

2 Timothy 2:1-2 | “Thinking Beyond Today”
Preached on January 29, 2023 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Timothy 2, and we will be covering just 2 verses this morning, verses 1 and 2. *[pause]*

Thinking beyond today is so important, isn't it? *[pause]*

Imagine a new farmer.

Doesn't he need to think ahead?

He can't just live in the moment, but he must always be preparing and thinking about what's coming next. *[pause]*

He has to plan what he's going to plant, when he's going to plant, or when he's going to harvest.

He has to make sure things are lined up for once he harvests everything.

Does he have enough storage to store the harvest? Does he have buyers lined up for the produce?

Are the machines and equipment all serviced and ready to go? *[pause]*

If a farmer only lives in the moment, his farm is going to fail. *[pauseeee]*

This is a common necessity in most of life, really.

We must look beyond our noses, we must be thinking and planning for the future. *[pause]*

A senior in high school must be planning for what's to come after graduation.

A soon-to-be married couple must be thinking about where they will live, and about all the details of cars, finances, and jobs.

Any business who isn't planning for the future is only planning their own demise. *[pauseeee]*

In our text this morning, we see that Paul was concerned that young Timothy be preparing for the future, and not just focused on his own day.

Just listen to what he says in verses 1-2. *[READ VERSES 1-2]*

Paul is in prison and nearing the end of his life.

He has passed on the truth to Timothy, but Paul doesn't want the ministry to just stop with him.

And that's why Timothy must entrust what he heard to faithful men. *[pause]*

But in order to do this, Timothy will need strength.

And so we first see...

I. The importance of the might.

Strength is needed in life, for so many things take energy and strength in order to be done.

[pause]

There's a reason why we need rest and sleep: so that our strength and energy are replenished to keep us going strong. *[pauseeee]*

Well the Christian life is no different - we *need* strength for the Christian life.

And that's why Timothy is told by Paul, "You then, my child, be *strengthened* by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." *[pauseeee]*

"You then," or "You therefore," connects back to what Paul was just talking about.

In order to be faithful and unashamed of Christ...

In order to follow the good example of Onesiphorus, and to not follow the faithless examples of Phygelus and Hermogenes, he will need strength. *[pause]*

So also, *you need strength for the Christian life. [pause]*

The Christian life isn't easy, so don't expect it to come easy without strength.

Opposition will be strong, discouragement will come, fears will arise, and our tasks will feel overwhelming.

We don't become Christians and then go into cruise control, but we need strength for each day. *[pause]*

Yet here's the question: *where* do we get the strength that we need?

What does Paul say? "Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus." *[pause]*

We need Christ's gracious strength for the Christian life - our strength will not do. [pauseeee]

Paul didn't say to Timothy, "Hey, you got this. You're a strong young man, so look to your own strength."

That's the message that our world would like you to believe, but it's not the message of the Bible. *[pause]*

Just type in "you are strong" into an internet search engine and see what pops up.

You will be bombarded with messages like, “You are strong, you are capable,” “You are stronger than you think,” and, “You are strong enough to face it all.”¹ [pause]

But are we?

Didn’t Paul just tell Timothy to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ? [pauseeee]

‘To be strengthened’ is a passive verb, meaning, it’s Christ who gives us strength. [pause]

What amazing news - you don’t have to wobble in weakness, but you have utmost strength available, but will you use it? [pauseeee]

“One New Year’s Day, in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. It was out of gas.

The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gas.

The amusing thing was this float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck was out of gas. [pause]

Even though Christians have access to God’s omnipotence, if we do not avail ourselves to it we will run out of power.”² [pauseeee]

Christ gives us strength, but we must be strengthened by it.

We must look to Him and depend on Him for it. [pause]

Regularly ask Him for the strength to do whatever needs to be done.

Realize that you need Him for *everything*. [pause]

More often than not, are you trusting in your own strength and capabilities, or in God’s?

When you face each day, whose strength do you rely upon? [pauseeee]

As we think about what Paul says, why does he say to be strengthened *by the grace* that is in Christ Jesus? [pause]

Because any strength that Christ gives us is a gift!

It’s a gift of unmerited help, power, and enablement.

We don’t deserve it, and it must come from outside of ourselves, so it is a grace gift. [pauseeee]

If I keep giving you money to go to college, you are being put through college by grace.

¹ I did this on a search engine, and found these quotes at <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=you+are+strong&atb=v359-7&iax=images&ia=images>.

² Found at: <https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/running-out-of-gas>. Original source: *The Minister’s Manual*, Lee McGlone.

So by receiving strength from Christ to go through life, then we are being strengthened by grace.
[pauseeee]

Isn't it amazing how God gives us what we need for the tasks that He calls us to?

Timothy had all that he needed in Christ for his task of ministry. [pause]

He isn't a mean boss, saying, "I want this done. Figure out a way to get it done."

But He's a kind and gracious God, who calls us to a high calling, and empowers us with what we need. [pause]

Are you going to be committed to rely upon Him for strength? [pauseeeee]

So might is important, but there's something else important, for we see...

II. The importance of the message.

Without a doubt, some messages are more important than others. [pause]

Your company gives you many messages, and some are more important than others, aren't they?

Sometimes they are just telling you to remember to mark down your hours, or to put your name on things in the company fridge.

Other times, it's explaining a change in the health insurance for the upcoming year, or massive changes like layoffs and things like that. [pause]

Well the way Paul talks to Timothy reminds him of the importance of the message.

It wasn't something to be heard and deleted, ignored or forgotten, but it was vitally important.
[pauseeee]

He says, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men." [pause]

We will get to the task of entrusting the message, but think of it this way - if a message needs to be passed on to someone else, then it's important! [pause]

Let's zero in on what Paul says.

He says, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust..." [pauseeee]

We first see the divine nature of the message, for why else would Paul's teaching be passed on for generations? [pause]

Scattered in Paul's letters is this idea that he received truth from Christ, which he was simply delivering to the saints.³ [pause]

The most clear passage is probably Galatians 1:11-12, which says...

“For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” [pause]

So God spoke through Paul, which is why what Paul taught should be passed on to others. [pauseeee]

Notice also the fixed nature of the message.

Timothy was entrusted to others *what he heard*. [pause]

It's significant that Paul didn't tell Timothy to add in some of his own teaching or words.

He didn't tell Timothy to add in whatever he feels like he hears from God in the future, but only what he has heard from Paul in the past. [pause]

This reminds us that with the apostles dying off, the canon of Scripture was set.

God chose to give us His Word through them, and our task is to simply learn, believe, and pass on that message. [pause]

You see, we don't receive any new revelation from God in our day, but like Timothy, we have an entrusted deposit given to us.

It's that entrusted deposit - the Scriptures - that we hold onto, guard, and pass along. [pause]

We are not truth innovators, we are truth proclaimers.

We don't go looking for God to speak something new in some vision, but we go and look at what God *has* spoken.

We may have to help people to understand the truth in our day, but we never change it. [pauseeee]

The message is a divine message, a fixed message, and a *trustworthy* message.

Timothy was to pass on only what Paul said “in the presence of many witnesses”. [pause]

So he wasn't to pass on Paul's private conversations, but only what was taught publicly by Paul. [pause]

³ See 1 Corinthians 11:23, 15:3, and 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Timothy didn't receive some secret teaching from Paul that only he heard, but it was the well-known, openly spoken message that Paul preached.

Other people could confirm that they heard this teaching from Paul, and would know that Timothy wasn't making anything up.

They could hold Timothy to the standard that Paul set, for he was to hold onto the pattern of sound words that he heard from Paul. *[pause]*

The result would be that the teaching that Timothy would pass on, people could hear it and say, "Yep, that's exactly what Paul taught. It's trustworthy." *[pauseeee]*

Church of Christ, we need a commitment to the truth as delivered!

May we remember its importance!

It's divine, it's fixed, it's trustworthy. *[pause]*

So many churches are getting away from the delivered truth.

They are not teaching what was given to them in the Bible, but moving away from it. *[pauseeee]*

Some think that they need to spice it up or water it down.

Others add to it or subtract from it. *[pause]*

That is not our role!

Our role is to pass on the sacred trust that was given to us, which is the Word of God.

May we hold onto and guard the truth, for the truth is not up for debate. *[pauseeee]*

We don't discover a new message, we don't develop it, we don't deviate or diverge away from it - we *deliver* what we have received.

We look to the written Word of God, and we teach it to others.

That's what Paul calls Timothy to do, and what we will talk about next, for we see...

III. The importance of the mission.

An important message needs to be passed on with care. *[pause]*

A man named, "John Currier was found guilty of murder in 1949 and sentenced to life in prison. Later he was paroled to work on a farm near Nashville, Tennessee.

In 1968, Currier's sentence was terminated, and a letter bearing the good news was sent to him.

But John never saw the letter, nor was he told anything about it, and 10 years went by.

Then a state parole officer learned about Currier's plight, found him, and told him that his sentence had been terminated. He was a free man."⁴ *[pause]*

It does no good for an important message to never get to others. *[pauseeee]*

Think of a family heirloom, like a precious table or something like that.

Your mother gave it to you, but what's the purpose? So that you can also pass it on to your child. *[pause]*

It's received to be passed on, but each generation must properly take care of it, if it is going to continue to be passed on.

That's the sort of idea that Paul is talking about with the truth. *[pauseeee]*

The Word of God is not only to be held onto and guarded, but also passed on.

We don't keep it to ourselves and stay silent, for it's such an important message that all people need to hear!

That's why Paul tells Timothy, "what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to *faithful men*, who will be able to teach others also." *[pauseeee]*

Timothy is told to entrust the truth with *faithful men*. *[pause]*

Timothy must expend his energy on those who prove to be faithful.

Why? Because imagine he uses all of his energy on unfaithful men. *[pause]*

What happens when Timothy leaves the scene?

They will be unfaithful, and the message is not preserved and proclaimed, and his time would have been wasted on unfaithful men.

That's why he must seek out faithful men, who will be faithful to the Word of God. *[pauseeee]*

Now this takes time and effort to invest in relationships, doesn't it?

It takes building relationships, so that we can discover if they are faithful. *[pause]*

Paul invested a lot of time and energy into discipling Timothy to get him to where he was so that he could teach others.

But it was so worth it, for it produced great results. *[pauseeee]*

So these men must be faithful, but also *able to teach*.

⁴ Found at: <https://www.ministry127.com/resources/illustration/delivering-the-most-important-message>. Original source: *The No-Guilt Guide to Witnessing*, George Sweeting.

Paul says, “Entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” *[pause]*

They must be fit, competent, qualified, and capable to teach others.

If they aren’t able to teach others, then it does no good because others won’t be taught. *[pauseeee]*

As Paul nears the end of his life, he’s thinking beyond his day to future generations.

But in order for the truth to impact future generations, it must be passed on from Timothy to others, who can then pass it on to other people. *[pauseee]*

If you notice, there are 4 generations of people in this verse.

Paul, who gave the truth to Timothy, who is to give it to faithful men, who are to give it to others. *[pauseeee]*

So we see here that a church must be preparing and thinking about the future of the faith.

Why? So that more people hear of Christ, but also, so that the truth doesn’t fizzle out with us. *[pause]*

So many churches are either living *in* the past, or living *for* the present.

Those living in the past are continually reminiscing about the good ol’ days, but by only looking backwards, you can’t be prepared for what’s to come. *[pause]*

Other churches are only living in the present, thinking about just this Sunday.

They rarely think about their past, and they never really think about their future, but are only concerned with the *now*.

They are bogged down with petty squabbles over their current preferences and opinions about church life that they never think about their future.

But if your eyes are only ever looking backwards or downwards, then you can’t see forwards. *[pause]*

Certainly there is a time to remember your past, and to concentrate on your present, but Paul shows us that we must also be diligently focused on our future. *[pauseeee]*

If you think about it, we are here thousands of miles away from where Paul and Timothy lived, 2,000 years later, holding onto and believing in the truth because other people entrusted the truth with faithful men, who taught others.

May we continue that faithful “handing off” of the truth, too! *[pause]*

It’s like a relay race, passing the baton to the next runner, who is to faithfully hold onto the baton and pass it on to the next runner. *[pauseeee]*

Are we as a church thinking about the future? *[pause]*

Are we on the lookout for future teachers in our church?

Are there young people who can be taught and trained up to teach in the future? *[pause]*

If you notice a young man with great potential to be a teacher, do you encourage him?

This shouldn't just be the seminary's role, but churches are to recognize and equip young men to be preachers and teachers. *[pause]*

I'm so thankful that my church that I grew up in Lancaster did this for me.

They recognized my potential, let me have chances to preach and teach, and trained me to do it.

In fact, at one point in my church back in Lancaster there were like 6 different men who could have easily stepped into that church in a full-time capacity and preached and taught well. *[pauseeee]*

What if we saw our church as a training center for future Bible teachers? *[pause]*

How could we accomplish this task of entrusting the truth with faithful men, who can teach others also? *[pause]*

Could we support a sound seminary in some way?

Is there a solid seminary or college that we are ready to recommend if there was someone who wanted more training? *[pause]*

What about, what could we as a church *directly* do to train future teachers? *[pause]*

Here's an idea that I've had.

What if we created a pastoral internship position?

We would hire a well-vetted, qualified young man (like a college student), who desires to go into pastoral ministry as our summer intern.

We could give him plenty of opportunities to get experience in ministry, but we could also teach and train him for his future ministry. *[pause]*

That's one way to entrust the truth to faithful men, who can go on and impact other congregations across the U.S. *[pause]*

It would take some financial sacrifice, for we'd pay him for the summer, but maybe we could set aside some of the surplus money that we have from last year to go towards the pastoral internship. *[pause]*

It would take some adjustment, I know, as it's something new.

It would take some sacrifice for some of you, for somebody would have to be willing to provide him with a place to stay for the summer.

But are we willing to make sacrifices to make sure we are entrusting the truth with faithful men, who can teach others? *[pause]*

Maybe we do that idea, or maybe you have something else in mind, but let's get the conversation started.

Let's start thinking of ourselves as a training center for teachers, for that's what God has called us to: entrusting the truth with others who can teach others also. *[pauseeee]*

Why was Paul so concerned with this entrusting task that Timothy ought to do?

As I said earlier, it's so that future generations can hear the truth, but I believe there's another reason.

It's not only for multi-generational reasons, but also for multiplication reasons. *[pause]*

Let's say that Timothy is the only teacher at his church, what's the result?

He can only teach so many people, for he's only one person.

But what happens whenever Timothy has to be out of town, for Paul even asks him to visit him in Rome at the end of the letter?⁵

There needs to be multiple teachers in the church to teach in Timothy's absence, but also to teach more people than he ever could. *[pause]*

If Timothy is the only teacher, he will be burnt out and can only reach a certain amount of people.

But if there are many teachers, the teaching load is shared, and many more people are taught. *[pauseeee]*

I can't be the only teacher here, for I am only one person.

But I'm thankful that there are others here who *can* teach and *do* teach, too.

We have Sunday School teachers, who faithfully teach, but we also have Ed and Dave, who are able to step in and preach for me in my absence.

That's great! *[pause]*

⁵ See 2 Timothy 4:9ff.

But what about more teachers?

What if more of you were trained up to lead Bible studies or Sunday School's?

It shouldn't just be the elders who teach, and it can't just be the pastor's wife, who leads all of the women's Bible studies. *[pause]*

Now certainly the command here for Timothy has a primary application in regards to training men for pastoral ministry, but I believe it can also apply secondarily to other teachers. *[pause]*

Not all of you are able or qualified to be a pastor or elder and preach and teach in front of everyone in the whole church, but could you lead a 1-on-1 Bible study with someone else? *[pause]*

I'm sure there are some of you sitting here today, who could be taught to lead a Bible study or Sunday School, but will you be open to it?

Are you willing to step outside of your comfort zone?

Are you someone who is faithful?

We, as your elders, would love to train you in how to do it well. *[pause]*

Maybe we create training classes for those who are interested in teaching or leading a Bible study.

Or maybe we think of something else.

But imagine that we as your leaders were training more and new teachers all the time, and then those teachers were sent to teach 1-on-1 Bible studies or group Bible studies.

Imagine the impact that would make on our church, as more and more people are able to teach, and as a result, many more people are reached. *[pauseeee]*

Each of you knows something about the Bible, so could you each teach someone what you know?

Fathers are to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and those children grow up to train their own children.⁶

Older women are to teach and train the younger women to love their husbands and children,⁷ and those women get older and train younger women later on.

⁶ A reference to Ephesians 6:4.

⁷ A reference to Titus 2:3-4.

And each of us is called to teach and admonish one another,⁸ who can then teach and admonish others. *[pause]*

That's the importance and impact of the mission of teaching others.

But do you see yourself as a teacher, even if it's something small and to someone who is younger in the faith? *[pauseeee]*

By Christ's strength, we must entrust the truth with others.

This mission of teaching others, who can teach others is so important.

We need to be thinking beyond today, and looking to the future. [pause]

Are we thinking only of our present, or are we thinking of the future of Christianity in Clearfield, in our nation, and in our world?

Are we preparing people to fill our shoes? [pause]

But not only that, are we preparing people to reach others that we may not be able to reach? *[pause]*

More people need to hear the Word, so that means more teachers are needed.

I can certainly lead a Bible study, but the impact will be small, for only a certain amount of people may come.

But imagine if I'm training 5 people to lead 1-on-1 Bible studies with others, and now they go out.

Then imagine later they each train someone else, who can go out and teach others, and it continues and continues.

The teaching just went from 1 person to now 10 plus people and counting because we saw the need to teach others, who can teach others. [pause]

That's the importance of entrusting the truth with faithful people, who can teach others also.

We need a commitment to a ministry of multiplication! [pauseeeee]

We are each to be disciples who make disciples, and teachers who make teachers.

But will we stand up to the task?

We can only do it in the strength that Christ provides, but we must remember how important the message is.

⁸ A reference to Colossians 3:16.

We teach and pass on the amazing truth of the gospel...

That though we were sinners, Christ died for us, so that we could be reconciled to God. *[pause]*

By grace, Christ has saved us, forgiven us, and given us eternal life.

He has called us to live for Him, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and *teaching* them to observe all that He has commanded.⁹ *[pause]*

What a message that we share!

What a calling that we have!

But also, what strength that He provides.

⁹ A reference to Matthew 28:19-20.