

Faithfully Following Jesus (2 Timothy 2)

Introduction:

Last week we looked at the Big Idea of one's calling. By calling we mean the vocation that God has designed for each of us and in which we will find our greatest satisfaction. In particular, we saw how the fulfilling of one's calling will happen through difficulty. Timothy was tempted to abandon his calling because of unusually harsh persecution. He needed to overcome shame and fear of many kinds in order to be bold in his faith. Like Timothy, we need to keep our sense of calling alive and flourishing by focusing on Jesus, nourishing our soul with His word, and having the support of a community of like-minded believers.

In chapter two I suggest that the Big Idea Paul wanted Timothy to know is that to:

Continuing Well in your Calling Requires being Strengthened by Grace so to Endure Faithfully

If there is one exhortation I would suggest for your remembrance from chapter two it is this:

Be Strong!

I invite you to turn in your Bible's to 2 Timothy chapter 2. Let us pray.

When in High School and University I was a wrestler. This is not the kind of wrestling some watch on TV where people are thrown around but more like what is seen during the Olympics. Wrestlers are known for being strong. They usually have muscles bulging. I was never very muscular but I did exercise to gain strength. My discipline for exercise continues until today as I regularly jog three times a week and work out in a gym whenever possible. For one to be strong physically he/she must exercise. If we want to be strong for life and ministry we must discipline our thinking and behavior as well.

1. Strengthened by Grace: In verse 1 Paul commands Timothy to BE STRONG. The verb form is a present imperative which we can understand. It's a command. However, what is called voice in the Greek language is here passive and not active. This implies that one cannot make him or herself strong, like with bodily exercise, but rather it comes from an outside source. We participate but cannot become strong on our own. Our strength comes from God's grace, or His enabling. Today, many people see strength coming from the government, health care, financial savings, etc., but these are not available for most followers of Jesus around the world. Jesus alone is the source of strength.

Being strong can refer back to chapter one where Timothy started well, he had nothing to be ashamed of, he should maintain sound doctrine and guard what had been entrusted to him. To live his calling he needed strengthening just like we all need. Although ultimately Timothy's strength would come in his relationship with the Lord, there were some things Paul says he also needs to do in cooperation. Over the rest of the chapter Timothy will be told to entrust, endure, engage or encourage, and evangelize. These all require strength of mind, behavior, and will.

Strength for Multiplication through Entrusting

Some of my favorite verses in the whole Bible are found in 2 Timothy chapter two. Verse two is one such verse and says, “*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.*” In this verse we find what some have called the ‘generational principle.’ Paul taught Timothy who was to teach faithful men who were to teach others also—four generations are mentioned: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others. This philosophy of ministry is one of multiplication or reproduction. Paul lived his life openly before many witnesses because this principle was critical for all to follow to advance of the Gospel. Paul obviously learned this method of ministry from none other than Jesus who also lived transparently before all people and taught His disciples as they taught others. This is God’s plan for sharing the Gospel with all people. Life on life disciple making!

I was fortunate to come to faith in Jesus during my university years. I was taught by a navigator disciple maker who helped me learn how to disciple others. After a few years of this training during university and then afterwards when employed and doing ministry on another campus, I was able to see some young men I disciplined go on to disciple others. Dennis taught me and I taught Cliff and Cliff taught Jim and so on. The Gospel continues to advance only as we all are faithful to pass on to others what we learn. And when we don’t reproduce the Gospel in others the generational multiplication stops. God’s plan is to advance the Gospel through each of us.

Timothy was commanded (imperative) to entrust or commit or deposit this sacred biblical truth to others. Let me ask you, “who helped you come to faith in Jesus or disciplined you early in your Christian life?” I hope you occasionally thank this person for entrusting to you the great gift of spiritual life. Who comes to mind that you have influenced for the Gospel so that he/she is either considering Jesus as savior or growing in Christ? I hope you each have been passing on the precious Gospel truth to others. If you do not currently have someone you are discipling, may I suggest that you pray, asking both God and some friend to help you do so. This is one of the main reasons God chose us and gave us a calling—to make disciples. Or as the navigator’s motto says, “*To know Christ, make His known, and help others do the same.*”

Transition: In verses 3-8 we find further insight on where strength comes from and how to draw upon it. For the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer, difficulties are inevitable. Don’t let yourself become entangled or distracted. Jesus the son of David, the Messiah, provides resurrection power for strength to live. So be strong!

2. Faithful in Calling: Let us move along in the text to verses 11-13. Paul mentions a statement that is *faithful and trustworthy*. There is only one way a person can be strong and endure.

Jesus died, providing salvation from sin and launching the process of spiritual multiplication. In some mysterious way we also died to sin when we believed on Jesus. Jesus rose from the dead and reigns so we can live free from sin having dominance over us. As we endure through the difficulties of life we will be rewarded with future blessings. There is always the possibility, however, that life becomes too tough and we deny Him. The next phrase is hard to understand since it implies that Jesus will deny us and we can lose our relationship with Him. What I

understand here is a warning for the person who continually denies Jesus. We know that Peter denied Jesus before the crucifixion and repented to go on follow Him until his death. So the denial mentioned cannot be the total severing of our relationship with the Lord. The focus is more on the latter phrase in verse 13 where even if we are unfaithful, God remains faithful to what He has said and done. The emphasis is on God's faithfulness and our privilege to be like Him—to be faithful.

Word Study: Let us look at this word faithful in more detail.

A. What does it mean to be faithful? Faithfulness has been defined as 1) Adhering firmly and devotedly, as to a person, a cause, or an idea; loyal. 2) Having or full of faith. 3) Worthy of trust or belief; reliable. 4) Consistent with truth or actuality: a faithful reproduction of the portrait. For the Christian, faithfulness occurs when we allow the Lord Jesus to reproduce Himself in us and become transformed by His life. Only then can we entrust the truth to others.

The word used for faithfulness in the New Testament (*pistis*) often refers to “faith, belief, trust.” But it also means “faithfulness, reliability, fidelity.” In the OT the word (*emet* or *aman*) can be translated Amen. It has the root idea of firmness or certainty. Thus, the idea of being firm or lasting naturally leads to the ideas of reliable, trustworthy, faithful. Faithful implies that one can be counted on, competent for tasks and persevering through difficulties. This is a wonderful word that all followers of Jesus should want to characterize them.

B. What is our motivation for being faithful? A motive is an emotion, desire, a felt need, or an impulse of some kind that compels a person to action or to certain pursuits. Thus, motives are crucial to everything a Christian does. Every day we have both good and bad motives that lead us to good and bad actions. In Romans 8:29 we learn that God is conforming followers of Jesus into His image or likeness. Hopefully every day the Holy Spirit has the freedom to transform us so we become more like Jesus. As this happens our motives and actions will be like Jesus. Our motivation for faithfulness is to be and live more like Jesus. A great daily prayer is for sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and to fully cooperate with Him in our transformation.

C. How do we cultivate a faithful life? In preparing for this sermon I read of a relevant illustration for faithfulness.

“In the eleventh century, King Henry III of Bavaria grew tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. He made application to Prior Richard at a local monastery, asking to be accepted as a contemplative and spend the rest of his life in the monastery.

“Your Majesty,” said Prior Richard, “do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard because you have been a king.”

“I understand,” said Henry. “The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you.”

“Then I will tell you what to do,” said Prior Richard. “Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has put you.”

When King Henry died, a statement was written: “The king learned to rule by being obedient.”

God has given us each a calling. After we discern it and live it we might tire of our roles and responsibilities. Some people like change or they get bored. Others might question if their sense

of calling is really very exciting. While others still get weary from what seems to be endless monotony. It helps to remember God has planted us in a certain place and by His strength we can live out our calling. Our faithfulness pleases God and it advances the Gospel.

Faithful to God's Word: Another of my favorite verses in the Bible is verse 15, *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”* Here is another command (imperative) for Timothy to give diligence in his pursuit to represent God well. Because the verse refers to handling God's word accurately, the command can mean to study diligently. Literally this word means to cut straight, precise, according to a pattern. God's word, the Bible, is so precious that He Himself ensured that we have it to read today. Many people in history have tried to destroy it totally or distort it in part. The word of truth deserves our careful attention and study.

As a young Christian I had a strong desire to understand the Bible and I learned that there are five main ways to value it. We can invest time to listen to it, read it, study it, memorize it, and meditate on it. You can liken each form of Bible intake to the fingers on your hand as an easy memory illustration. Hopefully we are nourishing our souls through multiple means.

Workman implies hard work more than great skill. It is not easy to value God's word today with our busy life pressing upon us. Years ago the navigators wrote a pamphlet titled, “7 Minutes with God.” Surely we can set aside 7 minutes a day to focus on God and let Him speak through His word. If it is hard work to find 7 minutes a day we are too busy or too lazy. I started with 7 minutes when a new believer and my interest grew. My hunger to learn the Bible led me to study different biblical books while in university. My hunger continued so I applied to and was accepted at seminary to prepare for a lifetime of study and teaching. For most of my 45 years of following Jesus I have read through the entire Bible each year. I have memorized over 1000 verses. I say this not in boast but as an encouragement for you to seek to be a workman who lives your calling in such a way that you will never be ashamed.

Faithful to Evangelize: Then there is one last passage in 2 Timothy which is one of my favorite in all the Bible. It is verses 24-26. READ

V24 The word bond servant is really slave. This word speaks to one's identity and is for all followers of Jesus not just leaders. Do you realize that when you believed in Jesus you became His slave. As a slave, our privilege is to teach or testify of our encounter and experience with Jesus. There is nothing that brings more joy in life than helping another person understand God's reality. Our approach will make all the difference in how a listener receives and responds. Bob Pierce founder of World Vision would say that, “people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” Build relationships first with humility and then people will want to hear what we have to say.

V25 Our hope and prayer is that God will grant people repentance. This is an important theological statement. We cannot persuade anyone to accept Jesus' forgiveness and offer of salvation. God must give the faith for people to repent—to change their mind about who God is and their need for forgiveness. We pray and hope and testify with life and words always hoping that God is ready to act. When He does, the angels in heaven rejoice and we are richly blessed.

V26 We must realize that those who do not believe in or follow Jesus are in need of release from an enemy who has enslaved their mind and heart. Jesus made this clear in John 8:43-44 when He told the Pharisee's that they belonged to or were under the control of their father the devil. When people do not value biblical truth or desire to experience God's love it is largely due to being held captive by Satan. He is the real enemy, not people. When we see people in need of release from bondage to the devil our intentions and approaches will change. We will have compassion on those who cannot live the truth of the Bible because they are not spiritually alive.

In these three verses we find four exhortations that lead to four consequences. Be kind to everyone and avoid quarrelling. Be able to teach. Be patiently enduring evil through self-control. Be gentle when correcting opponents. As a result one can see repentance from sin, enlightenment to the truth, awareness of sensible thinking, and deliverance from demonic ensnarement. As we experience transformation we can and should help others do the same.

Conclusion: I suggested that the Big Idea of this chapter was for Timothy to recognize that for him to continue well in his calling would require frequent grace, much endurance, and unshaking faithfulness. Let me close with two illustrations on faithfulness. We will look more into endurance in the next chapter.

The late United States Senator Mark Hatfield tells of touring Calcutta with Mother Teresa and visiting the so-called "House of Dying." This is where sick children are cared for in their last days, and the dispensary is where the poor line up by the hundreds to receive medical attention. Watching Mother Teresa minister to these people, feeding and nursing those left by others to die, Hatfield was overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the suffering she and her co-workers face daily. "How can you bear the load without being crushed by it?" he asked. Mother Teresa replied, "My dear Senator, I am not called to be successful, I am called to be faithful."

It was a stormy night in Birmingham, England, and the famous missionary, Hudson Taylor, was to speak at a meeting at the Seven Street schoolroom. His hostess assured him that nobody would attend on such a stormy night, but Taylor insisted on going. "I must go even if there is no one but the doorkeeper." As it turned out, less than a dozen people showed up, but the meeting was marked with unusual spiritual power. Half of those present either became missionaries or gave their children as missionaries; and the rest were faithful supporters of the China Inland Mission for years to come.

The two most populous missions fields in the world, India and China, and two godly servants remind us of important truths concerning our calling. Our calling, whatever it is in terms of vocation, is one for which we should be faithful. Success may come but faithfulness must come. Our commitment is serve our God and Savior regardless of names (who shows up) or numbers (how many show) or the nature of the situation (difficult or calm conditions). God looks for our faithfulness first and foremost.

Let us recommit ourselves today to Be Strong in living out our calling and seek with God's help to be as faithful as possible. Let us pray.