

20251019 2 Timothy 2 – Be a Diligent Disciple – Disciple Others Diligently

Be Strong in Grace

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

v.1 It is God who gives us the grace to handle the things that he calls us to. Even last week I sat with a man who will never eat food again. He has a severe intestinal disorder and must receive all nutrients through a feeding tube for the rest of his life. He asked me, “how can I do this? Pastor, where do I go from here?” All I could muster was the truth that if God brings you to some circumstance, He can give you the grace to get through it. The only way we can face much of what we come to in life is by the grace of God. That means that it is God who gives us the understanding to encounter and have victory through some of the very difficult things that we have to go through.

2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. [meditate on the word or you will not have understanding and wisdom]

V 2. Paul continues to exhort Timothy concerning what “you heard from me”. This refers to what Paul had told him personally and to all the writings that Paul had written to the other churches. Most scholars believe this now comprises 13 books of the New Testament. I am sure that Timothy had read most, if not all of them. Paul tells him to take these teachings and pass them on. What Paul is talking about is what is called “DISCIPLESHIP”. This is something that we all need to be involved in. Much of this chapter is talking about our relationship with the Bible and how that is to be lived out in our lives. Paul tells Timothy to take these teachings and to pass them on, and do so to FAITHFUL men. I want to talk for a few minutes about discipleship. Some people don’t understand discipleship. I was talking about it one day to another pastor, and he mistakenly thought it was what is called “shepherding”. That’s not what discipleship is. The “shepherding movement” was all about control. Discipleship is all about teaching and learning. The word comes from the Latin verb “disco, discere”, meaning “learning”. Let’s take a look at the Great Commission.

19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen (Matthew 28:10 NKJV)

Jesus makes it clear that we are not just to make converts, but we are to make disciples. We are charged with making “learners” and “doers” of His teachings. We too are to be disciples, and we are to make disciples of others.

V.v. 3-6. Paul then gives examples to convey to Timothy the idea of being a true disciple. This involves a lot of hard work and “discipline”. A discipline can be a body of knowledge that is learned. For example, my father was an expert in the disciplines of heart and lung functions. Discipline also involves self-control that is achieved by learning and following orders. It is needed to have the ability to keep working at something that is difficult. It takes self-discipline to “keep on keeping on.”

- a. Paul first analogizes discipleship by an example of the military. What happens when you join one of the armed forces? Several in our congregation enlisted and found themselves in service overseas. You lose the comforts of home and you are put into a position of being battle ready. As believers, we understand that being battle ready and being engaged in battle is just part of being in the world and getting through life. No soldier gets entangled in civilian matters. If you’re stationed overseas in Iraq, you should be focused on the battle at hand. You shouldn’t be involved in who’s running for mayor of Baghdad. This warning is a reminder that there are many things that will distract a pastor or any believer from their ministry or their task at hand. Stay focused on your ministry. It might be the nursery, the kitchen, the food pantry, etc. Don’t become distracted by things that aren’t related to your ministry. You will get side tracked and miss the primary objective that God intends for you. Some things just have to be sacrificed because “there is a war on.” Stay engaged in it. Regardless of your task at hand, there will always be many things that come in and compete for our time, talents, treasure, and attention. Stay focused on the battle at hand. Paul says “a good soldier wants to please his commanding officer.” You don’t please the commanding officer by being off doing your own thing.
- b. Paul then he gives the example of an athlete. You don’t get the gold medal by competing according to your own rules. Paul is saying, stay in the game and stay in the competition. There are rules in ministry, and we must never ignore those. Some of the rules of the spiritual realm are:
 - i. You will reap what you sow.
 - ii. You will be blessed by keeping moral rules in life. We don’t murder, steal, lie, commit adultery, etc. You can’t be a successful athlete if you don’t play by the rules of the game. Sandy and I used to always tell our kids that even unbelievers who follow God’s commandments live a much more trouble-free and blessed life.
- c. Paul lastly gives the example of the farmer who should be the first to enjoy the first-fruits of his harvest. What we see in all of these is **HARD DILIGENT WORK**. It is the

diligent person who will see productivity in his or her life. The farmer works hard to enjoy his share of the crop. It is hard focused work. Being a true disciple doesn't happen automatically. It involves hard work. My dad used to paraphrase something Thomas Edison said. Dad would say, "Most people don't recognize when opportunity knocks because it has on overalls and looks like hard work." Being a disciple involves discipline. It involves hard work.

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ 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.

Then Paul presents Jesus as the "offspring of David." In this phrase, he is connecting up the Old Testament with the New Testament. The promise was made in the Old Testament, and Jesus was the fruition of that promise when He came to earth. I heard of a Christian once who insisted that Jesus was Italian. This is nonsense. God sent His son, Jesus, as a Jew, and He was brought up in a Jewish household. He studied the Torah and He not only knew the commandments; HE WROTE THEM as God.

Christianity is in reality the continuation of Judaism. It is the story of God's revelation to mankind. The Old Testament pointed to Jesus and there within it, is the revelation of Jesus in the New Testament. The Church has tried for centuries to erase the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. Sandy has described the Church as being the table top that rests on Judaism. The top of the table can't stand without the legs under it. You can't understand the New Testament without having an understanding of the Old Testament. You can't understand Jesus' sacrifice for sin on the cross without understanding the provisions in the Old Testament for dealing with sin. And the Nation of Israel is still part of God's plan for mankind. I once heard it said, "If you want to keep an eye on God's foreign policy, keep an eye on Israel."

These following verses were either some kind of "saying" or they were perhaps the lyrics of a song.

¹¹ This is a faithful saying:

For if we died with Him,

We shall also live with Him. [Water baptism is a picture of this]

¹² If we endure,

We shall also reign with Him. [There rewards for staying faithful – troubles are momentary]

If we deny Him,

He also will deny us. [Jesus made this clear in Matthew 10]

¹³ If we are faithless,

He remains faithful; [We mess up as a faithless act – He is ALWAYS faithful]

He cannot deny Himself. [God's nature doesn't change – He can't deny Himself]

Let's now look at the second part of this chapter.

¹⁴ Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.

v.14 Imperative present – KEEP ON DOING THIS. What is he reminding them to do? This is Paul's first solemn warning telling them not to quarrel about words that do no good. There is something about humans where we look for differences with others. It is so very easy to fall into the trap of majoring on the minors. While I've been pastoring I've had questions posed to me about all kinds of things that I have never dreamt of. I've heard arguments and quarrels about the correct wording during a baptism or the correct words of the so called "sinner's prayer". I've heard arguments about the definition of grace, the end times, and even whether we should participate in water baptism. Paul says that striving over these things CAN POSSIBLY RUIN YOUR FAITH AND THE FAITH OF OTHERS. Don't do it.

¹⁵ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. ¹⁶ But shun profane any idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.

v.15-16 We must be zealous and do our best to present ourselves APPROVED to God. Notice that it doesn't include the approval of men. For example, a pastor must not focus on the approval of others. Sometimes what really needs to be heard is hard to say. If I'm looking for your approval, I'm not going to say what needs to be said. We must be workers who don't have to be ashamed at all by interpreting God's Word correctly. This is a phrase used in Greek that comes from an agricultural context. It is saying to "cut a straight row". That's how we are to interpret the Bible. You don't veer to the left or to the right. This means taking the Bible for what it says and not adding or taking away from it. Some incorrectly think that this means that we are to carve up the Bible into what applies to us today and what does not apply to us. That is NOT WHAT THIS MEANS. It means to interpret the Bible correctly. We must be very careful to not just take parts of the Bible and leave others out. Every word and phrase of the Bible has a purpose for being in there. You will notice that this is why I don't do much topical preaching. I don't think you'll get the whole counsel of God's word if I'm jumping from topic to topic.

I love teaching through the Bible because I don't have to be anxious about what I need to preach on from week to week. I teach this book verse by verse and chapter by chapter because I want to expose to you the whole counsel of God's word. Do you know what I'll preach on next week? It will be 2 Timothy chapter three. We don't just take part of the Bible and ignore the rest of it. Also, be careful about joining "theological camps" to define what you believe. You will find yourself trying to interpret every verse you come to by the camp which you have chosen. What do I mean by "camps"?

There is the Calvinist camp and the Arminian camp, and there are many other camps. The camp you belong to will influence your interpretation instead of just seeing what the Bible says.

When we do this, we begin to ignore what God's word says. Don't get tangled up in theological wrangling. What sort of things gets tangled up?: water baptism, Sabbath keeping, a believer's relationship with the Law of Moses, eschatology, gifts of the Spirit (Pentacostals or cessationists), generational curses and how to break them, predestination (doesn't mean that who is saved is fixed by God), being called, God's sovereignty vs. Man's good will, spiritual warfare (people cussing out the devil). Paul calls topics like this "idle babbling. If you get side-tracked by all of the divisive issues, Paul warns that it can lead to ungodliness.

¹⁷ And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, ¹⁸ who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. ¹⁹ Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

V.17-19 Side issues are seldom constructive. Just this past September 23rd there was a lot of talk about the beginning of the Tribulation because of certain Jewish feasts, astronomical happenings, etc. STOP TRYING TO FIGURE THIS OUT! NO ONE KNOWS THE HOUR! All of this just confuses people and it makes Christians look like fools. Paul says these are "idle babblings". Just study the word and enjoy the stability and sanity of God's word. If you take the Bible as it is, the peace of Christ will rule in your heart. I don't want turmoil. I want peace, and God gives me and you peace in and through His word. Just take the word for what it says. Be comfortable in not knowing exactly things it doesn't say.

²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. ²¹ Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. ²² Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³ But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. ²⁴ And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

V.20- Paul uses the example of our lives as being a great big house. You have things in there that are precious to you and other things that are not. For example, we have the Beleck and Waterford that belonged to my mother. It is beautiful Irish porcelin and crystal that is used for elegant things. We also have garbage cans and toilets that are not so beautiful and they are not used for beautiful things. Paul is saying that if you can rid yourself of your worldly passions, it is like cleaning up your house. The choice is yours. You can act like a garbage can in the house or you can be like the Waterford crystal. Let's be the fine china and crystal!

Question: Are you living out your faith as an "honorable vessel". You know, it is possible to pursue "youthful lusts and desires" no matter what your age might be. Don't do it! Let's live in a way where we pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with other believers.

Paul again deals with foolish controversies. You know what I call these? They are arguments about non-salvific issues. You know why people argue and bring up quarrels? James tells us. It is because we're more interested in being right than in living in unity with others.

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? (James 4:1 ESV)

I am not saying that there aren't important things that need to be discussed, but be careful. I think we need to be more focused and interested in understanding the word than we are about proving somebody else wrong. That is a big trap that we can easily fall into. It's really just a pride trap.

So in summary this morning, let me urge you to:

- 1 Get serious about becoming a true disciple of Christ. That will involve hard work.
- 2 Learn the Word: I've given you a handout. Take each of these verses and meditate on them so that you will have wisdom and understanding.
- 3 As you learn, pass it on and teach those who know less than you do.
- 4 Avoid disputes about doctrinal issues that are not salvific. That means if they don't involve the gospel, don't get too invested in them.
- 5 Avoid getting into a camp. Camps are dangerous. They are exclusive. The only "camp" you should be involved in is the Church.

¹⁵ Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV)

Let us pray.