

Plenary 4.2 : Friday 30 May 2014

Title: ***Training for Transition: Contextualization and transitioning to a new generation of local leadership.***

Sub-Theme: Ensuring the Personnel for Ongoing Contextualization

Our final study turns to a major personnel issues in contemporary church life – the widespread need for transitioning to the next generation of younger leaders in our churches and mission outreach. Focussing on the example of Barnabas and Paul’s encouragement for Timothy to start transition planning in 2 Timothy 1-2, we draw out relevant biblical principles, again noting the depth and breadth of concepts the Apostle brings to bear for addressing such a practical subject. With the help of insights from the writings and practice of our pioneer Christian Brethren missionary, Anthony Norris Groves, we add some historical perspectives for considering the importance of and our approach to succession planning and transition in our church and training networks today.

**GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AND SUCCESSION PLANNING
– IN SCRIPTURE AND IN MISSION PRACTICE**

Introduction:

Transitioning leadership to the next generation, ‘succession planning,’ could well be a globally relevant issue for our Christian Brethren churches. We have a history of focussing on our past, perhaps to the detriment of necessary forward planning. Is G.C.D. Howley’s 1960s comment on Acts 13:36, still valid today? “We all know that when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he died, he was buried with his ancestors, and his body decayed. Our problem in the Brethren movement is that when our leaders die, we don’t bury them.”¹ Howley’s point was, that too often we Brethren have assumed the ideas and influence of an earlier generation should still control and regulate the church life of the present generation, instead of welcoming the fresh vision and leadership of the new generation.

We shall survey one sequence of succession planning or leadership transition in the New Testament, specifically the Barnabas, Paul, Timothy succession and then reflect on some early Brethren missionary insights on the process, particularly from Anthony Norris Groves.

**I. LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AND SUCCESSION PLANNING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT :
BARNABAS DEVELOPS THE MODEL AND RECRUITS AND TRANSITIONS TO PAUL**

Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-28; 11:19-30; 13:1-14, 42-52; 14:1, 7, 14, 20, 21-23; 15:1-3 [Gal 2:9-14], 30-35; 15:36-41; Col 4:10 [2 Tim 4:11].

1. MEET THE MAN – BARNABAS - AND HIS BASIC COMMITMENTS

- We know a little about **his family and background** - From the clues of three verses:
 - Acts 4:36, He was **named** Joseph, but **nick-named**, Barnabas, “Son of encouragement.”
 - Nationality & Tribal links:** Born and raised in Cyprus - a Jew of the “diaspora,” with a Levite’s family heritage (of commitment to giving God the priority in their lives - a great heritage for anyone); **Resident** in Jerusalem was probably expected to take his tour of duty in Temple at Jerusalem - **an expatriate** who maintains links (as we shall see) with his home area; **A land-owner** - reasonably well-off.
 - Col 4:10; Acts 12:12-13 **Relatives: John Mark, a young relative**, probably a cousin, for whom he takes a particular responsibility; **An Aunt (or sister) Mary** who owned a substantial home in the religious and business capital, Jerusalem - again, fairly well-off; and, we could add, -

¹ As Editor of the Christian Brethren magazine, *The Witness*, G.C.D. Howley was speaking at a luncheon meeting of Brethren leaders in Christchurch, New Zealand, during his visit in 1963 (or 1964).

Barnabas was mobile internationally - used to living in various places - Jerusalem, Cyprus and Antioch in Syria

- So **Summarizing his heritage: Barnabas** had a deeply religious (but not distinctly Christian) heritage; he had possessions and well-to-do contacts internationally, and belonged to a race known as the business entrepreneurs of the whole geographical region. He was used to living in his homeland (Cyprus) and/or overseas, and had a close-knit extended family, for whom he took an ongoing responsibility
- **Two Special features** of Barnabas' life at the beginning: Acts 4:36

He was a real Christian: He had already met Jesus. He was involved in the life of the church, and his nickname hints that he demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit – as an encourager.

He has made a basic Commitment: He had sold a field and laid the total income at the feet of the Apostles, in stark contrast to Ananias & Sapphira, demonstrating his unreserved consecration of all he was and owned. A good example of God's grace so powerfully at work amongst the early believers, 4:33b. Christ had first place in his life. As an earlier generation would have put it, Barnabas was wholehearted and unashamed in his "Christian Devotedness",² confirmed, as always, by gladly giving significantly of his accumulated wealth for the service of Christ and his people, and to demonstrate his living trust in Christ for his material needs.

2. FOUNDATIONS FOR BARNABAS' CONCERN FOR TRANSITIONING IN LEADERSHIP

a. He has Faith in God's Power to Change People - So He Opens Doors into the Church, Acts 9:26-29

- *Church was struggling under Saul the Persecutor* Acts 8:1b-4; 9:1-2
Saul was "ravaging the church," imprisoning both men & women and scattering most of the common believers. Then "breathing threats & murders," Paul gained authorization to bring Syrian Christians back to Jerusalem for trial. And then he takes off from Jerusalem. Strangely Barnabas heard no more of him for at least three years.
- *Then Saul the persecutor is back – claiming to be converted!!* Acts 9:26-30
The Apostles won't have a bar of it!! They simply couldn't believe it, v26. **But Barnabas**, v27, sat & listened. He dared to believe God can change rebels. So *Barnabas mediates*, he pleads Saul's cause, and **opens the door into the church for the converted troublemaker.**

b. He has Faith the Lord's Grace Crosses Cultural Barriers in New Ways – And He is Available to be Sent to Encourage Others, Acts 11:19-30

- **The Situation:** For the first time some ordinary Christians, from Barnabas' home area of Cyprus and from North Africa, contextualized the Gospel for their non-Jewish Greek neighbours, preaching the Lord Jesus. The "hand of the Lord" was with them, and "a great number" of these "peoples of other cultures" believed and were converted. When this strange News comes to "the ears of the church" in Jerusalem they sent Barnabas as a trustworthy evaluator, to check it out, v22.
 - **Barnabas grows quickly in this Cross-cultural situation:**
Showing his special skill and values, he "saw the Grace of God," and rejoiced in it. True to his nick-name Barnabas encouraged and exhorted them, v23, to remain faithful; to remain ... in the Lord, and to do so with steadfast devotion. This is real pastoral encouragement.
Barnabas, can grasp this cross-cultural opportunity because, 11:24, "*He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith*" His goodness and his fullness of the Spirit *both focus on faith in people*
 - **He establishes the church at Antioch:**
His faith bore fruit, v24b, as "a great many were brought to the Lord." So he kept on for an extended ministry, v26 - 13:1, with the following outcomes: The Transformed disciples were

² This was the title of Anthony Norris Groves, widely influential 1825 tract.

noticed by their community and given a new nick-name – “Christians;” they immediately became involved in Social Action – the first Tear Fund offering was taken up to relieve the poor in Judea. But notice how Barnabas achieved all this:

c. He Gives Priority to Equipping New Leaders - So He Opens Doors into Service for Others, Acts 11:25-26, 13:1

- **He seeks, finds and brings into ministry one who had been nearly forgotten.** Barnabas “finds” Paul buried in his home town of Tarsus – forgotten by those in the wider Christian world. Eleven (or 14) years have passed since 9:29 (cf., Gal 2:1). **Together they serve as guests of the Antioch church**, systematically teaching the Word for a year. Thus, **Barnabas helps multiply the leaders**, 13:1. When one gifted encourager opens the way for another gifted bible teacher to teach consistently in one congregation for a year the result is a group of now competent bible teachers from many different cultural backgrounds, 13:1.

d. He Recognizes and Obeys God’s Call to a New Work - So He is Sent on a New Mission, Acts 13:1 - 5

- **While devotedly fulfilling his current duty, the Spirit calls to a fresh work.** God calls the Church to set Barnabas & Saul apart for a new task. **Barnabas lets go of his present fruitful, influential, leading position, and obeys** as the young church becomes the new mission-sending centre for the next phase of Christian expansion. Barnabas **goes – first to his homeland**, taking (or enlisting) his cousin (John Mark) to help in his partnership with Saul, the other commissioned mission delegate.

3. BARNABAS BEGINS TRANSITIONING TO A NEW LEADER AND DEVELOPS SKILLS TO SUPPORT THE CHANGE.

a. Barnabas Recognizes maturing Gift and Readiness for further Responsibility, Transfers Leadership and continues his Collegial Support, Acts 13:6 - 14:26

- **Early in this new outreach Barnabas recognizes the evident gifts of his colleague, Saul, and he re-allocates leadership responsibilities.** Notice the change in the order of names in the references in 13:9, 13, 42, and 50. But, Barnabas **works on with the now newly named Paul**, despite the reaction of Barnabas’ relative, John Mark, v13. Throughout this mission trip, Barnabas **keeps encouraging and trusting people** as the key strategy at the heart of their follow-up for new believers, 14:21-23.

b. He Grapples Humbly with accepting Correction from his previous Under-study – and becomes a better Advocate for Others, Acts 14:26-15:35 [Gal 2:11-14].

- Back in Antioch, reporting on their mission, Barnabas struggles to apply the boomerang lessons from the new mission frontiers into the life of the sending church. He and Paul have discovered the big issue, namely that as the Gospel crosses into a new cultural setting, the Gospel calls for converts, not proselytes. But the Jewish Christians have always expected people of other cultures to become proselytes to Judaism in order to become true members of the people of God, requiring circumcision as the badge of membership. Barnabas had already found that was not necessary, both when he first came to Antioch, and certainly in his experience on the Galatian mission trip. But when Jewish Christians from Jerusalem started demanding the proselyte route as the only acceptable one in Antioch, even Barnabas, the “Encourager,” preferred peace, rather than challenging these teachers, so Barnabas withdrew from those Gentiles with whom he had been enjoying fellowship around their tables- both in the church and socially. Paul, his younger, recently graduated apprentice colleague, rebukes Barnabas and publicly points out he is being led astray by going with the separatists, Gal 2:11-14.

- But when the “Encourager” faltered, Barnabas proved such failure was not final. He evidently accepted the rebuke, for when the Antioch church chose delegates to represent them

in debating these issues in Jerusalem, Acts 15:2b, Barnabas served supportively with Paul again. Such humbling, even humiliating, lessons, once learned, equip us better to continue our ministry on behalf of others, as Barnabas does as a trustworthy representative at the Conference.³ Willingness to accept rebuke from those who have trained under us, and to work alongside, and under them, is essential if we are serious about transitioning to younger leaders. Such attitudes, however, are not as common as could be expected amongst people committed to the One who, “humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.”

4. BARNABAS CHOOSES TO RE-APPLY THE PROVEN TRANSITIONING PRIORITY - BUT STARTING AGAIN BRINGS A COST, Acts 15:36-41, Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11

a. Choosing to Prioritize Preparing Future Leaders over Other Programmes brings Conflict and Misunderstanding, Acts 15:36-41.

- Barnabas faces the trauma of another public argument with Paul – this time the intensity earns the description, “paroxysm,” v39. The point of conflict appears to be that **developing potential in people, is the higher priority for Barnabas, and not "the work."** He wants to recruit John Mark again for the next missionary trip. Barnabas sees more ability in his young cousin, and Barnabas possibly understands more fully the circumstances around Mark’s previous “desertion” than Paul does. But Paul, up to this point, has always put “the work” first, so he doesn’t want in his team anyone who “didn’t go to the work,” v38. Quitters, for Paul, have disqualified themselves from further active, front-line service.
- The irony is that Barnabas just wanted to do for Mark what he had done for Paul, and open doors into service for his nephew. But it appears that, as now, so then, once a Christian worker had displeased key church leaders, it can be very difficult to bring them back into favour and a return to fruitful ministry.
- Moreover, when Paul didn't agree, the church backed Paul, and not only was the first step of a long-term transition plan refused, Barnabas was dropped from, or chose to drop out of, the mission team and the work. Sadly we hear nothing more of his ministry from this point in the Acts account. The priority choices between people development and “doing the work”, and personnel issues, particularly when they involve long-term trust and recovery from faltering first steps, and also involve extended family members, continue to prove difficult areas in Christ’s service.

b. But the Barnabas story does not end there – Barnabas fades from the picture, but his principles continue to bear fruit.

- Barnabas, presumably, took Mark and kept on encouraging him. For, although we hear nothing more directly of Barnabas, we can credit him with a major contribution to at least three later outcomes in the New Testament story.
- Beyond this point, *John Mark becomes “useful,”* as Paul himself finally testifies, Col 4:10; 2 Tim 4:11. Mark goes on to write *another Gospel*. It is hard to imagine what our New Testament would look like without Mark’s writing. But it is hard to imagine him doing such work if someone had not worked with him to restore him after being labelled by the leading missionary of the day as a failure, and passed over by the church most active in recruiting the new generation of Christian workers. The one person in a position to help Mark through such a discouraging rejection was, surely, “the son of encouragement.”

³ This sequencing of the events assumes the “South Galatia” explanation of the destination of the Galatian Letter, and that it was sent just prior to the Acts 15 recorded “Jerusalem conference.” I am aware that a “North Galatia” destination, and therefore dating the letter after the mission to that region, possibly referred to in Acts 16:6, would invalidate the timing of these lessons, but not the substance of them. I would gladly adduce F. F. Bruce’s support of the “South Galatia” theory and dating of the letter as an example of the scholarship on which I base my assumptions, as in F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, [NIGTC], Exeter: Paternoster, 1982.

- Perhaps equally significant: we notice that from this point on in his ministry, *Paul mimics Barnabas by recruiting and equipping understudies of his own*, Acts 16:3, cf., 21:1-5. Church leaders are often very reluctant to publicly admit they may have been wrong, or that they may have wronged one whose ministry they have rejected. But, when they immediately adopt the policies and priorities of those they shamed and wronged, perhaps that is their way of admitting their error. Imitation is ever the sincerest form of flattery. Certainly, from this point in Paul's ministry he begins to do for an increasing number of younger colleagues, just what Barnabas has done, humanly speaking, to prepare him for the transition which put him into his leading role. Paul gathers round him Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Silas, Priscilla and Aquila, and all those listed in Acts 20:4. Barnabas' priority has become Paul's regular policy and practice.

Interim Summary – So, what of Barnabas?

- Paul uses Barnabas' denial of personal rights as an example for the Corinthian Church, 1 Cor 9:6 – suggesting the rift may have been mended, and ensuring Barnabas is not altogether forgotten or unknown in Paul's new churches. Beyond that we can only speculate about Barnabas' later ministry. But the best summary of Barnabas' fitness to be honoured as the New Testament model for initiating succession planning, apart from the impact of Paul's whole ministry, is given in Acts 11:24: *“He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.”* A good man – because he loved, trusted and encouraged people as the focus of his service. Full of faith – because he believed in people, and in the Holy Spirit's ability to transform people – even those others didn't trust or wrote off. And both these – good love and faith in people – were the overflow of allowing the Holy Spirit to control his life fully.
- Barnabas' example and influence ensured the healthy transition from the first generation of believers to the next in the early church. Barnabas is the link person between the Twelve disciples and the ministry of Paul and his team. Barnabas faced and paid the price of ensuring the next generation received and transmitted the Gospel faithfully. That is the model for transition and succession planning. We can judge Barnabas' effectiveness, by turning now to hear his first understudy's counsel as he draws to the close of his most effective service, and he in turn is ensuring the transition to the next generation.

II. **PAUL'S TRANSITIONING INSTRUCTIONS TO TIMOTHY,** 2 Timothy 1-2.

In these first two Chapters, of this warmly personal, “Second Letter to Timothy”, as we call it, Paul is focussed on equipping Timothy to transition effectively to a new level of leadership responsibility, and to inculcate principles enabling him to repeat the same process with new developing leaders in the future. We shall survey these chapters with this purpose as our guide.

1. **Foundations for Leadership Transition – Purpose and Promise – From Eternity to “The Day,”** 1:1-2

These opening chapters have a pervading awareness of the importance of time for Christians. Not in the modern sense of a rapid succession of precious moments to grasp productively for material goals. Rather, time as a steadily moving, intentional arena in which destinies are forged with long term significance. Paul's attention will stretch back to time's very beginnings, 1:9b, and on to “the day” of its future fulfilment, 1:12. Little wonder, therefore, the Apostle Paul weaves into his normal letter greeting, stress on the way his own missionary role and authority were rooted in the dual foundations of “the will of God” and the “promise of life that is in Christ Jesus.”

The “will of God” reminds of purpose – God's purpose – spanning the generations of the life of our galaxy and the whole human story. Writing consciously within that unfolding

plan of God, gives stability, direction and certainty. But, since that purpose centres on the “promise of life in Christ Jesus,” it is never staid, old-fashioned or out-dated. Rather, this purpose abounds with vitality, satisfaction, and future oriented assurance because of the person in whom it culminates, Jesus the Christ, who answers the hopes and yearnings of all peoples, and every generation. In Old Testament times this cross-generational purpose was celebrated in the name of God as the “God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” But, in the New Testament the same future hope bursts all bounds in the reality of the generation-transcending life guaranteed in Jesus the Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever. God’s purpose, deeply rooted in eternity, and Jesus Christ’s life-infusing promise, set the parameters for instructions on succession planning in Chapters 1 and 2 of the Letter.

2. Leadership Transition is Driven by Gratitude for Previous Generational Successions of Service and Faith: 1:3-5

a. *For Paul - on behalf of the older generation.* Paul expresses his gratitude for the succession of conscientious ‘temple service,’ or exemplary benevolence (*leitourgeo* in the Greek) which had extended from his Hebrew ancestors down to Paul himself. He has an ongoing appreciation for the value of his pre-conversion religious heritage, vv3a. As we have seen from Galatians 3:19-4:7, this kind of respect for the function and role of our inherited religion is a continuing gift of the Gospel to all new believers in Christ. Too many fail to recognize the way the Spirit of God guided and lead us in the days before we came to Christ. Lack of appreciation of our religious heritage makes it so much the harder to see the importance of succession planning for the future.

But Paul did not live in the past. His prayer life evidences an empathetic concern for the rising generation – Timothy in particular. This balance of appreciating our past and investing prayer in the people of the future, signals Paul’s, and our, level of spiritual maturity. Paul’s use of ‘remembering’ and ‘re-calling,’ vv3b-4, sets the tone for what follows.

b. *For Timothy, representing the rising generation.* Paul reminds Timothy of the succession of ‘hypocrisy-free,’ sincere faith, or faithfulness (*pistis*) which had continued from his Grandmother, Lois, to Mother, Eunice, and, Paul affirms, is now (alive) in Timothy. The one quality of faith necessary to ensure its transmission across generations without becoming merely formal or nominal, Paul suggests, is integrity or genuineness. Certainly nothing turns children away from their parents’ faith quicker than a lack of consistency in the parents’ profession and life-styles. And none can detect hypocrisy more sharply than one’s own teen-agers. Equally certainly, the child’s faith needs to be genuine, not a mere mimicking of the outward forms of an inherited religion, for the transition to the next generation to be life-giving. Paul knows the importance of celebrating this dynamic of a personally experienced, integrity of faith-life transmitted across three generations, vv3-5.

In an age when Western society is steadily losing its appreciation for its faith heritage, perhaps one gift world Christianity can extend back to the West is this continuing appreciation of the role of an ongoing generational transmission of living faith. This is a vital driver for planning forward.

3. Leadership Transition Depends on Keeping Faith Alive in the Current Generation: 1:3-8

a. *On Paul’s part in ensuring vital faith in the present generation - by Memory, recall and reminders, 1:3-5.* As we have noted already, we do not, however, wallow in the past. The intention of Paul’s remembering is focussed on freshly stimulating present faith, and stepping forward properly prepared for the future. When the Melanesian peoples of Papua New Guinea came to faith, their whole orientation to time was ‘converted’. The traditional Pidgin English name for the times of the ancestors was, *taim bipo* – meaning the time you faced, or the time before your gaze. Their previous lives were regulated by the customs and *lo* (law) of the

ancestors, so you had to watch them for guidance. Traditionally, therefore, the time still to come was called *taim bihain*, meaning the time still behind your back which you did not face because you dared not turn your back on the ancestors. The Gospel literally turned the believers around. In Christ the sense of time progressing towards a God-appointed future is radical good news indeed. Likewise in 2 Timothy Paul was not merely celebrating the past, but he rejoiced in the onward transmission from previous generations to the present, in order to encourage the process to continue on to future generations. He stressed the importance of each generation discovering the vitality and integrity of the faith. Hence his further direct encouragements to Timothy.

b. Calling on Timothy to do his part to ensure vitality of faith in his own generation, 1:6-8:

Paul draws attention to three aspects essential for warmth and growth in Timothy's faith:

- *Rekindling his Gift* –Paul had been instrumental in Timothy receiving a gift of God's Spirit enabling and equipping him for his part in the service of Christ and the Gospel. But Timothy must rekindle the fire and develop and express that gift. Any loss of first-love fervour, or cooling off of ardour when responsibilities become routine, are sure to dampen concern to plan forward and equip others with the grace-gifts necessary for fruitful ministry. Stimulating the present-day glow of enthusiastic faith, therefore, is a first step to ensuring the pathway for faith into the next generation is secure.
- *Addressing personal weaknesses here and now is also essential to transmit faith to the next generation, v7.* Illustrating his normal approach to pastoral encouragement (see Col 1:28), and building on his regular prayer for him, and his relationship with his family, Paul warns Timothy and challenges him to take hold of the Spirit of God's offered power, love for others, and 'sound-thinking' to address his natural timidity and lack of disciplined initiative-taking. Paul's reference to Timothy's tears, v4, presumably on Paul's most recent departure, and his repeated references to people being, or not being ashamed, vv8, 12, and 16, suggest Timothy has been overly dependent on Paul, and over-anxious in the face of difficulties. For Paul, the Spirit's empowering, giving oneself to others in out-going love, and a well-ordered thought-life are the three sufficient ingredients for dealing with such deficits, and moving forward in service.
- *Courageous, even if costly witness and partnership in the Gospel empowered by the Spirit, v8.* Fresh commitment and involvement in cooperative service, drawing on the Holy Spirit's power, is each generation's best preparation for serving those who will follow. The old soldier, Paul, expands his anti-dote to timidity with this personal call for Timothy to move from a sense of shame about witnessing or identifying with Christians already undergoing trials for the faith, to embrace an active partnership in living and sharing the Gospel.

c. Note the Stress on the Holy Spirit's role in sustaining each Generation's vitality of Faith. In calling Timothy to move beyond his own frailties, Paul kept reminding him of his proven experience of the Holy Spirit's enabling gift and the availability of the Spirit's power, vv6, 7, 8.

The apostolic word of encouragement and the equipping of the Spirit of God are the abiding sources of strength for believers facing the pressures and costly self-sacrifice of effective following in the way of the Saviour. These two resources are still the necessary grounds for confidence in a succession of life-giving faith to the next generation.

4. Transition Planning Rests Firmly on God's Generation-transcending Eternal Purpose and Saving Grace: 1:9-10

Lest, after these challenges to timid followers to do their part to ensure good succession, we might still have doubts, Paul again takes us back to reconsider the time factor in our faith journey. His time perspective is boundless.

a. Saving Grace was Gifted to us in Christ - before Time began, v9. Paul is quick to remind Timothy his salvation experience and call to a set apart life owed nothing to anything Paul had

done. It was all the outworking of God’s purpose and free grace. But this was no suddenly devised emergency or contingency plan. God’s purposeful grace was “given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.” Here is the true perspective on the timing of how we fit in God’s saving plans, what has been called the “kairological schema” for salvation.⁴ God’s purpose to bring human wholeness and flourishing – i.e., his plan of salvation, was set in place, “given” is Paul’s word, within the mysterious being of the second person of the Trinity, yes, in Christ Jesus. And this all took place, literally, “before the times of the ages.” Before time as we know it came into being, in the pre-existent being of God, the grace-purpose for our total well-being was established. The plan of salvation did not begin with Adam’s sin in the garden. God was not caught off guard. Grace expresses and imparts God’s original intentions. This should lift us well above restricted concepts of God’s desires and plans. Especially it ought to give us a time consciousness which embraces generations to come, and is never content to simply live for the moment.

b. This Grace-purpose has been Displayed Publicly - through the Appearance of our Saviour Christ Jesus, v10. The reality and intention is from eternity. But it finally breaks into view in the incarnation manifestation of our Saviour, the Messiah of every nation, Jesus the carpenter’s lad. You can sense the awe with which Paul pronounces each word in this extraordinary claim. The One who first imagined time and brought it into being, then, “at the right time,” broke into time in person, for “it matters to him about you.”⁵ But, if the saving purposes of God’s grace were formulated before time began, and revealed in the break-through appearance of the incarnation of the deity in Christ, that is just the beginning.

c. This Grace-purpose was achieved through the Good News of Jesus who both destroyed death and brought immortal life to light, v10b. If, from God’s time perspective the salvation plan was already given before creation, then, from this same perspective the heart of the Good News, the death of Christ, has already done away with humanity’s last fear and enemy, death, and brought to light a new kind of life beyond the restrictions of death, immortal life. This vision of life abounding on into eternity future, does away with any lingering uncertainties, and gives substance to the promise of life announced in 1:1. Here are the theological reasons Paul expects Timothy to move beyond timidity, inappropriate shame and inaction. Grasping this perspective on time, and the great gracious purpose God is fulfilling in and beyond it, provides the clinching reason for the kind of assurance, confidence and courage that embraces forward looking succession planning.

5. **Leadership Transition Works through the Transition Principles of Commissioning , Entrusting and Long-term Planning- All in dependence on the Holy Spirit: 1:11-2:3**

With these firm foundations in place, Paul now outlines the specific steps in his transition plan, and what it is he expects Timothy to do to ensure the purposes of God continue in the next generation.

a. The First Transition Principle: The Present generation of Leaders Accept and fulfil their Commission, or Entrusted Responsibilities, 1:11-12. As we have already noted in the earlier verses, effective future transmission depends on the certainty and vitality of the present generation’s grasp of the Gospel, and their place in its service.

– *Paul has been given a costly Three-fold Commission: As Herald, Missionary and Teacher, 1:11.* As herald, or preacher, he is responsible to announce or declare publicly the message he received. Not to invent, add to, or alter, but proclaim the already given message of the Saviour and his salvation, which he has just been explaining. The Apostle role-description highlights his commission as Christ’s authoritative messenger, sent on a delegated mission. As teacher he instructs systematically, explaining, clarifying, correcting and progressively leading his learners

⁴ George Wieland, *The Significance of Salvation: A Study of the Salvation Language of the Pastoral Epistles*, [Paternoster Biblical Monographs], Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006: 133 *et passim*

⁵ This is the literal rendering of the final clause of 1 Peter 5:7.

into a deeper, richer knowledge Christ. Paul himself links this role closely with pastoring concerns in Ephesians 4:12. The earlier verses of the chapter have exemplified this task in action. Colossians 1: 25- 2:3 is Paul's classic unpacking of his own understanding of the way he must work out the combined responsibilities of the three roles to which he knows the Eternal God called and set him apart.

- *The Commission involved considerable Cost, 1:12a.* The three-fold task is inherently costly. The fact he is commissioned to publicly announce a message which confronts the ruling authorities, both religious and political, undercuts their imperial claims, and calls for exclusive commitment to its tenets, is enough to stir up opposition, as Paul's story to this date has shown. But, knowing who has commissioned him, and the significance of the outcomes of his message are enough to embolden, encourage and dispel any need for shame, on either his part or Timothy's.

Receiving this gift of such a strategic commission brings with it the obligation, and privilege, to prove faithful and trustworthy. Such gifts also bring accountability to transmit the same tasks and responsibilities to suitable persons for the next generation.

- *The Key to fulfilling the Commission: Paul has Received, and Confidently Trusts Christ to enable him to Keep the Trust inherent in his Commission, v12b.* Paul's personal friendship with his Commissioner, and active trust in him, forms the platform on which he fulfils his task. To be able to say "I know whom I have believed," is to stand on firm ground. This has also convinced him of the strength, trustworthiness, and competence of his Lord Jesus Christ to guard, protect and keep safe what he has entrusted to Paul. And Paul is confident Christ will do so till the Day on which all reports are in and the final assessments made of tasks undertaken. Paul has learned to give back to Christ what he had received from Christ in his commission Then he asks and expects Christ to take proper care of what he has put back into his Master's hands for safe keeping. This receiving of a trust, or "good deposit" (as Paul will call it in the next verse), meant Paul now had to manage responsibly the work Christ had delegated to him. This idea of having a deposit or trust to fulfil for Christ, forms the essence of the New Testament concept of commissioning. Paul's point in v 12b, is that once we receive a trust or deposit from him, we must quickly call ask Christ to care for that deposit or trust, and to protect it as long as it is in our hands. As we have said, Col 1:25-2:3 explains the substance of this task, and 1 Cor 4:1-7 further explains how to handle it. The current generation of leaders fulfilling the trust they have received in the strength Christ supplies is the practical first principle of the transition process.

b. *The Second Transition Principle - Entrusting and Handing on The Deposit Generationally:*

Paul has explained the terms and nature of an Entrusted Deposit, and told how he seeks to administer it. The next step is to ensure this same deposit is passed on to the next generation.

- *Paul has Handed on the "Deposit" as a Trust for Timothy to Keep and Guard, 1:13-14.* Paul now details Timothy's responsibilities. These build on the challenge Paul had already given Timothy to ensure the vitality and integrity of an active faith in Christ, and to enjoy the empowering of the Holy Spirit which more than compensates for Timothy's natural frailties. Now Paul has three further challenges.

- *Follow the pattern of healthy teaching already received – cultivating Christ-like character, v13.* Timothy is to grasp "what you heard from me (Paul)," and set it as his pattern for life and ministry. Inherent in Paul's apostolic role is the task of pattern-setting for later generations. The pattern is in what he taught – or "what you, Timothy, heard from me." Here the apostolic teaching is set up as the authoritative source for later generations to grasp and adhere to. Paul constantly repeats this theme to the churches he established, 1 Tim 1:18-19; 3:14-15; 1 Cor 11:1-2; Gal 1:6-9; Phil 4:9. Peter, likewise, insists that the apostolic writings, nothing else, will be their continuing standard after the death of the first generation of apostles, 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1-2.

But Paul adds one necessary directive about the way to uphold and “keep” or “guard” this deposit of faith in the apostolic words. Timothy, and each one who follows him, is to guard the sound teachings, “with faith and love in Christ Jesus.” A receptive mind-set of attentive, humble trust and faith is essential for rightly receiving these teachings. Too often we approach the healthy teaching of scripture with different, other frames of mind, without trust or confidence in their message, then wonder why they seem irrelevant. If faith is the way to receive the teachings, then love is the way to respond to them. We respond with love and devotion for the word itself, but we also respond to these words with love and compassion for those before whom we live out these words. Cultivating Christ-like character of faith and love as we read and apply the scriptures is the distinctive way to heed the challenge of this second Principle. For the sixth time in the 13 verses so far in the chapter the title “Christ Jesus” is used of our Lord. He is the partner in all our hearing, reading and applying of scripture. The teaching brings us into a living union with him, and the faith and love necessary to rightly appreciate and express these living words are the overflow of that relationship with him. Without experience of regularly living by the standards and patterns of the NT teachings, we have nothing of eternal value to offer the next generation. A proven life-style demonstrating this Word in action makes us fit to engage in the transition process.

○ *Guard the deposit entrusted to you - by the help of the indwelling Spirit:* What Paul has explained was his own experience in v12, he now requires of Timothy, too. What he has just described as the received teachings, together with the spiritual gift, the call and commission Timothy already has on his life and ministry, are now re-conceived as a “deposit,” “entrusted” to him, with an accompanying duty to guard what he has received, and to do so through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The duties of Christian leadership can be explored through many metaphors. Prominent here is the idea of receiving a gift of great value, with the accompanying duty of care to keep it safe. Another facet of the idea suggests you have received the gift because you have been counted trustworthy. But trustworthiness assumes dependability, faithfulness, and integrity of character and behaviour. Both the expectation of responsible care for the gift and trustworthiness also imply being held accountable, with responsibilities in the way you discharge the trust shown. All these ideas are present in the thought world of this entrusting with a deposit. The same ideas are also present in Paul’s description and elaboration of the Christian leader as a “resource custodian” (*huperetes* in Greek) and “responsible manager” (*oikonomos*) in 1 Cor 3:18-4:5.⁶ While the “good deposit” can be seen primarily as the same as the “healthy pattern of sound teaching,” Paul seems to include here all that Timothy has received to equip and enable him for the leadership task, including the commission to that task. The responsibility to keep the trust safely so as to ensure it is transmitted in its integrity to those who follow him is the centre of the ideas in focus in these verses.

Once more, though, Paul does not impose a duty without at the same time assuring of the resource already on hand to carry the duty well. In this case it is: “guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us,” v14. Holy Spirit-given gifts are such that they come accompanied by the Giver. Or to be more theologically correct they come courtesy of the already resident, indwelling Spirit of God. The One who literally knows each of us “inside-out,” also knows exactly the level and kinds of support we each need to properly fulfil the responsible trust we have received.

This, then, is the centre of the transitioning process. Those whose commission is near to honourable completion, commit their deposited trust to the next generation of leaders,

⁶ See J.M.Hitchen, ‘Confirming the Christian Scholar and Theological Educator’s Identity through New Testament Metaphor,’ *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 35:2 (July 2011): 276-287

confident that the same Father, Son and Holy Spirit who commissioned, enabled and resourced them, will do it again for their successors.

○ *Grasp firmly the same Grace that is in Christ Jesus* – embracing the cost, 2:1, 3. To round out and balance Timothy’s understanding of what is entailed in effectively transitioning to new leadership, Paul repeats two ideas already dwelt on in Chapter One. Twice he has explained to Timothy the role of the power of God, 1:7, 8. Now the call is to appropriate that power and be strong in the grace which he has also already explained in 1:9 as centred “in Christ Jesus.” Timothy’s frailties have never been far from Paul’s mind since his mention of his tears in 1:4. But rather than focus on them, Paul’s encouragements have all focussed on utilizing the available resources, and this is where this section of the letter returns. Strength, stability, faithfulness and endurance are the essential human qualities needed for good transition in leadership. Again, strength is also vital to be able to withstand the costs inherent in spiritual leadership, as Paul mentions again in 2:3. He knows the new generation of leaders must not have romantic delusions about the benefits of being in leadership. Paul knows more of the costs, pressures and disciplines, and would have Timothy be prepared for them, too. Again, strength and steadfastness in face of hardship and trials are the hallmarks of the kind of leadership which will carry through effective transition in their turn to the next generation.

On the basis of his own proven commission to fulfil his trust, Paul has now ensured the same trust is committed to Timothy. One final transition principle remains to be implemented.

c. The Third Transition Principle - Long-Term Transition Planning: 2:1-2

We have spoken to this point of the obvious responsibility of the present generation to pass on the baton to the next cohort of rising leaders. But the apostolic principles go deeper than that.

Paul finally charges Timothy with transition planning for the next two generations, at least, 2:2:

We can illustrate the number of generations in view in 2:2 in the following diagram:

Generation	Persons	Tasks fulfilled
1 st	Paul	Spoke the original words
2 nd	Timothy , with other witnesses	Heard Paul’s words, and entrusted them to reliable people
3 rd	Reliable people able to teach ‘others also’	Received Entrusted words from Timothy
4 th	The ‘others also’ who are taught	Received the teaching of the reliable people

From this we see that Paul had at least three further generations in mind as he commissioned Timothy. He also gave Timothy specific instructions to plan for the following two generations. This is the biblical intention for succession planning. Each current generation of leaders needs to equip the next generation and see they are able to equip their following generation as well. When each generation owns responsibility for the next two there is no excuse for any gaps occurring in the transition to the next leaders, or the continuity of faithful transmission of the Gospel message.

Timothy is to transfer not just the responsibility of leadership, but the same pattern of healthy teaching which entrusts the ongoing transition principles into the trust of the next two generations of qualified teachers.e generationnt of present

Commit

Paul's pattern of instruction, then, includes this approach to transition planning. We would do well to ask how well we are following the pattern in our churches today.

[
 III. **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN EARLY BRETHERN MISSION – Insights from Anthony Norris Groves in India**

With Barnabas' model and Paul's apostolic principles for transition planning in mind, we shall now summarise by briefly considering some aspects of Anthony Norris Groves missionary work in India and some key ideas from two of his influential writings:

- *Christian Devotedness* (Piccadilly: J.Hatchard & Son, 1825), published when he was first applying for missionary service, but before he went on such ministry; and
- 'A letter on Missions to the Heathen,' published in *Christian Witness*, Vol 7 (1840):127-140; a decade after he had commenced mission service in 1829, and by which time he had completed nearly two years of service in Bagdad, and seven in India.]

IV. **Conclusion:**

Succession Planning:

- ***Begins with "Devotedness" and Commitment of present Generation in fulfilling their commission***
- ***Continues with early recognizing and empowering of gifts of younger generation***
- ***Cultivated by awareness of importance of a time perspective which recognizes God's purposes at work***
- ***Fuelled by Faith – in people and in Holy Spirit at local church and***
- ***Fostered by the "Barnabas policy" which seeks, finds and grows people of younger generation – even when misunderstood***
- ***Implements the Transition Principles and gives them priority at local church level and in every area of ministry***
 - ***Demonstrates willingness to Hand over responsibilities, and to continue in subordinate supporting roles- accepting reproof and advice from previous understudies***
- ***Keeps encouraging younger generation to start succession planning early***