

Be Strong in God's Work  
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2 Timothy 2:1-10,14-15,22-26

Opening: How has God spoken to you this week? Who would share?

No honest believer in Christ will tell you living the Christian life is easy. Truth is, as many Christians say, it's IMPOSSIBLE. Impossible without the power of God through His Holy Spirit living in us. With that POWER it IS POSSIBLE to live the Christian life, but it's still HARD WORK. In 2 Timothy chapter two Paul tells Timothy (and us) HOW we can be STRONG in God's work.

1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 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. 3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

- Verse 1: Paul warmly reinforces his relationship as Timothy's "father in the faith."
- Verses 1-3: **Look for the things Paul is instructing Timothy to do. What are they?**
- "Be strengthened by grace." **What do you think that means?**
- Verse 2: **What else did Paul tell Timothy to do?**
- Last week in 1:14 we were told that the message of the Gospel is a TREASURE entrusted to us to "guard." We not only "guard" it, we SHARE it. We do that by entrusting it to other faithful servants who entrust it to others and so on. That's not only making TEACHERS that's MAKING DISCIPLES who spread the Gospel.
- Verse 3: Paul challenges Timothy to be a "good soldier of Christ Jesus."
- **What does it mean when we say, "So and so is a 'good soldier.'"**
- **What are some of the CHARACTERISTICS a "good soldier" would have?**
- Paul is reminding Timothy (and us) that God calls us to do our BEST in His service.

Ecclesiastes 9:10a (NIV)

10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might,

Romans 12:11 (NIV) says a Christian should...

11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 (NIV) urges us...

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

- Ministry requires hard work and diligence. Paul was challenging Timothy with that fact.
- God's men and women in ministry who fulfill their calling have to work HARD.
- Do we regularly pray for them? Do we take the time to acknowledge their hard work?
- As he challenged Timothy to be a DILIGENT worker Paul used three examples:

4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. 5 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.

- Verse 4: Paul's first example: a soldier. **How is living the Christian life like being a soldier?**
- Verse 4: "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits" - **What does that say about how that soldier does his or her job? What does verse 4 say a soldier desires?**
- Verse 5 speaks to an athlete who runs a good race but is DISQUALIFIED.
- We don't need to look far in the news these days to see this played out before us.
- **How might we be DISQUALIFIED working for God even if we're GOOD at what we do?**
- God's servants MUST STRIVE for biblically-based LIVING and TEACHING.
- No matter how talented we are, we will be rewarded if we abide by the God's rules.
- Verse 6: The Apostle Paul gives perhaps the BEST example of a DILIGENT WORKER: the "hard-working farmer." Remember the DODGE RAM commercial in the Super Bowl? For two minutes that TV commercial reminded us how HARD life is for a farmer!
- **How is living the Christian life like being a farmer?**
- Just THINK what we could do for God if we are STRENGTHENED BY HIS GRACE (verse 1) and if we work like a LOYAL SOLDIER; a CHAMPION ATHLETE; and a HARD-WORKING FARMER! What a PICTURE of DILIGENCE! As Oswald Chambers called it, giving "My utmost for His highest!"
- Serving God can be HARD WORK. When we consider that, it might discourage us.
- Satan loves to scare us off with the thought that working for God will be "too hard...too inconvenient." What could MOTIVATE US to serve God so DILIGENTLY? In verse 8, Paul tells us ...

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

- When we think about what Jesus has done for us it should MOTIVATE us to "endure" some hardships so that others "may obtain salvation." That's how Paul lived!
- Think about it! Paul was IN CHAINS LIKE A CRIMINAL for the gospel, and most modern Christians are afraid we might "break a nail" in the service of Christ!
- Satan will say "it's too much work...it's too hard."
- If he can't DEMOTIVATE us Satan will DISTRACT us.
- The church at Ephesus has some people who weren't LAZY, they were MISGUIDED. They had ZEAL but that zeal was for the wrong things. Verse 14.

14 Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

- **What do you think verse 14 is talking about? What “words” were they quarreling about?**
- Some people just love to debate. There’s nothing wrong with some healthy debate on matters of faith. **Why would Paul tell Timothy NOT to argue over words?**
- Two ideas here: 1. The church at Ephesus was infected with FALSE TEACHERS twisting the message. Paul was saying don’t waste your time arguing with FALSE TEACHERS. 2. The church (THEN and NOW) has always has people who spend more time debating and discussing the Christian life than LIVING the Christian life.
- Regarding false teachers, verses 16 & 17 say:  
*16 But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene.*
- As for those who just like to argue about non-essentials of doctrine, verse 23:  
*Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.*
- Here’s a question: **When you argue with someone who is pushing an agenda, what virtually NEVER happens?**

George Bernard Shaw said: *“Never wrestle with pigs. You both get dirty and the pig likes it.”*

- So, how SHOULD we respond when people are twisting the message? With TRUTH! Verse 15 is a good one to UNDERLINE.

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.

- “A worker who has no need to be ashamed.” Someone who takes their work seriously.
- That term “rightly dividing” or “handling the word of truth” compares communicating the truth of God to the work of a craftsman building with precision and care.
- STEVE JOBS STORY: “Because every artist signs his work.”
- When we communicate the Gospel we need to be ACCURATE and PRECISE so that we’re TRUE to the scripture. That takes the hard work of STUDY and PRAYER.
- Also, “rightly dividing” or “rightly handling” isn’t just about how we communicate the Word of God with our mouths. It’s about “practically living out” God’s word. (Swindoll)
- When we share the Gospel, people are watching to see if we LIVE IT.
- For the next few verses Paul wrote some more about those who had wandered from the true Gospel. Then in verses 22-26 Paul writes the JOB DESCRIPTION for the kind of MINISTER Timothy needed to be. It also applies to YOU and ME in whatever role we serve God:

22 So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- Show maturity and focus on righteousness, faith, love and peace. Associate with other like-minded believers.

23 Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

- Verses 24 & 25 are interesting in light of Paul's charge to Timothy to be BOLD not TIMID. Bold means don't back down on what's important.
- Verses 24 & 25 mean: You don't have to be a JERK to be BOLD and stand for what's right. Patiently endure evil, Timothy, and correct those who need correcting with "gentleness."

So, What's The Takeaway?

- The old saying tells us: "Anything worth DOING is worth doing RIGHT!" What's more WORTHWHILE than serving God as we live the Christian life?
- Like a good soldier, a disciplined athlete, a hard-working farmer, we CAN be a workman who is "unashamed."
- We are ABLE to do that if we are "strengthened by the grace" that is in Christ Jesus.