

## The Strategy for Success

2 Timothy 2: 1-6

Our text today comes from the last letter the Apostle Paul would write. At this moment, Paul is very near the end of life. He is confined within the Roman Mamertine prison, awaiting his execution. Paul's final days are lived in the shadow of the executioner's axe, knowing he will soon give his life for the faith.

As Paul penned this last epistle, many thoughts weighed heavy on his mind. He greatly missed his son in the faith, Timothy. The church was growing rapidly, and Paul felt the need to address church organization, continued doctrinal purity, and guidance for daily Christian life. Paul was also aware of the dangers of false teaching, which had become prevalent within the modern culture, and was finding its way into the church. Knowing his time was limited, Paul desired to leave final instruction for the young pastor he loved, and the church at large, to which he had committed his life.

Although Paul had been sentenced to death for preaching the Gospel, this was not a letter of resignation or defeat. In fact, it is a letter of encouragement and admonition for believers to remain steadfast in the faith, continuing to share the Gospel throughout the world.

Over the next few weeks, I want to journey through specific portions of this final letter, and examine the final instructions Paul left for Timothy. No doubt, this instruction will prove beneficial in our Christian lives as well. Today, as we discuss the [expectations](#) revealed within the text, I want to consider: [The Strategy for Success](#). This first expectation was for Timothy to:

**I. Be Strong in the Faith** (1-2) – As we examine these verses, we will discover the varied aspects of Christian service. Paul likened our commitment to the Lord, in service to Him, as a teacher, a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. As a teacher, Paul knew Timothy must be strong in the faith. Consider:

**A. His Position** (1) – [Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus](#). Timothy was not Paul's biological son, but he was his son in the faith. Paul loved him dearly, and expressed his great love for him in this letter. Paul in no way implied that his relationship with Timothy exceeded Timothy's relationship with Christ, but he did offer a reminder of his association with the apostle. Timothy had a great mentor in Paul; he had gained much from Paul's wisdom and guidance. Paul had invested greatly in this young pastor. He had been left with a legacy of faithfulness, and Paul wanted Timothy to remain committed to the truths he had instilled in him.

- Again, I want to emphasize that no relationship exceeds a personal relationship with Christ. Knowing and fellowshiping with strong believers cannot guarantee our salvation. However, like Timothy, my life has been influenced by others who were committed to Christ. They have invested much in me. I feel an obligation to continue in the faith and honor their investment. I want to honor the Lord, as well as, their commitment to the Lord.

**B. His Possession** (1) – *Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* Paul well understood the difficulty of serving the Lord in their current environment. While there was great reward, and the church was growing, there was also much opposition. Most in places of authority and power were not receptive to the Gospel. Paul knew Timothy would face opposition and persecution for the faith. He encouraged him to be strong in the grace available through Christ Jesus. Regardless what he faced, Timothy would never be alone. The grace provided through Christ would be sufficient to endure any difficulty. He must remain focused on what he possessed in Christ, instead of focusing on the opposition from the world.

- In America, we know little about real persecution for our faith. However, society as a whole is becoming less tolerant and receptive to the Gospel. Many are opposed to public proclamation of the Gospel. Some would like to censor the pulpits in America, deeming certain passages and topics offensive and therefore unacceptable to preach, even within the church. When faced with the opposition that will eventually come, we too must be strong in the grace available through Christ our Lord. He will provide sufficient grace to endure any difficulty!

**C. His Commission** (2) – *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* Paul understood the principle Jesus taught in the gospels – the fields were white unto harvest, but the laborers were few. The church was growing, and yet there were many who had yet to hear the good news of the glorious Gospel. Paul had invested in Timothy; he was well trained and prepared for the work of ministry. Timothy now had an obligation to share the truths of the faith with others, training them to take the Gospel to others. Paul knew disciples must in turn make disciples if the Gospel was to prosper.

- I am thankful for the investment of others in my life, and I am also aware of the responsibility to share what I have received. We must be willing to make other disciples, teaching them the truths of the faith and preparing them to share those truths with others. Apart from our fulfilling the Great Commission, being willing to make disciples, the church will suffer decline. This is not an option; it is a mandate from the Lord. *Matt.28:19-20 – Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [20] Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.* (The phrase “teach all nations” literally means “make disciples of all nations.”)

**II. Be Steadfast in the Fight (3-4)** – Paul now addressed the need for committed soldiers to diligently remain steadfast in the fight for the faith. Notice:

**A. The Requirement (3)** – *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.* Paul had not offered a suggestion; he fully expected Timothy to endure for the Lord. He was to faithfully abide in the faith, even in the face of great difficulty and varied hardships. The fight for the faith would not be easy, nor would it be won by the weak in heart, but Timothy had been commissioned to endure whatever the circumstance.

- This is quite convicting when we pause to consider the implication. Paul was about to die for the faith. All of the apostles, with the exception of John, would be martyred for the faith. We suffer little in America, and yet many allow trivial and insignificant circumstances to hinder their commitment to the Lord. Like Timothy, we are expected to endure the adversities and hardships associated with Christian service. There is no excuse for the believer to abandon the fight!

**B. The Restraint (4a)** – *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life.* Paul spoke from vast experience and wisdom gained while serving the Lord. Those who were successful in defending the faith and enduring for Christ must maintain a proper focus. They had to practice restraint, refusing to become entangled with the affairs of this life. Timothy would face many distractions, circumstances that could possibly divert his focus and commitment to the Lord. He had to be wise, willing to restrain the desires of the flesh for the cause of the Gospel.

- The enemy has not changed his tactics, and we must be committed to the same strategy Paul offered Timothy. It is easy to become distracted in service to the Lord. The enemy will put anything he can in front of us to divert our focus. This may be temptation, pride, greed, anger, jealousy, or bitterness, to name a few. We must be wise to his tactics and refuse to engage in the affairs of life that hinder our focus. Distracted believers are of little value to the ministry!

**C. The Responsibility (4b)** – *that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.* Paul reminded Timothy that his service was not about his recognition or advancement. He had one goal in life – to please the one who had called him to serve. Timothy's responsibility was to serve and honor the Lord.

- This truth needs to be emphasized in our day. The church does not exist to honor our accomplishments or please and satisfy our desires. We are here, first and foremost, to serve the Lord and honor Him with our lives. When a believer or congregation becomes focused on themselves instead of pleasing the Lord, their effectiveness in ministry is greatly limited.

**III. Be Sincere in the Field (5-6)** – Finally Paul used two more illustrations to encourage and equip Timothy – the athlete and the farmer. Both had attributes needed in believers. Consider:

**A. The Race (5)** – *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.*

Paul spoke of a runner participating in a race in order to win a crown. That was the desire of every runner. Those within the race sought to win the prize. Naturally, we see that one must first engage in the race if there is to be any expectation of winning the prize. Paul did not expect Timothy to watch the race from the sidelines, admiring the abilities of others, but to engage in the race himself. We need to remain committed to the race. Some of you started well, running strong for the Lord, but distractions and disappointments have sidelined you. You have an obligation to get in the race and run for the Lord, seeking to obtain the prize!

**B. The Rules (5)** – *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* Paul emphasized a simple truth – those who expected to win the crown must run the race according to the rules. If the runner failed to abide by the rules of the contest, he would be disqualified from the race, ending any chance of winning the prize.

- We too must run our race according to the guidelines set forth in the Word. One must first know Christ as Lord and Savior to even enter the race. We then must run according to the precepts of Scripture, striving to live free of sin while honoring the Lord, if we expect our efforts to endure in judgment. Also, each runner should be constantly aware of the team they represent. We are not merely running the race for our personal gain and recognition; we represent the Lord to the world as we run for Him!

**C. The Reward (6)** – *The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.* Finally, Paul referred to the believer as a farmer, a gardener expecting a harvest. If he was faithful and diligent in the work, he could expect to enjoy the first-fruits during the harvest. He would enjoy the fruit of his labor before others joined in and ate of the fruit. If one was to enjoy the harvest, work and effort were required first.

- There is a prize to obtain, an eternal reward in heaven, but it will not be given to the lazy and uncommitted. If we expect to have anything to lay at the feet of our Lord in judgment, we must be diligent in our efforts to serve in a way that pleases Him. The Lord is keeping a record and He will reward those who faithfully endure in service to Him.

**Conclusion:** This passage has not been difficult to discern, but it does present a challenge to every believer. Are these attributes present in our lives? Are we abiding strong in the faith, steadfast in the fight, and sincere in the field? I want to honor the Lord with my efforts while encouraging and equipping others in the faith. Are there needs in your life? Do you know Christ as your personal Savior? If so, are you living in a way that honors Him? Bring your need to Jesus!