

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE - 8.13.2023

PART 23 - STRENGTHENED BY GRACE

I. INTRODUCTION

2 Timothy 1:15-2:7

15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. **16** May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, **17** but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me— **18** may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day!—and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, **2** and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. **3** Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4** No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. **5** An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. **6** It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. **7** Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

II. STRENGTH THROUGH THE GOSPEL

1. A REFRESHING BROTHER

- After outlining Timothy's duties to the gospel, with the charge that he must share in suffering for the gospel, Paul recounts how he was abandoned by many in Asia when he was arrested.
- Knowing of the mass defection of believers in Asia, had to weigh heavy upon him.
- But there was one noteworthy exception. A brother called Onesiphorus.
- Paul writes that he was not ashamed of Paul's chains.
- Upon finding out that Paul was imprisoned, he sets off for Rome to find him and he does.
- Can you imagine the joy he brought to Paul while he was in chains? "For he often refreshed me..."
- Paul reminds Timothy, "...and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus."

- This was a servant of the Lord. He was well known at Ephesus and well known to Paul and Timothy.
- This brother did not desert Paul when he was arrested, but mobilized to find him.
- He was as Proverbs 18:24 says, “a friend that sticks closer than a brother.”
- And Prov. 17:17, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.”
- We need people like that in our lives and we need to be people like that for others.
- What kind of example are you?
- Are you like Phygelus and Hermogenes, who were ashamed of the gospel?
- Are you someone who is quick to flee when obedience and boldness are required?
- Or are you a loyal servant like Onesiphorus, who refreshes others?
- Paul expresses his gratitude for this courageous and faithful brother and friend.
- He offers two prayer-wishes, one for Onesiphorus’ household and one for his friend.
- Paul overflowed with gratitude for this remarkable brother in the Lord who refreshed him.
- Onesiphorus was a brother who was not ashamed of Paul’s chains, so “*Timothy, be like Onesiphorus!*”

2. THE SOURCE OF TIMOTHY’S STRENGTH

- The recounting of the suffering that Paul is enduring, serves as an example for the next exhortations he gives to Timothy.
- It’s an example of the hardships of ministry and suffering that Timothy will have to face.
- Paul writes, v1, *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus...*
- He once again speaks with the affection of a father to a son and of fatherly concern, “*You then, my child...*”
- So he writes to him, “*be strengthened...*”
- Timothy must be strong.
- But here is the key—Timothy is not to be strong in and of himself.
- Timothy is to become inwardly strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- The resources he will need to have strength to endure the trials and hardships of ministry, the strength to share in suffering for the gospel, will come from divine grace.
- A grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- That means it is a grace that Timothy already possesses because he is in Christ.
- Every believer who is in Christ Jesus has access to this never-depleting source of grace.
- John 1:16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
- The spigot of grace is thrown wide open and that grace is available to us.
- James 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
- Grace is available to those who acknowledge they are not sufficient in and of themselves and humbly rely on the grace and strength that comes from our Lord.

- 1 Cor 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.
- Timothy is to continually strengthen himself by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- But how is Timothy to do that?
- By continually calling to his remembrance that he had Christ's grace.
- By abiding day by day depending on the enabling grace that flows from his union with Christ.
- By continually asking for that grace and acknowledging that his sufficiency does not come from himself but from Christ.
- By continually remembering that the God who had called him to ministry, will supply him with an endless supply of strength through his grace.
- If Timothy was going to stand his ground and endure, it would only be by the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus.
- We need that continual reminder in our Christian walk.
- There is an endless stream of grace that is flowing to us from Christ.
- We don't only need grace for salvation, we need it continually, every day.
- What are you dealing with that you find yourself desperate for strength?
- There is a fountain of strength in Jesus. Look for strength to endure in Christ Jesus.
- Go to the gospel daily and find strength.
- Meditate on God's Word and find strength and grace coming to you.

III. PASSING ON THE GOSPEL

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- 2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.
- Timothy will need that strength through the grace that is his in Christ in order to stand firm in the faith and guard the good deposit.
- And one of the ways that he must do that is by passing on the good deposit to others.
- This will ensure a chain of truth that will extend throughout the centuries and all time until the return of Christ.

FOUR STAGES OF GOSPEL TRANSMISSION

- There are four stages of transmission of the gospel that Paul mentions.
- **First stage: Christ to Paul.**
- We must remember that the gospel does not originate with Paul. It is Christ's gospel.
- Paul received it by direct revelation from our Lord (Galatians 1:12).
- Paul received the treasure of the gospel, the good deposit, from our Lord.
- **Second stage: Paul to Timothy.**
- Paul entrusts the good deposit that was entrusted to him to Timothy.
- "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me..." (2 Tim 1:13).

- Now he writes, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses...”
 - Timothy repeatedly heard the apostolic teaching as Paul publicly proclaimed and taught.
 - The gospel, the apostolic teaching, was not some secret tradition passed down.
 - It was a public proclamation. It was announced in the hearing of many witnesses.
 - Gnosticism, which later plagued the church, claimed that there was some secret knowledge that could be attained through private revelation.
 - We have that today with the myriad of false prophets and their secret revelations they claim to receive from the Lord.
 - We have creeds and confessions we hold affirm that remind us that what we have is not some new novelty but that we possess an ancient faith.
 - Test everything you hear, every teaching, against the Word of God.
- **Third stage: Timothy to faithful men.**
 - Paul likely has in view here elders whose primary responsibility was teaching and preaching.
 - Titus 1:7,9 For an overseer, as God's steward,..He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.
 - The good deposit must only be passed on to those who were faithful and would guard the truth with their life, as Paul did.
- **Fourth stage: faithful men to others.**
 - That's the responsibility of every pastor, every elder, to faithfully transmit sound doctrine to the church, so the faith is preserved and passed on.
 - The next generation always has to be in view.
- John Stott writes that what Paul instructs here is the true apostolic succession.
 - The succession from the apostles is about the message being entrusted to faithful men who will pass it on.
 - A transmission of the apostle's doctrine handed down unchanged from the apostles to subsequent generations, and now we have it in the New Testament.

IV. ENDURING FOR THE GOSPEL

- The rest of the chapter Paul amplifies the teaching ministry that Timothy has been called to using six descriptive metaphors for the minister and ministry.
- We will look at three of those metaphors today: the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer.
- They hold instruction for how Timothy is to endure for the gospel, but they are also depictions that instruct us in the Christian life in general.

1. THE DEDICATED SOLDIER

- 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.
- Paul uses the imagery of the soldier to teach the reality that the Christian life is one of warfare.

- One of the most vivid pictures we get of this is in Ephesians 6.
- Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.
- Like a Roman soldier, we need to be equipped with the offensive and defensive spiritual armaments to stand firm—the armor of God!
- Timothy is to expect and embrace hardship, suffering, and risk, as a minister of the gospel.
- Just like soldiers on active duty should not expect a safe or easy time on deployment, the gospel minister and the Christian in general, should not expect an easy or safe time.
- Our fidelity to Christ and his gospel means we will experience opposition and ridicule.
- Just like a soldier on active duty does not get entangled in civilian affairs to dedicate himself to being a soldier, to following commands, in order to satisfy his superior officers, Timothy must not allow himself to get entangled in anything that would hinder him from fighting the good fight of the faith and waging the good warfare.
- He must be fully devoted to Christ, his teaching, and to the flock.
- But the application goes beyond ministers. Every Christian is a soldier of Christ.
- We must all commit ourselves to a life of discipline and suffering for Christ and his gospel.
- We must avoid whatever may entangle us and distract us from our allegiance to Christ and living a life that pleases him.
- We become too easily distracted by things that do not matter and have no eternal significance.
- Are there any good things keeping you from doing the main things?
- Are you entangled with stuff that is keeping you from the spiritual things that have lasting value?
- We need the single-minded devotion of a soldier. How do we please our Lord who purchased us with his own blood?
- Christ is our commanding officer and we do what he tells us to do. Our chief aim is to please him!

2. THE DISCIPLINED ATHLETE

- 5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.
- Paul borrows the imagery from the athletic competitions in the Greco-Roman world.
- These ancient games required that every athlete must complete a lengthy training period and then swear and oath that they had done so. Those were the rules.
- Every sport has its rules. Every sport requires training. There is sweat, discipline, and rigor involved.
- Competitive sporting events have a prize. The Olympic games of Greece awarded an evergreen wreath to the winner.
- But no athlete would be crowned if they did not compete according to the rules and used unfair tactics to win.
- Timothy must play by the rules in his duties as a minister.

- He must keep and obey God's rules. He must pass on the good deposit to faithful men. He must persevere.
 - He must be faithful to do all that God called him to do.
 - In 1 Tim 4:7 he told Timothy he must "train for godliness."
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- It's the same for every Christian. We are under obligation to keep and obey God's moral laws.
 - Now this is not about rule-keeping to earn salvation.
 - But like an athlete who trains and competes in order to win, playing by the rules, every Christian should desire to walk in godliness in accordance with God's Word.
 - Our lives are to be governed by God's Word. We don't live by our own rules, but by God's.
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- Paul used the athletic metaphor likening the Christian life to a race.
 - 1 Cor 9:24-27 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. 27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.
 - Run to obtain what is imperishable. Not some wreath that will wither and fade but one that is eternal.
 - All runners run—everyone is running the race pursuing something.
 - We are to run for an imperishable crown. We train and sweat for that which is eternal.
 - 2 Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.
 - We are to run our race, faithful to God, in a manner worthy of Christ and his gospel, to obtain the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will award to us on that day.

3. THE DILIGENT FARMER

- 6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.
 - Farming is hard work. Hard work is indispensable to farming, sweat and skill are required in order to bring produce from the ground.
 - The farmer cannot afford to be lazy, if he's lazy, he doesn't survive.
 - Paul is using this analogy to illustrate the hard work of spiritual ministry.
 - Ministry is not glamorous, it is hard and requires hard work and patience to see a harvest.
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- But on the bright side, the farmer is the first to taste the fruit of his labor.
 - For the minister, there are tremendous blessings involved in watching people grow in their faith, grow in their knowledge of the gospel, grow in holiness, seeing the work flourish, and seeing people come to faith in Christ.
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- The principle is the same in the Christian life, you must do the hard work of sowing spiritually in order to reap spiritually.
 - Galatians 6:7-9 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own

flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. 9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

- We need the diligence of the farmer to sow spiritually in life in order to reap a spiritual harvest; a harvest of holiness and souls.

CONCLUSION

- 7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.
- Think over these things. Consider them carefully.
- We are soldiers, living to please Christ our commanding officer, not allowing anything to hinder us from single-minded devotion to Christ.
- We are athletes, running the race, by the rules, to attain the imperishable crown of righteousness.
- We are farmers, toiling hard and sweating for eternal things, and we will share in the harvest.
- The Christian life is difficult, we will suffer, it is not easy or safe, but it is glorious!
- As you consider these things, may the Lord give you understanding in everything.
- And may you be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?