

A Call to Faithful Service

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Preacher: Guest: Zach Hilton

[0 : 00] Well good morning. My name is Zach Hilton and it is just truly a privilege to be here. Jenna and I were able to be here one time before, it was last July and as I'm looking around I recognize some faces but I can't always put names to faces so if you would afterwards please come up reintroduce yourself.

I do know Mark. I get to sit next to Mark in class this semester so it's just a privilege to be here. I just have to say I appreciate the songs that you sang and the focus that was placed on Christ's atoning work on the cross.

What a blessing to be able to gather together and sing those truths. The first one we sang was Nothing But the Blood. This is my two-year-old son's favorite song and as he's singing, Oh precious is the flow that makes me white as snow. I just have to, I just pray Lord help him understand those words someday. But I think he was probably singing it for a good 10 or 20 minutes on the way up across the bridge this morning so I was hoping he'd be able to hear it from the back.

Probably he'd get really, really excited. So go ahead and take your copy of the scriptures this morning and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 2.

2 Timothy chapter 2. The text in focus will be verses 1 through 7. While you turn there, I would just ask you to join me in a bit of a thought experiment if you would.

[1 : 30] I want you to imagine that you find out that you have 30 days left to live. Just 30 days. That's not a long time. One month.

And we won't go into the reasons or how you know this, but you find this out and so among other things you decide to sit down and you want to write a letter. Or you type an email perhaps to your closest family, to your friends, those whom you love the most.

And you want to express what's in your heart. What would you say? It's a heavy thought, isn't it? What would you say to those people? What would you want to encourage them with?

What would you share from your heart to your closest family members, to your closest friends? As you think through that, I bring this to your mind because we find Paul in 2 Timothy in a very close situation.

Paul is, as he writes to Timothy, sitting in prison. And he is very aware that the end of his life is near. We find out in chapter 4, Paul says, I've finished the race.

[2 : 39] I've kept the faith. And he's looking forward. He knows unless God miraculously intervenes, Paul is convinced that his life is coming to an end very shortly. And so he writes this letter to his ministry partner, Timothy.

And we see that one of the major concerns throughout this letter that Paul has for Timothy is that Timothy would faithfully persevere in his ministry. We see that all the way through the letter. And so this morning as we work through this paragraph, I just want to ask the question as we begin, what mindset, what attitude must we as followers of Jesus adopt if we are to faithfully persevere in the ministries to which we've been called?

And I can imagine someone objecting here and saying, wait a second, I'm not a minister. Pastors are ministers. Evangelists are ministers. Missionaries are seminary professors. Those are the ministers, right?

I just encourage you to think through the New Testament and the number of ways it describes believers as ministers. Using ministry language of all believers.

Just think of Ephesians chapter 4, verse 11 and 12. Paul says he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers. We say, oh, those are the ministers. But what are they doing?

[3 : 56] They're equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. Or Romans 15, 14. Love this text. I myself am satisfied about you, Paul writes, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.

It's often used in the context of biblical counseling. But the idea is that Paul expects these Christians in the church to be ministering to one another. And so we could go to other passages, all of those one another statements that Paul makes.

Where the New Testament language describes believers as ministers. And so as we look at the text this morning, I recognize not everyone is called to be a pastor, a teacher, a missionary, seminary, professor.

But we are all called to be involved in ministry. In speaking the word of God into the lives of other people. And so I just want to see this morning in 2 Timothy 2 that one of the ways that followers of Jesus demonstrate faithfulness to him is by wholeheartedly and single-mindedly embracing the hard work of Christian ministry.

I'm going to say that again. So go ahead and take your Bible.

[5 : 23] I'm going to be reading from the New American Standard Version this morning. 2 Timothy chapter 2. I'd like to read slowly through verses 1 through 7 and then we'll think through these together. 2 Timothy 2, 1 through 7.

Scripture says this. You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

[6 : 29] Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Would you bow your heads as we open with a word of prayer? Our Father, we are grateful for your word.

Lord, we ask that in the short time we have together this morning that you, by your spirit, would take your word and apply it to our hearts. That we would consider how we might embrace Christian ministry, speaking the word into the lives of others in our own lives, in our day-to-day walk.

And so, Father, I pray that Christ would be honored. I pray that our minds would be stirred as we consider this passage together. May all that is said be to your glory in Jesus' name.

Amen. If you study the pastoral epistles very much at all, you will recognize that the tone of 1 Timothy differs quite a bit from the tone of 2 Timothy.

In 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy and helping him and giving him encouragement and challenging him to deal with the heresies which were rising up within the Ephesian church.

[7 : 38] And so, it's very instructional. In 2 Timothy, however, Paul's tone shifts notably. We see Paul giving Timothy passionate advice as he contemplates the reality of his impending death in Timothy's ongoing ministry.

And it's a very personal letter. The paragraph we read this morning, 2 Timothy 2, 1 through 7, seems to begin and introduce the major section within 2 Timothy that goes all the way to chapter 4, verse 8.

And it's in this section that we find many of these personal exhortations. Several of them are familiar to you, I'm sure. Just think of 2 Timothy 3, verse 14. Paul says, You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.

Or in chapter 4, verse 1. Consider this language at the beginning. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ, who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word.

Be ready in season, out of season. You can pick up Paul's sober, solemn tone, and yet it's hopeful. He looks forward to, this is the God who will judge both the living and the dead. You can see that Paul, as he's considering the end of his life, wants Timothy to really grasp what he's saying.

[9 : 06] And so there's this urgency, this passionate appeal throughout the letter. In the text we've read this morning, we're going to try to follow its structure.

And we're going to see three, we're going to see first of all, three imperatives. What's an imperative? Can I be interactive this morning? Is that okay? Okay, a command, yeah. We're going to see three imperatives or three commands that Paul will give to Timothy.

After that, we're going to see three illustrations that are going to help us tease out the implications of these commands. We'll see that in verses four through six. So three commands, verses one through three. Three illustrations, verses four through six.

And then one final instruction there in verse seven. And that's how we're going to kind of follow this text this morning. But I want to draw your attention back to the opening words. Go back to verse one.

Paul begins, You therefore, my son. My dad always used to tell me, When you see the word therefore, stop and see what it's there for.

[10 : 08] Okay? And I used to kind of laugh at that. But it's pretty wise advice. Because the word therefore is a connecting word. And so we want to look back at chapter one just briefly. What is it that Paul is springing off of at the end of chapter one?

Look back at chapter one, verses 15 through 18. Paul ends the first chapter of this letter by reminding Timothy of two groups. Okay? And there's going to be a contrast here.

Verse 15, Paul says, You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me. That would be Asia Minor. Among whom are Figalus and Hermogenes.

Okay? Now there's a contrast here in verse 16. So in verse 15, there's this group of people in Asia Minor who have turned away from Paul. And then in verse 16, note the contrast here.

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus. And here's how he treated Paul. For he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

[11 : 07] But when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me. The Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day. And you, Timothy, know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

So at the end of chapter 1, Paul sets up this contrast. Here are these people in Asia Minor who have turned away, who have rejected him. And then here's Onesiphorus and his family, his household, that have refreshed Paul.

Chapter 2, then, Paul shifts to the second person. Starts speaking directly to Timothy. You, therefore. So what's the connection? I wonder if Paul is appealing to Timothy that in contrast to those that turned away from him and were ashamed of him, that he expects Timothy, much like Onesiphorus, to exemplify the faithfulness of a true follower of Jesus.

That's how I see the beginning of chapter 2 working. There's this connection. But we also notice the warm personal nature of the letter. Notice the title, The term that Paul uses here could be translated child.

It's a term of endearment. It reflects this close and personal relationship. This will be the fourth and final time that Paul will refer to Timothy as his son. He does so twice in 1 Timothy, twice in 2 Timothy.

[12 : 28] This is the last of those four. Just consider this relationship that Paul and Timothy enjoy, like a spiritual father, a spiritual son.

So as we look through the commands that follow, these are not heavy-handed. These are not harsh. But rather, Paul has Timothy's best in mind.

This relationship, he's considering the fact that Timothy's going to be ongoing in his ministry, that he's going to continue. Paul's not going to be here anymore. And so he, like a spiritual father to a son, wants to encourage and instruct.

Let's look at the first imperative. First command here in verse 2. I'll read it again. You therefore, my son, and here's the command, Be strong. That's how the New American Standard reads. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Is anyone reading an ESV this morning? Okay. A few of you. I think the ESV says, Be strengthened. You notice the subtle difference there? Be strong or be strengthened.

[13 : 32] The reason it translates it that way, and I think it's a good translation, is because the term in the original is a passive verb. It's a passive verb. So in other words, Paul is not saying to Timothy, In order for you to faithfully persevere, you need to kind of just be strong.

Like that's what our culture tells us. Like kind of muster that up within yourself. It's a passive. Be strengthened. In other words, Timothy, put yourself in a position whereby you might be strengthened by someone else.

And the implication, I think, is this is God. This is what we would call a divine passive. That God is the one who is strengthening Timothy as he stands in the sphere of grace, which is in Christ.

Paul has used this sort of empowerment or strength language already. Look back at chapter 1. I think this is really interesting. There's a lot of ties in this first paragraph of chapter 2.

Back to chapter 1. Go to chapter 1, verse 7. Paul has already used this empowerment language. Chapter 1, verse 7.

[14 : 39] For God has not given us a spirit, and for me that should be capital S. I believe this is the Holy Spirit, of timidity, but of what?

Power. It's a word that's related here. These are all related terms. But of power and love and discipline. Now look at verse 8. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.

So we see a spirit of power in verse 7, the power of God in verse 8, and now in chapter 2, verse 1, we have a related term, empowerment term, be strengthened by God.

And so you can see Paul's emphasis here as he begins this letter to Timothy, that he is going to emphasize that Timothy's ability to persevere in his ministry and to be faithful in his ministry as a follower of Jesus and in his unique role is not, it's not going to take place by any strength of his own, but by God's strength.

It is divine strength and divine strength alone that will enable Timothy to faithfully carry out his ministry. So I just want to pause, if I could, just for a moment and just make an application by way of a question.

[16:07] And that is this. This is a question that I've been asking myself as I've studied through this text. Upon whom are you relying for your strength? Upon whom am I relying for my strength as I seek to faithfully persevere in the ministry to which God has called me?

We see Paul emphasize here in verse 1, we're going to see it again in verse 7, that Timothy must recognize that if he is to persevere and if he is to embrace the hard work of ministry, he must be fully dependent on God's grace and on God's strength and on the understanding which only the Lord can provide.

We see that in verse 7. But we can ask ourselves that question and we can say, sure, I depend on God. I rely on God's strength. But what does that look like practically?

What does it look like practically? If I could just give you two thoughts that have challenged me recently. Do we stop and pray before we have that situation to speak with a friend or family member or co-worker?

When an unexpected counseling situation arises, do we even think to stop and ask the Lord for his strength, for his ability to be able to minister the word appropriately?

[17:33] Are we intentional about reading and committing scripture to our minds and to our hearts so that we have truth on our tongues and not just personal opinion when those situations arise?

These are practical. These are basic. These are sort of, you know, Sunday school answers. But this is what relying on God's strength can look like practically. So I've been thinking through this in my own life.

If we do not continually seek the Lord's strength in these ways, through the study of his word, through prayer, I think we betray that we have a pretty high view of our own ability and our own strength.

And so Paul says to Timothy, Be strengthened as you stand in the sphere of grace which is in Christ. Look back at the text with me if you would. I think this first imperative acts as sort of a header for the others.

If I can explain that. The two commands that we'll see next in verses 2 and 3 are going to help us answer the question, what specific tasks or responsibilities does Timothy have in front of him for which he needs divine strength?

[18:42] Okay, so look back at verse 2. So we first see, Paul says, Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The second imperative, second command here. In my notes I've just written, pass along the teaching.

Look at verse 2. Paul writes, The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

I said there's a lot of connections between this paragraph and chapter 1. Can I show you another one? That little word entrust. Go back to chapter 1, verse 13 and 14.

Paul has already used this language previously. Verse 13 of chapter 1, He writes, Retain the standard of sound words which you've heard from me in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us the treasure which has been entrusted to you. So in chapter 1, Paul says, There is a treasure, Timothy, and I take that to be those sound words.

[19:47] That is Christian, the Christian teaching that is represented in Scripture. This has been entrusted to you. Now, chapter 2, verse 2, you are to entrust this to others. The same idea, same expression.

But a question arises when I look at this text. When I look at verse 2. Who are the reliable men that Paul has in mind? And if you pick up different commentaries, you're going to find different answers.

There's not unified agreement on this. Some will say that these men are simply the faithful elders in Ephesus. That Paul is instructing Timothy to identify and pass along the content of the Christian faith to elders in Ephesus.

And that could certainly be involved. But it's interesting here that Paul, when he talks about these men who will be able to teach others, he uses an interesting term there.

Throughout the pastoral epistles, when Paul speaks of elders and their qualifications, he uses a very specific word for their ability to teach. Here, he uses a broader term, which has led many, and I think they're right, to see this is, I think, Paul's broader instruction.

[21 : 03] This could include elders, but I think it probably includes more. I think that Paul here is speaking to Timothy, identify people and disciple them.

That could include elders. I think it probably includes more. Elders and leaders within the church would fit this description. But I don't think Paul's imperative to Timothy is specifically elder focus.

In other words, he's not saying to Timothy, set up a seminary. Rather, teach the Christian faith these sound words and trust them to people in the church.

I think that Paul's words here to Timothy present a pattern that we must prioritize. That is the faithful transmission of the content of the Christian faith from our generation to the next.

At the beginning, I mentioned the hard work of Christian ministry. This is hard work. Discipleship is hard work. Just think of Jesus' words in Matthew 28, 20, often used in missions context, but just think through these words.

[22 : 13] Jesus says, Go therefore, go therefore, and do what? Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Now note this last phrase. Teaching them, this is an ongoing thing, to observe all that I commanded you. So discipleship does not take place in five minutes.

Discipleship does not take place in an hour. Discipleship is an ongoing thing that we are called to be involved in. And so we'll see Matthew 28, verse 20, often used in the context of worldwide missions, and I think that's right, but I think it's notable that Jesus here describes this broad teaching.

Teach them to observe all that I commanded you. And speaking of the nature of discipleship, this is hard work. We need divine strength for this.

I think it's also critical to observe that that sort of discipleship that Paul is commanding Timothy to be involved in is not relegated to Bible colleges, to seminaries, to academic institutions.

[23 : 32] And if you know anything about me, I'm not opposed to that. I said earlier I've been involved in a college or seminary for about eight years now. So I'm not opposed to that. But their existence, the existence of seminaries and colleges, must never become an excuse for us to abandon personal discipleship within our churches.

This is what Paul calls Timothy to. And so I want to pause again for an application, just ask this question. Are you, am I, actively engaged in the hard work of discipleship?

Are we actively engaged in that? If you answer yes, I just want to say praise God, keep going. If our answer is no, then I think we need to reconsider our priorities.

So I was thinking through this text, I was, I was thinking through discipleship, what could possibly be more rewarding, more glorious, more exciting than sharing God's truth with other people, with the goal of their conformity to the image of Christ and the glory of God.

I mean, that's exciting. That is an exciting work, but it's hard work. Something that we are called to as believers of Jesus. And so I encourage you, prayerfully consider, how might you be involved in discipling another person?

[25 : 04] Could be someone within this church. church. Primarily, it starts with your family, perhaps your neighbor or coworker. For those of you who are students, maybe another classmate.

How can you be intentional about sharing God's word? Pastor Jeff mentioned earlier that we must not equate the busyness of life with walking with Jesus.

And I think we could also say we must not equate the busyness of life as it pertains to getting together with other people as discipleship. Like there's an intentionality involved here, teaching one another the word.

So Paul first says to Timothy, be strengthened. Secondly, pass along the teaching. And thirdly, we're going to look at verse three, share in suffering. Look back at the text. Verse three, suffer hardship with me.

Paul writes, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. That term translated suffer hardship. It's one Greek term and it's used only twice in the New Testament. Both of them, both of those occurrences are in 2 Timothy.

[26 : 12] English translations differ on how to translate this term. I've just written down a few examples. The NASB says suffer hardship. The ESV says share in suffering.

The NIV says join with me in suffering. The KJV says endure hardship. So they all kind of grab onto that idea of hardship. But what kind of hardship or suffering does Paul have in mind?

Because when we hear the word suffering, we could think of different categories. Suffering, sickness, natural disaster, poverty.

Are those the things that Paul has in mind? It's interesting. If you look at this term, built into the very middle of it is the Greek word for evil. And so I think a good translation could be something like suffer evil treatment.

Paul, as I mentioned, is writing from prison. And the sort of suffering he has in mind, I believe, is persecution for the faith. This is very tangible to him at this very moment.

[27 : 15] He understands he's about to be killed for the faith and for his service to Jesus. And so I believe he calls Timothy to embrace the suffering of blatant evil, which faithful service to the Lord Jesus often entails.

I think it's important to note that Paul did not seek out opportunities to suffer.

If you read the New Testament, he is regularly suffering for Christ. But he didn't seek these things out. Rather, he understood that those who, as Rob Plummer, he's a New Testament professor, wrote, those who allow the gospel to run its dynamic course in their lives can expect persecution, can expect to suffer.

And so Paul calls Timothy to be so committed to his service for Christ that he would be willing to suffer. As you continue reading through the New Testament, we get just a small glimpse that Timothy one day would experience perhaps a similar sort of suffering that Paul did.

Flip over, if you would, to Hebrews 13. We just get one little line here that I just find intriguing. Hebrews 13, verse 23. The author of Hebrews writes, take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom if he comes soon, I will see you.

[29 : 02] What's the implication? What's the unstated part of that? It seems that Timothy was in prison. And so what Paul is challenging Timothy to embrace here in 2 Timothy, it seems that he would experience that in a very tangible way later on in his ministry.

Look at the end of, back to 2 Timothy 2, look at the end of verse 3. Suffer hardship with me, and then we get this analogy that acts as sort of a springboard into the three illustrations of verses 4 through 6.

Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. It's this theme of single-minded service most poignantly represented by a determined soldier that launches Paul into three illustrations.

And we could take each one of these illustrations apart and look at each of them in detail, but I think that we want to be careful that we don't miss the big idea. That is that all three illustrations present to us a person whose success in their vocation depends on their ability to faithfully persevere in the midst of challenges, in the midst of hardship.

And so we see these three illustrations. Look at verse 4. We have the first one, that of a soldier. Paul writes, There's two verbs here at play.

[30 : 36] The verb entangle and the verb please. Timothy's ability to please his master, to please the one who enlisted him, that is Jesus, is entirely dependent on his ability to avoid entanglement.

And so Paul brings up this picture of a soldier. Now we live in a part of the country that has a very strong military presence.

I know I've been shocked just since moving to the Hampton Roads area in the last two years how many military families I've met. It seems like, at least in Virginia Beach and Norfolk, if you're not a student or if you don't work at the port somehow, you're probably in the military.

So that's, when we hear the word soldier, we have a very specific image in mind, perhaps of an American soldier, a serviceman. But what would Timothy have pictured when Paul said, when Paul compares the faithful servant of the Lord to a soldier?

What would he have pictured? Yeah, probably a Roman soldier. Roman soldiers were known for their discipline, for their strength, for their endurance, for their perseverance.

[31 : 49] They had one goal in mind and that was victory and they would do everything to train so that they could achieve that goal. That's what they're all about. And so I think, as we consider this analogy, it can be sharpened as we think of it in its cultural context of the hard-working, diligent, disciplined Roman soldier who would not allow himself to become entangled because he knew that if he did, he would not be able to achieve his goal.

And, as Paul writes, primarily, please the one who enlisted him. As a soldier is keenly aware of his commanding officer's will and commands, so Timothy, Paul writes, is to be absolutely given over to the will and command of Christ.

That's a high call. That's difficult. And so, again, we go back to verse 1. It requires divine strength if he is going to do this.

So, again, I'd like to just pause for a minute and just ask the question, what entanglements might be keeping you from embracing the hard work of Christian ministry?

This has been a question that my wife and I have been trying to think through in depth this summer. What are those things? Can you identify them? It might be sin. It might not be. I know there have been times in my life when I have been, I've struggled to minister the word to others because I know that if I do, I'm being a hypocrite.

[33 : 26] Maybe some of you have felt that way in the past. And so, that becomes an entanglement that you're not right with the Lord, so you cannot be an effective servant. But it could be things that are not necessarily sin.

And again, back to what Pastor Jeff was saying with the busyness of life. What are those things that are good but not best? Those things that we prioritize in our lives that take the place of ministry, of service for Christ.

It is so, I found this personally, it is so easy to become consumed with those lesser things. Our hearts do wander from Christ.

And we will sometimes fail to even evaluate our lives correctly so that we see busyness or we see activity as service.

things. So what are those things in your life that are acting as entanglements keeping you from embracing this work?

[34 : 45] Look at verse 5 with me if you would. We see the second illustration. Paul now leaves the battlefield and he turns to the arena of athletics.

Look at verse 5. He writes also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

Athletic metaphors are a favorite for Paul. Think of the number of times he writes about maybe a boxer or a runner. 1 Corinthians 9 or Philippians 3 would be good examples of those.

But in this text, Paul's usual theme of discipline and training when he brings up these athletic metaphors kind of takes a backseat and the theme of rule keeping comes to the forefront.

Did you notice that? It says an athlete doesn't win the prize in his given event unless he competes according to the rules.

[35 : 48] And so there's a subtle shift from the soldier illustration away from discipline and training to rule keeping. to understanding and recognizing the boundaries of the given event.

As I think through this and I consider the situation at Ephesus and Paul's relationship with Timothy, I have to wonder if he is thinking of those Ephesian elders.

If you're familiar with 1 Timothy, there had been elders in the church at Ephesus who had defected from the faith and they were teaching heresies. Think back to Acts chapter 20.

Paul is there on the beach with a group of Ephesian elders and they are crying, they're weeping, this is perhaps the last time that they're going to see Paul and he warns them there that there will be those who will rise up among them that will lead away some of the flock.

And we find later that that did happen in Ephesus and perhaps some of those very elders that Paul is speaking with there on the beach in Acts chapter 20 have now defected from the faith.

[36 : 54] So I wonder if as Paul writes to his ministry partner Timothy, he is considering this, this ever-present danger and he is driven to warn Timothy stay within God's rules if you will for ministry.

So we see the soldier, we see the athlete and now the farmer. Look at verse 6. the hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

And so we have this agricultural illustration. First we see the soldier and then we go to the arena of athletics and we end with agriculture. In the American mind, the farmer epitomizes a hard-working individual, right?

In Paul's day, this would have even been more so the case. Because today we have modern farming equipment, we have technology, it's still hard work, but we have the tools that facilitate this.

In Paul's day, imagine how much sweat and hard work and discipline would have gone into bringing a crop up from the ground. So he uses this illustration of the one who ministers.

[38 : 12] Successfully tending, successfully bringing a harvest from the land would have required an immense amount of effort and exertion. So Paul says the farmer should be the first to benefit from his work.

What's that benefit? What is the reward that Paul is speaking of here? Some have taken this to be Paul is saying that ministers should be financially compensated.

And I think there's other passages we could go to that say that, but I don't think that's the emphasis here. I think that Paul as he considers the farmer all of this work going into the ground looking into the future when the crop will come but you can't see it.

You're doing all of this work in the ground but there's no crop while you're doing the work. So this reward I think is something that is yet in the future. I think Paul is giving this illustration to Timothy with an eye to eternity that the faithful minister the one who serves Christ faithfully and perseveres through this hard work may do so with an expectation of a heavenly reward.

And so Paul here I believe is offering hope to Timothy though it might look futile right now but you don't see the growth right now there is reward.

[39 : 36] And so I encourage you as you consider your ministries right now and again I don't know most of you I don't know who you are pouring into in your lives I don't know who you're sharing the word with but Paul offers hope there is reward for those who are faithful.

Look at verse 7 we'll finish with a final instruction. I find this so interesting as he began in verse 1 emphasizing Timothy's dependence on God so he ends in verse 7.

One final instruction consider what I say for the Lord will give you understanding and everything. I think it's likely that as Paul here considers Timothy's ongoing ministry he understands that Timothy is going to struggle to comprehend all of what he's just said.

You know we say hindsight is 20-20. Think with the use of metaphors like the soldier the athlete and the farmer the use of figurative speech there's always that you know kind of ever dangerous opportunity for misinterpretation misapplication and so here Paul says Timothy you even in thinking through these things don't become lifted up and think you're going to figure this out on your own rather the Lord will give you understanding in everything and so in just a few short words Paul encourages Timothy to think about his words to meditate on these things but ultimately to rest in the confidence that it is the Lord and I think by implication through his spirit that will provide the understanding and so I love this chapter 2 verse 1 chapter 2 verse 7 sort of for me act as a frame around this whole paragraph

Timothy in order to faithfully persevere in your ministry you must have a heart that is dependent on God's strength whether it is for strength verse 1 or for understanding verse 7 we are weak and we require God's strength that's instructive for me I think that ought to be instructive for each one of us as we consider who we are ministering to who we are sharing the word with are we relying on God's strength in all of it well I've tried to show this morning throughout this text that Paul's appeal to Timothy is not confined to those in full time ministry this passage does not only apply to pastors or teachers but to all of those who are in the grace of Christ

[42 : 34] Jesus and so as we close I would just remind you of what we began with that one of the ways that followers of Christ demonstrate faithfulness to him is by wholeheartedly and single mindedly embracing the hard work of Christian ministry so what are those practical steps that we can take in God's strength to be intentional about ministering to others what are the things that you can identify in your life even this week that would hinder you from embracing that task may the Lord give us grace and strength as we endeavor to do this for his glory to close with me in a word of prayer our heavenly father I am humbled we consider earlier your holiness and your worthiness that you reign forever as king over all that you are glorious you are powerful and yet you have chosen through your sovereignty to use people to be avenues of your word father I ask that you would help each of us in this room who are followers of Jesus to willingly embrace the hard work of ministry whatever that looks like in our context that we would be intentional about sharing your word with others father would you help us to be humble in this endeavor would you help us to be honest about those things which would keep us from this task and lord ultimately we rely on your strength as we place all of this in your hands in Jesus name amen amen

Thank you.