

2 Timothy Study
Week 2
2 Timothy 2:1-21

Day One

2:1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2:1 – Much has been made of fatherhood and son-ship in the many modern charismatic churches. Leaders have sons in the Spirit and that makes those men fathers over their spiritual sons. I am not discounting the power of a man to mentor another in a profound way. But Timothy’s relationship with Paul was unique and it was the only one of its kind that I can see in Paul’s life. **So is this the standard that every leader should achieve? And will it be different for a man who did not grow up with the influence of a father?**

My point is that there are many who are zealous to be spiritual fathers. I think that is something only God can make you, and He is the one who gives the sons. They cannot be collected or mandated; God must give them. I work with many women in my ministry and don’t have many sons. **Is that a problem? Am I deficient in some way?** I don’t think so, but I may be wrong. **What do you think? And does the fact that there may be spiritual fathers also mean that there are spiritual mothers?** All this talk of mothers and fathers in the Church makes me a bit nervous.

Paul did not call Timothy to draw closer to him, but closer to Jesus. That should be the objective of every spiritual father, but some, I believe, spend more time drawing the disciples after themselves than to the Lord.

v. 2 – Paul was more concerned that his work of teaching the basics of the faith would continue rather than his own name or ministry. This was his spiritual legacy. He wanted Timothy to identify workers who would be faithful, not to Timothy or Paul, but to the teaching and be faithful also to pass it on. Paul had an urgency about him concerning his work, for he knew that time was limited before the Roman Empire would oppose Christians and the Church. So Paul was running as far as he could, as fast as he could, for as long as he could and he was urging Timothy to have the same sense of urgency.

v. 3 – In the first 21 verses, Paul mentioned Jesus’ name 9 times! I realized a few years ago that I had preached entire messages and not mentioned Jesus’ name! I had talked about God and the things of God, but I had not always tied the themes to devotion to Christ. I have tried to rectify that in recent years.

Is Jesus the focus of your life, work and ministry? Is your denomination, doctrine or ministry the focus?

Paul was suffering hardship, as soldiers of a cause or nation are apt to do. He urged Timothy to join him in suffering for the cause of Christ. I think I have referred to some of my suffering as persecution although it probably has been more reaping from some of my bad decisions. Have I ever really suffered for the cause of Christ? Perhaps, but I have also suffered because of my own dullness and hardness of heart.

Day Two

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

v. 4 – Paul continued the soldier metaphor, pointing out that an enlisted soldier does not involve him or herself with ordinary civilian affairs. They are totally committed to their role of soldier, working to carry out the orders of the commanding officer. The analogy is clear that we are soldiers of Jesus, our Commanding Officer, and should be focused on the affairs of God's army. **Are you a good soldier of Jesus? Are you focused on your work as a soldier, or do you have a "side job"?**

v. 5 – Paul then changed his analogy to that of athletes who is restricted by the rules of their particular athletic event. Once again this relates to being focused on the task at hand, which for Timothy was the work of finding and equipping faithful men who would pass on Paul's teaching to future generations.

What is your focus or purpose? Do you know? Mine is to create order out of chaos. People ask me how I am able to do what I do, and I tell them it's because I stopped doing what I can't do. I am focused, or at least attempting to be. An athlete has to eliminate or restrict anything that doesn't contribute to his or her goal of competing and winning. A soldier must focus on the task at hand of protecting from or fighting the enemy.

There was a time when I was afraid to say no to anything because "maybe" it was the Lord who wanted me to do it. I was scattered, doing many things, some of which I was not gifted or inclined to do. I have tried to stop that, rather sticking to those things that I have the gifts and interest to do.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is totally scattered and 10 is totally focused, what score would you give yourself where focus is concerned?

v. 6 – Then Paul went to a third example, that of a farmer. At first, it wasn't clear to me why Paul would shift his thought to the farmer and what he was trying to say. The soldier, athlete and farmer have specific rules that go with those roles if they are to be successful. There are no shortcuts in any of those jobs; you must stay focused on the task at hand or risk failure.

The message is clear for you and me. We must have the same kind of focus, not just on the Lord but also on the task or purpose that He has assigned for you to do. **So let me go back to the question of what number you gave yourself on the focus scale. What can you do to improve that number?**

Day Three

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

v. 7 – Reflect? Did Paul write that Timothy should reflect? I don't know how Timothy was, but I don't have time to reflect. I'm way too busy. I want someone else to reflect and share his or her insights with me. I want to read or listen to the reflections of someone else. It's so much easier to hear from them – my pastor, the preacher on television, my friend – than it is to hear from the Lord. So please, Paul, don't expect me to take time to reflect!

I am being facetious, but that is how I have acted at times. It takes time to hear from the Lord, time to calm my mind and spirit, time to listen, and time to process what I am hearing. I don't always have the time. No, I don't always *make* the time. That's why I look for shortcuts.

There is nothing wrong with devotionals, seminars, commentaries, digital and TV teachings or books. They can be an important part of my reflection ritual. They cannot, however, take the place of my seeking the Lord, asking Him questions, and waiting for answers.

Are you making time to reflect? And how are you capturing and maintaining those reflections? Are you keeping a journal? The problem with taking mental notes is that they fade so quickly. You should be recording what you hear and even looking for ways to broadcast and distribute your insights to help others in their own reflections.

v. 8 – It's been a few verses since Paul mentioned Jesus, so he mentioned Him again. **It's all about Jesus, isn't it?** Paul never wavered from that and never drew attention to himself, or no more than was necessary to complete the task at hand. Paul's reference here is interesting – Jesus raised from the dead and descended from David. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah and was the heir to the promise that a descendant of David's would sit on the throne forever.

Most Jews would have taken this to mean that there would be many descendants who would sit on that throne to fulfill that promise. In reality, only One would do so by virtue of the fact that He would live forever. The Jews did not recognize Jesus because they had a preconceived notion of how God would fulfill His word and promises to Israel. This is

a critical mistake. Never assume that you know what God will do. You can be so adamant that you know what God will do that you miss what He will actually do.

As an example of what I am saying, there was a man who needed healing in the Old Testament, yet he almost missed his healing because he assumed he knew how God would do what He could do.

But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy (2 Kings 5:11-14).

Do you have some strong preconceived notions of what God will do or how He will do it? Then perhaps you need to relax and remember that you don't know for sure, even when you think you do. Leave room for God to be God and do the unexpected. Leave room to marvel at the mystery of how God works.

v. 9 – You and I may be limited and chained, but God's word is never chained. Notice also in this verse that Paul referred to *his* gospel, not to *the* gospel. Paul had a unique message and it was that God would include the Gentiles in His family. For this, Paul was in prison. Yet while the apostle to the Gentiles was in prison, God's purpose was not.

It's never about you and me. It's always about God and His purpose. Don't forget that. Many leaders in the body of Christ today need to be reminded of that truth.

Day Four

10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. 11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; 13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

v. 10 – Paul endured everything for the sake of his flock or his “target audience.” **Who is your target audience? Do you have one? What or who is the main emphasis of your purpose?**

Paul suffered so that his mission would be accomplished, just as any good soldier, farmer or athlete would do. **What price are you paying to see your purpose fulfilled?** Keep in mind that your purpose has eternal consequences for your target audience. My audience is mostly in Africa and I must pay a price to fulfill my purpose for their sake.

v. 11 – I think this short hymn in the next three verses relates back to Paul’s reference to salvation in Christ Jesus, which carries with it eternal glory for God and for the recipients. If we die in Christ, then we will also live with Him. That is why the resurrection is so critical to our faith:

But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

v. 12 – We must endure because we will suffer and pay a price for our relationship with God. Jesus, however, paid the ultimate price so that our price pales in comparison to His:

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood (Hebrews 12:3-4).

If we deny or walk away from Jesus, He will deny or walk away from us. **How does this relate to the “once-saved, always-saved” doctrine that many hold?** I think the Bible does make it clear that you can lose your salvation, although not as easily as some others would lead us to believe.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace (Hebrews 6:4-6).

v. 13 – If we don’t walk with God, He will still do what He has promised He will do. God can do anything but lie, for that would be contrary to His very nature. So if He promised to do or complete something, He will do so. He is faithful to Himself whether we are faithful to Him or not.

Are you doubting God or His faithfulness in any area of your life? If you are, then you need to get a grip! God is faithful, period, and is especially faithful to save the elect.

Day Five

14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. 15 Do your best to present

yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

v. 14 – Paul gave Timothy instructions to keep reminding the people under his care about God’s faithfulness where salvation is concerned. Then Paul urged Timothy to warn the people not to argue about words. **I wonder what he meant by that warning?**

I would think it is similar to the war of words we still have in the church over doctrinal issues. Some believe in “covering,” others in “tithing,” still others in “dispensations,” a few fight over “premillennial,” some for the “baptism” in the Holy Spirit and many others “tongues.” Are these examples of our modern day “words” over which we can argue?

What are the “words” that are important to you? Do those “words” separate you from other believers? Paul taught that arguments over “words” ruin the listeners. I would think this could mean unbelievers as well as believers. **Doesn’t the world look at our divisions and arguments and laugh at us, dismissing the message of the gospel, the most important thing, because we fuss over the less important things?**

v. 15 – **How can a workman present himself (or herself) approved before God?** I would think it would be by handling correctly the word of truth and being one who does not quarrel over “words.” I have tried not to argue over words in these studies, but rather keep the focus on God’s words and neither on my interpretation of those words nor on my opinions of what those words mean. When I have an opinion, I state it as such without presenting it as a “word from the Lord” or explaining that “God showed me.”

v. 16 – **Is Paul referring to conversations about casual, mundane things, like sports or politics?** I don’t think so. He is referring to the arguments over “words” that he mentioned in verse 14. There is a man who writes a lot of books about Israel and the end times and, in my opinion, he is engaging in godless chatter, not equipping the saints for the works of service that God intends for them to embrace. **So what if a person’s “word” on Israel are all correct? Does that person love his or her family, serve the saints, practice hospitality and care for the poor? How does the doctrine of Israel help a believer understand what God requires of them on a daily, person-to-person basis?**

The answer is that it doesn’t. How does an understanding of the end times contribute to godly living? In most cases, it doesn’t. So those debates and teachings should be avoided, first by the teachers and leaders themselves. If they don’t have the discipline to refrain, then the people who listen to them should.

Day Six

17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

v. 17 – That is a great description of the effect that some teachings and doctrines are having right now in the Church. They spread like gangrene. Gangrene is dead flesh on a living person. I have always marveled how one bad teaching can spread so quickly and remain so permanently embedded in a person's mind. This analogy is perfect. It spreads like gangrene! What's more, that teaching doesn't bring life but death!

When gangrene spreads, it means that a limb must be amputated, or eventually death occurs. There are some who are so confident that they have God's "things" figured out that they neglect the "weightier" matters, along with the Great Commission.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices — mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:23-24).

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Are you majoring in minors where God's affairs are concerned or are you keeping the main thing the main thing. What is the main thing? It's the fact that two billion people on earth today have yet to hear the gospel and will perish without this information. It's not about what percent of your income you should give to your church. Our main focus is to be the gospel and it's spread. That includes church planting, caring for the poor and widows and fulfilling your purpose, which is God's will for your life.

v. 18 – An example of gangrene-like teaching was the teaching of two men that the resurrection had already taken place. You would think that this teaching would be rejected outright, but some believed it! This is an example of how incorrect doctrine can spread like, well, like gangrene.

Will you join me in praying the following prayer?

Lord, deliver me from gangrenous teaching. I want to teach things that bring life, not just things that sound good or appeal to the intellect. Lord, I know I haven't always kept the main thing the main thing. I ask Your forgiveness and commit to eliminate minor issues from my teaching and writing so I can focus on the main issues – Jesus and the salvation that is found in Him.

Day Seven

19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." 20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. 21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

v. 19 – Oh, how I hope the Lord knows me! And then I must do my part by turning away from wickedness. Notice that the solid foundation is in salvation and right living, not in neatly designed doctrinal positions. The gospel is simple: turn to Jesus and then live a life that would please Him. Everything else, while of some value, is of lesser importance than the firm foundation.

v. 20 – Some teachers have presented their pet “words” or doctrines as silver and gold, when they are actually wood and clay. They are of some use, but aren’t of the highest priority. I wonder if this doesn’t pertain to some members of God’s household as well. Some we have promoted to the highest positions may not be as important as we make them out to be. Some of the great leaders may not be so great because they don’t serve as Jesus described below:

Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:24-27).

Do you really believe that you can be an effective leader if you act like the youngest? Many don’t dismissing these words by seeing leaders needing to be strong and in charge. I just finished a month-long choir tour where I led by driving a truck 5,000 miles to serve the choir. I was the least significant among the group, yet often I led from my truck driver’s seat. I served those younger than me as if I was younger than they.

Do you have a recent example of leading according to Luke 22? If not, what’s wrong with your leadership style? Do you really believe what Jesus said in Luke 22? If so, how are you applying it?

v. 21 – We must cleanse ourselves from ignoble purposes. What are those ignoble purposes? In this context, they are arguing over words and living an unholy life. If you can refrain from those two traits, then you will be an instrument for noble purposes, prepared for any and every good work.

What is the good work that God wants you to do? Among whom will you carry out that work? Do you know? What price are you willing to pay to find out?