



Editorial note: The two articles that comprise this edition of A Closer Look are written by young preachers. Jim Lloyd is 27 years old and works with the South Hills church of Christ. Adam Kimber is 25 years old and works with the Newland Street church of Christ in Garden Grove, California. I asked them to write on their respective topics because the letters they reflect on were written to young preachers. I think you will agree with me that both men have done an excellent job.

Paul's Letters to Timothy

James D. Lloyd

Hanging in my office is a gift from my Dad, framed and given to me when I began preaching. It is an inscription from 1 Timothy 4:12 – “Let no one despise your youth.” I cannot even count the number of times I have mentally turned to that inspiring exhortation for comfort. As a young preacher, like Timothy, I have found myself needing instruction from another preacher who is experienced, who understands what I am going through, and who knows what I need. My Dad is that person for me; Paul had this relationship with Timothy his “true son in the faith” (2 Tm 1:2).

The two letters Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy have been of great profit to me. It seems evident that while youthfulness is an asset, it can also become a liability if not carefully guarded. In these two powerful and practical epistles, Paul tells Timothy how to guard his youth and instructs him to “flee youthful lusts” in pursuit of “blameless” character (2 Tm 2:22, 1 Tm 6:14). Timothy was instructed to obtain the MOG (man of God) degree. This would make him complete and equip him for every good work (2 Tm

3:17). However, this goes against the normal tendency of the young preacher. I began my first work at the age of twenty. Seven years later I find myself economically worse off and desirous to provide for my family the niceties of life as others around me do. At times my mind has been carried away with thoughts of having more money, more things, etc. These are the very “youthful lusts” Paul warned Timothy against. He said, “godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Tm 6:6-8). These are some of the gems I treasure from 1&2 Timothy because they speak directly to me as a young preacher like no other book in the Bible. As I look at the twin letters to Timothy, at least four major themes occur:

- (1) THE IMPORTANCE OF ESTABLISHING QUALIFIED LEADERSHIP – So important is a qualified leadership that Paul dedicates an entire chapter to the qualifications of elders and deacons. The catalog is not optional. Paul

says that this is how elders and deacons “must be” (1 Tm 3:2,8). Many churches have fallen from grace because of a leadership that was not qualified. And we all know what happens when the blind lead the blind – they both fall into the ditch. Reading these qualifications as a young man inspires me to strive for such a character. We must groom all of our young men and encourage them to aspire to this “good work.”

- (2) **THE NECESSITY OF PREACHING THE TRUTH AND REBUKING FALSE TEACHERS:** Many of today’s “new generation” preachers have turned from the Word of God to fables and ear itching (1 Tm 4:7, 2 Tm 4:3f). This unfortunately is a very effective way of filling the pews. Telling people what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear increases contributions. Thus Paul commands Timothy to “Preach the Word!” Preach it when it is popular and when it is not popular, when it fills the pews and when it does not. God does not need fair weather preachers; He wants the Word preached “in season and out of season” (2 Tm 4:2). But not only are we to preach truth, we are to humbly correct those in opposition (2 Tm 2:25). Paul is sure to remind all young preachers, “do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” And even if no one else stands with you, “the Lord will stand with you and strengthen you” (2 Tm 4:16f).
- (3) **THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL EXAMPLE:** “I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God” (1 Tm 3:15). Specifically, the preacher must “be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tm 4:12). A preacher’s sermon is drained of its effectiveness if that preacher is himself a man of bad conduct. One cannot preach love if he does not love, or faith if he has none, or purity if he is unholy. The very power behind preaching godliness is godliness itself. No one would take financial advice from

someone who just filed bankruptcy, nor would anyone inquire marriage advice from a divorcee. Why then would one heed spiritual advice from a preacher that is not himself spiritual? A preacher should live so that he gladly places his life in a glass house to be observed by all. He should invite his hearers to see the fruit that can be produced by following his example.

- (4) **THE NEED TO MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS:** Not only should a preacher make himself an example by maintaining holy conduct, he should also extend himself beyond himself. This is especially good advice for a young preacher. An older preacher will many times receive respect because of his age and reputation. This commanding respect does not come with youth; it must be earned. Paul’s wise counsel to Timothy was to honor the older men and women, to honor widows, to honor elders (1 Tm 5:1ff). I have no doubt gained more support and encouragement from people after having shown them love and respect, than I did by preaching a sermon without notes or by claiming friendship with some well-known brotherhood preacher. I used to think I would be successful if I was invited to many lectureships, authored many books, asked to write for brotherhood papers, and hosting a lectureship of my own. To my shame, I was only seeking the praise of men. Now I know, God’s preacher preaches and practices the Word. God’s preacher loves his brethren. God’s preacher is concerned with pleasing God, not men.

Concluding Remark

Paul and the apostles were dying. The need to establish a new generation of faithful leaders for Christ’s church was needed. Paul’s tutoring of Timothy must be heard and practiced by all young preachers today that we also might commit to faithful men the precious Word that has been entrusted to us (2 Tm 2:2). “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust” (1 Tm 6:20). “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard

Paul's admonition to Titus serves as an effective lesson for preachers today about the significant responsibility that accompanies such a role. For me, working as a preacher in the Lord's church at age 25 is at least intimidating, and at times frightening – which is why I'm appreciative that Paul's letter to Titus is included in the Bible. This book provides encouragement to stand firm in the truth and instruction on the responsibilities involved in being an effective minister. There are three responsibilities in particular which have made an impression on me as a young gospel preacher.

First, in the beginning of the book, Paul addresses the manner in which the Word of God is manifested, which is through preaching (cf. 1:3). This truth carries with it a great responsibility for all who preach the Word of God. He has entrusted His message to be revealed to the world through our willingness to be used by Him. For me, this concept brings to light the essential and serious nature of the profession I have chosen.

The reality of the above truth creates a desire in me to accurately preach the Word of God. It helps me to understand the long-term effects preaching has on a church and on lost souls. While the church is facing strong currents to pervert the integrity of the gospel, preachers are faced with the temptation to water down the message of salvation. Sadly enough, it appears as if more and more preachers are succumbing to this pressure. As Paul writes, he reminds Titus of his responsibility to “speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). This includes placing God's commands above the pressures that are commonly placed upon the preacher.

Second, it appears that Titus has the responsibility of ensuring that qualified men are appointed as elders. In Titus 1:5-16, Paul delineates the prerequisites for elders and then states why they are needed. It is clear that Paul fervently wants Titus

to make sure men are appointed who are capable of protecting the flock from false teachers. Titus is the one most capable of making certain this happens; therefore, he bears the responsibility.

For me, this second command is difficult to practice. Who wants to approach an older man and tell him that he is not qualified to be an elder? Which young man wants to point out the shortcomings of an individual who has probably been a Christian twice as long as

he has? However, preachers must realize the doctrinal purity of the church hinges greatly upon the men who are appointed to serve as elders. As I read through Titus, it is obvious that God expects me to see that godly men are appointed to shepherd the flock.

Third, I observe that Titus has the responsibility of taking this new church and setting in order the things they are lacking. Titus is instructed to make sure all members of the church conduct themselves in a Biblical manner. Again, Titus is the one who knows how each member is to act. He is the one who has studied the Scriptures and been taught by an inspired apostle. Therefore, Paul charges Titus to “exhort and rebuke with all authority” (2:15).

As a young preacher, it is often difficult to assert myself in the areas which Titus is instructed by Paul. However, the faithfulness of the church is dependent upon our willingness to preach the uncompromising Word of God. The book of Titus is not simply an historical document of antiquity; it has relevance to us today and provides motivation to carry out the responsibilities with which God has entrusted us. As demonstrated in this letter to Titus, Paul expected the first century Christians to dedicate themselves to the study, teaching and practice of sound doctrine – and the same responsibility is expected of us today.

Paul's Letter to Titus

Adam Kimber



Modern Preaching

Mack Lyon

With secularization of the church, there seems to have been a change toward professionalism in preaching in the last century. I mean there's less emphasis on preaching, teaching, exhorting, evangelism from the word of God, with more emphasis on ministerial education, management skill, executive ability in the development of "programs" etc. that will draw the biggest numbers. There seems to be less interest in salvation for the lost and more focus on "church growth," less faith in the Divine power to achieve God's purpose in the church, and greater focus on human "proven success formulas" to achieve "church growth." And much preaching seems to have lost its urgency. The professional preacher must have something to say once and twice a week, while in the past, the preacher had something he just had to say whenever and wherever he had or could make an opportunity. Today he draws on his education, puts together a sweet-spirited speech of some twelve to fifteen minutes that will leave everyone feeling good about themselves, dismisses them, then goes by the business office on his way to the lake or golf course and picks up his check, the amount of which determines the measure of his success.

And at least from my vantage point, it seems that fifteen years ago he just had to say something! People looked to him and expected him to point them to Christ. He had no education and no library, so he went to his Bible to find his message. Well, some of the change has been for good and some is obviously very negative. Certainly if a medical doctor must be educated and trained to perform intricate surgery on the physical body, the preacher should be educated and prepared to skillfully speak to the spiritual needs of people. There's nothing wrong with that unless it is used as a substitute for the urgent burning need to speak up for Christ. I don't want to leaven the impression that I believe all preachers are "professional" preachers as

described above. But the emphasis seems to be in that direction. I'm encouraged by the number of young preachers among us who seem to be turning the situation around.



How did you like the sermon?

This is a familiar question. By what guidelines do we determine a good sermon? I suggest a sermon is successful if:

1. It is true to God's word.
2. It is preached in love.
3. It is prepared to meet a need.
4. It is spoken so that all can understand.
5. It glorifies God.
6. It challenges people to think.

Sermons are to be measured not by the approval and pleasure of people, but by their response in holy living, godly action, and true Christian dedication.

Sermons are preached not to be liked, but to be lived. The question in the heart of the faithful preacher is, "What does God want?"

Paul's admonition is still true: "If I were trying to win human approval, I should never be Christ's servant" (Gal. 1:10).

Author Unknown



(Paul's Letter to Timothy, Cont'd)

from me" (2 Tm 1:13). "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tm 4:16).

