

Entrusted: Stewarding Vocation (2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18)

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WATCH/LISTEN: www.fbcjc.org/sermon/entrusted-stewarding-vocation/

Today we continue our “Entrusted” series. First, I do want to share something kind of funny with you. Halloween is just around the corner, and what you’re about to see actually relates to the scripture passage that we’ll read. Have you ever considered what you’d like written on your tombstone after you die? Here are a few funny possibilities that you may consider:



Last week we talked about how this letter, 2nd Timothy, is a personal letter from the older, seasoned minister Paul, to the younger minister, Timothy. It was also written as Paul sat in a Roman prison cell, near the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

6 As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 From now on there is reserved for me the

crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

16 At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

There are three takeaways from this passage that we'll focus on today...

1. Having no regrets, or Knowing that you've done your best

In verse 7 Paul writes, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." You may not be surprised that this is one of the most popular verses that is inscribed on a person's tombstone after their death. Paul invested his life in the most important thing he could invest it in, and he did that every day he was given. He stuck with it, he gave it his all, and he didn't give up.

I want to point out that he really doesn't focus on the results. He does NOT say that everything turned out like he wanted it to, or that he met all of his goals or anything like that. He simply states that he has done his best. He was called to do something in life – in his case to preach the good news about Jesus – and he did it faithfully, day in and day out.

2. There were times when he felt alone and isolated... when no one was with him

In verse 16 he said, "At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me." Have you ever been in a situation when you believed you were doing what God had called you to do, but that you were all alone? Sometimes that's how it is in our faith journeys. Paul mentions that very clearly in this instance. And if you remember Jesus's life, the moment when he was arrested before his crucifixion – a moment when he needed the support of his friends and followers more than any other time - everyone abandoned him and ran in the opposite direction.

Sometimes living for God and doing what God has called you to do doesn't make you everyone's favorite person. It sometimes means you make people uncomfortable. It might mean you're too unconventional or risky to be around or even unpopular. And if we really look throughout the Bible at those people who were committed to living for God no matter what, many of them made those around them uncomfortable. And because of that, they were often alone and isolated at different times.

This is how it's paraphrased in The Message, verses 16-18:

- *At my preliminary hearing no one stood by me. They all ran like scared rabbits. But it doesn't matter—the Master stood by me and helped me spread the Message loud and clear to those who had never heard it. I was snatched from the jaws of the lion! God's looking after me, keeping me safe in the kingdom of heaven. All praise to him, praise forever! Oh, yes!*

3. The peace and perspective that comes with knowing that God stood with him

As Paul wrote in verses 17 and 18: "17 But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength... So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom..."

For me, one of the greatest challenges in life and something I miss again and again is to NOT base my faith on how things are going. To say it differently, my faith should not be based on my circumstances... on how good

or bad my days are. My faith is based on knowing that Jesus loves me dearly and gave everything for me, despite what's going on around me and whether my circumstances are good or bad. And then beyond that, that I'm doing the best I can to live for God in the midst of whatever my circumstances are. Paul understood that and lived that out. He knew – even though he was sitting in prison, arrested and under guard, likely to die – that God was with him and he was doing what God wanted him to do.

So let's take these three lessons from Paul and apply them to our topic this morning:

1. Having no regrets
2. Feeling alone comes with the territory
3. God stands with you – no matter the circumstances

As we think about being “Entrusted” with various gifts and opportunities by God, we're focusing on our “Vocations” today. I used to think that there was a very clear division between doing things for God when it came to “work” or a “job” – like being a missionary or being a paid minister – and all of the other “secular” kinds of work... jobs and occupations that must have been far removed from God and God's involvement. But thankfully that's not how God works, nor how our stewardship of vocation works.

Before we go any further, let's make sure we understand what we're talking about with this word “vocation.”

According to merriam-webster.com:

- *When vocation was first used in English in the 15th century it referred specifically to a summons from God to perform a particular task or function in life, especially a religious one.*
- *It comes from Latin vocation-, vocacio, meaning "summons," which in turn comes from vocāre, meaning "to call."*
- *Vocation is a synonym of the words calling and occupation.*

So what we're focused on together is our jobs, our occupations – but maybe it's best to refer to it as our “calling” – whatever kind of work that is or looks like. And I understand very well that this isn't a clearly defined role for many of us, and maybe even most of us. Several of you are still in school, trying to figure out what career path you might try out. And even more of you are on the retirement end of the spectrum, where most of your professional, vocational life is behind you. But with an understanding of those things, this is how I want you to frame this in your mind for what we're going to focus on today:

- In your current stage of life, what has God called you to do?
 1. School, Job, Retirement – or some combination of all of those.
- As you do whatever that is, are you doing it...

1. With no regrets?

What I'm about to say isn't always true – it's a broad generalization – but for the most part I've found that all of our jobs have two components: (1) The work or tasks I do, and (2) the people I interact with. While the tasks I do may or may not be related to Kingdom service, the people you interact with are ALWAYS related to Christ's Kingdom – even if they have nothing to do with church or faith life. So remember, as God has entrusted you with whatever your calling is in this stage of life, don't miss the opportunities God is giving you to impact those around you. Be kind. Be encouraging. When God gives you the opportunity, don't be shy about mentioning that you go to church or that your faith is important to you. Whenever the time comes for you to leave that job or that role with those people, don't have regrets that you should have said more in their lives.

2. Realizing that there will be seasons when your commitment to live for Jesus leads you to feel alone sometimes?

As you live out your faith, you will experience times when you may feel like a loner... that your religious convictions and your commitment to Christ put you on island all by yourself where no one understands why you do what you do or behave like you behave. That may very well happen. But don't lose sight of the fact that there are two other realities at work as well:

- People respect people who stand up for their convictions.
- You're living for God, and not for the approval of others.

3. Understanding that God stands with you – no matter the circumstances?

Ultimately, when we give our lives to God – whatever stage we're at in our calling or vocation – we find a peace and fulfillment from living for God that we can't find anywhere else. So no matter your age or stage of "work life" right now, if you're finding your work empty and pointless, then consider inviting God to be involved in it more.