

# Strengthened in the Grace of Christ (2 Timothy 2:1-13)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hey church, today we're going to read 2 Timothy chapter 2 verses 1 to 13. You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is Christ Jesus, in 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 their own rules.

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

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.

[ 1 : 23 ] But God's word is not chained. 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.

Here is a trustworthy saying. If we died with him, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him.

If we disown him, he will disown us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. If we are faithless, we will also live with him.

Jesus wants to make your life easier. Have you heard that before? Or Jesus wants to make you happy, to take all your troubles away.

Or maybe you've heard someone or something that says, Jesus wants to give you your best life now. In this retelling of the story of the Bible, then, Jesus is just kind of like a genie of the world, for the world.

[ 2 : 57 ] He's just a deliverer of comfort and of your happiness in the here and now. True story or made-up myth?

True story or made-up myth? Look, for sure, there is an unbelievably bright future ahead for everyone who trusts in the atoning death of Jesus Christ for their sins.

It is an unimaginably good future. Heaven will be unimaginably good. And yet, imagine saying this fairy tale to the Apostle Paul, right?

As we've been hearing, he's been writing this letter. Imagine saying to Paul, Hey, Paul, when you follow Jesus, *hakuna matata*. What does that mean? It means no worries for the rest of your days. And Paul's just sitting there, you know, in his chains in prison, about to be executed and going, nah. That's a Jesus-free philosophy.

[ 3 : 59 ] It's simply not true, is it? And not for our brothers and sisters who suffer real persecution every day. Not for many of you who wrestle with following Jesus and being pushed hard by even people you love to deny him, to ditch him.

And certainly not for Paul writing these words that we've been listening closely to. As we heard last week, 2 Timothy is a letter that comes from a man on death row, right?

It's Paul's final words to young Timothy. We heard from 1 Timothy. He was, you know, in trouble then. But here, he's really in trouble. It's been a few years on.

Paul has been abandoned by most of his friends. Most of them who are now too ashamed to testify about the Lord with him. And so here is the Apostle Paul.

He's languishing in prison. Not a comfy one like the ones we have in New Zealand. This one, he's chained like a criminal, it says. Like a dungeon. But God's word is not chained.

[ 5 : 08 ] Amen? God's word is not chained. And so Paul is free to write to Timothy, to encourage him. Don't be ashamed of suffering and hardship for the gospel.

See, rather than lose hope or give up, Paul willingly endures everything and more so that people will keep hearing the good news.

So that more and more people, including us, may gain the everlasting salvation that Jesus offers. And just like Paul, as we hear from this letter, I believe that you and I are called to follow the same cross-shaped pattern for the Christian life.

It goes like this. Suffering first. Glory later. Glory later. Can you remember that? Suffering first. Glory later. Coming to Jesus, this is for every person that comes to Jesus.

Coming to Jesus means being buried with him. That's suffering. And then being raised with him. That's glory. You and I might not be chained up in a prison cell.

[ 6 : 18 ] Well, you may not be having to think about what it looks like to have your head chopped off. And yet maybe you've felt the same disappointment of friends, loved ones who have deserted you because you follow Jesus.

Like how Phagellus, Homogenes, Demas, and others in this letter have deserted Paul. Maybe you've wondered, I come to church every week. Is all this hard work, this sacrifice, is it worth it? Am I a fool for staying faithful and few here? But like Timothy, we too, as we hear this letter, are called to endure hardship for the gospel.

Suffer now. Glory later. In light of the eternal glory that is coming, we are called to endure hardship for the gospel. Now that's really the crux of our passage, isn't it?

We're called to endure hardship for the gospel, firstly. And secondly, we're called to remember the grace that gives us the strength to do so. Did you see that? You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[ 7 : 29 ] Right? So there's two points, really, in our passage. And I hope you can see it from the passage yourselves. Two points. A call to endure hardship for the gospel.

And then a call to remember Jesus who makes that path possible. So firstly, let's think about the call to endure hardship for the gospel. And we do it by the grace of Christ.

Listen again to verse one. 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, will also be qualified to teach others.

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And more literally, verse three, Paul actually says here, suffer with me as a fellow soldier of Jesus.

I've actually used this phrase before. And last week's passage, 2 Timothy 1, verse 8. He says, But suffer with me for the gospel by God's power.

[ 8 : 32 ] So the same idea here, right? It's an invitation to suffer, but not by your own strength. Grace fueled endurance.

Paul knows that Timothy doesn't have the strength in himself. He knows that you and I don't have the strength in ourselves to resist the urge to join those who have left the faith.

The strength to stand firm in Jesus can only come from Jesus. Only his grace saves us from our sins. And likewise, only his grace sustains us, keeps us going in the journey, holds us from falling away.

Make no mistake. The call to be strong, verse 1, to suffer together, that's an incredibly costly call, isn't it? The work of teaching and training others to know who Jesus is, to follow him.

It takes time. It takes effort. It takes sacrifice. Because just as Paul treated Timothy like his own son, the only way we truly pass on this life-giving news of Jesus is by sharing our very lives with people, as if they're family.

[ 9 : 47 ] The way Jesus shared his very life for us, as if we're his family. And so Timothy, Paul says, is to take the good news about Jesus that he heard from Paul, who preached and taught it in front of many witnesses, and to entrust it to reliable people who will then teach it to others.

Church, if you and I are serious about building vibrant, multilingual congregations in this church family, then we need a vision, it seems, that's as big as Paul's, that lasts well beyond just our here and now.

Can you see this dying missionary, Paul? He doesn't have just tomorrow's business in mind, or what will happen next year even. Can you do the maths here?

He has not just one, two, three, but he has four generations of gospel ministry in view.

There's him, he passes it to Timothy, and says, pass it to reliable people who will pass it on to more people. Wow. Do you and I have that kind of long-term vision for this church?

[11:02] Why we just focus too much on the problems here and now? That's why one of the things I've prayed for often here these past five years is that God gives us the grace, not just to teach and pray things, it's important, but also to love people and to stay with them.

We live in a world where we change smartphones every year, right? How precious it is then when people stick around. They stay and serve, they learn and lead for the long haul.

How powerful it is when we prioritize the needs, not just of our generation, but the ones to come beyond us, and beyond us. And so it's why one of the things we pray for often is that God would raise up the next generation of leaders here at Pakuranga Chinese Baptist Church, right?

For more and more brothers and sisters to join in this costly work of passing the gospel on to the next generation. And yes, it's a painful process.

I mean, look at Paul's example. Almost all the leaders he trained have left him. It's not a work that's always fruitful in the here and now. You might never see the fruit in your lifetime.

[12:22] And often, at least it did for Paul, it brings heartache. And for people like us, we are so blessed to live in New Zealand, right?

One of the most beautiful countries in the world. One of the most comfortable countries in the world. And so we are accustomed to comfort and not accustomed to being ashamed not accustomed to being mocked and ridiculed and to suffer.

So Paul offers three pictures to get across. What does it look like, really, to endure hardship for the gospel? Do you notice that in our passage, right? First, we've already mentioned it. It's the image of the soldier, right?

Verses 3 to 4. A soldier knows the call of duty when he hears it. And it means staying focused on the mission that his commanding officer gives him.

You wouldn't trust a soldier who's just kind of on their phone, doom scrolling, while the battle's raging, surely. You wouldn't, right? If a soldier's daydreaming, while there's a war going on, they're not going to be very effective.

[13:27] And for every believer tasked with opening the Bible, sharing it with others, living on the front lines for Jesus, your ministry will require soldier-like attention.

It may require letting go of some civilian pursuits, right? Things that don't matter as much in light of eternity. In pursuit of the greater good of God's gospel, advancing in the hearts and lives of people. Paul gives another image, right? Chapter 2, verse 5. The image of the athlete. We have a couple of athletes here. The Bible speaks elsewhere of the Christian life being like running a marathon.

He also talks, you know, in 1 Timothy, godliness is of more value than physical training. So he's not unaware that people work out. All right? They lift. They do all kinds of things.

Here in particular, I think what's going on here is that one of the rules that athletes who competed in the ancient Olympic Games, right, one of the things they had to do was actually had to start preparing 10 months before the Games started.

[14:37] Right? 10 months prior to the competition, they had a strict daily training regime. Only then could you even enter the competition. Some of you know some of the most famous marathons, right?

You have to get a qualifying time. There's something similar going on here, right? If you enter and compete according to the rules, then you've got the chance to receive the victor's crown.

Here in verse 5. Just as our strongest rugby players or math geniuses, chess prodigies, you know, whatever your gift, you spend hours and hours in training, don't you?

It's not a fluke that you become good at what you do. And so enduring hardship means putting the effort in. The hard work in, not just when everyone's watching, easy to do that, but on your own.

Right? Treasuring God's Word when no one's watching, when it's not for show. Fighting sin, not just in public, but in private. Living holy lives, not just so people can see how holy you are, but for the audience of one.

[15:43] That kind of training and perseverance, that kind of dedication, is what Paul calls Timothy to, with the image of the athlete. A third image that he gives us of what suffering, hardship for the

gospel looks like, is the image of the farmer.

More than anyone else, farmers know that fresh food, they just don't appear in the grocery aisles of the supermarket. Right? They have to grow all this food.

There's hard work involved. Tilling the soil, watering the crops, harvesting all the produce, but it leads to rich rewards later. That's that kind of long-term mindset that you and I need.

And we'll see later on, verse 11 and 12, that the later on that Paul has in mind, is that final day, when Jesus Christ returns for his own, as we sang, to live and reign with him.

That long-term thinking, is part of what enduring hardship for the gospel looks like. It's easy enough to work hard, knowing that you'll be paid next week, right?

[16:50] Or next month, whatever your salary looks like. Much harder when you know that the payment comes at the end of your earthly life. But this is a call to endure hardship, like a farmer patiently waits for his crops to come.

And look, not every Christian is called to the exact kind of hardship for the gospel, like Paul and Timothy, right? Paul was a kind of itinerant, full-time gospel worker.

Sometimes he had a job, but often he didn't. Now, Timothy was busy trying to look after a church in Ephesus. But, that's not all of your vocations or your callings, right?

And yet, no matter where you work, no matter what your office desk looks like, no matter who you hang out with most of the week, you still have a call, a part to play, in enduring hardship for the gospel.

May look different, yes, but it's by no means less important. And each of you are called to endure hardship for the gospel, like a dutiful soldier, a disciplined athlete, or a diligent farmer.

[18:04] Perhaps your hardship is resolving only to date and marry someone who has also submitted their life to Jesus. Because you know, that's what the Bible says will help you stay faithful to the Lord Jesus when he returns.

Maybe hardship for you looks like, oh, I love that job on offer over there, but right now I have deeper relationships that I want to invest in.

And so, I'm going to stay where God's planted me. Or maybe actually hardship looks like the reverse. Wow, there is a really good opportunity here, but it's so far away.

But God is calling me there. Maybe hardship looks like giving up, binge watching yet another amazing TV show, but only so that you have time to dig deep into God's word, a book about, I don't know, church history, Christian counseling, because you really need to be equipped in that area.

All different kinds of ways that we might be called to endure hardship for the gospel. Notice verse 7 though, right? Paul is actually not very prescriptive with Timothy.

[19:18] He can be from time to time. We heard in Timothy 1, right? Drink this, don't drink that, be careful here. Here, he just says, reflect on what I'm saying. Either Paul's run out of practical advice, or, we do need to reflect.

We need to think, and meditate on God's grace, and let the Holy Spirit convict us, through his word, about what insights we need to apply to our life. What does it look like to endure hardship for the gospel?

For me. What choices do I need to make? What commitments do I need to keep? What distractions must I give up? And perhaps you're here, and you're not yet a Christian.

You're trying to weigh things up. Is the Christian life for me? Well, Paul is honest here. When you become a follower of Jesus, truly, it will lead to suffering.

Right? Through many tribulations, Acts 4.12 says, it's through many tribulations that we will enter the kingdom of God. Are you willing to bear the cost? The shame of being, perhaps, excluded, uninvited, cancelled, or ignored by the world around you, and yet, deeply loved by Jesus.

[20:40] Or, you may be here, and you've been around church for a while. Well, Paul's honest with you, and I too, right? There will be suffering now. Glory to come. When it comes to, planting a church, in Paul's case, there's no quick fix.

There was no magic formula. There was just the beautiful, costly work, of him telling people about Jesus, urging them, to keep holding on to Jesus, passing that message to reliable people, and then just, having to watch, and see what the Holy Spirit did.

So it is with us. This is a mission, that by God's grace, will carry on, long after, our bodies return, to the dust. Until Jesus comes back.

Just as we're called, to endure hardship, for the gospel, by the grace of Christ, here in verses 1 to 7, you flip that sentence around, and it's true as well. The reverse is true.

Because from verses 8 to 13, Paul tells us, to remember Jesus, who helps us, endure everything, for the gospel. If the first half of our passage, kind of stress what we do for God, in our faithfulness, the second half stresses, what God has done, for you, in his faithfulness.

[ 21 : 55 ] Do you get the picture? One is, what we must do for God, because he's been kind to us. And the other is, wow, he's been kind to us. And it's, it's in that, that we serve him.

Because here, from verse 8, we get a 10 word summary, of the Bible's entire story, don't we? What does it say? Verse 8. Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David.

Can you remember that one? Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. Okay, that's easier than most Bible memory verses, that we do.

here's Paul, again, he's about to be executed, by the order of the Roman Emperor, at the time, Nero. And of all the things he could say, right, to young Timothy, at this point he says, remember Jesus.

What's going on here? Was, was Timothy having memory issues? That, oh, Paul, who is it that we're trying to tell people about again? Rabbi, what's his name?

[ 23 : 01 ] So and so? Of course not. Timothy knows very well, who he is preaching about. This is not, Paul giving Timothy a surprise quiz, remember Jesus, you've forgotten.

Rather, he wants to remind him, and you and me, that Jesus, is what the Christian life is all about. Does that make sense? As author Gary Miller puts it this way, he puts it this way, he says, we never get past this.

We should never move on to something else. There's no such thing as advanced Christianity. It's always all about what Jesus has done for us, but becoming one of us, dying instead of us, and then lasting his way through death, so that we might live for him.

So remember Jesus Christ. Two things we remember about him here in verse eight. Firstly, he's raised from the dead. Because he rose on Easter Sunday, just as he said he would, we know that his sacrifice on Good Friday, worked perfectly.

This perfect, fully God, fully man, willingly offered his spotless life, to pay the penalty for, for your sin, for my sin, for all our sin.

[ 24 : 16 ] Not just some of it, that we later on need to then work up again. All of it. And the resurrection, raised from the dead, that tells us that the payment went through.

That's a tick, the confirmation. He sealed the deal. He's opened the way for us to know God, through suffering now, glory forever. Same pattern.

The other thing Paul wants Timothy to remember, is that Jesus was descended from David. Believe it or not, actually, very early on in church history, one of the earliest false teachings, the church had to face, was this claim that, you know, Jesus, he's too amazing.

He couldn't have been a flesh and blood person. Right? Docetist claimed that Jesus was kind of like a ghost. Jesus seems like one of us, but not really. But Paul says, no, he really did live and die, and rise again.

He really was flesh and blood person, seen by hundreds of witnesses. And he really did descend from David. Here he's referring to King David, of course.

[ 25 : 30 ] And it was about 1000 BC, when God told King David of Israel, through your bloodline, is one day going to be an ultimate king. someone who was set up an everlasting kingdom.

Isn't that amazing? That person we know is Jesus. King of kings, Lord of lords, now enthroned as king of the universe. He's already seated there, in his rightful place, in the heavenly places.

One day, after all the suffering now, glory comes. He comes to straighten everything out. Do you believe this? This is the true, apostolic gospel.

Jesus is the promised one, risen from the dead, descended from King David. And yet, despite this royal blood, he willingly, laid his own life down, for sinners.

He died and rose again, for you. And King Jesus calls, everyone, young or old, rich or poor, whatever your ethnicity, he calls everyone to, come after him.

[ 26 : 38 ] How? Deny yourself. Take up, his cross. Follow him. Jesus himself, put it this way, for whoever wants to save his life, will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for me, for the gospel, will save it. Some of you know, obviously, that I'm a dad.

But when I forget I'm a dad, it can get very disastrous. Let me explain, you know, I might be being a dad, and playing handball, right, with one of the kids.

But if I'm scrolling on my phone, and trying to return the serve, right, it just, it's disastrous, isn't it? Or if one of my girls says, I want to read a book, and I'm like, yeah, I'll read a book with you.

But then, my head's in another space. I'm thinking about, I don't know, the last five conversations I had with someone else. It gets disastrous. When I forget I'm a dad, it's disastrous, right?

[ 27 : 36 ] In the same way, Paul is concerned that you and I not forget, in this kind of way, about being a Christian. when you and I forget that Jesus Christ is our life, that life is found in him, it gets disastrous.

We eventually start to drift through the day ignoring him. We start to make decisions, really just based around our desires, not what pleases God. We start to forget the king of kings.

So remember the gospel, Paul says. Only that will guard you from forgetting who you truly are.

You're not just a leader. You're not just a talented person here at church.

You're not just someone who grew up here and knows all the Sunday school lessons. No. First and foremost, in Christ, you're a child of God, saved by grace, through faith. Hold on to that.

Remember Jesus. That will strengthen you when you realize, wow, if that's true, if Jesus is the king of kings, I have nothing to boast about except in the cross of Christ.

[ 28 : 41 ] Remember Jesus. If that's true, then, wow, this Jesus is far better than the counterfeit messages about Jesus around us. Remembering Jesus will guard us against getting into quarrels of no value, right?

That's what our next passage will teach us next week. Remembering Jesus will comfort us even as we see terrible things happen in these last days. So remember Jesus who helps us endure everything for the gospel.

Are you willing to do this? To hold firm to Jesus until you die and live again? Because that's what Paul finishes up thinking about, right? Verses 11 to 13.

Very likely, he's just quoting some early Christian poetry. And don't know about you, I don't know what this poetry sounds like in its original language. In English, it's brilliant, isn't it?

If we died with him, we'll also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us.

[ 29 : 49 ] If we're faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot disown himself. You notice what the lyrics say and don't say, don't you, right?

It says, we, not I. Christianity is not a solo endeavor. It's not just about you. It says, in him, not in us. Again, every other religion says, do, do, do.

Christianity starts with what Jesus has done. And so we put our lives in him, not in us. But finally, these lyrics don't shy away from the hard truth, right?

If we disown him, be careful, he'll disown us who deny him. How many of our songs and poems do this today? Lay out the truth, the facts, as it were.

Perhaps this is one way we can better remember Jesus, by being selective about what we read and listen to and sing together. The best kinds of lyrics are going to help us like this, right?

[ 30 : 53 ] Remember Jesus is the faithful one. It's, it's a, it's we coming to worship him, not just I. It's in him and not just in us. And it's also not just the soft truths, but the hard truths as well.

The best songs help us remember Jesus is the faithful one, the perfect savior. There is judgment to come. It's the dangerous songs that tell us we're the ones who speak change. We're the ones who bring down walls.

We're the ones who make our own dreams come true. As if Jesus, hang on, is like a genie again. So, perhaps if a worship song puts what you and I do or say at the top, and not who God is and what he's done, then don't sing it.

Or pick something else out of the amazing choices we have. Change your playlist. Because life is too short. Hell is too real. Jesus is too glorious to flex our vocal cords on vague, me-centered lyrics. Rather, as Paul calls us to do, remember Jesus, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel. In Christ alone, my hope is found.

[ 32 : 10 ] He is my light, my strength, my song. This cornerstone, this solid ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm. To this I hold.

My hope is only Jesus. My life is wholly bound to his. Oh, how strange and divine. I can sing all is mine, yet not I, but through Christ in me.

You see that? Real, truthful words. Church, if we want to be a family that passes the precious word of God, from generation to generation to generation, if we want to effectively guard the gospel, with all its beauty and blessing, 2 Timothy 2 calls us to do two things.

Firstly, as we've heard, remember Jesus, who alone helps us endure everything for the gospel, but also, endure hardship for the gospel, by the grace of Christ.

As we remember these two, twin truths, we do it, knowing that there's suffering now, but glory to come.

[ 33 : 20 ] Will you pray with me? Heavenly Father, we thank you for, how simple the good news is, and yet how challenging it can be.

simple, because it can be summed up in 10 words, that Jesus died and rose again, he really lived on this earth, for us, and yet, profoundly challenging, because he interrupts all our plans, he reshapes all our priorities.

to help us remember Jesus, help us to live for him, help us to be a people, who don't seek our own glory, but the glory of Jesus Christ.

We thank you for these, spirit breathe words. Oh, would your spirit, be convicting us, empowering us, helping us to, want to follow you, giving us the grace, of Jesus to do so.

We pray all these things, knowing that, it is the grace of Christ, that carries us on. Knowing that, it is the grace of Christ, that will carry on, beyond our generation, but to the next ones, and the next ones, and the next ones, until Jesus, comes back.

[ 34 : 56 ] And though we suffer now, we thank you for the glory, to come, when, Jesus, comes for his own. So help us now, as we continue to turn our eyes, to him, our king, our savior, our loved one.

Pray all these things, in Jesus name. Amen.