

# **Loving the Lost Means Loving the Truth**

## **The Inseparable Nature of Outreach and Orthodoxy:**

### **A Study of 2 Timothy**

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#### **Tension?**

“If I spend all my time calling on prospects, I might not have too much to say to them on Sunday if they actually come to church. And if I spend all my time working on my sermon, Bible classes, and preparing various devotions, I won’t be making the evangelism calls I need to make.” These were the thoughts that ran through my head as a first year pastor. They were not unique to me. Every called worker, commissioned by Christ through the church, must decide how much he or she will focus on reaching out and reaching in with the gospel. It is a natural tension of time for the Christian. For congregations and church bodies it becomes a tension of money as we decide whether a greater share of our resources will be used for preserving the truth among us or for reaching out beyond our congregations with the truth. This year’s theme for North American Outreach is most certainly true: every soul is a treasure. Yet, a tension is bound to exist as to how much of our treasure will be expended to minister to souls inside the Shepherd’s pen and outside that pen—all with the gospel.

There is the key that resolves the tension—the gospel. God has taught us by his Word that the good news message of Jesus Christ is the only power that can create and strengthen Christians. Thus, WELS Christians do not have to choose the best tool for nurturing faith as opposed to the best tool for doing mission work. The same divine tool, the gospel, works for both. While we have to make decisions about our stewardship of the gospel (e.g., how much time will be spent in making evangelism calls compared to shut-in calls), praise the Lord we never have to make a decision on what message to use. The gospel painstakingly prepared in a pastor’s sermon is the same one that is aggressively sown in an evangelism campaign.

No more tension? Not quite. Though we all agree that the work of the church cannot be done without the gospel, there seems to be some disagreement among us over how we are using the gospel. Some disagreement is healthy as Christian brothers spell out their passion for placing the gospel on human hearts. Disagreement in this area becomes unhealthy, however, when Christian brothers begin labeling (and thus marginalizing) each other as “specialists” who don’t get the big picture. Men who emphasize a proper conserving of the truth through careful doctrinal instruction may be labeled as “too orthodox” or “too message oriented.” Men who emphasize a proper sharing of the truth with the unchurched by all possible means may be labeled as “too outreach” or “too method oriented.” If we would just stop and think about these labels we would realize that what these brothers are really calling each other is “too gospel.” Would that we all wear that label!

Throughout the pages of Scripture God’s people are encouraged to preserve the truth and to proclaim the truth, to watch doctrine and broadcast doctrine. And in so doing God’s people are loving both the lost and the found, because both the lost and the found need the message of God’s surprising, saving grace. To study the inseparable nature of outreach and orthodoxy as it appears in all the Scriptures would take a book.<sup>1</sup> In this essay I invite you to come along with me and see how nurture and evangelism go together in one Book of the Bible, 2 Timothy. Every time I take seminary students through this final letter of Paul, I am struck by how vehemently the apostle contends for purity of doctrine and passionate gospel proclamation. By the Spirit’s inspiration, Paul the missionary extraordinaire and Paul the master theologian come together in this swansong we call 2 Timothy. Paul wrote it as an intensely personal letter to his “dear son” Timothy. At the same time he quite consciously wrote it as a last will and testament to the Church he loved. We do well to take to heart his encouragements for orthodox outreach. We find them in every chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Many in our circles would say that book has already been written, namely, David J. Valleskey’s *We Believe—Therefore We Speak*.

## Then and Now

The Paul of 2 Timothy is a reminiscent Paul.<sup>2</sup> No doubt the miracles the gospel had accomplished in his 30+ year post-conversion ministry were replaying through his mind as he languished in his second Roman imprisonment. Though his confinement was terribly uncomfortable (cf. the reference to “chains” at 1:16 and 2:9),<sup>3</sup> he took comfort in the fact that the “crown of righteousness” would soon be his gracious reward (4:8). Aside from the ultimate comfort of God’s grace in Jesus Christ, Paul could also look back at a long, faithful gospel ministry (cf. 4:7) and feel good about what the Lord had done through him. As far as humanly possible, from one end of the Roman world to the other, the apostle had confronted people with Christ crucified. Now it was time to write to his closest colleague about what was really important for the church militant as Paul’s graduation to the church triumphant was about to take place.

Timothy needed this instruction. This young man had spent the better part of the last 15 years of his life learning from and ministering with Paul. He had gone on his own missionary journeys.<sup>4</sup> One might think pastor Timothy had learned and seen it all. But his latest assignment in Ephesus (cf. 1 Tim 1:3) called for further instruction. The Ephesian church was the hub from which the gospel was being communicated in the eastern Mediterranean (cf. Ac 19:10). In order to pastor this congregation effectively, not to mention oversee the missionary endeavors that originated in Ephesus, Timothy needed all the inspired instruction he could get.

He also needed the encouragement. The Neronian persecution that began in Rome in A.D. 64 was now spreading to other regions of the empire. Men in power were pushing emperor worship and had targeted this stubborn sect called Christianity as a secret society that had to go. Timothy had Christ’s promise that the very gates of hell would never overcome the church, but he and all Christians were mightily tempted to shut up, to not go public with the message of the real King. What’s more, pesky false teachers had made their way into the Ephesian church and were peddling weird speculation rather than Jesus’ sure salvation.<sup>5</sup> The popularity of these false teachers was its own temptation to keep quiet about the truth. Timothy and his church needed encouragement to strenuously contend for and openly communicate the gospel.

Fast forward about 1,940 years. Many authors have noticed that the problems besetting the 21st century church are not that different from those that were swirling around the 1st century church. Who would disagree? The gospel of Jesus Christ is threatened around the world. In some places (which we tend not to hear too much about) it is being threatened by godless governments that physically persecute adherents of the gospel. In many more places (like our place) it is threatened by a predominantly godless culture that preaches its own gospel of tolerance, relativism, and “spirituality” divorced from the Father of our spirits. The temptation to be careless and silent with the gospel finds a willing participant in our own sinful flesh, a flesh that is complacent and lazy and less than vigilant. We need Paul’s encouragement and instruction to commit ourselves to orthodox gospel outreach.

The Spirit led Paul to offer us this encouragement and instruction in a way that answers one of the challenges of “doing church” in our age. That challenge is paralysis by analysis. Can it be that we have become so adept at analyzing our culture that we have failed to penetrate our culture with the gospel? Have we reacted to the self-centeredness that afflicts this generation by developing a self-centered attitude toward the gospel that shows itself in a reticence with the gospel? Do we tell Christians to build bridges to the unchurched without modeling the message of Christ that, God willing, will cross that bridge? In the name of being relevant to our culture do we lack the courage to be counter-cultural with the gospel? When you read 2 Timothy all the

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<sup>2</sup> There are four separate references to remembering as Paul opens the main body of the letter, 1:3-6.

<sup>3</sup> Church tradition places Paul in the Mamertine prison at this time, a place that Hendriksen describes as a “dismal underground dungeon with a hole in the ceiling for light and air” (p. 234).

<sup>4</sup> A careful reading of Acts and the Pauline epistles reveals that Timothy was dispatched by Paul on special assignments to Thessalonica, Corinth, Macedonia, Philippi, and Ephesus.

<sup>5</sup> The list of false teachings that threatened the church is long and varied in the Pastoral Epistles. They include everything from finding your security in “myths and genealogies” (1 Tim 1:4; Ti 1:14) to a denial of the resurrection from the dead (2 Tim 2:18).

strawmen go up in flames. A truly evangelical church, Paul would say, will not get sucked into the false choice between orthodoxy and outreach. A truly evangelical church gets to have, must have, both.

## **2 Timothy 1: Love the Lost by Guarding the Truth Entrusted to You**

We often encourage one another toward outreach and orthodoxy by saying: “Be faithful *with* the Word and *to* the Word.” Such is the two-pronged encouragement offered by Paul in the opening chapter of 2 Timothy. Timothy experienced forces without and within pressing him to be less than faithful with the Word, that is, to refrain from preaching the Word openly. The very real threat of governmental persecution hung like a dark cloud over Timothy’s ministry at this time.<sup>6</sup> The tendency to be timid with the message seemed also to be an inner struggle for this pastor. To push back against these pressures Paul exhorts: “God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord” (2 Tim 1:7,8).

It doesn’t matter how old or how (in)experienced the gospel minister is, armed with this threefold spirit from God he or she can be bold to reach out with the gospel. Do we think our proclamation of Christ’s gospel will make no difference in an unchurched person’s life? Consider the spirit of power God has given you—indeed, you have the very power of God at your disposal every time you speak of Jesus’ salvation. Do we have trouble focusing on how important those who are currently outside the church are to God? Consider the spirit of love God has given you—when you know God has loved you with an everlasting love, you are empowered to love others, which makes them important enough to you to knock on a door or strike up a spiritual conversation. Do we fret about how we might handle certain situations with an unchurched person? Do we wonder what we will say? Consider the spirit of self-discipline<sup>7</sup> God has given you—being grounded in God’s solid scriptural principles provides us with firm footing for a witness in any situation. Because Christians have this spirit of power, love, and self-discipline, there is no room to be ashamed of testifying to the Lord Jesus. Paul’s words remind us that the defensive, defeatist approach to witnessing (e.g., “People won’t like me because of my doctrine”) is uncalled for. We can be cheerful and positive as we share the certainties and affirmations of life with Jesus, certainties and affirmations for which people are actually hungering.

The fact that the forever life may be found only in Jesus is another motivation for outreach proposed by Paul in this first chapter. Note how he describes God’s grace: “This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:9,10).

A believer gets chills reading these words of election and redemption. What great things God has done for us! Please allow me to focus your attention on just the last three words: “through the gospel.” At the end of this glorious story of mankind’s rescue from sin and death is the little, all-important phrase that makes it live in the heart of a human by faith. Only “through the gospel” in Word and sacrament does one receive this great redemption as a personal possession. Let the Christian rejoice! Rejoice that the gospel was pronounced upon your heart that you might believe in the Lord’s Messiah. Rejoice that you have the same gospel to pronounce upon other hearts. Redemption is of no value to people unless it is proclaimed to them through the gospel. We are called to serve people with the only message that bears eternal blessings. Loving the lost means reaching out with that unique announcement.

Paul is quick to add, however, that loving the lost demands that we reach in and guard the truth that has been entrusted to us by God: “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us” (2 Tim 1:13,14).

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<sup>6</sup> Though Timothy was not in prison for his faith when he received this letter, it would appear from Hebrews 13:23 (written just a few years later?) that Timothy did in fact suffer imprisonment for the gospel.

<sup>7</sup> The word Paul used for “self-discipline” here (σωφρονισμός) is one of ten occasions in the Pastoral Epistles where he makes reference to the σωφρο—idea of reining in one’s passions and using sound judgment in every situation. This is a definite emphasis in these letters addressed to gospel ministers.

It is not enough to go to the highways and byways and shout “Believe!” The Christian knows there is Someone to believe in. The Christian has come to know that Someone through sound<sup>8</sup> teaching carried out by other Christians, just as Timothy had learned from Paul. The Christian does not desire to lead a lost sheep down the path of thinking it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe. The most loving thing to do for that lost sheep is to guard the integrity of the sound teaching the Holy Spirit has planted and preserved in our believing hearts. To guard this deposit is to protect it from evil outside forces. We need only think of the world’s philosophies, religious and otherwise, that would have us water down the message of sin and grace. Part of shepherding lost souls, then, is watching out for any enemy that would change the teaching we have received from God through the faithful teachers of our past. This can only be done through careful, devotional study.

Yet, let the watchmen on Zion’s wall know this. Guarding the doctrine does not mean being smug, arrogant, cold, or indifferent with the doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Being faithful to the Word does not imply an attitude of “I’m right. You’re wrong. Deal with it.” Nor does guarding the doctrine mean hoarding the doctrine. Being faithful to the Word does not mean having the attitude toward sharing that Fort Knox has about its gold. Guarding the doctrine is the act of an orthodox evangelist who hopes, yes, prays his teaching will be used by the Holy Spirit to deposit faith in an unbeliever’s heart.

## **2 Timothy 2: Love the Lost by Correctly Handling the Truth**

Paul knew his earthly sojourn was coming to an end. Just as he had worked hard to “pass the torch” to qualified gospel ministers throughout his ministry, so he now encourages Timothy to do the same. Note how Paul’s encouragement to keep on equipping the saints is spoken in the context of the Christian’s daily appropriation of grace: “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” (2 Tim 2:1,2).

Every soul-winner knows that two soul-winners are better than one. We multiply ministry not for the sake of having more ministers, but for the sake of the gospel and the myriad of souls who have not been touched by it. The group of Christians called the WELS takes this Pauline imperative seriously. Before we can go and make disciples, we must be instructed in discipleship ourselves. Before we expand the tent, we must strengthen the stakes. One of the marks of a missionary church is the thorough training of her missionaries.

Of what does this training consist? Paul spoke of its content and its transmission. He referred to “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses.” Outreach minded Christians do not seek to reinvent their message for each new generation. Rather, they study what has been faithfully passed on to them, what has been corroborated by the witness of the church, in order that they may present these truths in new ways. Paul referred to an “entrusting”<sup>10</sup> that takes place when Christians are trained to reach out with the gospel. We pass along priceless treasures when we instruct believers for gospel ministry. These treasures from God deserve our most serious efforts in instruction, whether they take place in synodical schools of ministry or church meeting rooms where evangelists are being trained. Worker training is a priority for a church that asks the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.

Work they will! Paul wanted Timothy to think of himself as a soldier, an athlete, a farmer in the Lord’s service as he worked to place the gospel on many hearts: “Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops” (2 Tim 2:3-6).

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<sup>8</sup> The word translated “sound” is a participle from the verb ὑγιαίνω, “to be in good health.” Paul uses this root nine times in the Pastorals to refer to the importance of teaching that is spiritually “healthful,” that is, doctrinally pure.

<sup>9</sup> Paul’s prepositional phrase “with faith and love” modifies the imperative “keep” and is reminiscent of his exhortations to combine love with truth in our communications (cf. Eph 4:15; 1 Cor 13:1-3).

<sup>10</sup> The precious nature of the παραθήκη mentioned at 1:14 is underscored by Paul’s use of παρατίθημι, a cognate, here at 2:2.

To testify to the truth is a labor of love. But it is still labor. Those who would make this testimony their life's work need the soldier's devotion to the task at hand, not allowing themselves to be distracted by hobbies and diversions to the degree that time in and with the gospel becomes an afterthought. Those who would testify to the truth need the athlete's intensity and spirit of fair play,<sup>11</sup> realizing that souls won by pious-sounding words with no gospel content are not won at all. Those who would testify to the truth need the farmer's work ethic, putting all one's effort into planting the gospel seed and trusting the Lord to produce a crop of souls turned to Christ. Let gospel ministers enter the arena with eyes open—seeing the work to be done and looking to God for the increase.

What is “success” in this kind of work? This question has haunted missionaries who did not see the visible fruit of their labor as quickly as they would have liked. It haunted me in the days before my ordination as I stressed about all the things I would have to do in order to make a go of the mission setting to which I was assigned. Thankfully my father pulled me aside on ordination/installation eve and redirected my focus. He acknowledged that I probably had many hopes and fears fluttering around in my head (and he was right). Then he told me in no uncertain terms that what I should have been thinking about, at least on that evening anyway, was how I would be faithful to the ordination vows I would take the next day. Faithfulness to the Word and with the Word—this is the gospel minister's success.

Consider how Paul impressed this upon pastor Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15).”

Who is the gospel minister who passes the test? The one who correctly handles the word of truth. What Christian committed to gospel outreach does not strive to be such a craftsman? To correctly handle the word of truth is to use it for the purpose God gave it. The evangelist understands that he or she cannot speak the gospel to someone who rejects the notion of sin or the need for forgiveness. To preach the law to a despondent sinner would be equally tragic.<sup>12</sup> To know which word of God to use at any given time takes training. In fact, just to know which word of God is law and which one is gospel takes training. Church bodies and congregational leaders understand their responsibility to raise up witnesses who are approved workmen in this regard. And skilled workmen boast not in their training, but in the Lord Jesus they seek to share with the lost.

## **2 Timothy 3: Love the Lost by Continuing in the Truth You Have Learned**

Paul the apostle is inspired to be Paul the prophet in 2 Timothy 3. As he had done in 1 Timothy 4, Paul predicts the moral climate of the times as we get closer and closer to Christ's return. In some respects his description of the godlessness of these last days does not shock us anymore. We in gospel ministry have seen moral decay in and around our churches. We must also confess that the attitudes represented by the 18 descriptors in this section lurk within the dark recesses of our own old, unregenerate selves: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 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” (2 Tim 3:1-4).

Though unbelievers who have turned themselves over to these sins<sup>13</sup> may make things difficult for purveyors of the truth, their obvious iniquity does not cloud the truth. What comes next, however, is a crass

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<sup>11</sup> The adverb translated “according to the rules” is *voimíwos*. In 1 Tim 1:8 Paul uses the same term for the manner in which the doctrine of the law must be taught.

<sup>12</sup> The NIV's translation of *ὀρθοτομέω* (“correctly handle”) is a good one, but the Greek compound (*ὀρθο*= straight; *τομέω*= to cut) suggests that the proper division of law and gospel is an appropriate application of Paul's idea.

<sup>13</sup> Five of the 18 descriptors in this list are included in Rom 1:29-31, a description of the natural man who has been given over to a depraved mind. Another detail worth noting is that this list is comprised of substantives rather than verbals, suggesting that Paul is speaking to the very nature of unbelief; these are not just things that unbelievers *do*, they're what they *are*.

characteristic of the unbelieving world that has the potential of clouding the truth in a believer's mind and loosening his grip on it: "[People like this have] a form of godliness but deny its power" (2 Tim 3:5).

In the name of all that is good and virtuous, false teachers may spew teachings that lack the one vital ingredient to produce the good and virtuous: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul's ancient prediction has come true in our day and age in the form of pious-sounding non-Christian sects and Bible critics who deny that the gospel accounts ever took place. We also may think of all that passes for "spirituality" in our present culture—forms of godliness that find their so-called power in the goodness of man or the mantras of mysticism. What a horrible denial of the gospel! Yet, God's people may be tempted to give them a try in order to feel more spiritual or see more results.

There is an antidote for this anti-gospel: "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim 3:14-17).

As false teaching goes from bad to worse in these latter days, the orthodox evangelist still wields the sword of the Spirit. Our challenge as we reach out to an increasingly godless world is not to change weapons, but to learn and trust that sword's usefulness anew. God's Word, according to Paul, is the only weapon that can fend off the attacks of unbelief. God's Word is the only force that can shine the light of salvation into a sin-darkened heart. Orthodox evangelists study the Word and go out with the Word and speak the Word. They may study sociology and human nature to determine points of contact with today's unchurched people. But they never consider themselves completely equipped for doing God's will of attacking the devil's strongholds until they are clad with the Word. There is no evangelism success without the God-breathed Word. There is no evangelism failure when the Word, both its piercing law and soothing gospel, has been proclaimed.

## **2 Timothy 4: Love the Lost by Preaching the Truth Boldly**

And now the time had come for the veteran missionary's final charge to his younger co-worker. Knowing that he was in the process of being offered up to the Lord,<sup>14</sup> knowing that his ship was about to sail across the sea of death,<sup>15</sup> Paul penned these words: "I give you this charge: 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 men 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 (2 Tim 4:1-5)."

If we are a Bible-believing, Christ-centered church, we will consider these words the apostle's final charge to us as well. Paul sums up for us the work of the orthodox evangelist in today's world.

We are charged to preach<sup>16</sup> the Word. Paul is asking us to be heralds of Christ, the Word made flesh. Such heralding implies a couple key concepts. First, the preaching of the Word is a proclamation of what the Sender gives you to say. While we work hard to apply the Word to any and every part of the human condition, we dare never let human conditions change the Word in our heart and on our lips. The herald faithfully represents what the King has to say. Second, the herald has important, exciting news to tell. How could our preaching and teaching and witnessing ever be considered a dry recitation of facts when we have the message that snatches people from the jaws of eternal death and rescues souls from hell? Shall we ever tire of that

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<sup>14</sup> By calling himself a drink offering in 4:6, Paul brings to mind the thank offering the Israelites made as they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land (cf. Num 15:10). Paul, too, was now ready to enter the Promised Land.

<sup>15</sup> Paul speaks of his "departure" (ἀνάλυσις), a term that referred to the unloosing of a ship's mooring ropes. He used the verb ἀναλύω at Php 1:23 when referring to his desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far."

<sup>16</sup> The verb for preach here is κηρύσσω, the same verb that greets our Synod's seminarians every day in chapel: Κηρύξατε τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον.

message? Note also that we are not charged to argue for the Word or prove it to be true. Christian apologetics has its place in our outreach as we attempt to remove biases that might prevent a prospect from giving the gospel a hearing. But, in the final analysis, it is the clear proclamation of the Word that wins souls for Christ. Preach the Word, Paul says.

Plan to proclaim, Paul says, but don't be surprised if things don't go as planned in your proclaiming. The Christian cannot possibly plan out every opportunity the Lord will provide for preaching the Word. The Christian can prepare for them, however. Paul's reference to "out of season" preaching impresses upon us the importance of thorough preparation. Not all preaching, in the strict sense of the word, happens in the pulpit. Therefore, WELS Christians should not look to leave it there. Preaching the Word happens in offices and factories, around dinner tables and across backyard fences, by phone and by e-mail. Because the gospel is for all people, gospel proclaimers will not look to limit it to one certain time, place, or style of communication. The more we are rooted and growing in the Word, the more we are prepared for preaching the word "out of season."

We don't limit the Lord in the opportunities he may give us to proclaim his Word. Nor do we limit the Word's power by putting it on our own timetable for results. Paul encourages both "great patience and careful instruction" when preaching the Word. This pair of qualities implies that the placing of the gospel on a person's heart was never meant to be a "one and done" proposition. Conversion is not a process, but orthodox outreach is. We follow up. We nurture with the Word. We do not let the sordid baggage from a pre-Christian life dissuade us from proclaiming the gospel into the new Christian's life. We expect that the Holy Spirit will be working through our patient, careful instruction even when the visible fruit of such instruction is hidden from our powers of perception. And thus we assimilate the newest members of the flock. Actually, God does, by the gospel, in his own time. Our part is to be thorough and persistent with our gospel preaching, especially as worldly teachers, who like to scratch itching ears, gain prominence.

To close his final charge Paul tells us once more: when the Christian studies the Word so as to preach the Word, when he calls false doctrine what it is so as to call people to faith, when he guards scriptural truth so as to proclaim the One who called himself the Truth, this is exactly when he is doing "the work of an evangelist." What our communities need are men and women who have listened to them, learned from the Scriptures, and are driven by love to confront them with the Christ of the Scriptures. In this second letter to Timothy Paul tells us that's doing the work of an evangelist.

Brother, are you an outreach specialist or an orthodoxy specialist? God forbid we in the WELS fall for that false choice. Be a gospel specialist. Listen to Paul. The missionary is a theologian. The instructor is an evangelist. When you love the lost you love the truth. Such is the love God has created in our hearts. May it flourish within our church until the Lord returns.

S.D.G.