

## STUDY ON THE BOOK OF SECOND TIMOTHY

### COMMITMENT TO THE GOSPEL!

Read 2 Timothy 1:13-2:4

#### **Introduction.**

Have you had a son or a daughter who took the easy way and avoided hard work, especially the dirty work that sometimes needs to be done? Though Timothy was Paul's trusted co-worker, he had weaknesses that Paul was trying to help him overcome. One of these was to shy away from suffering and hardship. Of course, it's natural to avoid suffering where we can, but it's not the way to accomplish what's needed – either in the natural world in which we live or in the spiritual realm.

#### **Guard the Gospel Entrusted to You**

*“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing, which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (vv13-14)*

After writing of the importance of boldness, Paul next called Timothy (and all godly ministers) to be faithful to God's truth, the pattern of sound words. “Hold fast” suggests someone or something would try to take the truth from Timothy. Unless he held on in faithfulness, it would be snatched from him.

It takes a special man or woman to truly hold fast; it takes someone who is not tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men (Ephesians 4:14). This is an important measure for any pastor; he must hold fast the pattern of sound words. The primary measure should not be humour or excitement or personality or charisma or even evangelistic interest.

The sound words Timothy was to hold fast came to him from a man — Paul the apostle. God used human instruments to communicate His eternal truth. We must always beware of the person who rejects all human teachers and says, “It's just me and my Bible.” God used Paul to communicate the pattern of sound words, and Timothy was expected to be faithful to that pattern. God uses other men and women to communicate that same truth today.

#### ***Faith and Love***

Faith and love describe how the truth is to be held. We hold it in faith, truly believing it and putting our lives on it; and we hold it in love, not in proud arrogance or self-seeking superiority. If one thinks they are faithful to the truth, but do not show faith and love in the life, they may be nothing more than a Pharisee. They were a group in Jesus' day that was very committed to holding certain teachings but had no fruit of faith and love evident in their lives.

Timothy had something committed to him — Paul called it that good thing, no doubt meaning the gospel and the truth of God. Timothy needed faithfulness to keep that good thing. God has committed many good things to us; we must be faithful to keep them. “Keep” has more than just the idea of holding on to something; it also means to guard it and to use it wisely. God has given us His Word, family relationships, time, talents, resources, education, and so on. We must be faithful to keep those good things in a way that brings glory and credit to Jesus.

The phrase, “keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us” is the key to faithfulness. God requires a faithfulness from us that is greater than we can fulfil by our own resources. Unless we walk in the Spirit and are filled with the Holy Spirit, we cannot keep faithful to what we must keep faithful to.

## Example of Unfaithful People

*“This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” (v15)*

The great apostle Paul, at the end of his days and a fantastic missionary career, was almost all alone. He was not praised by the world, or even regarded much among other Christians. Even the Christians of Asia — where Paul did a great work (Acts 19) — turned away from Paul.

Phygellus and Hermogenes were two notable men who among those turned away from Paul, were not faithful, and did not hold fast. These two were not the only ones, but Paul found it necessary to point out Phygellus and Hermogenes particularly. We don’t know much about Phygellus and Hermogenes; this is the only place they are mentioned in the Bible. It’s a terrible thing to have your name recorded in God’s word as an example of unfaithfulness.

## Example of Faithful People

*“The Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found me. The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day—and you know very well how many ways he ministered to me at Ephesus.” (vv16-18)*

Onesiphorus was a different sort of man than Phygellus and Hermogenes; he was faithful to Paul in difficult circumstances. Paul therefore prayed for mercy on Onesiphorus and his whole household. We don’t know much about Onesiphorus, other than that he lived near Timothy, because at the end of the letter Paul asked Timothy to greet Onesiphorus’ household.

Paul described many things that made him special.

- **He often refreshed me:** He was an intentional blessing to Paul, and worked to refresh the apostle who did so much for other people.
- **Was not ashamed of my chain:** Onesiphorus showed himself to be a true friend of Paul when the apostle was imprisoned.
- **He sought me out very zealously and found me:** There were many prisons in Rome, so it was probably difficult for Onesiphorus to find Paul, but he did.

Paul ended by praying for Onesiphorus that he may find mercy from the Lord in that Day. This was a special prayer for Onesiphorus. If a faithful servant like Onesiphorus needed such a prayer, then all the more do the rest of us.

## Be Strong in the Grace of Christ

*“You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (v2:1)*

"Be strong," endynamoō, means "to become able to function or do something, become strong." This was an important encouragement. Paul knew that Timothy would need strength and endurance to fulfil the calling God gave him. Again, this is one of the twenty-five times Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong and endure in his work in Ephesus. Perhaps Timothy was naturally timid and easily discouraged. He needed to be told often, “be strong.” This staying strength might be the difference between “Phygellus and Hermogenes” and Onesiphorus. The former lacked the staying strength in difficult times.

God is always there to give us strength; He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might, He increases strength... those that wait on the LORD shall renew their strength (Isaiah 40:29, 31).

However, we must receive this strength, therefore Paul had to encourage Timothy to be strong. God makes the resource of His strength available to us (Ephesians 6:10-11). Yet it does not come as we sit back passively and suppose that God will simply pour it into us. He brings His strength to us as we seek Him and rely on Him instead of our own strength.

Paul told Timothy a specific way to be strong — that is, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This strength in grace is essential for a strong Christian life. “Grace here has its simplest theological meaning, as the divine help, the unmerited gift of assistance that comes from God”. Resting in the grace — the unmerited favour of God towards us that is in Christ Jesus — gives a confidence and boldness we could never have when thinking we are on probation or thinking God hasn’t made up His mind about us yet.

There is nothing that can make us as strong as saying, “*I am a child of God in Jesus Christ*” and “*I have the love and favour of God even though I don’t deserve it.*” That is the strength that comes by grace. Paul knew what it was like to receive the strength of God’s grace, as he explained in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10: And He said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*” Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. He could encourage Timothy like this from his own life experience.

### **Teach Those Who Can Teach Others Also**

*“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.” (v2:2)*

Paul reminded Timothy of the body of truth that he had heard from the Apostle in the presence of many others. Certainly, Timothy heard many Bible studies from Paul, and shared much time with the Apostle in personal discipleship.

God gave ministry to Timothy, not for him to keep to himself, but for him to pass on to others. An essential part of his work as a pastor was to pour into others what God had committed to him. Timothy was not to teach others his own particular ideas or theories, but simple apostolic doctrine and example (the things that you have heard from me). What Paul poured into him he was responsible to pour into others.

The job of training leaders is simply part of a pastor’s job description. He should not only train leaders when the need for a leader is obvious; nor should he only train leaders for the needs of his congregation alone. He should train leaders for the Kingdom of God in general, whether they are used in ministry at the particular pastor’s congregation or not.

### **To faithful men:**

When Timothy looked for those whom he could pour apostolic doctrine and practice into, he was to look for the quality of faithfulness. He didn’t need to find smart men, popular men, strong men, easy men, perfect men, or good-looking men; Paul told him to look for faithful men.

Through the history of Christianity, some have held to the idea of apostolic succession. This is the idea that you can know who a true minister of the gospel is because Peter ordained someone to succeed him, and that one ordained someone to succeed him, and the next one ordained someone to succeed him, so forth and so on down the line. However, this verse reveals the real apostolic succession — the succession of faithful men, who take the teachings of the apostles and pass them on. This job of training leaders was so important that it could not be restricted to Timothy alone. Those whom he had trained must also be given the job to teach others also.

## As a Soldier

*“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” (vv3-4)*

This was not a suggestion from Paul to Timothy; “must” carries the sense of a requirement or a command. There was something that Timothy had to do, and Paul would tell him to do it. Timothy must take the attitude of soldier who expects to endure hardship for their cause. No real soldier — or at least no good soldier — ever gave up simply because some hardship came to them. In the same way, if a believer is not willing to endure hardship, they will never accomplish much for Jesus Christ. They will give up as soon as something hard is required of them; they cannot fulfil Jesus’ call: *If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (Matthew 16:24)*

Timothy must take the attitude of a soldier, who willingly separates himself from the things of civilian life. A soldier must give up many things. Some of them are bad things (pride, independence, self-will), and some of them are good things (his home, his family). Nevertheless, if a soldier is not willing to give up these things, he is not a soldier at all.

The things that might entangle a soldier might be good or bad for a civilian. The soldier can’t ask if something is good or bad for those who are not soldiers; he must give up anything that gets in the way of being a good soldier or serving his commanding officer. A faithful soldier does not have the right to do anything that will entangle them and make them less effective as a soldier.

### Why?

If Timothy did not endure hardship and if he did not put away the things that entangled him in the affairs of this life, he would not be pleasing to his Commanding Officer. Jesus Christ is the commander of all heaven’s armies.

In Joshua 5, Jesus appeared to Joshua as Commander of the army of the LORD (Joshua 5:14). He is our Commanding Officer, and we owe total obedience to Him as such. It is likely that Paul was chained to a soldier even as he wrote this. He saw how these soldiers acted, and how they obeyed their commanding officers. Paul knew that this is how a Christian must act towards their Lord.

To be continued next week...