

2 Timothy 2:1-7 - Pass it on

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Preacher: David Brown

[0 : 00] The Bible reading today is 2 Timothy verses 1-7. The appeal renewed. You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

Join with me in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a shower of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all of this.

Amen. Well, once again, I'm David. Let me welcome you. Thank you for being here this morning, whether you're a regular or you're a visitor or a guest.

[1 : 22] I'm really glad to see you. Really happy to be able to bring this passage to you and just talk through what the Lord has helped me learn in it this week.

Steve, graciously, was busy yesterday and Friday with another church up in York, and so the privilege falls to me to lead us this morning.

Let me just pray for us before we get started. Father, we thank you for gathering us here today, for prompting in our spirit to get up and to turn up to church this morning, whether that's a normal thing for us or something that is not as normal.

Lord, we pray that the words from 2 Timothy would not just be words on a page, not just something that was in a book from antiquity, but live and fruitful and has something to say to us that we might believe it and hear it and our lives would be different when we walk out.

Father, we pray that our hearts would be open to hear what you have to say, to accept your teaching in us and allow it to change us, as you promise you will do if we reflect on these things.

[2 : 47] You will give us insight. So we pray. We thank you, and we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, so we are back in 2 Timothy.

It's the second letter that Paul wrote to his protege, Timothy. Timothy, of course, had been with Paul on some of his journeys, and then Paul handpicked him to stay in Ephesus with the elders and teach the church there.

And so what we see is that Paul is writing this letter, as we've learned the last few weeks, is that he's writing this letter from prison. This isn't his first time in prison. He's been there before, but this time feels different.

This time it feels like he's probably not getting out. Right? He's now an elderly man. He's gone through many journeys.

He's been around and done a variety of things, and he finds himself in prison, literally chained to a Roman jailer. And he knows in his heart that this is it, that he will either die in this cell or that he will be put to death because of what is happening.

[4 : 00] And so he's writing. He decides in his last moments, his last days of his life, he wants to write a letter to Timothy, his protege, of course, but one that he calls his dear son, his child.

Right? Paul is never married and doesn't have a child of his own, but Timothy is his child in the faith, his son that he's brought up to know and understand the teachings that he has carried on.

And so he takes this last moment to write in his final words, to give him a final exhortation of all the wisdom and the truth that he has to offer. And he writes this last message to Timothy, and he says, you know, of all the things, of all the things Paul could say in a final message to Timothy, he comes up with these words.

And he appeals to Timothy. He says, you know, you see him, he's gray. I want you to picture Paul coming to the end of his life. He's gray. He says, hold on, I've got to write one more letter to Timothy. And this is what he says.

He appeals to Timothy to entrust what you have heard from me to reliable people, to pass on what he has learned to the next generation.

[5 : 20] This is the appeal of Paul to Timothy in these words. Right? He says, do not let it die with you, Timothy. And this is the appeal from Paul to us today here at West Kilburn.

He says, don't let this die with you. All of this message, don't let it die with you. Amazingly, all of us who believe are here today as believers because of a passage like this.

Right? Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus and entrusted him with the truth and said, go give it to someone else.

And then we see Paul entrusting it to Timothy in the stories in Acts and Ephesians and 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. And here we see Paul encouraging Timothy to entrust the same to faithful people who could teach the next generation.

And by God's grace, that process has carried on for 2,000 some odd years such that today you have heard it from someone if you believe.

[6 : 33] And it has made it to you such that you could understand it and now you believe that this is the truth. It is amazing. This is unbelievable. This is a miraculous thing.

What Paul is encouraging here is that we might entrust what we have heard to someone who hasn't yet. To someone who could pass it on to someone else.

And on. And on. This is the strategy laid out for the church by Jesus and then Paul and then on. This is what we're here for.

Right? To reflect on the things that we have been taught. To commit them into our lives. And then to entrust them to someone else. This is the glorious work of the church.

The passing on of the gospel truths. The holding of the good deposit. Protecting it as we looked at last week in chapter 1. To guard it. To protect its integrity. Not to let it be diluted.

[7 : 34] But not to keep it for ourselves. Not to protect it like a precious stone or a ring that you might want to hold tightly to. No. Instead sharing it. Entrusting it to the next generation.

So that the Bible and these truths are preached in this building for one more 150 years. And 150 years beyond that. Until the Jesus.

Until the Jesus. Until Jesus returns and makes everything new. Right? This is the emphasis of this passage. Entrust what you've heard. Entrust what you've heard from me, Paul says.

And what exactly are to we entrust? He says in verse 2. He says, The things you have heard me say. Things you've heard me say publicly. What are these things that he's said?

Paul refers to this in a variety of places. In his teachings. In this book and elsewhere. In Romans chapter 6 verse 17. He says, But thanks be to God that through you used to be.

[8 : 37] Through you. That though you used to be slaves to sin. You have come to obey from your heart. The pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance. And in Acts.

When Paul is saying farewell to the elders at Ephesus. He says to them. Therefore I testify to you this day. That I am innocent of the blood of all of you. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

And in several places just in the chapter preceding where we are today. As we looked at last week. In verse 12. This is from the ESV translation. But he says, I'm not ashamed.

For I know in whom I have believed. And I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day.

What has been entrusted to me. In verse 13 he says, What you heard from me.

Keep as the pattern of sound teaching. With faith and love in Christ Jesus. And then in verse 14 he says, Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. And then in verse 8, a little bit earlier, he says, Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.

[9 : 45] So what are the things that Timothy has heard Paul say? That Paul is encouraging him to entrust again. It's the pattern of teaching.

It's the whole counsel of God. It's what he has believed. It's the things that were entrusted to him.

It's the pattern of sound teaching. It's the good deposit. It's the testimony about our Lord. Paul tells as he continues there, he says, Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord.

Who saved us. Who saved us and called us to a holy calling. What are the things that we're to entrust?

It's the whole gospel. It's the whole story. It's all the teaching and clarity of what God has done in Christ for you and for me. That we were as good as dead, but Christ made us alive. And that our fortunes go from running into a dead end to glorious life with Jesus. Not because of what we have done.

[11:07] Not because we can earn it or do anything that justifies us. We have been like those children in the other story that are running the opposite direction. Throwing the mints in the gutter because we didn't care.

And yet, because of what he has done, he brings life and immortality. And the beauty and wonderfulness of that fact is what compels Paul, and then Timothy, and then every believer since, to endure through hardship to do the work of entrusting this message and these truths. Why? Because we know how it ends. Because we know that there is life and immortality through the gospel. We have to get this message, this truth, this pattern of teaching to the next generation because it is so good.

It's worth going through anything that we might endure. It's worth pushing past whatever might stand in our way. And did you notice we must endure?

Because, as Paul says, somehow this work of entrusting and teaching these truths to the next generation seems to be inextricably linked to suffering.

[12:22] Paul doesn't hide it from Timothy, nor us. Paul says to Timothy here in verse 3, he says, join with me in suffering. Echoing what he had already said in chapter 1, he says, join with me in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Somehow in God's economy, suffering seems to be a necessary part of preaching and teaching the gospel. How do we know?

Jesus suffered. Paul suffered. Timothy suffered. Suffering is part of it.

But look, there's hope because in verse 1, we find that there is... Oh, that was before. This work brings suffering. Okay. But we need supernatural strength to do the work of entrusting.

Look at verse 1 again. It says, You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. The ESV translates it slightly differently. It says, Be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus Christ.

[13:29] And I like that one better. Be strengthened. We need strength, but he doesn't say, muster all of your strength.

He doesn't say, grit your teeth and work as hard as you can. No, he says, Be strengthened by the grace. Right? This verb is in the passive voice.

Be strengthened. We are not doing the action. Right? We are not doing the strengthening. Who is doing the strengthening? It's Christ Jesus doing the strengthening. In fact, it's the grace in Christ Jesus that's doing the strengthening.

We are strengthened by his grace. It's not only for salvation that we are dependent on his grace. But no, it's for sanctification and service to Christ as well. Look at chapter 1, verses 8 and 9. It says, Share in the suffering for the gospel by the power of God who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works, but because of his own purpose and grace.

[14:36] Right? We are commanded to allow ourselves to be strengthened by grace in Jesus. Because we don't have the strength.

Right? You say, Go endure that suffering in your own power. We don't have what it takes. Nor can we gain it on our own in some way.

Right? We can't work hard enough, do enough lifting or studying or whatever it would take to get the strength to endure on our own. That's not how it's built.

We need grace that comes from Jesus. We need his grace in our lives to work. And this is what it is. And so you might ask, Why do we need such strength?

Why do we need supernatural strength in order to do this task of entrusting? It doesn't seem like that would be something that you need some, like, extraordinary level of strength.

[15:37] Right? People teach things all the time. People tell people, you know, maybe I'm taking it back now. School teachers do need some supernatural strength. But, like, the point is, what do we need this for?

I think there's a clue in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. It says, This is what we speak. Not in words taught to us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit.

This is the entrusting. This is the work that we're doing. Explaining spiritualities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit, the person who does not believe, does not accept the things

that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them, because they can only be discerned through the Spirit.

Right? A person without the Spirit does not accept, thinks it's foolishness, because they can't understand, because understanding is only through the Spirit. So there is resistance.

We know this to be true. Any time the truth of the gospel is proclaimed, there is resistance from the enemy. There is resistance from those who are there.

[16:49] And there is suffering because of it. Some of it might be intense suffering that Paul and Jesus might have gone through, that our brothers and sisters in countries, where they're not allowed to say these things, they might go through.

And some of it might be softer, but still feels like real suffering when your friends or your family don't accept what you believe, when they ridicule you, or they make light of the things that have changed your life.

Right? This is suffering. And so, like a good Baptist preacher, Paul gives us three examples of how we might stand strong in our task of entrusting to the next recipient.

Right? So he says, be like a soldier, be like an athlete, and be like a farmer. So first he says, be single-minded like a soldier. Look at that verse there.

In verse 3 he says, Join with me in suffering like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one suffering as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.

[17:54] Soldiers on active duty, if they're out there, they do not expect, or at least they should not expect, it to be an easy or safe time.

Right? Soldiers would take hardship, and risk, and suffering, as a matter of course. This is what they signed up for. Right? And those things are part and parcel of the calling of a soldier.

Modern day soldier, or going back to the times when what Paul is talking about. Right? Church Father Tertullian puts it this way. He says, No soldier comes to the war surrounded by luxuries, nor goes into action from a comfortable bedroom, but from a makeshift and narrow tent, where every kind of hardness, and severity, and unpleasantness is to be found.

So similarly, like the soldier, the Christian should not expect an easy time. This is what Paul is saying. If we are loyal to the gospel, we are sure to experience opposition.

The soldier must share in the suffering with his comrades, and in spite of everything going on around him, he has to focus on the task at hand. He has to focus on the mission.

[19:15] And in order to do this, the military, they understand what's at stake. And so they make great effort to free the soldiers from having to deal with the everyday tasks that we might get bogged in as civilians.

Right? Soldiers live on a base where there's no rent that comes due. No repairs that need to be done. Right? So they can live with mental clarity.

They're given a uniform so they don't have to be distracted about what they might wear to work. They go to a mess hall to get food. They don't have to worry about shopping or getting anything, making anything, deciding what they might make for dinner.

Their medical and dental care are taken care of. Right? The leaders of the military have recognized we don't want our soldiers to have to worry about all these things and get distracted from the most important mission.

Keep your mind on the mission. And this is what Paul is saying to Timothy. Be like a soldier. Don't get distracted on all the things that the world has to offer.

[20:23] Don't get distracted by the little things that are keeping you. But focus on the mission. We've got to be focused on the mission of God and not be distracted by the whims of the world.

So he says, be like a soldier. Not only that, he says, be like an athlete. Be full of integrity like an athlete. He says, similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules.

the London Marathon was in town just a few weeks ago. And the race course that they set out is meticulously planned and organized to be exactly 26.2 miles.

No shorter, no longer. Right? And they make very clear that there are walls and gates and things that keep you on that path so that you can't deviate and go a little bit less than that 26.2 miles.

If a runner were to jump off the course and take a shortcut, they might finish first, but they would, of course, be disqualified from winning the prize because they cheated.

[21 : 36] Right? Every runner, in a similar way, they enter the race in hopes of winning or completing the race in their personal best time. They've consistently trained for months and months to prepare for that race.

Right? And if any of them tried to shortcut the training, they would find themselves unprepared and not able to win or beat the time that they hoped for.

Right? There's no way to run a race and take a shortcut. You have to run the race. You have to do the training. There isn't a shortcut way to make it happen.

Right? And this is what Paul is saying. If you want the victor's crown, you can't take a shortcut. And he looks at Christians and he says the same thing. That, you know, in the same way that the performance on race day is a reflection of the work that the runner has put in training, we must follow the path laid out for us.

There are no shortcuts in sharing the gospel with a friend or a family member. There are no magic words that Steve can give you that will make that easier or make it go faster.

[22 : 48] Right? We are simply to hold fast to the truths that we've received and we share them faithfully. Right? And trust that the Lord will do the rest. Right? This is what Paul is saying.

He says, be like a soldier and keep focused. Be like an athlete and follow the rules and do what it takes. Right? And then he says, be like a farmer and be diligent in hard work like a farmer.

He says, the hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. And the way that the soldier's focused and the athlete has integrity, the farmer has to be diligent to do the work when the reward is not yet visible.

Right? Much like the runner logging mile after mile in the rain and in the dark of their training, the farmer gets up early every day to till the soil and plant the seeds, doing what is necessary to yield a crop in its due time.

Right? For weeks, there's no evidence at all that the work the farmer is doing will yield any result. There's weeks where there's nothing coming out of the ground.

[23 : 59] Right? And for months, the farmer carries on this task of his daily work in hopes that the crop will actually produce the fruit. Or the corn or whatever it is.

Right? It takes months of time for him to realize this. And his whole life is dependent on this. If the crop doesn't produce, he has no food to eat and he has nothing to take to the market to sell.

What an exercise of faith it is. And in the same way, the life of a Christian disciple looks very similar. We walk by the Spirit and follow the ways of Jesus which often look incredibly fruitless, especially in light of the way the world would look at it.

But daily faithfulness in pursuing Christian character one day produces a man or a woman worthy of respect. And in serving the Lord and teaching and evangelizing can be the same.

We might share the gospel with scores of people and no one comes to faith. We might teach the children or the youth faithfully for years and years and wonder if they've hurt us at all.

[25 : 13] Right? You might raise your son or daughter and faithfully entrust them with all the things that they have to say and never realize what comes of it.

And yet in God's timing and in his grace he produces a crop. And when that happens there is joyful singing in all of heaven because of it.

And so like a farmer we must walk in diligence not worried about what might come but following in the task of the day. Right?

So Paul is giving this to Timothy. He's saying look this stuff that I've taught the things you've heard me say it's worth telling and it's going to be hard but look be like a soldier be like an athlete be like a farmer and do it and it's not out of a sense of duty because Paul actually includes a promise with each of these examples.

He does use the example of the soldier but not to say that he must soldier on because he's bound by duty but instead the soldier remains focused so that he might receive the praise of his commander.

[26 : 25] Paul does use the example of an athlete but not to say that Timothy must grind away day after day to no end. No, instead he says the athlete reaches the end of the race and receives the crown of victory.

Paul does use the example of the farmer but not to say that we must begrudgingly and mindlessly toil away our days. No, instead the farmer works to then receive the first fruits of the harvest.

there are great promises awaiting us if we carry on. There are great promises awaiting Timothy if he listens to Paul and does this but notice the promises are of grace.

They're not earned. You don't get those things because you did those things. No, once again the beauty of the gospel is that no amount of work we can do no amount of work that we do can earn us the praise or get us the crown or bear the fruit.

No, Jesus has done all the work and he gives it to us. See, Jesus received the praise from the Father and it's imputed to us. In his high priestly prayer in John 17 he says the glory that you have given me this is Jesus talking to God to the Father he says the glory you have given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one I in them and them in me that we may be perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you have loved me.

[27 : 51] See, Jesus was given the praise and he gives it to us. Jesus won the crown of victory over Satan and over death and we get to share in it. In John 16 he says I've told you these things so that in me you may have peace.

In this world you will have trouble but take heart I have overcome the world. Jesus is the first fruits of the redeemed and we get to enjoy him and eternity forever.

In 1 Corinthians Paul writes but Christ has indeed been raised from the dead the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep for since death came through a man resurrection of the dead also comes through a man for as in Adam all die so in Christ all will be made alive.

Right? The means for us to do the entrusting the means for us to endure the suffering are grace and in the end the result and the reward is also grace.

It's grace by grace. Oh look I had that there. Sorry. Look and so finally we see verse 7.

[29 : 05] So Paul has gone through this and he says he looks to Timothy and he recognizes something in Timothy that I think we can recognize in ourselves.

He says look even if you're afraid that you don't have what it takes even if you're not sure you can do what it takes to do this entrusting work that he's called to even if you're not 100% confident in your ability to explain the teachings of the gospel to someone else Paul and God gives us something here and he says look reflect on what I'm saying for the Lord will give you insight into all of this.

See that reflect in the ESV again this time translate that he says think on what I say. Think reflect right we we we as Christians we don't read the Bible we read the words and then we close it and then we move on thinking that somehow that's what we have to do.

We have to think about it. We have to reflect on what it says think about what it means and when we do the Bible says the Lord will give you understanding the Lord will give you the insight.

Once again the Lord is doing the work we're not doing the work but the Lord is doing the work and yet at the same time we're told to put effort into it to do the work of reflecting and so the reality is some Christians we never do any serious Bible study.

[30 : 37] It might be that we're lazy it might be that we don't understand but it also might be that we think somehow that the understanding will come from the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner and it's just going to fall on us without us ever having to look at the words and it doesn't require any effort from us.

We skim through the verses in our morning devotion and expect somehow that the Spirit will just deliver understanding. It doesn't seem to me that Paul thinks it works like that.

See on the other side others of us are very good and very diligent at Bible study. We're the hardworking farmers as it were and we might grapple with the text of Scripture we might listen to all the sermons on YouTube we might know them backwards and forwards and commit them to memory but we forget that it's the Lord who imparts true understanding.

There are professors of religion at major universities who don't believe the text. They know the words they know it backwards and forwards they know it better than many of us do but they don't believe it because the Lord has to give understanding.

and it's the Lord who does it and he imparts it as a gift so we can't divorce what God has in his wisdom that he's put together.

[32 : 06] This think reflect and then I'll give it. Those go together. It's not two separate things. And so a balance of careful thought careful reflection and devoted prayer for understanding is essential.

we do the considering and God gives the understanding. So church as we kind of move towards closing here if there is to be a future here of vibrant spirit filled life in this building in this community if West Kilburn Church is to be a gospel anchored place of worship for the next 150 years if Queens Park and Kilburn and Maida Vale are and all the surrounding areas are to hear the gospel and to be transformed by Jesus as we hope and pray we can't expect Steve to do all of the teaching.

We can't expect Steve to do all of the what's the word that I've been using this whole time?

Entrusting. Thank you. Sometimes my brain just we can't expect it.

We can't expect the paid workers of the church to do all of this for us. The message that Paul hears, he's writing it to Timothy who would arguably be a paid worker of the gospel.

He's writing it to him but he's writing it to us. And the message is for each one of us that we must think and reflect on these words and pray that God might give us insight.

[33 : 45] We must be strengthened by the grace that is in Jesus. We must be like soldiers and athletes and farmers entrusting the gospel deposit that we have received by God's grace that he's given it to us and helped us understand and that we've come to believe and our life has been changed forever.

We then have to pass it on to someone else that doesn't know it yet. We have to entrust this pattern of sound teaching so that there are more teachers. We have to teach the many, many would-be listeners.

There's 50,000 people within one kilometer of this room living here. 50,000 people. Do you believe that? A very small percentage of them are trusting in these words.

So they're out there and it's up to us to entrust them with the things that we have received. Things that we have heard and committed to our lives.

And if by God's grace, by God's grace, we can do that. So let's pray that we would do the entrusting. Let's pray that there would be reliable people that would do the listening.

[35 : 03] And let's pray that we would both be strengthened by the grace that in Christ Jesus, right? That both of us, those who are entrusting would be strengthened by grace and those who are listening and want to hear would be strengthened by grace.

Amen? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your grace to us.

That in your mercy and love and grace for us, that you made us who were dead in our us to open our mouths and tell them about what we have learned, what we have received from you, and that there is much grace in your name, that there is life and immortality that comes from you in your grace to us, Father.

Lord, I pray that we would be so enraptured by the goodness and grace that is in you that we couldn't help but share it and entrust it with other people, that we wouldn't have a choice.

You've done a work in us such that we can't keep it to ourselves. It would not be like the ring of power, our precious that we hold and put it in our pocket, Lord, no, that it would be something that we share, that we excitedly invite others into.

[37 : 03] Lord, and you do the work. It's your grace in their lives that they might receive it. It's your work by your spirit that they might hear it and understand it. And so it's your things that you do.

And we simply want to be faithful. We want to follow you. We want to share what we have learned.

And by your grace, you do the things that it takes. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.