

2 Timothy 2:1-7 Sermon — Faithful Ministry Under Pressure

2 Timothy 2:1-7

TEXT

2 Timothy 2:1-7 “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. **2** And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. **3** Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **4** No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. **5** And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. **6** The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. **7** Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

INTRODUCTION

Paul is writing to Timothy at a time when ministry is costly. Men have turned away. Paul himself is suffering. Timothy is going to have to keep preaching, keep teaching, keep standing, and prepare other men to carry the truth after him.

That is why chapter 2 begins with therefore. Paul is continuing the charge from chapter 1. Timothy cannot control who leaves. He cannot control how much hardship comes. He can control whether he remains faithful to what God has given him.

That is the burden of these seven verses: How do you stay faithful when ministry gets hard?

Paul answers that by telling Timothy where his strength comes from, what he must do with the truth, and then by giving him three pictures he cannot forget: a soldier, a competitor, and a husbandman.

I. BE STRONG AND COMMIT THE TRUTH — VERSES 1-2

2 Timothy 2:1 “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Paul tells Timothy to be strong, but he tells him where that strength is found: in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Timothy still has something to do. He cannot sit down and quit. He cannot use weakness as an excuse for disobedience. But Paul does not point Timothy back to Timothy. He points him to Christ.

Paul knew what that looked like in his own life.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **10** Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Paul had weakness. He had reproaches. He had necessities. He had persecutions. He had distresses. Yet Christ told him, My grace is sufficient for thee.

That is where Timothy's strength has to come from too. The work may be bigger than you. The pressure may be bigger than you. The grace of Christ is not.

Then Paul tells Timothy what he must do with the truth he has received.

2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”

Look at who receives the truth next. Paul taught Timothy. Timothy is to commit the same teaching to faithful men. Those faithful men are supposed to teach others also.

The truth keeps moving, but the truth is not supposed to change.

That verse is sometimes used to teach apostolic succession, and there is certainly succession in the verse. Paul teaches Timothy. Timothy teaches faithful men. Those men teach others. But what does the verse actually say is being passed down? The things Timothy heard from Paul. He is to commit the same teaching to the next men.

The authority is in staying with what Paul actually taught. A historical chain by itself does not make false teaching apostolic.

There is also a real question about oral teaching because Timothy heard Paul. Paul did give authoritative teaching by word as well as in writing. The question is whether what comes later is the same teaching Paul delivered. Age by itself does not turn a tradition into apostolic doctrine.

And notice the kind of men Timothy is supposed to choose. They must be faithful, and they must be able to teach others also. Character matters, and ability matters.

Look at a man trusted with responsibility in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 7:2 “That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many.”

Why did Hananiah receive that charge? The Bible tells us. He was a faithful man, and he feared God above many.

If you are going to entrust a man with teaching God's Word, talent is not enough. Personality is not enough. Popularity is not enough. Can he be trusted? Will he stay with the truth? Can he teach somebody else what the Bible actually says?

And there is a personal question here too. What are you doing with the truth you have already received? Can you explain it to somebody else? Are you staying with the same doctrine, or are you always chasing something new?

II. ENDURE HARDNESS AND STAY FREE FROM ENTANGLEMENT — VERSES 3-4

2 Timothy 2:3-4 “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. **4** No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

Endure hardness means keep going when serving Christ gets hard.

Paul is not giving Timothy theory from a comfortable place. Paul is suffering while he writes.

2 Timothy 2:8-10 “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: **9** Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of

God is not bound. **10** Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

Paul is in bonds, but the Word of God is not bound. Paul is still thinking about other people. He is still enduring. He is still serving.

Now go back to the soldier.

2 Timothy 2:4 "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Entangle means to get tied up in something so that it interferes with what you are supposed to be doing.

A Christian can have ordinary responsibilities without being entangled by them. You can work. You can provide for your family. You can handle business. The problem comes when those things wrap themselves around you and begin controlling whether you will obey Christ.

This verse is sometimes used to say that a pastor cannot have a secular job. Paul's own life answers that. Acts 18:1-3, Acts 20:33-35, 1 Thessalonians 2:9, and 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 show Paul working while ministering.

Churches should support faithful ministers. Scripture teaches that. But a job itself cannot automatically be the forbidden entanglement when Paul worked and remained faithful.

A job can become an entanglement. Money can become an entanglement. Recreation can become an entanglement. A legitimate responsibility can take so much control that Christ's work keeps getting pushed aside.

Demas gives us the warning from this same letter.

2 Timothy 4:10 "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia."

Paul tells us what happened. Demas forsook him, and love for this present world was involved.

Now come back to verse 4 and look at what governs the soldier.

2 Timothy 2:4 "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

Christ is the one the soldier is trying to please.

That gives you a way to examine your own life. Is this helping me obey Christ, or is it tying me up? Is this responsibility being handled under Christ's authority, or has it started controlling me?

Work your job. Provide for your family. Handle what God has put in front of you. But stay free enough to obey your Commander.

III. STRIVE LAWFULLY, LABOR PATIENTLY, AND CONSIDER THE WORD — VERSES 5-7

2 Timothy 2:5-7 "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. **6** The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. **7** Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

To strive for masteries is the picture of a competitor striving to win. Paul says effort by itself does not bring the crown. The man has to strive lawfully. He has to compete according to the proper standard.

Paul develops that same picture in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. **25** And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. **26** I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: **27** But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

Paul runs with purpose. He brings his body into subjection. He takes service seriously.

Some people take the crown in 2 Timothy 2:5 and make it eternal life earned by faithful performance. But Paul later explains how he looked at the end of his own course.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Paul fought. Paul finished. Paul kept the faith. Then he looked forward to the crown.

Faithful service matters. How you serve matters. Unfaithfulness has real consequences. But Christian service is not the price of eternal life.

Now go back to the farmer.

2 Timothy 2:6 “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.”

A husbandman is a farmer. The farmer labors before he eats the fruit. There is work before harvest.

Jesus used harvest language in John 4.

John 4:35-38 “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. **36** And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. **37** And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. **38** I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”

Some sow. Some reap. Sometimes you enter into labor somebody else already started. Sometimes you work and somebody else sees the harvest later.

Now return to Paul's husbandman.

2 Timothy 2:6 “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.”

Paul also uses agricultural labor in 1 Corinthians 9 when he teaches that a laborer may legitimately receive material support. So there is a strong connection between labor and participating in the benefit of that labor.

Exactly everything Paul means by the fruits here is not completely clear, so leave it where the Bible leaves it. The clear thing is this: the husbandman labors. Fruit does not excuse labor. Fruit comes after labor.

Then Paul gives Timothy one final command.

2 Timothy 2:7 “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.”

Consider means think about it. Timothy is supposed to stop and work through what Paul just said.

Think about the soldier. Am I enduring? Am I entangled? Who am I trying to please?

Think about the competitor. Am I serving God's way, or am I assuming effort makes everything acceptable?

Think about the husbandman. Am I willing to labor before I see fruit?

And while Timothy considers the words, he depends upon the Lord for understanding.

Psalms 119:125 “I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.”

Read the Bible carefully. Consider what it says. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Ask God for understanding. Study and dependence upon God belong together.

CONCLUSION

Paul is showing Timothy how to stay faithful when ministry gets hard.

Be the soldier who stays at his post. Endure hardness. Keep the affairs of this life from wrapping themselves around you. Remember who you are trying to please.

Be the competitor who runs the right way. Effort matters, but the way you serve matters too. Stay with God's Word. Stay under God's rules. Finish your course faithfully.

Be the husbandman who keeps laboring. You may sow before you reap. You may work before you see fruit. Keep working anyway.

And through all of it, do what Paul said at the beginning: be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The pressure may come. Other people may quit. Results may take time. Stay with the truth. Stay faithful. Keep going.

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