

Entrust, Obedience and Consider

There are some things that have been true throughout history, they are basic, they are fundamental, and they do not change. One needs the proper nourishment to grow and flourish, not just the proper food, but love and affection as well. If a parent does not give adequate food to their children the children will languish and not grow – they will be physically stunted. The consequences are serious for both. The parent can be charged with child abuse and the child suffers. If a parent does not give their child affection they will also languish and be stunted emotionally. If the parent does not provide for the child's education the child will be ignorant and struggle to function in life. A good parent then provides for a child's proper nourishment, affection and education. To do less would mark one as less than a good and loving parent. As important as food, affection and education are, there is still an important element missing. This fourth element is also essential to a child's proper growth – it is their spiritual development. In our society few consider spiritual soundness as an essential part of life. Yet without it, a person suffers in their present and future life.

When one is not spiritually feed with loving affection guided in God's Word and given the proper education in the Word they are undernourished spiritually. The result is confusion and being immature spiritually which opens one to the false. As parents we are abhorred by the thought of not feeding, loving and educating our children so they can function well in this life and yet, some children's spiritual soundness is overlooked. Life is busy with providing for ones family's physical needs – the tyranny of the urgent. Neglecting spiritual needs leads to weak family structure and weak churches. There are popular churches that have grown large with live TV broadcasting and events but are they spiritually sound helping their

people live fully for Christ? Churches filled with weak malnourished people who are fed spiritual junk food do not grow their people into mature Christians able to live and defend God's truth. Just like a weak and malnourished physical body a weak and malnourished spiritual body has little resistance to disease that further weakens the body. When people are weak and malnourished spiritually they have little defense against false teaching that Satan injects into churches and people's minds to keep them from worshipping the one true God.

Just as a loving parent makes sure their child receives the proper nourishment so that their children will growth physically, a parent's job is to provide strong, sound spiritual nourishment so that his or her children will grow into strong, thriving Christian despite living in a world of sin and destruction. This strength only comes from believing in Jesus as the Christ and because He gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit to dwell within us. We must lay the foundation – God has chosen that His children will be His ambassadors to take His saving gospel to the world and this begins with our own children and families. If we fail to feed our children spiritually no one will arrest us for child abuse, but we condemn them to a physical and eternal life of suffering. If we, you and I, do not share the gospel with those who are in our lives – family, coworkers and those who are intertwined in our lives, we are guilty of abuse of the worst kind.

Paul spent time in chapter 1 of 2 Timothy speaking of one's need to guard the sound doctrine of God and be willing to suffer in order to live a life focused on God's truth. We know Paul was in prison and suffering but he was concerned about the spiritual needs of Timothy and the churches in Ephesus. Timothy is Paul's spiritual child and Paul loves him as deeply as any parent ever has. Paul desires to encourage Timothy and give him the spiritual nourishment to be sound and strong and able to live and defend God's Word. Beyond this Paul desires Timothy to teach and preach sound doctrine to other men to pass the truths of Christ on from generation to

generation. Paul knows through sound teaching and discipling the churches in Ephesus will grow strong and multiple.

Lets pray to God preparing our hearts and minds to study His Word.

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 2, as Paul continues his instruction to Timothy, “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.” (2 Timothy 2:1–7_{ESV}) In these verses we observe 3 key elements. Entrust sound doctrine by teaching others who in-turn teach others. Be obedient to ones calling. Think over the words inspired by God so that He will impart wisdom and understanding to you.

Entrust

“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.” (2 Timothy 2:1-2) Christ is the master teacher who inspired and taught Paul. Paul is given the sound doctrine to become the teacher of Timothy and many other men. Now Paul’s authority that he received from Christ is passed on to Timothy and others so that they will teach the same sound doctrine to others. This is the process that has continued for 2000 years. Each generation has its own teachers but the doctrine stays the same, for the Biblical truth is unchanging. William Barclay wrote in his commentary, “The teacher is a link in the living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to

Jesus Christ. The glory of teaching is that it links the present with the earthly life of Jesus Christ.” The teacher’s job is to show how the gospel relates to and gives the framework for our lives. Faithful teachers teach the Bible as God inspired it. They teach others who will teach others and they will teach others and the chain continues.

Just before Jesus ascended he told His disciples on the Mount of Olives, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

(Acts 1:8) These disciples were to be witnesses of Christ by teaching and discipling others who would take the gospel out in an ever widening circles until the gospel reached “the end of the earth.” Just as when one throws a rock into the still pond the ripples move outward until they reach the shore.

Often the teacher feels unworthy for such an important task as teaching the Word of God to impact people’s lives. However, again Paul is our example of God using what was broken; He took a Saul and made him into His instrument as a Paul. Luke records in Acts chapter 9 Paul’s conversion. Immediately Paul began to boldly preach Christ with Christ’s authority. However he did not forget who he was before Christ saved him, he wrote, “I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Corinthians 15:9) This understanding gave Paul undying gratitude for the salvation Christ had given him. Paul had a deep gratitude and this also gave him a deep sense of duty, he knew his calling and who had called him and made him an Apostle with authority equal to Christ’s other Apostles. “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle (Paul’s calling as an apostle had the same authority as those who walked with and were taught by Christ for 3 years.), set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures...” (Romans 1:1–2) We find this confirmation of Paul’s authority not just in Romans but several New

Testament epistles. These apostles of Christ proclaimed the gospel of Christ through preaching, teaching, discipling and inspired writings to other men who became the preachers, teachers and disciplers of others as they passed on the truth of who Christ is and the salvation He offered.

Paul understood that Timothy was struggling with conflict both from within and from outside the church community. Paul did not want Timothy to leave ministry and abandon his calling because of these conflicts and discouragements. Timothy was part of the chain of transmitting the gospel that would be carried on to this very day and Paul did not want Timothy's link in this chain broken. Paul closed out his first letter to Timothy saying, "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge,'²¹ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith." (1 Timothy 6:20–21) You see there has always been and always will be men who claim Christ's authority, but teach false "knowledge" and in truth lead people away from the true Christ. Timothy received the true Word of God from faithful Paul and Paul is telling Timothy to remain faithful and put the Word of God into the hearts and minds of men who are to remain faithful and teach the Word of God and who Christ is to other men from generation to generation.

This then is a prime purpose of each church and each generation. Every believer has the responsibility to learn God's Word in order to teach God's truth to others. Like the ripple in the pond ever moving outwards, however God's Word is beyond one ripple. If one throws a pebble and waits a second and then throws another and then another the ripples continue out and intersect and overlap. We learn from each other; the pastor teaches the church but the pastor learns from those in the church, the husband is the spiritual leader for his wife and the wife will see things in the scriptures that will bring new insight to the husband, parents teach their children and as the children mature they can enlighten the parents, and when one takes the time to

disciple another person the result is both the discipler and the disciplined learn from each other and grow spiritually.

Obey

In the next four verses Paul illustrates the life of one who is obedient in Christ's calling as a soldier, athlete and farmer. Reading from 2 Timothy chapter 2 beginning in verse 3, "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops." (2 Tim. 2:3-6)

Remember this letter is from Paul to Timothy, but it was also written in order for it to be read to the churches in Ephesus. Paul states that to live a strong spiritual life in a fallen and broken world Timothy in specific and Christians in general must consider themselves as soldiers in Christ's army. Paul is carrying forward the word picture he had written a couple of years earlier in his letter to the Ephesians, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." *As soldiers in Christ's army fighting evil and to free the enslaved of the world to salvation in Christ we are instructed.* ¹³"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of

the Spirit, which is the word of God,¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” (Ephesians 6:11–18) As Christ’s soldiers we are called to battle knowing that the more faithful we are to our Commander and Chief the more Satan will desire to destroy us. The armor Paul lists here is offensive; there is no protection or weapon listed that is to be used by the soldier in retreat. We battle, we inch forward and know that by the power of Christ we will succeed even if we perish. If we do not have spiritual warfare, spiritual battle in our lives we need to consider that we may not be faithful soldiers and are hiding from battle. Are we a threat to the evil one?

When Paul wrote “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” (v.4) The word “entangled” does not mean we do not live in this world or to isolate ourselves in a compound. What the word “entangled” does mean in the Greek is to weave. A soldier of Christ does not weave the fabric of the world into his life. He is a soldier and centurion standing guard where Christ has placed him and stands apart from the world. A soldier of Christ does not allow the world, the society in which he lives interfere with his duty to carry out the commands of Christ. This verse ends with the soldier’s “aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” A faithful soldier cannot serve two commanders; he is either obedient to Christ or the world.

The problem is that for fallen man the desire to please others is part of our character. As Christians we are redeemed but we struggle with the sin nature and have to battle to slay it. When a pastor desires to please the congregation or when Christians desire to please others to be accepted - the result is often allowing the scriptures to be abused. As those who belong to Christ we agree with Paul, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.” (2 Corinthians 5:9) Our

allegiance is to Christ, who was sent by God for the salvation of mankind. Our allegiance is to the Word of God, as God himself inspired it.

If Paul's analogy of the dutiful and faithful soldier was not clear enough Paul now uses the discipline needed by an athlete. Verse 5 reads, **"An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."** It takes great determination for a person to commit to overcoming the physical and mental struggles to bring their body into the shape in order to compete. We have seen in the Olympics what happens when these world-class athletes break the rules in order to compete at the desired level – they break the rules and lose their medals and are disgraced. This week the world news reported that Usain Bolt who made history as the first sprinter to sweep three gold medals at three separate Olympic Games over 12 years will no longer have this record. He lost his gold medal and historic record. Bolt had to forfeit his Olympic gold medal won at the 2008 Beijing Games because his Jamaican teammate, Nesta Carter was caught doping. Carter brought disgrace not only upon himself, but also to his teammates robbing Bolt of his medal and place in Olympic history, and he brought shame upon his country.

As Christians we are called to train and strengthen our bodies and minds by studying, meditating on God's Word because short cuts will leave us weak and unable to compete as we try to live out our faith in the world. Taking liberties with God's Word leads to weak churches and brings disgrace upon His church. In our lifetime we run the marathon called "sanctification" that develops strength in our relationship with Christ. Being strong in God's Word enables us to coach others to compete as those running the race of God's salvation.

Strong spiritual character takes hard work and endurance. Verse 6 says, **"It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops."** (v.6) The farmer must prepare the soil, plant the seed, keep weeds out of the growing crop.

Then at the right time he harvests the crop, threshes to separate the grain from the chaff and collects and stores the grain. If any of these steps are short-cut the results can be no crop to sell and certainly no crop with which to feed his family as fall turns to winter. Those who shy away from hard work will not see the fruit of the harvest. Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Matthew 9:37–38) Working hard is what faithful Christians do.

Whether we live 40 years or 90 years, life here on planet earth is short and there is much work needed for Christ’s kingdom – we can rest when we reach heaven.

Working hard and being faithful has its rewards. The teacher is rewarded – they get to see their students grow deeper spiritually through the teaching of God’s Word. Seeing lives lived in relationship with Christ through God’s Word and prayer. They are equipped to live life as a faithful child of God while living in a broken sinful world. The soldier experiences how battle strengthens a person. With the right weapon, strategy and endurance God’s territory can be gained from the enemy and enjoying the satisfaction of pleasing the One who commands his life. The athlete’s sacrifice and hard training brings the trophy. He runs with a heart seeking God’s glory and he is rewarded with the trophy of salvation. Now, the farmer who has worked tirelessly by preparing the soil and cultivating is able to reap, thus gaining spiritual food that will nourish him, his family and many others for eternity.

The common thing we see in all these illustrations of Paul is faithful hard work and never surrendering to the enemy. It means pushing when one is tired. Staining when the muscles of mind and body ache and to keep going. It means starting early and finishing late. Faithful living for Christ is not an 8 to 5 job but rather a 24/7 lifestyle. Our time for rest comes upon death. I agree with Paul who wrote, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed

between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus...”

(Philippians 1:21–26) Are you willing to pay the price to serve Christ with honor? Are you committed to study to grow beyond being a student of God’s Word and becoming a teacher? Will you fight the good fight, doing battle until the war is won or you have spent your life’s blood? As one observes the farmer who rises before the sun and toils in the heat of the day – are you willing to work tirelessly to see the harvest of souls for the kingdom of God?

Our good works have nothing to do with keeping our salvation just as they have nothing to do with gaining our salvation. However, our good works have everything to do with the working out of our salvation. Paul wrote to the brethren in Philippi, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,** ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12–13) God created us for His pleasure and God’s pleasure is that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:10) It is our duty to serve ours in the name of Christ. By studying the Word of God our heart and mind are restructured, running into battle at the Lord’s command slays evil, by pushing hard and staining against evil our minds grow strong and placing our hand on the plow and moving in season with Christ brings Him glory and us rewards by loving others more than ourselves. Jesus said simply what it means to truly believe and not believe, “**No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.**” (Luke 9:62) If you believe you must live your faith

for the world to see. You must always strain forward and never, never looking back to become part of the world again.

Consider

My beloved you and I are not Paul. We most likely will not experience arrest for preaching God's Word or shipwreck or imprisonment or martyrdom. We are not Timothy who pastored a church in Ephesus and oversaw a number of churches in the area; some doctrinally sound and others with infighting that discouraged Timothy. We may not experience the pressures of false teachers with their false doctrines trying to come into our church. You may not have your time and efforts focused on serving Christ in full-time ministry. However, you are who God has called you to be. Like Paul and Timothy we are called to be faithful by knowing God's Word, living out the scriptures and influencing those who God places in your life by sharing the gospel of Christ. This is the reason Paul closes out his thoughts with ["Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything."](#) Paul's desire was for Timothy, the churches in Ephesus and for readers throughout the church age until Christ returns to understand who they are in Christ. Understand the need to learn so that the student can become the teacher. Understand we must do battle with the world and the prince of this world with the ["sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."](#) (Eph. 6:17) The sword is to be used to cut through and expose mankind's sin and need for Christ as their Savior, but the sword is to be used with Christ's love, grace and mercy. Like the athlete we need to have a regiment to train our minds, heart and spirit in the Word of God in order to run the marathon of life faithfully. As the farmer rises early and works hard to bring the crop to harvest we too are to rise early, work late in sowing the gospel into the hearts of our family, friends, coworkers and those the Lord places in our life. Without this faithful dedication we will not experience the harvest God desires for our lives and for our church.

Paul says and he speaks with the authority of Christ, we are to strive to be faithful for our Commander and Chief, our Lord and Savior is forever faithful and the only to model for our lives. When we faithfully serve Christ we experience the joy and peace that only comes from Him. Stand with me and say along we me, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil. 1:21)