

WE KNOW THAT WHERE GOD'S WORD IS READ, GOD'S VOICE IS HEARD. IT'S TO THAT WORD AND VOICE THAT WE TURN TO NOW. TURN TO 2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2. EVEN THOUGH I MENTIONED LAST WEEK THAT 2 TIMOTHY IS MY FAVORITE BOOK OF THE BIBLE, I HAVE ONE COMPLAINT ABOUT IT. IT'S TOO SHORT. I WANT TO HEAR AS MUCH AS I CAN FROM PAUL ABOUT THIS TOPIC, ABOUT LONGING TO BE FAITHFUL TO ONE'S CALLING AND SALVATION NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. AT TIMES WHEN I FIND MYSELF WANTING TO GIVE UP, I TURN TO GOD'S WORD FOR A REMINDER OF MY CALLING AND THE CHARGE WHICH LAY BEFORE ME TO BE FAITHFUL TO IT NO MATTER WHAT MAY COME.

### **Read 2 Timothy 2:1-7/Pray**

IF I COULD HAVE JUST ONE WISH GRANTED, ONE PRAYER REQUEST ANSWERED IN THE NEXT 30 MINUTES OR SO THAT WE'RE HERE, IT WOULD BE THIS: THAT THOSE WHO ARE PROFESSING FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST AND HAVE COMMITTED THEIR LIVES TO FOLLOWING HIM ALL THE DAYS OF THEIR LIFE WOULD SEEK TO BE FAITHFUL IN BRINGING THEIR LORD GLORY BY THEIR OBEDIENCE NO MATTER WHAT. MY HEARTBEAT, AS WE'RE STUDYING 2 TIMOTHY, IS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS IN THIS ROOM TO VALUE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST, AND VALUE OBEDIENCE TO HIM, ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE. I HOPE THAT INSIDE ALL OF US WOULD BE A DRIVE AND DESIRE TO SERVE HIM IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE, NOT GIVING UP BECAUSE OF SUFFERING, PERSECUTION, OR COMPLACENCY.

SOMETHING I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO STRESS SINCE ALL OF MY MINISTRY HERE AT VOCA BAPTIST CHURCH, BUT ESPECIALLY IN THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS, IS THAT WHENEVER YOU COME INTO A SAVING RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST, YOUR LIFE IS NO LONGER YOUR OWN. CHRIST HAS BOUGHT YOU WITH HIS BLOOD, HE HAS BROUGHT YOU INTO LIFE, AND NOW HE IS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD. THAT WORD LORD IS IMPORTANT. LORD MEANS THAT HE'S THE BOSS, WHAT HE SAYS GOES, AND IF HE SPEAKS, YOU DO NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

THE REASON THAT I BRING THIS UP IS BECAUSE INSIDE OF EVERY SAVED CHRISTIAN IS STILL A HEART THAT DESIRES TO BE DISOBEDIENT. INSIDE OF ALL OF US IS THAT SINFUL NATURE THAT DEEP DOWN LONGS TO DO THAT WHICH WE REALLY DON'T WANT TO DO. AND WHAT THAT SINFUL NATURE INSIDE OF US WANTS TO DO IS TO SAY, FOR HOWEVER LONG, THAT CHRIST IS NO LONGER GOING TO BE THE LORD OF MY LIFE. I WANT TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO. SO IF THAT'S SIN, THEN IT'S SAYING THAT I'M GOING TO DO WHAT I WANT TO DO WHETHER CHRIST MY LORD WANTS ME TO OR NOT. HERE'S THE OTHER THING. INSIDE OF ALL OF US WE HAVE A DESIRE TO MAKE OURSELVES THE LORD OF OUR OWN LIVES AGAIN AND DO THINGS OUR OWN WAY. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE FOR ANYBODY WHO GOES THROUGH ANY KIND OF SUFFERING OR PERSECUTION OF THE FAITH. THAT'S WHY ANY TIME THERE IS PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH, MANY CHRISTIANS WILL SCATTER LIKE COCKROACHES AND APOSTATIZE, THAT IS ABANDON THE FAITH.

WHAT I HOPE FOR ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM IS THAT WE WOULD ALL SEEK TO BE FAITHFUL TO OUR CALLING, BEING FAITHFUL IN CARRYING OUT THE GOSPEL MESSAGE, BE ACTIVE IN TRYING TO CHANGE OUR CULTURE AND FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT NO MATTER WHAT MAY COME. I READ A STATISTIC LAST WEEK THAT SCARED ME. IT SAID, "IN THE TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, ABOUT 70 MILLION BELIEVERS HAVE BEEN KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH, OF WHOM 45.5 MILLION OR 65% WERE

IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY”, (WIKIPEDIA). ANOTHER STATISTIC I READ SAID THAT AN AVERAGE OF 330,000 CHRISTIANS ARE MARTYRED FOR THEIR FAITH EVERY YEAR,” (INTRO TO NEW TESTAMENT – CARSON, MOO, MORRIS, PG 380). IF ANYONE THINKS PERSECUTION AND SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL DOESN’T HAPPEN ANYMORE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SO-CALLED FREE COUNTRIES LIKE AMERICA, THEN WE ARE SADLY MISTAKEN.

FOR PAUL, IT WAS SUFFERING IN A COLD, DARK ROMAN PRISON WHERE WINTER WAS QUICKLY APPROACHING. ROMAN PRISONS WERE NOT PLACES WHERE PEOPLE WAITED UNTIL THEY GOT PAROLE. THEY WAITED THEIR UNTIL THE ROMANS KILLED ALL THE OTHER CHRISTIANS THAT WERE IN LINE BEFORE THEM. I MENTIONED LAST WEEK THAT YOU COULD ASK ME PRIVATELY WHAT KIND OF TORTURES EMPEROR NERO DID. I HAD NO TAKERS. BUT I WILL TELL YOU THAT NERO LIKED TO MURDER CHRISTIANS IN THE MOST PUBLIC WAY POSSIBLE. TO BE A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST MEANT BEING AN ENEMY OF ROME. THAT WAS PAUL’S SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL.

TIMOTHY AS WELL HAD TO SUFFER FOR THE GOSPEL. HIS SUFFERING WAS AT A CHURCH WHERE THE PEOPLE REFUSED TO CONFORM THEIR LIVES TO GODLINESS. HIS SUFFERING WAS LABORING DAILY OVER THIS CHURCH TRYING TO GET THEM TO TAKE THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST SERIOUSLY. YOU HAVE TO IMAGINE HOW DIFFICULT THIS WAS FOR THIS YOUNG MAN OF GOD. SO PAUL WRITES, **Read 1-3.**

VERSE 1 STARTS OUT WITH A “THEREFORE.” THOSE ARE IMPORTANT. THAT MEANS WE’VE GOT TO LOOK AT THE VERSES BEFORE TO KNOW WHAT THE “THEREFORE” MEANS. PAUL SAID IN VERSES 15-18 OF CHAPTER 1 THAT ALL OF THESE OTHER DISCIPLES ABANDONED HIM. ALL WHO WERE IN ASIA ABANDONED HIM. THE ONLY ONE LEFT WAS ONESIPHORUS WHO SOUGHT HIM OUT IN ROME AND PROVIDED FOR HIM. WHAT PAUL DOES IS CONTRAST THE ACTIONS OF THESE PEOPLE WHO WERE UNFAITHFUL WHENEVER PERSECUTION HIT WITH THE ACTIONS THAT SHOULD BE EVIDENT IN TIMOTHY. “YOU, THEREFORE, MY SON, BE STRONG IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”

ACTUALLY, THE BEST WAY TO TRANSLATE THAT WORD, “BE STRONG” IN THE GREEK IS THIS, “BE CONTINUALLY STRENGTHENED.” THERE’S A DIFFERENCE BECAUSE JUST BY SAYING “BE STRONG, TIMOTHY, BUCK UP AND TAKE THIS SUFFERING LIKE A MAN,” PAUL IS SAYING, BE CONTINUALLY STRENGTHENED WITH A STRENGTH THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM GOD. HE’S TALKING ABOUT THE DAILY STRENGTH THAT TIMOTHY IS GOING TO HAVE TO HAVE FROM THE GRACE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS TO CARRY OUT THIS WORK.

THAT’S IMPORTANT. THE SOONER WE REALIZE THAT WE FIRST OF ALL DID NOT DESERVE THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE, WE HAVE REACHED STEP ONE. THEN, WHEN WE REALIZE THAT WE ARE COMPLETELY INADEQUATE TO CARRY OUT THIS TASK, WE’VE REACHED STEP TWO. THEN, WHEN WE LEARN TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD NO MATTER WHAT TRIALS MAY COME, DEPENDING DAILY UPON THE GRACE AND STRENGTH THAT ARE FOUND IN CHRIST JESUS, THEN WE ARE WELL ON OUR WAY TO BEING A GODLY MAN OR WOMAN. WE ARE WELL ON OUR WAY TO BEING FAITHFUL.

ANYONE WHO IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN CHRISTIAN SERVICE, WHETHER THAT BE A MINISTER OR A LAYMAN WILL TELL YOU IT IS VERY EASY TO RUN OUT OF ENERGY. IT’S EASY TO BECOME TIRED. PERSECUTION AND CRITICISM CAN GET ANYBODY DOWN. LOOKING AT THE TASK LAID BEFORE YOU IN

MINISTRY, YOU MAY SAY, "THERE'S NO WAY I CAN DO THAT." THAT IS WHY IT IS VITAL FOR YOUR ENDURANCE AND THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY TO DAILY REFRESH YOUR SOUL IN THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS DAILY COMING TO THE SCRIPTURES FOR SUSTENANCE AS WELL AS MEDICINE FOR A HUNGRY AND WOUNDED SOUL.

REMEMBER THAT PAUL IS WRITING TO TIMOTHY WHO IS IN EPHESUS FROM ROME. THAT'S SOMETHING LIKE 200 MILES WEST IF YOU'RE TRAVELING BY BOAT ACROSS THE SEA, OR LIKE 800 MILES IF YOU'RE GOING THE LONG WAY AROUND ON LAND. HE'S WRITING TO TIMOTHY TO COME VISIT HIM SOON BECAUSE HE WANTS TO SEE HIM BEFORE HE DIES. SO PAUL IS TELLING TIMOTHY THAT WHILE HE IS AWAY, HE NEEDS TO FIND FAITHFUL MEN WHO WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD.

THIS IS THE WAY ANY EFFECTIVE CHURCH WILL BE. NOTICE THE LINE OF INSTRUCTION HERE. PAUL TAUGHT TIMOTHY. TIMOTHY TAUGHT THE CHURCH, PARTICULARLY THE PASTORS WHO WERE TOLD TO BE MEN ABLE TO TEACH. THE PASTORS WOULD TEACH THE CONGREGATION, AND ON AND ON THE DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS GOES.

SO MANY TIMES THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH IS DEPENDENT UPON THE PASTOR OR MAYBE A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE WHO DO EVERYTHING. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PASTOR GETS CALLED TO ANOTHER CHURCH? WHAT HAPPENS IF THE LAYMEN WHO DO EVERYTHING GET A JOB TRANSFER? WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MINISTRY? IT WOULD ALL GO AWAY WITH HIM. THAT IS WHY IF A PASTOR DOES HIS JOB WELL, THE MINISTRY DOES NOT REVOLVE AROUND HIM. INSTEAD, HE PUTS IT INTO THE HANDS OF THE PEOPLE SO THAT IT WILL CONTINUE. THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS COULD STAND TO HAVE TIMOTHY AWAY FOR A TIME BECAUSE THE MINISTRY OF THE EPHESIAN CHURCH WASN'T ALL ABOUT TIMOTHY.

PASSING ON THE FAITH IS SOMETHING WE ALL NEED TO TAKE SERIOUSLY. IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID THAT CHRISTIANITY IS ONE GENERATION FROM EXTINCTION. WHAT IF CHRISTIANITY, THE TRUTH AND ONLY HOPE FOR MANKIND, GOT REDUCED TO A FOOTNOTE IN THE HISTORY BOOKS OF MANKIND? WHAT IF IT FADED AWAY AS SOME LEGEND LIKE ALL THE OTHER ROMAN GODS LIKE ZEUS, HERA, AND HERCULES? WE ARE ALL CLOSER THAN WE THINK IN WATCHING CHRISTIANITY DISAPPEAR BECAUSE FOR MANY OF US, PASSING ON THE FAITH, BEING ACTIVE IN DISCIPLESHIP, AND SHARING THE GOSPEL IS HARD. IT'S COSTLY. A CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST IS A CALL TO LEAVE BEHIND THIS WORLD AND HOLD ON TO THE PROMISES OF THE NEXT. A CALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST IS A CALL TO SUFFER, LIVE, AND DIE FOR YOUR FAITH IF NEED BE.

SO PAUL SAYS, "TIMOTHY, SUFFER WITH ME." I LOVE THAT. LET'S SHOW THIS WHOLE WORLD WHO THE LORD REALLY IS. LET'S SHOW CHRIST THAT WE ARE FAITHFUL TO HIM NO MATTER WHAT, THAT WE LOVE HIM AND DESIRE HIM ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE, INCLUDING OUR OWN SAFETY.

IF YOU WANT TO BE A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, AND I MEAN A TRUE FOLLOWER OF CHRIST THAT ENGAGES A WHOLE HEART OF UNWAVERING ALLEGIANCE, THEN THIS WORLD WILL NOT BE EASY FOR YOU. YOUR BEST LIFE NOW IS NOT GOING TO BE ON THIS EARTH. DIFFICULT TIMES WILL COME.

OUR JOB IS TO BE A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS. IN FACT, THAT'S THE FIRST IMAGE THAT PAUL USES TO DESCRIBE THE FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN, A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS.

WHAT VERSE 4 IS SAYING IS THAT A SOLDIER IS FULLY DEVOTED TO HIS TASK AS A WARRIOR. HE HAS ENTERED INTO A BOND THAT CALLS FOR SERVICE ABOVE SACRIFICE. THIS ROOM IS FULL OF MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE SERVED OUR COUNTRY IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY. NO DOUBT THIS ROOM COULD BE FULL OF MORE PEOPLE WHO SERVED; HOWEVER, SOME OF THEM MADE THE GREATEST SACRIFICE THERE IS BY LAYING DOWN HIS OR HER LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY. WHY WOULD ANYBODY EVER DO THAT? BECAUSE THEY'RE A SOLDIER. THEY KNOW WHAT AND FOR WHO THEY'RE FIGHTING FOR. WHAT PAUL IS DOING IS SAYING YOU CHRISTIAN ARE A SOLDIER FOR CHRIST. WHEN YOU ENTERED INTO THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST, YOU GAVE YOUR LIFE AWAY TO BE FAITHFUL TO CHRIST NO MATTER WHAT. AND NOW YOUR LOYALTY LIES WITH HIM AND YOUR DESIRE, EVEN ABOVE AVOIDING SUFFERING, IS TO PLEASE THE ONE WHO ENLISTED YOU AS A SOLDIER, NAMELY CHRIST. CHRIST SAVED YOU, BROUGHT YOU TO LIFE, AND GAVE YOU THE AMAZING PRIVILEGE OF BEING A WARRIOR FOR HIM. WILL WE FAIL IN OUR TASK BECAUSE OF OPPOSITION? WILL WE STOP BECAUSE THERE'S A GOVERNMENT THAT DOESN'T WANT US TO TELL OTHERS ABOUT CHRIST? NO. WILL WE STOP BECAUSE THERE'S A CHURCH THAT HAS A LOT OF PROBLEMS AND WON'T SEEM TO CHANGE? NO. WE'LL FIGHT ON SO THAT WE CAN SHOW OUR FAITHFULNESS TO CHRIST AND BRING HONOR TO HIM WHO ENLISTED US AS SOLDIERS.

PAUL GOES ON TO MAKE ANOTHER ILLUSTRATION. THIS TIME THE IMAGERY IS THAT OF AN ATHLETE. THIS TIME WHAT PAUL WANTS TO EMPHASIZE IS THE REWARD. IT'S HARD WORK BECOMING AN ATHLETE, AND A LOT HARDER WORK BEING AN ATHLETE WHO CAN WIN. HE LONGS FOR THE PRIZE THAT AWAITS HIM AT THE END, KNOWING THAT AS SOON AS HE CROSSES THAT FINISH LINE, AS SOON AS THE FINAL SECONDS ARE OFF THE CLOCK, AS SOON AS THE LAST BATTER HAS SWUNG, IT HAS ALL BEEN WORTH IT BECAUSE NOW, IN YOUR HANDS IS THE PRIZE THAT YOU WERE LONGING FOR.

FOR CHRISTIANS WHO ENDURE, THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL IN THEIR SERVICE TO CHRIST UNTIL THE END, WHO PERSEVERE DESPITE TEMPTATIONS TO QUIT OR AVOID SUFFERING, THERE IS A PRIZE THAT AWAITS US. PAUL IS GOING TO SAY AT THE END OF THIS LETTER THAT HE'S ABOUT TO RECEIVE THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. THE BOOK OF JAMES SPEAKS OF THE CROWN OF LIFE. PETER TALKS ABOUT RECEIVING THE UNFADING CROWN OF GLORY. THESE ARE THE TROPHIES THAT LAST. THESE ARE THE PRIZES THAT MATTER. I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT ALL OF THIS IS GOING TO LOOK LIKE. A CROWN MIGHT BE NICE LOOKING ON MY HEAD. I DON'T KNOW. I NEVER REALLY WANTED A CROWN. BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT. IMAGINE BEING THERE IN A ROMAN PRISON SUFFERING AND DYING FOR YOUR FAITH. IMAGINE SUFFERING AS A LEADER IN A CHURCH OF WICKEDNESS. YOU'RE HATED AND DESPISED BY ALL THOSE AROUND YOU. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE A DAY WHEN IT'S NOT LIKE THAT ANYMORE. THERE WILL BE A DAY WHEN CHRIST RAISES YOU UP AND GIVES YOU GLORY FOR YOUR SHAME, LIFE FOR YOUR DEATH, PEACE FOR YOUR WOUNDS, AND YOU'LL HAVE A GOD WHO IS WELL PLEASED. BUT, WE MUST COMPETE ACCORDING TO THE RULES. WE MUST OBEY CHRIST, NO MATTER WHAT.

FINALLY, PAUL USES THE IMAGERY OF A FARMER. NOT JUST ANY FARMER, BUT THE HARD-WORKING FARMER, WILL RECEIVE HIS FIRST SHARE OF THE CROPS. GOD'S CALL ON YOUR LIFE DEMANDS

DIFFICULT LABOR. IT REQUIRES HARD WORK. THE VERSE SAYS, "IT IS NECESSARY" THAT IT BE THIS WAY. IT IS NECESSARY FOR A TRUE CHRISTIAN TO WORK HARD AND NOT BE MEDIOCRE. HOWEVER, JUST LIKE THE PRIZE AWAITING THE ATHLETE, THE HARD WORKING FARMER WILL ONE DAY REAP A HARVEST OF BLESSING WHILE THOSE WHO SIT BY IDLY GET NOTHING.

APPLICATION: ARE YOU A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST? ARE YOU REALLY? IS HE THE LORD OF YOUR LIFE FOR WHOM YOU HAVE DEDICATED FAITHFUL SERVICE AS LONG AS YOU LIVE? ARE YOU WILLING TO FOLLOW HIM NO MATTER WHAT? WHAT WILL STOP YOU FROM FOLLOWING HIM COMPLETELY ALL THE DAYS OF YOUR LIFE? WHAT WILL STOP YOU FROM SERVING HIM? WILL PERSECUTION? WILL HARD-WORK? WILL OTHER PEOPLE? **Philippians 1:29** For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,

MAYBE YOU'RE NOT A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST. MAYBE YOU'RE NOT A CHRISTIAN. I WILL DO NOTHING TO DECEIVE YOU BY TELLING YOU THAT IF YOU COME TO CHRIST YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE. NO, YOU MAY JUST LOSE OUR LIFE. BUT ONE THING I CAN TELL YOU. WHEN YOU ENTER INTO THAT RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AND HAVE THE BLESSING OF ALMIGHTY GOD UPON YOU, THEN ANYTHING YOU SUFFER FOR ON THIS EARTH WILL COMPLETELY FAIL IN COMPARISON TO THE RICHNESS WHICH IS FOUND IN BEING OBEDIENT TO YOUR LORD.