

GOD'S FINAL WORD ABOUT THE MINISTRY

Text: Selected passages from 2 Timothy.

Intro: One important question that few people seem to be asking today in the Church is this: How did Paul serve the Lord?

It would be just as important to ask, How did Peter serve the Lord? What were the main characteristics of his ministry? Or, How did the Apostle John serve the Lord?

Or, let me ask this question: If Paul, or Peter, or John were working in our churches today, or leading any of our schools, how would they do it? Do you believe that the ministry of the first century gives us the pattern for the ministry of the twentieth century, or are those New Testament Epistles which deal with the ministry as it was then interest us only from an historical point-of-view -- but would be of no significance in teaching us how the work of the Lord should be carried on?

If you believe in the verbal, inerrant, inspiration of Scripture, there can only be one answer: The Bible is never out-of-date, and the principles of ministry which we can see in the NT Epistles are just as up-to-date now as they ever were.

Tonight I want to take 2 Timothy, Paul's last Epistle (as far as we know), written when Paul knew that he was about to die, and I want to glean from it some of the guiding principles in Paul's ministry which he was commending to Timothy. Actually he was doing more than commending; he was commanding!

What we are seeking to learn is this: How did Paul serve the Lord?

Two things are very obvious:

- 1) Paul faced continual opposition -- from inside the Church as well as outside the Church.
- 2) There was blessing in spite of all the trouble.

What do we find in 2 Timothy?

- I. THERE IS MUCH EVIDENCE THAT PAUL GAVE HIMSELF UNCEASINGLY TO PRAYER.

See 2 Tim. 1:3.

Paul never moved away from the two major points that the Apostles made before he was even saved. Cf. Acts 6:4. This showed his utter dependence upon the Lord, not in his gifts or his experience or his methods, but in the Lord!

This is not something that was done just by the churches

as a group, but by individuals within the churches.

How much time do you devote personally to prayer? Are you sure that you know how to pray? Fathers, how much are you praying for your children? Do you expect others to perform miracles with your children when you only pray very briefly for your children, and perhaps not at all on some days?

The article in the new Newsweek magazine . . .

There is no other path to blessing except by prayer! "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

- II. THERE MUST BE THE REALIZATION THAT WE ARE ENTERING INTO THE WORK OF GOD, A WORK THAT HAS ITS ROOTS IN ETERNITY PAST -- AND NOT THAT WE ARE NOW LOOKING FOR WAYS AND MEANS OF ACCOMPLISHING COMPLETELY UNCERTAIN GOALS.

God is at work! Do you believe it?

Read 2 Tim. 1:8-10; 2:10, 24-26.

Even the Lord Jesus expressed this about His own ministry when He said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17).

These doctrines explain why anything we do proves to be successful. It is not because of us, but because of God. Paul worked with a deep and abiding confidence that his work in the Lord could not be in vain.

There is no more encouraging truth for the servant of the Lord than the verses we have referred to above.

- III. THERE MUST BE A SENSE OF A DIVINE CALL -- THAT WE ARE WHERE WE ARE, DOING WHAT WE ARE DOING, BECAUSE IT IS THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD.

AND ALONG WITH THIS IS THE FACT THAT THERE IS A DAY OF JUDGMENT COMING FOR US AS BELIEVERS.

Cf. 2 Tim. 1:11-14; 4:1-5. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:16.

Closely related to the above is this fourth point:

- IV. THERE MUST BE THE DESIRE, THE OBJECTIVE, TO PLEASE GOD -- AND THIS MUST TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER EVERY OTHER DESIRE.

Note what Paul says in 2 Tim. 2:4, 15, 4:6-8. Note how this has to do with the Word of God.

- V. THERE MUST BE ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE IN THE WORD OF GOD -- FAITH

THAT THE BIBLE ALONE IS ALL THAT IS NEEDED FOR:

- 1) SALVATION.
- 2) SANCTIFICATION.
- 3) SERVICE.

Read 2 Tim. 3:14-17.

What other needs are there in the lives of people? When we get away from the Word of God, we get into trouble. And yet there are many professing Christians who do not know the difference between humanistic advice and the truths of God's Word.

Finally,

VI. THERE MUST BE A STEADFAST REFUSAL TO BE TURNED ASIDE:

- 1) either by giving men what they want instead of giving them the Word,
- 2) or by being discouraged as a result of opposition -- whether it comes from within the church, or from without.

Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5.

Do you subscribe to the idea that it has to work with everybody, or it's not right? Sometimes it seems that it doesn't work with anybody! That is when we are thrown back upon the Lord and upon His Word to make sure that we are pleasing Him in what He has given us to do.

Concl: This is Paul's last word on the Christian ministry. No one was used more extensively than Paul was in the spread of the Gospel and in the establishing of churches. He writes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To deny any of this is to repudiate the Word of God. We can serve the Lord today in exactly the same way that they did in the first century. In fact, this is where our trouble is. We have more of an ear for Madison Avenue or for men who have a lot of worldly wisdom, but not much in the way of Biblical knowledge, and so our goals are wrong and many of our methods are, too. Let us get back to the Word for our guidance.

I am committed to this kind of ministry. What about you? I would like to hear from you.