

How will you be remembered? II Timothy 2:1-13

It's a simple question that calls for a simple answer. I remember a church sign somewhere and they put a message on the church marquee that said, "Live your life so the preacher won't have to make up something nice to say about you at your funeral." After you are dead and gone, after you've lived your 40 or 60 or 80+ years, when your time on earth has come to an end, when you are here no more, **how will you be remembered?** What will you leave behind as the legacy of your life? When they talk about you, if they talk about you at all, what will they say?

Let me sharpen the question some. **What will the people who knew you best say about you when you're gone?** We all know that casual acquaintances can say what they want, and it doesn't really matter because they never really knew us. But you can't fool your children or your spouse or parents or your closest friends. They know the truth because they've lived with you so long and seen you in so many different circumstances. What will they say about you as they walk back to their cars that day following the graveside service as they drive home? How will you be remembered? II

Timothy 2:1-13

¹ Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

² And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

³ Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

⁴ No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

⁵ And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

⁶ The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

⁷ Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all

things.

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

⁹ Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.

¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

¹¹ *It is* a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*:

¹² If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

¹³ If we believe not, *yet* he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

ILL: The Elvis Presley Bicycle Race

His name was Spencer Schreiter. He was a 59-year-old hematologist in Tupelo, Mississippi & but even after having received a clean bill of health from his last physical, he died while riding in the Elvis Presley Bicycle Race in Tupelo. It was a surprise because he had seemed to be the picture of health. A police officer who saw it happen said Spencer was riding along just fine, then he slumped over and was gone. Just like that. He played basketball at Ole Miss, served in the Air Force, became a hematologist, joined a local church where, along with his wife, he taught the senior high youth. Those senior high students were the honorary pallbearers at his funeral. Spencer's death shook a lot of folks because he seemed so healthy. Spencer was a bike-aholic. "He died doing what he wanted to do." Spencer's death made one of his friends think hard. "If I died right now, how would I want to be found? What do I want to be doing? If I had to die, what point of integrity and character would I want to have?" Then he thought over his life: "I could die out here. If they found me, what would they say about me? How would I be remembered? I don't want to be remembered that there were a lot of bad things

going on in my life.”

How will you be remembered? For the Apostle Paul, that was no idle question. When he wrote II Timothy, he was in prison, in chains, in Rome, under a sentence of imminent death. His days were numbered and the numbers were quickly running out. He didn't have five years left and he probably didn't have five months to get his act together. The grains of sand had nearly all slipped from the hourglass. Death by beheading was not far away. Paul knew he would never get out of prison alive. That's why he said, **“I have finished my course.”** For him the race of life was almost over. Only one thing was left to do: Send a message to his young protégé, Timothy, and give him a final word of encouragement. Then he could face his death with grace and courage.

By the way, how is Paul remembered today? He was put to death by that sadistic madman, Nero, the exalted emperor of the Roman Empire. Nero was the most powerful man in the world. Who was Paul, really? Just some Jewish preacher who claimed to be a follower of Jesus. A nuisance and a troublemaker, but he was nothing in comparison to Nero. Soon the emperor would order him put to death. But that was not the end of the story.

Two thousand years have passed, what does the world say now about Nero and Paul? Men name their dogs Nero and their sons Paul.

Two Pieces of Advice ... Here is Paul's advice to young Timothy: **“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”** (II Timothy 2:1-2).

If you know you're about to die, you don't waste time and you don't waste words. You get right to the point. Paul gives Timothy two pieces of advice:

1) Be Strong. 2) Pass it Along.

This is what we must do. This is our calling, our challenge, our mission from God. Be strong in the Lord. Stand strong in the grace

of Jesus Christ. When times are tough, be strong. When you feel like giving up, be strong. To be strong speaks of moral courage in the face of unrelenting opposition. To be strong in grace means that you don't rely on yourself when times are tough, you rely on the Lord alone. That's the moral qualification. Then there is one specific piece of advice: **What I have taught you, you must teach others. Pass it along.**

Don't keep the truth to yourself. But notice what he says: **Entrust the truth to "reliable men."** Why does that matter? Aren't we supposed to teach everyone? Yes, we are supposed to teach everyone. But along the way, we are to find those people who are trustworthy and faithful and we are to invest heavily in them. Find the reliable men and pour yourself into them. Do the same with the reliable women. Do it so they will be qualified to teach others also.

Find the People with these 3 qualities: **Faithful, Available, Teachable.**

Notice the four generations mentioned in one verse: First generation—Paul. Second generation—Timothy. Third generation—Reliable men. Fourth generation—Teach others also. This is the principle of spiritual multiplication. It is the only way to reach a world whose population now exceeds six billion people. Addition will never get the job done. If it depends on me alone, then the only people who will be reached are the people I can talk to myself. But I'm limited by time and space and energy and opportunity. **If I want to make a difference in the world, I must practice spiritual multiplication.**

First, I must learn the truth. Second, I must find faithful men and women. **Third, I must teach them.** Fourth, they must go and teach others. What sort of men are **"reliable men?"** This is where those 3 qualities come in: Find the **Faithful, Available, and Teachable** and teach them to teach others. Find them, teach them, and turn them loose. This principle works. It cost something to invest in someone these days. It takes your time

and energy to locate then teach so they can carry on the message. Just look at the investment that many of you have made in our young people over the years. Supporting them with your time to teach SS or VBS or some other lesson. Then there is the financial investment you have made in them. To buy materials for them to learn, the many that have gone out from CLC over the years to serve in missions efforts around this globe is remarkable for a church this size. All this takes someone's time, someone's investment in those going. That is part of spiritual multiplication. It's exactly what Paul has in mind when he tells Timothy to entrust the truth to "**reliable men**" who will be able to teach others also. It's God's plan for growing his church.

I remember back in 2003 the trouble that was brewing in Canada. Those were difficult days. I believed then that hard times were coming to Christians who lived in Canada and in America too. Moral conditions were declining in Canada then and also in America. They have continued to decline. Christians in Canada were greatly concerned because a Canadian court has essentially declared legalized gay marriage. Apparently millions of Canadians either didn't care or they thought it was a good idea. Gay marriage soon came to the good old USA too. We already have and will continue to see things made legal that our grandparents could not have conceived possible. II Timothy 3 warns that in the last days, perilous times will come. I think they are already here—and more perilous times are coming.

That's why Paul tells us to "**endure hardship**" in verse 3. Verses 3-7 offer us three images. **The first is the soldier** (verses 3-4). The soldier must endure hardship and doesn't get entangled in the affairs of the world. As soldiers, we must focus on pleasing the Lord alone. **The second is the athlete** (verse 5). To win the prize, an athlete must discipline himself to play by the rules. If he doesn't play by the rules, he is disqualified. As athletes, we must play by the rules God lays down. **The third is the farmer** (verses 6-7). The farmer must focus on

the future harvest. He can't just plant the seed and walk away. He must plant and fertilize and weed and water and wait. As farmers, we must work with an eye to the future. Jesus **didn't say**, **"Follow me and life will be easy."** He said, **"Follow me, and life will be tough, but it will be worth it in the end."**

Nearly 75 years ago God called a man named **John Sergey** to bring the gospel to the Russian people. John was burdened to preach the gospel in Russia. He had a heart for their souls. Back then, it seemed so hopeless, almost impossible. The iron grip of Communism held millions in spiritual captivity. Atheism was the official ideology of the Communist Party.

During the days of Stalin, millions of people died and Christians were severely persecuted. Pastors were thrown in jail and often killed. Pastors back then knew that at any moment they might be arrested. Pastors disappeared and didn't return from jail for years, if they returned at all. But through the long years of darkness, John Sergey kept working to bring the gospel to Russia. He never lost faith that one day the doors would open and Communism would be relegated to the trash heap of history. He made some people angry by telling them that one day things would be different in Russia. **As it turned out, he was right.**

Years ago, he started preaching to the Russian people by means of Trans World Radio. Week after week through short-wave radio, his messages reached believers and unbelievers. And John Sergey became known all over Russia. And long before it was popular, he would travel to Russia to preach. He preached in Moscow and St. Petersburg (back then it was called Leningrad), in big towns and small villages. Everywhere he went, people knew him from his radio ministry. He was like a folk hero. The Russian people loved him because they recognized his voice from the radio.

John is now gone to be with our Lord. Some years ago two of the most important leaders of the evangelical church from Russia came to America to make a special presentation. Several from John's family and several of the elders of a local church came together to

present John Sergey with an honorary Doctor of Theology decree from the Moscow Evangelical Christian Seminary in recognition of his ministry to the Russian church for so many years. Both pastors made beautiful speeches for the occasion. When the doctorate certificate was given, there was so much joy because he has earned it with 60-plus years of faithful service to the Lord and to the people of Russia. One would have thought, **“This is a crowning day of John’s ministry.”** It’s a small foretaste of heaven, when the Lord will say to us if we are faithful, **“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord.”**

The rest of the passage offers three motivations to encourage us to endure hardship and to stand strong in the grace of Christ. **First, remember Jesus.** That’s what he says in verse 8. Remember who Jesus is, and remember that he rose from the dead. **Second, remember those who suffer for the faith** (verses 9-10). It’s good for the soul to recall those who have paid a high price for believing in Jesus. Paul may be chained, but you can’t chain the gospel. Paul says, **“It doesn’t matter what happens to me. Whether I live or die is no big deal. The only thing I want is to see the lost saved. If my going to jail will help others find salvation, then I would rather be in jail than be free.”**

Third, remember your reward. Verses 11-13 Here is a paraphrase of these verses:

If we die, then we live with him. If we endure through hard times and never give up, then we reign with him.

If we disown him because of cowardice, then we lose our reward.

If we are faithless because of doubts or fears or love of the world, he will still be faithful to us because he cannot break his promises.

This is good news because it means that the worst our enemies can do is kill us. But if they kill us, we go to heaven where we will **“live with him.”** **If we lose, we win!** So go ahead and stand strong, be bold, live for Christ, endure hardship, stand up for what you believe. The worst that can happen is the best that can happen. Our future is

secure because it doesn't rest on us; it rests on the faithfulness of God.

So I come back to the basic question. How will you be remembered? What will people say about you after you are gone? What kind of man are you? What kind of man do you want to be?

What kind of Christian are you? What kind of Christian do you want to be?

What kind of husband? What kind of wife? What kind of father? What kind of mother?

I think about what some said after Spencer died: **“God will call you home when the time comes.”** He's right, and that moment may come sooner than you think. You can't do anything to cancel death. It's coming whether you're ready or not. Maybe you've heard this old saying, **“Only one life, 'Twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.”** No one who serves Christ while they are alive will regret it when they are dead. And what about those you leave behind?

“When you were born, everyone else was smiling and you were crying. Live so that when you die, everyone else is crying and you are smiling.”

Men, wouldn't you like your gravestone to read something like this: Faithful husband- Loving father - He believed in Jesus.

It's the last line that's most important. If when I'm gone, they remember that I believed in Jesus, then I will not have lived in vain. How will you be remembered? What legacy will you leave behind? Build your life on Jesus Christ and you will never be disappointed, and those who know you will be sorry to see you go.