

## ***“Passing On The Torch”***

### **A Study of 2 Timothy**

#### **Sermon # 2**

#### ***“Four Commands and a Promise!”***

#### **2 Timothy 2:1-13**

As we noted in our first lesson in this series as Paul pens this letter he is again in prison. But this is not just house arrest, this time he is in a cold Roman cell (4:13) and he had no hopes that he would leave his cell alive (4:6-8). We noted that 2 Timothy was probably Paul’s last letter and could be considered his *“last will and testament.”* What we have recorded here are the final words of a dying man who knows that his days are numbered. Many people think that Paul died within weeks of writing this letter.

Samuel Johnson once remarked, “When a man knows he will be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates the mind wonderfully.” If you know you are about to die, you don’t waste words. So to Paul gets right to the point in his words of advice to Timothy.

As Paul reflects on his own life and the legacy that he is leaving, he gives his young son in the faith, Timothy some important advice about how to live a life that will leave a legacy.

Paul gives us five insights into living a life worth remembering. As we study the Bible we should remember to pay close attention to the commands. Four of the five insights on we are going to look at tonight are commands located in the first ten verses of chapter two. The final insight is in the form of a promise found in verse eleven through thirteen.

#### ***The First Command - “Be Strengthened”***

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

The verse says “be strong” but since it is in the passive voice it literally means *“let yourself be strengthened.”* This kind of strength comes from outside of ourselves.

J. Vernon McGee states - “... I love this - “be strong in grace.” My friend, if you think that you can grit your teeth and go out and live the Christian life on your own, you’re in for a great disappointment. If you feel that you can follow a few little rules or some clever gimmicks to make you a mature Christian, then you have fallen into a subtle trap of legalism.” [J. Vernon McGee. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (1997, c1981 - electronic ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville]

#### ***The Second Command - “Commit” (v. 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.”

In the last lesson we learned that more than anything, the letter of 2 Timothy is a changing of the guard. Paul is passing on the torch of ministry to Timothy. In the Olympic Games the passing of the torch is the great spectacle of the opening of the games. The passing of the torch is symbolic. One person has fulfilled their duties and responsibilities and now those same duties and responsibilities are passed on to the next person and so on and so on until the work is completed. Paul is saying that he has finished his turn of carrying the torch of the gospel of Christ. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim.4:7) Now it is Timothy’s turn to carry the torch and finish his leg of the race. Now in verse two Paul reminds Timothy that it is his duty to pass on the Truth to “faithful men” who in turn will be able to pass it on to others. In fact four generations of believers are mentioned in this one verse; 1<sup>st</sup> - Paul, 2<sup>nd</sup> - Timothy, 3<sup>rd</sup> - faithful men and 4<sup>th</sup> -others also. This is the principle of spiritual multiplication. It is the only way to reach a world whose population now exceeds six billion people.

A good illustration of how this can work is seen in the life of a relatively unknown Sunday School teacher named Edward Kimball. “In 1858 a Sunday School teacher, a Mr. Kimball, led a young man who was in his class who worked as a shoe salesman to give his life to Christ.

The shoe salesman, a young man named Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879 his preaching awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Frederick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church.

F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman.

Chapman, engaged in YMCA work employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work.

Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, North Carolina. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai Hamm to town to preach.

During Hamm’s revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the Gospel and yielded his life to Christ. ....Tens of thousands have been led to Christ through the ministry of Graham. Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School Teacher who invested his life in the lives of others. [Source unknown - [www.bible.org/illus/ 2Tim](http://www.bible.org/illus/2Tim)]

So who are these “faithful men and women” that are to be entrusted with the gospel message? It has been suggested that we find F.A.T. people. No that not a personal judgment, it is a acronym. It stands for

F – Faithful

A – Available

T – Teachable

So in order to follow the advice give to Timothy we are told in essence to find the F.A.T. people and teach them to teach others. Find them, teach them and then turn them loose.

*The Third Command - "Endure Hardship" (v. 3) "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."*

Paul wants believers to understand that enduring hardship or suffering is a part of following Christ. God in fact does *not* promise to protect believers from trouble but to preserve them through it!

Paul then uses verses three through seven to offer us three images of what it means to endure hardship.

First, endure as a Dedicated Soldier

(v. 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."

Josephus, the Jewish historian of the time, wrote a description of a Roman soldier in which he said, "Each soldier every day throws all his energy into his drill, as though he were in action. Hence that perfect ease with which they sustain the shock of battle; no confusion breaks their customary formation, no panic paralyzes, no fatigue exhausts them. All their camp duties are performed with the same discipline, the same regard for security; the procuring of wood, food-supplies, and water, as required – each party has it allotted task; nothing is done without a word of command. The same precise is maintained on the battlefield."

How is the child of God a soldier? The last chapter of Ephesians tells us that the believer is fighting a spiritual battle and that he needs to put on the armor of God. Paul said to the Ephesians 6:12-13: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"

The soldier is to endure hardship and doesn't get entangled in the affairs of this world.

A good illustration of the last part of verse four, which says, "... that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier" is found in the life of Audie Murphy.

“Audie Murphy was an unlikely hero. Weighing in at only 112 pounds and with the face of a child, Audie was 18 years old when he went overseas during World War II. Nothing about him suggested a hero in the making. Yet when called upon by his commanding officers to do the duty of a soldier, Murphy held nothing back.

By war’s end, the quiet boy from Texas had fought with extraordinary bravery and saved the lives of countless fellow soldiers. He returned home to an adoring public, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and received at least 36 other medals—more than anyone else in U.S. history, all because nothing meant more to him as a soldier than the will of his commanding officer.” [Today in the Word. June 21, 1995]

Second, endure as a disciplined Athlete (v. 5) “And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

“Competes” refers to contending in the game. He wants to win, and he is doing everything he can to be the winner. Quoting J. Vernon McGee he wrote, “Someone has said in a very succinct manner, “The only exercise some Christians get is jumping to conclusions, running down their friends, sidestepping responsibility, and pushing their luck.” That is not the kind of exercise Paul is talking about. He spoke of the Christian life as being a racecourse, in Philippians 3:14 he said, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Paul also said that he wanted to keep his body under control (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). Paul’s goal was to run the Christian race in such a way that the One who is at the end of the race—the Lord Jesus—would be able to reward him and be able to say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21).

He is to “compete according to the rules.” There is no shortcut toward living the Christian life. Forget the gimmickry today that condenses Christianity into a little course or a few rules and regulations. If you have ever watched little kids as they learn the game of baseball you know that sometimes they try to run the bases in the wrong direction or run by a base without touching it. They have to be taught that in order to be successful in the game they have to play by the rules. A child of God has to do that, too. If you’re going to win, you can’t take any shortcuts. The athlete endures hardship in the race in order to attain the prize.

Third, endure as a diligent Farmer

(v. 6) “The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.”

The farmer endures the hardship of labor in order to harvest a crop.

The three images of a soldier, athlete and farmer are used to remind us that nothing worthwhile in life is accomplished without extreme effort and sometimes even hardship. Paul ends this thought with the admonition found in verse seven that we,

“Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” Literally when he says “consider” he is saying we must let these things “soak in.”

#### *THE FOURTH COMMAND - “Remember”*

(v. 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) There-fore 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 says “Remember that Jesus Christ”—the word “that” is not in the original but was supplied by the translators. Paul just stops to say, “Remember Jesus Christ.” That is what it is all about, isn’t?

In the text the reader is reminded of both the divinity and the humanity of Jesus. The divinity of Jesus is seen in his resurrection from the dead. Paul tells the readers in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

(3) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, (4) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

Secondly, the reader is reminded of the humanity of Jesus, he is descended from David. Romans 1:3-4 declares, “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, (4) and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

In Hebrews 12:3-4 Paul says, “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. (4) You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

*The Final Insight Is In The Form Of A Promise* (vv. 11-13) “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.”

This is the first trustworthy or “faithful saying” that we have found in 2 Timothy. There are five of these in all in the Pastoral epistles as we have previously seen in our studies of 1 Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 1:15, 3:1, 4:9 and Titus 3:8). What follows is a series of four conditional statements, if this, then that.

1. *If we die with him, we shall live with him* (Rom. 6). Symbolically we identify with the death of Christ on the cross through the act of baptism.

2. *If we endure with him* (through hard times) *we will reign with him*.

3. *If we disown him, he will disown us!* In Matthew 10:32-33 Jesus said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. (33) But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." Only someone who never had true faith can repudiate his faith that claim and walk away.

4. *If we are faithless* (because of doubt or fear or love of the world), *He is still faithful*. Obviously "faithless" here does not mean "*having no faith in Jesus*" but must refer to being unfaithful or lacking trustworthiness in our faith. Faithless here refers to lapses in our commitment.

## Conclusion

Paul has given Timothy five insights into living a life worth remembering.

### *Remember the Four Commands*

- *"Be Strengthened by Grace*
- *"Commit" or entrust the truth to other faithful ones*
- *"Endure Hardship"*
- *"Remember Jesus"*

*and the Promise that if we die with him, we shall live with him! We endure with him we will reign with him! We disown him, he will disown us! Even If we are faithless He is still faithful.*