

Theme: 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.

I. The Secret Race: Inside Hidden World TDF

- A. A book about Tyler Hamilton, a skier who became a biker after injury
- B. Discovered to keep rising he had to cheat/dope/drugs
- C. Ended up as one of the best; destroyed his life/marriage
- D. Christians can be tempted to “cheat” to avoid suffering

II. Strong Through Grace

- A. Timothy must be strong through grace
You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 2:1
 - 1. Note the tender reference ‘my son’
 - 2. ‘You then’ is emphatic in Greek - in light of all I have said, and especially of the examples I just gave, now I make my appeal to you - my spiritual son.
 - 3. How can Timothy guard the deposit and suffer for the Gospel - only through grace!
 - 4. This is the same point as in 1:6-7, 8, 14 - we must be empowered by God to faithfully fulfill our call.
 - 5. Be strong - present middle/passive imperative
 - a. This is a command - you must do this!
 - b. It is present tense - you must keep doing this daily!
 - c. Our call always begins, is sustained by, and is completed by the grace of God. It is grace from first to last!

6. The Christian life is a daily walk in the grace of God given to us in Jesus Christ!

7. Unbelievers - come to God by His grace!

B. Strong through faith - to pass on the deposit!

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. 2 Timothy 2:2

- 1. Timothy has been told to guard the deposit of the Gospel and the pattern of sound teaching (1:13-14)
- 2. The sound teaching/good deposit is what Timothy heard along with others through Paul.
- 3. This requires that Timothy not only receive it and guard it, but that he pass it on to others.
- 4. He must select others who will receive it, guard it, and pass it on to others as well.
- 5. Several things to note here:
 - a. This is an imperative - a command
 - b. This guarantees that the gospel will spread to others in Timothy’s own time, and also that it will continue to spread in the future (ἔσονται - future).
 - c. This certainly includes Timothy passing it on to faithful men who serve as elders in the church in Ephesus
 - 1. This is an essential call for the men who serve as elders - they MUST receive, guard, and pass on the faith unaltered!
 - 2. A failure here is what usually begins apostasy in a local church or group of churches.
 - 3. Never submit to leaders who do not fulfill this chief responsibility!

d. However, it is not limited to church leaders alone - all of us must receive, guard, and pass on the faith to others in our own generation and also to future generations!

6. 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.

III. Metaphors of Christian Life and Ministry

A. Paul gives three metaphors of Christian life and ministry

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.** 2 Timothy 2:3–7

1. Key command - suffer with us (literal; same as 1:8)
2. Three metaphors to explain this: soldier; athlete; farmer (also 1 Cor. 9, though different applications)
3. For all 3 hardship/suffering are part of the calling
4. But they each also develop distinct ideas
5. To fully grasp this we must reflect, think deeply - and God will then give us insight (v7)

B. Suffer like a good soldier of Christ Jesus

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. 2 Timothy 2:3–4

1. A good soldier of Christ must endure hardship/suffer
2. A good soldier keeps a sense of detachment from the outside world to give undivided attention.
3. It is not that the things of the civilian world are bad - but they are a potential distraction from the single-minded service that is called for in a good soldier.
4. We are also called to serve in the world but we can never let concerns of the world - which are secondary - “entangle” us in such a way that they render our service to Christ ineffective.
5. A good soldier is focused on pleasing his enlisting officer (literal)
6. As good soldiers of Jesus Christ, who has called us into His service, we must never allow other pursuits to entangle us in such a way that we become unwilling to suffer their loss if loyalty to Christ, His Kingdom, and the Gospel would be compromised otherwise.

C. Suffer to compete as an athlete for Christ

Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. 2 Timothy 2:5

1. Paul now uses the athlete - clear physical suffering
2. Athletes must compete according to the rules
 - a. Could include an oath to Zeus of a 10-month strict regimen to be allowed to compete in the games
 - b. It definitely includes that the athlete can not cheat and break the rules in the competition
 - c. The Christian must not cheat by trying to avoid the “rule” of suffering that is the natural result of faithfully following Jesus.

- d. To try to get a Christian life free of suffering would be to violate the rules and forfeit the prize.
- e. For a Christian to be ashamed of the Gospel or compromise to avoid suffering is like an athlete using steroids or cheating in other ways - it disqualifies one for the prize.

3. Athletes find endurance to suffer by looking forward to the victor's crown, but Christians are strengthened by grace to win an eternal crown!

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ²⁵ Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ²⁶ Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ²⁷ No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:24–27

- a. Everyone who competes goes into strict training - according to the rules of the Olympics
- b. They are motivated to suffer hardship to win the prize - a small laurel wreath that dies!
- c. We endure suffering for the eternal victors crown - and therefore we should be willing to endure anything!

D. Labor hard like a farmer looking for a harvest

The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 2 Timothy 2:6

- 1. The farmer must endure long hours, beginning in the cool wet spring, through the long, hot, dry days of summer, until the harvest arrives.

- 2. Like the athlete, the farmer's labor is fueled by the hope of future reward - a great harvest.
- 3. Like the farmer and the athlete, the Christian labors and suffers in the hope of reward

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do I see the normal Christian life involves suffering?

- 1. This is central in 1:8-18 and 2:1-7
- 2. It is one of the key themes of the entire book
- 3. For a Christian to avoid suffering will require compromise and turn the Christian into a cowardly soldier, a cheating athlete, and a lazy farmer.
- 4. To avoid suffering we have to become like Tyler Hamilton, Lance Armstrong: cheating to try and get the prize - but we will be disqualified
- 5. Do not be deceived: Christianity is not how to get 'your best life now'! There ARE real benefits to following Christ now, but there is also suffering, and we can not separate these things.
- 6. If you are not a follower of Jesus, I urge you to come to Him today! He is everything you long for in the depths of your soul, and the Door to eternal joy!
- 7. As a follower of Jesus, remember He is worth any suffering we must bear!

B. Am I drawing strength from God daily to suffer faithfully?

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus... ⁷ Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 2 Timothy 2:1, 7

1. Verse 1 and 7 form an inclusio to highlight that we find strength from Jesus
2. We can not do this in our own strength, but only as we receive fresh strength from drawing upon God's grace each day. (Remember it is a present imperative - be strengthened continuously).
3. To understand this, we must reflect and meditate upon it daily, asking the Lord to give us insight into the truth (v7).
4. This daily walk will also include a significant focus on eternity
 - a. These metaphors look to the future, especially the athlete and the farmer
 - b. This is especially important in our culture will lives for NOW - we need to let the Lord reorient our focus to the future, and especially to eternity.
 - c. We will see this theme more in future weeks.

C. The Table of Grace

1. We need to draw upon the grace of God daily
2. In worship, we draw strength from God's grace the Word and Sacrament
3. Here the Spirit takes us up to see and feast upon God's grace to give us strength for our labors in the week ahead.
4. A moment for meditation upon our glorious God

Grace To Suffer for the Gospel of Christ

2 Timothy 1:1-7

March 6, 2022

Communion

2 Corinthians 13:14

Teaching keywords: Grace; suffering; Christian life; multi-generational perspective and ministry; heaven, hell, and eternity

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

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. 2 Timothy 2:1–7