I track my use of time on my calendar and I color code it based on key areas of focus in my life. Pretty dorky, right? In case you were wondering what your pastor attempts to focus on throughout the week, I’ll give you the key areas of focus. My key areas of focus are based off of what I think the Bible requires of pastors: Prayer, Preaching the Word, Protecting sound doctrine, Promoting the Great Commission, and Preparing others for the work of the ministry.

I plan my week with these focus areas in mind, then I record my actual time spent. Then at the end of the week I submit my calendar to Jim Gustavson, our elder board chairman, he evaluates it, and gives me feedback when I need it. The goal of this exercise is to keep me focused on the most important things God has called me to. Some weeks I do okay. Some weeks it’s obvious the tyranny of the urgent is calling the shots, not God’s priorities.

What about you? If we could put your calendar/time log up on the screen what would we see? It would be clear what is most important to you. But would it reveal what is most important to God? Would it reveal your commitment to the Great Commission of making disciples? Would evangelism be on the screen? Would there be any time allotted to passing on the gospel of Jesus Christ to others? Would there be any time allotted to teaching the next generation to pass the gospel on? Or would your calendar reveal that you are so entangled in other things that there is no space for the Great Commission? If that is you, then God has some great encouragement in his Word for you this morning.

God provides the power and the perspective we need to fulfill the ministry he has called us to. Open your Bibles to 2 Timothy 2:1-7.

Paul is at the end of his life (cf. 4:6-8). He is passing the torch to his dear child in the faith, Timothy (1:12, 14). And as he writes to him you can sense the weight in his words. He wants to impress upon Timothy the most important things he needs to focus on. And near the top of that list is the command to pass on the gospel.

Two weeks ago we said that anything that is of significant value must be put in trust; it must be protected and preserved so that it can one day be passed on. Because the gospel is so valuable Paul entrusts it to Timothy and charges him to entrust it to others. The same applies to the church today. The gospel must be protected from false teaching, preserved through faithful preaching, and passed on to future generations.

Paul knows that Timothy is struggling to fulfill this important task. Paul knows that Timothy needs power and perspective to fulfill this important ministry and so he exhorts Timothy in order to give him courage. While Timothy’s role as an apostolic assistant to Paul is different than our role today, the church is still called to guard the gospel. Paul’s words to Timothy are also God’s Word to us this morning.

---

1 This introduction is adapted from Michael Lawrence, “2 Timothy 2:1-7.”
2 Timothy 2:1–7 (ESV)

1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

In these verses Paul gives Timothy a very important task. I’d like to order our time this morning by looking first at the task itself (vv. 2-3), then the motivation for the task (vv. 4-7), and finally the strength needed for the task (v. 1).

THE TASK ITSELF: PASSIONATELY PASS ON THE GOSPEL (vv. 2-3).

I’d like to explain the task by unpacking this sentence, in reverse order.

The Gospel

Why do I say the gospel should be passed on, since the gospel is not mentioned in these verses? Well that is the very thing Paul has been talking about since 1:8 (or even 1:2). Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord...share in suffering for the gospel. Then in 1:9-10 he gives the gospel. Then we’re told in verse 12 this gospel was entrusted to Paul. Paul refers to this gospel as a good deposit in 1:14. In other words the gospel is something that is of immense value. And it is of so much value that Paul wants Timothy to pass it on, as he commands him in verse 2. “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses [viz. the gospel] entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

What is the gospel? It is the good news that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul makes it clear in 1:9-10 why this gospel is good news. Mike explained this well last week, but I’d like to review it so that we are clear on why it is so important for this gospel to be passed on. Look there with me.

The gospel is good news because God saved us and set us apart for himself, he “called us to a holy calling” (v. 9a). The gospel is good news because our salvation is not based on anything we have done; it is “not because of works but because of his own purpose and grace” (v. 9b). It couldn’t have been based on anything we have done because grace was given to us “in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (v. 9c). The gospel is good news because it is the fulfillment of God’s plan and purpose; “which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus” (v. 10a). The gospel is good news because through his work on the cross and his resurrection from the dead Christ Jesus has “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light” (v. 10b).

In our sin we deserve the wrath of God, eternal death, alienation from God. But in Christ, through faith, we are saved by grace from death, forgiven of our sin, and brought into an eternal life relationship with God. This is God’s gospel. This is good news and is of immense value.
Without this gospel and all of the truths and implications that flow from it there would be no church; we would be without hope and without God. And that is why the church must **protect** this gospel from false teaching. That is why the church must **preserve** this gospel through faithful preaching. And that is why the church must **pass on** this gospel to future generations.

**Pass it on to elders**

We’ve looked at what the gospel is. Let’s now look at what it means to pass it on. When Paul commands Timothy to entrust this gospel to faithful men, to whom is he referring? I think Paul is referring specifically to elders (overseers, pastors) – the official spiritual leaders in the church, but I think there are some principles here that apply to all of us. I’d like to talk about both applications.

Appointing elders is so important to Paul in building churches. We see this in the book of Acts and in his letters to the churches (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:28ff; Tit. 1:5). And we know that as shepherds of God’s flock one of the primary responsibilities of elders is their ability to teach the Word of God (cf. Acts 6:4). In 1 Timothy 3:1-7, where Paul gives the qualifications for elders, the only skill required is the ability to teach.

Then, when Paul commands Timothy to entrust the gospel to faithful men in verse 2 he qualifies his statement by saying these faithful men must be able to teach others. This requirement to be able to teach is the main reason I think he’s referring to the official church leadership in verse 2. Now others in the church besides elders teach (i.e. the older women are to teach the younger women – Tit. 2:3ff), but generally speaking, in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. – Tit.) teaching refers to authoritative doctrinal instruction, not just teaching in general (cf. Tit. 1:9).³ 1 Timothy 5:17 says, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

John Stott has famously said that Christ rules his church by the scepter of his Word.⁴ Therefore, we shouldn’t be surprised that the main task of pastor-elders, who have been given the task of oversight, is to feed the flock with the Word of God, lead the flock with the Word of God, and to protect the flock by calling them to conformity to the Word, as well as protecting the Word of God from error.

Timothy needs to make sure that the gospel is in the hands of trustworthy, faithful, pastor-elders who will keep it in trust, teach it faithfully, and pass it on to future generations.

*Semper Fidelis* is the motto of the US Marine Corps, which means “always faithful.” It is often shortened to *Semper Fi*. It guides Marines to remain faithful to the mission at hand, to each other, to the Corps and to country, no matter what. No matter what! That is the heart of *semper fidelis*; faithful to the mission, no matter what. You may remember the Marines used to have a recruiting campaign where they said, “We’re looking for a few good men.” What they meant by

---

² George Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*.
³ Douglas Moo, “What does it mean not to teach or have authority over men?” p. 185.
⁴ John Stott, “Affirming Scripture’s Authority.”
a few good men was they were looking for the kind of men would be “always faithful” to the mission, no matter what.

The reason this motto calls for such unflinching devotion is because the mission of protecting this country is a big deal. We want the freedom we enjoy in this country to be here for future generations. And therefore we need servicemen who will be “always faithful” to the mission of protecting our freedom, no matter what.

If our country is precious to us and therefore worth protecting and worth enlisting top notch men who will be “always faithful” to protecting it and preserving our freedom, then surely the gospel which is of infinitely greater value to our eternal and spiritual freedom is also worth protecting. Therefore we need to take the task of entrusting it to faithful men who will be able to pass it on to future generations very seriously!

In my 14 years at First Free the gospel has been intact and has been guarded by faithful pastors and elders. As a congregation we need to continue to be committed to electing elders and pastors who are faithful men, able to teach the Word of God, able to protect the Word of God from false teaching and able to train up a future generation who will also be faithful to the gospel. I think verse 2 refers specifically to elders, but I also think there is application for all of us in verse 2.

**Pass it on to future generations**

We are all called to pass on the gospel to future generations, not just the pastors and elders. It is called the Great Commission. We are all called to make disciples who will in turn make other disciples. This is a general principle of multiplication that applies to all in the church. We all need to be “always faithful” to this mission even though it is a long and hard mission which requires much patience and perseverance. Semper Fi!

Are you passing on the gospel to future generations? Our gospel work today needs to be with tomorrow in mind. I want to speak especially to the older men and women in this congregation. You have a great opportunity in front of you to teach the younger generation. You can pass on the gospel to your children or your grandchildren. And you can pass on the gospel to other young people right here in this church. And you can pass on the gospel to young people in your community. Passing on the gospel is as simple as speaking it into the lives of people and helping them to understand the implications and applications that are associated with the gospel.

Pastor Voddie Baucham tells the story of planting shade trees in his backyard. After planting the trees he was so excited to show his family that he actually had them close their eyes when they came into the backyard. Then, after everyone was in perfect viewing position, he yelled, “Ta da!” But they all were quite disappointed by what they saw. He tells the story this way:

*They were expecting full-grown, thick-limbed, ready-to-climb trees! They couldn’t understand why I was so excited about these glorified bushes...I told the children that planting trees takes patience. We would have to wait for the trees to reach maturity. However, in five or ten years there would be more shade than they could imagine. At this point they looked at each other and shook their heads.*
“Dad, five or ten years is like forever,” my daughter said as she folded her arms in disappointment….I looked at my children and told them something that I have since said to them no less than a hundred times. “Kids, you must seek to become the kind of people who plant shade trees for others to sit under.”

I want to challenge the older generations to seek to become the kind of people who plant shade trees for others to sit under. The young people you pass the gospel on to today will be the faithful men and women in the next generation who will be shade for the church in another generation. I urge you to pass on the gospel. Do you have space for this in your schedule? Or are you entangled with other things? Do you have space for this in your comfort zone? Or is dealing with people who are younger and different, who have different preferences, more than you want to deal with? When we are holding on to our preferences and the way things are, non-essentials, it can prevent us from passing on the gospel to future generations. Do you want to be the kind of people that plant shade trees for other people to enjoy? We must be “always faithful” to this task, no matter what. I’ll say it again, no matter what!

_Passionately_

Notice again the way I’ve described the task Paul lays out for Timothy. Passionately pass on the gospel. When I say passionately I don’t mean passionately in the traditional sense. I don’t mean with great emotion. I mean passionately, in the literal sense. The word passion comes from the Greek verb *pascho*, which means to suffer pain or death or to undergo difficult circumstances. That’s why Jesus’ death is sometimes called the Passion of Christ. My thought is that if you are truly passionate about something, then you will be willing to suffer for it. Are you passionate about the gospel?

Look at verse 3. “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.” It is interesting that Paul uses a military metaphor here. I think he is saying, “If your country is worth protecting to the point of death, then surely the gospel is worth protecting to the point of death.”

If we’re “always faithful” to the mission of passing on the gospel we can be assured that it is going to hurt. “Always faithful” means always, even when it hurts. The call to passionately pass on the gospel is a daunting task. That is why Timothy needed so much encouragement. And we’re no different. We too need encouragement as we will inevitably face difficulty when we are faithful to this mission. So, I’d like to spend some time talking about the motivation for being faithful to the task and the strength needed for the task.

THE MOTIVATION FOR THE TASK: WE MUST HAVE PRIZE PERSPECTIVE (vv. 4-7).

Look again at verses 4-7. “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.”

---

5 Voddie Baucham, _What He Must Be - - If He Wants to Marry My Daughter_, p. 16.
6 Danker, _The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament_, πάσχω
Notice that in all three of these examples that a reward or a prize is in view. The prize of the faithful soldier is pleasing his enlisting officer. The prize of the faithful athlete is the victor’s crown. The prize of the faithful farmer is the bountiful harvest. Paul is reminding Timothy that he needs to keep his eye on the prize; that’s the kind of perspective that will motivate faithfulness to the gospel in the face of suffering and difficulty.

The three examples given in verses 4-6 also give us a fuller picture of what is involved in being faithful to the gospel. In the first example we learn that faithfulness involves single-minded focus. In the same way that a soldier can’t get involved in civilian affairs if he wants to please his commanding officer, a disciple of Jesus Christ can’t take his eye off of the mission of passing on the gospel if he wants to please the Lord.

We so easily get distracted by things that have nothing to do with the mission of passing on the gospel. We need motivation. Motivation comes from a prize perspective. We need to focus on pleasing the Lord so that we can be faithful to the mission.

Hebrews 12:1–2 (ESV)

1...let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The second example shows us that faithfulness involves enduring training. In the ancient world if an athlete wanted to compete in the Olympic Games they first had to complete a required ten-month training period and then swear an oath that they had done it. Those were the rules.7 Faithfulness to the mission involves training. We can’t cut corners.

But we love to cut corners. We say things like this. Do I really need to do that? Do I really need to study my Bible, memorize Scripture, pray?8 If we’re going to pass on the gospel, we need to know it intimately. Therefore we can’t cut corners even when life is difficult. We need to be focused on the mission. We need to play by the rules. Motivation for enduring training comes from keeping our eye on the prize, which Paul makes plain.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 (ESV)

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.

The third example shows us that faithfulness involves hard work. Farming isn’t glamorous. It can often times be lonely. And it is really hard work. The whole point of farming is the harvest, but most of the time spent farming is on things other than the harvest; the things that must happen before the harvest. But a farmer will endure this hard work because of his focus on the harvest.9

7 Hughes and Chapell, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit.
8 Eric Simmons, “Enduring Loyalty.”
9 Ibid.
Motivation for the hard work of faithful gospel ministry must be the harvest. Now again, you must remember that gospel ministry is in many ways planting shade trees for others to sit under. Some of the harvesting may not even be done by you. But God’s gospel will not return void. It will accomplish the task for which it was sent in God’s timing. He is the Lord of the harvest.

Charles Bridges once said, “The seed we sow now may lay under the sod until we do.” But that shouldn’t matter because we’ve already received the reward of Christ himself.¹⁰

We must have prize perspective. If I were to summarize the principle in these three examples, I would say an eye on the horizon can help us keep our nose to the grindstone. As we focus on the prize that lays ahead, of pleasing the Lord, of receiving the crown of righteousness, and of the harvest that comes from passionately passing on the gospel we’ll be motivated to passionately pass on the gospel with focus, endurance, and hard work. An eye on the horizon can help us keep our nose to the grindstone. But we need more than motivation to do what God has called us to do. We also need strength. But where do we get strength for the task?

**STRENGTH FOR THE TASK:**

**WE MUST BE EMPOWERED BY THE POWERFUL GOSPEL (v. 1).**

Look again at verse 1. *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

Timothy was lacking courage to fulfill his ministry. And so Paul has made it his aim so far in this letter to encourage Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:6–7 (ESV)

*... fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,* 7*for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.*

2 Timothy 1:8 (ESV)

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.*

Now in 2:1 he says “be strengthened,” or quite literally “be empowered!” But where does the power come from? The power comes from “*the grace that is in Christ Jesus.***

In our culture drawing strength from another is viewed as weakness. And weakness is viewed as, how do I say it…weakness. But in the Bible’s economy when we are weak we give God the opportunity to be strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9–10 (ESV)

*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.* 10*For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

¹⁰Michael Lawrence, “2 Timothy 2:1-7.”
We didn’t have the power to save ourselves and we don’t have the power in and of ourselves to do what God has called us to do. We don’t have the power to suffer for the gospel. We don’t have the power it takes to pass on the gospel to future generations. But God does.

We were saved by grace and we must be strengthened by grace. We were saved by the work of God in Christ; we must be strengthened by the work of God in Christ. The power that we need must come from outside of ourselves.

Three weeks ago Maggie and I were in Chicago when the tornado came through Wichita. The kids were staying with Steve and Susan. But we weren’t worried about the safety of our children because they were in the hands of the most protective man I know. Or as my daughter likes to say, the most paranoid man I know.

Knowing bad weather was coming Steve bought one of those crank radios. A crank radio draws its power from within itself and is quite helpful in a major storm when your electricity is out. But none of us would use a crank radio to get our news and music on a daily basis. When we have access to electricity we will use electricity to power more effective technologies.

To do the work that God has called us to do, to passionately pass on the gospel, we need access to God’s power, we can’t crank up enough power within ourselves to do what he has called us to do. No, we are weak, but his grace is sufficient for us and his power is made perfect in weakness. Since we have access to his power, let us be empowered by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

How do we access this grace? If grace is found in the gospel and the gospel is communicated in the Word of God, and the Word of God is illuminated by the Spirit of God (the Spirit of power), then one way to access grace, and thus the power we need, is through the Word of God. How do we get the power? We get the power through grace. And how do we get the grace? We get grace through the Spirit empowered Word of God. Saturate yourselves in the Word of God. Saturate yourselves in the gospel of grace and you will be empowered by God.

**Benediction:**
May the grace of God be with you all to empower you to go and passionately pass on the gospel.

---

References


