

## Final Words

### *Be Strong*

2 Timothy 2:1-7

September 23, 2018 pm

HDBC

### **What do teachers, soldiers, athletes and farmers all have in common?**

They are all metaphors used by Paul to illustrate what it is like to follow Christ.

**On January 15 of this year** a 17 year old girl called 911 and told police a story, almost impossible to believe. She and her 12 brothers and sisters had been locked in their family home, chained to beds, malnourished and cut off from the world. She happened to escape and alerted authorities. When they found the group they initially thought they were all children because their growth had been so stunted by their situation. However, it was discovered that seven were actually adults. They ranged in age from 2-29. Parents were arrested and charged with child endangerment and torture.

**That is heartbreaking and tragic.** It is also tragic when God looks at His followers and finds malnourished, underdeveloped, immature disciples. Those 13 siblings came out confused, immature, disoriented and weak. The same is true of many believers. They are confused, immature, disoriented and weak.

**But, as Paul wrote to Timothy,** it should not be. Read **2 Timothy 2:1-7.**

#### **1. Command (1) *Be Strong***

The verb is an imperative, which makes it a command, not a suggestion. Yet, it is a command tempered by his great love for Timothy. Note how Paul refers to him as **my son**. There is a tenderness in Paul's heart at this point. He is admonishing us tenderly but firmly to be strong.

**The verb** is also in the **passive voice** which means the source of this strength must come from outside of himself. Paul makes it clear that the source of his (and our) strength is ***the grace that is in Christ Jesus***.

**Just as we are saved** by his grace, we are strong through his grace. God's continuing grace is what enables us to bear up under the strain that comes with following Christ and enables us to move courageously forward in carrying out God's will for our lives.

**This is not a called to be saved.** Timothy was already saved. It is a call to be strong. Don't be satisfied to be a weak Christian. Grow up and grow strong. So, along with the Paul, I want to invite you to be serious about this journey that we call discipleship.

**Paul then presents four pictures** of a strong disciple, using the analogies of the Teacher, Soldier, Athlete and Farmer.

## 2. **Teacher (2)**

Paul then urged Timothy to teach others what he has learned. Not only that, he was to teach others who would be willing to teach others. Paul is pointing out the importance of a **process of discipleship** that moves from one person to another, from one generation to another. The truth of God's word must never be allowed to die with one person, one church or one generation. It must be passed along to others.

**This is** an important part of the ministry of those called as pastors. But, it is not only for pastors. All believers are called to teach others. Sometime this is in a formal setting, like leading a Bible study or small group class, but is not restricted to that. It also happens in informal settings when you are with others and are sharing divine truth. Teach someone along the way.

**Research published in 2006 revealed that worker ants sacrifice time and efficiency in order to teach other ants how to find food—a practice that is beneficial for the society as a whole.**

**When a female ant goes out to find food, she will often choose another ant to accompany her. If the second ant doesn't know the way to the food source, the leader will teach her through a process called "tandem running." As the teacher runs along the path to food, the student follows behind and will often stop to locate landmarks**

**Ants participating** in tandem running located a food source 35 percent faster than others who did not. However, it costs the teacher. Research indicated that the lead ants traveled up to four times faster when they were not accompanied by a student. They had to sacrifice personal efficiency.

**So why do the leaders** sacrifice their time and efficiency to teach others? According to study leader, Their society as a whole will benefit. This occurs as the students gradually learn their way and are able to teach other ants, which increases the efficiency of the entire population.

**What God** commands us to do, ants instinctively do. Why is that? God has built into his creation a method designed to sustain that which is necessary and good. It is instinctive in the animal kingdom. But people, because of our fallen condition, need to be reminded of this important process.

**Who are you teaching?** Who will carry the truth when you are no longer on the scene? We should always be training our replacements in ministry and in life. That involves those in our own families, but also beyond our families.

### 3. **Soldier (3-4)**

Three things about soldiers that Paul points out.

#### **A. Endure Hardship**

Paul uses endurance of a soldier to call us to deal with hardship.

For the title of his book, **Band of Brothers**, Stephen Ambrose referenced Shakespeare's stirring **St. Crispin's Day Speech in Henry V**. As the British army prepared for battle, cut off from retreat, the king rallied his generals:

And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
From this day to the ending of the world,  
But we in it shall be remembered,  
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;  
For he today that sheds his blood with me  
Shall be my brother.

**Soldiers who suffer together** develop a special bond. Paul reminds us that we are in a war, and as such are soldiers. Soldiers endure hardship. The Christian life is not an easy life. **So, Paul offers a third imperative** for us to remember; endure hardship!

**Those two English words** translate one Greek word which means to suffer evil or pain along with someone else. I love that Paul does not call on Timothy to endure hardship alone, but to do so along with Paul. We are all in this together. We rejoice together and suffer together.

## **B. Stay Focused**

Soldiers refuse to get distracted by things that are less important. They understand that in the heat of battle they can't worry about frivolous things. The battle in which they are engaged must have their full attention.

**There are so many things** that can distract us away from the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in. Paul reminds us not to let that happen. Keep the main thing the main thing. Stay focused on your relationship with Christ and your obedience to Christ.

**Talking about single-minded devotion to Christ. No place for reserves in Christ's army.** Why? Because we are still at war. Outcome is decided, but skirmishes continue.

## **C. Please Jesus**

Every soldier is under someone's authority, command. We are under the command of the Lord Jesus. He is the one who enlisted you, and the motivating force of your life should be to please Him.

## **4. Athlete (5)**

In Paul's time, athletes who participated in the Greek games were required to swear an oath before Zeus that they had dedicated themselves to 10 months of rigorous training. Failure to train resulted in immediate disqualification.

**They also had to** follow the rules of each competition. Not only would they be disqualified, but they could receive monetary fines and even scourging.

**Among other things** the Bible is a guidebook not only for learning how to become a disciple but also for how to live as a disciple. It offers principles for life that we are to follow. If we are to be strong in Christ, we must not only pay attention to the principles and commands found in it, but we must obey them.

## 5. Farmer (6)

The last image is the farmer. He works to gain a crop for himself, and as Paul indicates, deserves to enjoy some of the fruit of his labor.

**Hard-working** speaks of one who **toils intensely**; to sweat and strain to the point of exhaustion. Farming requires energy, sweat and patience. The same is true of growing in Christ. The disciple who is strong is one who has exerted energy to the point of exhaustion.

**One other important thing** about farming. The process takes a long period of time. The farmer is working now for an anticipated reward later. The farmer plants during one season but understands that the harvest, the reward, comes in a future season.

**The work that we do now** as Christ-followers, will be rewarded in another season. In this life you may see little or no return on your spiritual investment. Don't worry about that. The one who is keeping up with the accounts will miss nothing.

Go to a field that needs a workman. Or, at least, work in the field in which you find yourself.

***Boris Kornfield was a Jew who lived in Russia.*** He was arrested in the 1950s and sent to prison. Through the witness of a fellow inmate he came to know Jesus. God began to change his hatred for his captors into love. He was a medical doctor and was pressed into service on several occasions.

***Once he*** was operating on a guard who had beaten inmates. He had a chance to tie an artery too loosely so the man would bleed to death. No one would know. But didn't do it.

**Another occasion** he was operating on an inmate with cancer. The patient was drifting in and out of anesthesia. He bent over and told the man about Christ. As the patient came to, he heard a commotion down the hall.

**His surgeon** was being brutally murdered all because he had dared to share Christ with him. The patient recovered and became a Christian. His name was Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. **All because** a faithful disciple of Christ worked the field in which he found himself.

## 6. Challenge (7)

We close this section with a challenge and a promise from Paul. The challenge is to pay close attention to what he has written. Take it seriously. The word means ***to perceive clearly with the mind, to fully understand.***

The promise is that the Lord will provide the understanding that we need.

Be strong like a teacher who imparts life-giving truth to others.

Be strong like a soldier, enduring hardship and staying engaged in the fight.

Be strong like an athlete who is qualified and follows the rules

Be strong like a farmer, planting, watering and anticipating a harvest.

Be strong by trusting the Lord to bring understanding and illumination.

**Be Strong. Be Strong. Be Strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**