

A Father's Farewell

2nd Timothy

Grace To Suffer for the Gospel of Christ

Key idea:

Believers must grow strong in grace so that they will be able to endure the suffering necessary to guard and pass on the precious deposit of the Gospel.

Key text:

2 Timothy 2:1–7

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. ³ Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer. ⁵ Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Key points:

1. The Church can only thrive as it daily is strengthened by grace and labors to guard and pass on the precious deposit of the Gospel to future generations.
2. Paul uses three metaphors to describe faithful Christian life and ministry: a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. All three point to the requirement to be willing to suffer as part of our calling. However, each of the metaphors also makes a distinct point to help us understand the necessity of suffering for faithful Christian life and ministry:
 - a. To be faithful, a soldier must suffer and endure hardship, keeping a sense of detachment from other pursuits, in order to please the officer who enlisted him into service.
 - b. To win the victor's crown, an athlete must compete according to the rules, going into strict training and refusing to cheat to lessen the suffering required to win.
 - c. A farmer must labor hard to grow a crop and is sustained in this by the hope of future reward
3. To understand this necessity of suffering and to faithfully endure, Christians must draw strength from the grace of God daily as they meditate upon these metaphors and the eternal reward awaiting God's faithful servants.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's text and teaching stood out most to me? Why?
2. Why does Paul begin this section with a command for Timothy to be strengthened by grace? How does this remind me of the primacy of the Gospel and of grace in the Christian life?
3. Timothy was a mature believer - why does Paul think he needs to remind him to draw upon God's grace each day?
4. Why is passing the faith on to future generations necessary to faithfully 'guard the deposit' given to us?
5. Why does Paul use metaphors to illuminate his call for Timothy to be willing to suffer along with him? How do metaphors help me understand something more deeply and fully? What is required for a metaphor to have this effect?
6. The NIV1984 translated the verb in verse 3 as 'endure hardship' and a few other translations have something similar. The verb is actually the same one as in 2 Timothy 1:8 "suffer with us" - and this is how the NIV2011 and many others translate it. What is gained when I realize it is the same verb? What is gained when I think of it more in terms of "enduring hardship" rather than "suffering"?
7. How do I balance the call to not be entangled with 'civilian affairs' with the command to serve my neighbor in my various callings? How do I faithfully engage the culture around me without becoming 'entangled' in a way that compromises my ultimate loyalty to Jesus and His kingdom?
8. Why do some athletes cheat by using performance-enhancing drugs or by breaking the rules? How does this apply to the Christian life?
9. How is farming a good metaphor for the Christian life? Can I think of ways that farming is NOT a good metaphor? (Note that all metaphors break down at some point - part of reflection is discerning where this happens.)
10. How often do I think about my eternal reward? What makes this difficult? Why is it important?
11. Who will I call to encourage this week? What specific members of BRCC will I commit before God to pray for and call?

Preview of Next Week: 2 Timothy 2:8-13