

All right, let's open up our Bibles. And turn to Second Timothy, chapter two. After our study today, we will observe communion with it being the first Sunday of the month. But first, we're going to continue our study through the last letter that Paul wrote to Timothy. And to keep it simple, we've outlined this letter with the first two chapters. Their encouragements or exhortations to Timothy, and the second section would be chapters three and four. Paul lays out the difficulties and the challenges that lie ahead. Now when Paul wrote to Timothy around 65 AD, the church was being severely persecuted and in fact, it got so bad that a lot of people walked away from their faith and the courage that the church used to show when she was facing challenges started to fade away. And the Apostle Paul had been arrested and he was sentenced to death. And according to church tradition, he would be beheaded by Caesar Nero. Shortly after this letter. And so he writes this final letter in the consciousness that his life is nearly over. And so young Timothy, he is being called upon to take his place. We also learned in chapter 1 that God had uniquely gifted Timothy, and Paul was reminding him to stir up the gift that God had given him. The fear of man could have easily brought a snare to Timothy, and because of that, Paul reminded him, God has not given you a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and a sound mind. We learned that Timothy had a genuine faith and trust in the Lord, and that faith was now being put to the test. And this young pastor had a decision to make. Would he be ashamed of the gospel during these difficult times? Or would he stand for the gospel? Would he guard that which has been committed to him by the Holy Spirit? And so we can only imagine the mounting pressure and the spiritual warfare that surrounded Timothy at this time. It would have been easy for him to become weary and weak in his work for the Lord. And remember that Paul reminded Timothy of the spiritual desertion of former followers of Christ in chapter one, verse 15, Paul says that all those in Asia have turned away from me. And so that is why Paul continues to write in chapter 2, chapter 2, verse one, you therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses. Commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. And so, Paul, he urges Timothy to resist the trend of the defectors in Asia and instead follow the example of Nicephorus there at the end of chapter 1, who stood out as a positive exception. And so Paul tells Timothy, you can only endure if your strength is found in the grace of Christ Jesus. And so Paul doesn't tell Timothy to simply be a man or be strong. Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and that is of no help. Another phrase, perhaps you've heard it. It's also of no help is that God helps those who help themselves. That is found nowhere in the Bible, and in fact, it actually originates from ancient Greek fables. And Benjamin Franklin was the one who popularized it in his Poor Richard's Almanac. But Paul tells Timothy to be inwardly strengthened by the grace from Christ. It is the grace that Christ will give us and empower us,

and it empowers all these exhortations and encouragements in chapter 2. And so grace, the unmerited favor of God towards humanity. The foundational concept in Christian theology. It's the basis for our salvation. It's the source of strength. The guide for holy living. Through grace. God extends his love and mercy, inviting anyone and everyone to partake in the eternal life through Jesus Christ. So Paul is telling Timothy, go on by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, not by your own strength. The same is true for you and I today. Christians who want to make an eternal difference in this world are those who learn to rely upon God's strength and not their own. Major W Ian Thomas says that the Christian life is simply this the life that Jesus lived. Then being lived now by him in me. And then in verse 2, we see the golden rule in growing a church is discipleship. And here at Parkland Chapel, one of our distinctives is organic discipleship. And we don't stick to a formal program, but we're inspired by Jesus's call to go and make disciples there. In Matthew chapter 28. And so we encourage our people to connect with their communities, your sphere of influence, through your work, your hobbies, daily life, sharing experiences through meals, sporting events, fishing, pickleball, Bible study to help each other grow spiritually and Mike. He said this in the past that the meaningless things can point to the meaningful, and so the heart of discipleship at Parkland Chapel is all about building strong relationships. And here Paul is telling Timothy to win or to disciple a few faithful men to Jesus, and that word disciple means learner. And every Christian should be learning and growing in Christ. Yet the disciples simply doesn't just remain a learner. The learner should eventually become a teacher. Psalm 145, verse four I have it up there for you. It says that one generation shall praise your works to another to declare your mighty acts. It is the responsibility of one generation to pass on to the next what they have received, what's been imparted by way of the Word of God. And it's been said that Christianity is always one generation away from extinction. So my question to you this morning is who are you discipling right now? And I would even say outside of immediate family, who are you imparting God's truth to? That which you have received? Who are you passing that on to? Who are you discipling? You should have a Paul in your life as well. Someone who is investing in you and teaching you what they know. And then you should have a Timothy in your life that you're passing these truths onto. And yet, when we grow through this process of discipleship, Christians encounter hardships. The enemy will attack. In this means, as disciples, we need to cultivate endurance. And in the next verses, Paul uses three analogies to help add fortitude to our faith. In verse three, you therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And so we just discussed discipleship. And because I'm being mentored and disciplined by pastor Mike. I can't help but reflect on the soldier

analogy presented in these verses, and it causes me to wonder. Why does the military plant trees every year? To grow the infantry? This is Mike's fault. This isn't mine, okay? He's discipling me. This is just simply what happens. Why did the optometrist set his clock to military time? To see 2020. That's a guy I'm discipling over there, by the way. Why are there no knock knock jokes about the American military? Because freedom rings, baby. So to inspire Timothy for faithfulness and ministry, Paul doesn't use bad dad jokes. Instead, he uses three simple but powerful images, beginning with the soldier. And what Paul is getting at is that warfare is full time. It's a 24 over seven preoccupation. When you're fighting for survival and the freedom of your loved ones. As a soldier, you don't have time to mow the lawn or go to the Cardinals game. You never see a soldier going to battle bringing a floatie for the float trip. The soldier's attention is totally directed towards the battle. Now don't hear what I'm not saying. This does not mean that Christians should neglect family time or healthy vacation time. Paul. He's speaking of a mindset and a mission that as soldiers for Christ, we should live with the awareness that there is a war going on. And as Christians, we are in a spiritual battle. And one of the easiest ways to get caught off guard in the battle is by not even realizing that you are in one. And so Paul is saying, don't let yourself get distracted with the secular concerns. Of course we got to go to work. We have families to take care of. We need to be good stewards of what God has given us. And I do believe that God wants us to enjoy this life, but we can't as soldiers, let that stuff take our eyes off of the battle. And so we need to develop a wartime mentality. Life is too short. Eternity is at stake. We need to put first things first, like a dedicated soldier, and so that we may please Jesus, who enlisted us as his soldiers. Like what Robert Moffat said, we will have all eternity to celebrate our victories, but only one short hour before sunset in which to win them. So we are to be a good soldier. Verse five. And also, if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. And one name sticks out to me. Lance Armstrong, the former professional road racing cyclist, makes me think. Has there ever been a bigger fall from grace? This dude was stripped of seven tour de France titles from 1999 to 2005. He was given a lifetime ban from competing in cycling in 2012 and after years of denying doping allegations, Armstrong publicly admitted to using performance enhancing drugs. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey in January of 2013, Lance Armstrong's legacy in cycling was irrevocably tarnished because he didn't follow the rules. He will forever be. This stigma of shame. So what if we achieve a moment of glory only to be disqualified afterwards? And the same is true spiritually in the Christian life. The end never justifies the means. When a Christian shortcuts or finds loopholes or uses manipulation to achieve it becomes a tainted victory. This may include the temptation to compromise our biblical truths for cultural acceptance. Or how close

to the line can I get and still be a Christian? Some people might even say, how far over the line can I go and still be considered a Christian? The allure of power and influence, the pressure to achieve by worldly standards. So for an athlete's effort to be meaningful, they must play by the rules. And similarly, Christians are called to walk in godliness according to God's Word. This isn't about rule keeping for salvation, but about our desire to honor God's truth without shortcuts. And so our ambition to serve God should align with his standards. God's work needs to be done God's way. In verse six. The hard working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. So in other words, the farmer has to eat from the harvest to sustain his strength as he works. And so we too, as we minister, serve the Lord. We also need to be nourished by the Lord. If we are always putting out spiritually and never taking in, we will eventually dry up. Paul is saying, the farmer who is overworked and underfed, will be a dead farmer. A dead farmer can't feed anyone, and likewise, the Christian. And so, as God's servants, we need to eat from what we feed others. We need to eat our own feed. And most of you probably flown on an airplane and have heard the the safety instructions before takeoff. You're instructed to put on your own mask first before assisting others. It's not selfish, it's how you save both yourself and then others. And the same is true. To help others learn spiritually. Paul tells this to Timothy back in first Timothy chapter 4 verse 16. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine, and continue in them. For in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you. And so if you're going to share spiritually with other people, you better be taking in spiritually yourself, or you'll have nothing to pour out. You'll have nothing to sustain you. Which amplifies the importance of time spent with the Lord in prayer, Bible reading, meditating upon his word, even Jesus did this in his life. He was recorded as going out early in the morning to spend time with his father. So in a way, when we don't, are we saying that we're better than Jesus? Can we do this without his power? We need to spend time with the Lord. And then Paul wraps up these analogies in verse 7. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evil doer, even to the point of chains. But the Word of God is not chained. My friends, you can chain the messenger, but you cannot contain or chain the message of God. And it's been said of the Bible. It outlives it out, loves it, outreaches it, outranks it, outruns all other books. It's alive, it's living, it's active, it's supernatural. This is God's revelation to us. You can't hold down the truths found in God's Word. In verse ten. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. And so Paul says that I can endure this persecution and hard times that I go through, because my struggles might help others hear the gospel and find Jesus. And the same is true for you and I. The

struggles and hardships that we go through, we can actually use that time to redeem it and bring others who might be struggling with the same thing and point them towards the Lord. And this is even made more meaningful because Jesus's own sufferings made it possible for anyone to be saved by the gospel message that we preach in the first place. So his sufferings make our sufferings worthwhile. Now, before we read verse 11, we're going to see that this is a faithful saying, which is one of several such faithful sayings in Paul's pastoral letters. There are actually three other ones there in first Timothy chapter 1, verse 15, chapter 4, verse 9, and in the book of Titus, chapter 3, verse 8. So three other faithful sayings. It's also cool. I think, that these faithful sayings were actual liturgies used in the worship of the early church. And so the church would recite these declarations of faith as reminders of vital truths. And so we actually get a taste now of the earliest Christian worship. And they would speak in unison in verse 11. This is a faithful saying, for if we died with him, we shall also live with him. If we endure, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot deny himself. So each of these statements taught an essential truth on which these early Christians lived their lives. Notice the positive reminders. If we if we die, we will live. Jesus says, he who finds his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for my sake will find it. In other words, when we trust in the crucified Christ, who put an end to our sin, in turn he gives us new lives spiritually and practically. So eternal life with Christ begins today. It begins now in Christ. Then he says this, which blows my mind. If we endure, we will reign. If we endure hardship. Now. Knowing that our faith will actually earn for us authority in God's kingdom one day. And then there are two negative reminders. If we deny him, he will deny us. If a man denies Christ, the Lord has no other choice. He will say of you, I never knew you. Depart from me. And then the last line in the liturgy can be misinterpreted. He says, if we are faithless, he remains faithful. He cannot deny himself. Many people use this to gloss over their own faithlessness. They might think, even if I stop having faith in Jesus, he's going to remain faithful to me. But that's not what Paul says here. If you are faithless, God remains faithful, but not to a faithless person. Instead, he is true to His word. Salvation is by grace through faith. So without faith, no exceptions are made. God must remain true to himself. And while his faithfulness is new every morning, for believers, this text serves as a warning for those in persistent unfaithfulness. This isn't a comfort. This is a warning. In verse 14. Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words, to no profit to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness, and their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort who have strayed concerning the truth,

saying that the resurrection is already past, and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless, in verse 19, the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal. The Lord knows those who are his, and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Here Paul demands Timothy to rightly divide the word of truth in that phrase. Rightly dividing means to cut straight. The Greek word was used to describe a farmer in the fields plowing a straight furrow, or a carpenter cutting a board at an exact angle. You don't want to cut your ankle while you're cutting a board. That would be really bad. But it's also used of a tentmaker learning to cut the cloth straight. And if you remember, that was Paul's trade. He was a tent maker, and I find this encouraging because we can use the careers and jobs and talents that God has placed us in to point others to Jesus. We just comes to my mind is an electrician. Make sure that things light up. Well, as Christians we are called to be the light of the world. If you're in construction or concrete, you're pouring the foundation for a building. Christ is the foundation for our lives and so God, he can allow our careers and jobs that we have to point back to him. And so Timothy must preach the word carefully and clearly to help the hearers stay on the path of life. And we all need to be diligent in our interpretation of God's Word. You have to use the whole Bible to explain the whole Bible. You can't just base an interpretation off of one verse and run with it. Exactness is required here. A haphazard or sloppy approach is an insult and can even be dangerous. And carpenters have a slogan to measure twice and cut once. I learned this the hard way. You see, as a church, we go down to Mexico once a year with the youth to build a house for a family in need, and it's through this organization called Casa Pro Cristo Houses for Christ. Well, two years ago we went down on a scouting trip for the church just to see how everything goes and if this is the right fit for us and for me, this was my first time doing anything construction related in my life. It was Christopher Wilkerson who was teaching me how to even use a tape measure for the first time at the age of 26. Because I grew up and I learned how to put a basketball through a hoop, and I learned that quite well. Construction, not so much. And so one day we're working on the walls for this building, and I'm on cutting cutting duty for a little bit. And so these walls, we have to cut these two by fours to the exact length. And I get on the miter saw and just start chopping away. And I only cut for one wall. And I cut the top board in the bottom board. And me and the crew, we start nailing the boards together and we finish the wall, but the bottom board was shorter than the top. And our leader asks in front of everybody asks me, how many times did you cut? Or how many times did you measure before you cut? I said, one time on a 26 year old guy. I know these things. I know what I'm doing. And turns out I was dead wrong. And our leader said to measure twice and cut once. And so after that, our group had to take apart the whole wall, start all over, and to say the least, that was one of the

most humbling moments in my life, because everybody else was a construction worker at another church. And so I was laughed at the rest of the week, and I was not allowed back on the miter saw. Because, you see, the carpenter is to cut only one time after he makes the precise measurements, the slightest slip or miscalculation can produce disaster not only for himself, but the team involved. And the same is true if we misinterpret the Word of God. And so Paul, he warns Timothy, don't have quarrels over words. He urges him to present himself to God as an unashamed workman who rightly divides the word of truth. And then he warns, warns Paul, about empty chatter and idle babbling, which is something Paul actually alludes to eight or so times in these pastoral epistles in first Timothy, second Timothy and Titus, he says, avoid godless ideas. He says that eight times through these three letters. Avoid the idle talk, the godless ideas. And he references the unrighteous hymenaeus and philetus as an example. By the way, this is Hymenaeus second time being used as a negative. He doesn't get called out once, but twice. Back in first Timothy chapter 1, verse 20, I think Paul is saying that this guy is an idiot. Don't follow his example. These false teachers were leading others down the wrong path by denying a future bodily resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is no small thing. That's the foundation to our faith. According to First Corinthians, if Christ hasn't been resurrected, our faith is for nothing. That's what these guys were spreading, these false lies. Paul says false teaching is deadly and it spreads like cancer. This is different from the modern world view today of the age of tolerance and relativism. Whatever is true for you may not be true for me. Well, Paul says there is a true path. There is a false path. There is right and there is wrong. There is a Mark you can hit. There is a mark you can miss, and there is a truth that can nourish and provide life. And there's falsehood that kills. And then verse 20. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel of honor, sanctified and useful for the master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But here it is again. Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, not just some, but all able to teach patient in humility, correcting those who are in opposition. If God perhaps will grant them repentance so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will. And so we have to keep in mind that this chapter, this letter, it's significant. It's a call that was originally addressed to a pastor, not necessarily the whole church. And it's relevant, though, for all Christians. He's calling Timothy to be a teacher, to rightly divide the word of truth. But for Christians, we do have to teach in some capacity. While that not might be

you preaching and teaching up here on Sunday mornings, not everyone's called to teach the church publicly, but discipleship and investing in others is for everybody. Think about it. The disciples of Christ. What did they do? They just received the bread and fish from Jesus and they distributed it to others. So discipleship is simply sharing what you have received and passing that along. And so this is what believers were called to do to reproduce ourselves, to pass on what we've learned, and to be an effective disciple who makes disciples. We have to clean ourselves. Use some of that Holy Spirit Old Spice, and cleanse yourself from the latter. I don't know about you, but I want to be a vessel of honor, useful for the master. So I need to lather up. Some of y'all probably haven't showered in a while. And Paul spoke about a cleansing that isn't just something God does for us, as we just sit there passively. This is a self-cleansing for service that goes beyond a general cleansing for sin. This is an aspect of cleansing which God looks for us to do. He invites us with the participation of our own will and effort. Not that it's a work apart from God, but it is a work that awaits our will and effort. For the text says, if anyone cleanses himself. And so what are we to do? How do we cleanse ourselves? We flee from youthful passions and pursue Jesus. Effective disciples must avoid foolish controversies, controversies. Avoid godless ideas. Cleansing isn't just about avoiding negative influences. It's also about actively seeking the positive. And you may have heard the saying, I don't smoke or chew or go with those who do. It's easy for anyone to stay away from the bad things. You can stay away from all that and not be a Christian. But the true challenge lies in pursuing the good things of Christ. That's where our faith truly comes to life, and our Christian journey becomes real. So there are definitely things we need to avoid, but there are also things we need to be chasing after to separate unto Christ. And Paul says, righteousness, faith, love, peace to those who call out on the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. And cleansing also extends to how we treat others. So to be cleansed, we must do everything we can to be right in our personal relationships with others. And Paul says as much depends on you. Live peaceably with all men. So as disciples, we need to calmly share the truth with those who disagree with us. And Paul wraps up by advising us to approach our opponents with kindness and patience, hoping that they might come to repentance. And so, as we come to the close of this chapter. And the challenges from Paul to his young pastor Timothy and to us as disciples today, the challenge to endure hardships like a soldier, to play by the rules, like an athlete, to work hard as a farmer. The challenge to be an unashamed workman, rightly dividing the Word of God to cleanse ourselves as honorable vessels, and then to be a servant of the Lord. We're told we have to be kind to people. Stink. I don't know about you, but for me, all these challenges in this chapter makes me want to cry out, as Paul did in Second Corinthians, who was qualified for such a task. In other words, who the heck can do this? Who is

sufficient for these things? And while we fail at these tasks, we should take to heart that the fact is there is one who fulfilled them all. And in him and through him we can live out these exhortations faithfully. And to me this is beautiful, because it seems that Paul puts his pen down after chapter 2 and takes a moment and turns our attention to Christ, which is fitting as we head into our time of communion. After this, as we remember and meditate on who Christ is and what he has done for us. My friends, this chapter is all Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate soldier. He was engaged in the greatest spiritual battle of all time, and he was victorious. We now have that victory. Jesus, the ultimate athlete, played by all the rules. He fulfilled every single rule written in the Old Testament. Christ came to fulfill the law. He is the hard working farmer. He provides your needs and minds so that we can feed others. He is the ultimate unashamed workman. He perfectly taught God's Word. In fact, John's Gospel declares Jesus to be the Word of God incarnate. He made it. Of course he knows it. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. Jesus, the ultimate honorable vessel. They found in him no spot or blemish. He was set apart for the occasion for rescuing sinners. You and me. And it's because of his perfect fulfillment of God's righteousness requirements and his substitutionary death for sinners that we could be made righteous and are given power to live out his character. He is the ultimate servant. He is portrayed as meek and majestic in The Great Servant Songs of Isaiah, the Suffering servant endured flogging of evil men and the mocking of sinners. He went to the cross, led like a sheep to the slaughter, so that we didn't have to. The Lord's servant was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. He bore the sin of the world. He interceded for the rebels. Jesus Christ, the Lord's servant, is not only the model for all disciples, but he is also the person who gives us power to accomplish our mission in making disciples. That is what Paul is telling Timothy. And so to us, you sons and daughters of the Most High God. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Amen. So, Heavenly Father, thank you for today. We know that you've overheard and we thank you for your word. May we be filled by your spirit, Lord, to endure like a soldier, to follow the rules, like an athlete. Lord, help us to be a hard working farmer, first pouring into ourselves and then pouring out to others and making disciples. Help us to find that one person that we can invest in, Lord, and bring along those who can invest in us. Lord, thank you for the challenges found within. They're not impossible without you they are impossible. But with you, Lord, it is possible. And so we just pray, pray, Lord, to be walking in joyful obedience. Thank you for Paul and his encouragements to Timothy, and for somebody like Timothy who's so relatable. He's weak, he's timid, yet he's strong in the grace found in Christ Jesus. Help us to do the same. So, Lord,

again, just please fill us afresh with your spirit today. In your name we pray.
Amen.