

Love Letters

Lesson 19: 2 Timothy 2

Nearly all of Paul's co-laborers in the ministry had deserted him (2 Timothy 1:15), causing Paul to point out the one remaining—Onesiphorus. Like a father counseling his son to make wise choices, Paul challenges Timothy to be like this faithful servant, unhindered by intimidation, unashamed of the gospel, and undeterred as a church leader. How would Timothy be able to rise to the challenge? Paul answers that question in chapter 2: "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (verse 1).

Read 2 Timothy 2: 1–26.

Day One: The Strength of Grace

1. According to verse 1, who did Paul recognize as the source of Timothy's strength? When in a situation where clarity of mind is needed, why would this be important to remember?

The command "be strong" is translated *endunamou*, which means to "be empowered" or "strengthened," implying that help is supplied by someone else—in this case that someone else is God. Because Timothy was God's child, he could expect to be strengthened for service by the grace (undeserved favor) that was his through his relationship with Christ. This same strength is available to every believer today as we learn not to rely upon ourselves, but on His sufficiency to meet our every need.

2. What does the Bible have to say about the best condition in which to receive the Lord's strength?
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - b. Colossians 1:11
 - c. Philippians 4:13

We will see more about the strength of grace throughout our lesson this week. Paul emphasized the point that scriptural truths were not taught in secret for an exclusive few; rather whatever Paul had received from the Lord he passed on to Timothy and others openly. The message was widely known, and spoken about in the presence of many witnesses.

3. According to verse 2, what was Paul encouraging Timothy to do?

Selah ~

Each of us has at least one area where, like Timothy, we feel timid, insecure, and even fearful. Pinpoint the area that causes you the most fear and note it below. Consider how you can begin applying God's promise of *power, love, and a sound mind* in your particular situation.

Memory verse: 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Day Two:

Endure All Things

Reread 2 Timothy 2:3–13.

Paul's counsel to "be strong" was not a suggestion to Timothy—it was a command—and Timothy had no reason not to be strong. Paul reminded him of his faith, his gift, and his resources; it was not an issue of having or being more, but of using what he'd already been given. It was a reminder to Timothy (and to us) that the grace allowing the sinner to be forgiven is the same grace that empowers the saint! To employ the full use of that grace requires the believer to respond in maximum obedience. In other words, the knowledge we gain through the Word brings with it the responsibility to apply it to daily life.

1. To drive that point home to his audience, Paul uses several illustrations in verses 2–6. Name them along with the point that you determine is applicable to the Christian life.
 - a. Verses 3–4: Consider the hardship a soldier on active duty must endure for the sake of his safety and success. Think too of your own spiritual warfare and what you can apply on the front lines of your battle.

- b. Verse 5: Sports were popular in Paul's day. Athletes trained vigorously in the hopes of competing for the prize. What aspects of an athlete's training—if applied—can help you reach the finish line in your race?

- c. Verse 6: Planting and harvesting account for only a small portion of a farmer's time and energy. What are some of the other aspects he must give attention to in order to realize a healthy crop? What thoughts come to mind about long hours, hard work, and persistence in order to realize the rewards of ministry?

Paul goes on to say: "Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things" (verse 7). Once again, Paul does not make a suggestion but shares a command. The verb *consider*, means to *carefully and clearly perceive with the mind, mulling over with full understanding*.

- 2. What powerful reminders does Paul seek to point out to Timothy?
 - a. Verses 8–9:

 - b. Verse 10:

- 3. Verses 11–13 are put in the negative, speaking of those who only profess to know Christ, but who do not actually follow Him by becoming identified with Him. Finish the thought. . .
 - a. *If we died with Him* _____
 - b. *If we endure* _____
 - c. *If we deny Him* _____
 - d. *If we are faithless* _____

Selah ~

Jesus Christ's faithfulness is not contingent upon our faithfulness to Him—He remains faithful no matter what His children do or do not do! Timothy most certainly would have understood that he was to continue reminding others of these truths in demonstration of his obedience to the Lord. Which of the *faithful sayings* from verses 11–13 struck you the most? Why? Please explain.

Day Three: Honorable and Dishonorable Servants, Part 1

Reread 2 Timothy 2:14–19.

Paul the Apostle gave his young protégé very practical instruction on how the servant of Christ should behave and speak. In turn, Timothy was to keep reminding the leaders and the congregation that God has called His people to unity. Paul then turns his attention to servants specifically, contrasting the differences between honorable and dishonorable servants.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (verse 15).

Remember that the false teachers of the day were mishandling God's truth for their own gain. Timothy was commissioned—called into the ministry—with the mission to handle God's Word correctly; hitting erroneous notions head-on by telling it like it is! As you look closely at Paul's admonition to Timothy, consider that his words apply to all Christian leaders in the ministry.

1. Rather than contending over unimportant details or engaging in foolish discussion, Timothy was to be diligent about certain things . . .
 - a. Present himself to God in what manner?
 - b. As what kind of a workman? What does this look like in everyday life? (Give an example.)
 - c. Skillfully handling what? What do you think Paul meant by this?
2. Who is mentioned as negligent in these areas? What were they teaching and what was the result?

Greek philosophy was creeping into the doctrine of belief: the truth of the resurrection was commingled with other non-essentials that made it more palatable and understandable to all. The problem was that the bodily resurrection of Christ is the absolute bedrock of the Christian faith, and the future promise of bodily resurrection is every Christian's hope.

3. What does the Bible teach us about the importance of the doctrine of resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:12–20)?
 - a. What does 2 Corinthians 4:14–15 have to say regarding the hope of every believer?
 - b. How do the above verses underscore the importance of giving Scripture its rightful place in our belief system?

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity’” (verse 19). Herein lies our assurance: the influence of false teachers may have temporary sway; but it will not last—the Lord knows who are His!

Selah ~

Timothy had to be diligent to *present himself* to God; no one could do that for him. The same is true for you as His child and servant. How are you being diligent to *present yourself* as that workman who does not need to be ashamed?

Day Four: Honorable and Dishonorable Servants, Part 2

We are examining up close Paul’s prerequisites for honorable servants, coming now to the qualities that pastors and lay leaders must have to win in the battle for human souls. Since God always works to restore the repentant sinner to Himself, His servants must model the same care and kindness He does for the lost.

“And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition...” (verses 24–25).

The word “servant” could best be translated *bondservant*, or *doulos*—*voluntary slave*. It is a description Paul often used in referring to himself in his letters. But here he uses it to refer to Timothy and others called to minister in the church. In verse 24, Paul mentions necessary characteristics—*inward heart attitudes*—exhibited by leaders and those wanting to be effective servants of Christ.

1. The servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all . . .
This includes being uncompromising when it comes to the truth, and doing so in gentleness and humility. How is that possible? Only by following the example of Jesus, who spoke of himself in Matthew 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart” (NIV).
 - a. Take a moment to consider your demeanor and dialogue with others when sharing the good news of Christ. Would you say you most often appear timid and fearful; kind and matter-of-fact; or assertive and quarrelsome? (Pick the one that most describes you.) Have you ever placed your strengths and weaknesses before the Lord in this regard? Is there an adjustment you realize you could make to strengthen your witness? Please explain.
 - b. Following the example of Jesus, Paul shares a similar comparison in 1 Thessalonians 2:7; what does he say? How powerful is this illustration when applied?

2. The servant of the Lord must be able to teach . . .
The phrase *able to teach* translates into the single Greek word *didaktikos*, which conveys the idea of being highly skilled in teaching. It refers not so much to attaining

vast amounts of knowledge as to having the ability to *effectively communicate* how that knowledge translates into understanding to apply to daily life.

- a. Every servant of God should strive to be a skilled communicator of the Word—rightly handling the Truth. You will no doubt be called repeatedly to share what you know to the people God places around you in your sphere of influence: your home, neighborhood, workplace, church community—you are the Lord’s representative. Where and how is God currently using you? Cite a recent example when God asked you to share His truth.

 - b. What are the areas of communication you find most difficult (i.e., boldness to speak, lack of interest in others, hesitancy to share personal testimony, etc.). Ask the Lord to strengthen you and help you to be effective for Him.
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3. The servant of the Lord must be patient when wronged.
This is perhaps the most difficult of the qualities presented in this verse because we know we will face criticism and persecution for our faith; but may we not be offended when we are wronged. Jesus is our example in patiently dealing with others. The word *patient*—*anexikakon*—is used only here in the New Testament. It literally means to *face ill treatment without resentment*.
 - a. The best model for this is found in Isaiah 52:13–14 and Isaiah 53:1–10. Read through these verses and note what stands out to you.

 - b. 1 Peter 2:21–24 presents us once again with the attitude and response of Jesus. In your own words, summarize the content of these verses.

Remember, the servant who imitates Christ will experience some of the same “wounds” from those who feel convicted and attempt to strike out in anger. The key is to demonstrate patience and gentleness toward those who are quarrelsome. Having someone listen—perhaps for the first time—may allow walls of offense to begin to crumble and doors of opportunity to open!

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in your walk of faith this week?

Prayer Requests ~
