

LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for April 25: Persevere in sharing the good news of Christ_41904

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Persevere in sharing the good news of Christ

2 Timothy 2

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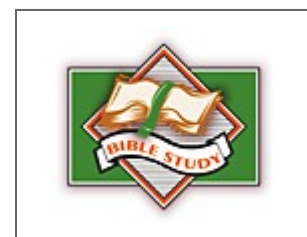
You may be one of many Christians who face hostility as you attempt to live out your faith. You are not alone. Others suffer with you. And the Apostle Paul's challenge to Timothy to remain strong in the faith can embolden us as we seek to persevere in our faith.

Show spiritual power

Paul charged Timothy to be strengthened constantly to overcome the hostile circumstances he was encountering. God's grace had redeemed Timothy, and that same grace would supply him with needed strength

through his ongoing relationship to Christ. Staying connected to Jesus brings strength.

Paul also commanded Timothy to preserve the gospel for those to follow. He needed to entrust to others the truth which he had received from Paul. Christian truth passes from one generation to the next as faithful persons transmit it to trustworthy Christians.



Three images which Paul named impress upon Timothy the need to persevere—the soldier, the athlete and the farmer. Each metaphor highlights a different aspect of Paul's admonition to persevere.

Soldiers face harsh circumstances, need to be focused on the task and desire to please their commander. “Endure hardship” literally means “to suffer together with someone.” Paul and Timothy were struggling together, although they served Christ in different locations. Christians find strength in adversity when others suffer with them. Soldiers cannot afford to be distracted but need to concentrate on their devotion to their commander.

Success for farmers and athletes demands perseverance. Successful athletes train long and hard to excel. “According to the rules” may suggest playing by the game's rules, that is, not cheating. But more likely, it means the lengthy and strenuous preparation and discipline in advance of the contests. Farmers work long and hard on their land to produce crops.

God promises to reward believers who remain faithful. Athletes expected the laurel wreath of the victory, soldiers expected the spoils of war and farmers expected bountiful harvests. Believers anticipate eternal life as

their reward. We experience part of this in this world but will fully receive the crown of life after Christ's return.

Paul instructed Timothy to consider regularly these words. God would grant him greater understanding and guidance when necessary.

Benefit others

Keeping Christ first in the Christian life is crucial. We can persevere only when we remain focused on Jesus. Worship is essential. To worship is to remember. We remember Jesus, who though crucified, was raised as Lord. We remember that this descendant of David was human. Paul proclaimed Jesus Christ as the divine-human Messiah (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul wrote Timothy while chained in a prison as a common criminal. He believed his suffering resulted directly from his preaching the gospel. Yet while the Romans might restrain him, they could not shackle the gospel.

The apostle willingly endured suffering because he considered its benefit on the elect. "Elect" refers to God's people. The word emphasizes God's initiative in redemption. To obtain salvation is to be delivered fully and completely from sin and death. The process begins here but will be completed in our future life with God.

Ensure rewards

Paul broke into a hymn of assurance for the faithful after mentioning eternal glory. These words, affirming God's faithfulness, surely encouraged him as he awaited execution.

This hymn highlights God's faithfulness to Christians. Paul showed in it the importance of remaining faithful to Christ. To deny Jesus was serious. While Paul stressed that Christians persevere when persecuted, he

acknowledged some would weaken and fail. But even if “we are faithless, he will remain faithful.” God remains faithful and trustworthy despite human failure. The Lord keeps offering grace and mercy and remains true to his promises. God will not abandon his people.

Be approved of God

The false teachers in Ephesus apparently spent more time on doctrinal wrangling than developing Christian conduct. Paul more fully detailed the sinful conduct of the false teachers in chapter 3. Paul certainly recognized legitimate conversation on doctrinal issues but challenged Timothy to resist mere verbal discussions. The aim of teaching in church should be godly living. Words should build up believers and not weaken the church. Paul insisted that Timothy keep reminding the church about the importance of living Christ-like lives.

Timothy should model for others what it means to be worthy of the name Christian. Circumstances in Ephesus surely tested his character. He should discipline himself to be a worthy laborer who appropriately used the gospel to build up the church. A correct handling of the word of truth would help believers become more like Christ.

Question for discussion

- ◆ What interferes with you sharing your faith?

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