

LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text
Part twenty-four - Sunday, July 28th, 2024
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TIMOTHY - Becoming a Dependable Follower of Jesus (continued)
2 Tim 2:1-13

- 1) **STRONG IN GRACE** - vs.1 - “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus....” These words look back to **1:15-18** - “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.”

Paul points out the carelessness of some of the Asian partners in contrast with the singular faithfulness of Onesiphorus. His point is Timothy too must stay strong and true. And the *measurement* of this will be the way he continues steadfastly, not only when others are marching with him, but especially when all others turn away. This is the only way you prove to yourself that your faith in Christ is authentic. It is a source of great assurance with you stand on your own for Christ Jesus. Without going against the crowd, you will never know how much of your faith in on the inside, rather than just *mimicking* other Christian people you know.

Mark the emphasis here. There is still much that sounds an optimistic note in Paul’s heart - “***Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus....***”(2:1). Much is lost when grace is linked only to *forgiveness*. Paul tells Timothy there is grace enough in Christ Jesus to enable any determined follower to stand firm.

To Paul, this was **key advice** in the training of a young leader. Persevering against the crowd is an imperative lesson for all preachers, teachers, parents, etc.

- 2) **THE TASK OF MATURE CHRISTIANS - vs. 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.”**

This verse builds on what Paul has already said in **1:13-14** - **“Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. [14] By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.”**

First, guard what has been entrusted to you in the faith(1:14). If I leave you something and then tell you to **guard** it, something very important is being implied. It says something if the **value** I’m leaving with you and it says something about the potential **threat** that will arise against it.

I know how to guard my wallet and my car. How do I guard **truth**? Meditate on it. Know it inside out. Practise it in your own daily life. And constantly be alert to things that **look** and **sound** the same but aren’t quite. You, especially if you’re still young, are **called** to that kind of discernment.

Second, entrust to others what you have been taught so they can teach it also. The reason for Paul's instruction in this verse are clear. He wants Timothy to **leave Ephesus and join him in Rome (4:9 and 21)**. Timothy's job is to make certain that he is building a **strong foundation for continuous ministry after he himself is off the scene**. In these words Paul stresses the difference between **proclaiming** and **discipling**.

You are called to more than just **believing** the gospel. And even declaring the Gospel is not the same as teaching the saints to do the work of the ministry in the Body of Christ - which is why the contemporary church so frequently settles for the former by itself.

The crucial issue seems to be how the early church measured the maturity of its members. The writer of Hebrews gives a very clear answer in **Hebrews 5:12** - **“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food....”**

So there was some kind of **standard** or **measuring stick** in the early church. At some point in time it was unacceptable for anyone to remain on the same beginner level. The ability to minister to others was the acid test for who was really moving ahead in the life of Jesus and who wasn't.

- 3) **NOT TAKING THE EASY WAY OUT - vs. 3** - **“Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”** The main point of this verse is not merely that Timothy should stay away from worldly amusements. Probably it is best to frame this verse in the whole context of **faithfulness in the face of opposition** (see also 1:13-14, and 2:1).

Paul seems to be pointing out that there will come times when it will seem ***so much easier to back out of a difficult situation by compromising on commitment to Jesus***. In our culture that pressure is most likely the stigma of political incorrectness of giving Jesus Christ the ***unique*** role as Redeemer and Lord in a society that considers it mandatory that all religions be given equal truth value. To give Jesus Christ ***unique*** space is to invite persecution.

Paul says a soldier ***is not free to change sides just because the battle gets rough***. That is what some of the Asian believers had done (as mentioned in **1:13-14**). In contrast to them, Timothy must remain true to His Lord and Commander.

There are all sorts of situations that call for this reminder from Paul - the lone Christian student in a pagan atmosphere - the Christian husband or wife with an unsaved partner - the only Christian in an unchristian home - the lone Christian in the godless work place - the Christian business person who is alone in his ethical standards and feels the pressure to bend his convictions for profit - the Christian who vocally lifts up Jesus in a world increasingly intolerant to adherence to Jesus as Lord.

- 4) **LOOKING FORWARD TO THE SECOND COMING - vs. 5-7 - “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.”**

Don't shy away from looking forward to the Second Coming and eternal reward for faithfulness to Christ. Paul says the only reason an athlete runs is **reward (2:5)**, and the only reason a farmer plants is **harvest (2:6)**. Timothy is to face whatever life dishes out with this eternal view in mind.

The writer of Hebrews records the reminder that ***Jesus, Himself, had this as the motive in His life's work - Hebrews 12:12:2-3*** - "....looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, *who for the joy that was set before him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. [3] *Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*"

While this is something we have all known and been taught since childhood, it's important to note that Paul says the **existence** of the reward will not, in itself, sustain us throughout difficult stretches in our Christian walk. We must all "**think over**" these things (**2 Tim. 2:1**) and the Lord Himself must renew them and "**give you understanding**"(7).

There is great insight here. Perhaps it was because of the intensity of the persecution that the members of the early church greeted each other with the simple word "**Maranatha**" - Jesus is coming!