

Chestley Howell Ordination

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, I know time is brief. Would you take your Bible and turn to Acts chapter 16? Acts chapter 16. Acts 16. Thanks for the great meal earlier tonight.
- That was awesome. You guys do barbecue well. San Diego does barbecue terribly. But we do sushi and ceviche very well, so don't get too haughty.
- All right. Don't get too haughty. How many of you know what ceviche is? How many of you like ceviche? All right, good. We've got a good crowd here tonight. You guys love Jesus. All right, good. I like it.
- Well, as we come to Acts chapter 16, a lot of things have transpired in the passage of Scripture preceding this.
- You'll remember it's the council at Jerusalem. The church at Jerusalem had called the Christians back or the missionaries back and Christians from all over the region. There was that big debate with the Judaizers who were saying you had to earn your way to salvation.
- [1 : 0 3] You really had to convert to Judaism before you could come to Christ. It was a works-based, as all false religions are, works-based salvation orientation. And that's what was going on.
- And they have that big debate that goes on. And then James, who's the pastor of the church, stands up and he gives his judgment. I think the Scripture says those exact words. I give my judgment. And basically says this, Gentiles don't need praise the Lord.
- You don't have to convert to Judaism to have faith in Jesus Christ, but have sincere, genuine faith in Christ and Christ alone. And it's a wonderful, wonderful thing that we read about in Acts chapter 15.
- Well, then we come a little further in Acts chapter 15. And we read about the calling of God on Paul's life to visit the churches that he started on his first missionary journey.
- And it's a wonderful thing how the Lord is calling Paul to not just plant churches, but to care for the churches he has planted through the ministry of Paul.
- [2 : 0 4] In other words, we could take this application. It's not enough to simply start something. God has called us to start it and shepherd it for his glory until it is established and strong and strengthened in the faith.
- And that's what God has called the apostle Paul to do. And then we read about what I would consider, and it's debatable. You can have your own feelings about it. But I would consider in the New Testament, this to be one of the worst events where it's the breakup of the great missionary team, Paul and Barnabas.
- And I've heard a bunch of different angles and directions and how God used both men. And all of that is true. I wouldn't diminish that or take away from that, not for a second. But to me, when you take away the all-star team, if you will, Paul and Barnabas, because of a division over John Mark, that hurts my heart a little bit.
- And I think we'd have to agree that it probably negatively affected the cause of Christ in many, many ways. Well, that has happened. I mean, it's like breaking up great teams of all time, like Michael Jordan and Scotty Pippen.

You just don't ever want to break those guys up. Or Kobe and Shaq, that never worked out very well. Or Mike and Ike, nobody ever just buys a box of Mike's or Ike's. Got to have them together.

[3 : 29] And so that's where they really shine. Well, Paul and Barnabas have broken up, and breaking up is hard to do. It was a cultural reference.

You're allowed to laugh at my music jokes, all right? I grabbed your pastor's playlist today. Let me tell you, it's not all Getty music. Make no mistake.

I thought it was a message on hell when I hit the heat is on. It was not that. And so, sorry, pastor. This is my one chance.

I'm never coming back. So I just, I'm going to be encouraged to leave sooner. My time just dropped again. Then we come to Acts chapter 16.

And so Paul, in chapter 16, verse number one, Then came he, talking about Paul, to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess and believed.

[4 : 28] But his father was a Greek, which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go with him and took and circumcised him because of the Jews, which were in those quarters.

For they knew all that his father was a Greek. And they went through the cities. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders, which were at Jerusalem.

And Chesley, tonight I really just wanted to take the next 20-ish minutes and just share my heart with you as a man who is ordained into the fraternity of servanthood.

A lot of fraternities, it's how do you get bigger and better and connect and all of that and do better in life. This is a fraternity of how do you discipline yourself to serve a lost and dying world as Jesus Christ would.

And Timothy, we really see some beautiful lessons here that I think are applicable for every follower of Christ and certainly applicable in your life and mine.

[5 : 42] In many ways, I have loved you like a brother. At times, I've loved you like a son. At other times, I've hated you. Probably not hated you, but I've loved you like a stepbrother that I didn't like.

And I'm really proud of what God is doing in your life. And if you're a missionary, I know this. I think some of us have been in ministry. This is my 27th year to preach the gospel. There's times in our life when we have to give people patience to grow.

And there's many times I'd go home at night and just Debbie and I'd pound our heads against the wall. Like, what is going on with this kid? Why is he struggling?

Why isn't he doing what he knows to do? And then why is he doing it the wrong way? And why is he so stinking weird? And what's up with the state of Kansas? I mean, you know, I mean, all of these thoughts that would run through our head.

And then to see where God has brought you, we couldn't be more proud. I'd like you to notice verse number two. The Bible talking about Timothy says he was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

[6 : 55] I want you to notice Timothy was a faithful follower of the Lord. He was well reported of. Now, Timothy, it depends on who you study, but the idea is that he's an older teenager, probably around 17 years old.

And he's well reported of. He has a good report. He's lauded with praise. He has a good reputation. And he's well reported of. The scripture says in verse number two, by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

The brethren were the leaders in the church, especially, or the men of the church, I should say, especially the leaders. These men were reporting well. They were saying good things about this young man, Timothy, that he walked with the Lord to the point of having a godly reputation.

I heard the folks tonight talk about you and your attitude and your ministry and how you've served and how you lifted up your arms or rolled up your sleeves, I should say, and served.

And I've been impressed by the report that has been given. And Paul is in need of a ministry aid. And Paul is in need, really, of a third member of his team.

[8 : 04] It's got Paul and Silas, but he needs somebody to come on board. And the men of Lystra and Iconium, they hear about the apostle Paul. They talk to Paul. They find out Paul's needs. And in my mind, it works out this way.

Like maybe they're sitting in a circle and they're just talking and Paul is sharing doctrine or prayer requests or whatever. I don't know. And then somebody says, hey, Paul, don't you need a guy to come in and serve you and to serve Silas and to cook your meals and wash your clothes and to go alongside you and help carry the load a little bit in a physical way?

And Paul's like, yeah, we had that with John Mark, but he's not on the team anymore. So, yeah, we just have a real big need that way. And somebody over on the other side, just again, the way my mind works, somebody says, hey, Paul, have you ever thought about Timothy?

And then the whole group kind of gets a little quiet and they're like, Timothy, yes. Paul, Timothy is a good young man. He's got a good reputation on here. He serves the Lord. He shows up. He comes in.

He helps. He helps clean. He helps minister. He carries the load. Paul, you ought to consider Timothy. Timothy is a faithful follower of the Lord. And Chesley, the years are going to come and the years are going to go.

[9 : 11] But I would submit to you that the Bible teaches us very clearly that it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. God does not require you to be fruitful.

We can define fruitful in a thousand different ways. Go to different ministries and different people will define it in different ways. It's this many salvations or this many baptisms or this many people through discipleship.

And all of those things are wonderful. But none of those things are really required. What's required is that you and I be faithful and we just keep showing up day after day and week after week and month after month and year after year that we be faithful to what God has called us to do.

Some parts of the world you can go and be a missionary. I think of some countries and boy, you can. People want to come. I was just preaching in Louisiana.

Louisiana. You guys. Now, Louisiana is no big deal for you guys. All right. But for us, the only thing that happens there is people get killed. So every scary movie is set in Louisiana. I mean, we're from California.

[10 : 11] The sun shines. People are happy. And there's no moss growing off trees. There's no swamps in my state. Well, there's no water in my state either. A lot of fires, though.

And I was scared going to Louisiana. And I went to Louisiana. I went to a little church in Louisiana in a little town of 500 people that had 12 Baptist churches in it. That was different, I can tell you for sure.

And I showed up and the pastor said, hey, just so you know, we're the mega church in the area. We're the second largest church in our town. I was like, right on. What does that mean? Because I was just going to encourage him. I had no idea and I didn't really care.

He goes, we run 44. You're a mega church at 44? He goes, yeah, it's pretty awesome, isn't it? I'm like, absolutely. Yeah. Yeah, that's great. In town of 500, 44. Yeah, okay. Yeah, that's awesome.

Good job. And I was really excited. And as I began to preach, people were coming up to me and they're like, Pastor Chadwick, we didn't know people from California could preach the Bible like you preach it. And we didn't know you guys even cared about Jesus.

[11 : 10] We had no idea. We just thought you killed people. One lady literally said that to me. I'm like, you know, we only do that on Tuesdays. Glad I'm here. And that's kind of how it went. And people came and people came by the end of the week.

We had half the town in a standing room only meeting. And really, they only came not because they wanted to hear the word, but they wanted to see a big dude from California preach. They'd never seen anything like that before.

It was like you put on a monkey hat and have somebody, you know, crank the piano. They'd drop quarters in just to hear me keep going or tell a few jokes. And my point is that sometimes, Chester, there'll be people who want to come or they don't want to come or they want to say good things or they don't say good things.

God's not requiring you. And we're not going to stand before the Lord for the temperature of the crowd. We're going to stand before the Lord for the faithfulness that we convey to him. Timothy was faithful.

Timothy was a man, in verse number three, who died to his own ambitions. Him would Paul have go forth with him and took him, circumcised him because of the Jews, which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

[12 : 22] There are many times when we make superhuman those who have done wonderful things. And we do that with Paul and we do that with Timothy. But the reality is Philippians chapter two, verse number 13, it says, for it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do his good pleasure.

Timothy is going to go with the apostle Paul. And in order for Timothy to go with Paul, it wasn't enough that he said, yes, I'll go. Paul said, now, if you go with me, everybody in here knows that your dad's a Greek. So you have to be circumcised.

I'm just telling you, I'm revisiting that call. Like, dude, I don't think I'm going to do this. But Timothy said, you know what, Paul, if that's what you want me to do, I don't want to be grotesque or out of character or anything.

But this is a major physical suffering that Timothy is going to go through before he ever enters into the ministry. Paul says, but if we're going to do this just for your testimony's sake, which Paul didn't require this of Titus.

So there had to be something special that Paul was requiring. And Timothy said, I'll die to myself. I'll endure persecution. I'll endure whatever is coming my way just so that I can serve within the framework of the calling of God on my life.

[13 : 37] Timothy, leave your family. Timothy, enter into a ministry where you know that I have already been persecuted. It was in Lystra and Iconium in Acts chapter 14 where the apostle Paul had been beaten and they thought that he was left for dead.

They left him for dead in that area. If you've ever been in a small town, you know that it's very, very likely that Timothy had heard these stories. And now just a few years later, Timothy is going to be on the ministry team of the dude who got stoned and left for dead in our own home region.

I don't know about you, but that's no easy thing to consider. Like, Timothy, this is what might happen to you. I doubt that the apostle Paul even had to tell him.

I would assume that Timothy knew it well. So when somebody said, hey, Paul, have you thought about Timothy? And then somebody goes to Timothy, Timothy, have you thought about working for Paul? You mean the dude that got stoned and left for dead?

Yeah, that's who we're talking about. No, I have not thought about working with him. No, there's a lot of people I would work for. I hear Bonnevus and John Mark are going the other way. Maybe I could work with them. No, I'm not in mind to work with them.

[14 : 51] Jesse, you're going to go to the field of Columbia. And missionaries, many of you are in other fields all over the world. And pastor, you're here in Georgia. And I'm in California. And the reality is we're going to face persecution.

Our world is changing faster than we ever thought possible. And Jesse, the question that has to be asked is, have you died enough to purposeful and personal ambitions that you are willing to endure persecution?

The story is told of J.W. Tucker with his hands tied between his back. He was beaten. And then with 60 of his Christian compatriots was thrown into the crocodile infested rivers of the Congo.

It wasn't ISIS or Al-Qaeda that did that. It happened on November 24, 1964. J.W. Tucker, out of natural instinct, we have this natural instinct to feel sorry for him.

But God doesn't promise us always happiness. And God doesn't promise us always peace. And God doesn't always promise us joy. But what God does promise us is that he will lead the way and he will go with us.

[15 : 56] And so during this huge civil war in the Congo in the 60s, J.W. Tucker goes into a very difficult spot in the field. And then he's going to go into a war-torn region.

And a friend of his, Morris Potts, said to him, J.W., if you go in there, the chances are you may never come out. And Tucker responded with these words, Potts, God didn't tell me to come out.

God told me to go in. A different way of saying what Jim Elliott repeated or said many years ago that has been often repeated. He is no fool to give up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

Your life isn't about yourself anymore. Truth be told, I've loved having you in my house at every single Christmas that you've been there. But in my natural self, I'm an introvert.

I like to be alone. I don't like to be around people. I got nervous flying here. Like I have to meet new people. And people meet me and they're like, oh, you're the biggest extrovert ever. No, I just play well. I just kind of learn the thing.

[17 : 01] I just had to die to ambition like everybody in this room. If we're going to be used of God, we have to die to our personal ambitions. We have to surrender to the Lord.

The Apostle Paul said, I die daily. Just that you're entering into a phase of life where you die. Well, how long do you die? Well, for the rest of your life. And then I don't have time, but I'll just quote 2 Timothy 1.5.

And it says, when I call to remembrance, Paul talking to Timothy before Paul dies. And his person, obviously his head chopped off by Nero. When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which first dwelt in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice.

And I am persuaded it is in thee also. Timothy was a man who personalized his walk with God. Timothy was a man who personalized his walk with God.

I am persuaded that this unfeigned faith is in you. Unfeigned without hypocrisy. Without pretense. Genuine. Real.

[18 : 01] True. Timothy, I believe, I'm convinced with all my heart that that same faith that was in your grandmother is in you. And you've heard it said, and some people say, keep reading your Bible. Keep listening to messages.

Keep praying. All of that is absolutely true. Because above everything else, your walk with God has to be paramount. You can't take people on a journey that you yourself have not gone.

Timothy, I'm persuaded. I'm convinced that the same faith that was in your mom and your grandma is in you. And Chesley, you come from a family of the faith.

Your dad's a pastor. Your mom serves the Lord. Now, they're in Kansas, so the weirdness of Kansas has worn off on them a little bit or rubbed off on them. They're wonderful people that love Jesus.

Your dad has sacrificed greatly for the ministry. We've talked. Your dad and I have talked about just his love for the Lord. Your dad doesn't even consider it a sacrifice. It's a joy. You have to personalize your walk with God.

[19 : 03] As I get older, the thing that I look forward to being as I am growing in years every year. Duh. That didn't come out like I planned.

But I want to be that peaceful old man who walks with God. That's not going to happen if I don't personalize my walk with God.

Timothy was a man who personalizes his walk with God. Not long ago, Debbie and I were in a very conservative state, which means it wasn't California.

We were at a game with a pastor friend, a basketball game. And he introduced me to someone who introduced me to someone who introduced me to someone.

And normally, because of my size, people ask me dumb questions. And like, wow, how are the steroids in California? They're really great. You should see them. Stuff like that. But this lady came up to me.

[20 : 08] And, you know, it's in a state. In the South, people meet you and try to be funny. In California, they don't. They don't. To be honest with you, they've smoked too much weed to be funny.

Everything's funny to them. And so that was supposed to be funny. You're like, really? You just confirmed everything we already thought. But I get introduced to this lady.

And she was older than a lot of people. And she said, I shook her hand. And she said, and it was a southern state.

She goes, so you're from California? Yes, ma'am, I am. I am. I'm from California. She goes, huh? I'd never live there. Okay. Well, nice to meet you too, mom.

I mean, fine. You don't have to live there. I said, were you thinking about it? No, I hate that state. Great. Great. Thank you for hating my state. May the love of Jesus Christ be on you and your dog that I hope bites you later.

[21 : 11] And she said, I got a question for you. I'll never forget it. Okay, what's your question? She goes, do you know Nancy Pelosi? Nancy Pelosi? Nancy Pelosi. Okay, ma'am, I'm in San Diego, San Francisco.

She goes, yeah, are they far apart? Like 500 miles. She goes, well, do you know her? No, ma'am, I've not had the opportunity to meet Nancy Pelosi.

She said, huh, well, if you ever meet her, will you do me a favor? I'm not sure what's going to happen now.

I don't know. What's the favor? Would you tell her that I hate her? I was like, no, I'm not going to tell her you hate her.

She goes, well, I wish somebody would. I hate her. I could never live in that place, Nancy Pelosi. That's just how it was. Well, Chesley, there's going to be people who can't serve in Columbia and they make fun of Columbia.

[22 : 19] There's going to be people who can't serve in South America because whatever. They don't like South America. But God has called you there. And God is doing a work there.

And God is going to do a work through you there. It might be better than you ever dreamed. It might be worse than you could ever imagine. We have no idea. But what we do know is that God has called you and the Presbyterian has laid hands on you.

And you can't forget that. You are called to serve the Lord. And I encourage you tonight to do exactly what God has called you to do.

Because it's the greatest thing you will ever do. And when you stand before him, which you will, one day you will stand before him, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord. We persuade men. And as you stand before him, may it be said of you, God, I was faithful to what you called me to do.

And if you'll do that, your life is a success. And our investment and pastor's investment and the college's investment.

[23 : 23] Your parents' investment. The hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who've invested in you, their investment will return a hundredfold for them.

Father, I'm so thankful for Chesley and your work in his life. Thank you that you called him. I'm thankful that you worked in his heart.

I'm thankful that you didn't give up on him as he struggled like we all do. I'm thankful that you brought him on a long journey to Vision Baptist.

And that here you worked on his heart and gave him clarity as to exactly what and how you wanted him to do the work you called him to do. And I pray that you would bless him in a great way in Columbia.

I pray that you would use him, Father, in ways that will be surprising to us all. That we would see thousands of people or hear reports of thousands of people coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 23] And churches being planted all over that wonderful country as he ministers to people in Columbia. And then we would pray he would move into Venezuela and all over South America and up into Central America, Lord.

That you would do a mighty work in his heart. Work through him on those people. Prepare a people for him even now. I pray that you'd prepare him as he enters into language school.

May he grasp the language with ease. May it not be long before he's witnessing in Spanish and then preaching in Spanish. Father, work in his life, we pray.

In Jesus' name.