

Message #6

II Timothy 2:1-2

We are living in the days in which many people are completely enamored with what is called the “mega-church.” Big churches with impressive buildings and budgets are a dominant theme of the religious world in our time. For most people it is about numbers and programs and bands and campuses. If you have the numbers on your side, then that proves it is right. In fact, just recently someone boasted to us about the fact that their church had a coffee shop and health club. If we are not careful, this kind of mindset can not only infiltrate our thinking, but it can become very intimidating. It is not easy to stand alone in ministry and, as Kipling said, “keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you” and if you can stand alone when others are doubting you, you are a “man, my son.”

Timothy was in Ephesus when Paul wrote II Timothy and Ephesus was a big time religious city. That temple of Diana, which sat outside the city, was one of the impressive wonders of the world. Furthermore, in the city there were all kinds of what we could call religious systems and places of worship and none of them were given to a serious commitment to the Word of God or to grasping the grace of God found in Jesus Christ.

Not only was Timothy up against the mega-church religions, but also he was seeing those dedicated to the truth being persecuted and executed. They were not thriving and they did not appear to be succeeding. Furthermore, some who had once been so faithful turned against Paul and his teaching. These were very lonely times for Timothy. Paul needed to motivate Timothy to stay steadfast in being a faithful minister and that is exactly what he does in II Timothy 2.

It is interesting to me to carefully go through this text to see what makes a great minister in God’s estimation. There is no evidence that a great ministry had anything to do with numbers at all. There is no hint from these metaphors that great ministers and ministries strive to build the mega-church. Paul challenges Timothy to be:

- 1) A strong son. 2:1
- 2) An instructed teacher. 2:2
- 3) A good soldier. 2:3-4
- 4) A prize -winning athlete. 2:5
- 5) A reaping farmer. 2:6
- 6) A diligent and serious student. 2:15
- 7) An honorable clean vessel. 2:20-21
- 8) A gentle teacher and apologist. 2:24-25

Paul wanted Timothy to finish an award-winning minister. He did not want him quitting and he did not want him toning it down. In fact, he wanted him to fire up and stir the flame of his gift at an optimum level. So what he does in this chapter is to use a series of metaphors to try to stimulate Timothy to being faithful:

As we come to these verses, what we see is this:

THE BELIEVER WHO WILL BE AN AWARD-WINNING CHILD WILL BE A STRONG SON AND STRONG DEFENDER OF THE GRACE OF GOD THAT WAS TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE PAUL.

I do not know of any father who wants his son to grow up to be some mambe-pambe weakling. Most fathers want their sons to grow to be stable, strong men who can survive in a tough world. Paul wanted that for Timothy.

In fact, Paul calls Timothy “my son” in **verse 1**. The Greek is very strong in that Paul is personally and specifically saying Timothy, you are “my son.”

The particular Greek word used for “son” (teknon) in this verse, emphasizes that Paul is telling Timothy, I am your parent. You are not only in the family of God, but you are in my family, you are “my son.” God had used Paul and his teaching to give birth to Timothy, not only putting Timothy into the family of God, but also allowing Paul to be Timothy’s father in the faith who raised him in the truth of God. Paul is the one who taught him grace. Paul is the one who gave him the system of doctrine that revealed grace. **Timothy was Paul’s son in the faith and Paul did not want him acting as some weakling boy; he wanted him to be a strong son and strong man of God.**

Paul did not want Timothy weak in spirituality, character, doctrine, ministry or ability. Paul wanted to be able to say in an unashamed way that Timothy is “my son” in the faith.

Now there are three character traits of a strong Pauline son:

STRONG CHILD TRAIT #1 –The award-winning believer will be strong in the grace of God. **2:1**

We do not want to gloss over this because this is where Paul begins. Strong believers, award-winning believers will be strong in the grace of God that is found solely and only in Jesus Christ. Paul does not say be strong in the O.T. law. Paul does not say be strong in your works system. Paul does not say be strong in religion. He says be strong in the grace of God.

Just exactly what grace are we talking about? What is the grace that Paul wanted Timothy so strong in? Paul wanted Timothy strong in the doctrine that taught any relationship we have with God that is favorable and pleasing to Him is based solely and completely on and in Jesus Christ.

It is not based on any of our works. It is not based on what we deserve or what we may earn. It is not based on a series of rules or codes or traditions. We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and we are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had been a champion defender of the grace of God in a religious world that stressed everything but that. Now it was time for Paul to die and he wanted Timothy to take the torch of his grace message and doctrine to the world.

Paul had been all over the world and he had seen the spiritual distortions and devilish doctrines that plague people. He had seen the devastation that affects people who do not grasp grace. He had personally battled the legalists, the ritualists, the traditionalists, the formalists and the sacramentalists.

He had seen firsthand what happens to people who are not strong in the grace of God. They become rigid and pharisaical. They are unstable and miserable and powerless. Paul knew the importance of the doctrine of God's grace and he knew that this was the key to having a right, healthy, balanced relationship with God. Paul says to Timothy, you need to be strong in the grace of God that is totally and solely focused on and found in Jesus Christ.

Now there are four grammatical things to glean from this.

First of all, the actual word "strong" means to clothe oneself with strength. So we are to be clothed entirely with grace.

Second, the parsing of this verb "be strong" is important. It is a present tense verb, which means the believer is to continually be strong in grace.

Third, it is a passive voice verb which means we must depend on God and the Holy Spirit for the strength because we do not get this ourselves. Strength in the grace of God comes from God.

If you want to be strong in the grace of God, ask God to make you strong in the grace of God. Ask God to help you grasp grace so you may understand it, live it and teach it.

Fourth, it is an imperative which means it is a command.

So God is commanding the believer to continually depend on Him and allow His grace to dominate our minds and our lives. To be strong in grace, we must depend on God for strength. We cannot conjure this up by ourselves. It is a continual dependency and reliance on the grace of God that makes us strong.

Do we understand this point? The more we depend on the grace of God, the stronger we become in grace.

John Calvin made a very significant historical observation. He observed as soon as the apostles were gone and as soon as a few of these men like Timothy passed off the scene, Satan buried the doctrine of the grace of God for nearly 1500 years until Martin Luther revived it.

It is imperative that we be strong defenders of grace. This is not a nice suggestion; this is critical to us being an award-winning believer and an award-winning church.

STRONG CHILD TRAIT #2 – The award-winning believer will teach Pauline truth. **2:2a**

Now this again is something we do not want to overlook. Timothy was to specifically teach the things he had been taught by Paul. Paul had taught his grace doctrine to many people. He had taught grace to the Romans, the Galatians, and certainly to the Ephesians.

Paul wanted Timothy to specifically spend his time teaching that which Timothy had heard from Paul. He already mentioned this in 1:13; but he reinforces the point again here. That verb “heard” indicates Paul had literally given Timothy verbal instruction and he had listened to it. I also want to point out something about the relative pronoun “which” (“things which”). This is a definite pronoun, which means Paul taught Timothy definite things about grace. As we said last time, the word “standard” (1:13) indicates Paul did have some systematic way of presenting grace theology.

So many theological institutions take the position that it is not our job to give dogmatic theology to students. Our job is to teach them how to think for themselves and form their own convictions. Well apparently Paul did not agree with that mindset. He gave Timothy specific, definite grace instruction and he wanted him to teach it.

If you listen to many preachers today, they have missed this point. They think it is their primary job to teach the O.T. law. They think it is their primary responsibility to teach the denominational viewpoints. Many believe it is their responsibility to teach the traditions of men. I literally sat in a church in which the teacher was teaching a course on how to succeed in business. He threw in a couple of Bible verses, but the great majority of his time was drawing analogies from the movie “Hoosiers.” We could not believe it. The job is to teach the Word and communicate the grace of God doctrines. Paul says to Timothy, your job is to teach the grace I taught you. Your job is to teach Pauline grace. This grace was taught to many witnesses.

Teaching Pauline truth accurately is very hard work. In fact, Paul said that in order to do it, one had to work hard (I Tim. 5:17). Anyone can teach a course on religion or some catechism invented by men. Very few actually understand Pauline grace and can teach it. Paul said Timothy, you are one who is to do just that.

STRONG CHILD TRAIT #3 – The award-winning child will teach Pauline truth to faithful men. **2:2b**

Now let’s think about this for a moment. Paul wants his son in the faith to finish a winner and what he says here goes against the grain of the way many churches actually think. **The primary assignment Paul gives to Timothy is not to evangelize the lost ; but to instruct the faithful .**

Now think about this for a moment. This is Paul’s last letter he will write to Timothy and Paul says to him your primary responsibility with the gift God has given you is to teach faithful people about the grace I taught you. It is true, Timothy was to witness. In fact, later Paul will say “do the work of an evangelist” (4:5), but his primary job is to teach faithful men. Timothy was to instruct faithful men in Pauline grace doctrine, who would be able to instruct others also. This is rich here and the wording is powerful. There are three points of observation we want to mention here:

First of all, Timothy was to invest his time teaching men who were proven faithful. Although you cannot solely build your doctrine on this point, the fact is Paul expected that men, not women would be the public preachers and teachers of the Word of God.

Faithful men are men proven faithful. Faithful people are people who have proven themselves to be faithful people of God over time.

Second, these men you teach will then be fit and competent and sufficient to teach others. So Timothy is to take the grace instruction he received from Paul and teach it to faithful men and they, in turn, could teach it to others.

Third, the “others” means others of a different kind who are not fit and not sufficient to grasp grace. The assumption here is that many people will need to know and grasp grace. They may have faith in Jesus Christ, but they will need to grasp grace.

Now what Paul wanted Timothy to do was to take Pauline teaching and spot men, not women, who were faithful and trustworthy and he was to give them instruction in Pauline doctrines so they, in turn, could teach others who were not instructed in Pauline grace doctrines.

John Calvin said when you find a man sound in the grace of God, train him and commit to him the ministry.

Harry Bultema wrote a commentary on these Pastoral books called “Chains of Gold.” He said as a whole, churches have not obeyed God’s Word on this matter. Faithful men in a church are not usually singled out and taught; they are shipped out and sent off to Bible Schools, Institutes, Colleges and Seminaries. Sometimes those schools do anything but teach them Pauline grace.

The fact is very few churches even to this day are grounded in Pauline grace truth and doctrine. Many of us can testify of churches that are not eating solid meat, but still sucking baby milk. Many Christians are going to churches, but few are doctrinally wise when it comes to grasping the grace of God.

Not too many have taken this mandate seriously. But we may certainly praise God that Paul taught Timothy. We can praise God that James Brookes taught C. I. Scofield. We can praise God that C. I. Scofield taught Lewis Sperry Chafer.

Charles Ryrie does a marvelous job of giving a historical sketch of Lewis Sperry Chafer and since we are connected to him through John Miles, I want to read it:

“In 1922 he (*Chafer*) moved to Dallas, Texas for the express purpose of establishing the Dallas Theological Seminary, which came into existence in 1924 and which he served as president and professor of systematic theology until his death. The study and teaching of theology was thrust on Chafer by the death of W. H. Griffith Thomas, who was slated to teach theology at the new seminary but who died the summer before it opened.

Chafer's theology may be characterized as biblical, Calvinistic, premillennial, and dispensational; **but chiefly he was a strong exponent of the grace of God.** Undoubtedly his teaching and his written and popular ministry exerted a major influence for biblical understanding on the church in the twentieth century."

Dr. Chafer was strong in the grace of God. He taught Mr. John Miles and Mr. John Miles taught me and I have done my best to teach you. You now have been entrusted with this great doctrine of grace and you have the responsibility to be a strong defender of it. Believe you me, if you grasp grace and defend grace, you will not be well-received by the vast majority of religious people; but you will be a strong son in the faith and you will please God. You hear a lot of talk about discipleship these days, which is a word that does not even show up in the Pauline epistles. Well Paul never told Timothy teach a course on discipleship; he said you be a strong son in the grace of God. You take that system I taught you and you teach it to others.

The sad tragedy is very few places actually present pure Pauline grace today. They do not grasp that doctrine. In fact, many pollute it. We need people who know God's Word and doctrines. We need people who can defend God's grace.

If we want to be an award-winner, we must present grace that is found in Jesus Christ. Believe it; defend it; testify of it. In a world in which most people believe in themselves and in their religion and in works, you stand for grace.

The grace message is simple. Jesus Christ is all you need for everything. He is all you need for salvation and He is all you need for the rest of your life. You spend your days learning about the grace of God that is in Jesus Christ and you will finish an award-winner.