

2 Timothy 2:1-9

September 13, 2015

I thought it would be appropriate to preach my last sermon as your pastor on the text God used to call me into the ministry.

Testimony

That call came over 25 years ago, and now I am glad to be able to say I am so glad the Lord called me into His ministry. Has it been easy? Absolutely not, our text today is going to make that clear. But I wouldn't trade the last 22+ years for the world.

2 Timothy 2:1-9 - You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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. 3 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 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. 5 And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. 7 Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. 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.

I trust you remember every time we read a passage of Scripture we need to ask ourselves three questions: Lord, **what** do you want me to do? **How** do you want me to do it? **Why** should I do it? I believe we will always find answers to the first two questions (what and how), and many times God will even tell us why.

So with this in mind we can outline our text as follows:

Lord, **what** do you want me to do? The answer is found in verse 1 - *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

How do you want me to do this? What does it look like to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus?

1. (v.2) the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
2. (v.3) Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ

As if anticipating our objection as to **why** we must endure hardship, Paul gives several reasons:

1. Soldiers have one job: to please their commanding officer. They don't get tangled up with the affairs of this world... with anything that might interfere with their duty. They don't say, "Sorry sir. I can't go on that mission because I am going over to my friend's house to watch the ballgame."
2. Soldiers endure hardness
3. Athletes endure hardness
4. Farmers endure hardness

Think about it Timothy. If soldiers, athletes, and farmers are willing to endure hardness for the fruits of their labors, how much more should you endure hardness?

Think about it: what is more important, temporal rewards or eternal rewards? Timothy, the eternal destiny of men's souls is at stake. Another answer to **how** can I be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" is found in verse 7 - *Consider what I say.*

In other words, you will never be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus without meditating on God's Word.

Paul then gives two more answers to "Why should we endure hardness?"

1. Remember, Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. If Jesus was willing to lay down His life for us... If Jesus was willing to pay the penalty for our sins that we so richly deserved. If Jesus was willing to endure hardness that He didn't deserve. How much more should we be willing to endure hardness so that others can have eternal life? Think about it Timothy.
2. Think about this too Timothy: I, Paul, am suffering as an evildoer. I am totally misunderstood, so much so that I am in chains. But even though they can put me in chains, no power on earth can put chains on the Word of God. Timothy, if I can endure hardness for the sake of the Gospel, you can too.

So now that we have the big picture in mind, let's go back and flesh out some of the details.

2 Timothy 2: 1 - You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We don't have to worry about whether or not God has given us enough grace for our daily trials. We don't have to pray for God to give us more grace because He has promised His grace is sufficient. Our job is to lay hold of that grace.

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 - It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not

know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. 5 Of such a one I will boast; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities. 6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me. 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

You are very familiar with this text, but knowing a text and living out a text can be two very different matters. God gave Paul a glimpse of the magnificence of Heaven and God also gave Paul a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

Let me point out three important lessons from this text:

- 1. God uses trials and afflictions to mature us**
- 2. God's grace is sufficient for these trials and afflictions**
- 3. The supernatural response of a thankful spirit in the midst of these trials and afflictions can only come from a humble heart... and a thankful spirit in the midst of suffering magnifies the greatness of our God.**

The only way we can endure hardness is by being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. So, let's consider this: how did Jesus endure hardness? Hebrews 12 gives us some wonderful insight:

Hebrews 12:1-4 - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us,

*and let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 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.*

How did Jesus endure the cross? He focused not on the pain of the horrible injustice of being made sin for us, He focused not on the shame. Instead He focused on the joy this hardship was going to produce.

Spurgeon writes the following to help us get a grasp on how much we hate shame:

Perhaps there is nothing which men so much abhor as shame. We find that death itself has often been preferable in the minds of men to shame; and even the most wicked and callous-hearted have dreaded the shame and contempt of their fellow-creatures far more than any tortures to which they could have been exposed.

We find Abimelech, a man who murdered his own brethren without compunction; we find even him overcome by shame, when “a certain woman cast a piece of a millstone upon Abimelech’s head, and all to break his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man his armor bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died.”

Shame was too much for him. He would far rather meet the suicide’s death — for such it was — than he should be convicted of the shame of being slain by a woman. So was it with Saul also — a man who was not ashamed of breaking his oath, and of hunting his own son-in-law like a partridge upon the mountains — even he fell upon his own sword rather than it should be said of him that he fell by the Philistines. And we read of an ancient king, Zedekiah that albeit he seemed reckless enough, he was afraid to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, lest the Jews who had fallen away to Nebuchadnezzar should make a mock of him.

These instances are but a few of many. It is well known that criminals and malefactors have often had a greater fear of public contempt than of ought else.

Nothing can so break down the human spirit as to be subject continually to contempt, the visible and manifest contempt of one's fellows; in fact to go further, shame is so frightful to man that it is one of the ingredients of Hell itself; it is one of the bitterest drops in that awful cup of misery.

The shame of everlasting contempt to which wicked men awake in the day of their resurrection; to be despised of men, despised of angels, despised of God, is one of the depths of Hell.

How did Jesus endure hardness? He focused on the joy that was set before Him. The joy of knowing His substitutionary death on the cross would bring salvation to countless sinners who couldn't possibly save themselves.

I want to point out three choices or decisions that Jesus made to enable Him to endure the hardness of the cross.

First he ministered to others in the midst of this trial. How? John 13 tells us in the Upper Room He washed the disciples' feet. As you know this was normally done by a household servant, but Jesus, the One who spoke this world into existence didn't think He was above such a menial task. So let me ask you: when trials show up are you choosing to look for ways to serve others? If not, why not? Do you think you have a better plan to handle trials than Jesus' plan?

Secondly, He gave thanks in this ordeal. Our sinful nature wants to murmur and complain when life gets hard, but notice the humility of the Lord Jesus that is on display by the giving of thanks.

*Matthew 26:26-28 - And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, **and gave thanks**, and gave it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. 28 "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

So let me ask you: when trials show up are you choosing to give thanks in, for, and thru your trial? If not, why not? Do you think you have a better plan to handle trials than Jesus' plan?

And thirdly, Jesus put a song in His heart as He endured this trial.

Matthew 26:29, 30 - "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Who is "they" when it says, "And when they had sung a hymn?" It isn't just the disciples it is Jesus and the disciples.

So let me ask you: when trials show up are you choosing to put a song in your heart? If not, why not? Do you think you have a better plan to handle trials than Jesus' plan? Very importantly, do you think in His humanity that Jesus felt like washing the disciples' feet? Do you think He felt like giving thanks? Do you think He felt like singing?

Of course not. But if Jesus followed this pattern in the hour of His greatest need, do you think it might be wise for you and me to go and do likewise?

In case you didn't make the connection, let me connect the dots for you.

Ephesians 5:18-21 - And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Paul's command to Timothy and to us is to be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. I want you to see the Apostle Paul was strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, and it is no accident we see Paul following this pattern in his trials.

Paul gave thanks when God told him He wasn't going to take away the thorn in the flesh.

9 Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Paul's response exudes thankfulness. And when Paul states "For when I am weak, then I am strong," we need to understand Paul was strong (not physically)... he was strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Yes, Paul was giving thanks in his trial, but that's not all. Do you remember when Paul and Silas were thrown in prison in Acts 16? Do you remember what Paul and Silas were doing at midnight? They were praying and singing hymns. Let that sink in. Paul was singing when he was unjustly thrown into prison. You see, Paul wasn't just a hearer of the Word, he was a doer.

Do you think Paul stayed busy ministering to others in his trials?

Where was Paul when he was writing this letter to Timothy? He is in prison in Rome. What do we find Paul doing? Is he feeling sorry for himself? Is he wishing he hadn't become a follower of the Lord Jesus? No, absolutely not. He was busy ministering to Timothy. In fact, we could say he was busy ministering to you and to me as he was being used by God to give us 2 Timothy.

Paul could have pouted. He could have said, "This isn't fair. I didn't sign up for this Jesus." He could have, but he didn't.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

One last thought before we close. I told you earlier that we don't have to ask God for more grace for daily trials, all we have to do is lay hold of the grace He has promised.

There is a secret way to lay hold of God's grace. It shouldn't be a secret but it is. Would you like to know the secret? Here is the secret: the more you give thanks, the more you will receive God's grace, and it is not just because you are being obedient. No, there is a special relationship between grace and thanks. Believe it or not grace and thanks come from the same Greek word.

*2 Timothy 1:1-3 - Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, 2 To Timothy, a beloved son: **Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3 I thank God...***

If you look in your concordance you will find that the words "Grace" and "Thank" come from the same Greek word "χαριτω."

You will find the following relationship to hold true 99% of the time. If it originates from *God*, the word is almost always translated "*Grace*." If it originates from man, it is almost always translated "Thanks."

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

You cannot be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus if you are not giving thanks!!!