

**Ancient Advice for a Modern World: Having Confidence**

October 7, 2007

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Pastor John Wertz, Jr.  
St. Michael Lutheran Church  
Blacksburg, VA

There was a time not so long ago

- when completing a two mile walk

- would not have been the easiest thing for me to do,

- but nevertheless

- I agreed to take part in a CROP Walk.

- The CROP Walk raises money to fight hunger

- and people from the church were participating,

- so as Pastor,

- I felt like I needed to show up and support the event.

- I joined the other walkers and started to make my way through a neighborhood.

- It didn't take long for me to get winded

- and to start to slow down.

- If I had been on a track,

- or anywhere near my car,

- I might have stopped the walk right then,

- but I wasn't.

- I was, however,

- walking with a friend.

- He noticed my slowing pace

- and he made a conscious decision not to leave me behind.

- He very easily could have finished the walk in half the time it was taking me,

- but he stayed with me,

- paced me along the way

- kept talking with me to keep my mind off the walk ahead,

- and ultimately helped me to reach the finish line.

- His encouragement,

- His confidence that I could finish,

- His willingness to walk with me along the way, - - -

- gave me the strength I needed,

- gave me the help I needed,

- gave me the confidence I needed,

- to finish that walk.

Obviously,

- I had the ability to finish the walk.

- They didn't have to call a car to come and get me, - - -

- but without my friend beside me to essentially say,

'I know you can do this.

- Believe in yourself.

- Don't give up."

- Well - - I doubt I would have finished.

- Sometimes it takes a little encouragement.
  - Sometimes it takes the voice of another - -
    - to help us to believe in ourselves,
    - to spur us to action,
    - to convince us to trust what we know to be true.
- In a sinful world,
  - self-doubt comes easily.
    - It helps to have someone who believes in us,
      - someone who loves us,
      - someone whom we trust,
        - to stand beside us and say,
          - ‘Stay the course.
          - Trust what you believe.
          - Don’t be afraid to share
            - what you know is true.’”
  - That is what’s happening,
    - in 2 Timothy today.
      - The author seems to be encouraging Timothy,
        - to have confidence in what he believes
          - in his understanding of the faith,
          - and in his call to ministry in the world.

Obviously,

- something is going on with Timothy
  - that needs to be addressed.
- He is clearly a man of faith.
  - He has a family history of faithfulness.
    - He has learned from an excellent teacher
      - and received the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- He has every reason
  - to be bold in his faithfulness,
    - bold in his proclamation of the good news about Jesus,
      - confident in his ability to teach and to lead,
        - but something seems to have gone wrong.
  - Why else would the author say,
    - “Do not be ashamed, then of the testimony about our Lord.” (1 Tim 2:8)
      - or
      - “For this reason,
        - I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you.” (1 Tim 2:6)
- Now - we can only imagine what has happened.
  - Maybe he has had a death in the family
    - and is struggling to reconcile his grief
      - with the love of God.
    - He wouldn't be the first Christian to have the darkness of grief,
      - obscure the good news that we don't have to face grief and pain alone,

- but rather that God is present with us to give us strength
  - and the hope of eternal life with God
    - in midst of our grief and pain.
- Maybe he has been confronted by a question about God he can't answer,
  - and that has caused him to question his faith.
    - He wouldn't be the first Christian,
      - to struggle with the reality that some things about God
        - are a mystery and can't be fully grasped
          - by human reason.
    - A quick review of the lives of famous Christians, like Martin Luther,
      - will remind us that questions and struggles
        - are a normal part of a life of faith.
  - Maybe his leadership in the local congregation is being challenged
    - by someone who is a better speaker,
      - who brings easy answers to difficult questions.
    - He wouldn't be the first Christian to struggle
      - with an appealing, false teaching
        - that subtly undermines a relationship with God.
    - For even though it doesn't take long for most people to learn
      - that the easiest way forward,
        - isn't always the best way forward. –
          - The easy answer in a beautiful package

- can be hard to turn down

- who know,

- perhaps he's struggling with that.

- Whatever the reason may be,

- it's clear Timothy is struggling

- and the author is reminding him,

- to have confidence,

- to believe in God,

- to trust in the good news about Jesus that he has learned,

- to draw on the strength of his family of faith,

- so that he might continue

- to live faithfully in the world

- and to serve God in his community.

- I am praying for you,

- the author says,

- You grew up in a family of faith.

- You have the gift of the Holy Spirit with you.

- You know the good news of Jesus' love for the world.

- Don't give up.

- Keep walking.

- Keep moving toward the finish line.

- Keep living faithfully.

- Keep trusting in God and in your relationship with God.
- Have confidence!
  - Have confidence in what God is and can do through you in world!
  - Have confidence in the eternal hope that comes to us through Jesus. - -
- Believe that whatever difficulty you may face,
  - whatever doubt may arise,
    - whatever darkness may seem to overtake your life - -
  - Believe the good news is that - - - God is with you,
    - and you can always draw on God's strength
      - to face the challenges and struggles
        - that every person of faith will encounter
          - over a lifetime of believing.

You see, although these words of encouragement, hope and help,

- were written for Timothy a long time ago,
  - the good news we hear addressed to Timothy in this letter,
    - is also addressed to you and to me. - - -
  - This letter could begin,
    - 'To John, my beloved child, . . .
    - To Sandy, my beloved child, . . .
    - To Gary, my beloved child, . . . .
    - To Karen, my beloved child . . .'
- For since, like Timothy,

- we all have days and times,
  - when we struggle with our faith.
- Since we all have days and times
  - when it is easy to see everything that is wrong,
  - and hard to see the multitude of blessings God gives.
- Since we all have days and times,
  - when we feel like we might be ready to give up,
- then we can all
  - hear our name inserted in this text
    - and know the good news that God is with us. - - -
- With us
  - through the foundation of faith we receive in our families
    - and through our mentors and teachers
      - who share their experiences of God.
- With us
  - through the unending presence of the Holy Spirit,
    - and through the story of God revealed in Scripture.
- With us,
  - as it says in this letter to Timothy,
    - through the “grace that was given to us in Christ Jesus
      - before the ages began”
        - which is now “revealed through the

- appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.”

*(1 Tim. 2:9-10)*

- You see the good news for us today and every day
  - is that just like my friend who was with me on the CROP walk,
    - and just like Timothy’s friend who wrote him this letter,
      - God is present with us,
        - through prayer and scripture,
          - through people of faith and the power of the Spirit,
  - Present with us to offer words of encouragement,
    - and to walk with us along the way, - - -
      - so that we will have the strength we need,
        - the help we need,
          - and the confidence we needed,
            - to face the challenges and difficulties of this life,
              - and to be God’s faithful people in the world.