



A Call To Suffer & Endure

A Follower of Jesus has not only been called to a most wonderful salvation, but also to endure hardship and suffering. The Christian life is not always a life of comfort and ease, but rather also a life of experienced affliction and troubles. But Jesus Christ Himself endured such suffering so that His followers would not grow weary or discouraged, but rather would find strength to endure that He supplies by means of His abundant grace.

2 Timothy 2:1-13

BIBLE PASSAGE

2 Timothy 2:1-13

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

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.

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

⁹ for 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.

¹¹ *This is* a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him*, We shall also live with *Him*.

¹² If we endure, We shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.

¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

INTRODUCTION

While imprisoned for the sake of the gospel, The Apostle Paul writes this letter to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy. This letter of encouragement to Timothy would end up being the last of Paul's Epistles before being beheaded by Rome for the crime of following Jesus.

As Paul himself undergoes hardship for the sake of Christ, he writes to Timothy encouraging him to likewise, endure the hardship that he would encounter while fulfilling the calling and mission given to him by God.

If you recall, Paul, once known as Saul of Tarsus, was a zealous persecutor of the church. We're told in Acts 8, Saul was, "ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison."

That was until the moment he encountered the living Jesus on the way to Damascus to persecute more Christians. And as we're told in Acts 9, Saul, now blind and helpless, is greeted by a disciple of Jesus, Ananias. Do you remember Jesus' instructions to Ananias? After Jesus instructs Ananias to go and lay hands on Saul so that he would regain his sight, Ananias has a bit of hesitation because this is the man who was actively causing suffering among the disciples of Jesus. But Jesus commands Ananias saying,

"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; 16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake." Acts 9:15-16

As we know, this would in fact be true. Paul the Apostle would experience suffering and hardship for the sake Jesus the one who had radically transformed Paul's life. And now, Paul is encouraging Timothy to do the same. To endure the hardship that would naturally come as a result of following Jesus and fulfilling the calling he had on his life.

This same call that Paul gives to Timothy is not mutually exclusive to the call that Christ gives to all who desire to follow Him.

“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. - Luke 9:23

Sadly today, with the infiltration of the prosperity, health & wellness, word of faith gospel, the call to follow Jesus is often softened for those who have not yet believed. Leading to many left with a misunderstanding of the true gospel and what it costs to follow Jesus.

We live in a culture that promotes the self. Rather than the denial of one's self. We live in a time when people just want to play it safe. Live a life that is comfortable and easy. This is true also of many Christians.

As we jump into our study today, we will be looking at 3 main points found within this encouragement to endure suffering.

1. Strength to Fulfill
2. Examples of Endurance
3. Remembering Jesus Christ

1st, let's look at Paul's instructions to Timothy to find strength to fulfill.

1 Strength to Fulfill (V.1-2)

BIBLE PASSAGE

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

The New King James Version. (1982). (2 Ti 2:1–2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

GRACE SUPPLIED STRENGTH

In previous verses, Paul not only reminded Timothy of his family heritage and calling from God upon His life to the ministry, but also the encouragement to remain faithful to Jesus and the truth of the gospel.

After this reminder was given, Paul then instructs Timothy to *"Be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ"*. The phrase "Be Strong" can also be translated, *"be strengthened, increase in strength"*.

This is not the first and only time Paul would write about finding strength in the Lord. Paul in writing to the Ephesians 6:10 said,

"...Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." - Ephesians 6:10

Paul would not only give this instruction to other believers, but would have to learn this from first hand experience as well. If you recall Paul's Thorn in the flesh that he makes mention of in 2 Corinthians 12. After asking that the Lord would remove this thorn in his flesh that he admitted was keeping him humble, Paul says this,

"And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." - 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

This is where the strength is found. Paul did not just tell Timothy to just be strong. But to be strong in the Lord.

This instruction that Paul gives Timothy is to acknowledge in humility his own weakness so that he could receive this strength that God supplies through Jesus Christ by His grace. For it would be in that humble and honest acknowledgement of his weakness that God's power and strength would be displayed.

APPLICATION

How often do we look at ourselves as being strong? If we were to be honest with ourselves, we would likely attribute more strength to ourselves than what is actually true. Especially when it comes to the Christian life and ministry. When a Christian attempts to operate in their own pre-conceived strength, what ends up happening is that they are operating in their own flesh, which ultimately can produce nothing of eternal significance.

But God in His grace is willing and able to supply the strength that you and I need to be effective for Him in this life He has given us.

For what purpose did Paul instruct Timothy to receive strength in the Lord?

TO FULFILL THE MISSION

You see, in order for Timothy to fulfill the mission he had from God, he would need God's strength to do so.

Timothy is instructed to commit or entrust the teachings of the gospel that Paul had taught him, to other faithful and reliable men, who then in turn can do the same. Paul demonstrated this by example but was now telling Timothy to carry on this work of discipling others who were trustworthy, passing down the truth of the gospel to future generations. (Notice the 4 generations)

And this is seen throughout all of church history up until this point today!

This task that Paul gives Timothy is something that should not be unfamiliar to us.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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 28:18-20

You see, every believer and follower of Jesus is given this mission. And that is to go out into all the world, starting even locally, to make disciples of Jesus Christ, teaching them the truths of the gospel.

APPLICATION

This mission that is given to you and I, remember, can only be accomplished in God's grace supplied strength. But, we must understand that discipleship does not stop with us. (Consume, consume, consume) We are not meant to just receive, receive, receive. No! We are meant are to receive and give, receive and give, receive and give, until our life is over and we meet Jesus face to face.

I've heard it once said that, "We must always be receiving discipleship, and must always be giving discipleship".

And sometimes honestly, we can overcomplicate this. But are you able to just take one person and commit to them not only the truth of the gospel but also demonstrate that truth in your own life by example, the result will be of one that carries on for generations to come.

What is God calling you to do? Take the step of faith, trust Him to supply you with the strength needed to fulfill that calling.

ILLUSTRATION

Michael Moore and Miles' testimony last week serving as Missionaries in the DRC.

Their example shows us that faithfulness to fulfilling the calling and mission that God has given us can result in experiencing hardship or suffering.

This is what leads Paul to encourage Timothy to endure that hardship he would inevitably face in fulfilling His mission.

To help Timothy grasp what it means to endure, Paul sets before him 3 examples.

2 Examples of Endurance (V.3-7)

BIBLE PASSAGE

V.3-7

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.

THE ENDURANCE OF A SOLDIER

The phrase "endure hardship" *κακοπαθέω* means "to undergo hardship:—be afflicted, endure afflictions, suffer trouble."

Paul here is encouraging Timothy to join alongside him in enduring hardship for the sake of the gospel.

In previous verses, Paul told Timothy, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but **share with me in the sufferings** for the gospel according to the power of God," - 2 Timothy 1:8

The following examples of endurance would have been familiar to Timothy back then while living under the Roman Empire.

First, the Soldier. Timothy is told that he is to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

A good soldier is one who competent and able, one who follows the commands of their commanding officers. This picture of a Christian being a Soldier is one often presented in Paul's writings.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God..."

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, with the picture of the Roman Soldier in his mind, tells them to,

"11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against ^bflesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." - Ephesians

6:11-12

And even in his first letter to Timothy, Paul tells him to

"Wage the good warfare" - 1 Timothy 1:18

This of course is true of every believer. We are all soldiers of Jesus Christ. (The Lord's Army)

"I may never march, ride, shoot, zoom, but I'm in the Lords army."

With this understanding, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was not only to undergo hardship, but also to not "entangle himself with the affairs of this life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him."

No soldier who is actively engaged in warfare concerns himself or involves himself with the affairs of life. The word "*affairs*" means "pursuits and occupations pertaining to civil life". That is because the soldier who is in the heat of the battle, has a single purpose, that is to please and obey his commander.

(World 1 Museum)

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 9:62

"No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." - Luke 9:62

"A Roman soldier's single-minded purpose, rigorous discipline, and unquestioning obedience to **his commanding officer** combine to make the figure of a soldier an apt one for a servant of the gospel." - Bible Knowledge Comm.

APPLICATION

As soldiers of Jesus Christ, to be well pleasing to God, the one who enlisted us into His spiritual army, we must be willing to endure hardship as a soldier who is active duty, engaged in warfare would.

Paul then moves on to his 2nd example...

THE ENDURANCE OF AN ATHLETE

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. - V.5

Another picture that Paul often draws upon in his writings. As we know, one of the things that ancient Rome was known for was The Olympic Games. With the idea of enduring hardship in the Christian life, Paul brings up this picture of an athlete competing in the games or contests.

Just like today, rules were set in place for all the athletes to abide by in order to win the prize. (Performance Enhancing Drugs, Women's Sports).

Only athletes who trained hard, disciplining themselves and competed according to the rules could qualify for the prize. Paul was warning Timothy against being disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 gives us some more insight into this:

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified. - 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

For the Christian, our goal should be as the Athlete, to live this life in endurance, discipline, and self-control, all while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus at the finish line.

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every weight (hindrance) and the sin which so easily entangles

us, and let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the ^aauthor and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:1-2

APPLICATION

We too endure as an athlete would knowing that Jesus ran His race with endurance, discipline and self-control for our example. We do so casting off hindrances and sins that so easily ensnare us and keep us from running well, knowing that Jesus, the ultimate victor, awaits at the finish line to crown us with the crown of righteousness as we are welcomed into His kingdom.

THE ENDURANCE OF THE FARMER

⁶ *The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. V.6*

The 3rd example of endurance in suffering that Paul gives Timothy is one of a Hardworking Farmer. The word "Hardworking" means = "**to labor with wearisome effort, to toil**"

In comparison to the other 2 examples just given, Paul seems to put an emphasis here on this specific word. The diligent soldier received the approval of his commanding officer, the disciplined athlete wins the prize, and here, the hardworking farmer is first to receive his share of the crop.

Again, with the idea in mind of enduring hardship while on mission for Christ, Paul gives this example to Timothy to encourage him to work hard in his calling, knowing that he would reap the reward of doing so.

Paul says in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary"

Because I am clearly an expert in farming, since I have lived in the midwest for a whole year now, it is understood logically that if a farmer does not work hard in his field to plant, then he will not get to experience the fruit of his labor. But if the farmer is diligent and working hard to the point of exhaustion to plant, the more reward he will experience.

APPLICATION

In the Christians life, we too should be working hard with the same wearisome effort, that the farmer exerts, knowing that there is an incredible reward at the time of harvest.

To a farmer, I am sure there are times of disappointment. Working hard, planting seeds, hoping they will come to full maturity so that you can reap bountifully at harvest time. But for the Christian, we take encouragement, knowing that God is the one who gives the increase.

"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." - 1 Corinthians 3:7-8

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

Paul then tells Timothy in v.7 to consider or think upon these things he said knowing that the Lord would bring him understanding.

These 3 examples of endurance display the qualities that the Christian is to have while fulfilling God's mission and undergoing hardship for Him.

Remember, as Paul is writing this letter to Timothy, he knew he was at the end of his life and ministry on earth. In thinking of these 3 examples, listen to what Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:6-8,

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Notice v.7, in light of these 3 examples we just read, Paul says, "I have fought the good fight" as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, "I have finished the race" as an athlete who competed according to the rules, and "I have kept the faith" as a farmer who did his work trusting in the one who gave the increase.

I don't know about you but I want to be able to get to the end of my life in Christ and be able to say with confidence in Him these exact things. But only if in endurance, we are engaged in the warfare, running the race well, and working hard in God's strength to sow that which will be harvest unto eternal life.

These of course are incredible examples given to Timothy of endurance in the Christian life while undergoing hardship for the Lord.

But Paul makes mention of an even greater example. Thee ultimate example of Endurance is found in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

3 Remember Jesus Christ (V.8-13)

BIBLE PASSAGE

V.8-13

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for 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.

¹¹ *This is* a faithful saying: For if we died with *Him*, We shall also live with *Him*.

¹² If we endure, We shall also reign with *Him*. If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us.

¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

ILLUSTRATION

Farmers Market down in KC during the draft / Leading to Remembering that we have to pack next weekend...

REMEMBERING THE ONE WHO ROSE AGAIN

Paul tells Timothy something he would have already known, but maybe was in need of being reminded of. That would be Jesus Christ, the One who endured suffering, died, and rose again from the grave.

The word "remember" means = **to hold in memory, keep in mind.**

Paul instructs Timothy to always keep Jesus at the forefront of his mind while undergoing hardship. For it was this Jesus, the descendant of David, who was raised from the dead according to Paul's gospel? Of course this is not Paul saying that he was preaching his own version of the gospel, but rather that it was personal to him. Paul was entrusted with the gospel to preach it to those who were without Christ. And the same applies for every Christian.

This good news is that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinful humanity from their sins, reconciling people to a restored relationship with God through faith in Christ's finished work on the cross.

This good news is why Paul was in v. 9 suffering afflictions or trouble as an evildoer. Or translated, "a criminal". At this time of extreme hostility towards Christians, Paul was facing imprisonment and potential death, treated as a criminal all for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

Even today, in many parts of the world, the same is true of our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. They face persecution, imprisonment, and the likelihood of death all for professing the name of Christ.

But I love how Paul ends this verse, he says, "for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; *but the word of God is not chained.*"

Reminds me of Isaiah 40:8, "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."

Although Paul, and even many Christians today are in chains for the preaching of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ can never be chained. From the moment the church

was formed on the day of pentecost, to this present day that you and I live in, the gospel has spread like wildfire and there is nothing that can stop it.

"No government, no religious authorities, no skeptics, no scientists, no philosophers, or no book burners have ever been able to stop the work of the Word of God. Yet, if there is any sense in which the Word is bound, it is bound when its supposed friends abandon it. When pulpits sound more like self-help books than those who proclaim God's word; when Scripture is used sparingly like a spice in a message, instead of being the core of it, pastors themselves put a chain around the Bible." - David Guzik

THE CONSEQUENCE & THE REASON

Although Paul was facing the consequences of preaching the gospel, he shares with Timothy the purpose for his suffering.

"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."

Paul would gladly endure suffering, imprisonment and potential death if it meant that those who had not yet come to faith in Christ would one day in the future receive the salvation from sins that is in Christ and with that, the promise of eternal glory in Heaven with the Lord, forever.

This is a love for God that was displayed in a love for others.

Frankly, when studying this, I was hit a question that I found challenging:

Would I be willing to endure through imprisonment, persecution, and even the possibility of death all so that others may come into a personal relationship with God?

The question is not a matter if we are able to do so, because God would supply the strength needed to so do. But rather are we willing?

A TRUSTWORTHY STATEMENT

In v.11-13 Pauls makes a statement that Timothy and all who profess Christ can consider as trustworthy and reliable:

"For if we died with *Him*, We shall also live with *Him*."

"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." - Colossians 3:3-4

"If we endure, we shall also reign with *Him*."

"and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, **if indeed we suffer** with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together." - Romans 8:17

"If we deny *Him*, He also will deny us."

"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. - Matthew 10:33

"If we are faithless, He remains faithful (true to His promises);"

What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? - Romans 3:3

"He cannot deny Himself." (to prove false to himself)

in the hope of eternal life, which God, *who cannot lie*, promised ^dlong ages ago, - Titus 1:2

We too would do good to trust this truth.

For we have died with Christ and now our life is hidden with in God. If we endure hardships that come as a result of being His followers, then we will one day reign alongside him. But if we deny him rather than ourselves, he will deny us before the Father. Even if we become unfaithful to Him instead of maintaining our allegiance, He still remains faithful to His promises for He cannot change.

CONCLUSION

The question I couldn't help ask myself was, "Why?"...

"Why would I intentionally live my life in a way that would result in hardship and afflictions?"

Well, because Jesus first did so for you. Jesus Christ endured suffering by going to the cross, dying in our place, so that you may not grow weary or discouraged.

"For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary^b and lose heart. - Hebrews 12:3

For those of us who today would willfully choose to wage the good warfare as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, to run the race marked out for us with endurance keeping our eyes on the prize that is Jesus Christ, and to work hard in life and ministry so that at the time of harvest there is a bountiful reward, take courage, knowing that your Savior, the ultimate example, first endured suffering so that you could be rescued from the power of sin and death, reconciled into a relationship with your creator, and be granted eternal life and a life more abundant in Him.

In the 19th century, an English missionary named Hudson Taylor, dedicated his life to reaching those who were without Christ in China. God had given him not only the calling but the burden for the Chinese people, which resulted in him going to great lengths to effectively reach them for Christ, (including learning the Chinese culture, language and dress of the time.) leading to him founding the China Inland Mission.

Hudson Taylor's life was anything but easy. He endured much suffering for the sake of the gospel. But listen to what Hudson Taylor once said,

"If I had a thousand pounds China should have it—if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Saviour?" - Hudson Taylor

COMMUNION

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. - 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

