

Series #2 2 TIMOTHY 2

We are hitting certain highlights in 2 Timothy, which was a letter written by Paul to a young evangelist named Timothy, who was left in Ephesus to carry out the work of preaching the gospel and pastoring the people there. As mentioned, Paul realizes he only has days left before his execution.

So the words of 2 Timothy have special significance and reflect Paul's thinking of what truly matters concerning Timothy's ministry and walk with Christ. It is what Paul desires for Timothy as Paul is about to depart from this earth. So, we are taking a small series through 2 Timothy to observe what Paul's priorities are for a Christian who wishes to follow Christ.

Last Sunday we observed that the first matter that Paul brings up is this matter of God's calling of Timothy to testify of Jesus Christ to others and we were left with several implications that we may apply to ourselves:

- I. **Commit yourself to the ministry God has given to you**
- II. **Know that you are empowered for service**
- III. **Recognize that your work is an investment for eternity.**

Now as we turn to chapter 2, Paul continues to give advice to Timothy. However, in this chapter the emphasis is on endurance to continuing in the preaching of the word despite the opposition that one may face; and this opposition is not only from those who are outside the church, but even within the church for those who wish to hear something else. Yet Timothy must remain faithful to instruct in the Scriptures. Therefore, Paul continues to pass on advice that will keep Timothy faithful to the ministry. Here is some of the advice.

- I. **Carry out your ministry in the strength of God's grace**

2 Tim 2:1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Paul exhorts Timothy to be strong in the ministry that God has entrusted to him, which is that of preaching and teaching. A ministry has to be carried on, just as our daily walk must be, in **"the grace that is in Christ Jesus."** Mounce writes: "Grace is a one-word summary of God's saving act in Christ, stressing that salvation comes as a free gift to undeserving sinners." The acrostic, **God's Riches At Christ's Expense** expresses the realization of what we have discovered in Christ.

It is fascinating that in the ancient world, "grace" was a colorless term without any religious connotation. It was used to refer to **"something attractive"** or **"something**

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that brought pleasure or approval” or *“to show favor”*; but it did not have any deep significance attached to it. But for some reason, the New Testament took this word and gave it a rich meaning for God showing His favor to people who do not merit such favor. In Paul’s writings, it doesn’t merely mean, “God’s favor,” but “God’s steadfast and unbending favor,” which is rooted in His great love for us. To receive God’s grace is to receive God’s deep and special favors.

To be *“continually strengthened in grace,”* as the present tense emphasizes here, implies that Timothy is to get his power through Christ, being motivated by all that Christ has done for him on the cross. It is *grace* that is to be the motivation for why and how Timothy keeps plugging away in his preaching and teaching.

And grace is the power and the motivation for every believer to continually in his/her ministry on behalf of Christ. Grace moves us to the position, “Not my will but Thine be done” for you have saved me and blessed me with your great salvation. So we carry on knowing that we have been richly blessed by God.

So also here, if Timothy is going to continue in the faithful preaching and teaching of God’s word, with the opposition that he has to face in doing it, he is going to have to rely on God’s grace and realize that God is in this work with him.

Paul echoes the same concept although in different words, when he said to Timothy: *“For I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted [deposited] to Him until that day” (2 Tim 1:12).*

So for all of us, a ministry is to be carried on in the strength of God’s grace!

II. Pass on to faithful men apostolic doctrine

2 Tim 2:2 **The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses** [that is, the preaching and teaching that was witnessed by the crowds who heard Paul], **entrust these to faithful men** [trustworthy men] **who will be able to teach others also.**

Paul looks at three generations of disciples who are to be taught God’s word.

Paul → Timothy → faithful men → others

It is important that Timothy keep to the same true tenets of the gospel that Paul had taught and not to deviate from them. Paul had preached and taught numerous

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audiences throughout his ministry. Both to Jews and Gentiles, to masses and in private home meetings, to friendly audiences and hostile. Timothy had witnessed the preaching and teaching of Paul for years and, so, is well acquainted with Paul's doctrines. These teachings are to be passed on by Timothy to faithful men (men who will not deviate from these doctrines) who will in turn, pass them on to others.

One must realize that various heresies had risen in the church at Ephesus and Timothy must entrust the gospel to those who are faithful to the truth. Later Paul will command Timothy:

2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling [lit., "cutting a straight line"] the word of truth.

With the pressure from others to deviate from the truth, Timothy must look for God's approval rather than man's, by accurately teaching God's word. The Greek word for "accurately handle" is only found here in the NT and literally means to cut in a straight line. Timothy is not to deviate from the true doctrines of the gospel to follow fables, myths, Jewish teachings into endless genealogies, ascetic doctrines, such as abstaining from certain foods or abstaining from marriage, or to chase some "self-love" theme, which, by the way are all heresies mentioned by Paul in his letters to Timothy. It is his task to teach and preach the doctrines that were those of Paul and of other apostles and of Christ.

This indicates that he must give time to the study of it as well. Timothy must study it and then preach and teach it, even though the assembly may want to hear otherwise.

Earlier Paul also said in this letter:

2 Tim 1:13 Retain the standard [*hupotupósis*, "pattern," "sketch"; it doesn't mean the same as "standard," although it will achieve that purpose as well; but *hupotupósis* indicates that one looks at the blueprint and follows it; it is about the content or substance of the material one teaches; these teachings Timothy must "retain" or "hold to"] **of sound words** [*hugiainó*, from which we derive our word, "hygiene"; "healthy words," that is, true biblical teaching] **which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. (14) Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure** [the "good deposit"] **which has been entrusted to you.**

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Paul states that his preaching was derived from “**the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**” His preaching was not derived from any self-motive on his part or for personal gain. Indeed, every believer is to carry out his/her ministry from a sincere faith and a love that is grounded in Jesus Christ. When a ministry is carried out from these motives, then your ministry is never about you (how well you perform, how good you sing, how witty I preach), your ministry is not to be about you, but it is about a genuine walk of faith and a desire to please Christ through your ministry. Paul has repeatedly testified that what he preached was motivated by “a sincere faith and love for Jesus Christ.” It was not about himself.

Timothy is now entrusted with the teaching and preaching of these doctrines of the gospel, and these doctrines are to be carefully “guarded” or “protected” through the Holy Spirit who indwells him.

And just as Paul saw his ministry as a “deposit” that will be guarded by God (v. 12), so also this “deposit” has been entrusted to Timothy to guard (v. 14). He has been given the “pattern” or doctrinal substance of the gospel teaching that is to be retained.

Notice that verse 14 says, “*through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.*” The same Spirit that indwells Paul also indwells Timothy, and He indwells you and I. He dwells in you for carrying out your ministry.

So Timothy is to retain and pass on to faithful men apostolic doctrine.

III. Be willing to accept ill-treatment because true biblical teaching will upset a hostile world.

We read here that if Timothy is to preserve the true teachings of Jesus Christ, then he is going to upset people. The gospel road is regarded by Paul as a road that brings conflict to anyone who teaches the truth. Now the effort that Timothy must put forward is illustrated by the three metaphors: *the soldier, the athlete, and the hard-working farmer.*

A. The soldier

2 Tim 2:3 Suffer hardship with *me* [literally, “bear the evil treatment with me”], **as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.**

The first phrase, “*Suffer hardship with me*” is from one word, *sugkakopatheó*, which is a compound word made up of three parts:

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sug = “together with”

kakos = “bad,” “evil,” “a malicious disposition”

patheo or *pathos* = “raw, strong feelings, not guided by God”

Now the particular Greek form used here (aorist imperative) indicates that Timothy must make a decisive decision at the outset to be willing to accept such treatment. Thus, “Decide that you are going to bear with me malicious treatment by people rooted in strong godless desires.” If one is going to teach God’s word faithfully, then he must realize that such reactions will exist. This is why Timothy must be rooted in “grace.” For one will not accept such abuse, unless he is empowered by grace. For it is the grace we have experienced in Jesus Christ that moves us to value the ministries we render for Him and to accept the inconveniences that go with it.

Now Paul clearly raises the issue of opposition to Timothy’s preaching. But to anyone who wishes to serve Christ in some way, it may we may not go through hostile opposition like Timothy had, but still there are inconveniences that we must be will to accept if we wish to be obedience servants of Jesus Christ. No one serves Christ at his or her convenience. Rather there is a sacrifice, a willingness to accepting inconveniences that a dedicated life to Christ imposes. The music team needs to be here early for practice. It takes a certain dedication. Junior church teachers have to allow extra time to prepare Bible lessons. Extra work in doing finances; etc. One who prepares to be a servant of Christ foregoes conveniences to do it. Continuing the illustration of a soldier:

2 Tim 2:4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

No soldier, when he has been enlisted to fight a war (the original is literally, “No one making war”; a euphemism, which means, “no one serving as a soldier”), will at the same time, go off engaging himself into the affairs of civilian life. The farmer leaves his farm behind, the storekeeper his store, the blacksmith his shop. When enlisted, they leave their civilian occupations behind to “go warring.”

A soldier is paid to “go through hell” if the orders are given. Clearly, then, it is no longer about what he wants to do for himself; but his objective is to please his superiors. And since his role is as such, he doesn’t entangle himself in the affairs that everyday civilian life, which he had done before.

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B. The athlete

2 Tim 2:5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete [*athleo*], he does not win the prize [*stephanoo*, “the crown”; “the wreath”] unless he competes [*athleo*] according to the rules.

It was a practice in the ancient Greek games, whether it was the Olympics in Athens or the Ithmas games at Corinth, for example, that conditioning rules, as well as rules during the competition had to be followed. The second part of the verse reads more literally, “he is not crowned (*stephanoó*) if he does not lawfully compete (*athleo*). To “lawfully compete” indicated that the person had to follow the laws of the games. And as I said, these laws concerned severe training rules during the time of training, as well as the rules that had to be followed during the competition.

In my Senior year in High School, when I went out for cross-country, I had a friend who wanted to join the cross-country team as well. Now the team started practices on a Monday, giving us a little less than two weeks before our first cross-country meet. My friend came out that Friday to work out. Now we had to come back the next morning, Saturday morning, for another workout. Well I swung by to pick him up for practice. I went to the door and knocked on it. The screen door was shut (it was one that was almost all window), but the main door was open, so I could see inside while I stood at the door. Well, finally and slowly approaching the door was my friend Jim. I could see that he could hardly walk because he was so sore from the workout the previous day. So he comes to the door and says something to the effect, ‘I’m not coming! I’m so sore, I can hardly walk.’ So I went to practice without him.

Now, Sunday there was no practice, but the team did work out Monday through Thursday. Friday comes the day of our first cross-country meet. We had to leave classes a little early to get our running outfits and leave for the cross-country meet that was held in another town about 30 minutes away.

Well, who shows up to get his jersey and expects to run in the cross-country race? My buddy Jim! At the end of handing out the jerseys to the runners, Jim goes up to the coach and asks him, “Where is my jersey?” And do you know what the coach said to him? “Get out of here Hollowell!” And he didn’t get a jersey, nor did he run in the meet, nor did we see him the rest of the year!

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In the ancient games, if one did not follow even the strict rules of training, which lasted 11 months, he was not allowed to compete; and if he violated rules during the competition, he was disqualified.

At any rate, an athlete doesn't make the rules; he has to train according to them and compete according to them. If he fails in either of these, he has no chance at a crown. (see 1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

C. The hard-working farmer

2 Tim 2:6 The hard-working farmer [*geórgos*, from *ge* = “ground”; and *ergo* = “work”; one who works the ground] **ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.**

The hard-working or toiling farmer, not the laid-back or lazy farmer, but the one who puts in the hard work, the long day! He will be rewarded with the first share of the crops.

Now the important thing about each of these is the sacrifices that each occupation requires. The *soldier*, in order to please his commander, does not “entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life.” Timothy has been given a ministry and his objective is to please Christ.

The *athlete*, in order to receive the crown (to hear from the LORD, “Well done good and faithful servant”), commits himself to rules of rigorous training. He wants to win the spiritual prize that the Lord will give him on that day.

The *farmer*, in order to receive the first share of the crops, works hard. He works the harvest to receive his share in it.

And with each there is a desire that they have. The soldier seeks to please the One who enlisted him. The athlete hopes to win the prize. The farmer gets the first share of the crops.