

Commentary on the Gospel for Thu, Jun 2nd 2016

In the second letter to Timothy we are reminded of our call to discipleship. It is helpful to read the entire short four chapter letter from Paul to gain further insight to Paul's instructions to his most loyal disciple Timothy. Paul reminds Timothy that there will likely be suffering through persecution ahead but that from his experience, it is certainly worthwhile. Paul reflects on all that he has done to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His passionate efforts had grave personal costs to him but even when all others abandoned him, the power of God sustained him. Paul's suffering gave him a great understanding of the power and grace of God which he experienced as salvation and truth.

While most of us will not suffer the persecutions that Paul endured for the faith, the readings in this letter speak directly to us. Paul encapsulates the Gospel here to focus on the character development of a disciple. While he clearly had confidence in Timothy's character and trustworthiness, Paul reminded Timothy that suffering can often cause us to deny God. This is true for us also. We not only need to be reminded to remain faithful, we need to be faithful as a witness to remind others to remain faithful. That translates to a big job most of the time. It means we can't commiserate with other people who don't bear up well in the face of adversity or abandon our faith if we stand alone at times. We have to eagerly persevere with our faith. This is a critical part of the character development of a disciple and it certainly isn't easy.

Like Paul and Timothy, many of us are called to a radical discipleship. We are called to die and live with Christ on a daily basis. The prayer in Psalm 25 is the prayer of a disciple who has confidence that when we seek and follow the paths of the Lord, we will gain truth and understanding. The Psalmist is confident that if we humble ourselves to receive God's instruction, we will be accompanied by a kind and faithful friend. We won't be alone. Like Paul, we will be sustained by the power of God. Not only that, we will share in the eternal glory of Jesus Christ. And like the scribe who understood the most important call of the faithful is to "love the Lord your God with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself," we will be "not far from the Kingdom of God."

For most of us, however, our call is not to travel to distant or hostile lands to proclaim the Gospel as did Paul and then Timothy. For most of us, our call to faithfulness is to love God, to love ourselves, and to love our neighbors right where we are. Simple as it sounds, the practice is not. It requires humility and eagerness to daily learn new truths, persistence in gaining deeper understandings, strength in self control, patience with others, and an awesome fear of the Lord. We wouldn't be up to it were it not for the grace and love of God. I give thanks that we can trust in that grace and love and pray with all of you who are part of our on-line ministry, "Teach us your ways, O Lord."

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