

### An Exhortation to be Strong in the Lord

#### 2 Timothy 2:1-2

2 Timothy 2:1-2: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> 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.”

#### Background Notes

The theme of 2 Timothy could be stated in a number of different ways. “*Individual responsibility in a time of collective failure*” would be one way to state the theme. Timothy was responsible to remain steadfast and faithful, even though others around him were failing. Even if the Church did not remain pure, Timothy was called to remain faithful.

“*Faithfulness in the midst of fire and failure*” would be another way to state the theme of 2 Timothy. When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Nero had already blamed the Christians for starting the great fire in Rome in AD64. This epistle was written after AD64, and the Roman persecutions upon Christians had begun.

Furthermore, false teaching was already creeping into the early Church, and some were falling away. So Timothy was challenged to remain faithful, even though there was persecution from outside the Church, and even though some were turning away from within the Church.

Maybe the simplest way to state the theme of 2 Timothy, especially for today, would be “**Hang in there!**” Whatever happens, Timothy, just hang in there. Be faithful and true! Be steadfast and dedicated.

What a challenge to us! Remember, this epistle was not just a 1<sup>st</sup> century letter from Paul to Timothy – it is God’s Word to us today. Regardless of how you word the theme of 2 Timothy, the challenge to us is clear: be a faithful and steadfast believer, even though enduring the test may be painful and costly. And remember, persecution does not just have to be physical – it can be verbal abuse, and mental mockery, and economic disaster. So - even though others around us may be falling away and deciding to do their own thing, we are to remain faithful and steadfast.

In chapter 2 Paul gave Timothy several models of the faithful Christian. The best-known models are the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer (v3-5). But there are other models here as well. In fact, I think we find seven models here. In each model, there is a key thought that emphasizes one particular aspect of what it means to be a faithful Christian.

The model of the teacher is seen in verses 1-2, and I think the key thought here is communication. A good teacher is a good communicator.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Like a teacher, the faithful Christian communicates sound doctrine to faithful students.

Verse 2: *“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.”*

Notice that there are four links to the teaching process. That is true apostolic succession. The four stages to good communication of sound teaching are:

**Stage 1** - Paul received revelation from the Lord Himself and passed it on to Timothy.

**Stage 2** - Timothy received the sound doctrine from Paul. Notice that he received the teaching in the presence of many witnesses. The apostles did not have any secret doctrines. Timothy had heard these teachings from Paul on many occasions.

**Stage 3** - Timothy was to entrust the sound doctrine to faithful students of the Word.

**Stage 4** - Those faithful students were to pass on the sound doctrine to other faithful Christians.

The key to this process is **good communication**. I think that’s why the model of the teacher was used. Not because teachers get their summers off, or because teachers aren’t paid well. No! The model of the teacher was chosen because a good teacher is a good communicator. Like a good teacher, a faithful Christian should communicate sound doctrine to faithful students.

Note the words, “faithful men” (v2). The word that is translated “men” is the word for *mankind*, so it includes both men and women. The primary point here is that we should look for faithful Christian men and women who can be entrusted with sound doctrine, and who will faithfully pass it on.

The Lord Jesus preached to multitudes – but He chose just twelve disciples, and He spent a lot of teaching time with them. We need to do the same. Timothy was told to be an evangelist and preach the gospel to all, but he was also to look for faithful students to teach and entrust with sound doctrine. And they were to pass it on.

When I worked with the Young Life ministry to high school students, we held a weekly “Young Life Club” meeting. The aim of “Club” was to reach unsaved kids. We also held a weekly “Campaigner” group. This was a Bible study for the

Christian kids. Then we started “Discipleship,” a program for the faithful kids who wanted to get deeper into Bible study - not just in the fun and entertainment of the program. They were hungry for the Word, and they wanted to reach others as well. Part of the “Discipleship” program involved the Christian teens teaching others. The faithful Christian communicates sound doctrine to faithful students.

## **2. Like a teacher, the faithful Christian communicates sound doctrine to capable students.**

We’ve all seen a relay race. What’s the most important point of a relay race? It’s not just the speed of the runners – it’s passing on the baton to the next runner without dropping it! You drop the baton and your race is over! I remember seeing a high school relay race where the lead team lost it all - because the baton was not passed on properly. Passing on the baton is the most important thing.

“Don’t drop the baton” is really an illustration of the point the apostle was making here. A faithful teacher looks for faithful students and also for **capable** students, who can receive sound doctrine and pass it on intact and unchanged, not diluted or distorted in any way. As teachers of God’s Word, we should look for faithful Christians who are capable of passing on sound doctrine to others – just as they received it.

One of my Bible College students this year is a wonderful Christian guy, but I must say that I’m glad the transmission of sound doctrine doesn’t depend on this student! I’m afraid there would be some garbled transmission. It’s not that this young man is unfaithful or doesn’t have the desire to teach others - he just has a hard time “passing on the baton” as it was given to him. Something always seems to be changed or missing or distorted in the feedback. That’s not true of all Emmaus students, by the way! There are many students who are faithful and capable students. I know the sound doctrine that is communicated to them won’t be dropped, or lost, or distorted. They’re going to carry on and teach it to others.

Do you see the point? There are two aspects here. As teachers we should welcome all and teach all students. All of us are to be teachers in the sense of passing on sound doctrine. As teachers, we should welcome all and teach all. But we should especially be on the lookout for those faithful students who are capable of receiving sound doctrine and passing it on to others, without distortion, or dilution, or deletion.

The transmission of sound doctrine should not be like the game of “Telephone,” in which the original message becomes increasingly garbled as it’s passed along! In Bible times, oral transmission was an exact and rigid teaching method. The teacher communicated the doctrine or the historical facts to the student - and the student repeated it right back to the teacher to be sure the student got it right! The student’s repetition was to be correct and unchanged in every detail. So, like a teacher in biblical times, the faithful Christian should communicate sound doctrine to capable students who will pass it on correctly!

## Practical Application

### **You never have to experience spiritual burnout.**

There's a difference between physical burnout and spiritual burnout, but they do overlap in certain ways. The key to not experiencing physical burnout is to realize that you can't "burn the candle at both ends"! But the key to not experiencing spiritual burnout is to avail yourself of the strength that is in Christ Jesus. *"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* Spiritual burnout is a real danger for many of us, because we're engaged in a constant spiritual battle. *"...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).* We need to understand this, and we need to become more be aware of this battle on a daily basis.

Maybe you're a Christian who is experiencing spiritual burnout. You don't have to. Do you know why? Because 2 Timothy 2:1 tells us that if we tap into the grace that is available in Christ Jesus, we will be strengthened. *"You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* Be strengthened – that's the idea. Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We don't have to summon up strength on our own, and we don't have to force ourselves to be strong. No. We are to be strengthened in the grace that's there for us. It's available! All the strength we need is available. Just tap into that strength, and rely on it.

*"...be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Ephesians 6:10).* All the spiritual strength we need for the daily struggle against the forces of evil is available. All the spiritual strength we need to resist temptation is available - whether that temptation may be. All the spiritual strength we need to do whatever God calls us to do is available to us.

Dads - you have the spiritual responsibility to be the spiritual head of your household. You can do it, because all the spiritual strength you need is available, so you can do what God calls you to do. Moms - you have the spiritual responsibility to be a godly wife and mother. You can do it, even though it may be very discouraging at times. You can do it because all the spiritual strength you need is available to do what God calls you to do.

Be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6). And remember - you never have to experience spiritual burnout!