

Session 3

GOSPEL STRENGTH

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Memory Verse

¹¹ *This saying is trustworthy: For if we died with him, we will also live with him;*

¹² *if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

¹³ *if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.*

– 2 TIMOTHY 2:11-13, CSB



Gospel Strength

THEOLOGICAL THEME: The key theological theme of this section is the infinite value of Christ and the gospel. There are related themes that orbit this fundamental emphasis, such as the authority of God's call, the reality of suffering in a fallen world, and the means of the spread of the gospel.

If you were to visit a majestic king who was the ruler of all lands, you would be in awe. If he were to invite you to his table and make you a part of his household, you would be overwhelmed with joy and thanks. Then, if he gave you a signet ring to wear around your finger to show that you belonged to the king's household, you would treasure it.

Now, imagine that you were sent out on a mission for the king to a distant land. The people there are rebellious and hate the king. They live in opposition to his good laws and mock him. When they see your signet ring, they laugh and sneer. When you refuse to take it off they deny you housing and food. When you stand firm they threaten you with violence.

At what point would you take off the ring and throw it aside? That depends on how loyal and devoted you are to the king.

Those who are in Christ are to be loyal unto death and not to fear the mocking, sneering, or violence of those outside the kingdom. They have experienced the goodness of the King. They have partaken of His mercy and grace. They know the promises of the King, and they have experienced His provision and power. Furthermore, they know He holds His subjects in His hand, and nobody can pluck them out. Their souls are secure.

In our passage today, Paul urged Timothy to remain faithful because he was on mission for the King.

? How do you typically respond when faced with opposition to a certain stance or belief?

? How does a person's willingness to hold to an unpopular view show their level of commitment to that which they say they believe?

Session Summary

In chapter 1, Paul expressed his affection for Timothy. Furthermore, he exhorted him to rekindle the gift he had been given with which to serve the Lord in the church, to guard the good deposit, and to not be ashamed. Timothy was working hard in Ephesus when he received this letter. Paul had left him there to continue the work that he had started. Now, Paul was joyfully languishing in prison and was concerned about Timothy's well being and continued faithfulness in his post.

In our passage today, Paul went straight to the point of what this work ought to look like, namely to commit to faithful men the good deposit that Timothy was guarding, so that they would teach others. Paul then reminded Timothy of the rocky road that lay ahead (some of which Timothy had no doubt already traveled), and encouraged him to find his perseverance in the inexhaustible reserves of Christ Jesus.

1. The Call to Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:1-2)

Paul loved Timothy as a son and had concern for his personal well being and progress in the faith. But Paul also loved the Lord and was burdened for the well-being and progress of the churches, the church in Ephesus included. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he had two objectives that dovetail without any conflict whatsoever.

? Think back to 2 Timothy 1. What did Paul encourage Timothy to do in the first chapter of this letter? How would this provide the foundation for the instructions Paul gave at the beginning of chapter 2?

At this time, letter writing was the exclusive way of communication between two people when geography made face-to-face meetings impossible. We know that Paul wrote another letter to Timothy, and there may have been others that God did not choose to include in the canon. It is important to note that Paul didn't write this letter to Timothy while also communicating by other means simultaneously. What we see in this letter was Paul's full message to Timothy at that time, which was a critical point in both of their lives. Paul was preparing for death and knew that this could be the last message he would be able to give Timothy. Though he encouraged Timothy to come and visit him soon (4:9), we don't know if that happened.

Consider what Paul told Timothy to do in chapter 1: “[R]ekindle the gift of God that is in you” (v. 6); “[D]on't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel” (v. 8); “Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me” (v. 13); “Guard the good deposit” (v. 14).

Paul loved Timothy and wanted the best for him. He knew Timothy was pressed and that he was facing difficulties. Yet, Paul didn't say, “take a little time for yourself, Timothy,” or “find a good hobby to take up to help you unwind and get away for a holiday.” Those aren't bad things, but Paul's counsel to Timothy stressed devoted obedience over self-care.

? How did Paul's counsel of Timothy conflict with how we generally view difficulty and hardship?

 How did Paul describe what obedience should look like in Timothy's context in verse 2?

 Application: What would it look like in our context to meet by gender a couple of times a month to disciple 2-3 other people through a book like Greg Ogden's *Essential Guide to Becoming a Disciple* (see "Additional Resources")?

Paul exhorted Timothy, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." Isn't it wonderful that the Bible is consistent and clear about the things we most need to know and do? It's true that the Bible doesn't speak directly to every possible scenario in our lives (though it can and should be applied to every scenario), but the areas in our lives and church that are of most importance are spelled out in black and white. Timothy was to teach other men who would be able to help him teach others as he sought to shepherd the church in Ephesus. This message to be taught was primarily the Scriptures.

This pattern was set up in Acts 6, when the apostles made it clear that they must be about the business of the ministry of the Word and prayer. Here, Paul described the specific way in which Timothy should carry out this critical function, to which he was called and for which he had been gifted.

2. The Price of Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:3-7)

Paul wasn't ignorant of the struggles that Timothy was facing. He was also facing them himself as he wrote this letter from prison. He was sympathetic to the struggle. Paul's way of helping Timothy wasn't to try to find a way out of the struggle, but to aid him in being faithful through it.

? What examples did Paul use to help Timothy to see how suffering and trial are mingled with obedience? How did these examples illustrate Paul's point?

Paul employed examples of soldiers, athletes, and farmers. In each of these examples, Paul illustrated how obedience to the calling comes with a price. There would be suffering. The soldier has the joy of obedience to his country, but he must forgo civilian affairs. An athlete may look forward to a trophy, but he must discipline his body and compete according to the rules. The farmer partakes in the harvest, but it is hard work to get there.

? What was Paul's main point about the difficulty that Timothy faced? How can this encourage us today?

What Timothy experienced wasn't unique to his situation. It isn't even unique to Christian ministry. Suffering and trials are common to humanity, and they are necessary parts of faithfulness and fruitfulness. Paul wanted Timothy to know that his goal wasn't to avoid suffering, but to understand that it was inevitable.

Not only was it inevitable, but also it was profitable. If Timothy would be faithful to carry out the task with which he had been entrusted by guarding the faith and entrusting it to others, suffering would surely follow, but so would blessing. Timothy would have the joy and privilege of being used of God to strengthen the church and make disciples. Moreover, Timothy would receive the rewards that are given to those who are faithful. These things are the harvest that the hard-working farmer enjoys.

Furthermore, when Timothy remained faithful in the face of suffering, especially suffering in the form of persecution, he proved the reality of his faith and shut the mouths of his accusers.

However, Paul knew that it was impossible for Timothy to remain faithful to the task under the pressure of opposition and persecution unless he kept the treasure of the gospel in plain view.

? Application: When have you had to sacrifice for the sake of pursuing a goal? How might God want to use this experience in shaping the way you seek to follow Him and make disciples?

3. The Impetus of Effective Service (2 Tim. 2:8-13)

In verses 8-13, Paul laid out in plain language the reason that Timothy should continue to persevere in the work, even when it was accompanied by suffering.

? What two reasons did Paul give for continued obedience? Did these reasons only apply to Timothy's context or do they also apply to us today? Explain.

Paul first encouraged Timothy, "Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David." Timothy was to keep Christ in mind in order to remain faithful to the calling that God placed on his life. Why? Because Jesus Christ was his life. Timothy, like all of us, was dead in his sins and trespasses. He owed a debt he could not pay. He was a child of wrath, bound to sin and destined for an eternity separated from God. He was without hope and without the ability to do anything to save himself. He would indeed be paying the price for his own sins in hell. But God who was rich in mercy toward Timothy saved him. The evidence suggests that he heard the gospel through the witness of his mother and grandmother.

The gospel is a tremendous motivator. For those who have truly been born again, the facts about God's kindness toward them in Christ Jesus lead to deep thankfulness

and unbridled love and devotion. The one who has been forgiven much gives all. Paul wanted Timothy to remember the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ on his behalf. But, that's not the only reason Paul gave to Timothy. The wonderful thing about the kindness and mercy of the Lord in Christ Jesus toward His children is that it produces those same attributes in them that overflow in action toward others. Paul said, "This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory" (v. 10). Timothy should remain faithful not only out of love for the Lord, but also out of love for neighbor. God had achieved a great rescue in Timothy's life. Now, God would use Timothy to achieve a great rescue in the lives of many Ephesians.

? How does remembering the gospel help you stay faithful to the Lord and the work he has given them?

The value of the gospel is such that suffering because of it is endured gladly. The gospel is the great gift and treasure that God has given, and there is nothing more valuable than it. The gospel is so glorious and beautiful that it is more than enough motivation to keep the wounded soldier fighting, the lame athlete running, and the blistered farmer plowing. Faithful Christians endure all for the joy set before them, just as Christ did.

? Application: How are you encouraged to take another step toward following God faithfully in light of the gospel message? Mission project? Mission Trip? Become an apprentice/co-leader? Have a Gospel Conversation with a neighbor, co-worker, or friend? Begin hosting a group of friends for Bible study?

Conclusion

Timothy was discipled by Paul and became a valuable coworker. Timothy faced difficulties, just as Paul had experienced on many occasions and was experiencing at the time of the composition of this letter.

Timothy shepherded the flock in Ephesus, but his commitment could be in danger of faltering. Paul sensed that this was a possibility, so he wrote to Timothy encouraging him to remain faithful. Paul's main message to Timothy was to remain faithful in the ministry of the Word. Specifically, he told Timothy to entrust the good deposit to other men who would also be able to teach others. These men would no doubt be a great help and relief to Timothy.

Paul reminded Timothy that suffering is inevitable, but that the suffering would be nothing in comparison with the beauty and value of the gospel. Furthermore, Paul contended that anything was worth enduring for the sake of those who would hear the gospel and respond with faith and repentance.

 What is the work that God has called all Christians to (Matt. 28:18-20)? What are specific and unique ways in which you can disciple someone, be discipled, or share your God-story through gospel conversations?

 Do you ever find yourself faltering in the mission? What motivates and encourages you to stay faithful? Why?

CHRIST CONNECTION: The infinite value of Christ and his gospel is worthy of all of our labor and sufferings.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Second Timothy 2:2 is a key disciple-making verse and principle. Timothy didn't just shepherd the flock in general, abstract terms, but he was to teach men, who would be able to teach other men. This is a direct application of Matthew 28:20, "teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you."



FOR NEXT WEEK

Gospel Truth

Main Passages

- 2 Timothy 2:14-26

Session Outline

1. An Approved Workman (2 Tim. 2:14-15)
2. Empty Speech and Useful Vessels (2 Tim. 2:16-21)
3. Flee and Pursue (2 Tim. 2:22-26)

Memorize

¹¹ This saying is trustworthy:

*For if we died with him,
we will also live with him;*

*¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he will also deny us;*

*¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful,
for he cannot deny himself.*

- 2 Timothy 2:11-13, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 2 Timothy 2:1-13
- Tuesday - Colossians 1:10-12
- Wednesday - Isaiah 40:29-31
- Thursday - 1 Peter 5:8
- Friday - Proverbs 3:3
- Saturday - Galatians 6:9