

**1 Timothy 3: 2; "Able to Teach" (Part 2), Sermon # 8 in a series on the Eldership, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

In my last sermon to you on this series I laid before you 4 of the 7 marks of identification that a man is able to teach. 1<sup>st</sup> – He must have a gift of teaching given Him by the Holy Spirit (and stir up that gift within him) (2 Timothy 1: 6) He will be doing this by reading, by meditation, and prayer. Then 2<sup>ndly</sup> – He must have a deep understanding of doctrine (that is; he must be able to distinguish and organize the truth that he preaches and teaches.) He is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things old and new. Thirdly – He must have an attitude of humility and be willing to serve others John 15, verse 13 says, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am." "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet you also ought to wash one another's feet." "For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him." "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." And 4<sup>thly</sup> – A skilled teacher must have a life marked by holiness. He himself must receive the precious promises of God and learn to separate himself in the right way from the world; not external separation so much as in his heart; he must learn to separate the precious from the vile as it says in Jeremiah 15: 19. He does this in his experience, and he teaches and leads others to do so also. It is a holiness of life marked by a deep love for Christ Himself. I want to spend a few minutes in this sermon speaking more about holiness of life before we go on to the other 3 marks of identifying a teacher of the Word. Holiness is the cultivation of a garden of the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of righteousness which comes out of a real relationship of love between ourselves, as a part of the Bride of Christ (Christ's Church), and the Bridegroom who is Jesus Christ our Lord. Since it is so important that we all understand this, and not just a candidate for the ministry; I want you to turn with me to Song of Solomon Chapter 4, verses 7-16. We will let this form our introduction to this afternoon's message. We are united to Christ, and because we love what He has done for us in joining us to Himself, we are to love all of His commandments. But the 1<sup>st</sup> and greatest commandment we have given to us is to cultivate our relationship to Christ; to develop our relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is what Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom says to His spouse the Church - "You are all fair, my love, and there is no spot in you." "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon." "Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lion's dens, from the mountains of the leopards." "You have ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; you have ravished my heart with one look of your eyes, with one link of your necklace." "How fair your love, my sister, my spouse!" "How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes

than all spices!" "Your lips, O my spouse, drip as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under your tongue; and the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon." "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." "Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, fragrant henna with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices—a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon." "Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! "Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out." "Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits."

We find here, that the love between Christ and the Church is the highest and best of loves. We are fair because of the grace and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our love for Christ ravishes His heart. When we look to Him in faith, He is very pleased. He takes notice of our time spent in His Word and what we are becoming in our hearts. These gardens enclosed that were mentioned in verse 12 and following, were the private gardens of the King, where He would cultivate fruits for His peculiar and particular pleasure. All the believer's attempts to cultivate the graces given to them by Christ; all the attempts to bring forth fruit unto God in holiness, are pleasing to Him. Our heart's desire will be to please Christ by faith and by acts of obedience to His Word. Our heart's desire will be to please Him in every respect. Obedience begins in the heart where grace is cultivated, where love is displayed, and where it is exchanged in words which express what the heart feels. True submission flows out of love to Christ for what He has given and for what He has done. The minister is one who cultivates his own heart first, and then teaches others the importance of cultivating theirs. All the glory will then go to God and his people will not be proud of themselves, but rather thankful and satisfied. How important it is, then, that we see our Lord as the One who tends our hearts, and the One who comes looking for the fruit of holiness in our lives. This is the pre-eminent mark of identifying a teacher of the Word of God. He is one who is cultivating holiness in his own life and teaching others to do the same.

This being said, there are 3 more marks of identification that I want to mention this afternoon. The fifth of the 7 marks is that the man is a diligent student of the Scripture. The 6<sup>th</sup> is that he is a man who is willing to confront doctrinal error wherever he finds it. The 7<sup>th</sup> is that he must have strong and consistent convictions of what is true and right. Let's briefly look at each of these, praying that God will raise up men who will exhibit these strengths.

**The 5<sup>th</sup> mark of identifying a man who is called to teach and preach is that he is a diligent student of the Scriptures.**

Turn with me to 2 Timothy Chapter 2, and verse 15. The Apostle writes to Timothy – "Be diligent to present yourself approved unto God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (or handling accurately) the word of truth." A man who would minister and indeed all true Christians should be diligently striving to be approved unto God. The Word of God requires study, it requires meditation; it deserves an accurate handling. Not a casual handling; not a forced or

contrived meaning imposed upon it; but a serious wrestling with its wording and its meaning in the context in which it resides. The Scripture comments upon itself; it is its own interpreter by the Spirit's working; to give the right understanding; that is, provided that one diligently studies it. This diligence requires not only looking at grammar and word meaning and sentence structure, but also praying that the Lord will give light and understanding and illustrations from other parts of Scripture and nature and experience, that will aid in its communication to the hearts of the hearers. The one who would teach must be able to show and prove the literal interpretation of a passage, where it is literal; and a spiritual interpretation where it is literally spiritual. He must not always be insisting that the Bible is to be interpreted with a wooden literalism. Neither should he be a man who is always trying to spiritualize what is meant to be taken literally. Brethren, this is not an easy task, and it requires spiritual discernment given from God Himself. The Bible is not just another text book that you apply your great mind to, or bring your thoughts to bear upon. It is God's word which is designed by Him to speak to you authoritatively on every subject of spiritual and eternal concern. This is why prayer is needed in the study of the Scriptures, not just a sharp and intelligent mind. The text of Scripture is not given to be forced to one's own private interpretation or imposed upon by your imagination, or denied because you cannot believe in miracles, or God's sovereign power being exercised in salvation. You can see that God's word is to be handled with the care and the reverence which it deserves, having been given to us by One who is infinitely Holy, and infinitely wise and righteous and good. The Holy Spirit's illumination upon the text is very much needed. A humble submission to the Word of God as the Word of God is requisite to come to place of usefulness as a teacher.

This is particularly needed when you remember what the context of 2 Timothy 2: 15 is. Paul was reminding Timothy that there were, and there still are today, some people who like to strive about words. They like to wrangle and battle and fight over them. Paul says in verse 14, "Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers." The things which Paul would have Timothy remind them of were the profound and simple truths of the gospel which he related in verses 3-13; the truths about Jesus Christ, descended of David; His being raised from the dead; Paul's having had to suffer for preaching those truths, so that others would be saved. What a responsibility the man of God has; which is to hold them fast, and hold them forth. How can he do this, unless he has studied the word of God very diligently? And this leads us to the 6<sup>th</sup> mark of an able teacher.

**6thly – The skilled teacher must not only avoid error himself, but he must be willing to confront doctrinal error wherever he finds it.**

You will notice that I said that he must be "willing" to confront doctrinal error; not that he sees this as his whole mission as a preacher and teacher. Some men fall into this. They are heresy hunters. They stalk heresy throughout other men's works, and they spend an inordinate amount of precious time trying to prove other men wrong. It is certainly important that heresy and error in relation to the gospel and

the truth of the Word of God be understood so that it can be refuted where necessary. But when this is the continual subject of one's preaching and teaching it is unprofitable because the hearers, although they will become more discerning doctrinally, they may fall into the same error themselves of what their teacher is guilty of; which is not focusing on what is true, as much as the false; of not showing loving and kind attitudes to those who are deceived, but rather being suspicious and proud because of their knowledge of the error that they have discovered in them. This is a very great problem indeed. And so Paul says, "don't strive about words". He says in 2 Timothy 2: 24 that "the servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, in humility correcting those in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will." Let me ask you if this is you, dear Christian? Do you see people who are in error in this way? Do you look at dear brethren in other denominational settings; in other church settings, in this way? If you do, you will always feel it your duty to argue with them about doctrine and try to get them to come to your position. What a sad state of affairs this is; and it is something which even well meaning people can fall into, unless they are careful. Let us understand, once and for all, that it is very possible that a person can be perfectly orthodox, and yet be so proud and so unloving to others around them that they could not possibly convince one soul of the truth, because of the way that they convey it. They convey it with no love for the soul of the person who has fallen into error or who is deceived. Take care that you do not fall into this God-dishonoring practice.

But having said this, we need to understand how important a thing it is, to actually be willing to confront doctrinal error wherever you find it, if you have a gift of teaching; or if you are a discerning person. How will persons holding error or heresy ever change; how will their souls be saved, and how will those whom they have taught and deceived be turned away from spiritual and eternal destruction, unless the person who knows, warns them or tells them? People who hold heresy and error are dangerous not only to themselves, but they are dangerous to others. Sometimes their words and their persons need to be shunned after they have been told that they are in error. Their false beliefs do not need a closer look. They need to be deliberately ignored. If you look just past the text in 2 Timothy 2: 15 that we have been looking at in its context, you find these words in verse 16 – "But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness." And their message will spread like cancer." "Hymnaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some." A man who would teach and become a pastor must possess the discernment to see "of what sort" people are. Some people's teachings are like cancer which spreads, and it is the job of a teacher to act as a physician of the soul, to speak and to teach in such a way to show that these false teachers and false teachings need to be cut out of the body of believers which he pastors. Their errors and heresies should be refuted in a public manner from the pulpit, and privately confronted also,

if necessary. The resurrection of the dead was a doctrine which was not being handled rightly by some, who were named by name, in Paul's letter to Timothy. A man who would teach and preach in the church in our day must be willing to name denominations which may be in error, and errors of people within or outside of those denominations so that his flock, and others, will not be ruined either eternally, or in relation to their faith because they may believe them.

You see this further amplified in Titus Chapter 1, verse 9 in the qualifications listed for an elder in that place. He must be one who, "holds fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." "For there are many insubordinate, (those who will not submit to the word or to pastoral authority in relation to the word), both idle talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain." I could preach a whole sermon on this subject, but I cannot at this time. Suffice it to say, the man who would be a teaching elder must indeed be willing to confront doctrinal error wherever he finds it, and willing to reprove it in those whom he shepherds.

**And then the 7<sup>th</sup> mark of one able to teach is that he should be a man who has strong and consistent convictions of what is true and right.**

Turn with me to 2 Timothy 4, verse 1. This was the last letter that we know of, that the Apostle Paul wrote to his son in the faith Timothy. He says to him, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!" "Be ready in season and out of season." "Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." The Christian ministry is the waging of a warfare for the forward progress of truth, and that truth lived out in the righteous words and actions of those who have listened to it preached. It is not a literal physical warfare, although we may indeed be persecuted or die for our stand for the truth. The convictions of a man who would teach must be settled, his having worked through all the major doctrines of the faith in the fear of God. He must be absolutely convinced that it is truth which must hold the people who listen to Him. It is a fight of faith. And so this is why Paul charges Timothy by Christ's appearing and kingdom – as a Judge – "Preach the Word." Convince the brothers and sisters in Christ, Timothy, rebuke them, exhort them with patience, because there will come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine. A time then, and a time now. There are times when those who say that they are believers will not endure sound doctrine, and who don't hold established convictions, based upon the truth of the word of God. They will, Paul says, heap up teachers in accordance with their own desires, and they will have itching ears to hear something new and novel; something which departs from the

sound doctrine of God's word the Bible. They will turn their ears away from the truth and they will turn aside to fables and myths. But you, Timothy, are to have strong and consistent convictions. You are to be watchful in all things; watchful so that you do not depart from the truth, and watchful for the souls under your charge, that they by your speaking to them and teaching them, will not depart from the truth either.

Let me ask you in closing; have you formed those strong and consistent convictions of what is right and true according to the word of God? Are you doctrinally sound? Do you go over the truths of our confession of faith with a view to really thinking about what sound doctrine consists of? Are you willing to do spiritual battle for the truth and if need be, to lay down your life for it? The Apostle Paul was; and so was young Timothy. It is a good thing to be able to start well in running the race of the Christian life. But it is also good to finish well, so that you can say at the end of your life; "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." "Finally, there is laid for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who loved His appearing. I hope that each of you will embrace a doctrinal Christianity, and receive the word of God with all meekness, and that you will not turn aside from it to the myths and fables that people make up to put in its place. The Lord Jesus, His righteous life and sacrificial death; His glorious resurrection :His coming again; and His judging the world; these were not fables but wonderful and solemn realities over which people will either embrace them as doctrines to be believed; or perish thinking that they were fables or irrelevant to their lives. See to it, that you are among the first group that I mentioned, and rejoice in the truth that has been entrusted to you; the truth that was once delivered to all the saints.