



1 Timothy 2:1-7

The Lord Will Give You Understand

7th Sunday After Epiphany — February 19, 2017 (am)

INTRODUCTION

Today we want to prepare our hearts to *remember* our Lord's death in communion. But in our text this morning we also want to *remember* what it means for us that He has *risen from the dead* (8). We've seen that Timothy's faith is wavering a bit under the threat of persecution, and possibly even death. But today Paul is going to speak words of (*strength*) and big-picture reminder to Timothy, in the midst of his battle. And we need to hear his words as well, in the midst of our battles. Let's hear Paul's instruction in three stages.

PAUL POINTS TIMOTHY IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION – 1-3

Having just spotlighted the desertion of *Phygelus and Hermogenes*, together with *all who are in Asia* (1:15), but also the faithfulness of *Onesiphorus* (1:16-18), Paul turns his attention back to his spiritual son, Timothy (c.2). *1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Onesiphorus stands as proof to you that your union with Christ by faith, your relationship with Him, provides (strength) for you to endure, and even thrive, in these present circumstances. You don't need to fear* (1:7). You don't need to shrink back, *18... ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, said Paul, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God. His power can enable you to (suffer) without shrinking back in fear, Timothy! And since the gospel is the direct cause of your suffering, it's an unmixed blessing to realize that God's grace to you in Christ is sufficient for you to endure it (faithfully), and even to keep pressing on in your gospel service (cf. 1:18) in the face of it, just like Onesiphorus did. Don't forget that!*

2 And... that gospel service, what does it look like? Paul wrote: 2... what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Keep teaching and shepherding the people of God, directed by the Word of God, strengthened by the grace of God (1). Timothy received this *pattern of sound words* (1:13) from Paul *in the presence of many witnesses*, probably meaning *in the company of the whole body* (cf. Guthrie 156), many listening ears who could confirm what Timothy heard, and test what he says—that is one rich blessing of the body of *Christ*, and a responsibility of those who listen to the proclamation of the apostolic *gospel* here every Sunday (cf. Act.17:11).

And what Timothy is doing with this *pattern of sounds words* (1:13) is (*entrusting*) it to *faithful men, and women* (inclusive Greek noun ^[ESV footnote]; *women* teach other *women* [Tit.2:3-5] and may assist their husbands in discipleship [Act.18:26]), *who will be able to teach others*. Four generations of *faithful (teaching)* ministry in the local church: Paul's generation, Timothy's, those he is (*teaching*), and those they will *teach*. This is the work that needs to keep on going, *strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus* (1). It needs to continue on no matter what opposition it kicks up. And it will kick up opposition (1:10-12; 2:8-9; 3:12). So Paul repeated what he'd already said back in 18: ³ *Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*. Some form of *suffering* will inevitably arise against *gospel* proclamation in every generation.

So, how do we know it's really worth it? Paul illustrates.

PAUL PICTURES WHY THIS DIRECTION IS BEST – 4-6

Just listen. ⁴ *No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.* ⁵ *An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.* ⁶ *It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.* Do you hear it? Paul is telling Timothy not only that some form of *suffering* in the process of waiting for a desired outcome is a common experience in almost every area of life. He's also reminding him that there is a desired outcome on the other end of *gospel suffering* that makes it more than worth the wait, worth the cost. There is a payoff in *gospel* ministry that absolutely buries the approval an *enlisted soldier* gets from a commanding officer, or an *athlete* gets for winning the championship, or a *farmer* gets from eating even an unusually tasty (*crop*).

They all (*suffer*) in pursuit of the prize. And setting their eye on the prize motivates them through the season of *suffering* that is necessary to win that prize. And that is more of what is being addressed here that following the rules during some event of competition. Paul seems to be speaking of the ten-month season of preparatory workout every athlete had to complete to qualify for his event (Kelly 175-6). I have much more experience with the *athlete* here than with the *soldier* or the *farmer*. I know the painful *suffering* of the three-a-day, pre-season soccer practices under the blistering August sun. I know the mental discipline it takes to play through a very painful but non-structural injury. I know the exhaustion that has to be put aside when post-season playoffs add to the length of an already long regular season. But as we recently saw on a whole different level than my limited experience, in the NFL Super Bowl, all that *suffering* virtually disappears when you're holding the championship trophy.

PAUL PRESSES TIMOTHY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING – 7

So, what does Paul want Timothy to (*understand*) from this? What does he want him to do? He wants him to meditate on this instruction and hear from *the Lord* through it. ⁷ *Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

So, what do you think *the Lord* want's Timothy to learn? I think that's clear. There's indeed a payoff at the far end of this season of *gospel suffering* that far outweighs the pain of our *suffering*. If that is true for a *soldier*, an *athlete*, and a *farmer*, it's immeasurably (literally and metaphorically) more true for a Christian! In fact, Paul said to the Romans 8:18 ... *that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* And to the Corinthians he wrote that 1Co.4:17 ... *this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.* There is a payoff! It's literally *out of this world!* And it's so far beyond our *suffering* here and now, it so far outweighs it, that there truly is no *comparison*.

Paul wants Timothy to (*understand*) ⁽⁷⁾ and *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus* ⁽¹⁾ to hold onto *the promise of life that is in (Him)* ^(1:1) *who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* ^(1:10), and *is able to guard until (judgment) day what has been entrusted to (him)* ^(1:12) in the *gospel*. And Paul is confident that *the Lord will give (Timothy) that understanding, in everything* that concerns it. God will *strengthen* him to keep heaven in view while he ministers on earth—to keep eternal *life* in view as he faces the threat of (*death*) ^(cf. 11). Paul is confident that *the Lord will strengthen* Timothy through *the promise of life* ^(1:1) that is made evident in the resurrection *Jesus*. ^(cf. 8)

CONCLUSION

And that is a *faithful* reminder to be held tightly by believers in every generation of the church. I believe it's a reminder that we need to hear over and over again. Still today we need to keep (*thinking*) over Paul's lesson of the *soldier*, the *athlete*, and the *farmer*. There's a payoff at the end of the season of waiting, the season of *suffering*. We can see it in each of these pursuits. And we can see it all the more clearly in the stories of believers because we are following and serving and preaching and teaching Him Who was raised from the dead as a *promise* to those who die, proving that He has indeed *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. ^(1:10) Our waiting and *suffering* and even death will surely end in eternal *life* if we have trusted in Him as Savior—if we've been *strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus* ⁽¹⁾, and press on in it.

We actually live in a world where God Himself has not only come in the flesh to save His people from their sins, but He's Rom.4:25 ... *(died) for our trespasses and been raised for our justification*. If we will but ⁷ *think over what (Paul said here), ... the Lord will also give (us) understanding in (it)*. If we could just ⁸ *remember that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead...*, Paul's very next charge, how different our lives would be, every day, from all those around us who don't know Him. If we could just remember the lesson of the *soldier* (⁴), that there is Someone to *please*, and the lesson of the *athlete* (⁵), that there is a *(crown)* to be won, and the lesson of the *farmer* (⁶), that there is a *crop* to be enjoyed. There is an outcome, a reward, a payoff to this *gospel* work we're called to do that will make any *suffering* we endure about as memorable as those pre-season practice sessions after we've won the championship.

Think over what it means that we serve a *risen* Savior. *Think over what* it means that not even death can defeat us now that we're *in (Him)*. *Think over what* it means that we need not *fear* (^{1:7}) even when we ⁷ *share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*—when we ¹⁸ ... *share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ¹ ... strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. We are tempted to be *strengthened* by so many other things—our bank balance or net worth, the diversity in our investment portfolio, the quality of our health insurance (or life insurance, or property insurance), the safety of our homes and neighborhoods, the well-being of our children (spiritually, physically)—that we can actually forget that *Jesus Christ is risen from the dead*, and lives as a *promise of life* to all of us who are in Him by faith.

Think over what this means, and *remember*.