

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy  
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November 28, 2007  
2 Timothy 4:1-22

*1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

*6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

*9 Do your best to come to me soon. 10For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. 16At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*19Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. 21 Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. 22The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

How do you typically handle the end of a test?<sup>2</sup> When the professor announces there are ten minutes left, are you scrambling to get done, or do you give up because you know there's no chance for you? Some people start scribbling like crazy because their thoughts have been jumbled and scattered, and they haven't made good use of time. Others hear the amount of time left and work hard until the end because they want to do their best to get all their knowledge on the page.

Paul says we don't have much time left. Actually, Paul says *he* doesn't have much time left. These may be the last words Paul wrote. He may have died months, weeks or even days after writing this letter. Tradition says he was beheaded during the reign of Emperor Nero.

So it's the end of the test. Does he put down his pencil, put his head on his paper and resign himself to what he has? No. He has written to us this amazing letter to spur us on, so we too will work hard to the end.

Paul gives us three more things to notice about leaders: Preaching, Dying and Loving.

### **Preaching**

*1 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. 5As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

This comes on the heels of chapter 3, where we read that all Scripture was God-breathed and useful for teaching, correcting, rebuking and training for righteousness. Now Paul tells Timothy that Jesus wants him to preach the word.

He's urged to do this. There is an insistence here. And Timothy is to do it in season and out of season, meaning all the time. This doesn't mean Timothy is supposed to be rude and barge into people's homes or accost them on the street. Not that sort of always. Instead, it's the sort of always for Timothy. When you feel like it and when you don't. When you have a great sermon you like or when you have one you're not excited about. You always have to preach the gospel and sometimes it's easy and sometimes it's hard. No matter what, it's your job.

Paul re-mentions the relevance of doing this. The word reproves, rebukes and exhorts people. It touches their intellectual, moral and emotional lives. We all need all of these, but some of us lean toward appreciating some of them more

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For this series, I used commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy from Hughes, Stott, Knight, MacArthur, Ryken, and Clinton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

<sup>2</sup> The idea for this illustration comes from Tom Wright.

than others. Timothy is told he must touch people's lives with his preaching. But, and this is important, he's to do so with patience and explanation. It's easy sometimes to be frustrated when people don't get it quickly. It's easy some times to try to ram things down peoples' throats, but Paul says to hold it. To be patient and love people along the way.

But that doesn't mean people will like it. In fact, many won't. Many don't. They want something else. They don't want to hear the truth, and they find teachers to suit them. They prefer their own truths. "They thus substitute their fancy for God's revelation. The criterion by which they judge teachers is not (as it should be) God's word, but their own subjective taste. Worse still, they do not first listen and then decide whether what they have heard is true; they first decide whether they want to hear and then select teachers who will oblige by toeing their line."<sup>3</sup>

I see this all the time. People flock to churches where they can hear about how wonderful they are and how fulfilled they can be. Churches are doing less and less teaching. They are teaching less and less Bible. They're doing series, showing videos and attracting people with donuts, programs and slick marketing. It seems biblical. It looks biblical. But it's not.

Paul tells Timothy to preach the word. That's the Bible. We cannot stray from the Bible. We've talked about this in chapter three, but here it is again. It's the Bible we need to know, not someone's opinions, not a pared down version, not a summary of a pastor's favorite verses. Learning the Bible is a huge thing. It takes time and work. You won't even always like it. I remember when I went to seminary. I had yearned to go, to sit in classes and learn about the Bible. I thought I would be invigorated every day as I sat and listened at the professors' feet. I soon realized it was going to be harder than I thought. I might be memorizing the outline of the prophets and where they fit into Israel's historical timeline, but it was still – memorization.

We have to hear and read the Bible. But the other thing Timothy is told here is that he is to preach it. Preach the word. Preaching isn't very fashionable these days. If you study forms of communication, a monologue between a one person and a group of people is considered to be the worst form possible. No argue here. It really is. People have noticed this of course. And they've decided to go away from preaching, to bring it closer to those better forms or try other methods altogether. Skits. Video clips. Sitting in a circle. Or camp. Or the internet. The Passion of the Christ.

And those things are fine, at least some of them are. But God ordains preaching.<sup>4</sup> He uses preaching. I don't know why. It may be because he likes most to use things that don't seem like they'd work. You don't think preaching would be a good way to change people – then I'm going to use preaching to show you it's not the method that does it. It's the Holy Spirit changing hearts.

Probably the most famous sermon ever preached in America was Sinners at the Hands of an Angry God, by Jonathan Edwards. You may have read it in high school (probably as an example of how sad and depressed the Puritans were). Do you know how that sermon was preached? Edwards held the sermon in one hand and a candle in the other and he read it. He read it in a monotone voice, except he had to keep telling the people to hush up and be quiet since they were all crying so much from what he was saying.

Does that make sense? A monotone sermon changed people like that?  
What does this mean?

For us as listeners, we need to care about good preaching. Good preaching isn't always sexy preaching or dynamic preaching. It is faithful to the Bible. It is honest with the Scriptures. And it is powerful to your soul. Do you want to hear good preaching? Do you think others should? Then you should invite them to. They may think it's silly, but you know it's not. They might rather be in a small group, or sit in a circle or watch video pastors on screen, but they need to hear the word rightly preached, so you need to invite them to. And you need to be there with them when they do, sitting next to them listening to the word preached.

What about you as leaders? This could be intimidating to you because it does say that we must do this. All of us. Not just me. Sure, I'm called to be a preacher as my vocation. But we're all called to preach the word, in season and out of season. Not only when you feel like it. Not only when you have something profound to say. Always. That could scare you. But I don't want it to. I want you to think like this – if you are regularly hearing and reading the word, then you have something to say to people. So bring it up. Don't be afraid. You don't have to be great. You have to be faithful. You have to say something. God can use whatever you say, wherever you are.

Rev. Ricky Jones tells a story he heard about a man who was locked away in solitary confinement for 30 days. The man was all by himself for 23 ½ hours a day, but for 30 minutes he was let out to walk the yard with the other prisoner who was also in solitary confinement. This other man was a neo-Nazi. He had a swastika tattooed on his back that went from the base of his neck to the bottom of his back, and from one elbow to the other. He was scary. The man in our story came out the first day and in his thirty minutes said this: "I don't know about you, but I couldn't get through this without Jesus." And they started talking about Jesus in those thirty minutes a day. And the neo-Nazi was converted. The man asked him what he was going to do about his swastika, and he said he was going to have a friend burn it off with an iron when he got out.

Okay, so that is amazing. That's what we're talking about.

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<sup>3</sup> Stott, 111

<sup>4</sup> I have in the back of my head a sermon preached by Rev. Ricky Jones that I might be directly stealing from but I don't know.

Here's another story that floats around out there. In Africa, there was a man who was blind he came to the missionary doctor. He performed a fairly simple procedure that healed him and gave him sight. He thanked the doctor and left.

About three months later, the doctors look down the road and here comes the man. He's carrying a rope, and 50 people are holding that rope all following him. He had gone all through the country gathering blind people to take them to the man who had healed him.

That's what we're talking about. Not polished manuscripts and impressive evangelistic deliveries. Not door to door campaigns or effective outlines. That's what scares you. But I'm talking about talking about what Jesus is doing in your life now. What you're learning about how he's dealing with your sins, fears and hurts. About inviting people to come with you to the places you are finding life.

That's what leaders do. It may not seem effective all the time. We love programs. We love sexy ministries and videos. But God uses the preaching of the gospel by his leaders. By you. Persevere. Don't get tired. Endure suffering as you refuse to compromise that message. Persevere in the task until the end.

### ***Dying***

The first thing Paul tells us in this chapter we're used to hearing but don't really believe is true. We don't like preaching, at least as evidenced by what our churches are doing these days. But the second one is even worse. Leaders aren't just supposed to preach, but we're supposed to die.

*6For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

This is supposed to be an encouragement to Timothy. Paul is in the last stages of his life and he's looking back over what he's done. He's not being arrogant. He's being truthful. He uses several images or metaphors here about his ministry.

He has been a sacrifice. A drink offering is one of the offerings poured out for the peoples' sins. Paul has poured his life out for the sake of people in ministering to them for over 30 years. The time of his departure has come. He's pushing his boat off of shore and onto a new adventure.

We've heard this one before – he fought the good fight and finished the race. Both of these athletic metaphors are familiar to us. Paul encouraged Timothy to fight and run, but Paul is done. He's finished both, and presumably won.

He has kept the faith. This sounds like when Paul wrote about guarding the deposit of faith. So the metaphor is guarding a great treasure. Paul has done that, and now it's someone else's turn.

Skipping ahead, Paul also puts himself in the courtroom. The righteous judge comes out of the dock and declares Paul to be forgiven and loved.

And we also get the palace court. The king comes in and all who have loved him gather to give him praises. Those who love his appearing the first time and the second time will be awarded.

It's the last metaphor, the one of reward. Paul says he's going to get a crown of righteousness on his head. This will be the opposite of what he's getting from Nero, which will be a beheading. From Jesus, he'll get a crown set upon his head. I'll take the crown.

We often get a little squeamish about rewards in Christianity. Doesn't that mean we have to earn our salvation, that works are involved and we're doing this just for rewards? No, it doesn't. There are different kinds of rewards. Tom Wright is helpful on this in his commentary. He points out the difference between a rewards for grades. Imagine a girl getting a bicycle from her parents if she aces her Spanish final in high school. That reward isn't innately tied to the action – Spanish/bike. It's like getting money for turning someone in to the police. Not connected inherently. But there's another kind of reward. Imagine when the girl gets her A in Spanish, she gets to go to Spain and has the pleasure of being able to speak Spanish there, to understand the culture and the people. That is connected. That reward is the culmination of what she has done.

Jesus says we will get rewards in heaven. I don't know what they will be like. I don't think we work out our salvation to get rewards. But we do get them.

The tricky part here is the dying. Paul says his life is poured out like a drink offering. This is what we don't like. We like life. We hold on to it. We protect it. But Jesus says walking with him is a life of dying. Take up my cross and follow me. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but he lives in me. Yes there is life too. Jesus says I am the resurrection and the life. But what does resurrection necessarily entail? Death. Ah, there's the rub. We want the resurrection and the life but we hate the death to get there.

I think there are deaths all around our lives, each and every day. If you live your life for yourself, if you care only about your life, then you are a selfish person. You think the world centers around you. Other people spin around your orbit. Your boyfriend exists to make you happy. Your friendships are there for your enjoyment.

But to die means we pour our lives out as a drink offering. We sacrifice for others. We change our agendas. We go to things we don't always want to go to. We do and say things that are like dying to us sometimes.

And that is joyous. Eventually. Not right away. It's still dying. But as we give our lives away, we begin walking with Jesus, sometimes for the first time.

Are you ready to die? As a leader? Are you willing to attend something that is good but you don't want to go – so that someone else who needs to be there will come? That's dying to your agenda. Are you willing to remain friends with someone and not push it to the next level because you love that person so much that you are willing to die to your romantic status? That's a death too. Are you willing to die to your sexual desires so that God can fulfill them at the right time? It's going to feel like death when you say, "I'm sorry, I'm not willing to do that with you." But it will bring life. Are you willing to die to your study schedule when someone really needs to talk?

These are the places leaders operate. They don't always and only stand up and give presentations. They don't always and only propel new initiatives. They don't always and only win awards and accolades. The Bible tells us that leaders are willing to die for their cause and for their people.

### **Loving**

There's one other thing leaders do in this passage. They love.

*9 Do your best to come to me soon. 10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. 16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

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*22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

I was watching an okay movie last night called "Serenity." It's a sci fi movie with a plot I don't need to bore you with. At the end, when the action is over, the main character talks about flying the spaceship with the girl he's just spend the movie saving. "Do you know the number one rule for flying?" he asks. "Love. You have to love the ship and the people in the ship. If you don't, you'll make mistakes and you won't listen and you'll blow up." Or something like that. I don't remember exactly.

You have to love the ship to fly it. Do you love the ship?

You see loving at the end of this book. I don't have time to go through every tidbit, but let's make a few subpoints here.

You see loving by just being there. Paul wants Timothy to come. This will be a intercontinental journey from Asia to Europe, so it's not like going a few blocks or even a few hours or days. This trip to see Paul will take weeks. But Timothy needs to be there.

You love people by being there for them. This is important ministry. People need people around. Your humanity is in community, not in aloneness. That means when your roommate is sobbing because her parents just informed her she's getting a divorce, you should sit with her. You don't have to say anything, but you need to be there. When your grandmother is alone in the nursing home and you don't even think she knows you're there, sitting there with her connects her to her humanity. It's important.

Other people deserted Paul. Some of them weren't Christians. Others of them were Christians but they didn't have the time or didn't want to be connected with Paul in his trials. This makes Paul deeply sad and frustrated. It's easy for us to desert our friends. It's hard to go to the hospital to see someone. Things never come at convenient times.

But leaders love people. They sacrifice and pour out their time like a drink offering for others. That's what love does. That's what Jesus does for us.

Paul also asks for things he needs and loves. He asks Timothy to bring his cloak and also to bring books and parchments. I don't want to say Timothy loves his cloak, but it seems like it might be getting to be winter in Rome and he's cold so he needs it. But he also needs his books and parchments. We wonder what these could be. Are they his copies of the Old Testament? Are they his own writings? Are they notes he's compiled for books and letters he hadn't written yet? Are they sayings of Jesus he had heard and researched?

It's fascinating to think about. But whatever they were, Paul needed them. Do you have books that are precious to you? Do you have authors who resound with your soul? Do you have a book of the Bible that speaks to you, that you read over and over? I think it's essential in the Christian life to be a reader. I don't care how much or how fast you read, but we are to be a people of The Book, and that means we should read, read to others, care about reading and love books. Paul did.

Paul also loves to talk about Jesus. In his love, he never fails to mention how Jesus is at work in his life. *17 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen*

Leaders tell their story, and it's not always past tense. It is present and future tense. The Lord stood by me and rescued me. The Lord will rescue me and bring me safely to the kingdom. Do you hear that love of God? That assurance of God's goodness and provision?

Paul loved to tell his story, about how he was converted when he deserved to be judged. How he spent time with Jesus and was finally accepted as an apostle. How he was learning more and more about Jesus all the time. How Jesus was affecting his life, his thoughts.

Do you talk about Jesus this way? Do you talk about what he is teaching you about yourself and about the world? Are you engaged in the ongoing story of God's redemption in your life? Christianity isn't something that happened to you at church camp in seventh grade. It's not your FCA group in high school. It's not the fog machine, emotional song singing on Tuesday nights. It's every day real life.

Thinking of leading this way, and thinking of ministry and evangelism this way means it happens when you get out of bed every day. We don't need programs to lead. We don't need programs to do evangelism. We need people to love, follow and talk about Jesus. To invite others to this sort of love and community of faith.

That's our message.

That's what we're trying to build here, to change our campus and change our lives.

We need all kinds of leaders. Don't think of yourself as a leader or not a leader. We're all on a spectrum. We can all be better leaders. 1 and 2 Timothy have taught us about leadership.

Here are the subheadings we've talked about:

True Doctrine | True Life | True Faith | True Love | Fight/Hate Well | Are Grateful | Understand Roles | Access Outside Sources (Pray) | Elders/Deacons = Leaders | Enjoying Creation | Godliness | Widows/Elders/Slaves | Sound Teaching | Give Money | Flee/Follow/Fight/Fasten | Cultivate the Gift | Share in Suffering | Strong Delegated Suffering | Remember | Good Work/Honor/Runners | Avoid False Teachers | Remember Your Leaders | Remain Faithful to the Scriptures |

Leaders have a lot to think about and a lot to do. They affect the world. You affect the world. Your job on campus is to go out and lead. By being there with people and loving them that way. By preaching to them about how Jesus is real and at work and calling them to hear him. By inviting them to hear the Word of God rightly preached. By dying to yourself. By submitting to right roles, fighting well, being true and grateful, by giving your money away, cultivating your gift and sharing in suffering. By running from evil and running toward good.

It seems like a lot, doesn't it? But God is at work. It's his world, and it's his church. We are to love and follow him. That means we're freed up. We don't have to save people, but we can help them take just the next step. We view people as a complex set of thoughts, feelings, experiences, relationships and mindsets. They aren't just Christians or non-Christians. There are Christians who are doing well and those who are doing poorly. Doubting ones, failing ones, strong ones. There are all types. There are all types of non-Christians too. Strident ones. Questioning ones. Ones doubting their unbelief. So we meet people where they're at and where we're at and we talk about Jesus and the church. That's what they need after all. You can do that.

Lead on o King eternal!