

2Timothy 24-10-06a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is the 6th of October, 2024. We continue our study in 2 Timothy, picking up in chapter 2. We're going to see some very fascinating comparisons made here that give us insight into the way we operate our spiritual gift.

Each one of us has one, we know its purpose is to benefit the body, and it is helpful to kind of know how it works. What God can do in us and through us depends a lot on whether we understand what is required of us to be available for that purpose. Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we'll begin.

Father, how grateful we are for another opportunity to spend this time together in shared enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus Christ, His work on our behalf, His continuing representation and advocacy at Your right hand on our behalf. We pray that as we look at this portion of Your Word together, that the Holy Spirit will find us easy to teach, and will implant these truths in our memory in a way that will be helpful to us in the days ahead, in our role as representing the Lord Jesus on this earth toward those around us, and in learning those skills and gaining the experience that qualifies us for service and function now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name, Amen.

As we come here to 2 Timothy 2, you will remember that we've looked at the first few verses together. You therefore, my son, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strengthened by the grace.

No point in attempting something when you don't have the strength. The older we get, the more we realize that the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is often not as capable as it once was. And it is wonderful to have strength from an outside source, a reliable source, a divine source.

So, Paul exhorts his son in the faith to be strengthened in Christ. Not simply with good wishes or grand ambitions or wishful thinking, but there is actual strength. There is power that comes into our life in, by, and with the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And this, of course, is the mind of Christ, the word of God, and the presence of God's Holy Spirit. Divine enablement. Supernatural power.

This is how Jesus lived his life. It's how he performed his miracles. It's how he understood the will of God, the timing for when to stay in a town or village and when to move on.

He didn't base it on public acclaim or the amount of interest or the pleadings of his disciples or others. The Lord Jesus understood the will of his Father because he was steeped in the word of God and was enabled and empowered by the spirit of God. And he test drove.

He provided the example of the kind of life that we, in this age, are privileged to lead. So we don't want to forget that. Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses. You're not alone in this. It's a team effort.

There are many witnesses. We're blessed to have many, many sources of insight, explanation, exhortation in the word of God. There are many witnesses.

Timothy is one of them. In the modern day, we have any number of pastors and teachers who make up this team of witnesses and of preachers and teachers. Students of the word of God who share what they learn for our corporate benefit, as well as our individual understanding.

And commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. I will note in passing, many of us have been in Bible studies, especially if you go to a larger church. And there's a need to split off and have a bit more intimate fellowship, more personal time spent with fellow believers.

And in very large churches with hundreds, if not thousands of people coming, they will do this by means of subdividing the flock. Instead of there being a massive sermon. They call this now the sermon event.

And I saw a cartoon by a guy. I don't agree with much of what he presents. But he does cartoons and his signature is the naked pastor.

I don't know why, but you can find these. And he makes pointed commentary through his spiritually editorial cartoons. But there is one that I couldn't help but smile at.

And it is a aerial view of a sanctuary filled with people. And Pastor Bob is at the pulpit and there's signs pointing to Pastor Bob. It's the Pastor Bob show.

It's a one-man event. And not the Pastor Bob that some of us learned under. I'm sure this guy doesn't know, but he might.

And so people refer to the sermon event or the one-man pastor show. And that is a correct and useful observation. That church shouldn't be about coming and having an entertainment event or one person.

And that's all you do. You don't have fellowship. You don't have interaction.

You don't have the opportunity for other spiritual gifts to function. We do have to make allowances in our particular church, our particular case. Our people are scattered and we don't have the opportunity to do things to the extent we would if, and as we have in previous days when we were all co-located.

Nevertheless, to the extent that we can participate in fellowship and in conversation and in intercessory prayer and in the kinds of interaction that are possible, given our situation, we have the privilege of doing so. And church should be more than just a 35 to 40 minute Bible class. But having said that, the core, the trunk of the tree in church fellowship is the teaching of the word of God.

That is the heartwood, that is the center, because that's where we find Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed in the word of God. Every book of the Bible, every page connects to him in some way.

And because the Lord Jesus should be at the center of our fellowship and at the center of our worship and at the center of our spiritual life and growth, necessarily the word of God that reveals him has to be the primary element. The witness is given to us from the Lord Jesus through the apostles into the pages of scripture and then via faithful men who present that. We are all edified and built up.

There are past faithful men. We have their witness in books, their testimony, the fruits of their study and their learning. I love reading the old gray heads from a few years ago to a couple of hundred years ago.

I love to read Adam Clark, Matthew Henry, H.A. Ironside, C.H. McIntosh. There are any number of wonderfully insightful individuals. Wiest, Kenneth Wiest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament is a cornucopia of insights from the original language.

And so these are witnesses. What you do not find, and hear me carefully, what you do not find is the group sitting in a circle asking each other, what does this mean to you? That is not in the Old Testament. It's not in the New Testament.

This is an innovation of people who apparently lack interest or lack presence or lack something. There is something missing. If you do not have this word of truth being communicated by a faithful witness, that is the model in the New Testament and in the Old.

Israelites did not gather at the foot of a mountain and ask each other, well, what do you think God's law is? What do you suppose is the problem in our nation that God is sending judgment? Ahab, what do you think? Methuselah, what do you think? Elihu, what do you think? This notion that because we are all blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are all qualified to interpret Scripture is completely undercut by this passage. Paul doesn't say teach as many people as you can so that they can share the faithful witness with each other. He says identify individuals who are apt to teach, will be faithful to teach, and will teach only that witness that you have heard me present in the presence of many witnesses.

There is a treasury. There is that thing that was entrusted to your care. And as with

many valuable things, everyone isn't the caretaker.

Someone is designated to be the caretaker. Someone knows the combination to the vault. Someone is responsible.

Someone is accountable. And the word of truth has been entrusted to those who are ordained, commissioned, and gifted to preserve it, maintain its truth and its accuracy, its fidelity to the Scripture, who are susceptible to the Holy Spirit's enabling and empowering to operate that gift. And everyone is not a teacher in public.

Everyone is not able to marinate in the word of God, see its truths revealed, and share what they learn. This is a limited field of operation. If you are ever invited into one of these, let's all get a book and we'll get together and each one of us will tell the other one what it means to me.

Run away. That is not God's way. It's not God's purpose.

After you have been in church and have heard the word of God presented, to discuss it, to talk about what it means, how it recalls to mind other things that you've learned, that is wonderful. That is healthy. Speaking the truth to one another in love.

But you have to have first been taught the truth and presented it by someone that God has designated to do so. And I'm sorry, but these circular arrangements where everyone can say whatever they want are unproductive and you will end up being deceived. The truth will be lost in the fog of subjectivity, personal anecdote, someone who sucks all the air out of the room because they won't quit and they don't know what they're talking about, and so on.

And many times when the truth is presented in that context, it's shouted down by people who are there because they're not very spiritually healthy. And when they hear the truth, they don't like it and they won't respond to it. They will react against it.

It's an unhealthy way to approach the word of God. This is the model. Read the pastoral epistles.

Paul pleads with men to be pastors and to be leaders and to be teachers. And they've got to be faithful. And they have to be dedicated in a unique way.

That's why he goes on to say, you must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. There is a sense, as we saw this last time and the time before, there's a sense in which we are all engaged in spiritual warfare. Put on the full armor of God, helmet of salvation, shield of faith, feet shod with the gospel of peace, and so on.

But this particular context tells us that Timothy and pastors like him are soldiers in a unique way. The entire population of a nation is rarely the army. It has happened.

Most of the people in Israel receive military training. But generally speaking, you have those who are enlisted for service, who are trained in warfare, in defense and offense, in strategy and tactics, in handling weapons, and in being deployed under orders to accomplish military goals. And they are a small subset of the entire population.

Just think about our country and our military. Most people are not military. So, when Paul says, you, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, you have two things here.

He doesn't say, tell your congregation that they must all endure hardship as good soldiers. He says, you, Timothy, as the pastor, will endure a unique kind of hardship because you represent and present the gospel. Those who attack the gospel, those who reject it, those who want to distort it, pervert it, and teach a false version are going to come after you.

You uniquely, as a communicator, represent the truth. And you will engage in a unique kind of warfare because of that. So, you, therefore, singular, Timothy, second person, you must endure hardship as a good soldier.

Not to say that there aren't other soldiers, in the same way that Paul is a slave of Jesus Christ as an apostle. Not to say that we are not all servants, in a sense. But we don't serve the way Paul did, because we're not apostles.

And we're not soldiers in the sense that Timothy was, because we're not all pastors. So, you must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. So, now we're going to see the example of Timothy as a pastor.

What do we do with these examples? We don't tune out because, well, I'm not a pastor. I'm not even a man. I'm a woman.

So, I'm going to wait until we get to the end of this section, and then I will perk my ears back up and see if there's something for me. We've seen this over and over again, particularly in the past Orals, that when you have an example of a gift or a function or a status or an opportunity, just as when we read the Old Testament and we see the nation of Israel, we're not Israelites, we're not in their circumstances, but we can observe and apply principles that are reflected in their particular case. Same thing here.

Most of the people to whom I am speaking are not pastors. Many of you are never going to be one because you're a woman or you have a different spiritual gift, which is great. God bless us all for having such a diversity of gifts.

That having been said, the principles that Paul gives Timothy for the operation of his gift are the same principles that apply for the operation of your gift. So, we don't duck out and wait for the pastor section to leave. We wouldn't be in the past Orals at all if that were the case.

So, there is a kind of hardship that all of us endure. Timothy's is opposition and attack because he is a representative of the gospel proper. But there is a sense in which you are a representative of the gospel proper.

And the priorities and the values that you reflect in your life will sometimes skyline you and cause you to have to endure hardship, relationship hardship, employment hardship, social hardship, political hardship. And just because you're not a pastor doesn't mean that you do not in some way, shape or form serve as a representative of the gospel, just not as formally and visibly as a pastor does. But we must similarly be ready to endure whatever hardship our identity as representatives of Jesus Christ entails.

So, how do we do that? This bears on both our general identity as believers in the Lord Jesus, as children of God, as sons and daughters and brothers and sisters in the faith. And as the targets of persecution, rejection, dismissal, derision, vilification, whatever it may be, there are those who will treat us with disdain. They think we're scientifically bereft, that we are intellectually limited, that our motives are the imaginary ones they assign to us of fear, inadequacy.

You need an invisible friend to help you through the day. You're afraid of death. You don't want to engage with the hard realities of turning to dust when you die and there being no life beyond.

You fear the great unknown. I am brave. I'm an atheist and I stare into the darkness of the emptiness of lack of purpose and lack of meaning and lack of anything in life.

And I'm better than you because I'm willing to indulge this denial of basic realities. So, how do we do this? How do we both function within our gift and serve as representatives in general of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, in this chapter, chapter 2 of 2 Timothy, we have seven examples. Seven examples.

You can take note of these. We have seen four of them and we're going to encounter the next three before we finish the chapter. The first is in chapter 2, verse 1. Do you see it? How is Timothy characterized in verse 1? You, therefore, my son.

This is a spiritual connection. This is spiritual family. We are members of the body of Christ and we are related to each other.

We are on a team. We are not lone rangers. We are not lone wolf scouts.

We are not stranded on an island. We are connected. We have a family.

We have those who have gone before and served as worthy examples. Encouragement. Training.

And the uplift that comes from association with believers who know who they are and

why they're here. This is Timothy's relationship to Paul. So, son is the first kind of metaphor, if you will, as to how to function.

And Paul leads with this. Don't think you're isolated, you're alone. Nobody knows the trouble you've seen.

You're disconnected. Paul talks in this letter, as we have seen in chapter 1, about the fact that he himself is isolated. All those from Asia have left.

He's alone. Some have forsaken him for the pleasures of the world. Some have gone on their own agenda.

Some have fallen away from the faith. Others are detailed on God's work elsewhere. And so Paul, physically, geographically, circumstantially, is alone.

But he's not alone. And so he connects with his sons in the faith, whether it is Timothy, or Titus, or Epaphroditus, or Onesiphorus, or Luke, or others who God will bring at the right time, the right place, for the right reasons, to provide refreshment and restoration. We are not alone.

We always have the presence of the Holy Spirit. If we are faithful and obedient, we have the indwelling Christ. We have the indwelling Father, who those two have come and made their home with us in and through the Word and the Spirit in a unique and supernatural way.

So we are connected, first and foremost, as children of God, sons and daughters of God. We have a family connection. We have a Father who loves us.

To remember that in times of hardship, and to not become subjective and think, it's all about me, and it's my circumstance, it's my discomfort, it's my lack of enthusiasm for the status quo, we become objective when we remember to whom we are connected. First, vertically and eternally. Secondly, our spiritual family, my son.

That's number one. We are in the process of looking at number two, and number three, and number four, which is the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. I always have a slight smile when I see farmer in the Greek New Testament, because if you've ever known someone named George, that's the word for farmer in Greek, Georgos, George.

George means farmer. So George Washington, you think about Mount Vernon, and he was a farmer. He was a planter.

So, what's that? George Foreman. I don't know, I can't make that work. But a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer, these are the ones we're looking at right now.

We are going to go on to see in verse 15, and you don't even have to look, because if I say 2 Timothy 2:15, what do you say? Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a

what? A workman, a worker, a laborer. This is another metaphor, in a sense. For us.

So verse 15, a workman. That is number five. Number six is down in verse 21, and this is one of my favorite sections of all of Paul's writings, one of my favorite sections in the entire New Testament, because it is so effective in countering the misunderstanding of Romans chapter 9. So many of the Reformed and Calvinist persuasion want to go to Romans 9 and say, God has made vessels of wrath fitted for destruction.

They're foreordained. God does not elect them to faith and to salvation. They are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and it's God's inscrutable, ineffable, unknowable reasons for appointing them to wrath and withholding efficacious grace from them so that they might be saved.

And they're just an example so that we can see God pour out His wrath upon them and eternally punish them. They're vessels of wrath. God just decided He would make some vessels of honor and some vessels of wrath.

It's God's sovereignty, and don't question it. Who are you to answer back to God? He can make from the clay whatever He wants, and He has made some pots that He's just going to throw in the air and shoot with His shotgun. No.

And this section of 2 Timothy that we're approaching, these who, in verse 16, engage in profane and idle babblings, increasing to more ungodliness. In verse 18, they strayed concerning the truth, saying the resurrection has already passed. They overthrow the faith of some, but the solid foundation of God stands.

Verse 20, In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, i.e., vessels of honor, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Do you notice that both kinds of vessel are in the same house? It's a great house. But there are both gold and silver vessels and wood and earthen vessels.

They're all in the house. The people in the house have not taken the wood and earthenware and thrown it outside. They haven't smashed it up and gotten rid of it.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from dishonor, Verse 21, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, which is dishonor, identify what is dishonorable by God's grace, in God's strength, in, by, and with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, be strengthened, abandon, and separate from dishonor, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. It is not God's sovereign choice to elect some to honor and to dispose others for dishonor. We choose.

A man cleanses himself. He's got to use God's cleansing grace. He has to be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

He has to sprinkle his heart. He has to wash his body. But if a man cleanses himself, he

will be a vessel of honor, fitted for every good use.

We choose. But notice the figure here is to be a vessel, useful, a useful vessel. That is number six.

Then finally, in verse 23, you avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing they generate controversy and strife, division. A servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition. Once again, a figure here, a servant, a servant.

This again, in verse 24, is uniquely the province. There's a balance. There's a symmetry here with what Paul began with in terms of being a good soldier as a pastor and identifying others who will be able to carry on that work.

Those God has gifted, those that display an aptitude. This is how you figure out who is functioning with a spiritual gift. They will have an aptitude.

They will be effective. They just have that green thumb, as it were, and it becomes evident that these people just have a kind of insight, a kind of intuition that comes from God, and they are able to be a blessing in unique and special ways to fellow believers. Many of you are in that category, and many of us are blessed in and through your spiritual gift and your willingness to be prepared and be a vessel of honor that God can use for these wonderful good uses.

So these are the seven, and we will find in these, each of them, unique benefit in how our own gift functions. It may be different in its area of service, in its specifics, but the general principles that guide it are all the same. Well, we're going to pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to see why are these seven figures specifically chosen by Paul, not just here but elsewhere. We've already been to 1 Corinthians 9 and seen that Paul's mind returns to these metaphors and these examples more than once, and he uses them similarly in other places to emphasize particular aspects, particular facets of our interaction with fellow believers, our place in the world, how do we respond to those who are opponents, to those who contradict, to those who are engaged in deceit and a false gospel, whether we encounter them as pastors and teachers or in the course of our conversations with those around us. There is guidance in the Word of God.

There are helpful and memorable examples that will guide us so that we can be effective in representing the Lord Jesus on this earth, in this life, at this time. Let's pause here and take our break.