



Wisdom's Toolbox – Part 2

Making Strategic Sacrifices

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Well, she swept all the regional competitions in Colorado. She struggled a bit with the nationals, but she did earn a spot representing our country for the world title that was held recently in Finland. Arvada Sinclair is her name. And she worked hard. She worked hard. She sacrificed a lot. She invested a lot in this. She traveled thousands and thousands of miles. She ate weird food at weird restaurants. She slept in foreign hotels. And then two weeks ago the outcome was announced on the headlines. And if you don't keep up with the news, maybe you didn't hear what happened. Sadly, I can just tell you, though, that our contestant from Denver did not win. She came in seventh place. Some guy from France ended up taking the top spot.

But if you don't follow the news, you probably didn't hear about the title that was given out in the AGWC and if you think, "Pastor Mike, what is that?" Well the AGWC, it's a real thing and that's what they call it, the AGWC. It's otherwise known as the Air Guitar World Championships. People work hard to get on the stage for the Air Guitar World Championships every year. This year in Finland, they hosted that and people traveled. I mean, this is a big deal. I mean, the money and the time and the effort that goes into it. Now, they don't play an instrument. You know what air guitar is, right? They don't sing. They stand on stage and pretend to play a guitar. That's what they do.

Now, if you're doing our Daily Bible Reading with us this year, we've reached Ecclesiastes. And if you ever want a modern parable about Ecclesiastes, just to quote Ecclesiastes 1:17, for this "I perceived was nothing other than striving after the wind." I think guys strumming the air on a stage and girls as well, I mean that kind of typifies something that you'd think at the end of your life, I don't know, it's not a skill you're going to go that's a resumé builder right there. Right? I am the air guitar world champion. And yet Ecclesiastes is trying to remind us as Paul so clearly reminds us in the New Testament you can spend your time on a lot of things that in the end will be wood, hay and straw. Right? As opposed to the wise investments that Christians can make and making wise sacrifices to store up something Jesus said in his preaching was like treasure in heaven. It is what Paul said in First Corinthians 3 is "gold, silver and precious stones that on the day when our work is revealed," it's like, this is the good stuff. This is the stuff that is rewarded. This is the stuff that has an eternal consequence. It bleeds into the next life as like this is a "well done good and faithful servant."

Now, any investment in life, we can focus on the investment, we can say, well, here's a wise investment right here. But it's really not about making wise investments, because the reason you and I don't make more good financial wise investments is because we'd have to sacrifice the money to make that investment. Right? So if you see the sermon this morning, you'll see the title is like making strategic sacrifices because that's really what it comes down to. I mean, the hurdle with me making a more, I don't know, a more wise and effective and precious in terms of gold, silver, precious stones kinds of investment is it takes the sacrifice of not doing the kind of the wood, hay and straw stuff that frankly is hard for us to give up in our world.



Because the world is filled with vanity, right? "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." That picture that we're reading about in our Daily Bible Reading, it's a good reminder to us that so much of what's going on and the activity, the scurrying around of people in this world, that we as Christians can fall into that as well and miss the fact that we are coming together regularly, I hope, multiple times a week to remind ourselves that we serve the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He's in charge of everything. If you want to talk about a worthy investment, a worthy sacrifice to make for a worthy investment, well, then we need the most worthy person to be clearly in view. And to have the most worthy person clearly in view, he's going to direct us to make investments in things that matter most to him. And as Paul said, as he was talking to the leaders there in Ephesus, there is a group of people who he has purchased with his own blood.

As Paul said, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they may come to obtain this grace that is found in Christ Jesus." I mean, this is like that's important. And it's not just him winning more people to faith in Christ. It's about his desire, as we've seen in the book of Acts, to go back now in this second missionary journey and build them up in the faith, to strengthen them, to see how they're doing. And so as we started to look at the beginning of a launch of the second missionary journey in Acts Chapter 15, we saw that Paul and Barnabas went two separate directions because of the dispute over John Mark, who Paul said, "I don't think we can rely on this guy to go thousands of miles across land and sea because he bailed on us midway last time. So I'm going to pick someone else. I pick Silas."

So Paul and Silas go north. And a little map there on your worksheet reminds us they kind of divided and conquered. Remember, they kind of went clockwise around from the Mediterranean Sea through Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and then backtracked and came back around. Well, they split this now, it's not as though this is some, you know, crossing your arms as we said last time and marching into separate rooms. It's like, no, no, we disagree about who we should take, but we're both going to go out and get this done. And so, as you'll see on the map there, you remember that Paul and Silas, they go north through Asia Minor and they start hitting some of the cities they hit last on the first missionary journey.

And then Barnabas, he went ahead and went with his cousin, John Mark. And he's a great believer in trying to restore him and he ended up doing that, as we learned last time. He then gets on a ship and they go across the Mediterranean to the island that they started the missionary journey on last time, the island of Cyprus. So we pick up this story in Acts Chapter 16 verse 1 and we see that when Paul gets to Derbe and Lystra and we see that on the map, he's naming them in the order that they came to them. There's a little demonstrative pronoun in the middle of that verse which reminds us that this guy who we're about to pick up named Timothy, who becomes a key player throughout the rest of the New Testament, is from there. And there, we assume, is the last city on that list, which is Lystra.

And so he picks up this guy named Timothy from Lystra and we read about this. What we're going to see in this passage is what we need to be challenged to kind of recalibrate our thinking on every time we get together. And that is, are we making the wise investments in



our lives, are we making the wisest investments in our lives? Because for a lot of you, as I look out on you, I know you're making good investments in things that matter for eternity, but it's never really a challenge of thinking about good and bad as we said recently, it's about better and best. And sometimes we can take some of the things that we're doing and squeeze out more of that wood, hay and straw and put a little bit more of the gold, silver and precious stones in the practical decisions we make regarding our priorities and our schedules and our investments and all the things that we do.

And so we're going to watch Paul make some wise investments. And we'll see Timothy, who he picks up as his new, you know, missionary companion, this young guy, he's going to remind you how young he is in this passage. By the time Paul finishes the missionary journey, he spent three years in Ephesus, he ends up putting Timothy in charge of that church as the lead pastor, if you will, the senior pastor, and he ends up being called "young" in the letter Paul writes back to him. So he's a young pastor. So at this point he's even younger. Right? And in this scene we see Timothy displays some of the wisdom that Paul leads him into, reflects it willingly, he make some sacrifices of a personal nature, as we'll see. And I think we can leave here today with perhaps the challenge to say, how can I make more strategic sacrifices that matter for eternity?

So let's look at this passage. I'll read it for you from the English Standard Version. First five verses. I'm going to end at verse 5 because you'll see in verse 5, even as you glance at it, that this is one of those re-occurring statements in the book of Acts that reminds us that God's hand is clearly on us. So whatever we read in the first four verses, it's like a reminder. This is a good thing. The wisdom pays off. You want to know if it's a worthy investment? Well, we know this for sure. We kind of get this imprimatur, this stamp of approval in verse 5. And we can learn a lot from that.

Paul would say when you watch me do something right, something good, you ought to imitate what I'm doing. If you see that pattern in any one else you ought to imitate what they're doing. So let's imitate what we see here. First, by reading it, let's start in verse number 1 of Acts 16. Put your eyeballs on verse 1 as I read it for you. And it says, "Paul came also to Derbe and Lystra." You're oriented there on the map. "A disciple was there," at Lystra we assume, "named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer." Now, if you've been in Sunday school, you've graduated from Sunday school, you know, in Second Timothy Chapter 1, we even get the name of his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois, these two ladies who had taught him the Scriptures. You go over to Chapter 3 of First Timothy and you hear that he's been raised on the Jewish Scriptures. He's acquainted with the sacred writings, the holy writings that are able to lead you to the knowledge of salvation. All of that is something that he was raised in.

But these people, this family, we're assuming Lois and Eunice were led to Christ on Paul's first missionary journey, and Timothy, perhaps even he was led to Christ there. But he is related to these women, the Jewish women in particular, who taught him the Jewish Scripture. But it says the at bottom of verse 1, "his father was a Greek." Not a Jew. Here's what we learn about him. One thing we learn about him before Paul picks him up as a leader and the reason



he picks him up as a leader, verse 2, is "he was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium." Look at your map now. That's even 20 miles further away. I mean, this is a bigger city, and this is the place where his reputation had gone even further. And if you think about him being a young person, perhaps even a late teenager, if I said to you, we've got a teenager in this church and man, he's notable. He's a standout. He's a godly man. He's spoken of well. I mean, he's like the guy we think this guy is a great Christian young man.

But he's also known, you know, in churches all around the area. That's like, wow, this guy's a notable person. Outstanding reputation. Spoken of well by the brothers. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. And you cannot read that without the contradistinction to what we just read in Chapter 15 when he looks at John Mark and goes "I don't want to take him." So, I mean, there's something here noteworthy. There's something here that's just a contrast to what he saw and perceived in John Mark. Later again, Barnabas, his work would restore him. But there's this sense of now I'm going to pick one here, not just the guy who at Syrian Antioch and in the church and I'm sure Silas, obviously, as we learn, is a great choice. But Timothy gets taken into this band, this company. "Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him and circumcised him."

Let's talk about circumcision this morning. That's a fun topic for the modern church Sunday morning. I don't want you to think too hard about this, but this is all about circumcision. I mean, that's the key issue here. You want to talk about a sacrifice, it's kind of a personal sacrifice. And if you've read Joshua, you get adults, getting an 18-year-old getting circumcised. Remember the story after the wilderness wanderings, they all needed days to recover. So don't think about it too long but it's an issue. It's a sacrifice, is it not? A bloody sacrifice. Yes, sorry. I'm sorry. That line was uncalled for. Good thing is we can edit it before it goes on the radio. He took him and circumcised him. It was bad for me. I had to do all the study again. All right. Sorry.

Why did he do that? Here's why. Middle of verse 3. "Because the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." Okay. Now again, the ancient Greco-Roman world was different than our world. There are bathhouses, there are gymnasiums. There's a lot more exposure, literally. And they probably knew not only that his dad was a Greek ethnically and not a Jew. I mean, perhaps there was an assumption, perhaps there was a knowledge, we see in Galatians, even people spying on them in their moments of bathing and all the rest to figure out whether the band of missionaries were circumcised or not. But the point is, he got a Jewish mother, got a Jewish grandmother. They're introducing you to the Jewish Scriptures. You got a Greek father. We don't know anything about his spiritual state. Perhaps he was saved too. We don't know. But it was because his father was a Greek that he wasn't circumcised.

So Paul said, I'm going to get you circumcised. Verse 4, "As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them," to the people in the cities, the Christians, "for observance," for the things that they must do, "the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who are in Jerusalem." Now, what is that? Go back in your mind. All our study we did in the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council started with people standing up and saying,



glance at it if you want, verses 1 and 2, you got people saying, "Hey, to be saved, you got to be circumcised." They were of the Pharisee party, which, of course, doesn't mean they weren't, you know, messianic Jews, that they weren't believers. They they put their trust in Christ, but they were from the background, like Paul, who'd been trained in the Jewish seminaries, and they were of the pharisaical group of people like Paul admitted that he was in Philippians 3. But the reality is, they said, "Well, you know what, these badges, these symbols, these signs of Judaism, they need to be adhered to. You need to be circumcised. You cannot be saved, look back at the beginning of Chapter 15, unless you're circumcised."

So the observance that Paul was giving people to obey was you don't have to be circumcised. And yet, in verse 3, Paul took him and got him circumcised. So we even see there's some understanding we've got to gather from all of this. And if it seems like, as some people might suggest, "Hey, Paul did something that he's telling other people they shouldn't do, well that's bad. That's called hypocrisy. That's called double-standard. That's called whatever. Situational ethics." No, no, no. Verse 5, "So the churches," you see that phrase "so"? "So the churches," so because of all that, "were strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily."

And we've seen that recurring, kind of recapitulation of that idea of things are healthy and growing and numerically growing and it's great. And so we have they're "strengthened in their faith." That was the whole point of the second missionary journey. Go back and strengthen these churches, see how they are. And you got more people getting saved. So discipleship, as we like to call it in the modern era, but we're getting people stronger in Christ and we're winning people to Christ, evangelism. So discipleship and evangelism are happening. God is doing it and he's doing it through these guys. And what they're doing here is a wise demonstration of making good decisions, good investments, good sacrifices to kind of get in the head of Timothy here, sacrifice.

Paul said, "Hey, you're going to join our team. But first let's go to the doctor. Right? We're going to get you circumcised. There's a little bit of a physical sacrifice there, but there's also a sacrifice in the sense that we already know it is not salvificly necessary to get circumcised. And yet you're going get this guy circumcised. You're doing something you don't need to do, something you don't have to do, something you have the freedom not to do. But you're going to make a decision of sacrifice to do something that is going to end up in verse 5. Hey, "the churches were strengthened, increasing in numbers daily." Wow, that's awesome. Healthy. Good. Talk about a good missionary journey. That's a good missionary journey.

All right. Let's learn a few things from this. Let's start with Timothy and kind of take this theme of sacrifice back into his biography. We learn a lot about Timothy, not only from the nice things Paul says about him, you know, in Colossians for instance, and he's got great things to say about Timothy in Philippians as well, great things to say about him. But we learn a lot about him from the pastoral epistles because Paul writes to two pastors, Titus and Timothy. We get First Timothy, Second Timothy and Titus, not in that order. But those are the last extant letter we got from Paul, is Second Timothy before he dies, his second imprisonment in Rome. But we have these two guys and they're leaders and appointed leaders in the church



in Ephesus and on the island of Crete. And so they are, and we learn something, we learn a lot more about Timothy because there's more written in those letters in First and Second Timothy. Six chapters in First Timothy and four chapters in Second Timothy. And there's a lot of biographical information we pick up from these letters.

So let's think through the kind of person that Timothy was just by the one statement in verse 2, look at verse 2. Paul is going to go through the city, he's going to find a guy named Timothy and he's going to pick him up. He's got a Jewish mother who's a believer. He's well spoken of by the brothers. Great. Let's go in Second Timothy and learn a little bit about him and some of the sacrifices that had to be made in his life for him to be a stand out guy who Paul would say, "I want you to join our team." And then he's going to start his very first act as a servant in this missionary team, this cadre of guys, is that he's going to go get circumcised and go through the aching recovery of that for days.

So let's think this through. Why would Paul pick him? He's a young guy. He's not some aged, wise, older person in the church. He's a young guy, he's really young at this point. And yet, go with me to Second Timothy Chapter 2 and let's see kind of how this all works. Let's start in verse 19. Let's start in verse 20. You can start in verse 19 if you want, but bottom of verse 19. Since I said verse 19, let's start there. "God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his.'" Right? Now, that's one thing, right? That's the idea of justification. Here's some sanctification. "But everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." That's a pattern. That's a process of continually saying no to sin. And that then is motivated by this wonderful illustration. So wonderful. It's a powerful and motivating illustration.

Here it comes, verse 20. "Now in a great house," that means a big house, "there are not only vessels of gold and silver and also of wood and clay." Right? "There are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use." Right? You put stuff in it. The flowers you put, you know, put things you want to drink for dinner in it and "some for dishonorable use." Right? And I won't even mention some things you do with some utensils in the ancient house, because it's just you use it because you need to use it and it's not for honorable use. Verse 21. Was that enough to read between the lines, verse 21? I've been more explicit in the past, but I feel like I've already crossed lines with you this morning, so I'm being careful.

Verse 21. "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable," now we go from there are honorable vessels and dishonorable vessels, things I'd want to pick up and show my guests and things I don't want to pick up and show my guests. And here it is, he says, now, if a person, now I'm thinking myself as a vessel, "cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy." This started with let him who names the name of the Lord, verse 19, "depart from iniquity." So I want to be holy. I want to cleanse myself from the dishonorable things. I want to eradicate those things increasingly from my life, "set apart as holy." Here it is, "useful to the master of the house and ready for every good work."



Now you can put that line into Paul's head, could you not? When he comes into this town, he gets this young guy, maybe he's a senior in high school, a freshman in college, a junior in college. He gets this guy at the community college because this guy has got a great reputation among the brothers. So in the church at Lystra, probably at Derbe, certainly in Iconium, we know this guy's a standout and Paul's saying, "I can use that guy." He's already said, "I don't want to use John Mark. I want to use that guy. I'm going to use Silas, and I going to use that guy too, so come with me.

So this is really, think about it, Paul the apostle is an instrument of God in this illustration here, taking Timothy off the shelf to employ him for some honorable use. You'll be a missionary. Not only will you be a missionary, you're going to be the understudy of the Apostle Paul of all people, and you're going to end up being the senior lead pastor in Ephesus. That's huge. That's big. I mean, you're to be named in books of the New Testament. People are going to study you and they're going to preach about you 2,000 years later on the other side of the planet. That's going to happen. So this is an honorable thing, a big thing, a good thing.

But all of that because why? Well, like verse 19 says he's made it a pattern of "departing from iniquity." He's, middle of verse 21, "he's cleansed himself from what's dishonorable." To put it very specifically and he's encouraged now in verse 22 to continue to do this, here's a command, which of course what got him picked in the first place, "flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness and faith and love and peace, along with all those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

I can't help but think generationally here it's an impressive thing. If you think about like, who are the guys "calling on the Lord from a pure heart?" They're "departing from iniquity. They're the holy guys in the church, and you think of this holy band of, you know, gray-haired guys and they're all calling on the Lord. And but here's this teenager over here. Here's this guy who's 20 or whatever. And you know what? Hey, "flee from your youthful passions" that may be stronger in you than they are in some, you know, 60-year-old. But flee from those, "pursue righteousness, peace, pursue love and faith," and you're going to join that band.

I just want to think of what that costs someone. If I said to you, we've got an 18-year-old stand out. I mean, if the Apostle Paul ran through town, the Apostle Paul would probably take notice of him. Matter of fact, we would probably say, "Have you met this guy? This guy is impressive." Not only that, not only in our church, but all the churches who got to know this guy. Everyone's impressed with this guy. If he's a high school senior, let's just say. How's it going at gym class for him? How do you think between classes they talk about him. What's his reputation, if he's at the community college, what's his reputation at the community college? I'm just thinking probably not that great. Do you remember high school? Do you remember high school? I hope you think back on it and think, "I wish I were more godly in high school." Well, the more godly you would have been, the more you would not have fit in. Am I right? I'm just thinking that's a problem. And if you don't believe it, let me quote the authority of Christ in Luke Chapter 6. He said, "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you." "Well, that's the whole point Pastor Mike. You said they're all speaking well of him." No, the brothers are speaking well of him.



Jesus said this: "For my sake people are going to ridicule you, exclude you. They're going to say all kinds of terrible things about you. But when they do it, rejoice in that day." Why? "Because thus did they speak of the prophets." In other words, the godly guys that I have chose for useful ministry, people hated them. And Jesus said, "If they hated me," to quote now what John writes about him, "they'll hate you." And all I'm telling you is this. What does it take? It takes a lot of sacrifice. Sacrifice of a lot of things. Let's get the big heading and build some sub-points because I know I'm a long time into this without the first point. You're just dying for the first point, that's why you brought a pen to church.

So here it comes. Are you ready? Number one, "Sacrifice for a Good Reputation." Timothy had done that throughout his childhood. And certainly since his conversion he clearly in his love for Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit, he was pushed and pulled by God to keep his commandments and that meant he was out of step with the world, because the world doesn't want you to do that. And let's think about a few things. Number one, he's going to have to say no to his passions as a 19-year-old. Right? So that he can have purity. That's what we just read in verse 22. That's the pattern that Timothy had established. And I just wonder how you're doing with that sacrifice right now.

Pause for effect. Are you following this? Because your passions and your desires are wanting you to do things that when you do them, we've got a problem. If you continue to fulfill your appetites of your passions, your reputation is going to continue to tank among the brothers as they find out about your indulgence in your passions. Because the passions, the desires of the flesh, they're waging war against your spirit and certainly against God's Spirit. They're not in sync with each other. So the problem is you've got to say no to your passion so that you can be pure. That's the goal. And that's hard. Super hard. You got to flee those youthful passions. You got to pursue something else. And Timothy was doing that. He did that to gain this good reputation. That's not why he did it. But that was the the byproduct of it. Are you following this?

And not only that, I've already established this and you know this because I quoted just in passing Luke Chapter 6 when Jesus was teaching about this. We need to know this if you want to build another sub-point, he's going to sacrifice popularity. Right? He's going to sacrifice popularity for godliness. To have that godly reputation, to be a godly man, to be ready for honorable use, he's going to have to say no to passion so he can be pure. He's going to have to say no to fitting in with the world so that he can be a useful person and a righteous and godly person, which is what God is looking for. What Paul was looking for.

Let's keep reading in this passage. There's some other things you have to sacrifice. So this gets a little nuanced, but follow it in verse 23. "Have nothing to do with foolishness, ignorant controversies; for you know that they breed quarrels. The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but be kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of truth." Look at that statement again. Right? "Foolish and ignorant controversies." If I said, "Hey, Paul, I got a guy here. He's awesome. He's in our college



program. You ought to look at this guy. Great reputation among the brothers. Oh, but you know what? He's always involved in ignorant controversies, always getting involved in quarrels. Yeah, he's a quarrelsome kind of guy and when anyone kind of slights him or says you're dumb, I mean, he just fights. He does not endure evil very well. He doesn't correct his opponents with gentleness. He just hammers anyone who disagrees with him." Do you think Paul would have said, "Oh, great. Let's take him." No.

So he's already expressing and I'm sure living out this stuff, but Paul's just pushing it, keep going. Like Paul says to the Thessalonians about love. You love each other, but I just want you to excel more and more. And so even this reminder to me in this text shows me as Paul's encouraging and pushing him to go further. Well, I'm sure he had some of that. I mean, Paul may have built on that, but I'm just saying, why do people quarrel? Why do people engage? Why do people retaliate with fists, so to speak, verbal fists? Why are they pejorative people? Why are they, as the old King James put it, pugnacious? Why are they strikers that biblical Greek word? They want to fight. They're always fighting.

Well, if they're doing that and just psychoanalyze people for a second, I mean, usually we know ourselves well enough. Let's just talk about ourselves. Why are we tempted to lash back? Because we don't want to be thought of as the stupid one. We are concerned about our ego. We're concerned about being right. We're concerned about really, and this is the thing certainly in those kinds of things, when there's a controversy or there's some kind of a back and forth where people don't agree, we want to be the smart one, right? We want to be the winner. We want to be powerful, we want to win this argument. Now, there are arguments worth winning. There are times to reprove and rebuke and exhort. I get all that. But these are foolish things. And some people just there's no fight they're not going to get into. If anyone pushes their buttons, they're going to go, they're hotheads.

And all I'm telling you is you have to say no to the power and the ego feeding of winning arguments to be able to say, you know what? To have a good reputation I'm not this guy. I've got to say, now let's use the word peace, because godliness and wisdom, James says, is peaceable. It's reasonable. It's open to reason. So I'm going to say this if I'm building sub-points, which I did, sacrificing passion or pleasures for purity, I'm sacrificing popularity for godliness. And I got to sacrifice this power trip thing, sacrifice power for peace. I got to be able to say I'm not going to build a good reputation by just saying I win every argument I get into. Now you build a good reputation, a godly reputation with the brothers when you choose your battles wisely. When you can be enduring evil without striking back. When you can in a conversation be able to be not be baited into something you shouldn't be even wasting time with. There's a time not to answer a fool according to his folly, because you're going to be like him.

So we don't need any of that. And that's how you build a good reputation. That's the kind of wisdom that we're looking for. And Paul saw that as immature as it might have been, it was certainly a standout in terms of his peers, Timothy was a guy who was... "Yeah, I need that guy on my team." Timothy had a good reputation. That's all we learn about him in our



passage. And it's a reputation that got Paul's attention, that had already gotten the church's attention. And he says, "Timothy, I need you on my team."

I'd like you to have a good reputation. That's important. Even there's an aspect of it, and I don't mean to get off on a bunny trail, when Paul writes Timothy about someone being a pastor or a leader in the church, he says you should have a good reputation with outsiders. And if that sounds like a contradiction, no we're just talking about a thin slice of what it means to live a Christian life in a non-Christian world. There are certain things the world does applaud. Like it's great when people aren't embezzling money from the boss or being insubordinate at work, right? Or not stealing things from the neighbor's back yard. That keeps a good reputation. So there's an aspect in which us being godly people will get the applause of a boss or a neighbor sometimes. I mean, I think my neighbors like me, right? But if I start talking about Christianity, if I start talking about biblical ethics or I talk about something regarding sexuality and what God thinks, well, that's when I'm not going to be the nice guy to them.

But the reality is, I know this: It's going to be a sacrifice to build a good reputation. Sacrifice passions. I'm going to have to sacrifice some of the ego in the power trips I have in conversations and arguments. I'm going to have to certainly sacrifice popularity with the world. But in our text, in verse 3, that kind of guy that Paul enlists, he now says, "Hey, guy, you've sacrificed a lot to get this reputation. Now you're going to join me on the missionary journey. Now you're going to sacrifice something else, part of your body you're about to sacrifice. You're going to sacrifice that, why? To use the word that we just quoted in Second Timothy Chapter 2, "To be useful to the master," right? You're going to now be employed in ministry, and that ministry is based on you being useful to do something that you're not going to be as useful if you don't do it.

Now, it's not necessary. You don't have to be circumcised. Matter of fact, that's the whole point of the doctrinal conclusion that they're delivering to the churches. But you are taking something that you don't... is salvifically unnecessary and you're going to see this as something you gladly sacrifice for the sake of usefulness in ministry. Because here's the deal. They know your dad's a Greek. And you having known the Scriptures from the time you were a tiny little kid, you could get up in the synagogue, open up a scroll and read from Jeremiah, and tie some Christological truths from that scroll to those people who need to know Jesus as the Messiah. You could do that. But if they think you're not circumcised or they find out you're not circumcised, they're not even going to give you the platform. So let's go have you get circumcised.

Wow, that's okay. Now, eight days is one thing, but 18-years-old is another. Okay, I will do it if it means I can be more useful. Right? Paul thought that. Timothy didn't get strapped down to a table. This was not against his will. He clearly, obviously in the sacrificial ministry of his upbringing now and what led him to a good reputation, is now going to lead him to greater usefulness. Now we'll build this with some sub-points. But let's put down this topic. Number two, we got to "Sacrifice for Greater Usefulness," greater usefulness.



And sometimes I don't even need to preach. I just need to say the sentence. Let me think about this. What would it take in your life to say if I sacrifice this I know I would be more useful. For what? Verse 5. For discipleship and evangelism, for building people up in their faith and seeing more people come to faith through me. If I sacrificed these things, I think God would make me more... I mean, like, I don't even have to preach this point. I can say that sentence and some of you are going I know exactly what it is. I know exactly what it is. I know there are things in my life that I just think it's wood, hay and straw and it's squeezing out the important things, the things that are really eternally important. And it would make me more effective in doing the things that God cares about the most, enduring all things for the sake of the elect, for people who need to be saved or going to be saved, or the people who are saved and need to grow up in their faith, I could be a greater effect on their lives if I just sacrificed these things.

And again, if I shoot in the dark and I'm shooting arrows, I don't know if I'm going to hit something that's true for you in your situation, because you can do it without the examples I'm giving. But let me give you one example. If someone sits like in a Compass Bible Institute classroom, like right now we're teaching world religions and cults. Right? If you sit through that and you write the papers and you read the books, does the Christian need to know anything about Judge Rutherford or the Watchtower Tract Society or Joseph Smith or the Angel Moroni or anything about the Koran or anything related to, you know, the religious trends of Hinduism in India. You don't need to know any of that. You don't. I mean, you can be a godly person without knowing any of that. Then why are those people over there writing papers and studying that? Why are people picking up books in our bookstore this afternoon about the questions you should ask your Mormon friend and they're reading about that so they can have a conversation... because they want to be more useful. They don't want to just shut the door on a guy who's saying something about, you know, the Trinity was created in the third century and it's a pagan idea. They want to be able to answer that. So they're taking the time to study these things to be more useful.

And I just got to say let's just start with that. You want to build a sub-point, let's start with this one. Sometimes we just need to sacrifice time for training, the training that will make me able to make good decisions about how to disciple people and how to evangelize people. Every investment in me digging deeper roots in my knowledge of the Bible. Let me quote Hebrews Chapter 5. To be trained and skilled, to have our powers of discernment trained by that constant working of my mind in the meat of the word, it allows me to be someone who now can be a teacher. It doesn't mean you have to have a microphone on and stand on the platform, go to seminary, be an expositor. It just means this: that I'm able to teach others.

The writer of Hebrews looked at the audience there and said this, "By this time you ought to be teachers, but instead you need someone to teach you." Why? Because you've become, it's a great Greek word, you've become lazy in your listening. "You've become dull in your hearing," the English Standard Version puts it. But you need to wake up and you need to start making the most use of the time. And that's the literally "time" that's the word "Kronos." That means that actually you've had enough days and months and years go by for you to be really taking your time, sacrificing more of it, not watching cat videos all the time on YouTube, but



actually saying, I'm going to read a book that's going to help me be a better discipler and a better evangelist. And I'm going to invest, I'm going to sacrifice time. Even knowing how to approach it.

Turn with me to First Corinthians 9. Here's an example of Paul's breadth of knowledge that you can say, well, he intuitively learned all this in seminary when he was coming up as a Pharisee of Pharisees. Yeah, but everyone on his missionary team needs to learn this. He was constantly wanting to learn more about this. Right? He was going into places. He had to learn the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods, even to be able to say things that he says in Acts 17. He wants to know things. He's willing to take time to learn things so that he can be more effective. And then he's able to employ different strategies, which even includes in the passage we're in, circumcising your coworkers so that you can have a greater effect, have platforms to be able to do the kind of work that needs to be done.

First Corinthians Chapter 9. This is a text that cannot be overlooked in this discussion. I mean, it really is key. Let's start in verse 19. "For though I am free from all." Now Paul has one Lord, one King. We do too. Right? You only answer to God. He's the lawgiver and judge. You are going to have to answer to him. So I got one King, one Lord, that's it. But he says, "I've made myself a servant to all." In other words, he's about to talk about that and the nuances of how you tease that out. But I'm not really taking my shots and calls from anybody but the King of kings. But when it comes down to it, I'm looking at you, the person I want to serve, and I am taking calls from you. I've really kind of subordinated myself to your proclivities and your interest and your sensitivities and kind of the things that hack you off. I'm concerned about them. I want to know about them. Why?

Bottom of verse 19. "That I might win more of them." I want win to them. I'm going to become their servant. How? We got to learn about them. We got to know what they need. We got to know what they want. Got to know what their sensibilities are. Verse 20. "To the Jews I became a Jew, in order to win the Jews." Well, guess what? He was about as Jewish as they get. But when he's there with Timothy whose dad was a Greek, he ain't as Jewish as it gets because he ain't even circumcised. So he's employing this principle to take Timothy to get him circumcised, then get over it for a while, and then come out and preach with him to the Jewish people.

So there's no stumbling block and no one's going, "Well, I'm not going to listen to you. You're not even circumcised." "To the Jew I became a Jew in order to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law." Though, listen, I only got one King, one God. And I'm not under the law because I know no one's justified by keeping the law, "though not myself being under the law, that I might win those under the law." That's why "to those outside the law I became as one outside the law."

Have you ever been, by the way, to one of our trips to Israel with us? Some of you have, I know. And like the day we go to Jerusalem and we take you through Jerusalem, that's the morning. Like we give you that conversation or each of the pastors on the bus will say, go to all these sites in Jerusalem. Now, here's the thing. It's kind of wacky, but some of the sites



you're going to go to, like, you know, a Jewish synagogue and you're going to go there and you're going to have to put something over your head guys. You're just going to have to do that because that's what they expect. If you don't have one they'll give you a little paper one, put on your head and you got to cover your head.

And then we're going to go out and we're going go over to this Islamic mosque or whatever. And then, you know what? You better take it off. You better take off anything on your head. And then we're going to go like to the Wailing Wall, this sacred site and you better put something on your head because you better cover your head. Oh, then we're going to go to this Eastern Orthodox chapel and we go, hey, take your hat off. It's like, what in the world, right? Keep it on. Keep it off. Well, we're doing that for us on those tours just to get in these places and not hack everybody off. Right? How much more important would it be if we're going there to do evangelistic ministry. Right?

Now it's one thing to put your hat on, take your hat off. Timothy is even sacrificing more than that, obviously, by going in for a little minor surgery to deal with that so that he might say, I want to not only just not offend them, Paul's applying this principle, I want to reach them. I want to win them. And those outside the law if they don't care about those things then I don't care about those things. Although there are things I care about "not being outside the law of God," middle of verse 21. But I'm under the "law of Christ." Of course, the moral law of God, everything that reflects God's attributes I want to do those things. As far as the ceremonial laws, I'm not interested in that. And if they don't care about those, then I'm not going to care about those "that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak."

Someone's got a weak conscience, for instance, it talks a lot about that in First Corinthians. I became, look at this, "I become all things to all people, that I might by all means I might save some." Does that sound like a sacrificial guy? Like he's ready to sacrifice? I'm just saying, how do you even know how to do that? You're going to need to learn. Learning. You ever notice at church it's all about learning all the time? Every classroom, every place there's always someone standing up and teaching, teach, teach, teach. Then it's about books, right? It's just like, think about it. Then it's training and then it's school and it's syllabi and it's papers. Why all this learning? Because we sacrificed our time, our effort to be trained so that we might be more useful to the Lord. It isn't just about our reputation that reflects, I hope, some reality of our holiness. It's also being equipped, right? "Equipped for every good work." That's what God's word does. That's what the truth of God's word does. And that even is what studying and analyzing the people I'm trying to reach them.

Good preaching, for instance, right? Not our preaching necessarily, but sometimes maybe, it takes a good analysis. Not only the text, it takes a good analysis of the people you are preaching to. You got to figure out where people are at. And that's so important in every aspect of discipleship and of evangelism. And so it is that I have to sacrifice many things for the sake of usefulness.



I know one thing. Let me be very specific on this one. Colossians Chapter 4. It says, "Pray for us that God can open a door," this is verse 3, some of you know this passage by heart, "to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I'm in prison, that I may make it clear as I ought to speak." Right? So he's in prison, so he's already sacrificing to do what he knows he needs to do. He's going to make it clear. That takes training for sure. And then in verse 5, "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer each person."

Here's the thing. There are clear things here in this passage throughout it. You've got to speak. You've got to talk. You've got to have speech that's seasoned with salt. You've got to know how to answer people. That's called conversation. The reason some of you are not very effective or useful to the master is because you're not willing to sacrifice the discomfort to even open your mouth and have conversations about these things. And I'm not just talking about evangelism. I'm talking about discipleship.

Put it this way if we're building sub-points. I'm going to sacrifice comfort for conversation. I have to converse with Christians if I'm going to build them up in the faith. I have to converse with non-Christians to win them to faith in Christ. If we're ever going to get to verse 5, we've got to sacrifice that. Everyone has to if we're going to be useful to God. Not only do I need to know what to say, I ought to know how to answer. That's going to take some time to be trained. It's also going to take some discomfort to speak. I got to speak up. Some of you right here, you say you love God, you say you follow Christ but I don't want to talk about it with anyone. Right? We say we got opportunities for you to take what you've learned and be involved in discipleship or lead a small group. I don't want to talk. I don't want to talk. We got to talk. We got to pay the price. We got to sacrifice our comfort when we engage in conversation.

I have more sub-points. But let me just say in summary, you sacrifice the trivial for the eternal. I mean, I know that's 30,000 feet, but whatever it is, that is the wood, hay and straw that is not going to matter a hundred years from now, I'm going to try and sacrifice more of that, squeeze that out with things that are going to matter. And sometimes I'm sacrificing comfort. Sometimes I'm sacrificing time, making friends by means of mammon, by money. Sometimes I'm sacrificing money. Money just to do discipleship. Money just to build bridges for evangelism.

And by the way, the eternal things when you invest in eternal things, let's talk about one aspect of evangelism - adding more numbers to the body of Christ. When you see someone say... Luke Chapter 15 verses 1 through 7 tells the story of Jesus speaking to people who the Pharisees didn't like him speaking to, because in the previous chapter Luke had shared the story about him going out, the servants going out into the highways and byways and finding people to be compelled to come into the master's banquet. And it ends that whole chapter with "Let him who has ears hear." Well, the people who were willing to hear were the tax collectors and the sinners and the Pharisees and scribes they didn't like that.



And Jesus then tells this story. Well, it's like a shepherd who loses a lamb. That sheep has gone. And he leaves the 99 in the open pasture. Now, I can just sit here and say, "I got most of them," and you could take a nap in the green grass. You could take a little bath in the brook if you want. But no, I'm going to go out in the hot sun and I'm going to look for the lost sheep. And he says he's going to look and he's going to look and he's going to look until he finds it. The perseverance of working and trying. And all of that, all the sacrifice involved in not just looking under one bush and going, "Well I don't see him. I guess we can't find him." Or looking behind one rock and saying, "I don't see him, so I guess I can't find him." Some say, "I've talked to him about Christ. No one's coming to faith in Christ. No one's interested in the gospel in our community. No one in my work ever wants to talk about the God thing. So I'm not... I'm just... I've tried."

The person who persists, it ends in verse 7 this way. Right? "So it is." Because the point is, once you find the lamb, "you put it on the shoulders and rejoice." You call your friends together and you have parties like, "Yeah!" Just like you're going to share. If you lead someone to Christ in your small group, you're going to talk all about it. Everyone's going to rejoice and give thanks to God. So it is that heaven rejoices "over one sinner who repents." You want to talk about something eternally important? Let's talk about something that's transcendentally important. Eternal is in terms of time. But let's think about heaven rejoicing when he, heaven and God and everyone there sees us investing in eternal things. Not only do they cheer us on when we're searching, but when we find. Not only does God cheer us on when we're suffering, as Paul said, it's like pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. Discipleship is so important and when you work at it, then heaven is applauding. But when you see Christ's likeness in your disciples, I mean, heaven gets excited. That's a good principle.

If that doesn't help squeeze out some of the trivial for the eternal, sacrificing things that I could otherwise do, and you could be a Christian and do those things. But I'm going to do less of those things so I can do more of this stuff. That's a sacrifice for usefulness. And for Timothy, it was cutting off his foreskin. I mean as frank as that is. Why? Because I know that'll give me more opportunities here. That would be a good thing. I would be better equipped to be useful to God if I go and do this and Paul goes, "Yep, let's do that." And that's exactly what they did.

Verse 4, Acts Chapter 16. "As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decision that had been reached by the apostles and elders who are in Jerusalem." So what was that? You don't have to be circumcised to be saved. Now be considerate of the sensibilities and the proclivities of those people. Don't hack them off. Don't offend them. Right? But you don't have to be circumcised to be saved. And that was the question on the table. And yet he just circumcised Timothy. You get all that, right?

But turn quickly with me to Galatians, Galatians Chapter 2. I want to show you that the act of him circumcising Timothy, the pastoral epistles are written to Timothy, the pastor of Ephesus, is radically different when Titus, the other pastor, is described here. That of course, with a name like Titus, if you know anything about names, that's certainly a Roman name. A Jewish mother not going to agree to Titus for the little baby. So full blown Greek, full blown Roman, a



Gentile. Titus now they're pressuring Paul to have Titus circumcised. And the concern of the Galatians churches where he's ministering on these missionary journeys, they're like, "Well, yeah, to be saved, you got to be circumcised."

Look at his response in Chapter 2. Look at verse 3. "Even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek." And if you're going to try and conform to Judaism, you've got to be circumcised. "Yet, because of the false brothers secretly brought in who slipped in to spy out our freedom." That's literal, right? They were literally looking to see if they can get a glimpse of Titus. I mean, as gross as that seems to you. Bathing, whatever. Like, "let's see. Let's see. Is he?" They're spying out whether or not they're trying to exercise their freedom, not just to circumcise, "the freedom we have in Christ, so that they might bring us into slavery." Now they're going to demand it. "To them," verse 5, "we did not yield in submission," I love this, "even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you." We are in no way going to mess with the gospel. And that's how Galatians 1 started. "Even if an angel shows up to have us rethink this thing, we're not." We don't mess with that.

There are a lot of negotiable things when it comes to my time and all these other issues of trying to make me effective and to grow in Christ. But it is NOT going to change the way that I deal with the gospel. Number three, "Never Sacrifice Sound Doctrine." Never. That's a non-negotiable. I don't mess with the gospel. We are not going to sacrifice the truth of the gospel. God says that's exactly the kind of attitude we need. Sacrifice for reputation, sacrifice for ministry. Don't sacrifice the truth. Now, my good hand is going to be upon that kind of effort, and we are going to bless them. They're going to be strengthened in their faith, the people you minister to, and we are going to grow this thing, this missionary endeavor, all the Christians in these towns.

By the way, the one thing that you may miss in all of this is the example that we have in Christ, and I don't want you to miss that. Right? If you think about Paul saying "I'm being poured out as a sacrificial offering for your faith," I'm quoting now Philippians 2. It says, "I just rejoice in that." What does that spell? I willingly, lovingly do this. "I'm willing to spend and be expended for your souls" to quote Second Corinthians 12:15. That's the idea. That's awesome.

Think about this, though. Jesus had just been described earlier in that chapter as the one who was willing to sacrifice the glory, the divine prerogatives, being found in his humble state as a human being, to die at the hands of these brutal, muscular Romans, having been beaten and whipped. He was willing to die as a sacrifice. He did all of that as it says in Romans 5 because he loved us. Right? God demonstrates his love in this, "While we were still sinners he died for us." He lays aside his freedoms and he sacrifices to secure our forgiveness.

And then Paul goes, "I'm ready to sacrifice. I'm like a drink offering, poured out." I can't get it back, those hours I can't get back, that effort I can't get back, that money I can't get back. As we talk about around here, going the extra mile, staying the extra hour and spending the extra dollar, I'm willing to do it gladly. Why? Because he LOVED these people. First Corinthians



Chapter 13 says, "If we give up our body, sacrifice our body to the flames and we have not love, it's nothing." It's not about us going I need a good reputation so everyone will think I'm godly. I need more medals on my uniform so that I can be more useful to the Lord and I may reach more people for Christ and doing more for God in discipleship. It's about us loving the people. Paul said to those Ephesian elders loving those people, think about this now, that God has sent his Son to purchase with his own blood. Got to love.

At that example of Christ, I want the ushers to come down and pass out the elements of the Lord's Supper. And I want you to take those elements and I want us to think about that. That's the most important act of sacrifice. And we celebrate that in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper by you looking at those elements and you remembering what they represent. Christ has died to exonerate you, to expiate your sin, to make you right before his Father. That picture of redemption is the ultimate picture of everything we've been talking about today. But it's the one that is efficacious. It's the one that changes our status.

So take that cup, take that piece of bread. If you're a Christian, if you have a real relationship with God, you've repented of your sins and you put your trust in him then take those elements and we're going to take them, eat them together, hold on to them now. We're going to take these elements together in about 3 minutes. Okay? In the meantime, you going to hear a little music. And I want you to talk to God, not just about what we talked about today, which I hope is certainly the outgrowth of you pondering what we're dealing with right now.

Christ died. He was willing to be beaten and treated like he was you who deserves punishment from the Father. "God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Christ we might become the righteousness of God," treat the Son like he were you, so that you could be seen as holy as he is. And that is the ultimate pouring out of your life as a drink offering. And it's the one that changed your status before God if you're a Christian.

Ponder that, the sin between you and God, if you've got to fix something. You think about the fact that you are, think about what we've talked about. Like, maybe you've wasted a lot of time in selfishness to not reflecting this. And it is what we're supposed to be "imitators of God," Ephesians Chapter 5 verse 1, just as Christ "offered himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Be like him. All of that is the outgrowth of what we're concentrating on. So you talk to God for 2 minutes here. Confess your sins silently. Speak to him. I then will lead us in taking these elements together. We will get out trying to put this sermon to work this week in our lives. Talk to God.

We should not presume upon or utilize this as some leverage in our decision making but it is great when we celebrate the Lord's Supper to think about it, kind of a reset, right? Like, okay, I'm contemplating the core doctrine of the Christian life. Christ has suffered for me so that I don't have to incur God's judgment. That I'm rightly related to God, I'm adopted into his family because of Christ and to concentrate on that I'm making sure my life is confessed up, that I'm forsaking sin, I'm committed right now to walking forward. I just I love that as a kind of a reset. It can happen at any Thursday at two you can have one of these. But these times are like profound senses of that reset.



And so whatever it is you walked into this auditorium with hanging over your head, the baggage, it is just like, it's good for us to say, okay, this is Christianity right here, that I am made right in Christ, that I no longer bear my sin, that my sins are separated from me as far as the east is from the west. Is there consequence? Sure. Whatever. We'll get to that tomorrow. But today we're focused on the fact that this has made everything right. Everything else in your life could go completely south. But this is fixed because of the finished work of Christ. That's huge.

And to think about that without the burdens of my finances or my health or my marriage or my work, it's just good to say this is great. We are forgiven. "Though your sins were like scarlet, white as snow." A child of God. Eternity is secure, right? Hell is canceled. We celebrate that we've been transferred out of the domain of darkness into the light, the glorious Kingdom, the great gift that God has given us. Children of the King. That's a great thing. And for us to say, yes, we ingest these elements as a picture and a symbol of that profound thing that happened that now applies to me. It's just great. It's a good thing. It should be refreshing. We should walk out with our sense of joy. It's humbling, I get it. But how great it is to be a forgiven Christian, a child of God. Problems right now are not the focus. The focus is, in fact, we are his kids. And we love and celebrate his sacrifice. Amazing. If that's your trust, trusting in Christ for salvation, I invite you to eat this bread and drink this cup.

Stand with me as we pray and dismiss you. God, we stand before you as a church. Our sins are long. Our failures are big. The problems in our lives might be painful, but we stand before you as forgiven people as your children. I love the way your Son put it, a little flock. We're your people like a group of sheep that you guide in this world. And yet you turn us into lions for your truth, you give us a voice. It's as though you're making your appeal through us. And God, we just want to be basking in the acceptance that we have in Christ. And we want to be fueled and energized to get out there this week and to live for you. God, I pray this message and even the reminder in our conclusion of your sacrifice for us would be a motivation for us to live for you in a way that we haven't in the past. Let us recalibrate, reprioritize, refocus as we head into a new week. We trust you for it.

In Jesus name. Amen