

Orders for the Battle

Call to Worship: Psalm 68:1-4

Hymn Insert- *My Heart is Filled With Thankfulness*

1st Scripture: 2 Timothy 1

Hymn Insert- *O Church Arise*

2nd Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Hymn #493- *Who is On the Lord's Side*

Introduction

Having worked through the first chapter of Paul's (divinely inspired) letter to Timothy, hopefully we have gotten a sure sense of the urgency of the matter regarding Paul's heartfelt desire to see Timothy persevere in the faith, and stay true to the soul saving doctrines that have been committed to him. The persecution under Nero and Rome was increasing, Christians were in the "cross hairs" from many directions, and some, such as Phygellus and Hermogenes have already walked away from the faith. Indeed, the Christianity of the early church was a battlefield, as the enemy sought to snuff out (and/or defile) its morning light, before the foundation could be laid and the cause of Christ catch fire!

This morning, we continue on into chapter 2, where Paul, the imprisoned Apostle and commanding officer, will give Timothy, the active soldier, a few critical orders for the battle, seeking to provide him with everything that he needed, for striving not only to hold the fort, but furthermore, to continue onward into enemy territory (into the very gates of hell, as it were), to rescue the perishing and build Christ's Church. And I pray, Brethren, that these very timely and relevant instructions would be embraced by us, to be utilized by our church, in a context, where much of Christianity, has sadly, gone on leave.

I. Be Strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus

Paul's first order to Timothy is found in verse 1: "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Speaking to Timothy, as a father, Paul implies that his commands, while urgent and critical, are driven and motivated by a filial affection that he has for his protege, Timothy. "You therefore, (in light of fact that you have before you, many unfaithful examples — several from Ephesus, including Phygellus and Hermogenes, who have fallen away, along with

the faithful example of perseverance from Onesiphorus,... *my son...* ". "You therefore, be strong! Be among those who stand firm to the end and who finish well! Be strong!"

But notice that Paul doesn't leave Timothy to his own resources for finding the strength needed to stand firm. He doesn't say, "Timothy, dig deep down in yourself, and tap into the strength that is naturally there." No, Paul was not living in a Hollywood fantasy of fabrication. He knew very well that such a command would be fruitless, giving Timothy absolutely no hope of obeying it. He may as well of said, "Timothy, sprout wings and fly to the moon." No, he points Timothy to the only sure and certain source of spiritual strength that can enable weak, needy, pilgriming, redeemed sinners to win this war. "Be strong *in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!*"

You see, Paul reminds Timothy of, and points Timothy to, the only fountain of grace that has saved him from the beginning and has brought him this far, namely, the inexhaustible grace that is found in Jesus Christ. Paul knows two things about this grace that continually remains in, and can be drawn out of, Jesus Christ.

1) It is infinite in both its measure and its necessity, providing embattled Christians with everything they need to win the battle. Why is this the case? For starters, it is the free grace of Christ which constantly avails resurrection power to His people, so that they can withstand the fiery arrows of the wicked one, and persevere at all physical and material costs, without compromise. Real power is needed for real perseverance. Real power is needed to rise above what is visible and appealing to the senses, to the place where the invisible reality of God and all that He grants us in Christ overrules and controls the desires and the will unto seeking His ends, in the building of His kingdom. Real power is found in Christ's grace, secured by His real death and resurrection. And furthermore, it is by the constant taking in of the merits of Christ's grace, that we are able to persevere in spite of remaining sin. Sin grieves us. Sin is a remaining sorrowful hindrance to the prosperity of God's people, and it constantly threatens to undo and destroy us. But, in the fountain of grace found in Christ, we are continually washed of present sins, and continually renewed for effective service. We are given a place to confess our sins and to perpetuate a life of ongoing, sincere repentance in the grace of Christ. Were that not the case, we would never get out of bed, let alone, progress in the battle of the faith. And so, Paul gives

this command to Timothy, urging him to make good use of the grace of Christ, which empowers us in every sense, to persevere to the end, of what would otherwise be an impossible endeavor.

2) But secondly, Paul gives this order because he knows of our natural tendency to lose sight of and to move away from, ongoing dependence on the grace of Christ. We must continually remain in the vine of Christ, if we are to persevere. He must be the air that we breathe, the bread that we eat and the water that we drink. He is our only means of continual perseverance and spiritual advancement in the kingdom. As the High Priest was of constant necessity to the Old Covenant people in every sense, more so, our heavenly High Priest is our constant necessity. And be it by pride, doubts, fears, covetousness, the draw of the world, self-dependence and a host of other vices, we are always tempted to move away from depending upon Christ and His grace [Note: The entire Book of Hebrews addresses this matter].

Be assured, Satan's greatest attacks against you Christian, would be geared toward severing your daily dependence upon Christ and His grace. And he would take much pains, and exercise much patience, seeking to gradually loosen your grip on Christ, knowing that if he achieves that, he will render you powerless and ineffective in the work of the kingdom of God. And so, Paul orders Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," as a starting point, as a foundation to the other orders that follow. In other words, this order is a critical and ongoing prerequisite to any hope of keeping the orders that follow.

II. Raise up "Word Centered" Leadership

"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" (vs. 2).

Secondly then, Paul orders Timothy to expand his military outreach, by taking all that Paul has delivered to him, and delivering it over to other qualified men, who could then be entrusted to lead and teach others. Especially in the face of so much opposition to the gospel, where all manner of destructive heresies are flying about, there is always the need to raise up and send out good and faithful teachers, who are unwilling to compromise their sound doctrine, so that the church of Christ will prevail. The very means, by which, Christ builds His kingdom and His Church, is through the proclamation of His life saving, life changing truth. That is why, in 1

Timothy, Paul reminded Timothy that the church is the household of God, and the pillar and ground of His truth. The church is entrusted with that alone which has power to change hearts. It carries the message that brings people into fellowship with God, and connects people with the Holy Spirit and the power of God. And so, within that body, qualified men must be raised up to teach others, so that, through mutual edification, the people of God can grow, and together, bring glory to God.

We would simply note here then, that those who are appointed to leadership must be held to the standard of qualifications given in 1 Timothy, and they must be taught and trained; they must be grounded in the truth, before they can be set into the office of proclaiming that truth. And while Bible colleges and seminaries can assist to this end, the ultimate responsibility of raising up, “Word centered, Christ centered” leadership, rests within the local church itself. Timothy, especially in the churches infant stage, had the unique responsibility of fulfilling this task in Ephesus, and perhaps, in some of the other churches of Asia, as well. Titus was given such a responsibility in Crete.

III. Persevering in the Battle

“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” (vs. 3-4).

Here, Paul gives a third order, which he follows up with an important motivational reminder. He begins by reminding Timothy of the reality that, on this side of heaven, the Christian life involves fighting and suffering, akin to that which takes place with soldiers in a war. And there is no other way to think of the Christian life, which, while being set heavenward, presently unfolds in the context of a fallen and condemned world, with demonic beings and spiritual powers lurking about and battling behind the scenes. It is a war! Now, there might be many who are asleep, especially in a context such as ours, but a war is taking place nonetheless.

And so, Paul tells Timothy, “You must be willing to suffer hardship, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” It is part and parcel for the course. Those who desire to serve and follow Christ, must likewise, be willing to bear a cross, that they might suffer with Him. Christianity is not

about receiving the incomprehensible benefits of glory *in this life*. It is about losing this life, and investing in that which lies ahead. Yes, there is the wonderful blessing and benefit of knowing God now; of relating to and walking with Christ now; there is the incomprehensible benefit of having peace with God now, but the completed rest and the enjoyment of all that is ours in Christ, is yet to come. And the pathway there is laden with trial, with suffering, with hardship and with the angst of pressing forward against opposition. And so, there is the need for perseverance and endurance and diligence and endeavoring; there is the need to press on and to exhaust ourselves in the battle, knowing that even every ounce of pain endured here serves a glorious purpose in our sanctification, with our eyes set on Christ and the prize just up ahead, where the gathered assembly of the church triumphant awaits us in glory! “Timothy, you must be willing to endure hardship...*as a good soldier of the glorious, highest ranking, commanding officer, the Lord Jesus Christ!*

You see, Timothy, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” You see, Paul wants Timothy to recall that his calling in Christ, which has brought about every glorious blessing in Christ, has also enlisted him in a present war, which could very well bring him into the clutches of a tyrannical Nero and in the crosshairs of many opposing Jews, Greeks and Romans, but he must stay the course nonetheless. And if he is to stay that course, he cannot attach himself to the things of this world. He must hold a loose grip on this life. It must not be dear to him. He cannot get entangled or caught up in it. His back must be toward the world, even while remaining in it. And he must focus on the primary mission at hand, which is to please his enlisting officer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who Himself had travelled such a path of sorrow, suffering and self-sacrifice [followed by His apostles and Paul...etc]. You see, one cannot be truly engaged in a war, while giving his attention to the things of everyday life. They must consciously, focus on the battle at hand, following the orders of their commanding officer.

Notice, as well, Paul adds two other accompanying illustrations to help broaden the picture of what he is saying here. The first involves an Olympic event, and the second a farmer: “And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops” (vs. 5-6). What then do

these two illustrations add to Paul's charge for Timothy to be willing to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

1) When one competes in an Olympic event, its not just a matter of getting the highest score, or to the finish line first. You must follow the rules. You must compete within the specified boundaries and rules for each event. [Ex: The Olympic bicycle racer, Lance Armstrong, was stripped of his 2000 bronze medal, when they later found out that he was using unacceptable energy/strength enhancing drugs that gave him an unfair advantage]

And so, when seeking to finish the race that God has set before him; in seeking to finish well, Timothy cannot compromise. Timothy must remain firm and be willing to endure all preordained hardships. There is no "easy road" to glory. He cannot cut corners by embracing compromise. He must stand firm on the doctrines that have been delivered to him by the Apostle; doctrines that will, of necessity, provoke opposition from within the spiritual and physical realms. Timothy cannot preach a watered down gospel. He cannot join hands with those who would spew forth dangerous, anti-Christian doctrines, being willing to compromise the truth for the sake of making his journey safer, more comfortable, pleasant and without suffering. He cannot say "Jesus is Lord," *and* "Caesar is Lord." In short, he must operate within God's orthodox parameters, remaining faithful at all costs, even at the potential expense of his very life. He must run the race, on God's terms, and for His glory!

2) Paul provides another, final illustration from within an agricultural context. "The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops." What does Paul mean by this short illustration? Well, in keeping with the previous two illustrations, and the context of enduring hardship, Paul is here indicating that it is only the hardworking farmer; the farmer who invests much time, energy, sweat and conscious focus, on properly caring for the crop, who will yield a harvest and be first to partake of it. And the idea here, is that Paul is placing a special emphasis on persevering and patiently striving toward the desired outcome. It involves consistency, staying the course, and remaining diligent in one's labors, in anticipation of what will come in the end. It is a sacrificing of much in "the now," eagerly anticipating the blessing that will come later. And so, Paul charges Timothy to remain faithful to the end, because it's only the *hardworking* (emphasis is here) farmer who will be first to partake of the crops.

Finally, Paul closes out these orders with this statement in verse 7, “Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.” Simply put, Paul wants Timothy to take the time to process and chew on all that he has said, and at the same time, he knows that the Spirit of God must work the understanding and conviction of these things into the heart of Timothy, if Timothy is going to give heed to these orders. While Paul loved Timothy dearly and trusted him firmly, Paul’s confidence was always fixed on the Holy Spirit of God, who alone can grant us the grace, strength and wisdom to continue onward in the work of the Lord. And so, he expresses his desire to see Timothy actively process these things, and for the Holy Spirit to continue to enable Timothy to understand and give heed to them.

IV. Closing Thoughts and Applications

1) Recognize your own proneness toward drifting away from dependency on the grace of Christ, which is our only source of strength, wisdom and constant cleansing in the battle. The drift is often gradual, and it exists in every one of us (“Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here’s my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above”). This reality alone even, should make us a people of constant prayer. We need God’s daily strength to remain faithfully on the course, and we need His constant forgiveness, if we are going to function for His glory for another day. All of this comes through the grace that is found in Christ Jesus, and in Him alone. [There is no treasury of merit, left over by the saints...they have nothing to offer anyone]. Stick close to the vine and you will bear fruit!

2) Pray that God would enable us to raise up, within this church, “Christ centered, Word centered” men, who are willing to faithfully preach the Word without compromise. The infectious disease of liberal, jellyfish, palatable Christianity has grossly infiltrated the ranks of most alleged Christian colleges and seminaries. We need men of the Word; men who are not looking for new, adventurous, unpaved roads, but who are rather committed to the paths already trodden by the faithful of old, even though the tastebuds of our modern culture are hungry for new, culturally relevant ways of meeting the felt needs of people. People need the same life transforming Gospel; the Gospel, which the Holy Spirit uses to raise the dead and to forever

change lives. Let us pray that we would continue to work toward raising up such men, right here.

3) Are you in the battle? Are you even conscious of the battle? Or are you “entangled” in the affairs of everyday life? Is it your desire and mission in life to please the Lord Jesus Christ, who enlisted you as a soldier? In what specific ways, daily, are you meeting with your Commanding Officer, and how are you consciously, daily, seeking to serve Him? Are your ideals, hopes, desires and dreams fixed on glory, or on this life? Does your life manifest tangible evidence of a life that has experienced a new birth, such that, even though you are not presently what you will be, at the same time, you are not presently what you once were? What defines your life? Is it life as defined by the general consensus of society or by Christ Himself? Do you look and live completely like the world; do you comfortably fit right in the world or is there a real sense in which others can see and know that this is not your home? Does your profession have a heartbeat or is it nothing more than a dead profession? Are you in the battle?

Perhaps, you have wavered a bit or have fallen asleep at your post. Then, wake up soldier!...etc. Return to your Commanding officer and Press on! Return to your first love!

Perhaps, you have never truly been saved. Then, flee to Christ now, before it is too late!...etc.

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25