

## 2 Timothy 2:1-7 – November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### *Deadly Dangers*

JD Farag

Good morning and welcome to our Sunday morning second service. We have two services on Sunday. The first of which is devoted to Bible prophecy. We do our weekly Bible Prophecy Update, and the second service is our sermon, our verse-by-verse study through the Bible. We are currently in the book of 2 Timothy, and our text today is going to be chapter 2, the first 7 verses. We'll encourage you and invite you at this time to turn there if you're not already there.

While you're doing that, I just want to, by way of a reminder, let you know about the new site at JDFarag.org. There is a Forum on that site and quite active and really quite a blessing as well. A challenge for sure but a blessing as well. So, if you haven't already, you might want to check that out at JDFarag. All right.

Let's get to the Word. I'm so looking forward to our study today. If I can ask you to stand if you're able, you can follow along as I read. If not, where you're seated is fine. Beginning in verse 1, chapter 2, 2 Timothy, the Apostle Paul is writing to a young pastor by the name of Timothy. Don't think of him as like a teenager. He's probably, some believe, in his 30's which is still young, and Paul, of course, is at the end of his life.

This is the last letter he's going to write. It's almost like his parting words, and what a better letter to write than to Timothy, who he loves and sees as a son and he even says as much here in verse 1. "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and [verse 2] the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses. Entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others. Join with me [verse 3] in suffering..." Oh, that's what I said. "like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No one serving [verse 4] as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs but rather tries to please his commanding officer. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete will not receive the victor's crown - except by competing according to the rules. The hardworking farmer [verse 6] should be the first to receive a share of the crops." Then verse 7 says this, "Reflect on what I am saying for the Lord will give you insight into all of this."

Let's pray if you would join with me. Thank you, Lord, for Your Word. Ah, Lord, this is life. This is life for us. This is the bread of life, the water of life for hungry and thirsty souls. Lord, we know that you today, as only you can and always do will satiate that hunger and the thirst that we have for you. So, Lord, speak into our lives in and through your Word. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen and Amen. You can be seated. Thank you.

This week, I spent some time in this passage beginning here in chapter 2 and really sought the Lord. I have to confess I struggled a little bit, wrestled a little bit with the Lord concerning what it is that He would have me to talk about. He sort of settled my heart on this matter of deadly dangers. I know that's kind of an ominous title, but it's what I would argue are amongst the deadliest dangers in the life of a Christian.

Would you agree with me that we live in dangerous times, in perilous times? You know this is no time to be playing church. This is not a playground. We're in a battleground, and the battle is raging on, especially in these last days. If you're anything like me, and I suspect that you are, this is what we love about God's Word. It always speaks to wherever you're at in your life. Doesn't matter where you're at in God's Word, it always speaks to where you're at in your life, and what's going on in your life. Such is the case with the text that we have before us today.

I found 5. You might find more but 5 dangers that can be deadly to a Christian, and by deadly, I mean in the spiritual sense. A dead Christian who has no life, no joy, no fire, no nothing. I mean, a "dead man walking" if I could say it like that. I mean, there's just no life. They're just going through the motions. Well, there are these dangers that can take up residence in the life of a Christian, and we're going to look at those today.

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Let's start with the first one in verse 1. This is a killer: Legalism. Here the Apostle Paul tells Timothy that the source of his much-needed strength comes in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. Verse 1, you read verse 1, and you just read past verse 1. But I think to do so is to err greatly because of what Paul is saying here. I realized it might seem like a firm grasp of the obvious, but it's all of grace, not works.

What Paul is saying here could be easily missed because what he's saying here to Timothy is that strength you have in Christ - It comes vis-a-vis grace. That's where the strength comes. That's the source of your strength. Here's what I'm thinking. It has to be because if it's not, absent God's undeserved favor, absent God's grace, we'll be crushed under the weight of our own guilt and condemnation.

If we think that we've somehow deserved God's blessing and favor, then what we've done in effect, and this is what the enemy will try to get us to do, is to move from grace into works. That's the flesh, and that's the worst possible place you can be. Pastor Chuck Smith wrote a book, one of my favorite books in my library. It's titled "Why Grace Changes Everything."

In that book, he draws such a perfect picture comparing a garden to a factory. You're already getting the point here. What's in the factory? Oh, sweat, stress, deadlines, work. What's in the garden? Peace, calm, tranquility. No works, no sweat.

In the Old Testament, I'm struck by the strictness with which the priests would serve in the tabernacle and subsequently in the temple. They were required to cover themselves with a robe that covered all of their flesh. So that when they would step up to offer the sacrifice on the altar, the robe would not come up and expose their flesh because no flesh is going to glory in His presence. It had to be made of cotton, not other fabrics, because there could be no sweat, no works, no flesh. It was a picture of grace. Grace changes everything.

The question becomes this: If you were to characterize your Christian life, would it resemble that of a factory, or would it resemble that of a garden? Because you know what happens in the garden? Things grow. You know what happens in a factory? Things are produced. I had to say it like that just for the effects. We got work to get done. We got deadlines to meet. We got products to produce. Come on. Let's go! That's the factory. Is that what your life's like? Is that what your Christian life resembles?

Let me take it a step further. It's kind of like this. I kind of had a good week last week. After all, it was Thanksgiving, you were grateful for and expressed your thanksgiving to the Lord for His abundant blessings, and certainly, He is a blessing God, abundantly so. It was a pretty good week. Hey,. God's going to be good to me this week. Is that how you live? What about when you have a bad week? Better lay low. What are you talking about? Yeah, because I kind of messed up. Oh, you're not under grace? Well, it sounds like you're under the law.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians Chapter 3:6. He said, "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, speaking of the law, but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. You know the Christian to be most pitied is the Christian that lives under the crushing weight of always trying to earn God's favor.

It doesn't work like that because here's what will happen. You will live under this auspice, and the enemy is right there again. God's angry with you, and he'll build this infrastructure of guilt and condemnation, and no Christian, I don't care how strong you think you are, can bear up under that crushing weight of legalism. It'll kill you. The law kills but the Spirit gives life. It's all of grace.

When I say this to you, I want you to think about this. Ask yourself, do you really believe this? There's absolutely nothing you can do to make God love you less. Let that sink in. Okay, so you had a bad week. Okay, so you blew it. Okay, so you messed up. What? You think God's in heaven going, you did it again. No.

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It's all of grace, and when you live under grace and not under works, it's the grace of God. It's the kindness of God. When you realize that God's not going to just zap you because of grace, ho, that changes everything. See, now, instead of keeping my distance, I'd better lay low. I blew it. No, it's I'm forgiven. I'm forgiven.

What is Grace? We affectionately define it as unmerited favor. I don't think that even begins to scratch the surface of the definition of grace. I think grace by its very nature, as one has said, is not definable. Undefinable is that a word? Let's just say that's a word, undefinable. It's been said that grace is God giving you what you don't deserve, what you have not earned, and mercy is God not giving you what you do deserve. I'll take both, thank you very much.

Ephesians 2:8-9, you know it well. "We are saved by grace through faith." It's the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast, and isn't that the truth when it comes to work. Look at me, oh, highly favored of God. Certainly, you have merited God's favor. Come on. That Christian life is a factory, not a garden. That's not grace. That's works. Works kill, the law kills. Grace, the Holy Spirit gives life.

The second one is - Selfishness. All are all a biggie, but this is a biggie. This is a biggie of biggies. The importance of what Paul says here, again like verse 1, can be easily missed at first read such that it deals with a Christian not being an island to themselves. Stay with me. Let me explain. If we think it's all about self, we become an island to ourselves. Then we become like the Dead Sea in Israel where nothing flows to it or from it or grows in it. It's for this reason that Paul exhorts Timothy to impart and entrust what he's received to others.

I've been talking to the Lord about this example so just bear with me on this. Here's what that looks like, and please know I am speaking of no one here in this church. You guys are just marvelous. I'm talking about other carnal Christians. They go into church. It's all about them, and they sit down. God forbid somebody is not in their seat. That's my seat. Oh. And their body language? Oh, my goodness. All right. Let's get this show on the road. Boy, the worship better be good today. I'm sorry, but there must be a misunderstanding. Oh, is the worship for you?

Here's what you're saying without saying it. Again, I'm not talking about you. These are other Christians. Nobody's folding their arms right now, I can tell you that. They're just sitting there like - All right, bless me. And then the pastor gets up. That's the pastor? What's this guy going to say now and it better not be too long. Oh? You're in the wrong church if you are here. Yeah, you already know. Hey, tell me what I want to hear. Well, I better know the song. I don't know that song. Oh, you don't? Let me teach it to you then. So, here's what happens. That is a sad Christian, isn't it? Again, nobody here. We're talking about those carnal Christians elsewhere. But it's the Christian who says it's all about me.

Do you know that song we sing? I love that song. I hate to ruin it when I do this. It's all about you, Jesus. You liar! No, right? Because it's not all about Jesus. It's all about you, dude. You're thinking, bless me with the worship. Yeah, I want to be able to sing along. I need to know the song. I need to like the song. If I don't like the song? I don't like you.

Do you know what's sad? I won't stay too long on this for what I think might be deemed obvious reasons, but do you know what's sad? We're going to see it later on here in 2 Timothy. This is really heartbreaking, actually, in all seriousness. Churches and pastors have acquiesced to this. Keep it fast. Keep moving. Keep it interesting. Keep it relevant. Worship has got to be really cool, man. Hey, we need effects: lights, smoke machines... I mean, again, sad, but you would think you walked...

Listen, I got out of the world, and I came to Christ to get away from the world and not find the world in the church. I mean, you go to some churches, and you would think you were at a rock concert. I mean, you know when you get older that music gets louder, doesn't it? You know when you're young

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it's like, ho, turn it up! When you get older, like, ho, turn it down! Right? Whoa! Wait a minute. Is this a performance of man, or is this the worship of God?

When we get to heaven, what do you think you're going to be doing? You're going to be worshipping before the throne. Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Holy, holy, holy... Where's the reverence? Where is the Holiness? God. Man-centered and the sermons, man-centered. Five keys to this. Seven secrets to that. What? Wait! Where's that in here? Sounds like a seminar.

Number 3, verses 3-4: Entanglements. Here Paul starts with the first of three illustrations concerning potential dangers to the Christian. This one is having to do with suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Specifically as it relates to not getting entangled with, or if you prefer distracted by the things of this world. We are at war.

You don't have time for these matters. They are inconsequential because we're at war. Yeah, but you say this is a good thing. Fine. It may be a good thing, but if you don't detach yourself from it, deny yourself of it, you'll in effect be caught up in it and distracted, dare I say, derailed by it, and that's dangerous in the life of a Christian.

You think about those who serve in the military. Certainly, those who have been on the battlefield. Don't you find it interesting, by the way, that Paul would say, a good soldier? The implication being that I could be a soldier but not a good one? Yeah. What is a good soldier? A good soldier is one who serves to please his commanding officer. Who's our commanding officer? Come on. This could easily go into a discussion about being a man-pleaser or a God-pleaser.

By the way, back in verse 1, I missed it. Maybe I need to just note it here parenthetically, but did you notice that Paul said to entrust what he had received to reliable men? Notice what he doesn't say. He doesn't say entrust it to gifted and talented people. Ho, look at them - so talented. Let them do it. No, no, reliable, faithful.

On that day, we all long to hear Him say, well done, good and faithful, reliable, servant. It's not going to be well done, good, and productive. That's the factory. He doesn't even say that he's going to say, well done, good and fruitful. No. Just reliable, faithful, dependable. If I'm entangled by and distracted with all of these other things, how can I be reliable and dependable?

Verse 4, Number 4, this is again another biggie of biggies: Dishonesty. Here Paul goes from the illustration of a good soldier to that of an athlete. It's interesting because you would think he would talk about the perseverance or the endurance of the athlete running the race to receive the crown, but he doesn't. Again, you could miss it at first read. He actually illustrates with this athlete concerning the rules. He says that if this athlete doesn't go according to the rules, they're disqualified. What's he saying? Oh.

Picture this with me, and this is just the way my mind is wired. I know they have clinical terms for this. But unless you have a better one, you can tell me afterward, right? So, you've got this runner in a race. Let's say it's at the Olympics. If we are going to go, let's just go big or go home. Okay, you're at the Olympics. What do they have the 100-yard dash? You're watching these athletes. I mean, they've been training all their lives for this moment.

There they are at the starting line, right? The gun goes off, and, poof, out of the chute, they go. They start running and then this one guy, all of a sudden, cuts through the track to get to the... What is he doing? He's breaking the rules. I know. He's disqualified. That's the point! He's trying to take a shortcut He's cheating. That's dishonest

That's what Paul is talking about. He's talking about the paramount importance of integrity and purity in the life of a Christian. Do you know what the rule book is? It's right here. It's right here. This

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is the rule book. Are we running the race we call the Christian life, according to the Word? This is going to actually dovetail into our last one that I want to spend the remainder of our time on.

Oh, how I wish I could stand before you today and say to you that there are shortcuts in the Christian life, but there isn't. Doesn't that just, I mean, make our flesh salivate just the thought of it? Hey, here's an easier way. Really? How? I'll take it. Where do I sign? Sold. Laziness.

Spiritual Laziness: This last one is perhaps one of the most important of all because here, Paul says, and I want you to notice the keyword here, the hardworking farmer, not just a farmer. No, this is a hardworking farmer. I'll just tell you, having grown up in a small farm town, Tekoa, Washington, wheat, lentils. A really small-town farm, farm town - those farmers work hard. Oh, wow, they are hard workers, those farmers. They have to be, or they are not going to survive, let alone thrive.

Here Paul goes from a good soldier to an honest athlete going according to the rules, now to a hardworking farmer. I don't know if it's possible to overstate the importance of this, but spiritual laziness in the life of a Christian is dangerous and perilous. You know that Proverb, we always understand it and see it and rightfully so in the context of material labor, but all hard work leads to profit but mere talk only to poverty. You know the Proverb, right?

Have you ever seen that in the spiritual sense? It presupposes that one knows that the Christian life is hard work. It's not for wimps. The Christian life requires both diligence and vigilance. It's hard. I want to draw your attention to verse 7. This, to me, just seems to sum it all up. Everything that heretofore in the first 6 verses, the Apostle Paul is writing...

Think of it this way, he's pouring out his heart to Timothy, whom he loves as a son. He knows that his days are numbered. It's not going to be long before he's martyred, and he will be. His parting words to Timothy because he knows that Timothy... How do you think Timothy receives this? Oh, I know he's crushed. The Apostle Paul was a father. He fathered him in the faith.

Now it's not going to be long before I'm not going to have him anymore. He wants to prepare me for that which is prepared for me, and he's telling me, warning me, really. These are the things that you need to do. These are the things you need to avoid because they are dangerous.

You could flip every single one of these that we've looked at around the other way, and you've got... You talk about grace instead of legalism. Selflessness instead of selfishness. How about being entangled? I mean so committed, undivided, unflinching loyalty. Nothing moves me. Nothing distracts me. Nothing shakes me. Nothing fazes me. My eyes on the prize. Oh, what about this? Not interested.

How about the good soldier? Probably should have spent a little bit more time on that. You'd be hard-pressed to hear a sermon on suffering. Right? That's not going to have a draw is it? I mean, what if I titled the sermon, "How to be a Good Suffering Soldier?" Would you look at the time? What day is that? Too bad. Busy that day.

In verse 7, Paul writes, "Reflect on what I am saying. For the Lord will give you insight into all of this." I have to confess that this is a hard one for me personally. I'm just being open with you. I hope it doesn't make you uncomfortable. I hope you don't see me differently. This is a struggle for me, and I'll explain what I mean.

Quieting my very busy life and just listening and reflecting and thinking and praying for insight doesn't come easy. I think if we're honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that our lives are just loud and busy. There are so many things clamoring for our attention. It's like we're seeing in the song of Solomon. It's just so poetic and magnificent. Come away. Come away. Just get away. Come with me. Come away with me. There are some things I want to tell you.

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There are some things I want to show you and speak to you about, but I can't because the volume of your life is just turned up so loud. When I speak, I speak in that still small voice of the Holy Spirit. I'm not going to compete with the other voices. I'm not going to turn up my volume. No, you've got to turn down that volume if you want to hear me. You need to get quiet.

We live in a day and age... I'm not going to start in on social media. Though I could, and you know I could, but I won't. But it's as one said so eloquently, it's that solitude, that simplicity, and that silence. It's not easy, is it? I'm confessing. I'm not going to stand before you. I mean, God's not going to let me get away with it anyway. Come off like, hey... Are you kidding me? There'd be a lightning bolt behind me in a second if I tried that.

It's hard work to get quiet. You're going to have to work at it. I just wonder how many times the Lord had fresh insight, valuable insight, that was so important for me in my life at that time that I missed because I didn't reflect on and get quiet with the Lord. I do have to say that I've tried. I'm not talking about praying. Praying is a different matter and maybe a different topic for another time. I find that this works for me [getting quiet with the Lord]. Maybe it'll work for you if you want to try it.

I do my best praying when I'm walking. I'm walking and talking with the Lord. That's my prayer time, my best prayer times. I have a prayer journal. I have a prayer list. I have all of that. I pray, but when I'm just walking, and I'm just talking with the Lord. People think I've lost it.

I have, but I try to do it in the quietness of my own office - just talking to the Lord. Yeah, thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Baba. Lord, I've got to deal with this, and you can help me with that, right? Yeah, I know you will. You always do. You're so faithful. Thank you, Lord, so much. Just talking...

By the way, prayer is not a monologue. It's a dialogue. I know it's a corny illustration, but, again, if you got a better one, let me know. You know the phone? Oh, I can't use that anymore. That's old. That's antiquated. Now it's the cell phone. Actually, it's the airpods, I guess. That's God speaking to you, and then the speaker on the phone is you praying to God. It's back and forth.

How does God speak? Oh, you'll recognize his voice. You know the sheep know the shepherd's voice when he speaks, and he'll always speak first and foremost through his Word. If you think you're hearing God say something to you and it doesn't match up? Guess what? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that ain't the Lord.

I don't know how else to say it. The truth of the matter is that it's so much easier just to be lazy spiritually and make no mistake about it. The enemy is right there to dish up 1000 times a day, in 1000 different ways, anything that you want. Oh, check your email, check Instagram. I told you I wouldn't do that, but I just did so might as well - Twitter, Facebook, all of the above.

Okay, and I speak of myself when I say this as convicting as it is. I wonder if we would but spend a quarter, 25%, of the time with the Lord, quiet before the Lord, 25% of the time that we spend texting and on social media - just 25%. I'm so convicted right now. You'd better be too. Don't look at me all smug and spiritual. Whoa! Speak for yourself, Pastor. Man, where's the victory in your life? I know! It's hard!

Do you know what happens when we opt for the easy? We pay a heavy price in our Christian lives - especially in these last days. Today's update was rather intense. Some of you are saying, what are you talking about? Every update is intense. I know because things were really intense right now. Oh, my goodness. This last week? You would think Thanksgiving would be kind of low-key. Hey, it's Thanksgiving. Are you kidding me?

Do you know how much happened just this last week? I'm thinking to myself, Lord, with what's happening and with what's coming? And if I'm not spending time with you? Man, when, not if it

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comes, and it will, when it hits, I'm going to be ill-prepared. How am I going to survive it? Let alone thrive in it?

I want to close with a parable that Jesus taught in Matthew 7. It's not in my notes, but I think the Holy Spirit would have me talk about it in closing. We've talked about it on many occasions, even recently, but I think maybe it's apropos and germane to our understanding today.

It's the parable of the two builders. Remember that one? Matthew 7, so Jesus is comparing these two builders and apparently had a lot in common. They're both going to build a house. They both must be close in proximity, one to the other because it seems that they both went to the same church because they both heard the words of Christ.

There was one difference: The one builder built his house on the sand, but the other builder built his house on the rock. So when, not if, the storm hit and the storm will hit the house that was built on the sand came crashing down. Jesus is careful to very specifically say, and when it came crashing down, great was that crash. Interesting. Contrast it with the other builder who built his house on the rock. Storm hits - Oh, trade winds are up. I'm saved. Why? Because I'm on the rock. Nothing's going to move me. I stand strong.

Many years ago, this was in our "BC" days. Not before Christ, before children. I'm so sorry about that, but you get the point - when you could travel. There, that's a good save. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it. Before children, we would drive to Cannon Beach, Oregon, and we would stay at a Christian conference center there. They would bring in speakers from all over. It was such a great time.

We would go out there to the beach, and there on the beach, in Cannon Beach, is what they called Haystack Rock. Just right there, man, in the water. Depending on the tide, I mean, low tide you get a little bit closer to it, high tide you're further away from it. But here, the waves are crashing into that rock, and you have these birds on that rock. If you look close enough, they are not at all concerned about the storm or the waves that are crashing up against that rock. Do you know what they're doing? They're singing to their creator because they're on the rock. Nothing moves them. Nothing fazes them because they're on the rock.

Okay, so what was the difference then? What's the point of the parable? What's the difference between the sand and the rock? Oh. The one who built on the sand was the one who did not put into practice the words of Christ that he heard. The one that built his house on the rock didn't fall or crash because he did put into practice the words of Christ, and that's what made the difference.

Does this sound a little bit like what James said about being merely a hearer of God's word and not a doer of God's word? I mean, he even takes it further and says the one who is only a hearer of God's Word is like someone who looks at themselves in the mirror. Lord, come quickly. That's my lot every morning. Sorry.

You look at yourself in the mirror, and what happens when you see yourself in the mirror? You make adjustments. There's hair where it shouldn't be. Hair where it used to be - it's not there anymore, and so we shave, we comb, we brush, we wash, right?

What's James saying? I know this is a little over the top, but you get the point, right? James is saying that's what God's Word is like. If I'm just a hearer of God's Word, I'm looking at myself, and I'm seeing myself as in my true condition. By the way, this is before apps that now can make you look... In fact, I need one of those apps to give me more hair and look younger, but, man, they make you look so nice. I'm like, who is that? Oh, what an app. They have an app for that now.

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But let's get back to God's Word. There's no app for that in God's Word because you're looking at God's Word, and ho! I'd better do, DO, something about that. You are a doer of God's Word. I'm a doer of God's Word. I put into practice the words of Christ.

Okay, this will be the last closing. I know I said I was going to already close, but you know what? Again, I'm just thinking about the update today. Man, I've been studying and teaching Bible prophecy for many, many years. I'm looking at this, and I have to step back because it's almost surreal because all of these things that I've been talking about and teaching about all of these years - they're happening! They are happening now. We are so close.

We are so close. I'm telling you Jesus is coming, but that doesn't mean it's not going to get really hard before he does. We could go through infinitely worse difficulties and even persecution, by the way, before the rapture. You'd better have that house of your Christian life built on the rock, or you won't stand.

Please stand, and we'll pray. Thank you, Lord. Lord, I've done my best. I want to be found faithful, rightly dividing your Word, and teaching and preaching. Lord, I don't think there's one of us here that doesn't want to be pleasing to you as our commanding officer. I don't think there's one of us here that doesn't want to build our house on the solid rock. You are the rock. Jesus, you're the rock.

Lord, I pray that you will take these things that we've looked at here today in your Word and as only you can begin that process by the Holy Spirit of building it into our lives and applying it to our lives.

Lord, thank you. We love you so much.

In Jesus' Amen.