

The Duties Of The Steadfast Minister

2 Timothy 2:1-13

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Timothy is discouraged. He wants to give up. He's facing opposition. He's young. He's in a very difficult place. He's in Ephesus, and false teachers had come into the church. His beloved mentor, Paul, was in prison and facing certain death and execution. Paul is writing to Timothy, this last of his epistles—the last thing Paul ever wrote, it's Paul's swan song—to encourage a discouraged pastor. His name was Timothy. His name means one who honors God. He writes in the first chapter these words of encouragement. We're going to go back and kind of highlight it for just a moment because chapter two starts with a "therefore." Basically, what he's going to do in this chapter (if you're taking notes) is tell him what the duties are to be a steadfast, faithful minister. We're going to get some insight tonight as to what the pastor is to be and what he is to do. I think it's important.

A lot of people don't know what a pastor is to be, and they don't know what a pastor is to do. Warren Wiersbe said that he was at a pastor's conference one time and he saw a minister with two name tags on. He thought it was rather odd and asked, "Why do you have two name tags?" The man said, "I'm having an identity crisis." God wants us to know who we are. He wants us to know who we are and what we are to do, especially those who are called to minister. Paul is going to give us the duty of being strong in God's grace, the duty of transmitting the truth of God's Word, the duty of steadfast endurance for the sake of the gospel, and the duty of understanding the pictures that Paul paints of what a minister is to be and what he is to do. Let's go over that this evening.

In verse 1, we have the duty of being a strong minister in the grace of Jesus Christ. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Notice he's writing to Timothy personally and individually, "Thou," he says, "therefore, my son," so he's actually writing to an individual. Most of Paul's letters were written to groups or churches, even sometimes groups of churches, but this is actually written to a person, an individual. He says, "Thou therefore, my son," the term "my son" is a term of endearment. Some translations have "my child" because the Greek is actually teknon. It means born one. Timothy wasn't Paul's biological child, but he was his spiritual child. Timothy was led to Christ by Paul's ministry. He was actually viewing Paul as his father in the faith; and Paul, very endearingly, considered Timothy to be his spiritual son. When you lead someone to Christ, you have that responsibility of mentoring, encouraging, and guiding them in their walk with the Lord. God is our Father, no one would ever take that place or that position, but it is a blessing when God places men or women in our lives that can mentor, encourage, help, and guide us. We should all get involved in that kind of a ministry—finding a young believer and encouraging and mentoring them.

Paul was Timothy's mentor, he was Paul's protege as he calls him his son, but I want you to note the word "therefore." I won't belabor it or take too much time, but I believe this "therefore" goes back over everything he said in chapter one. You say, "Oh, no! Here it comes. He's going

to go back over the entire first chapter.” No, but I want to just survey it real quick. Everything he said in chapter one is actually the impetus or the motive for what he says in chapter two. He was trying to encourage Timothy in chapter one, and he did that in ten ways. First, by affirming his love. In 2 Timothy 1:2, Paul calls him “my dearly beloved son.” “My dearly beloved son,” opens chapter one and then chapter two opens with, “Thou therefore, my son,” my child. It’s in indication that Paul loved Timothy, and he’s trying to encourage him by his love.

Secondly, Paul tried to encourage Timothy by his prayers in 2 Timothy 1:3. He says, “I’m praying for you night and day,” or I’m bringing you before the Lord constantly in my prayers. He was encouraging Timothy by his love, his prayers, and in verse 5, by his confidence in Timothy’s faith. He says, “You have a faith that is genuine,” or authentic or real. He calls it “the unfeigned faith...which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.” These are all intended to encourage Timothy.

Paul reminded Timothy of God’s gift in 2 Timothy 1:6, and told him to “...stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” When they laid hands on him, God gave him that gift and they confirmed it with the laying on of hands. So, “Rekindle the flame and stir it up. Keep using that gift.” Timothy was timid, fearful, and was starting to let his gift be put on the shelf.

Fifthly, Paul reminded Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7 that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,” or self control. Sixthly, Paul said that God had a purpose and a calling for you, that God has called us and purposed that you are in the ministry. Seventhly, God called Paul to preach the gospel (verses 11-12) and that he was suffering for the sake of the gospel, so he’s encouraging Timothy to do the same or be willing to suffer for the gospel. Then, in verse 13, he said, “Hold fast,” we covered that, “the form of sound words,” that have been entrusted to you. In verse 14, to keep that which has been committed to you. He closes by showing two individuals that were a bad example that he should not follow, Phygellus and Hermogenes; rather, he was to follow the good example (verse 16) of Onesiphorus.

We spent about four weeks covering 2 Timothy 1, but the “therefore” in 2 Timothy 2:1 covers all of what he said in chapter 1 because God has given you a gift, because God hasn’t given us a spirit of fear, because your faith is genuine and sincere, he’s telling him to stir up the gift. Now, in 2 Timothy 2:1, he tells him, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” We all need to be strong in God’s grace. That phrase, “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” there are three things that I want to mention about that. First, it is a command or an imperative. In the Greek language you have what’s called an imperative, which is a command. This isn’t just a suggestion, Paul is actually commanding Timothy, “Be strong.” The Greek term “be strong” here is also in what’s called the passive voice. What does that mean? It means let God strengthen you.

It doesn’t mean that you pull yourself up by your own boot straps. You know, when you’re feeling discouraged and kind of down, do you appreciate someone saying, “Aw, come on! Get it

together. Be strong! Stiff upper lip." You feel like slapping them is what you feel like. "You don't know what I'm going through. You don't know my problems. You don't know my difficulties," and I know what that's like. Sometimes you get discouraged and go, "Come on! Don't be so bummed out," and you feel like, "I'll give you something to be bummed out about!" Paul doesn't do that. He doesn't just say, "Come on, Timothy! Be strong!" What he actually said in the Greek is be strengthened. Let God strengthen you, and that's God's Word for you tonight. God is saying to you to be strong, but He's saying, "I will strengthen you. I will give you the power." We let God. The idea of the passive voice means that we yield to the Holy Spirit and surrender to God, and He comes and strengthens us.

There's a third thing that I want to make mention of that it's in the present tense. The Greek is a command, it's in the passive voice, and it's in the present tense. Now, what does that mean? It means that Paul is saying to Timothy, "Be continually ongoingly habitually strengthened by the grace of God." That's what he's saying. We all have a responsibility to surrender obediently to God and let God's grace strengthen us. Day and night, 24/7, we have to surrender and yield to the Holy Spirit, walk in obedience to God's Word, and let God strengthen us. The idea is that God has a part and we have a part. God strengthens us, but He does it with our cooperation. The power belongs to God, but we must yield to Him and surrender in obedience to Him. We can't be passivists, we have to be activists. We have to surrender and follow the Lord, but God has promised to strengthen us. It's not in a void that Paul tells him to be strong because he tells him specifically how, "...in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Grace is not only for salvation. We all know and understand that, right? "For by grace are ye saved," Ephesians 2:8-9, "through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." By the way, it goes on to say, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," that word "workmanship" is a Greek word *poiema*. We get our word poem from it. It literally means something made or a work of art. God saves you by His grace and you become His work of art. You become His *poiema*. There's our part in believing, faith; God's part is saving us. We get saved by grace, but—listen to me very carefully—we also are sanctified by God's grace. We're not sanctified by works. We're saved by grace, and we're sanctified by grace. You say, "Well, what do you mean sanctified?" Made holy. When you become a Christian, God declares you righteous, you're justified, and that starts a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. That's the process of sanctification or becoming more holy.

I talked about this last Sunday morning. There's positional righteousness, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness," we're born again and have the righteousness of Christ. Then, there's practical or imparted righteousness—living a holy life. How do you do that? By the grace of God! You don't do that by your own energy or by your own strength or by your own ability. We're saved by grace, we're sanctified by grace, and let me add another one, we serve by the grace of God. God doesn't just say, "Serve Me," and then He kicks back and folds His arms and we have to go off and do it on our own. Our salvation, our sanctification, and our service to God is all depending upon the grace of God. I need God's grace to preach. I need God's grace to pray. I need God's grace to counsel. I need God's grace to serve.

Everything I do, I must rely upon the grace of God. The day that I don't do that, I am in big trouble. I need to say, "God, I don't have the wisdom, I don't have the strength, I don't have the ability, I need Your help!" You see, grace is unearned, undeserved, unmerited favor.

I know you've heard that definition over and over a million times, but it's really a good one. That's why I repeat it—unearned, undeserved, unmerited. It's just God's grace. God's grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. God's mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve, so God is merciful and He's gracious. He doesn't judge us, He's merciful. He does save us and strengthen us and works through us for His glory. He is gracious. So, you're saved by grace, you're also kept by grace, and you serve by the grace of God. Salvation, sanctification, and service are all by the grace of God. If anyone knew the grace of God, it was the great Apostle Paul; and we need to understand the grace of God, that we can't earn or merit or deserve anything from God, that we come humbly and rely upon Him for His help to be a better husband, to be a better wife, to be a better parent, to be a better obedient child, to be a better grandparent, to be a better worker. When you go to work tomorrow morning, you get in your car and start heading out to work and say, "God, I need your grace today. I need Your strength. I need Your help. I need You. I don't deserve it, but I need it," and you rely upon the grace of God in all that you do.

The duty of a minister is to build himself up and be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, not become legalistic or try to do the ministry in the works or the energy of the flesh. By the way, Ephesians 5:18 reminds me of this passage, 2 Timothy 2:1, because Paul says, "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." It doesn't say Holy Spirit, but it's the Holy Spirit, "...be filled with the Spirit," and in the Greek it is in the passive voice. It is a command, and it's in the present tense. It's be being continually filled by the Spirit. It's all-inclusive which means that every one of us must allow the Spirit to fill us, and I think it ties in with what it means to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Remember, that "be strong" is again in the passive voice. It's a command, and it's in the present tense; so just continually let God strengthen you.

The second duty of a minister and a believer is to be transmitting God's truth, God's Word, to others who will in turn share and transmit God's Word to others. This is amazing. Look at verse 2. Paul says to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit," or entrust, "thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." What is a minister to be (verse 1)? He's to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. What is a minister to do (it's here in verse 2)? He is to teach the Word of God the apostolic doctrine found in the New Testament to other men who are faithful, who will teach God's Word to other men who are faithful, who will teach God's Word to other men who are faithful. It is actually to be passing the baton to each next generation, and on and on and on and on it goes. This is an amazing thing. A lot of pastors today are floundering. They don't have any idea about what they're supposed to do, what they're supposed to be, and they get on all the different kind of fads and trends that flow through the church to try to grow the church instead of opening the Bible and finding out from God's Word—which is our roadmap, our GPS, our guide—on how we're to be serving the Lord in the church and being obedient to it.

What does Paul mean when he says, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses”? I think it’s pretty simple. I think Paul is telling Timothy, “All of the teaching, all of the doctrine, all of the truth, all of the things that I have taught you and shared with you.” Paul the Apostle received this directly from Jesus Christ. That’s not the case with me. I receive it from God’s Word. Paul wrote it down so we could receive it, and we’re taught by others that go before us. Paul received it directly from the Lord. He was an apostle, he had apostolic authority, and was able to write under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Paul’s writings—theologians call it the Pauline epistles, the writings of Paul—are all give by inspiration of God as well as the other epistles and the other books of the New Testament and the Old Testament as well. By the way, the Old Testament isn’t less inspired than the New Testament. All of the books of the Bible are given by inspiration of God, equally inspired. They may not all be of equal value to a Christian today, but they are of value and are given by inspiration of God.

Paul was teaching Timothy. What is the job of a pastor? To teach the Bible, plain and simple. That’s the job of the pastor. It’s not primarily to go to potlucks and to have food with people, go to the hospital, do weddings and funerals, and to counsel people. We do all that (and I’ve done all that for many years), but that’s not my number one job. My number one job is to teach God’s Word. God has placed in the church pastor-teachers (by the way, that’s hyphenated in Ephesians 4:11. It’s not a pastor and a teacher, it’s a pastor who teaches). A pastor is to be a teacher. You can be a teacher without being a pastor, but you can’t be a pastor without being a teacher. You got that? If God has called a man to pastoral ministry, his number one job is to “Feed the flock of God which is among you.” How does he feed the flock of God? With the Word of God—not philosophy, not psychology, not his own ideas, but simply the Word of God—nothing more, nothing less. You’re not to add to it; you’re not to take away from it. That’s what Paul did. He handed this to Timothy, and he handed it to Titus. He handed it to Luke and these other men. This is that succession that’s transmitted from the apostle to these other men. They were spiritual leaders in the church, and they were to teach others.

A couple of other things that I want to say about this, notice who they were to commit it to. The word “commit,” by the way, means to deposit it with them. It’s a banking concept. It’s to put it in trust. Remember in chapter one Paul said, “...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Paul had committed his trust in believing in Christ, his soul to Christ, and his ministry to Christ; then, Paul told Timothy to guard that which was committed to him, the gospel; now, he tells him that he takes the gospel and the truth of God’s Word and passes it on, and he commits it. He deposits it to other people.

Two things, faithful men, number one, and they are able—they have an aptitude or an ability—to teach others. I want you to see those two things. You don’t just give it to anybody, you give it to faithful men. They needed to meet the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3 for an elder or a bishop or an overseer or a pastor, and some of those requirements were that they be above reproach, they lived blamelessly, the husband of one wife, not given to wine, and we covered all of those qualifications. So, “Timothy, you have been given this trust of the Word of God, now I want you to pass it on to these other men, and make sure that they are faithful and able to pass

it on to others.” Notice the idea of faithful men.

Do you know what God is looking for more than anything else? He's looking for faithfulness. He's not looking for great talents. He's not looking for great abilities. He's looking for faithfulness. God looks on the heart. You may kind of write yourself off and say, “Well, I don't really have any talents. I'm not that smart. I don't have any great abilities.” My thought is that you're a candidate for the glory of God because the Bible says, “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things...and the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” When you see God using somebody wonderfully, you shouldn't think immediately, Well, it's because they're so smart, or They're so talented, or They're so gifted. No. They're just a candidate for the glory of God—weak thing, base thing, despised thing—that God might use them for His glory. That's what God does. God doesn't look for great ability or great talent, God just looks for availability and finality or faithfulness to what God gives you to do. So, pick out faithful men.

In 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says that the number one quality of a minister should be faithfulness—to God, to His Word, and to God's people. Notice also that these men who were to be entrusted with the Word of God were also to be able to teach others—teach, teach, teach, teach, teach. Do you know the church is to be a teaching ministry? Some people are surprised when they come to Revival and actually learn the Bible. They say, “Wow! This is awesome.” Well, what else are you supposed to learn? “Wow! I come to this church and I'm really learning my Bible.” I hope you do. Shame on us if we're not learning the Word of God, and you're to be commended, you're out on a Wednesday night. I know it's a challenge, but we're having a Bible study. You're learning God's Word. The church is to be a teaching institution. Yes, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” We're to go out and reach the lost, but we're also to gather and to congregate to edify and to build up one another. The number one way we do that is in God's Word.

Let me say something, lest I forget. (Everything I preached tonight, I'm preaching without notes. All I have is my text in front of me, so you wonder why I'm kind of figuring out what to say. It's just coming to me as I talk. It doesn't mean I didn't study and do my homework, okay?) In the Catholic Church, they have what they think is a direct succession in their pope from Peter, handed down, you know, hand on hand—that Peter was the first pope, and then he handed it down, and he handed it down—and they think they have this apostolic succession. The Mormon Church today, (I don't put the Roman Catholic Church in the same category as the Mormon Church, so forgive me by mentioning them in the same breath) they do believe that they have apostles handed down by direct succession. That's not what this verse is teaching, and some actually turn to this verse to try to prove that point. Notice that he wasn't laying his hands on men who had the authority, he was passing the teaching of the Apostle Paul to the next generation. Notice it first came to Paul from Jesus; then, it went from Paul to Timothy; then from Timothy to others; then it went from others to others and guess what? It's come to me, and I'm sharing it with you. Guess where it's found? In the B-I-B-L-E, yes that's the book for me, I stand alone on the Word of God, The B-I-B-L-E. Amen? It's not this apostolic chain of

succession coming down. "Do you have living apostles today?" No, we don't, but we have apostolic doctrine, and it's found and contained in the Bible, the Word of God.

Your Bible came from God through Paul to Timothy and to us. We have God's Word, and it doesn't change. It never changes. The same message that Paul preached to Timothy, we preach to you tonight, and if it's not, again, shame on us. We need to be faithful to the Word of God. My job is not only to teach the congregation but to find faithful men who are apt to teach (one of the qualifications for an elder in 1 Timothy 3 is, "...apt to teach," able to teach) and instruct them—teach them and train them—in the doctrines and how to present God's Word; so first, the duty of being strong in God's grace, and secondly, the duty of transmitting God's truth, God's Word, to the next generation. It's like passing the torch. It's like a relay race.

I think relay races are pretty cool where you pass the baton and the next runner has his leg and then you pass the baton and the next runner has their leg. What would you think if one guy at one point of that relay race that was halfway through just said, "Aww, forget it!" and threw the baton and sat down? "I don't feel like running." What about the guys that have already run? They're not going to be too happy. What about the guys that are yet to have run? What about your relay team? They're going to say, "What did you do? We've worked hard! We've trained. We committed to this and we all have to work hard together." You have to pass it down.

What if Paul hadn't passed it to Timothy? What if Timothy hadn't passed it on? It wouldn't come to us. You wouldn't have a Bible right now. Do you know that in church history men and women actually gave their lives for you to actually have a Bible right now? They actually suffered and died so you can have the Word of God. They were persecuted and opposed and put to death to bring you the doctrines of God's Word, yet we take it so cavalier. We don't really think about our responsibility. Now, I know the context is pastor teaching other men who can teach other people and other men, but I believe that you have a responsibility. If you come on Wednesdays and Sundays and other nights of the week—and you come to FIT class and other doctrinal classes, small groups—you have a responsibility to find somebody who doesn't know what you know and to pass on your knowledge. Take it home and share it with your husband. Take it home and share it with your wife. Share it with your kids. Share it with someone at work. Get a small group together and teach them what you've learned.

One of the best ways to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus is to teach other people. You know, when I study, I get blessed; when I teach, I get doubly blessed; and when you learn and you grow, I get blessed again. If you want to be blessed, pass on what God has given to you. Don't be a reservoir, be a conduit. Be a channel of what God has given you to be a blessing to others. It's not enough just to sit, learn, and gain information, you have to pass it on. You're only going to retain and be really blessed by what you learn if you pass it on. You know, when you teach somebody else, that's when it really solidifies it in your own heart and in your own mind, when you're teaching others. We need to move on.

There's a third duty or responsibility. It's the duty of steadfast endurance for the sake of the gospel. This is the heart and soul of this passage (verses 3-6) where Paul's going to paint

three pictures. It's been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, right? Paul paints three pictures that the Christian life, and especially the minister, is a soldier, he's an athlete, and he's a farmer. Let's look at them. Paul says in verse 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," he's talking about the Greek athletic games, if he's an athlete, "yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully," and then the farmer in verse 6, "The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits."

Paul is encouraging Timothy to steadfast endurance in his gospel ministry. He starts by painting the picture of a soldier. Someone said, "The Christian life is not a playground, it's a battleground," right? Paul wrote in Ephesians 6 and says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places," so we're all in a spiritual warfare, especially those who are in active ministry, especially those that are preaching and teaching the Word, you discover there really is a devil. I heard a guy that was preaching on a street corner one day and someone started heckling him saying, "You Christians, you all believe in the devil. I've never met the devil. I've never encountered the devil," and the preacher so wisely said, "It's because you're going the same direction he is." You turn and go the other direction, you're going to run right into the devil, right? If you're going the same way, you're not going to encounter him. You start serving the Lord, you're going to realize, "Hey, there's a spiritual war going on."

Paul is not so much talking about spiritual warfare here as he's just drawing from the imagery of a soldier and the idea that a soldier faces hardship, difficulty, has to stay focused, and doesn't get involved with things of the world so that he can please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. Let's look at it (verse 3). He says, "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." I've never been in the military, obviously, so I've never been in war. I've never been in military active duty, but anytime I've looked at or studied it—watch movies, read books—I'm overwhelmed by the rigor and the hardships and the difficulties that they face. You think about the hardships that the American troops faced in WWII in Europe driving Hitler's forces back. You think about the soldiers that were in Vietnam and the difficulties and the rigors of days without eating, bloodshot eyes watching for the enemy, sleeping in a foxhole, eating horrible food, fighting the enemy, just the difficulties. It's hard, and Paul is actually conveying that concept here that serving the Lord can be difficult. It's not a cakewalk. It's not easy. It's hard. Paul's telling Timothy, "Yes, it's difficult. You are a soldier. Be willing to endure hardships, hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

In verse 4 Paul says, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life," he's saying that if you're in active duty and you're in a war with the enemy attacking, you're not worried about, Did someone mow my lawn? Did someone scratch my car? What's the economy doing? What's on tv tonight? What's happening? You are focused on the battle at hand. You're not involved in things of this world. You're not distracted. Now, he's not saying that a pastor can't have side employment or a secular job on the side (Paul was a tentmaker). He's actually just saying that as a minister you should stay focused. Don't get entangled. The

word “entangled” is the word entwined or wrapped up in the affairs of this life. Let your contact with the world be as light as possible. You know, you just have your canteen, your food rations, your pack, your weapon, your helmet, and, man, you’re out there in the battle zone. You don’t carry a lot of things with you. You let your contact with the world be as light as possible. A lot of times, even as Christians, we get bogged down serving the Lord because we are so worried about what are we going to eat, what are we going to drink, what are we going to wear, what do we put on, and all of these things the heathen seek after. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” So, endure hardness is first (verse 3).

The second is in 2 Timothy 2:4, don’t get entangled with the affairs of this life and the reason is, here’s the motive, “...that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” You want to please your commanding officers. You want to obey orders. I believe that whether you’re a pastor or a full-time minister or a Christian or whatever you’re doing, all of us here tonight right now should have one desire, and that one desire is to please God, to be pleasing to God, to be obedient to God. Amen? So, it’s the imagery of a soldier—the hardships, the difficulties, the need to stay focused, don’t get entangled in other things, stay consecrated and concentrated on the task at hand.

Paul then moves to the athlete (verse 5). “And if a man also strive for masteries,” that’s the picture of the Greek Olympic Games. The Greeks were really into the Greek Olympics, and they were really into the running, the wrestling, the javelin throw, and all of the stuff that happened in the arena. You have to prepare by discipline. Now, they actually had a requirement that for at least nine months prior to the event that each contestant practiced, trained, and disciplined himself preparing for his event. If you didn’t do that, you’d be disqualified; so you’re striving for the masteries. “...yet is he not crowned,” or you won’t get the reward, you won’t win the event, “except he strive lawfully.” You have to obey the rules. The soldier stays focused and endures hardness, and the athlete disciplines and trains and works hard to prepare for the race. We think of the Olympics today. Those people will train with great rigor, you know, discipline, diet, exercise, for like four years for a single event, and it’s unbelievable the energy and effort they put into it. He’s telling him the ministry is difficult. Serving the Lord is hard. It takes dedication, and you have to strive according to the law. You can’t break the rules. You have to run in your lane. You have to obey the laws of the race in order to win the prize.

Notice, thirdly, (verse 6) the farmer. The King James has “husbandman that laboureth,” so we have the soldier that has hardships, the athlete that is striving, and then we have the farmer who is laboring. What do all three of these images have in common? Hard, hard work. It almost makes me tired right now. You’re in a war, you’re in a race, and you’re farming. You say, “Oh, come on, farmers? They just ride around on a tractor with a piece of straw in their mouth and their suspenders on.” No. Farming is hard work. I don’t know from experience, but I did plant a garden one time—only once, never again. I buy my veggies. It was so much work that I just said, “I don’t want to do that.” Can you imagine having a farm? They work from sunup to sundown, and they have to fight the elements, to till the soil, and plant the seed. Another thing

about farming is you have to be patient, right? I remember when I planted my garden, “Ok, come on! I wanna eat!” It took forever, and then finally it started to sprout and grow and the gophers came in and got it before I did! Ripped me off! Farming is difficult. Ministry is difficult. It’s a spiritual battle. It is a spiritual battle! I’ll just stop right there. Satan doesn’t like pastors. He doesn’t like Christians. He doesn’t like you. He doesn’t like your marriage. It’s running a race!

In the Greek Olympics they had wrestling. They would wrestle. Wrestling was difficult. They had boxing. Boxing is difficult. It’s exhausting. And, they’re farming. Farming is hard work and takes patience but the fruit. When you win the war, blessing. When you run the race and win, you get the crown; by the way, their crown was a little laurel wreath, just a little kind of a headband of little leaves that they put on and they would just wither up after a day or two. At least athletes today get a gold, silver, or bronze medal. You know, you got trophies in boxes in your garage that you were so proud of when you got them and they’re all just covered with dust today, but we’re doing it for an incorruptible crown. We’re doing it for a crown that won’t fade away that’s reserved for us forever in heaven.

In each one of these images, and we could spend a lot of time on it, we need to move on, but the soldier has a sword. What is the sword? It’s the Word of God. The athlete has the rulebook and must strive according to the rules—we have the Word of God as our guide. The farmer has the seed, which is the Word of God, that he sows and it brings forth fruit. I think every minister’s ministry should be Bible-centered—that you use the sword of the Spirit, you follow and serve the Lord according to the Word of God, and you sow the seed, which is the Word of God, which brings forth fruit. Every one of these three pictures carries with it the imagery of the Word of God as well as focus for the soldier, dedication for the athlete, and diligence for the farmer. The fruit will come. It says there that he is also to be (verse 6), “...first partaker of the fruits.” He does all the work and gets to benefit from it and eat the fruit of his labor.

In verse 7 there’s another call to duty, that is, a call to understand the meaning behind these three pictures. Look at verse 7, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” He basically gives him the three pictures and then says, “I want you to consider these pictures.” The word “consider” means to think deeply, intelligently, and rationally. It means to use your mind and to think down upon. Then he says, “...the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” I like the idea in that one verse that, again, there’s our part and there’s God’s part. Our part is to use our minds and to think about these things, and you should take these images tonight and go home with them and muse on them—meditate and think about them. You should take doctrines from the Bible and think about and meditate on them. Ask God to show you their significance and their meaning for you. Don’t just listen to the sermon and then go home and forget about it. Take notes, re-read it, go back over it. Do you know what I do on Wednesday night a lot of times after I get home? I go back and re-study what I just preached, and I start seeing things that I missed or that I didn’t say or I didn’t see, and I kind of go back over it because it just solidifies it in my own heart. The Scripture says to think about what I am saying, and the Lord is the One who gives you the understanding.

There's our part, that is, to study, to think, and to meditate; and there's God's part which is to bring illumination to the understanding of God's Word.

Paul closes in verses 8-13, and I won't tarry on these verses. He closes with now motivation to duty. I love the way this section closes, and I took all 13 verses because it is one unit. Now, he gives the motivation for duty. Let's read it. He says, "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel," Paul means that's the gospel that I preach, "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. 11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

In this section, Paul basically gives four things to motivate Timothy, and us, to being faithful servants of the Lord. I want to point them out. The first thing he tells us to do is remember Jesus, verse 8. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel." There's a lot that could be said about that verse, but basically, this is the thrust of what Paul is doing. He's saying, "Timothy, keep your eyes on Jesus Christ." He's really doing just that, "Keep your eyes on Jesus Christ." Do you know why we get discouraged in the Lord's work? Do you know why we get discouraged living the Christian life? We get our eyes off of Jesus Christ. By the way, this is another reason why you ought to be here for communion when we have communion because what we're doing is looking at Jesus and remembering Jesus who suffered and died and rose from the dead, and that should encourage us that if Jesus would give His life for us on the cross, then I can get out of bed and spend some time in prayer. If Jesus would die for me on the cross, then I can get busy, roll up my sleeves, and serve the Lord or share the gospel with someone. So, get your eyes on Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ who according to my gospel suffered and died and rose from the dead, but the resurrection mentioned there means that that's the centrality of Paul's preaching.

Here's the second thing Paul did to motivate him to duty. He says, "Remember me," verse 9. "Wherein I suffer trouble," now he mentions the gospel, and it's because (verse 9) of the gospel that Paul was in trouble. As a matter of fact, he was in prison. He says, "...as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." Isn't that awesome? So, because of the gospel that God entrusted to me and my fidelity to preach it, I've been arrested, put in prison, I'm in bonds, but God's Word is not bound. Amen? God's Word marches on. Now, we can be thrown in prison, we can be silenced by man, but guess what? The Word of the Lord endures forever. I have no fear but what God's Word will continue. Jesus said, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," right? How wonderful that is!

We remember Jesus, we remember Paul—he was willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel—remember others that have suffered for the sake of the gospel, and then here's the third thing to remember (verse 10), remember the church. You might say, remember your brothers and sisters in Christ. "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.” First, remember Jesus. Secondly, remember that Paul suffered for preaching the gospel. Third, remember the elect, remember the church.

These are three practical things that can keep a pastor going today—remembering Christ, remembering Paul, and his love for the church and God’s people. A pastor must love the people of God. He must love the church of God. He must give his life for the bride, the church, and be spent for it. Paul says, “I endure all things for the elect’s sake,” these are those that are chosen by God’s sovereign grace and make up the church, the bride of Christ, “that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” Notice our salvation is obtained and it’s obtained by faith in Christ; but it brings to us salvation, and that salvation is in Christ Jesus and brings us glory that is eternal, which is a reference to heaven.

There’s one last thing we’re to remember. It’s in verses 11-13, that is, we’re to remember the future rewards. So, remember Jesus, remember Paul, remember the church, the elect, and remember the future rewards. Verses 11-13 is one of what we call the “faithful sayings.” That title or term used in verse 11 is only used in the pastoral epistles. It’s used in 1 Timothy 1:15, 1 Timothy 3:1, 1 Timothy 4:9, Titus 3:8, 2 Timothy 2:11, and we see here the “faithful saying.” A “faithful saying,” it is believed, was actually a hymn of the early church. They actually sang this as a song. It had kind of a hymn aspect to it. Notice what it says, “For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: 13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.”

You say, “How is that supposed to encourage Timothy?” Let’s look at it for just a moment. Notice the statement “if we” four times, verses 11, 12, and 13. The first thing he says is, “For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him.” There’s two ways to look at that, and I have to solemnly confess, I’m not sure which is the right interpretation. Both of them are biblical, and both of them are possible. One of them might be that Paul is saying that when you are born again you died in Christ. It’s our identification with Him. Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live,” right? “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” When you became a Christian, guess what? Your old life died. That’s what baptism symbolizes. When you go under the water, it’s a picture of burying the old life. When you come out of the water, it’s a picture of your new life. It could be that it’s just saying that if you’re a Christian, you died with Christ, you’re gonna live with Christ.

In the context of the opposition, the persecution, Paul’s in prison. Paul’s gonna die. He’s at the end of his life. Paul is encouraging Timothy in facing persecution. Many good scholars, and I think it’s a good possibility or actually believe that what Paul is saying is that if you are martyred, you’re going to heaven. If you’re martyred—if you die for Christ—you’re gonna go to heaven. Now, you don’t go to heaven because you die for Christ. You don’t get to go to heaven because you’re martyred, but you stand and face even death because your Christianity is real, genuine, or authentic. The Bible says, “...to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

You know what you should ask yourself tonight? Would I die for my faith in Jesus Christ? Staring down the barrel of a gun, would I deny Christ or would I confess Christ? Would I be willing to actually die for Christ? Would I be willing to be tied to a stake and burnt for Jesus Christ? Christians went through that before us. Someone said, "Should we be carried to the skies, On flowery beds of ease, While others fought to win the prize, And sailed through bloody seas?" I mean you're sitting in a comfortable pew in an air-conditioned sanctuary, and you had a nice dinner tonight, but these Christians were in dungeons. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins. They were destitute with afflictions. They were thrown to the lions. They were wrapped in animal skins and devoured by beasts. They were actually made into human torches and lit by Caesar Nero all because they were Christians. Their crime? They loved Jesus. They would not pledge allegiance to Caesar. They wouldn't put the incense on the altar and say, "Caesar is lord." They were willing to die; and if you die, you're going to go to heaven. That's what Paul's saying possibly to Timothy.

Then he says, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." This "if we" could carry the idea of since we suffer for Him or with Him, we will reign with Him. Now, if you're a real Christian, if you're an authentic Christian, the Bible says, "...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," and if you suffer with Him, you're going to reign with Him. He also says, the negative is, "if we deny him, he also will deny us." Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you. If you deny Me, I will deny you. If you confess Me, I will confess you." So, "if we deny him," the idea, I believe, here is that you're not a real believer—you're not genuinely saved—He'll deny you. Could it be that a true Christian would have a lapse of faith? Yes. Peter did. Remember when Peter said, "I don't know Him." He denied that he even knew Him, but immediately repented, turned back, and got right with God because he was a true child of God. There was repentance. If we disavow Christ, and we disown Christ, then He will disavow, disown, or deny us.

In closing, notice what encouraged Timothy, and it certainly encourages me, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful," even though I'm a flake, God is faithful. Amen? Even though I falter, stumble, and fall, God is faithful, "he cannot deny himself." Amen? What Paul is telling Timothy to do is be strong in God's grace. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strengthened. Let God's grace strengthen you. Amen? Let's pray.