

Title:                               **2 Timothy**  
                              **“Endure Hardness as A Good Soldier of Christ.”**

Text:           2 Timothy 2:1-3

Date:           Tuesday Evening—May 25, 2004

Tape #       Y-22b

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Introduction:

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy was the last epistle written by the Apostle Paul before he was put to death for preaching the gospel of Christ. This epistle was written primarily to encourage Timothy to remain loyal and faithful as the servant of God. I find it remarkable that this man, knowing that his executioner was at the door, as his last act writes to a friend and fellow laborer in the gospel to encourage him to be steadfast in the midst of trial and opposition, to, as he puts it, “*endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*” What a remarkable man Paul must have been!

The aged Apostle is sitting alone in the dark, miserable Roman prison, the imminent flash of the swordsman’s ax etched in his mind’s eye. Yet, his heart is full of concern for his dear son in the ministry, Timothy, who was serving as pastor of the local church at Ephesus. Timothy was being confronted with the onslaught of grievous wolves entering from without and corrupt men arising from within the assembly (Acts 20:29-32). The flagship church of Asia Minor had become the

battleground for the gospel of God and the cause of Christ.

The church of God, the truth of God, and the glory of God were under assault. The souls of men were at stake. So, before leaving this world, Paul wanted to encourage his friend and God's faithful servant to remain faithful. Can you picture Timothy reading this powerful, emotion filled letter from his cherished and admired mentor? His eyes must have been full of tears. As he got to the last chapter, he understood clearly that this was the Paul's last will and testament to him.

It is likely that even before this letter reached Timothy, Paul's head had been severed from his body. This great man of God died just as he had lived — as a living sacrifice to his God (Rom. 12:1). A more fitting epitaph could not have been written for him than that which the Holy Spirit inspired him to write at the end of this epistle, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim. 4:7).

## **FOR US**

But these four chapters were not written for Timothy alone. They were written for us (Rom. 15:4), particularly for God's servants who labor as gospel preachers in the midst of relentless opposition. This great epistle is written to encourage us to be faithful to our God. As "*he abideth faithful,*" let us be faithful to him. The contents

of this letter can be summed up in three words: personal, pastoral, and practical.

2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is a very **personal** letter. It displays the great, personal affection Paul had for Timothy. He prayed for him night and day (1:3-6). He calls Timothy his “*dearly beloved son,*” looking upon him as one as dear to him as a son (1:2; 2:1). He longed to see him one more time before leaving this world (4:9, 21). Such personal love and concern ought to ever be manifest in God’s saints toward one another, and should be distinctly manifest in gospel preachers toward one another.

This is also a **pastoral** letter, along with 1 Timothy and Titus. Timothy was pastor of the church in Ephesus during very disturbing times. His was no easy not an easy task (1 Tim. 1:3, 4, 18; 2 Tim. 1:6-8). Paul wrote this epistle to encourage and exhort him to continue faithful in all things, to make a full proof of his ministry (4:5).

And 2 Timothy is a very **practical** letter. Of course all the Book of God is practical, but this epistle distinctly concentrates on the practical aspects of daily taking up our cross and following Christ. Here we are encouraged to “*fight the good fight faith,*” and told how to do it. 2 Timothy is indispensable.

**“A SOUND MIND”**

In the opening verses of chapter 1 Paul expresses his love for Timothy and tells him how thankful to God he is for him (vv. 1-7). He assures his dear friend that he prayed for him continually, and urged him to “*stir up the gift of God*” that was in him. Timothy was a man gifted of God for the work of the ministry; and the gifts God had given him he was responsible to use. If nothing else will rouse a gospel preacher to faithfulness in the work trusted to his hands and courage in performing it, the bare fact that God has made him his servant ought to do it (Eph. 3:8-12).

(Ephesians 3:8-12) “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; (9) And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (10) To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, (11) According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: (12) In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.”

But Paul would leave no stone unturned, as he sought for arguments that would encourage Timothy to continue faithful in the cause of Christ. He reminds him of his mother’s faith in Christ, his grandmother’s faith in Christ, and of his own unflinching faithfulness in serving God with a pure conscience. Then, he tells Timothy and

us that there is never a reason for us to give way to cowardice and fear before men or before hell itself, because our God has given us the power, love, and sound mind needed to serve him (1:6-7).

(2 Timothy 1:6-7) “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. (7) For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

Having the Spirit of God (“*power from on high*”) dwelling in us, having our hearts motivated by love for Christ and his people, and having our minds established firmly by the gospel, we have no reason to be afraid as we go about our lives doing the will of God.

### **“HOLD FAST”**

Beginning in verse 8 and going to the end of chapter 1 Paul urges Timothy (The Spirit of God urges us!) to hold fast and remain faithful in believing and proclaiming the gospel in the very teeth of hell itself.

Remember, Paul was writing from prison. Many who pretended to be the servants of Christ, and some who truly were the servants of Christ, were intimidated and cowered by Paul’s imprisonment and had abandoned him, just as our Lord’s disciples abandoned him. Paul was particularly hurt by Phygellus and Hermogenes who

had turned away from him (1:15). Still, there were others like Onesiphorus who comforted and refreshed him.

Paul understood well that Timothy's strength would not come from himself. To inspire his strength he turned Timothy's attention to the gospel of Christ. He says, in verses 8-12, "Timothy, let me remind you that I am here, in these chains, because of the gospel I have preached. You do the same." He knew, as Roger Ellsworth puts it, "our willingness to stand for the gospel will be in direct proportion to our understanding of it." He tells us exactly what that gospel is for which he was imprisoned and put to death. This is that form of sound words we must hold fast (1:9-10).

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

- The gospel is a declaration that salvation is entirely God's work. — "*Who hath saved us.*"
- The gospel is the declaration of salvation done. — "*Who hath saved us, and called us.*"
- The gospel declares that salvation is altogether God's work, without the aid of man. — "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works.*"

- The gospel is the blessed good news that salvation is a matter of free grace, God’s work alone, accomplished according to God’s eternal, unalterable purpose. — *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace.”*
- The gospel is the revelation of the fact that God’s salvation and grace were given to chosen sinners in Christ before the world began. — *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”*
- The gospel is the declaration, the manifestation, the revelation of light, life, and immortality in and by Christ, in whom is *“the promise of life”* (v. 1). — *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

Though imprisoned and facing immediate execution, Paul was not ashamed of his circumstances in the good providence of God, or of the gospel for which he was about to die. In fact, that was his only comfort and peace (1:12).

(2 Timothy 1:12) “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

It is against this backdrop that Paul calls for Timothy and us to “*hold fast*” (1:13-14). With that as the backdrop, how dare we do otherwise?

(2 Timothy 1:13-14) “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (14) That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

### **“BE STRONG”**

In chapter 2 (vv. 1-26) Paul calls for us to “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*” Like Timothy, we are not only to hold the gospel firmly ourselves, we are to commit it to others. Faithful men learn the gospel from faithful men and then teach it to other faithful men, generation after generation.

Clearly, Paul is passing the torch to He is urging him to continue to depend on God, assuring him that he would find the strength needed and the grace sufficient in Christ. Paul’s long ministry with Timothy had included many hardships, and as Timothy took up the mantle he

could expect more of the same. So Paul urged him to submit to difficulties as a good soldier.

In verses 3-6 we are given examples of how we are to “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*” He uses three examples to help and us understand the responsibilities upon us in this world: that of a soldier, that of an athlete, and that of a farmer.

First he tells us that, like good soldiers, we must remain free from entanglement with other lesser goals and activities while serving the cause of Christ in this world (vv. 3-4).

(2 Timothy 2:3-4) “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (4) No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

The he tells us that we must, as disciplined athletes, do the work of building Christ’s kingdom, sp[reading his gospel, and ministering to his people according to the rule of his Word (v. 5).

(2 Timothy 2:5) “And if a man also strive for masteries, *yet* is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”

Third, Paul tells us that as laborers in God’s vineyard, we must give ourselves to the constant toil of tending the vineyard, like any good farmer tends his ground (v. 6).

(2 Timothy 2:6) “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.”

In a word, that which is required in the service of Christ (required of gospel preachers and required of all who serve Christ in their own place) is dogged, relentless persistence. If ever this dogged persistence was exemplified in a mere man, that man was the apostle Paul (vv. 8-10).

(2 Timothy 2:8-10) “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: (9) Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even* unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. (10) Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

### **ASSURED FAITHFULNESS**

Paul assures us that “*the Word of God is not bound*” and cannot be bound (v. 9). And he assures us that our great God is ever faithful. He does so to inspire our dogged persistence in faithfulness to him, no matter the temporary cost or opposition (vv. 11-13).

(2 Timothy 2:11-13) “*It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: (12) If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: (13) If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.*”

## REQUIREMENTS FOR PREACHERS

In the remaining portion of chapter 2 (vv. 14-26) Paul tells us what is required of those who preach the gospel. Remember, however, this book was not written only to instruct preachers. If we are to instruct eternity bound men and women in the truth of God, if we are to teach people the things of God as his witnesses in this world, whether preaching from the pulpit or discussing the gospel with our barber or hair-dresser, we must heed these requirements.

- Avoid strife about words (v. 14).
- Study the Word of God (v. 15).
- Shun the profane and vain babblings of men about the things of God, being confident that “*the foundation of God standeth sure,*” that God will save his elect (vv. 16-19).
- Purge ourselves of all false religion and the vain babblings of it (vv. 20-21).

(2 Timothy 2:20-21) “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. (21) If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work.”

- Flee those youthful lusts that inspire religious debate, following righteousness, faith, love, and peace (vv. 22-23).

(2 Timothy 2:22-23) “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (23) But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.”

- Instruct those who hear us with gentleness, meekness, and patience (vv. 24-26).

**“THIS KNOW ALSO”**

In chapter 3 Paul continues telling us what is necessary for us to know and understand if we are to be useful as God’s witnesses in the day and generation we have been put here to server.

We cannot possibly minister to our generation if we fail to understand it. So this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter begins with a plain declaration of what we face in these “*last days*” (vv. 1-7).

(2 Timothy 3:1-7) “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (3) Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are

good, (4) Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (6) For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, (7) Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

“*The last days*” began with our Lord’s first advent and will continue until his second coming (Acts 2:14-17; Heb. 1:1-2; 1 John 2:18). They are days of continually increasing (v. 3) ungodliness and self-centered rebellion accepted and practiced by religious people who have a form of godliness, but deny the gospel (which is the power of godliness) altogether.

**Lest we be overwhelmed** at the realization of these things, Paul assures us that the cause of Christ and the purpose of God cannot and will not be hindered by them (vv. 8-9).

(2 Timothy 3:8-9) “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. (9) But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all *men*, as theirs also was.”

**As Aaron’s rod** swallowed up the rods of Jannes and Jambres when they turned them into snakes, so the Word of God will swallow up all who oppose it (vv. 10-16).

(2 Timothy 3:10-16) “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, (11) Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. (12) Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (13) But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. (14) But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; (15) And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (16) All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

The Word of God and the Word of alone is sufficient as the means by which we are to know all things spiritual and withstand the evil influence of false religion. It is profitable for...

- Doctrine — to teach us everything we need to know about God, salvation, and ourselves.
- Reproof — refuting error and false religion.
- Correction — correcting our own misunderstandings and wayward behavior.
- Instruction in Righteousness — teaching us the way of life, faith, and righteousness in Christ.

**“PREACH THE WORD”**

Paul’s last word to Timothy (chapter 4) and to us is this — “*Preach the Word!*” That is God’s remedy for the wickedness of this age and every age is gospel preaching (vv. 1-5).

(2 Timothy 4:1-5) “I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; (2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; (4) And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (5) But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

Then, he concludes this epistle and his life with an description of his own life and ministry as the servant of God (vv. 6-8), and calls upon Timothy to come to hi quickly, desiring to see him one more before leaving this earth for heavenly glory (vv. 9-22).

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous

judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Paul knew that his execution was at hand. He had already appeared before Nero once. Now he must appear before the monstrous wretch again, and he knew what the outcome would be. But he is looking beyond all that. He is about to depart from this world, about to enter into a “*house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*” with Christ. Yet, he was cold and lonely. He says...

“Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus.” (2 Timothy 4:9-12)

He asked Timothy to bring him his coat, his books, and the Scriptures, desiring to the end to learn more of Christ (V. 13). He had been greatly injured by Alexander the coppersmith (vv. 14-15). When he first stood before Nero, no one stood with him. All forsook him. Still, the Lord stood with him and delivered him out of the mouth of the lion (vv. 16-17). Though he knew that Nero (the monstrous raging lion) from whom he had been delivered, would have him killed this time, he tells Timothy and us that God had indeed given him the spirit “*of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*” Nero

would kill his body; but by Nero's hand he declares confidently, "*the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever*" (v. 18).

Paul closes this epistle with some personal words to his friends. What a delightful letter this is! What a challenge and comfort it must have been to Timothy. But remember, this was written to you and me as much as it was to Timothy. Paul wrote this, his last epistle, to encourage us to stand firm, to hold fast to the form of sound words given to us in the gospel of Christ, to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ remembering that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him.