

REMAINING FAITHFUL

PAUL GAVE TIMOTHY MUCH ADVICE AND WISDOM SO THAT TIMOTHY COULD CARRY ON HIS MINISTRY. PAUL DIDN'T ONLY TELL HIM THE GOOD THINGS AND THE BENEFITS, BUT HE ENCOURAGED HIM AND WARNED HIM OF THE OBSTACLES HE MAY RUN UP AGAINST. NOW PAUL DOES ENCOURAGE TIMOTHY EARLIER IN HIS LETTER OF I TIMOTHY 4:11-12 *"Command and teach these things. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."*

MANY WHO HAVE READ THE LETTERS TO TIMOTHY BELIEVE TIMOTHY WAS QUITE YOUNG, BUT IN THAT TIME PERIOD YOU WERE CALLED A "YOUTH" UP TO THE AGE OF FORTY! THIS ALSO AGREES MORE WITH THE TRADITION THAT PEOPLE APPOINTED TO THIS POSITION WERE AT LEAST THIRTY AND LIKELY FORTY OR OLDER.

HOWEVER, MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE AGE OF TIMOTHY ARE THE WORDS OF WISDOM THAT PAUL GAVE HIM. 2 TIM 4:2-5 *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when **people will not put up with sound doctrine.** Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."*

WHAT PAUL IS TELLING TIMOTHY IS TO REMAIN FAITHFUL IN HIS MINISTRY BY PREACHING THE WORD! WE, AS DISCIPLES MUST REMEMBER THAT YES, GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, AND HE SENT JESUS, BUT THE REASON JESUS HAD TO HANG ON THAT CROSS IS BECAUSE OF OUR SINS. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US FALLS SHORT AS WE ARE REMINDED IN ROMANS, BUT **WHEN WE PREACH NOTHING BUT LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, WE ARE NOT PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS.** IT IS WHAT WE MAY LIKE TO HEAR, SOMETHING THAT "TICKLES" OUR EARS, HOWEVER IT IS NOT THE WHOLE STORY. FOR MYSELF YOU WILL HEAR THAT YES, **GOD LOVES US, BUT WE ARE SINNERS AND BY LOVE, MERCY AND GRACE WE ARE FORGIVEN!** AND HERE IS THE KICKER – WE CAN'T DO A THING TO RECEIVE IT. WE SING THE SONG "FREELY, FREELY", BUT DO WE REMEMBER THE WORDS, DO THEY SPARK IN OUR SPIRITS THAT GRATITUDE AND THANKFUL HEART FOR WHAT GOD AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST HAVE DONE FOR US?

IN MANY CHURCHES TODAY THE BIRTH, DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS ARE JUST STORIES MADE UP BY HIS FOLLOWERS TO GET THE BALL ROLLING. DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT EVERY CHURCH YOU ENTER WILL YOU HEAR THE GOOD NEWS AND ISN'T IT AMAZING HOW PAUL WARNED TIMOTHY OF SUCH THINGS OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO!

IN THE EARLY 1800S THERE WAS A BAPTIST PREACHER, CHARLES SPURGEON, IN MINISTRY IN LONDON. THE BAPTIST DECLARED THAT JESUS' ATONEMENT, JUSTIFICATION AND THE HOLY SPIRIT WERE ALL FABLE, JUST A STORY. HE LEFT THE CHURCH OVER WHAT WOULD BE CALLED MODERNITY OR BRINGING THE CHURCH INTO THE PRESENT. IF WE LOOK AT THE INSERT WE CAN SEE THE COMPARISONS OF THE TRADITIONAL EMPHASIS AND POST MODERN-EMPHASIS. **WE CAN SEE HOW PAUL'S WARNING TO TIMOTHY THAT PEOPLE WILL COME TO NOT TOLERATE SOUND DOCTRINE APPLIES TODAY AS IT DID IN PAUL'S AND SPURGEON'S TIME.**

HERE IS ANOTHER VERSE PAUL WROTE TO TIMOTHY - 2 TIM 3:2-5 *"People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."* **HOW MUCH DO WE OBSERVE OF THESE TYPE OF BEHAVIORS?** IN MY VIEW THIS IS THE PRICE WE ARE "PAYING" AS WE BECOME LESS AND LESS OF A GOD-FEARING PEOPLE. WHEN ONE HAS NO MORAL COMPASS TO BE GUIDED, THE RESULTS BECOME PLAINLY CLEAR AND DISHEARTENING.

THE QUESTION BECOMES "WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT IT?" EVEN CHURCH-GOING PEOPLE HAVE COMPROMISED AND FOLLOW SOCIETY'S WAYS. WE HAVE AS MANY OTHERS IN OTHER CHURCHES DRIFTED FROM THE WORD THAN WE MAY LIKE TO ADMIT. WE EXCUSE IT AWAY WITH FAMILY, JOB OR WHATEVER. **HOW WILL WE REMAIN FAITHFUL IF WE CONTINUE TO TAKE EACH SMALL STEP AWAY FROM SOUND DOCTRINE?**

ASK YOURSELF RIGHT NOW "WHAT DO I ACCEPT NOW THAT JUST 5, 10 OR 20 YEARS AGO I WOULD NEVER HAVE THOUGHT OF ACCEPTING?" IT IS JUST LIKE THAT OLD RECORD NEEDLE. THE SOUND GETS WORSE AND WORSE, BUT UNTIL WE PUT IN NEW NEEDLE IN WE NEVER REALIZE IT. IT CAN HAPPEN THE SAME WAY WITH OUR FAITH. **WE KEEP MAKING COMPROMISES, JUSTIFYING THINGS MANY TIMES BASED ON CULTURE'S REASONING NOT GOD'S.**

THERE IS THAT OFTEN QUOTED VERSE FROM ISAIAH 29:3 *“And so the Lord says, “These people say they are mine. They honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. And their worship of me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote.”*

WHEN WE COME TO WORSHIP ONE DAY, ONE HOUR CAN WE FOCUS ON GOD OR ARE WE THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE DOWN THE ROAD? WE WONDER WHY GOD IS NOT DOING SOMETHING IN OUR LIVES, WELL MAYBE WE OUGHT TO TAKE THE TIME TO TALK TO HIM, AND DEEPEN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. WE NEED TO **KEEP OUR LIFE IN BALANCE AND NOT DO SO MUCH RUNNING HERE AND RUNNING THERE FOR WHOEVER OR WHATEVER. WE NEED TIME TO BE STILL AND KNOW GOD!!!**

THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING VERSES IN JUDE, YES, THAT IS A BOOK, A BETTER DESCRIPTION, A LETTER NEAR THE END OF THE BIBLE. THESE VERSES DESCRIBE IF WE DO NOT REMAIN FAITHFUL WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO US OR HOW THE PEOPLE WE ASSOCIATE WITH CAN INFLUENCE US. JUDE 16-19 *“These people are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage. But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, “In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.” These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.”* WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE DO YOU HANG OUT WITH – POSITIVE, UPLIFTING, CAN GIVE YOU WISE ADVICE OR WITH THOSE DESCRIBED ABOVE?

HOW CAN WE REMAIN FAITHFUL WHEN IT LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE THE “DECK IS STACKED” AGAINST US?

FIRST WE MUST NOT GET DISCOURAGED. JUST AS PAUL ENCOURAGED TIMOTHY THE BIBLE TELLS US NOT TO BE DISCOURAGED BUT CONTINUE DOING GOOD.

SECONDLY, WE CANNOT BE LAZY IN OUR FAITHFULNESS. HEBREWS 6:12 *“don't be lazy, through your faith and patience you inherit the promises”*. **IT CAN BECOME REALLY EASY TO STAY HOME ON SUNDAY MORNING WITH A SMALL ACHE OR PAIN.** MAYBE WE STAYED UP LATE WATCHING THAT GAME OR A MOVIE? HEBREWS 10:25 *And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another,...”* **HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU NOTICED SOMEONE NOT HERE FOR A FEW WEEKS OR MORE AND CALLED TO TALK TO THEM AND TELL THEM YOU MISSED THEIR PRESENCE AT CHURCH?**

THIRD, WE CANNOT LET THINGS ABSORB OUR TIME TO A POINT WHERE WE IGNORE GOD. AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, EVERYONE HAS TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, WHAT ARE WE

DOING WITH IT? A WHILE BACK I TALKED ABOUT THIS, AND SAID PEOPLE WILL MAKE TIME, THEY WILL ALWAYS HAVE TIME FOR WHAT THEY WANT TO DO. IF YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO SERVE GOD AND HIS CHURCH WHAT IS THAT SAYING?

IS GOD AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM JUST NOT “HIGH” ON THE LIST? HERE IS SOMETHING TO PONDER. IF YOU MAKE TIME FOR GOD AND YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, YOU WILL HAVE TIME FOR ALL THE OTHER THINGS. REMEMBER MATTHEW 6:33 “*Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.*” I STRONGLY BELIEVE ONE OF THESE THINGS HE WILL GIVE US IS TIME!!!

LASTLY, WHEN WE HAVE JOY, THAT DEEP DOWN SENSE OF JOY, WE CAN REMAIN FAITHFUL. NOTHING IS MORE OF A DOWNER THAN A GRUMPY CHRISTIAN. JOY DOES NOT DEPEND ON CIRCUMSTANCES. WE TALKED ABOUT GRATITUDE LAST WEEK AND THE VERSE WE SHOULD ALL CARRY WITH US FROM MEMORY – I THESSALONIANS 5:18 “*Be thankful **in all circumstances**, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.*”

IN CLOSING A STORY...Some of us can remember the Sunday morning terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, in which hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded as they slept. A few days after the tragedy, Marine Corps Commandant Paul X Kelly, visited some of the wounded survivors then in a Frankfurt, Germany, hospital. Among them was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton, severely wounded in the incident. Nashton had so many tubes running in and out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man; yet he survived. As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and a pen. He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commandant. On the slip of paper were but two words -- “**Semper Fi**” the Latin motto of the Marines meaning “**forever faithful.**” With those two simple words Nashton spoke for the millions of Americans who have sacrificed body and limb and their lives for their country -- those who have remained faithful.

MAY WE NO MATTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE FIND OURSELVES IN, REMAIN FAITHFUL TO GOD, WHO LOVES US, AND GRANTS US MERCY AND GRACE EACH DAY OF OUR LIVES. AMEN.