

RUF Bible Study – 1 & 2 Timothy
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2 Timothy 2:1-13

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. 2 You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

3 Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. 5 And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. 6 And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. 7 Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

11 This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. 12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. 13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

College students are known for their procrastination. Their motto: never do today what you can put off until tomorrow. They often still pull it off, writing papers until 6 am and turning them in at 9 after a few hours of courtesy sleep. I do it too. I need to make a few phone calls regarding household chores and car items. I hate doing that, but I need to.

Paul is encouraging Timothy here to do the hard thing. Press on. Be strong. Write the paper. Make the call. Talk to the person. Don't dally and don't be timid, but be strong. This comes right after Paul has told Timothy about the others who have fallen away, and how all of Asia has rejected him.

But not you Timothy. You are different. How will Timothy be different? Let's look at two things in his life. These are two things Paul is calling this leader to.

Strong Delegated Suffering

Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. 2 You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.

In the midst of the landslide of defection, Timothy is to remain strong. He is to resist the prevailing mood. This is a motivational speech for Timothy to do all the things that leaders do. To get it done. Whatever it takes. To win the day. Take the hill.

But. But it's not on his own strength. Paul isn't telling him to grit his teeth and do it. He's saying be strong – in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The power that Timothy needs comes from grace. The word here is a present passive imperative. That means "Keep on being strong." There will always more grace for you to keep being strong in.

This means that nothing will come his way that he can't handle because of grace. No person, no pain, no problem, no responsibility, no trial, no tragedy. If he calls you, he will give you sufficient strength, power and fortitude. "Timothy is to find his resources for ministry not in his own strength but in Christ's grace. It is not only for salvation that we are dependent on grace (1:9), but for service also."²

God gives you this grace in Christ Jesus today. It wasn't just something you needed back in the day when you were at camp or in church or at that retreat. You need it today. Or else you won't make it. Not your strength, but his. Ask him for it.

So leaders are strong in Christ. But they also enlist help and delegate. Paul moves on in verse two to give Timothy another instruction. Teach these truths to others. Paul is saying, "The good deposit was entrusted to you. Not only do you need to preserve it and guard it as a treasure. You also must entrust it to others. You have to keep it going and pass it on. That is a part of your job."

He mentions there is an unbroken chain of faithfulness here. Paul got it from Christ. Paul then gave it to Timothy. "My deposit" has become "your deposit." This didn't happen in private somewhere, some secret room or secret meeting. It

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For this series, I used commentaries on 1 and 2 Timothy from Hughes, Stott, Knight, MacArthur, Ryken, and Clinton. The reader should assume that none of the ideas expressed are original to me.

² Stott, 50

happened out in public, through teaching over time just like it does today. Timothy entrusts this to faithful men to become preachers and teachers to preserve the tradition. These men should be able to teach others like we read about in 1 Timothy.

We have to have sound truth. We've been hearing that again and again in Paul's letters to Timothy and the church. But preaching is not enough. We must be raising up others who are younger than us. We must be passing on our knowledge to others so they can pass it on to others. Do you see the regeneration here, the multiplication going on?

This is properly talking about preachers and teachers. We need more. I would love to see pastors come out of our group. I pray for them. I pray that some of you will want to be interns and missionaries, and you will devote your life to the gospel ministry. I pray that there will be 10 campus ministers from my time here. Or 20. Might God be calling you to be a part of this train? Put yourself under good teaching. Hunger and thirst for righteousness. Test your gifts. Lead out.

And this applies to all of us. Not only pastors and teachers, but everyone. We can all pass on what we have to others. All of us need a Paul in our lives, someone who can pour into us and we can learn from. Someone who looks out for us, encourages us and corrects us. And all of us need Timothys in our lives. We need peers to work alongside and labor with. We need friends who we're doing these things with, a group of people who are doing it together. And we need to be Pauls to others. We should be looking to new people, to freshmen, to younger folks or spiritually younger if not in age, and helping them, praying for them, encouraging them, loving them, listening to them, leading them.

It has to be more than just multiplication though. It takes time. It is hard. It involves the gospel at every step, not programs and seven spiritual steps. It is life on life, studying and repenting a lot. We need you to be leaders in this. We need you to be pastors and teachers in this.

This is exciting stuff. It's like recruiting people to something awesome. Then why does Paul write this?

3 Endure suffering along with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 Soldiers don't get tied up in the affairs of civilian life, for then they cannot please the officer who enlisted them. 5 And athletes cannot win the prize unless they follow the rules. 6 And hardworking farmers should be the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor. 7 Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.

Here we are talking about a great and wonderful adventure, and Paul throws a wet blanket on it by talking about sharing in suffering again. Suffering? Enduring suffering? Suffering together? I'm out.

Paul wants to make sure we understand this calling isn't easy. It is glorious, but it's not easy. He gives us three examples of what he means.

First is the *soldier*. Endure suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Onward Christian soldiers isn't a popular hymn these days, but it is biblical to be sure.

Soldiers don't expect an easy time. If they do, that gets knocked out of them pretty quickly in the first day. You are there to suffer. You are there to follow orders, to do the right thing and quickly, to perform your task well so your country can win. If we are to fight the good fight, we are to do so with soldierly characters like obedience, deep loyalty, courage, commitment, sacrifice, and concentration.

On our family vacation this year, we went to Gettysburg for a day. We bought the movie, which is over four hours long, and my family watched it twice. Once on the way there and once on the way back after we had been in the real place and it made more sense. I have listened to the movie twice, but haven't seen it since it came out fifteen years ago or so.

One scene I remember is when the South is trying to get up onto Little Round Top. The Maine Division is the end of the line. They have to hold the line. They cannot let the Confederates get around them. In the midst of extreme gunfire, they do hold the line, they do save the day, and they do most likely keep the battle from being lost and perhaps the whole war. It is a stirring moment filled with courage and commitment. And suffering.

Soldiers have to know how to concentrate on the right thing. They are to please their commanding officer. And that's hard to do with distractions and entanglements. We must focus on Christ and how to please him. We need to listen to him and have the lines of communication open. We are to hold our affairs lightly, willing to change them when we are told to do so.

The next illustration Paul gives of suffering is that of an *athlete* – there is a law-abiding obedience to suffering with Christ. In these Roman days there was a 10-month training period to compete in the Olympics, and then they swear an oath that they completed it. Now we have years and years of training. No one just walks into the Olympics without training. That is crazy.

One of my goals is to run a marathon. I've done a half-marathon, but I want to do the whole thing. There is a race coming up in Dallas in December. I have a wild hair to just go ahead and do the marathon then. I think I could make it. Running is mostly, though not entirely, mind over matter. I'm in pretty good shape. I can do half of it for sure. How hard would the other half really be?

This is bad thinking on my part. I could really hurt myself. I need to train and train and train. I need to suffer now so that my suffering then won't be as extreme. That's the way exercise works. Isn't it funny when you go to the gym and you see all those people voluntarily torturing themselves? Why would they do that? They have a higher goal, a vision of why this suffering matters.

So suffering involves training. But it also involves competing by the rules. Instead of training hard, you can also cheat. If you're not the best, strongest or fastest, there is also cheating. Wouldn't it make more sense if you wanted to get from first

base to third base, that you would run a straight line over the pitcher's mound right to it? Why waste all that time going around second base? Because it's the rules.

If you're running a marathon and you wanted to win but you weren't fast enough or strong enough, why not take a cab part way? People have tried this. Some of them pop out of the crowd with only a mile to go and raise their hands as the winner, wanting the glory. But they get found out. They don't win.

If you want to follow Jesus, don't look for a loophole or an easy way out or a shortcut. You can't take whatever way you choose, because Hey! I'm a Christian so I'm good to go.

There are rules – and there are prizes – in the Christian life. We need to live according to them; we need to write the laws into our hearts. One of those is suffering. We follow a suffering servant. You can't run the marathon without suffering, sweating and training beforehand and along the way. It is a part of it. Don't bypass suffering.

The last illustration Paul uses is that of a *farmer* and his painstaking labor. I don't personally know many farmers, but some of you might. Farmers are characterized by hard work, early and long hours, constant toil (plowing, sowing, tending, weeding, reaping, storing), regular disappointment (frosts, pests, disease), patience, and sometimes boredom.

Farmers don't get to sleep in. Farmers don't get to tell the cows to wait. Farmers can't take the month off from planting the crops. They suffer with their time and with the amazing job of not being able to control the weather. Too much drought – suffering. Too much rain – suffering.

Paul says the Christian life is like that. There is strain, discipline, and diligence. But it is worth it. There is a reward. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians: *58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.*

There is suffering and reward. Pain and gain. There is the harvest of holiness, for what you sow you will reap. You may suffer to walk with God. And there is the harvest of souls, as Jesus says the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. He's talking about people there. God uses his people, and their sufferings, to bring others to Christ. Look at Paul himself. "He gave and did not count the cost; he fought and did not heed the wounds; he toiled and did not seek for rest; he labored and asked for no reward except the joy of doing his Lord's will. And God prospered his efforts."³

Paul finishes this paragraph with this: *7 Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things.* Think over what Paul is saying. We must consider what Jesus is saying through Paul. Paul knows this. He's self-conscious about his apostolic authority. We must consider it. We have to get in and think about it, it doesn't just happen. The Holy Spirit will just drop in understanding on them. Think over what I say. I want us to be thinkers. Not only thinkers. We've read a lot about doing. But we have to think. We have to talk about these things. Are you challenging your ideas? Are you considering new ones? Are you processing with people? Are you talking about who God is, who you are and what is going on? Are you interested in learning more? Nothing that is worthwhile is ever easy. To be sure, there is grace. That is what Paul opens with. But there is also suffering. Suffering for his glory.

Remember

So here we are thinking about suffering. It's not my favorite topic, but I'm getting more and more used to it. And Paul tells me, as I'm thinking, that I'm to remember. In the midst of my suffering, and my reflection on it, I'm to remember. Remember what?

8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach. 9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.

The Bible is all about remembering. One great thing, and I can't run through them all, is the Passover. Where God delivered his people from slavery by a redeemer so they could worship him. We are to remember that, to sing about it, and we do when we take the Lord's Supper. Another place is the Shema, which is what we call Deut 6 – Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One. We are to hear, meaning we are to remember. It's a warrior's cry.

Whenever God's people crossed the Jordan River to go into the promised land, what were they told to do? They made a memorial in the middle of the river. Here is where we crossed. Here is where it happened.

Back to my Gettysburg trip. Going to the battlefield is a strange experience. In our world of Disney and Six Flags and user-friendly attractions, Gettysburg stands as a contrast. The battlefield is enormous, spanning maybe 20 square miles. Walking around it would be nearly impossible in a day. And you are walking up to monuments. There may be a little on commemorating where a soldier or battalion fell. It may be a huge one, memorializing a whole state's soldiers. You really need to hire a guide, or buy a cd that orients you to what you're doing and seeing.

But those monuments tell a story. They say, Something Important Happened Here. Remember!

We sing of this when we sing, Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I've come. An Ebenezer is a stone of help. It's a memorial. It's what the Israelites made in the Jordan River when they crossed.

³ Stott, 58

God is all about remembering. He gets extremely upset with his people when they forget. Psalm 78 is all about rebellious people and how they forgot God's wonders.

Have you forgotten? Do you remember? Maybe you need to raise an Ebenezer. I read of a man who yelled and screamed at his wife. He got so mad one day he threw a vase at her and it broke in a thousand pieces. This was his own breaking point. He fell to his knees in horror of what he had done and who he was. He repented, and God changed him. When they cleaned up the vase, they wanted to throw it away. It reminded him of his shame. But instead, they glued it back together and it reminded them of God's grace. That is an Ebenezer. Do you have things that help you remember?

What are we to remember? Yes, the Passover, the crossing of the Jordan and the Bible stories that form us. But Paul says here we are to first *remember the Gospel*.

8 Always remember that Jesus Christ, a descendant of King David, was raised from the dead. This is the Good News I preach.

Paul says this is a summary of the gospel. Of course we could say much more about the imputation of sin and the atonement on the cross. But here we do have a wonderful and short description of the Christian message, the Good News.

Jesus Christ is a name and a title that packs a punch. Jesus is the man's name. He was from Nazareth, a small town in the middle of nowhere. He was a man. He descended from David like any other man would have ancestors.

But this wasn't an ordinary man. He came from David, which means he was from the royal line. And – oh there is this little thing – he raised from the dead! He did raise and he still is risen. He was divine and his work was a work of atonement and forgiveness for sins. His work was also that of a Messiah, which we get from David again. He establishes a kingdom and you can live in it.

In other words, talking about Jesus Christ as coming from David and being raised from the dead means we're saying he is Savior and Lord. Redeemer and King. Not one or the other. Both. This is the gospel. Messiah-ship and resurrection make up the gospel. "Jesus is the predicted, long-awaited Messiah, and he has been raised from the dead and ever lives. This is the gospel. Everything else in the gospel is implicit in and flows from these two supreme realities. As Messiah, he fulfills the cascade of the Old Testament messianic prophecy and the gospel is King of kings and Lord of lords. As resurrected Lord, all authority in heaven and earth is his. He is victor. He is all-powerful. It is the good news that Paul himself clings to as his death approaches. This is the theological reality from which he takes strength."⁴

You must remember the gospel. Being strong isn't all there is. We have to have the gospel in our lives at each and every moment.

We also *remember the Gospel's power*.

Paul writes: *9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. 10 So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.*

The gospel has power then in our own lives to bring us to conversion and continual repentance. We think about it. We talk about it. But we also experience it. It can't only be theological and logical; it must also be experiential.

Here is Paul imprisoned during the days of Nero, who persecuted and blamed Christians. Paul is heralding the kingdom of Jesus, the royal message of a Savior King. And it's not the emperor. This is preposterous if people believe it. And Paul is willing to go to jail for it. Paul can be chained, but the Word of God cannot. It is unstoppable.

Kent Hughes tells a story in his commentary about a group of missionaries who went to Russia after the Cold War ended and things opened up. They had been talking about Jesus but no one had any Bibles in this little town. They had all been confiscated and locked up in the 1960s. They asked if the officials knew where they were, and if they could get them. The officials agreed, and they went to the storage place where the Bibles had been kept for decades. One of the people helping them get the Bibles was from the town. He'd grown up there. After awhile the people couldn't find him, so they looked for him. He was sitting and reading a Bible for the first time in his life. And the Bible he was reading was his grandmother's. He'd found her Bible and now it was his. God's word had seemed to be stopped – but just for a time. Isaiah puts it this way in chapter 55: *11 It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.*

The gospel has power. It has the power for you to do incredible things. Do you know this power? Have you seen this power? Does it motivate you to do things you wouldn't normally do?

Paul ends with another things we're to remember. He says we must *remember the trustworthy saying*. This seems to be some sort of ancient hymn or poem that people who know.

11 This is a trustworthy saying: If we die with him, we will also live with him. 12 If we endure hardship, we will reign with him. If we deny him, he will deny us. 13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

The first verse talks about conversion. If we die with him, we will also live with him. We don't die finally to sin, but we die to ourselves. Christianity is a life of both life and death. There is the strangeness of living in this: Whoever wants to find his life must lose it. Whoever is first shall be last and the last shall be first. Losers become winners. The poor in spirit become blessed and the mourners get comforted. Living with Jesus means dying with him.

⁴ Hughes, 203

The second verse talks about persevering and suffering. If we endure it, we will reign. Hold your ground against affliction. Don't give up and give in. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount that we will be persecuted. It will be hard, but stand strong for Jesus. And his promise? Not just that we'll make it, but that we'll be reigning with him. We'll be co-regents, viceroys and confidants of the king. But – only through suffering.

The third verse is the scary one. It's about apostasy. Jesus says that if we deny him, he will deny us. In Matthew 10: 32-33, Jesus says this same thing: 32 *“Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. 33 But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven.”*

We read of this with Hymenaeus and Philetus. There is a terrifying eternal disownment. I think this means the person never knew Jesus really. They talked about him, seemed to live for him, but in the end, he did not rule their hearts and they prove they never really knew him. If you are sinning, repent and believe. Don't wait years and years. Don't wait months or even weeks or days. Do it now. Come clean with God. Ask his forgiveness. Don't deny him and his work for you. Don't turn your back on him.

The fourth verse is one of hope. When we are faithless, what is God like? It's surprising because we don't get a warning, but a promise. When we are faithless, God is faithful. Hooray. We need this.

So there is something different about Peter and Philetus. Peter denied Jesus, but it was a temporary condition of his regenerate heart. Philetus denied Jesus, but it proved he wasn't among the elect. You don't have to believe perfectly all the time. The third verse is true, and we must take note of this possibility. Our antidote to is – repentance. If you are feeling faithless and you are denying God, repent and come back. He is faithful and will not deny himself. If God is truly in you, you will come back to him. *“Often and often, I have in my folly torn up my copy of God's covenant with me; but, blessed be His name, He keep it in heaven safe; and he stands by it always.”* Samuel Rutherford, found in Hughes, 206

One commentator made the point that there is a big difference between being blown off the deck by a hurricane and jumping off the deck because you don't want to take the helm.

There are a lot of things to do here. Be strong. Train others. Suffer with Jesus. Be a soldier, athlete and farmer. Remember. Raise your Ebenezer.

A woman named Penny Jo in our church has a nine-year-old grandson named Tristan. He has had a strange eye problem that the doctors cannot diagnose. It requires him to get drops in his eyes every 15 minutes all day every day. That is exhausting for him and for his family. He wears a black eye patch because the drops make his eyes too sensitive to light. It looks like he may need a corneal transplant in order for him to see in this eye. But it's been clearing up.

Penny Jo wrote this in an email just this week:

Tristan had an appointment at the eye clinic again yesterday. While driving in their van, Tristan said, “Mom, I'm kind of glad I am going through this.”

To which my daughter replied, “Why?”

Tristan said “Cause we learned a lot of new stuff, new words and good lessons. Besides, everybody needs to suffer.”

Viktoria asked him “Why do you say that?”

Tristan said “When people suffer it keeps them from being big wimps. Doesn't the Bible say something about suffering?”

His mom said “Yes, the bible says that we learn lessons from struggling.”

To which Tristan replied, “I thought so” and went back to what he was doing in his seat in the van.

That's some pretty good thinking from a nine-year-old. Suffering does keep us from being wimps. It makes us stronger like an athlete. It keeps us focused like a soldier. It keeps us dependent like a farmer. It makes us humble instead of proud. It opens us up to hearing from God and others. It gets us out of ourselves. It makes us need others, which is the way of the Christian community. We learn lessons from struggling. We walk in the way of Jesus.

We need to pass this on to others. We need to pass on the gospel truth and the gospel way of living to others. You can be a part of that. A part of a believing, trusting, suffering, mentoring, repenting community.