the passing of time it is easy to forget the promises you made then, so stir up your mind and remember. Perhaps you've gone through hard times, much discouragement has come your way. Your calling still remains. It is still within you. Stir it up!" The NIV says, "Fan

it into a flame. Keep it at white heat." The Greek says, "rekindle, stir up." This is the action necessary to break up a fire that is banked up because the air vent has been closed. The fire may appear to be almost out, yet it still burns ever so slightly. Open the air vent, stir it up. Put the poker in. In a matter of moments the fire will flame up again. The fire wasn't out, though it appeared to be. That is the picture Paul gives us here. The gift is still there, in you. You may encounter opposition and persecution. But "stir up the gift" so that you may use it for the function for which God gave it. The fire cannot go out in the life of those truly of God, and the gifts of God are without repentance. But these things do die down and they need to be stoked up, stirred up.

The real danger in all of this is simply that familiarity can and does breed contempt. We read the Word of God purely for pulpit preparation. We lose the wonder of the message of this book. We become quite academic in it all.

Recently I was listening to Eric Alexander, pastor of St. George's Tron Church, in Glasgow, and he was commenting on the benefit of studying for the pulpit. He said, "Sometimes I am studying my Bible and I have to get up from my desk and walk up and down, overwhelmed by the glory of the message. And to think, I am getting paid to do this! *I'm getting paid for doing this!*"

We need to meditate more on this word. Meditation is that word which describes the cow chewing its cud. It chews it over and over. The Psalmist says, "When I was musing the fire burned." And elsewhere, "My heart is indicting a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45:1 KJV). He is saying, "I am going to write about the things that I have discovered concerning the King" (my words). He is speaking, I believe, about Christ. But have you noticed that the tense changes in verse two? Here he speaks to Christ and says, "Thou art fairer than the

children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips." The more he mused about the things of Christ, the more Christ came to him and ravished his heart. And he sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet unto his taste.

Then in 1:8 we read: "Be thou not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." Isn't it interesting that he doesn't say Nero's prisoner? He says, in effect, "I am the Lord's prisoner." And, he exhorts, "Be thou not ashamed." The work of the gospel is costly and the temptations will come to you as they come to me again and again: Take the lower ground! Avoid the difficulties, escape the hardship, avoid the consequences, spare yourself the trouble, and so forth. If you are to remain faithful to Christ it will cost you. It will involve a great deal of misunderstanding and criticism. There will be times when, particularly for young men, you will feel the intimidation because you believe in the sufficiency of Scripture, and others do not. You might even be regarded as mentally imbalanced, narrow, or too rigid. Even puritanical! Well, these things can be very, very hard. I would suggest to you that one of the more difficult things is to be simply disregarded altogether, to be ignored, as if you were totally irrelevant. Or you may come to the place where people simply patronize you a bit. Have you ever been there?

What does Paul say to Timothy, and to us, in this regard? "Be not ashamed." Never, never be ashamed of the Word of God, of the cause of Christ, of your testimony, of what God has done for you in Christ. Remember, "Whoever is ashamed of Me, I will be ashamed of him," said our Lord. Never be ashamed of this gospel. Preach it plainly.

The third exhortation is to be found in verse 13. We read: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

There is a body of truth which has been delivered to the

saints; there is a pattern, a good plan. And it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that perish. There is a body of truth that we are called to uphold. We are not to neglect that truth no matter who opposes it. Our services of worship must include the reading and expounding of the Word of God. Never dilute the truths of the Word of God as so many are doing in our time. We are called upon to deliver the whole counsel of God, the whole truth, rough edges and all.

The late professor James Denny, in a sermon on our Lord's temptation, said:

How little Jesus had to lean upon that the churches are tempted to trust in now. How little there is in the gospel about methods and apparatus. We may well believe that He would look with more than amazement upon the importance which many of His disciples now attach to such things. He spoke the Word unto them. That was all. The thrust of the church in other things is really a distrust of the truth, an unwillingness to believe that its power lies in itself, a desire to have something more irresistible than truth to plead truth's cause. And all these are modes of atheism. It is not only a mistake, but a sin to trust attractions for the ear and the eyes, and to draw people to the church by the same methods by which they are drawn to a place of entertainment. What the evangelist calls "the Word," the spiritual truth, the message of the Father and His Kingdom, spoken in the Spirit and enforced in the Spirit, told by faith and heard by faith, is our only real resource, and we must not be ashamed of its simplicity.

Denny refers to "something more irresistible than truth to plead truth's cause." How many, I wonder, in our day have gone down that path? That is a great problem. Paul is saying to us, "Don't give way to anything other than the

Word of God." In an age and in a day and generation where people are being swept off their feet by drama and music and dance and mime, we must remember that it is the law of the Lord which converts the soul. "*Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Ps. 119:105 KJV).

We have to ask, in this generation, what is my concept of the doctrine of Scripture? Am I content, really and genuinely content, to believe in the Word of God? Am I content to let it do its own work? Look at what Paul says in verse nine: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."

That is what this gospel is all about. The great saving truths of God: His sovereignty, His eternal decrees, His electing grace, His Spirit's calling, His preservation of the saints and their perseverance. These are the doctrines that we are to hold fast to, and these are the doctrines that we are to proclaim. How much confidence do I have in the doctrines of grace? Am I content to preach these doctrines plainly and openly and to let them have their effect in people's lives? It is always the truth of God that will set men free! The Word of God shakes the gates of hell. It brings true reformation to the church.

It was this word that the Puritans and Protestant Reformers preached. Those Scottish folk in the era of great blessing didn't go out unto the moors and huddle in the freezing rain to hear some kind of milk-and-water homily that many men preach today. They went out and stood for hours to hear the Word of God. These men proclaimed the whole counsel of God. And as much as I can understand these things the characteristic of the reformers was always this: They always went right back to the scriptural doctrine of preaching itself. They always followed the biblical pattern. They opened up and unfolded the Scriptures, giving the

sense of the text, causing the people to understand as they spoke. The central thing for them was always "What saith the Scriptures?" The Reformation was a return to these writings; it was a recovery of the message of the Scriptures, and it was the preaching and exposition of that message in the way it was practiced in the early church. These reformers maintained, as a basic principle, that Christ and the Scriptures were always inseparable. They meant by this that only in and through the Scriptures can Christ be truly known. Therefore, to communicate a whole Christ, one had to mediate a whole Word in order that men may receive a whole salvation! For Christ is to be found in all the Scriptures. His *Master's voice* is to be found in every book of the Bible. And we who preach must expound the whole of this Word.

Our Lord exhorts us, "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think that you have eternal life. These are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39 KJV). If we are to genuinely bring men to the knowledge of Christ, the only sure way to do it is to preach the Word of God to them. That is why Paul is saying to Timothy, "Hold fast the form of the sound words." Never neglect the preaching of the Word of God for anything else. It is paramount; it is before everything else in your ministry.

His fourth exhortation is found in verse 14 where we read: "That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us" (KJV).

He is saying to Timothy that his responsibility is to not only preach the gospel of God, but to safeguard it as well. You have a responsibility to see to it that the gospel is preserved for the generation which is to come. That word *keep* is a particular word for shepherds. The incarnation narratives say "There were shepherds in the field keeping their sheep." It is the same word used by Peter in Acts 12, "The keepers, therefore, kept the door of the prison." Timothy is being exhorted to keep the truth of the gospel,

to guard it, to safeguard it with his own life. Why? Because of those who would deny it. Humanists in our day tell us that man is the center of things and man is the master of his own fate. We have seen already the fruit of this kind of thinking. The faithful minister, like Timothy, must guard the gospel in such a time.

We are continually being influenced by men who are rationalists, men who attack the very supernatural basis of our faith. Men like William Barclay, the commentator, who was a master of the Greek text, yet denied the miraculous elements of the same text on many occasions. Such teachers add to the gospel. They often teach a salvation by ritual and a gospel of works righteousness. Such error comes through cults and isms that are on the march in our day.

I lived next door, in Glasgow, to two ministers. Three manses in a row on one block. One of these men, a Presbyterian, advertises himself as a Christian clown. He entertains people. That is his "calling," so he says, to be a Christian clown. That is the kind of age in which we live. Men are doing all sorts of stupid things in the name of this gospel, and there are misguided believers everywhere. People will follow such teachers. Paul is urging Timothy to keep this gospel from that sort of thing, from misguided believers who use prophecies to guide them. If this were true then we should close the Bible and go home. If we believe in the sufficiency of the Scripture, then we must guard that doctrine against people who say that they have an extra revelation from God for us today. And Paul is saying to Timothy, "Keep these things and guard these things." The enemy is all around us, and that is why we are told not only to preach and teach with sound doctrine, but to keep it as well.

In conclusion, let me point out some of the motives that Paul gives to Timothy for these exhortations. In verse five he tells Timothy to *remember his heritage*. He writes: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee,

which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (KJV).

What is he doing here? He is reminding Timothy of his upbringing, of those who have gone before him. Timothy was converted during Paul's first missionary journey, fewer than 20 years after our Lord's death. It is probable that his grandmother's faith was pre-Pentecost, and thus she would be one of the old economy, one who was looking for and waiting for the coming of Christ. Her daughter Eunice, perhaps to the great sorrow of her mother, had married a man who had no interest in the true and living God, and yet all the time in the background, this believing grandmother was praying for her daughter and praying for her grandson. In due time both Eunice and Timothy were converted.

How much you owe to your forebears you will never ever really know in this life. How many people come to faith in a non-Christian home, only to discover afterwards that their grandparents were believers. We tend to think of people who have no kind of spiritual background, but we forget the providence of God in this. God has promised to bless His faithful people unto the second and the third and the fourth generation for them that love Him.

I recall the story of T. DeWitt Talmadge, a nineteenth-century American preacher. He reflected once that, when he was a boy, every Saturday afternoon his mother would leave the house at 2:00 p.m. She wouldn't come back until a couple of hours later. That happened, he said, all through his childhood into his teen years. He wrote that he later found out that his mother had a holy conspiracy going. She would meet with several other mothers in their district and go to a barn where they would pray for two to three hours for their children. Says Talmadge, "I was the last of the family to be converted." And every child of those mothers was converted to Christ. We must never underestimate the power of God.

Do you know the story of Luke Short in New England? Luke Short was converted sitting at the side of a hedge at the age of 103! He lived to be 106. His gravestone is to be found in New England. "Here lies Luke Short. A child by nature, 106. A child by grace, aged 3." Now the interesting thing is this: Luke Short was converted at the age of 103 through the remembrance of a sermon that John Flavel had preached 70 years before. Seventy years later God brought it to his mind, and that sermon, applied by the Holy Spirit to this man's life, brought salvation to him. We must never underestimate the power of the Spirit of God. Remember your heritage.

Then in verses 9-11 Paul adds: "Remember the things that cannot change." Many changes have taken place in the history of America, I am sure, over the past 25 years or so. I look at my own pastoral ministry in Scotland. When I was 25 years in the ministry I wrote a letter to our people telling them something of what it was like when I was first converted. I was first converted at the age of 19 having been influenced by Anglo-Catholicism. I remember telling my mother that I had been converted, and she looked at me as if I had gone daft. My pattern of life was that every Sunday at 7 a.m I went to a prayer meeting. I came home from that meeting and went back to worship at 10:15 a.m. to share in an open air meeting. At 11 we had morning worship service. Then at 2 I went to a Sunday school meeting and taught young children. At 3 was a Bible class, and then at 5:15 we had another open-air meeting prior to another worship service in the evening. We would have an after meeting after the evening service where we would share testimonies, etc. Then came supper in the home of another believer.

Now that made for a long day! I never felt this was an imposition. It was expected when I was converted that I would stop smoking, going to the theatre and the dance hall. And would give a tenth of my earnings to the Lord. To read the Bible daily was also understood as important. These

things were never an imposition to me. Now, years later I understand the dangers of legalism, but I will tell you this: I look back at those people who did not engage in certain things and followed after the Lord in this manner, and I ask myself, "Where are they today?" Many changes have taken place in church life, some for the better. Many of the changes have been for the worse. But remember the things that cannot change. The basic needs of the human heart never change. The answers to that need never change. Paul is reminding Timothy of the unchanging gospel, i.e., of the God who saved us and called us with a holy calling.

What a wonderful thing it is to speak to men and women of the glorious gospel of Christ. I believe in a gospel that saves men and women, and I believe we need to preach it.

As his last exhortation Paul says: "Timothy, keep going on in the things of God. And remember [in verse 18] *that day*." Remember that a day is coming, *that day*, when you must stand before God. I remember my own ordination. I was charged from 1 Corinthians 3:13 to remember that every man's work shall be manifest on that day. That day will declare it. My brethren, labor and preach with that day in view. It is still required of a steward that he be found faithful. You may not be successful as the world understands it, but you may be found faithful if you labor in the light of that day. You must give an account. You must herald the truth of this Word of God. In the light of this, my brothers in the gospel ministry, "Preach the Word!"

Author

William G. Hughes serves as pastor of South Glasgow Baptist Church, Glasgow, Scotland. This article was originally presented in September of 1991 as an address to pastors at the Whitefield Ministerial Fraternal in Wheaton, IL. The Whitefield Fraternal is sponsored by Reformation & Revival Ministries, Inc.