

## ENDURING HARDSHIPS

(2 Timothy 2:3-13)

Westend Bible Chapel

Paul's last letter —regarded as Paul's last testament and will. He is at the end of the line. It circa 67-6 AD. He is about 65 -66, approximately my age, and Timothy is about 35. He wrote these, his last words, during his 2nd imprisonment in Rome, while he awaited his sentencing and departure to heaven by execution.

The condition of that city dungeon was pathetic to say the least. It was known as “the sepulchre”, because many prisoners there were eaten alive by rats. And because of Paul's dreadful situation, all the Roman Christians deserted Paul, leaving him to himself and his sufferings. Luke only remained with Paul.

But in spite of those horrible conditions and abandonment from his fellow believers, Paul amazingly did not lose faith, to the contrary his zeal and faith are stronger than ever.

He is able to say, *“<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”*

Paul led Timothy to the Lord and loved him. Timothy was young, timid and easily discouraged. He had been given the oversight of the Ephesian church. But things were difficult there, hardships were increasing, many evils had emerged in the Ephesian church and he was prone to give up, throw in the towel and drop everything.

Paul knew it, and wrote not one letter, but two to encourage him not to lose heart, and to endure all hardships and be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He actually tells him, *“Join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life –not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. (2 Tim. 1:8)*

Timothy stands up to the job! Timothy was slacking off. Paul would have him understand, “this isn't your ministry, it's the Lord's, and you have no right to slack off, until He takes you out of the work, by death or by rapture.” You don't retire from ministry, it a life-time ministry.

In our text for this morning, Paul emphasizes the fundamental attitudes for faithful endurance, not only for elders and deacons, but for us all

### Faithful Endurance Is Commanded vv 3

Look at verse 3, the first part of it, there it says, “**Endure hardship.**” This is one of the 25 times Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong and endure in his work in Ephesus. Paul knew, if we endure, we conquer.

*There is a book entitled is **Endurance** by Alfred Lansing. I haven't read it, but it tells the story of Ernest Shackleton's 1915 voyage to the South Pole, where he planned to cross the continent of Antarctica on foot.*

*However, winter set in early, and the ship got trapped in ice in the Weddell Sea. After months encased in ice, the ship was eventually crushed and sunk.*

*Shackleton and his men drifted on sheets of ice for months; ate what they could kill; made do with rotting, insufficient clothing; and battled doubt, discouragement, and bouts of insanity. Incredibly, after more than a year in the Arctic, all 27 of the crew survived!*

*The ship's name was Endurance, and after more than 100 years, a team found it just last month 10,000 feet under the sea—the word ENDURANCE still visible on the stern.*

*The ship's name was based on the family motto of Ernest Shackleton: “Fortitude vicious,” which means “By endurance, we conquer.” And so that became the crew's battle cry.*

Paul is both challenging and reassuring Timothy with the same battle cry. “Share in suffering. Endure hardship. By endurance, Timothy, we are victorious.”

But how is endurance possible? Answer is given in verse 1, “*You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*”

God is always there to give us strength; *He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might, He increases strength... those that wait on the LORD shall renew their strength (Isaiah 40:29, 31).*

The sense of the words “**be strong**” is keep on being empowered. Keep in touch with power. Stay plugged with God. So that the grace of God can always be yours in Christ.

Paul is saying, “*Don't be afraid, be courageous, through the hardships and persecutions, you have God's grace for the task.*” Draw strength from God.

### Faithful Endurance Is Illustrated vv 3–7

Paul presents 3 metaphors in order to encourage Timothy and us. That a soldier, that of an athlete and that of a farmer. Paul loved using metaphors as pictures to help us mentally visualize and understand what he meant.

Verse 3. *“Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”*

Paul likened God’s people to soldiers. It is because the children of God living in this world must fight against the power of darkness, the devil and his agencies (Eph 6:12).

Our Christian life is a constant spiritual battle. Endurance is a key to become a good soldier. Endurance requires a lot of training. When a soldier is disciplined well, he will become a fine soldier enduring any kinds of hardship. Let’s make no mistake, the Christian life is not lived out in “in the barracks,” but on “a battlefield.”

Another quality to become a good soldier is not to be involved in the civilian affairs. Look at verse 4, *“No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs-he wants to please his commanding officer.”*

In this spiritual warfare, Jesus Christ is our commander-in-chief and we are his loyal soldiers.

The Roman soldier was expected to keep one thing in view, and only one, to win the victory for his commander-in-chief This suggestive of the singleness of aim, which characterizes not only the minister of Jesus Christ but every faithful Christian.

The Roman soldier was not allowed to engage in any employment which will entangle and interfere with his usefulness for the battle.

We can’t afford to get absorbed, entangled with secular affairs because we are in the middle of spiritual battle to rescue many souls from the hands of Satan. It is important to obey the orders of the commanding officer absolutely in order to win the battle.

In our spiritual battle we must listen to Jesus’ command absolutely to win the spiritual battle, and gain the godly wisdom He alone can provide for us to cope with our earthly responsibilities and duties.

Second, a Christian is like an athlete in v5, *“Similarly, if anyone who competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.”*

In order to teach Christian discipline, Paul compared Christians to athletes.

First things we need to know about the athletes in Paul’s day is: competitors required 3 qualifications to be in the games.

- 1) must be Greek citizens by birth
- 2) they must undergo strict training for at least 10 months beforehand and swear to it before the statue of Zeus

- 3) and complete according to the specific rules of the games

Failure in any of these 3 areas, would disqualify the athlete. Comparable qualifications belong to the Christian.

- 1) We must be truly born from above. A true-born citizen of heaven
- 2) We must pledge allegiance to Jesus, in self-denial, discipline ourself to study and learn God's word in depth.
- 3) We must fight, run and live out our ministries by the fixed standards of the Word of God.

1 Cor. 9:24-27, *"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. <sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.*

Tremendous effort, concentration, determination, dedication and resolution is needed if one desires to win. The work of the athlete is hard and demanding, but enormously rewarding if he keeps at it and finishes well. The crown and glory shall be his!

Third, a Christian is like a hardworking farmer. Look at verse 6. *"The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops."*

Usually, farmers are known as hardworking persons. When we see hardworking farmers, no one is lazy. Farmers first spread the seeds and work hard to protect the young crops. They work hard from early morning until late night.

They endure the cold, the heat, the rain and the drought. When weeds appear, they must pluck them out. They frequently must chase away the rodents. With all their attention and care they must cultivate the crops. But they are happy in the hope of abundant harvest. And when the barns are full, their reward for the hard work will bring them joy.

This hardworking farmer's story teaches us perseverance and hope in God. A harvest doesn't spring up over night. Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, *"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow."*

Paul lived as a gospel farmer. Psalm 126:5-6 says, *"Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."*

The specific emphasise for the 3 metaphors are: For the soldier – endurance, for the athlete – discipline, and for the farmer -perseverance.

Verse 7, *“Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.”*

The apostle was saying to Timothy, and still says to all believers today: Ponder the things I have said, consider them carefully. Look at your life and ask yourself if you are a strong Christian, a spiritual Christian, a mature Christian.

Are you enduring hardness as a good soldier of the cross? Are you being disciplined fighter, or runner, running the race to win the crown? Are you working hard in the field, sowing, planting, and watering, so that there may be a harvest for the Lord?

Or are you the verge of giving up? Telling yourself what is all this for? Has someone offended you and you're hurt, and so you want to stop serving? Endure, forgive and forget, be strong in God's grace and stay on course with God's calling to you.

### **Faithful Endurance Is Modeled vv8-10**

Look at verses 8-9. *“Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.”*

The risen Christ Jesus is my gospel Paul says. I go around preaching the resurrection from the death, giving hope to all believers. Suffering first, glory afterwards to all who believe.

Paul gives his own example in this. Paul's suffering was even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But Paul did not think of his present suffering, he looked to the resurrection promised him. His light and momentary troubles were achieving for him an eternal glory that far outweighed them the hardships. He fixed his eyes on the unseen. He did not lose heart.

Think about it, Paul was arrested by the Jews, imprisoned by the Romans, but never once does he describe himself as a prisoner of the Jews or Romans, but as **“the prisoner of Jesus Christ.”** His loyalty to his Master, his Commander, landed him in prison, and he gloried in it. There was no shame in it for Paul.

When Paul remembered Jesus who suffered, died and rose triumphantly to save men from their sins, the pain of his chains subsided. His pain was nothing compared to Jesus' pain.

Actually, Paul rejoiced, knowing that he was participating in the remaining suffering of Jesus Christ. He was filling up Jesus' afflictions (Col. 1:24). When Paul remembered Jesus Christ, God helped him to remember God's way of ruling world history. Christ is still suffering through his church. He suffers with us.

In remembering Christ has the Risen Lord, our service will be more aggressive, we'll have more courage, greater boldness, greater hope, greater endurance to face hardships, suffering, opposition, rejection and all these things for the Lord.

We do not go through it all for nothing, we will come out on the other side victorious!

Paul was chained, **but God's word is not chained**, he says. It can't be made a prisoner. The word is out there, moving from place to place, transforming lives and setting the prisoners free. The word can't stop, it can't be destroyed. It lives, it conquers and it abides forever.

Paul believed that God's word would be proclaimed to the end of the world. We are witnessing it, in our day.

*V10, 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.*

Scripture teaches us no one comes into the kingdom unless he is elect of God. The elect is those who are pre-ordained by God to believe and saved. This is the Word of God. The non-elect is passed over, and left to their unbelief.

Paul was told by God to hang in there, stay in Corinth, I know the city is very sinful, but keep talking, don't be silent, I am with you, for I have many people in this city.

Christian is a fragrance of death that leads to death to those who are perishing, but a fragrance of life that leads to life to the elect.

### **Faithful Endurance Is Rewarded vv 11-13**

<sup>11</sup> *Here is a trustworthy saying:*

*If we died with him,  
we will also live with him;*

<sup>12</sup> *if we endure,  
we will also reign with him.*

*If we disown him,  
he will also disown us;*

<sup>13</sup> *if we are faithless,  
**he remains faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.***

The passage of 2 Timothy 2:11-13, is believed by scholars to be an early Christian hymn. It reinforces the theme of endurance and faithfulness.

It consists of four couplets, two positive and two negatives.

- The first couplet (2 Tim. 2:11) the believer has been crucified with Christ. The old man, the sinner, who we were before we got saved is dead. As a saved person we are a new man (Col. 3:3), we have experienced an inner resurrection with Christ to newness of life (Rom. 6:2-18). We live *with* and *for* Christ.
- Second, if a believer endures all suffering, faithfully, he will one day reign with Christ on the earth (2 Tim. 2:12a).
- Third, is a serious. We can not reject Christ without being rejected ourselves. Jesus Himself gave this sobering warning in Matthew 10:33, "*Whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.*"

This is a settled, final kind of denial that does not repent and thereby proves one is unsaved. Peter denial wasn't like that! Peter repented with many tears of sorrow.

If a person professes to be saved but is not a genuine believer, he will be rejected by Christ. A false believer disowns (denies) Christ by his false works, and the Lord will expose him and disown on judgement day. "*I never knew you, get away from me, worker of iniquity.*" (Matthew 7:23).

- Fourth, if we are faithless, or remain faithless, Christ will still remain faithful to Himself (2:13). This person lacks saving faith, and Christ will remain faithful to Himself by keeping His word of condemnation to that person and sentence him to an eternal hell as He decreed, He would.

1 Cor 15:58- "*Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*"

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.