

Series: **The Courageous Life** – week 3

CDOBC – beginning on 9/13/15

Today's Title: **"Pictures of Courage"**

September 27, 2015 ~ 2 Timothy 2:1-6

OBJECTIVE: To help believers know the details of a courageous Christian life.

Opening prayer

This is week #3 of our series: A Courageous Life

Today – we will look at Timothy and how he struggled to be courageous as he pastored the church in Ephesus.

As hostility, opposition and marginalization in the western world has increased toward Christians, many believers in today's churches have become very discouraged and they feel beaten down. They feel defeated by the increasing verbal hostility or disrespect in the culture toward Christians. It's important for us to know - this is not a new occurrence in history. This has always been the case since the founding of the Church on Pentecost – and has been the case albeit in different degrees of intensity. What makes it so shocking to our system is for the past 200 years or so in America, the opposition and hostility toward Christians has been largely dormant and we have for the most part enjoyed the public's favor.

But, over the past few decades, the unbelieving culture has grown more vocal in their opposition to Christ – and a new

normal has emerged which is very different than past generations knew and experienced.

In our Constitution, we are guaranteed not just Freedom of religion – but freedom to practice our religion.

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”

(Amendment 1 – Constitution of the United States of America)

This is changing in how it’s viewed and applied in modern day America. The idea of *“practicing”* or *“exercising”* your religion is being silently ignored and the freedom to worship as you see fit is becoming the popular opinion and thought. In other words – worship however you want – just don’t try and live it in the culture – don’t try and exercise your faith. Well...as I stated earlier – this is nothing new.

In fact, this was happening in the first century and we see some specifics in the Apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy. Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father – meaning Paul was Timothy’s mentor – and the Apostle poured his life into Timothy because early in Timothy’s life it was discerned that God had called him into pastoral ministry.

So...Timothy learned from Paul – sat under his teaching and learned how to serve by watching the Apostle. Timothy was Paul’s protégé – when Paul was gone / done / dead Timothy was to take up the mantle of ministry the Apostle Paul had been carrying.

During his ministry, Paul was imprisoned twice. After his first imprisonment – when he was released, he sent for Timothy and arranged for Timothy to meet him in Ephesus.

Problems and opposition in Ephesus *1 Timothy 1:3-7*

Ephesus was the church Paul spent the most time at (about 3 years). Ephesus was the most vibrant church he planted – and from Ephesus 6 other churches were planted in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). However, Ephesus was in decline – it was spiraling downward and away from the truth. The leadership was corrupt and teaching heresy, sin had entered the church, the people were not serving properly – things were unwinding very quickly.

This broke Paul’s heart since the church in Ephesus had been so strong – and now it was so sick.

So, when Paul got out of prison, he meets Timothy in Ephesus, and he begins the process of turning the church around and correcting the spiritual wrongs that had become common in the church.

But, after a period of time, Paul needed to travel to Macedonia, so he leaves Timothy in Ephesus to continue to work of renewing the church and bringing the church back to the truth and grace of Christ.

Paul writes his first letter to Timothy (1 Timothy) and in this letter he was repeating much of what he told Timothy in person before leaving for Macedonia.

1 Timothy 1:2 “To Timothy my true son in the faith...”

1:3-7 – “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer

4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

6 Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk.

7 They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.”

In this section Paul lists the many problems in Ephesus that Timothy needed to address.

1:18-19a – “Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight,

19 holding on to faith and a good conscience.”

Paul gives Timothy a ‘charge’ for his work / ministry as the new pastor in Ephesus.

Keep in mind – this letter would have been read aloud to the entire church – so not only are the issues laid out very clearly for all to hear – but Timothy’s authority and ‘charge’ are publicly known by everyone in the church.

As you read through 1 Timothy, Paul gives details about:

- Prayer and ministry in the church...
- Qualifications for leadership in the church...
- Dangers to be aware of and on the lookout for...
- Instruction about caring for widows...

- How to treat the elders / teaching elders in the church...
- How Christians are to treat one another in daily life...
- Proper attitudes about money and godliness...

All throughout the letter, Paul encourages Timothy to:

“...be a good minister of Jesus Christ...” 4:6

“Command and teach these things...” 4:11

“Do not neglect your gift...” 4:14

“Be diligent in these matters...” 4:15

“I charge you...to keep these instructions without partiality...” 5:21

“...these are the things you are to teach and urge on them.” 6:2

“Fight the good fight of the faith.” 6:12

“I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame...” 6:14

When you read the strong directives and encouragement Paul gave Timothy in this first letter to Timothy – you begin to realize Timothy had a difficult road ahead of him as the pastor at Ephesus.

Even in Ephesus – even in the shadow of Paul’s ministry – great amounts of courage and strength were needed to maintain the truth of Christ in that church.

As Paul was in Macedonia, he is arrested again, and some reports from Ephesus are brought to him – and they weren’t good reports.

Timothy was cracking under the weight and pressure of those in the church – and the increasing Roman persecution from outside the church.

- Timothy was starting to compromise on truth.
- Timothy was starting to keep his mouth shut instead of preaching / teaching the truth.
- Timothy was becoming argumentative with those opposing the reforms Paul had begun.
- Timothy was losing his strength and courage.
- Timothy was becoming discouraged.
- Timothy was thinking about his own safety instead of the ministry and truth of Christ.
- Timothy was struggling in ways very similar to many modern-day Christians.

The culture in the church was moving away from truth – and the culture outside the church was becoming more hostile to those in the church.

So the Apostle Paul writes a 2nd letter to Timothy (2 Timothy) – and in this letter he tries to bring Timothy’s focus back to center – back to the true North – and he encourages Timothy to be strong and courageous!

He begins by reminding Timothy of his faith and calling:

2 Timothy 1:6-9 – *Paul writing to Timothy who was struggling in faith and leadership of the church in Ephesus:*

“Therefore, I remind you (*Timothy – struggling Christian*) to keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.

8 So don't be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God,

9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.”

In modern-day America – and all throughout the world – if you are a Christian, living the Christian life in 2015 and beyond will require an increasing amount of courage.

Here in 2 Timothy 1:6-9, this is what Paul is telling Timothy.

He begins by reminding Timothy of his faith – and the gift of God in him – to teach and preach. “To keep ablaze the gift of God that is in you...” is a Greek word that has the idea of stirring the coals in a fire that has died down. Stir it back up! Get the coals – get the fire going again!

He reminds Timothy in vs. 6-7 to embrace the “power, love and sound judgment” of God – and to reject the “spirit of fearfulness”.

In vs. 8 he tells him not to “be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord”. This is an amazing statement – Timothy had become so fearful that he was ashamed to speak of Jesus Christ! This is the pastor we’re talking about!

In addition – it seems he was ashamed of being identified with the Apostle Paul also!

Are you ever hesitant to talk about Jesus at work – at school – with your neighbor across the fence?

Are you ever ashamed to pray before a meal when you’re at a restaurant – in the cafeteria at school or work?

What we face today is nothing new in history.

It may be new to us – but it’s not new to the church or those who identify with Jesus.

The Bible’s consistent message to believers:

Be Strong and Courageous Deut. 31:6-8; 2 Chron. 32:6-8; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1

John 2:14

All throughout the Bible we see the command and encouragement for the followers of God – the believers in Christ to be strong and courageous in the faith.

In Deuteronomy 31:6

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.”

7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance.

8 The LORD Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

We read in 2 Chronicles 32:6-8

He (King Hezekiah) appointed military officers over the people and assembled them before him in the square at the city gate and encouraged them with these words:

7 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the king of Assyria and the vast army with him, for there is a greater power with us than with him.

8 With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God...

We read in **1 Corinthians 16:13** (NLT)

“Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong.”

1 Corinthians 16:13 (NIV)

“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.”

We read in **1 John 2:14b**

“...you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”

Christian...you are called “...to be strong, not weak but strong, to be able to contend with difficulty, face challenges, meet the enemy, bear the pain, suffer the hardship, uphold what is right, press to the goal, and never compromise (y)our convictions, never equivocate on those things that are true and precious. We are not to be weak and vacillating and defeated...but rather to take the risk, face the attack, face the difficulty triumphantly, never ever letting go of our faith, of our convictions or of our duties and responsibilities.”

(<http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/90-127/fundamental-christian-attitudes-strength-part-2>)

We can learn a great deal from Paul’s instructions to Timothy.

His instructions are more than a pep-talk – more than a half-time motivational speech.

Paul gives us something solid – something that will outlast the challenges and pressures we face in the world.

Paul gives Timothy 4 great pictures of courage – 4 great examples of what it looks like to be strong and courageous in the faith – and we’re going to look at these 4 pictures today.

Turn to **2 Timothy 2:1-7**

“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs -- he wants to please his commanding officer.

5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Paul was facing his own opposition and his own struggles. He had been imprisoned again and people who once stood by his side began to fall away and abandon him and the Gospel.

We see numerous references to this throughout 2 Timothy:

1:8 – “...me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel”

1:12 – “that is why I am suffering as I am”

1:15 – “You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me”

2:9 – “...for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal.”

2:10 – “I endure everything for the sake of the elect”

3:11 – “persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me...”

3:12 – “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

4:6 – “I am already being poured out like a drink offering”

4:10 – “Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me”

4:14 – “Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm”

4:16 – “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.”

We are not alone in the struggles of our day.

Paul endured the difficulties and opposition against him – because of the power of Christ and constant presence of Christ in his life – and we have the same power and presence with us!

With that – let’s look at the 4 pictures of what a strong and courageous Christian looks like.

A strong and courageous Christian is like a:

Teacher 2:2

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

You want to be a strong and courageous Christian?
Teach God’s Word!

When you teach, you deepen your knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. When you take on the mantle of teaching God’s Word, it forces a number of things to happen in your own life.

1. Learn it yourself by studying / preparing to teach

2. Develop a clearer understanding of the truth / passage
3. You own the truths / develop convictions about the Bible's teaching
4. You are responsible to learn, study, grow – and you are held accountable by those you teach to live according to your teaching.

If you are teaching about grace...you better be gracious!

If you are teaching about controlling your anger, you better control your anger!

You're held accountable for living what you teach!

A strong and courageous Christian is like a:

Soldier 2:3-4

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs -- he wants to please his commanding officer.

We are in a battle – a spiritual battle.

We operate – we do ministry in a hostile environment – spiritually hostile always, physically hostile?

2 Cor. 10:3-5

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.

4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Jude 1:20-23

“But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.

22 Be merciful to those who doubt;

23 snatch others from the fire and save them...”

In battle a soldier rescues people from the grip of the enemy – we “snatch them from the fire”. When you share Christ with them – and they put their faith in Christ – they have been rescued “from the fire”!

The Christian life lived with courage means we understand the reality of the spiritual battle that is waging around us every day – and we live as a soldier in the midst of battle.

Soldiers are exposed to great hardship and great sacrifice. They cannot enjoy the luxuries or the mental pauses of civilian life.

Paul appeals to Timothy: “Endure hardship with us” and he goes on to tell him not to get involved with civilian affairs but to live in a way that pleases his commanding officer – Jesus Christ.

Illus. - When I first heard about the donation to build out our campus – I was filled with joy and excitement – but then my second thought and feeling was a sobering thought of the difficulty ahead. Don't get me wrong – this was / is not a discouraging thought of difficulty or drudgery – but a thought of the reality of the spiritual battle and spiritual challenges God is assigning us to. This is not about buildings and nice spaces for worship – it's about waging war against the forces of evil in our world – our community – and these forces are ruining lives of our neighbors with the lies of the evil one and taking people straight to a godless and suffering eternity.

If you are a believer in Christ – you are at war with spiritual forces of evil – take courage!

A strong and courageous Christian is like a:

Athlete 2:5

5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules."

Athletes train, practice and compete to win.

A lot of people exercise not to compete and win, but simply to exercise. Their goal may be losing weight – or getting ready for a 5k or 10k race or a ½ marathon or full marathon – but there's a goal to

their exercise – maybe it’s vanity – maybe better health - or maybe an upcoming race.

As a Christian – we need to live the Christian life with the same dedication and discipline as an athlete approaches an upcoming competition.

We need to be dedicated – follow the coach’s instructions – we need to practice – but most of all, we need to be motivated by the finish line.

Athletes compete to win.

Christians are already on the winning team – Christ has already secured victory – but we strive so we will hear the words, “Well done good and faithful servant”

(Matt. 25:21, 13) and we strive to receive rewards for a faithful life.

(See also 1 Timothy 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 9)

“...competes according to the rules” – this is very important in athletics. We have seen many violations of this – especially in the Olympics – but also in recent history of “deflate-gate”, pitchers with batting tar on their hat or glove, steroid use in baseball and other sports, cheating brings dishonor to athletes and their teams – in some cases to an entire city – or an entire county!

Ignoring the rules – ignoring the standard of God’s Word will bring shame and discredit on the Christian as well.

People – I’m putting you on notice right now – as we become more and more intentional about preaching the Gospel and more intentional about talking with our Circle about spiritual truth, Satan will attempt to derail us through moral failure. **BE ON GUARD!!** Do not be disqualified – do not discredit or bring confusion into the message of Christ by moral and ethical failure.

1 Cor. 9:26-27

“Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air.

27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”

Make sure you live by the rules – make sure you don’t disqualify yourself and discredit the message of the Gospel with how you live.

A strong and courageous Christian is like a:

Farmer 2:6

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

Farmers work hard.

Farmers sow seed – and they reap a harvest.

If a farmer never sows seed, they won't be a farmer for very long! Sowing seed is the fundamental starting point – the obvious basic thing a farmer does.

The other fundamental thing a farmer does is harvest the crops. The seed grows – sometimes beyond expectation, and other times with lesser results – but there is always a harvest for the hard working farmer.

And the farmer gets first pick of the crops. What a great blessing – to enjoy the blessing of the harvest! Spiritually, we need to sow the seed of the Gospel. We need to look for any and every opportunity to speak about human sin, and God's love and provision in Christ through His death, burial and resurrection.

We need to sow the seed of God's truth and work hard at it!

Then we need to realize that it's God's responsibility to grow the seed that we sowed – we can't force it or make it grow – if it's good soil, it will grow (Matt. 13), and then we have the blessing of harvest time!

Apply it...

Paul gives us 4 pictures of courage so we can see what this looks like in daily life.

First, we must have a deep and working knowledge of the Word of God.

Teaching God's Word will drive the truths of God's Word deep into your mind and soul.

Second, commit to fight the spiritual battle.

A soldier must have strength and courage each day to fulfill their duty. The urgency of this battle is often concealed from plain sight – but don't be misled by physical appearances – this battle is real – and you must fight!

Third, train and prepare as an athlete

Focus...strive...discipline...these are the traits required of an athlete – these are the traits required for a Christian to live with strength and courage.

Fourth, work hard and share the Gospel

As a farmer must work hard and be faithful to sow the seed in the spring, we must be faithful to sow the seed of the Gospel – so we can reap a great harvest for the Kingdom!

Close in prayer