

3. Learning How to Be a Faithful Servant of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become men of God. We saw that Paul knew that he only had a few months to live. As a result, he wanted to encourage Timothy to pass on the message of the Word of God that Paul had taught him. Paul encouraged Timothy to be strong in the Lord, even though he would face opposition and persecution. Today, we are going to see what Paul said to Timothy to help him be a faithful servant of God.

2 Timothy 1 concluded with Paul telling Timothy about the example Onesiphorus had demonstrated as a man of God. Paul went on to say, in 2 Timothy 2:1-2, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Here, we see that Paul again reminded Timothy that Timothy was his son in the faith. This is a reminder of the great love Paul had for Timothy. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, we read, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul called Timothy his faithful and beloved spiritual son. Paul knew that Timothy would teach the Christians in Corinth about the course of conduct that Paul demonstrated wherever he went.

Here, we see that Paul encouraged his spiritual son, Timothy, to continue to be strong in the Lord. Paul had earlier written to the church at Ephesus, in Ephesians 6:10, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” The word translated “be strong” means *to receive strength or to increase in strength*. Paul knew how the Lord had strengthened him when he gave his first defense before the Roman emperor. 2 Timothy 4:17 says, “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear.” Paul wanted Timothy to know that the Lord would strengthen him so he could continue to share the message of the Gospel and additional Gentiles would hear the message.

We also see that Paul wanted Timothy to continue to pass on that message to additional generations. As a result, Paul told Timothy to focus on several generations so that the Gospel would continue to spread. We see four spiritual generations in verse 2: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others also. Here, we see a real key if we are going to be effective spiritual leaders and equip our children to be effective spiritual leaders. Our goal is not just to lead our physical or spiritual children to Christ. Instead, our goal is to lead our children to Christ and help them grow to spiritual maturity. We also want to show them how to lead others to Christ, and then, help those Christians grow to maturity and become faithful men. Then, we want to help our children learn to equip those faithful men to lead others to Christ and bring those Christians to maturity also.

Timothy had traveled with Paul for many years, and so, he knew exactly what Paul taught. In addition, many others had also traveled with Paul through the years. We recognize well-known names like Barnabas, Silas, and Luke. However, we are not quite as familiar with names like those in Acts 20:4, which says, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia—also Aristarchus and

Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” In fact, a study of the book of Acts, and the other books Paul wrote, will give us the names of nearly forty people who traveled with Paul at different times.

We see how Paul trained all of these people, and many others, to share the Gospel. He trained them by taking them with him as he shared the Gospel in various places. Acts 20:20-21 says, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Just as Paul took people with him as he traveled to various cities, he also took people from each city he visited with him, and showed them how to share the message of the Gospel from house-to-house. Here, we see that committing much of what we teach is best done by taking people with us, so they can be shown how to share. Now, Paul encouraged Timothy to teach faithful men in the same way.

Paul knew that Timothy would face opposition. As a result, Paul said, in 2 Timothy 2:3-4, “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” The word that is translated “endure hardship” means *to be ready to suffer hardship or affliction*. This word is also used in 2 Timothy 4:5, where we read: “But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” In this verse, the word is translated “endure affliction.” As Christians, we are in a spiritual war; and so, we want to help our children learn to be willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.

We see a second thing about soldiers. They do not get themselves entangled with the affairs of this life because of their desire to please the person who enlisted them. The word that is translated “entangles himself” means *to get caught or tangled in the things of this world*. The word that is translated “affairs” means *business or occupation*. Paul knew that in order for Timothy to effectively carry out the work to which the Lord had called him, he needed to avoid getting highly involved in some other business at the same time.

Instead, Paul encouraged him to make it his goal to please the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:1 says, “Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God.” We will be a faithful servant of God and a good soldier, and will help our children to become faithful servants of God, if we make it our goal to walk in such a way that our lives are pleasing to the Lord.

We are also given two other illustrations of what it means to be a faithful servant of God. In 2 Timothy 2:5-7, we read, “And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” Here, we see that the first illustration is from the field of athletics. At the time of the writing of the New Testament, the Isthmian Games, and the Olympic Games, were well-known, just as the Olympic Games are well-known today. Runners would practice for many months, and even years, to prepare for these events. 1 Corinthians 9:24-25 says, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one

receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*.” We want to practice self-discipline in our lives, because we realize that we are competing to win an eternal reward.

However, an athlete had to do more than just run fast if he wanted to win the prize. He also had to learn to compete according to the rules. To help our physical and spiritual children learn to win the prize God has for them, we want to help them learn to serve the Lord in a way that is pleasing to Him. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here, we see that we have been created for good works. In order to receive the reward the Lord has for each Christian, we need to help our children learn to do good works in a way that is pleasing to God. 2 Timothy 2:24-25 says, “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, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth.” Here, we see that our attitude will usually determine the effectiveness of our ministry.

The next illustration is a farmer. The farmer works hard to prepare and raise his crops. When the harvest time comes, we see that the farmer has the privilege of being the first to enjoy the fruit that comes from his crops. Paul looked forward to the prize the Lord had for him. 2 Timothy 4:7-8 says, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” We can look forward to the privilege of enjoying the fruit of our ministry as we serve the Lord in a way that pleases Him.

In John 15:4-5, Christ told us that we are not the ones who produce the fruit. Those verses say, “‘Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” Here, we see that it is Christ who produces the fruit. Our lives will only bear that fruit if we are abiding in Him. Unless we are abiding in Christ, our lives will bear no fruit.

The word translated “consider” means *to perceive with the mind so that we have understanding*. The Lord wants us to have a full understanding of these things so that we do not try to produce fruit through our own efforts. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to be a faithful servant of the Lord. That will only happen as our children see our example of dependence on the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to become faithful servants of God.