

Mid Week • 2 Timothy 2

INTRODUCTION

As we saw last week, 2 Timothy is Paul's last letter.

In prison in Rome, he knows his days are numbered.

His appeals have run out and with the rabid and fanatical Nero on the throne, he knows he doesn't have long before he is summoned before the executioner.

He writes this letter to Timothy, asking that he come to see him before his death, but he realizes there's a good chance he won't make it before the day comes so he writes this letter of encouragement to his young son in the faith.

Paul writes as one beleaguered saint to another.

You see, not only was Paul going through a tough time in prison there in Rome but so was Timothy as pastor in Ephesus.

Things had deteriorated for Timothy with more factions dividing the church and persecution getting hotter.

With Nero on the throne, the enemies of Christ were emboldened to step up their attacks.

So Timothy faced a huge challenge both from within in the form of heresy and from without in the form of persecution.

Despite the seeming hopelessness of their situation, Paul writes words of incredible faith and trust in the Lord.

He tells Tim to not grow faint or lose heart but to press on - even more so in the face of difficulty.

You know, you gotta' love a guy like Paul.

He didn't see trials as *problems* – they were *opportunities*.

He didn't see trouble as a *hassle*, - it was a chance to watch God work.

He was a tough-minded optimist whose optimism was founded securely on the Love and Power of God.

CHAPTER 2

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

In both of Paul's letters to Timothy, we find the apostle speaking to his protégé in words that alternate between *great tenderness* and

stern charge.

On one hand, he calls Tim his *son*, even his *beloved* son, and there is in this the tenderest of affection.

Then, as we see here, he turns right around and issues a charge or challenge that is firm and serious.

7 times in these two letters, Paul laid a *charge* on Timothy.

In chapters 1 & 2 of 2 Timothy, he presents Timothy with a *challenge*.

Sure things are tough for his spiritual son, but instead of coddling him and sympathizing with his troubles, he calls him to a renewed commitment to the Lord and preaching the gospel.

Once again – he tells Tim, who tended toward timidity, *to be strong*.

He was to find his strength – *where?*

In the grace that is in Christ Jesus!

Now – what is grace?

Grace is unearned, unmerited favor and blessing.

It is a *gift*, given by God *through faith* to those who believe.

As with any gift, the way one makes grace their possession is to simply *take* it.

Paul tells Tim to avail himself of the grace of God freely held out to Him in Christ.

This grace will make him strong and enable him to deal with the problems he faced there in Ephesus.

I like what Samuel Johnson said in his book on Leadership . . .

He said that there are three qualifications for the ministry: The grace of God, knowledge of the sacred Scriptures, and *gumption*.

Friends, there is enough grace in Christ to meet every one of our needs.

There is healing for every ill – solace for every hurt.

In Christ there is the answer to every problem and strength to meet every challenge.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Paul tells Timothy to make sure the chain of ministry carries on.

Just as Tim had traveled with Paul for several years, hearing him preach again and again, he was now to find qualified men

whom he could pour his life in to and train them up to carry on the work of preaching, teaching, and leading the flock of God after he was gone.

Sitting in that cell in Rome, Paul looked back over the years and remembered his first meeting with Timothy and how he had been commended to him as a young man upon whom there was clear evidence of the calling of God.

Timothy had proven himself faithful in his hometown of Lystra, so Paul took him under his wing and began to train him.

One day, the training was complete and Timothy was charged with the task of pastoring the Church of Ephesus.

Now as Paul contemplates his death, he instructs Timothy to follow his example of finding faithful men and entrusting them with the task of leading the church.

Jesus gave the disciples the same charge in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 & 20

19 Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20 Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you:

Jesus had taught and trained them for a little over 3 years.

The last part of the training and charge to them was that they now go repeat ALL that He had done with them – and that included the final charge that they go and do it with others.

In other words, the full plan of discipleship is to win, train, and then SEND people.

Praise God that the followers of Christ have been faithful to this mission and charge throughout the centuries.

We sit here tonight, enjoying the gift of eternal life because people have obeyed this charge and made sure they passed on the gospel to the next generation.

May we be faithful to follow Paul's charge to Timothy, and make sure we are entrusting the work of leading the church to new people who can carry on after we're gone.

We have a group of guys here at Calvary who we're training to be

pastors.

We call it the Shepherd's School and they're learning the principles and practicalities of pastoring a church.

We anticipate that some will go out to plant churches.

Others will be part of a team that does church planting.

Some may even stay here and become part of our staff.

The point is – we want to be obedient to the Lord and do what Paul says here.

Paul reveals a profound mindset here we need to stop and take note of.

Once again, think about the situation for Paul in Rome and for Timothy in Ephesus.

Paul is in a dark, dank hole, chained about the ankles with iron links.

He's been branded as a traitor to the Empire and has a death sentence just waiting to be carried out.

Timothy is facing a really tough time of it in Ephesus.

Several false teachers have spread gross distortions of the gospel through the Christian community and drawn away many disciples after themselves.

At times it seems Timothy is the lone voice defending orthodoxy.

At the same time, persecution is growing more intense from those outside.

To these two men, it had to look bleak.

It looked like the light of truth was a small candle about to be overwhelmed by a tidal wave of error and hatred.

But these verses reveal Paul's rock-solid conviction that no matter how bad things got, no matter how dark the night – the dawn was coming and the gospel would triumph over all its foes.

Maybe his days on the front lines were done – he knew others would take his place.

He saw himself as part of an unbroken chain that began with the faithful of the OT and would continue through the grace of God right down to the Return of Jesus Christ.

Timothy was the next link in the chain.

Timothy was now to forge some new links that would follow after him.

In 1858, a Sunday School teacher named Mr. Kimball led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ.

The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist.

In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of F.B. Meyer, pastor of a small church.

F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman.

Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work.

Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C.

A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach.

During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ.

Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School teacher who invested his life in the lives of others.

We give great prominence to Billy Graham – such is the way of the world.

But in heaven, it's the Mr. Kimballs who are the standouts!

We need some of Paul's courage and vision today.

We need to see that no matter how bad things get, no matter how hostile the culture or dark the evil night – Christ will triumph!

So we carry on being faithful in the small things, the necessary things.

If you wish to enrich days, plant flowers; If you wish to enrich years, plant trees; If you wish to enrich Eternity, plant the gospel in the lives of others.

3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Paul tells Timothy to keep his eyes on the goal and not lose heart because of the severity of the fight.

We are engaged in a spiritual war, and as Christians, we are enlisted in the Lord's army.

As Paul tells the Corinthians – the weapons of our warfare are not physical, but spiritual and forged to pull down spiritual strongholds.

Just as a soldier has a soldier's mindset and counts hardship as part of the soldier's life, so we must count hardship as part of the program.

The battle is real – every bit as real as physical war – it's just fought on a different battlefield.

The only way we can win is if we keep things in the right perspective and realize why we're here and where we're headed.

If we're enduring hardship as a good soldier, then we won't whine and complain and call God's love and power into question.

We may not understand everything that happens to us – but like good soldiers, we'll trust that our commanding officer knows what He's doing and promptly obey.

V. 4 is critical because it reminds us that our Christianity isn't just one department of our lives to be balanced with everything else.

Today, many Christians *compartmentalize* their faith.

3 Sunday mornings a month they wear the Church hat but driving home from church, they take it off and put on the weekend fun hat.

On Monday morning they don the work hat.

Sometimes they wear the marriage hat, or the parent hat.

The problem is that some of these hats are incompatible with each other.

Some of the things they like to do for fun are prohibited by God.

The shortcuts they take at work don't square with their professed faith in Christ.

But they remain oblivious to the fact that they are living contradictory lives because they've compartmentalized their faith into a neat little corner.

Paul is addressing precisely that kind of mindset in v. 4.

Being a Christian is all-inclusive and overarches every other commitment and responsibility.

I am not a Christian AND a husband, a father, a pastor, a friend, or

whatever.

I am a CHRISTIAN – PERIOD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

My marriage is one of the places God calls me to live *out* my Faith in Christ.

My parenting is another place I live out my faith.

As a pastor – I reveal who and what I am as in Christ.

Emil Mettler owned a well known restaurant in downtown London.

Christian ministers and missionaries were commonly seen there for Mettler was a believer and invited them to come and enjoy a meal there.

Mettler would never allow a Christian worker to pay for a meal in his restaurant.

Once he did happen to open his cash register in the presence of an officer of the London Missionary Society.

The officer was surprised to see among the bills and coins a six-inch nail.

He asked Mettler what it was there for.

Mettler said, "I keep this nail with my money to remind me of the price that Christ paid for my salvation and of what I owe Him in return."

He had an understanding of the fact that as a Christian, his life belonged to Christ – all of it, including his business.

We covered vs. 3 & 4 Sunday – if you weren't here, get a copy of the tape.

Paul now gives more examples perseverance and single-mindedness .

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5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.

7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Paul uses two more illustrations – the athlete and the farmer.

The athlete competes for a prize but can only win if he or she stays within the guidelines that govern the competition.

The Greeks and Romans loved athletic competition – in fact,

athletic games were big events and champions were well-known throughout the Empire.

The Olympic and Isthmian Games saw thousands and thousands of people turn out to watch and cheer on their favorites.

The winner was given a crown made of a laurel wreath.

Judges attended every event, keeping a close eye on each competitor to ensure they abided by the rules.

But the rules of ancient competition extended to the *training* prior to the event as well.

Athletes had to *train* as well as compete according to the rules.

Paul's point here is that the Christian, who is destined for a crown of victory, must make sure that he or she lives according to the rules.

We can't go off and start defining our own way.

We can't, like the false teachers in Ephesus were doing, make it up as we go along.

We have to follow the course laid out for us by the Lord.

Isn't it amazing how many people you meet today, even people who call themselves Christians, who seem to be charting their own path to God?

They don't read the bible and rarely if ever go to church, but they think they have a special and unique relationship with God that transcends these things.

I don't know how many people I've met who said they were Christians but when I ask them what fellowship they're a part of, say they don't go to church.

And quite frankly, they don't see any need to be a part of a group of other believers.

They think they can be close to God by just being a good person.

Simply put – they aren't living the Christian life according to the pattern and path Jesus had defined.

They're not competing according to the rules.

In v. 6 Paul says . . .

The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.

Here Paul reminds Timothy that ministry is often hard and seems at times to be fruitless.

But wait – a harvest will eventually come.
What a great illustration for all of us as we consider the work of the Spirit.
The farmer spends many hours of backbreaking labor doing work that produces no immediate result.
He plows the field, breaking up the fallow soil and getting it ready for the seed.
Then he plants the seed.
Each day, he goes out to the field and hoes up the weeds that appear trying to steal the moisture and nutrients away from the crop he's planted.
He channels irrigation down the rows and watches over the field to make sure animals don't come and spoil the crop.
From the time of plowing until the first shoots appear may be weeks.
Then he has to wait for several more weeks while the plants mature and blossom.
Then the fruit begins to grow.
Finally the harvest comes, and the first one to enjoy it is the farmer who walks among the stalks and fondles the grain.
Paul's point is that ministry, and investing in spiritual growth, either our own or another's, is not always immediately evident.
It's like the work of a farmer – it's hard, and there is usually a period of prolonged waiting, but eventually – the harvest comes – and no one's joy is greater than the farmer's because it is HIS harvest.
Shortly after winning his Gold medal for figure skating, Scott Hamilton said, "Someone asked me why I was looking at the medal so intently. What I was doing was looking at 16 years of my life."
Timothy had ministered faithfully in Ephesus for several years. It looked like there was little fruit from his labor – but Paul tells him to hold on, the harvest will come.
Indeed, as we look ahead to the book of Revelation and Jesus' letter to the church at Ephesus, we realize that Timothy's hard work *did* pay off.
Jesus faulted them for their lack of love – but their doctrinal purity and zeal to be busy for God was outstanding and He

praised them for these things.

Taking vs. 5 & 6 together, we find some important guidance for the work of the local church.

In v. 5, Paul tells Tim to follow the guidelines for his ministry proscribed by the Lord.

In v. 6, he calls him to be *diligent* and *patient* in following those guidelines.

We live in the age of the instant and have grown accustomed to seeing quick results.

Whether we're making a meal or an investment in the stock market, we want quick returns.

This mentality has crept in to the Church.

In many denominations, a pastor stays in a church for only about 5 years, then he gets moved to a new parish.

If he's good and the church has grown, he gets moved to a larger church with a bigger salary.

If the church hasn't grown, he gets moved to a smaller church and a pay cut.

Because of this, many guys look for programs that will bring quick results.

And believe me, there's a whole bunch of church growth programs out there offering to increase numbers.

There are actual growth packages you can buy that have letters on letterhead, flyers, posters, banners, balloons, and curriculum.

The sermons are even written out and all the pastor has to do is practice and read them as if they were his own.

Other church growth ideas aren't as formal as one of these packages; they're more of a philosophy.

There's the signs and wonders movement that appeals to the sensational.

Healing and prophecy have made their way through the church in recent years.

The Laughter revival recently swept through thousands of churches.

Now we hear about gold dust, gold teeth, and angel feathers!

The most popular church growth philosophy is the seeker sensitive movement that I've already mentioned several times.

Over against all this – is what Paul exhorts Timothy to here.

Follow the pattern of ministry Jesus has given, and be diligent and patient – the harvest will eventually come.

That pattern was to do what we find in v. 2.

Find faithful men, and do what with them? – Teach them the Word of God.

These then would do the same with others, and the work would grow.

It wouldn't be as quick as some of the flashier and more sensational methods, but it would produce lasting fruit.

The problem with the flashy and sensational is that if you attract people with that, you have to keep them with that.

And you know how it is – people get inured to something after a while and you have to take it up a notch in order to keep them from getting bored and moving on to something more sensational down the street.

Isn't this what's happened with the whole signs and wonders movement?

It began with healing, then moved to personal prophecy, then to casting demons out of Christians.

Now it's gone to the laughing thing, and that has merged into gold dust and angel feathers!

Where will this end? I don't want to guess, but I suspect it will flow into something blatantly immoral.

The seeker sensitive movement appeals to the sensitivities of the lost, but by doing so, they often compromise the heart of the gospel message in their concern about offending.

George Barna, who at one time was a major promoter of the seeker-sensitive movement has recently said that while their aims are praiseworthy, the methodology has proven to be less than effective.

All they've succeeded in doing is making a lot of converts to a highly watered down form of Christianity and may in fact simply be inoculating people against the gospel!

They are making *church members*, but not *disciples* of Jesus Christ.

Look at what Paul says in 1:13

Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ

Jesus.

Here is the guideline Timothy was to minister by.

As he faithfully invested himself in this, God would bless.

Calvary Chapel as a movement is devoted to what Paul says here and over the years we have seen an interesting thing happen.

Many times a Calvary Chapel will start in a community at the same time that another new church starts.

The new church is based on one of the church growth methodologies and they grow rapidly while the Calvary usually struggles for the first few years.

But after about 5 to 8 years, the Calvary Chapel has a committed solid core of mature believers of a couple hundred.

In ten years, they've doubled and as each year goes by, more and more people are won and disciplined.

The other church, after the first few years of great excitement and rapid growth has gone through several pastors and seen the congregation fluctuate between crowds and mere handfuls.

Today, Calvary Chapel has a reputation for one thing – faithful verse-by-verse exposition of the Scriptures!

What a GREAT reputation to have!

7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Paul calls Timothy to think deep and hard on what he's just written.

Oh that pastors and churches today might do the same!

8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

Once again, Paul calls Timothy to look up from the darkness of his present situation to the eternal truths of the Gospel.

Things may be bad in Ephesus – but that doesn't change the FACT that Jesus rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death!

Because of that, death has lost its grip on humanity.

And that was why, even in prison in Rome, awaiting his execution, Paul could write with such joy and passion.

No matter what the enemies of the cross tried to do to him – he was victorious!

Paul believed and lived the words of Jesus, “He who lives and believes in Me shall never die!”

Since death held no terror for Paul, he didn’t live his life in fear, worried that this or that might happen and he’d end up dead.

He counted himself already dead in Christ and alive to a new way of living.

To the Galatians, he put it this way,

Galatians 2:20 • I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

When James Calvert went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, the captain of the ship sought to turn him back.

He said, "You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages."

Calvert only replied, "We died before we came here."

So fearless and determined was Paul to share the message of Christ’s victory over death, that he had been branded as a proclaimer of foreign gods and arrested as a dangerous destroyer of the ancient traditions.

But even the chains of prison could not shackle the message.

He wrote letters and witnessed to his guards.

Adoniram Judson, the renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ.

For 7 heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and deprivation.

During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for a year and a half was subjected to incredible mistreatment.

As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly marks made by the chains and iron shackles which had bound him.

Upon his release he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the Gospel.

The godless ruler of Burma angrily denied his request, saying "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might SAY, but I fear they might be impressed by your SCARS and turn to your religion!"

10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in

Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

As Paul wrote to the Philippians – while his personal desire was to depart this life and go home to heaven, he knew his time on earth was to be productive in assisting others get closer to the Lord.

So while he awaited the day of his execution, he spent each moment either exhorting, encouraging, or praying for others.

One of the more heroic stories to come out of the Korean War involved a young sergeant by the name of Gardolibov.

He had been engaged in the intense fighting on Heartbreak Hill.

When the shooting ended, a rescue team was dispatched to the area to aid the wounded.

Gardolibov was found dying, but the rescuers discovered something unusual.

Although his hands were paralyzed, he had clenched between his teeth the two ends of a communication wire that had broken.

In that moment when we would expect his every thought and concern to be directed toward his own needs, he was still doing what he could to keep the messages going through.

He was faithful unto death!

Paul's words here really challenge me.

Should the Lord's return be many years off, and I end up growing to my senior years and end up weak and infirm, I hope I don't spend my last days bitter and complaining about this and that – as so many elderly people do.

We've had the opportunity over the years to visit convalescent hospitals and minister to the people who live there.

There seem to be two kinds of people

- 1) those who do little more than lie around and complain
- 2) and those who are cheerful and outward looking, seeking to bring joy to others rather than selfishly pursuing their own comfort.

If I should reach my senior years – I want to be like Paul: counting each day, filled with whatever challenges it may be, yet seeing each day as another gift to be profitable for the work of God in the lives of others.

Even if I'm confined to a bed, I want the nurses to go out of their way to stop by my room so I can give them a blessing and

impart a word of grace to them.

I want to go out, spending my last breath praying for God's kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.*

12 *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

13 *If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*

The first words of v. 11 mark this as a saying common among the believers of the early church.

Paul is now putting his apostolic stamp of approval on it.

These words are aimed at strengthening Timothy's commitment to the Lord and his ministry.

He reminds Tim that if we have by faith identified with Christ, then when Christ died on the cross, our old self died with Him. We gave evidence to that in baptism.

But we didn't stay under the waters of baptism, we came forth from the water, symbolic of our rising to newness of life through the power of the resurrection.

The proof of genuine faith is endurance.

False faith is revealed by its failure – but genuine faith endures and results in reward.

If in the end, we deny Christ, then He too will deny us.

As Jesus said in Matthew 10 . . .

32 “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

While our response to Christ determines *our* eternal standing, in v. 13,

Paul makes it clear that our doubt and unbelief do not change God. Let's set v. 12 and 13 next to each other because an important truth is revealed here.

. . . If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful . . .

To some, these seem contradictory.

God will deny us, but even when we are unfaithful, He remains faithful.

To what – to all His commitments. Covenants, and promises.

Let me use an illustration from scripture here.

Peter denied the Lord – yet He was restored to fellowship and even his calling as chief of the Apostles was renewed after the resurrection.

Judas, on the other hand, denied and betrayed the Lord and was not restored.

He went out and hung himself. Jesus said that it would have been better if he had never been born.

Why was Peter restored after his denial and Judas was not?

The answer is found in Peter's repentance after his denial.

He went out and wept bitter tears, realizing his failure and agonizing over it.

He knew what he had done was wrong and sought desperately for the place of forgiveness.

His faith in God created a hope that he could be restored, as unlikely as it appeared.

Judas wasn't repentant at all; simply condemned.

His lack of faith is revealed in the act of committing suicide because he couldn't live with the reality of his own failure and didn't believe forgiveness was open.

Maybe you've failed God – maybe you've even denied the Lord before others as Peter did.

Because God is faithful, if you will but repent and turn back to the Lord, He will forgive and restore you.

Don't be a Judas – be a Peter!