

“Good Counsel in Navigating Life!”
Monthly Comment – June, 2008

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, and perseverance (2 Timothy 3:10).

Timothy was a young pastor (1 Timothy 4:12). When Paul first met Timothy he was believed to be in his twenties. By the time Timothy was appointed to his first pastorate, many believe he was in his mid-thirties. That doesn't seem too young in our culture for a pastor, but in a predominantly Greek/Roman culture and certainly in relation to the apostle Paul, Timothy was considered young.

Youths were despised (1 Timothy 4:12). Youths became adults when they earned or gained respect by the life they lived. It is somewhat the same today only age is not the issue, it is primarily the character displayed in the life one lives. Hence you could have someone old living immaturely as well as someone young living very responsibly.

Paul's advice to Timothy, his younger son in the faith, (1 Timothy 1:12) was to carefully note a number of things. Paul gives a list of things about himself to Timothy which included what he believed and subsequently taught him. Then Paul also told this young pastor to note things about his life that I ascribe to character: “manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, and perseverance.”

The reason for Paul's counsel to Timothy is easily understood by the verses that had preceded v. 10. “Perilous times” did, are, and will be coming on the church. Those perilous times are connected with deceptive people and practices, some of whom are named for illustrative purposes going back in time to the days of Moses. Jannes and Jambres were demonically empowered magicians in Pharaoh's court that gave convincing signs in attempts to thwart the advance of God's purposes for His people through His servant Moses.

Obviously Paul warns his son in the faith, Timothy, that there were the same kind of deceptive people and practices that were surrounded his ministry and the people he served. Of course the huge problem with Jannes and Jambres and individuals of that genre has to do with them not knowing they are deceived and deceiving (2 Timothy 3:13).

So the wise apostle gives a counsel that is a standard for any season of the church, harsh or not: Standard ware for good judgment in perilous times must be to run everything through the filter of sound Bible doctrine, not the teachings of an individual! Many things spoken, taught today, have a ring of truth, but is it the whole truth. The next piece of counsel Paul gives young Timothy to help him navigate perilous times has to do with the lives people live and the company they keep.

The apostle says,

Timothy, you have carefully not only studied my doctrine, but my life. You know me! You know my manner of life and purpose. You have seen me in the trenches over the long haul. Don't get caught up with the newest or the latest or the thing that impresses. Note the apostle says nothing to Timothy about what he has done or accomplished in his ministry as a point of navigating well in perilous times. He simply talks about his (Timothy's) need to “Continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation...” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

Bottom line! The apostle is giving a huge guide for us in navigating life well and avoiding being "tossed to and fro" (Eph. 4:14). The counsel! Listen for sound Bible doctrine and watch for good character over a long period of time.

Navigating life with you,

Mike

The Bennies of Patience!

"That you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12).

We are not very good at this one are we? Some of us need to be careful here as we may feel we are quite patient, but the patience exhibited is more of the attitude displayed because we have no choice in a matter. Waiting in a doctor's office comes to mind as does vehicle registration lines. Reserve Street at 5 pm on Fridays would qualify for not much choice in that wait either.

To live in this verse of course would require faithful examples to imitate. Examples in the arena of "patient ones" are not in abundance. In fact I would say finding this type of saints to model our lives after, are on a very short list. Remember, I do not refer to people who seem to be patient while going through something, but in reality have very little choice.

Patience isn't just going through something or waiting. As referenced above, there is not a one of us that don't have to do this. We all have to wait for one thing or another. The Greek word for patience has far more to do with expectation than in just biting our lip and waiting it out until rescue comes. In fact, Strong's Concordance says this word has to do with "a cheerful or hopeful endurance." The Apostle James implies that "patience" has a perfecting and completing work to do in us (Jam.1:4). Patience works for us! The result of patience's work is always to our benefit.

Jesus tells us that by our patience we will possess our souls (Lk.21:19). Even here in the Hebrews reference at the top of this comment, patience has an inheritance—"the promises." The best thing I have found to live the Spirit's Fruit of patience is to live in expectation that a good work or promise is being worked in the process.

PBPWGMGIFWY (please be patient with me God isn't finished with me yet)! But we will all like the outcome.

"Who Needs a Doctor?" Weekly Comment – June 8, 2008

"Luke the beloved physician...greet you" (Col. 4:14).

Hey! Here is a thought! Why is the Apostle Paul hanging out with a physician? Paul believed and practiced Divine healing! What's this doctor stuff about?

There are some who believe that that is what Luke was before that "Greek Gyro" got saved. That would be plausible if it were not for the fact that Luke had been accompanying the apostle for many years up to that point (Col. 4:14). In other words, why then call him the "beloved physician" if in fact, he is no longer a practicing physician?

We don't even have record of Luke getting saved. All we know for sure is he wrote the Book of Acts and everything is in third person until Acts 16:10, when the pronouns of the Book changed to "first person plural." Because that is believed to be where Luke joined the apostolic band.

Some actually believe that Luke, the physician, not only joined the apostle's ministry as the "documentarian" of their ministries, but was secured by Paul to attend to his physical ailments, hence lending more reasoning as to why Paul refers to him as "the beloved physician."

If there is only one point to make here, it is that all genuine healing comes from God. Why I say "genuine" has to do with the fact that the devil has works that are called "signs and lying wonders" as well (2 Thess. 2:9). We should never mock or belittle any of us that are under a doctor's care...remember there are "gifts of healings" (1 Cor. 12:9). Some healings just seem to be a lot quicker and less expensive, but God should always get the glory.

Who needs a doctor? My prayer is none of us!

Mike

"Gap People"
Weekly Comment – June 15, 2008

"...I sought for a man among them, that would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land; but I found no one" (Ezekiel 22:30).

The making of a wall is a metaphor of someone who would intercede on behalf of the people of Israel. In that day God was specifically referencing a priest, prophet or king that would stand up for righteousness and not cave in to the trends of the culture.

In talking about false prophets of the day, God said that they "have not gone into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle..." (Eze. 13:5). The Jewish people had no leg to stand on. They had no righteous high ground to stand on against their enemies.

Their defenses had holes "gaps" in them, permitting their enemies to gain access and afflict them all the more. Throughout Israeli history, there were individuals that stood in the "gap" and interceded on behalf of the people. Abraham stood in the "gap" and made a wall for Lot. Moses stood in the "gap" and built a wall for the whole of the Jewish nation. Both were interceding in the "gap" between God and the people. Are you a "gap" person?

Jehoshaphat stood in the "gap" and interceded for the people against the Ammonites and Moabites (2 Ch. 20:1ff). The point of course, is that someone stood in the "gap" and did the intercession as the need arose.

Nothing has changed! God still looks for someone to stand in the "gap" for a person or nations who are in trouble. Will you stand in the "gap?"

See you in "The Gap" on Tuesdays,

Mike

“Things Go Better With Prayer”
Weekly Comment – June 22, 2008

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and PRAY for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

If you read the surrounding verses here in Matthew, we would be reminded that Jesus is telling us about the conduct of His Kingdom. The context is informing would-be followers that they are the “salt of the earth,” the “light of the world,” so “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-14, 16).

So certainly loving your enemies; blessing those that curse you and praying for those that spitefully use you, gets the attention of the non-believing world. The prayer offered for your enemies works. It is an evangelistic tool for sure.

But things go better with prayer in other ways, as well. If we don't respond to adverse things Jesus' way, then we are personally harmed as well. Recently I read an article from some researchers that did a study at Duke University Medical Center. “The researchers found that healthy, older adults who participate in private religion activity...prayer, meditation or Bible study...appear to have a survival advantage over those who do not.”

I suspect that the peace we experience on a continual level through the spiritual disciplines of the Christian faith has everything to do with a longer and healthier life.

Things go better with prayer!

Mike

“The Best Witness”
Weekly Comment – 6-29-2008

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (I John 5:13).

John has been talking about having a witness. When we think of a witness, I suspect most of us think of something legal – like the kind of witness you'd see and hear in a courtroom.

A witness is someone who attests to something they have seen or heard. In our legal system, witnesses “swear” on a Bible to tell the whole truth, so help them God. That's a sobering thought should we ever take the stand as a witness at a trial.

The testimony of a witness or two is compelling evidence in a trial. It can be enough to put someone away in prison for a long time or even be enough to bring about a guilty verdict that ultimately seals an individual's execution. Being a witness is serious business!

The apostle talks about receiving the “witness of men” but quickly follows by stating that the “witness of God is greater” (I John 5:9). Think about that for a moment! The witness of God is that which He has “testified of His Son” and he “...who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself” (I John 5:9-10).

So the believer not only has the witness of God through what He has said in the prophets and apostles, but we have His testimony in the Holy Scripture. Beyond that, "believers" have that truth (His Son) "in" themselves. All this is primarily what John means when he stated "And there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit" (1 John 5:7).

Pretty good witness, huh?

Mike