

Passing the Torch A Life Worth Living 2 Timothy 2:1-13

Introduction

In the past couple of weeks, we have been taking a look at Paul's second letter to Timothy. When he writes this letter, Paul is back in prison at Rome. However, this time Paul is not just under house arrest; we find him chained in a cold, damp Roman cell with no hope of getting out alive. (4: 3)

Paul pens this final letter to Timothy, which many consider as his last will and testament. As you read this letter, you begin to realize these are the words of a man who knows he is about to face death. Many scholars think Paul died within weeks of writing this letter.

Paul thinks about Timothy and wants to leave him with some encouragement and guidance. He knew Timothy would need boundless strength to endure in his work as pastor of the church in Ephesus. Most of us need constant reassurance and encouragement to remain firm and steadfast in our faith. Thankfully, God is always willing to give us that strength. Isaiah wrote, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might, He increases strength; for those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." (Isaiah 40:29, 31)

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul writes, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6: 10-11)

Paul knew that his time was short. So, he doesn't waste any time getting right to the point with some important advice for Timothy. Paul is probably considering his own life and legacy as he reaches out to give Timothy vital tips that make your life worth living.

These valuable insights from Paul are timeless and worthwhile for all those who want to leave a legacy of faith. Paul lists several key elements that are crucial to living a life worthy of being called a Christian life. Paul wants Timothy to develop a credible and enduring witness as a follower of Christ.

First, Paul advises Timothy to be strong in the grace of Christ.

I. Be Strong In Grace

In verse 1 of chapter 2, Paul writes, "You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2: 1)

That advice is so much easier to read than to practice! But Paul is not talking about a personal achievement here. He's not suggesting that Timothy must work to be strong in grace. The literal translation is more like, "let yourself be strengthened"

or better yet, "allow yourself to be strengthened by others." Some so many people need encouragement and strength but refuse to let anyone help them. When you refuse to let others encourage or help you, you are rejecting the grace of God. We need lots of encouragement and grace from others to remain steadfast in the faith.

When Paul tells Timothy to be strong, he gives him a specific way to make that happen. The grace we have in Christ Jesus gives us a confidence and boldness we could never achieve on our own. The strength of grace is essential to a stable and secure Christian life. It is the gift of God's help, even when we don't deserve it.

The Holy Spirit always wants to reach out to you in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and give you the strength you need to walk in faith and deal with every situation you are facing. Don't ever refuse God's offer of grace! Accept it, even if it comes to you through the hands of others.

II. Choose Faithful Servants

Paul's second piece of advice is to choose faithful servants. Don't hang around with people who have no faith! Criticism, sarcasm, and negativity will only bring you down.

Keep in mind Paul is passing the torch of faith to the next generation. We are witnessing a changing of the guard. Paul is finishing his leg of the race and is passing the baton to Timothy. In Chapter 4, Paul writes, "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7)

Now it's Timothy's turn to carry the torch. But there are other runners ahead who need to be prepared to run their race. In this relay of life, no one can do the job alone. Paul reminds Timothy that he must commit the gospel to other faithful servants who, in turn, will be able to teach it to others.

Paul mentions four generations of believers. First, Paul, then Timothy, then faithful men, and then others also. We could call this the spiritual law of multiplication. Paul's insight and advice here is the only way we can reach our world with a population of over seven and a half billion people.

There are many accounts of how this principle works. But one of the best known is how the life of a relatively unknown Sunday School teacher named Edward Kimball. In 1858 a young shoe salesman attended Kimball's class, and Kimball was able to lead Dwight L. Moody to faith in Christ. D.L. Moody would become a well-known evangelist. While preaching in England, Moody's message awakened an evangelistic passion in the heart of Frederick B. Meyer. F.B. Meyer began preaching on American college campuses and won a student to Christ named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman began holding revival meetings and touched the life of a former baseball player named Billy Sunday. When Billy Sunday began holding crusades, a group of local businessmen invited him to conduct a meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. Sunday's preaching so moved the businessmen that they planned another revival meeting and invited another evangelist, Mordecai Ham, to

come and speak. During Hamm's revival, a young sixteen-year-old teenager attended a service and gave his life to Christ. That young teenager's name was Billy Graham.

Only eternity will reveal the names of those saved through the succession of faith. But it only works because of the faithfulness of those willing to commit the message of Christ into the hands of other faithful servants who will, in turn, teach others also. What impact will your life have in bringing others to Christ?

Paul tells Timothy to look for those who are faithful, available, and teachable. It's our job to find them, teach them, train them, and then turn them loose.

III. Learn To Persevere

Paul's third piece of advice is found in verse 3, "You, therefore, must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." (2 Timothy 2:3)

Make up your mind that living the Christian life is worth living all the way to the end. Paul's words are not a suggestion; they are a command that carries with it a sense of duty and requirement. Paul wants us to understand that enduring hardship and even suffering is part of following Jesus. God does not promise to protect you from facing any trouble or difficulties. But he does promise to be with you and preserve you through the hardships of this life.

Paul offers three images of perseverance in verses four through seven.

First, Timothy must adopt the attitude of a soldier who plans and expects that hardship will be a part of the mission. In verse 4, Paul writes, "No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier."

The historian, Josephus, wrote, "Each soldier every day throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle; no confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyzes, no fatigue exhausts them. All their camp duties are performed with the same discipline maintained on the battlefield. (War 3. 72-108)"

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians 6:12-13) Good Christian soldiers are required to maintain the discipline and action worthy of a Christian.

Paul also uses the image of an athlete to illustrate perseverance. In verse 5, he says, "If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." The point is clear. An athlete can't make up the rules as

he pleases. Each athlete is required to compete according to the established rules or be disqualified.

Every athlete wants to win the race, but only those who persevere to the end obtain the crown. Being prepared and fit is crucial to winning. In the words of one Christian writer, "The only exercise some Christians get is jumping to conclusions, running down their friends, sidestepping responsibility and pushing their luck." That is certainly not the kind of exercise Paul is talking about here.

Paul pictures the Christian life as a race. In Philippians 3:13 he writes, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul was committed to leaving a legacy of a life well-lived. He wanted to run the Christian race to receive the crown. He wanted Jesus to reward him with the words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21)

There are no shortcuts to living the Christian life. We are required to run our race in this life according to the rules. The textbook and the rulebook of life is the Bible. Christians can't make up their own rules for living the Christian life. We are required to live the Christ-life. Paul tells Timothy to look for serious followers, not flirts!

The third image Paul uses to describe perseverance is the hardworking farmer. In verse 6, he says, "The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops." In Paul's day, farmers had to endure the hardship of labor to harvest a crop. They didn't have tractors and seeders and combines. Farming was hard work. Unlike the soldier or athlete, there was nothing glamorous about the work of a farmer. Paul knew he was called, blessed, anointed, and filled with the Spirit. But he also knew that being a follower of Christ was hard work. A good farmer, in those days, had to endure the heat of the day, fatigue, long hours, and rigorous schedules.

Perseverance is an absolute necessity for those who plan to obtain the crown for a life worth living. Everything worthwhile in life is accomplished with extreme effort and often great hardship. Paul ends this thought with an admonition in verse seven to, "Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things."

None of this makes any sense to you unless the Lord gives you understanding. The soldier, the athlete, and the farmer are each illustration of perseverance. Whatever the discipline of life, perseverance is needed to succeed. Soldiers who quit fighting will lose the battle. Athletes who stop running will lose the race. Farmers who quit working will lose their crops.

Perseverance is a key ingredient for a life worth living.

IV. Remember Your Freedom in Christ

In verse 8, Paul writes, "Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2 Timothy 2:8-10)

Earlier, Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

In his letter to the Romans he wrote, "Jesus Christ our Lord, was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The only eternal hope in the world is the hope Jesus offers. That offer rests upon the resurrection. Our freedom from life's addictions and vices rests upon the redemptive and rescuing work of Christ on the Cross. In John 8:36, the Apostle John writes, "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." The only lasting freedom is the freedom we have in Christ. And Paul says, "Remember that!"

Conclusion

In verse 11, Paul leaves us with this thought, "This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."

This is one of five "faithful sayings" found in the Pastoral epistles. The statements made in the faithful saying are all conditional. #1, If we die with Him, we shall live with him. The Bible speaks of dying with Jesus in a couple of ways. Symbolically, through baptism, we declare the death of our old sinful life because of Jesus' death on the Cross. We also declare our new life has begun in the resurrection power of Jesus Christ. Physically, however, many believers have died through martyrdom. Sometimes believers are called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice of sacrificing their physical lives for the cause of Christ. But God promises that those who do face martyrdom for the sake of the gospel will live eternally with Christ.

Statement #2, If we endure with Him, we will reign with Him. Paul assures us that our present sufferings and trials are worth enduring because the reward is worth it! We shall reign with Him! The Bible says we will rule and reign with Jesus Christ.

Statement #3, If we deny Him, He will deny us! In Matthew 10:32, Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father, who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in Heaven." That doesn't need any further explanation.

Statement #4, If we are faithless, He remains faithful. There are many people right now who need faith and hope for their future. The message of gloom and doom will not lift their spirits. Doubt and fear and panic do not belong to the message of good news. The Bible says that without faith, it is impossible to please God! (Hebrews 11:6) Unfortunately, some people judge God by the failure of some of His followers. That is complete foolishness. Our faithlessness cannot in any way detract from the perfect glory of God.

Paul gives us some incredible insight into a love worth living in this second chapter of Second Timothy. I encourage you today to listen to them.

- Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
- Commit the gospel message to faithful followers.
- Endure the hardships of opposition.
- Remember the freedom you have in Christ.

If we die with Him, we shall also live with Him.

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.

If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful still!

Faithful servants will always choose a life worth living!