

Timothy—Receiving the Torch of the Testimony

II Timothy 1:1-14—Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and discipline.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, 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 granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

II Timothy 2:1-2—You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

II Timothy 2:19-22—Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.”

Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Let's have a word of prayer:

Lord, we thank You for the songs and the message within the songs regarding Your testimony. We are so aware of the fact that You call and choose even children when they are young. We pray now as we look at Timothy's life as an example of somebody prepared for the torch of the testimony, that You will speak to our own hearts about our own preparedness, readiness, willingness, and faith to take that which You have called us to do. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Timothy was one of those brethren who took up the torch of the testimony at the end of Paul's life. As you can see from what we read in II Timothy, how much Paul had invested in Timothy and how much he loved Timothy even as his own son.

Paul Meets Timothy

We in fact meet Timothy for the first time in Acts 16. As Paul started out on his second missionary journey with Silas, when he arrived in Lystra and Derbe, he discovered a young man who already had a reputation among the saints as being of character and some gifting. It does not immediately tell us in Acts exactly how he came to the Lord, but he was taken by Paul and circumcised. He was of a Jewish mother and a Greek father and had not been circumcised, but he was circumcised at that point. We assume he was a teenager but we do not really know for sure. However, he began traveling with Paul and Silas and others as they went from place to place, and I am sure Timothy's eyes saw things that he had never seen before.

Timothy's Background

By the time I Timothy was written and then II Timothy subsequently, probably more than fifteen years had gone by. So actually, although we consider these exhortations are to a young man we would think as a teenager, the fact of the matter is that Timothy must have been a bit older than that. Maybe like the Chinese, he was still a teenager at thirty years old. But in any case, when we begin to read these two letters sent to our dear brother Timothy from Paul, we begin to see some of the background and understand the reason for this man's preparedness of gifting and life in the Lord. And wonderfully, we discover in II Timothy 3:15 that it started with grandma and mama, those two wonderful women, grandma Lois and the mother Eunice. It says, "From childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through Jesus Christ." So we also discover that these two sisters, Lois and Eunice, read the Old Testament to Timothy when he was just a little boy.

Now I have a feeling here tonight that probably about twenty per cent of you are here because you had a grandma or a mother who loved the Lord. Now I hope you take it seriously that which they put into your heart when it comes time for you to take the torch of the testimony. When you go through history and look at some of those great heroes of the faith, as we call them, back in the background you often find a devoted godly mother or a grandmother. Such was the case of Count Zinzendorf; his grandmother raised him up teaching him Scriptures, teaching him to sing these conference songs that little children sing. From the time when he was just a little child he grew up absorbed in the Word of God.

This is by the way one of the greatest blessings of getting together all these years at the family conference—what the children learn year by year. When I hear those songs, I almost want to be in those classes. I feel they have touched and learned some things that are truly precious. As Jerry prayed, may those songs be written in their hearts to sing ten years from now, fifteen years from now. From the test comes the testimony. That was Timothy's life. What a blessing to be raised by a godly mother!

Now they read the Old Testament Scriptures, but probably when Paul came through on his first missionary journey to Derbe and Lystra or Iconium, they heard him preach the gospel. We are not really positive where Timothy is from, but grandma and mama heard the gospel and they got saved. Whether Timothy got saved through his grandmother and mother or whether he got saved through Paul's ministry, we do not really know. But it is amazing when Paul comes back about two and a half years later, how this kid had become a young man of God. He was teaching the Bible evidently or teaching about Jesus Christ, and he had godly character in him.

Timothy Learned the Lord Jesus Through Brothers and Sisters Meeting Together

I want to make a plug here because I wish that every young child could enter into God's seminary because it is the church as the body of Christ in reality. How did Timothy grow up like that? When Paul arrived there, he was well-known and respected and Paul saw that there was something in his life. All of that happened just through brothers and sisters. We do not know if other apostles had gone through Lystra and Derbe, but let's just assume for the moment that it was the elders who had just newly been saved and brothers and sisters meeting together who had newly been saved. But there was such a reality of Jesus in the midst of them that Timothy was learning the Lord Jesus—not just learning the teachings of the Old Testament, but learning about Jesus and learning Jesus and hearing Jesus. God has chosen for His church to ground His children in the Lord. So we see this being one of the things that happened in Timothy's life.

Timothy Receives the Holy Spirit and a Gift

We see in chapter 1:6 that at some point Paul laid hands on Timothy and he received some gifting. It does not really tell us what, but he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He received a gift that was used to edify the body of Christ. This was part of Timothy's young preparation in those days. Then we see in verses 8 and 9, from Paul's exhortation to Timothy, that as he traveled with Paul, he was exposed to the gospel, to the mysteries of Christ, to the mysteries of the body of Christ, to the mysteries of God's eternal purpose. It is so wonderful when somebody can be in an atmosphere where such wonderful things are preached. Paul was a steward of the mysteries of Christ and his gospel was so deep and so rich. Timothy must have seen the Lord Jesus in His church high and lifted up and at the center of God's purpose. What a wonderful thing it is to be exposed to gospel preaching as Timothy had been in his own experience.

Timothy Exhorted to Retain the Sound Teaching He had Received

In verse 13 Paul is exhorting him to "retain the standard of sound words which he heard from me." We realize that hidden in Timothy's heart there was sound teaching and words. This was all part of the preparation of one who would bear the torch of the testimony of Jesus Christ. But you know there are some young people who hear Paul preach and it goes in one ear and right out the other. They say, "What did that guy say?" As many of the young people have been saying all week, "What did Dana say?" That is why they should have heard Lucio. But some people say, "What did he say?" It just goes in one year and out the other. However, for some people it goes in one ear and down into the heart. That was Timothy.

Timothy had a Good Deposit

So the precious first sense of preparation for Timothy, being one who could take the torch of the testimony, is in chapter 1:14. This is a precious reality. Timothy had a treasure in him by the Holy Spirit. He had, as some translations say, “a good deposit.” Now what is that? Is that treasure Jesus? Well, no. That treasure is what Jesus has worked into Timothy's life. It is something in his character now. It is something that has been deposited there. It is holiness walked out. It is righteousness understood. It is power having been used and trimmed. There was a deposit in Timothy. So even though Timothy was a timid young man, in fact he had a treasure in him. Now God builds that treasure in a young person's life in order that it can be used for Him later on. So Paul said to Timothy, “Now Timothy, guard that treasure that is inside you.”

It really is a tragedy to me when I see somebody I knew as a young person who really had that treasure in them, but they did not guard it. They went off to school and got into business; this happened and that happened. The next thing you know when you see them, whether they are a Christian or not, you are not so clear because you can see the deposit is missing.

Do you guard whatever the Lord has put in your heart? Paul went on to say, “I thank God that I know and am persuaded that whatever I commit to God He keeps” (see II Timothy 1:12). Young people, whatever you have heard this week, whatever you have fellowshiped, whatever you have touched this week of the Lord Jesus, will you just commit that to the Lord and say, “Lord, would You keep that? Would You keep that in my heart? Would You let that be part of my deposit?” That is all preparation for that time when you and I are to bear that torch of the testimony.

Timothy Exhorted to Fight the Good Fight

Paul carefully watched Timothy even as they ministered together, and sometimes apart. However, Paul writes to him and you can even sense in his first letter that he was watching Timothy. Now we heard this morning from II Timothy 4 that Paul testified the end of his time had come. He had fought the fight, run the race, and kept the faith; but at the same time that he was fighting these spiritual battles in his own life, he was watching Timothy, because part of the important preparation in our lives is that the Lord gives us a good fight to fight. One way we become strong is when we fight the good fight of faith. So Paul exhorted Timothy.

In I Timothy 6 we see the exact words there and we will see it in its two forms. It says in I Timothy 6:12, “Fight the good fight of faith.” For those who are growing and learning, those who are preparing to take up the torch, there is a fight of faith that must precede taking up the torch. If you are completely inexperienced, if you have not killed your bear or lion, you are not able to stand against Goliath. So there is a fight of faith that must be undertaken. And Paul mentioned two special areas, which along with the other fights of faith, Paul especially exhorts Timothy about these two because they apply to young people and any young adults who are pursuing a career in this world.

Keeping Faith and a Good Conscience

I Timothy 1:18-19 says, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience.”

There it is; “Keeping faith and a good conscience”—that is a fight. “Keeping faith” means when the world gets you into their university classes and they start laughing at you for believing in God, you need to go back to the Word and fight that good fight of faith. You need to hold on to the faith you have in Jesus Christ. It is a fight because the enemy wants to snatch it away. I know we get overwhelmed sometimes in the university at how smart the professors are. But a lot of that is they are just full of baloney and you will find that out later on. But for now you need to fight the good fight of faith.

But here is the deal: “Keeping a good conscience”—if your conscience gets defiled, that is to say, if you start disobeying regularly what your conscience is telling you to turn from and ask for forgiveness, your faith will be ruined in the process. You cannot go on with living faith if your conscience is busted. We remember John encouraging little children in his epistle of I John 3: “When you pray, you will receive whatever you ask if your heart does not condemn you.” Faith is connected to your conscience; so if your conscience is bad, your faith will fizzle out. I often tell the young people to start out praying big: “Oh Lord, we pray that You will help us today and help me to keep my faith.” Then your conscience hits you. “Even though I do not deserve it that much. I have not been studying much. Well, I have not been praying much. Anyways, sorry, Lord, I did not mean to bother You.” What just happened? That faith balloon just blew out all of the air because their conscience was bad. You have to fight that battle.

The Fight to Keep Your Testimony as a Man of God

But in chapter 6 he is talking about something else. I Timothy 6:12 says, “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”

Here he is talking about another fight, and it is the fight to keep your testimony as a man of God. Notice what he goes on to say in the next two verses: “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (vv. 13-14).

The Issue in this Battle is Money

What do you think the issue was that Paul said was such a battle in this matter of fighting the good fight of faith, in keeping your confession and your testimony? It is the temptation of money. You will notice verse 12 comes on the heels of what he has been previously talking about in verses 9-11a: “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of

money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But flee from these things, you man of God.”

Now that is your confession. By the grace of God you have been saved through Jesus Christ and you are a man of God. God has placed a deposit in you and you are standing for the testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord over your life from start to finish. Then money gets in there and mammon gets worshipped, and Jesus is out the window. You will suffer much if you do not fight this fight of faith. Basically, you have to read chapter 6 to see it all. But he says, “You know something, man of God, be content with what you have. Don't be ambitious for riches because it will drive you off the course. Be content because the Lord will supply what you need. You need a job? Be careful there is a snare in every step you take in a vocation in this world of climbing up the ladder and all that stuff. Be aware, you man of God. Fight the good fight of faith. Hold fast your confession.” How do you do that? By the life that is within you. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called. Do you live by Christ's life? Is Christ your life? Do you confess that? Do you testify that? Do you realize that that is what we are called to, living in Christ and Christ in us? Now you need to fight that good fight of faith or else you will find you are serving two masters and you will not be able to do so. These are some of the kind of tests that are involved in us growing up.

Not only that, there were other exercises that Paul exhorted Timothy to do in preparing to be a torchbearer. In II Timothy 3:15 I have already mentioned that Timothy grew up through his grandmother and mother teaching him the Word of God. He developed a devotional life in the Word of God. He could open the Word of God and receive life from it. He could pray and understand the Word of God.

A Workman Who Can Rightly Divide the Word of Truth

But in II Timothy 2 Paul says, “Now Timothy, you have to step up. It is one thing to just take the Bible as a source of devotion, but I want you to take hold of the Bible and make it yours. I want you to study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who can rightly divide the word of truth because there is a problem in the church and heresy and wrong teaching” (see v. 15).

Again in II Timothy 2 he exhorts Timothy, “You have to take hold of the Word of God. You have to be able to rightly divide it. It is not just a devotional book. You need to take it. It needs to be the word of life to you and something you can teach to other people. Because there are some people like Hymenaeus and Philetus who are going around telling the Christians that the resurrection has already taken place.” That means that everyone that was left on earth missed it, and it upset the faith of some. These screwballs are going around telling such things. Somebody needs to be able to rightly divide the word of truth or those screwballs will go around and do all kinds of damage. Timothy, lay hold of the Word of God. Dear young people, lay hold of the Word of God” (see vv. 15-18).

The Exhortation for Timothy to Grow Up

Let me take it a step further. Actually if I am right, Paul is talking to a thirty-plus year old Timothy. Now there is a whole generation of thirty-plus, who just got married, have one kid, a

new job and thinking about buying a house; and you are Timothy that Paul is talking to. Let's not just lay it on the young people. Some of them are just learning how to fight the good fight of faith, but some of you who are thirty years old are still absolutely passive. I do not know if we find it in the Bible somewhere that between the ages of twenty-five to forty-five you can go on vacation from the body of Christ. It is not in my Bible. I do not know why people do that. Paul is exhorting Timothy, a thirty-plus year old guy: "It is time to grow up, Timothy." Basically that is what he is saying by these kinds of disciplines.

Not only that, he compliments Timothy, "I am glad to hear that you are working out down at the gym three days a week. Now there is nothing wrong with that. By the way, the gymnasium and this kind of working out in physical things, can also include, according to the Greek understanding, scholastic training. So okay, your physical training and workout, that's fine. Physical discipline is good. Scholastic discipline is good. But how about spiritual discipline? Are you exercising your spirit as much as you are exercising your body?"

Up in Manhattan we have a whole bunch of people who belong to the gym. They all have their headphones on, and they are running on whatever those things are. They are listening to something, and I am not sure it is always Christian music. All right, you are going to get some exercise. You are going to stay healthy and in good shape. Good for you. How about spiritual exercise? Do you realize that it is so important for someone who will carry the torch of the testimony to be exercised in spirit, to hear the voice of the Lord, to commune with Him and all these kinds of things? This is part of becoming a true overcomer. In a way Paul is actually telling Timothy, "Now Timothy, you have come to the age where you need to start deliberately choosing your course in life. Up to this point people have been doing things for you. You have gone to school so you had to study. Now you are at a point where you are setting your own life and I want you to set it according to your calling in Christ Jesus."

The Church has Become a Large House

This sounds simple except for the fact that even during the times since Timothy was a young man in Lystra and Derbe, in that precious wonderful body of Christ in which he learned the Lord, in these succeeding fifteen years or more, there has been a change in the church. It was no longer God's seminary. Why? Paul says in II Timothy 2:20: "In a large house ..., and he is referring to the church. What has happened? Now the church has grown, praise God. People got saved, praise God. Fellowships are bigger, praise God. However, they are not doing so well in raising the children in the Lord. As a matter of fact, because this house is so big we find all kind of vessels there. There are good vessels, gold and silver vessels, noble vessels; but there are also scoundrels, carnal vessels, vessels out for their own gain. So in a large house where the light used to be clear and the testimony on the lampstand so pure, where it was the house of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth, now it is a large house and there are all kinds of things. You might find some good servants of God in your fellowship or you might find some guys who are sort of ministering by the seat of their pants. They are doing it as an afterthought and are not committed to the Word of God nor to the will of the Lord. So Timothy, now you need to set your own course. You need to determine how you are going to live.

Standing on the Firm Foundation

II Timothy 2:19: “Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.’”

“Timothy, I want you to stand on the firm foundation. I want you to be firmly grounded regardless of what you see going on around you.” Now listen, I do not need to make a case for this, but you know that for young people getting out of high school, going to college, and going into the church culture of the United States, it is a very confusing and enticing thing. There is good and there is bad out there. Our young people get into stuff that is called Christian. In the city all the time, we hear of folks who go to a Bible Study and have a great time, then after the Bible Study they go out to bars and drink and get drunk and hang out to 2 o’clock in the morning. Now there is something wrong with that kind of lifestyle.

So Paul says, “You stand on this firm foundation. The Lord knows those who are His. There may be some pretenders, some of these Hymenaeus and Philetus, who say the resurrection has already come, some false teachers, some pretenders; but the Lord knows those who are His. You can take that to the bank. And you can also take this to the bank. Those who name the name of the Lord Jesus abstain from wickedness. You can count on it. Those who really love the Lord stay away from that which is iniquitous, wicked, and wrong. Take that to the bank, Timothy; you decide to live by that standard.”

A Vessel of Honor

He further goes on after talking about that large house and tells Timothy, “I want you to be a vessel of honor.” I think Paul’s heart would have been broken if Timothy had become a vessel of dishonor. But listen to what he says to him in verses 21-22: “Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared [for bearing the torch] for every good work.” Now Timothy, set your course right this way. “Flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

If you want to be somebody who carries the testimony of the Lord, I am thinking you are going to have to make a decision and pick the right friends. You understand? I know you want to hang out with everybody. Today it is a very inclusive generation of young people. But it is time to pick your friends and it is with those who will pursue righteousness and love with a pure heart. Those are the ones that you can set on the right course.

All of these things are for Timothy’s preparation. The time had now come, as Paul realized his time was about gone, for Timothy to take up the torch of the testimony and carry on.

The Passing of the Baton

We find in II Timothy 2:1-2 an allusion to what a lot of Bible scholars think is the marathon and the passing of the baton. “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

If you look closely in verse 2, there are four handoffs. He first says, “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses ...” Here is the first link. It is Paul and he is saying, “Now Timothy, you have heard me speak over and over again. I want you to pass along things but not what we spoke about in private—perhaps we prayed and some miracle happened—but I want you to talk and pass on the gospel as I presented it. Be a steward of the mysteries, even those you have heard me explain. Those things you have heard me share in the presence of many people, you need to take up and make them yours. I am not saying, ‘Timothy, go down the street and say, ‘I want to read you Paul’s message, and he says, ‘Hi, my name is Paul, and I want to talk ...’ No, you have got to make the gospel which you have heard from me real to you. You have got to digest it and then begin to share it as it comes through you in reality.” Now that takes some digesting. It takes going back to the notes from the conferences that you have attended with the apostle Paul.

Now Paul says, “It is time for you to take the torch from my hand; but not only to take the torch from my hand, I want you to pass it on. You take it from my hand and I want you to ‘entrust these things to faithful men” (see II Timothy 2:2). So I want you to take this torch of the testimony and I want you to pass the things that I have shared with you along to some faithful men.”

Timothy is to Pass the Torch to Faithful Men

The next step is that those faithful men will be able to teach others. So it is actually four groups. Do you see that? I just presented it badly, but if you look at verse 2 you see it is very obvious. Paul handing it to Timothy and Timothy handing it to faithful men and these faithful men teaching others as well. There is a handoff there, a passing of the torch. We see it going on in Paul’s life as he is exhorting Timothy to do these things, and Timothy has now come to the place where it is time to take the torch. Now how is he going to do it?

We have talked about the church being gold and seeing the church as gold. That is faith; that is the substance of things hope for and the evidence of things not seen. We need to minister out of that gold standard and not out of the lower standard.

Can you imagine taking Paul’s torch? Talk about the gold standard! Let me take up Mark’s torch or somebody else, but to take Paul’s torch and share these mysteries? As many times as Timothy heard Paul preach these things, I am sure he would say, “Wow! This ministry is so vast and tremendous, who could possibly pass this on?” However Paul said, “Okay, now it is your turn.” That is the gold standard of a torch, wouldn’t you say?

Now Timothy is kind of a timid guy. When he hears that he has to pass this gold standard on to other people, you know he must have broken out in hives. How is he possibly going to do that? “Oh no, no, Paul, didn’t you write to Titus? Tell him to take the torch.” But obviously Paul saw something in this more introverted, fearful guy that was important. There is a deposit in him that needed to be passed on. Of course, it was to be passed on to Titus as well. It was not that Paul could only pass the torch to one person. We are talking about having faith here. This is something most people would cave if they had to carry such a responsibility.

Be Strong in the Grace of Christ Jesus

Paul knows the reality and before he talks about passing the torch he says this: “Timothy, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” That is the only way he could pass the torch. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

As we know Timothy was a timid guy, a little passive. He even had some stomach problems. He was one of those guys who say, “You know, I do not feel so good tonight.” So Paul said, “Drink a little wine. Take a little wine and get busy.” We see from at least three references in Timothy that he still had a complex that he was young. We have some Asian brothers in our fellowship in New York who are probably between 32 and 38 and still think they are teenagers. “No, no, no, not me; I am too young.” That’s Timothy: “No, no, no I am too young.” Paul says, “You are thirty-five, Timothy.” “I know but that’s still too young.” How young is too young? In Flushing, we had a young people’s group and the leaders were forty-five to fifty years old. I am all for people remaining youthful, but there comes a time to stand up and say, “I am an adult.”

Freely Received—Freely Give

Only by the grace of God is he going to be able to do that. Indeed, a new level of grace is going to be needed. We have something which back in those days they did not have. We have this confusion today about grace, that grace is just something that is freely and passively received: “Oh, I received the grace of God. He loves me. He has forgiven me. He has enabled me and helped me.” It is just by grace freely received. Now comes the part of grace which is “freely received, freely give.” There is a part of grace that has to be laid hold of. If Timothy is going to lay hold of the torch that Paul is giving him, he is going to have to lay hold of this, which I will call “responsible grace.”

Responsible Grace

As our brother Jerry shared, back in those early days things were chaotic. But Jerry suddenly realized: “The Lord wants *me* to take responsibility.” Now that is grace. That was not law. Don’t think responsibility is law; it is the grace of God. But it is the grace to be taken. There comes a point in our lives where the Lord says, “Will you reach out to Me now? Will you trust Me now?” And that is exactly the point that we see Timothy needs to go through.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This phrase which is actually the Greek word *enduelement* “be clothed” is only used in one other place which is in Ephesians 6:10 where it says, “Be strong in the Lord.” Wear the Lord. Be clothed in the Lord and in the power of His might to do spiritual warfare. This grace needs to be laid hold of.

Paul does not want to leave that to Timothy’s imagination completely, so he gives him a couple of very simple explanations of what this grace is. This responsible grace is what you may call soldier’s grace. So you notice in the next verse he talks about soldier’s grace:

Soldier's Grace

II Timothy 2:3-4: "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

What is soldier's grace? You sign up and obey. That is the deal. You sign up in the Lord's service, and whoever that general is, whatever king you are working for or whatever the case may be, you obey what they say. You go where they tell you to go. You fight when they tell you to fight. You do not entangle yourself. You do not say, "I am sorry, I cannot fight. I am still waiting for my delivery from Wal-mart. I have a 60 inch TV coming. Sorry, I cannot fight today." No, one who is in the Lord's service does this: they are willing to suffer and obey by the grace of God.

What are we really talking about here? We are talking about grace—denying yourself, taking up your cross and following Him. This is part of what it means to bear the torch of the testimony. There comes a point in your life where with all of the grace of God you have and all the blessings and the deposit you have received, now it is time to deny yourself, take up that cross, and follow Him. So the soldier's cross is this: "I am willing to endure hardship because I am enduring hardship with You." Paul actually says if you look closely at it, "Suffer hardship with." "Me" isn't really there. Maybe it is suffer hardship with Christ or suffer hardship with me. But it means that now you are in a corporate hardship with Christ, with Paul, and all the brethren where you are now called upon to serve with sacrifice; that is growing up. I hope you realize when people are blessed week after week at the fellowship where you are, somebody is sacrificing week after week to bring life and blessing there. At some point you become one who is a giver and it is a sacrifice. It is a denial of self and a joining in the service. Paul is saying to Timothy, "Timothy, it is time for you to enlist." That is what you are doing when you are taking this torch.

Athlete's Grace

Then he goes on and says, "You need athlete's grace." That is in II Timothy 2:5: "Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules."

An athlete's grace is an inner discipline. In a month from now we are going to see the Olympics. The thing that amazes me is how these people have been getting up every morning at 4 o'clock and running ten miles before they go to work. They have been doing that for three years before they ever get to the Olympics. How do they do it? There is some inner discipline or self-discipline. In the end, no one else is going to do it for you. You get out and run or it doesn't happen. There is that inner discipline. Of course, Paul is talking about a spiritual discipline, but nevertheless you have to follow the rules. There are rules of spiritual discipline that are necessary if you are going to be an athlete and actually win or gain reward. These things you need to begin to understand.

Rules of Spiritual Discipline

Rule 1)—Multitasking makes you shallow. The attention span of young people has been cut in half in the last twenty years. Sometimes I watch young people while someone else is speaking, and I see some of them fidgeting all the time. They go get some water, come back, then go to the bathroom. They come back and sit down. Then they get their Bibles; they put their Bibles down. They get something out and work on that a while. That is while somebody is speaking here. Where is the attention span? Who can concentrate? “I cannot concentrate on anything but I can do ten things at once.” Watch! Eventually you are going to learn something and it is this: If you do not spend quality time with the Lord, uninterrupted time with no earbuds, you are not going to hear the Lord. Now how are you going to be a good soldier for the Lord if you cannot even hear the Lord? If you have not spent the time to hear the Lord because you either go from listening to music to listening to messages, or to watching television, or doing this and that. “Timothy—inner discipline!” Because of his mother Timothy grew up in a society where they took the Sabbath off to pray, meditate, and think about God. That is a good place to start. Have you taken a Saturday off to just think about God and read His Word? I am telling you this is the kind of inner discipline that is necessary if we are going to carry the torch.

Rule 2)—Web reliance will not make you a scholar. Young people now have access to everything; they can google whatever they want. In our little group in Manhattan, we do a daily devotion every day. We have about forty people who do a devotion, and it rotates around. I would say, and I do not want to be mean, but at least two days a week, I get a devotion that comes straight, pumped from the Internet. That is to say, they looked up the Scripture portion that we are dealing with, they googled it, they did the Blue Bible, or the White Bible or whatever Bible, and looked up a few references, and they spit it out. You can tell. Sometimes they even have the thees and thous from the commentary in it. Now listen, I know you have access to all the commentaries you can possibly touch, but have you ever looked at the Bible and said, “Lord, what does that mean? You teach me.” This web dependence is ridiculous. There is a lot of junk out there by the way on the Internet that will drive you in a wrong direction. It is not to run to a book; it is to run to the Lord. “Timothy, if you are going to run the race, you have to do it according to the rules of spiritual development.”

Farmer’s Grace

In II Timothy 2:6: “The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.”

This is the third illustration of what it means to take up your cross, to take up the torch, and by the grace of God to be responsible—the farmer’s grace. Now how many of you have a relative who is a farmer? Then you know how hard they work. It takes grace for the hard-working farmer. When I was a young pup and still in seminary, I was actually a pastor out in a rural community. They got up at four o’clock in the morning to milk the cows and then they worked all day long. Then they came back and harvested the crops. They worked hard. Now why do they do that? They expect reward, and the hard-working farmer should be the first to receive the crops.

The grace of a farmer is actually two things It is working hard, serving the Lord hard, and you can do that by the grace of God. And the second thing is being patient for the harvest. I actually saw some farmers who planted a field full of stuff, and a bad problem came along such as locusts or whatever, and they lost their whole crop. They lost a whole year's worth of working—tilling and watering, the whole thing, and they lost it all. But they went out the next year and planted again. Now that is faith. If I will serve the Lord with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, surely the Lord will bear fruit in the end. This kind of a life was called upon for Timothy as he was to take up the torch of the testimony.

Remember Jesus Christ

But Paul did not just leave it like that, just to take grace. He gives him the key to moving forward in this grace and laying hold of the torch and it is this—remember Jesus Christ. There it is. After all of those things, he goes on to say in II Timothy 2:7-8a: “Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ.”

Take all of the things that I have said. Take it to the Lord and have Him explain what that means for you in your life. Remember Jesus Christ. Think of your Master, think of your Lord, think of His hard work, think of His keeping to the rules, think of His suffering hardship, and you will find grace to do the same. When you look off unto Jesus, suddenly the grace is there to do what needs to be done to be faithful. All of this was to prepare Timothy to take the torch.

Knowing the Time We are Living in

There is one other Scripture that I would like to end with and that is in II Timothy 4:1-2: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

Paul goes on to talk about sharing and ministering and being faithful even in an era and day when people become godless, people become worldly, people will not even listen. I want you to still be faithful.

All of these things we have been talking about all week in this matter of taking up the torch of the testimony, this matter of the testimony of the Lord and His church, can only be seen and understood in the right time zone. Now this is what I call the Kingdom Time Zone—KTZ. A lot of these exhortations do not make sense unless you know what time it is—that we are right near the end. In light of this time zone we are in and the nearness of the Lord Jesus, these things suddenly become important.

Paul’s Solemn Charge to Timothy

When we look at these two verses in chapter 4, it is interesting and we can learn a lot here. In my translation it says, “I solemnly charge you.” Actually, do you know what the word is? It has the word martyr in it, martyro. It is diamartyromai. It is a verb, and what it means is “witness upon witness.” “I solemnly charge you” means “I witness upon witness.” This is a term that is used when there is a very solemn act. I think even in the marriage ceremony in the

United States, “I solemnly charge you” are the words we use. Paul is bringing Timothy to the place where he wants to give him this solemn charge.

“I solemnly charge you first of all, Timothy, you are in the presence of God who is here witnessing this moment.” Notice he says, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God.” Timothy, this is not just you and me. Brothers and sisters, young people, thirty-plusers, everybody, I charge you in the presence of God. He is here. I hope you know that and realize that He is watching to see your consecration in this matter. I charge you in the presence of God. It is not just my witness, Timothy, but it is God’s witness. I am witnessing; God is witnessing and Jesus Christ who is to be the judge of the living and the dead. So Timothy, I charge you, and then I double charge you in the presence of God, and I triple charge you in the presence of Jesus Christ who is your Judge, who is watching you to see who does good, who needs reproving, who needs blessing, who gets reward. He is your Judge and you are standing before the Lord Jesus your Judge. May you see once again Jesus who is in the midst of us watching and looking upon us, who is the Lord of our ministry. Timothy, I solemnly charge you. I am charging you. I witness. The presence of God witnesses. Jesus Christ the Judge witnesses you.

Our Faithfulness has to do with His Appearing

And he goes on to say, “And by His appearing.” I charge you that that which you commit yourself to now has a connection to His appearing. Your faithfulness could be connected timewise to His appearing. I charge you to realize that the importance of you being faithful to taking the torch has to do with the timing of His return. Do you realize that?

On top of that, not only is it His appearing, but His kingdom. Here you are about to take the torch, Timothy, and I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and in the presence of Jesus Christ your Lord and Judge that you are in the presence of His appearing, and you are in the presence of your kingdom, your reward, your service.

The Holy Spirit has to bring us into that time zone for it to be impressed on our own hearts to make such a solemn charge: “Lord, I will consecrate my body as a living sacrifice in full service to You. I am willing to take the torch. Those things I have received over the years and I have kept in a notebook here and there, I want to chew it. I want to understand. I want to be able to share with others.” Oh, what a revival I believe would come if all of us who have received the riches and the treasures of the conferences and the Christian Testimony Ministry would begin to digest them and make them our own so that we can speak of these things and pass on the torch of the testimony! I believe there are some in this room tonight who have been prepared by a lifetime of grace and blessing by godly parents, godly grandparents, or godly upbringing even in the body of Christ where you have learned the Lord and how to obey and submit, how to share and pray. All of that is preparation.

The Foundation of God is Sure

Will you take the torch of the testimony? Will you be one of those who stands up no matter what the environment is? If it is the large house where there is good and bad, dark and light, and you stand up with the torch of the testimony and say, “The foundation of God is sure.” What a testimony! Thus as we live in this world, are we willing to preach, teach, exhort

brothers and sisters and those who are not believers? There is a certain solemnity as my translation says, "I solemnly charge you."

Only the grace of God will enable the torch to be passed from one to another. We have watched the Lord do wonderful things over these years, and the wonderful fruit of it all would be if all of us would take that torch, be faithful, and hold it up. As we gather together on Sundays hold up the torch of the testimony, as we live our lives in this world, hold up that torch in the presence of God, in the presence of Jesus, in light of His appearing and in light of His kingdom. May the Lord help us to be faithful!

Let's pray:

We are so thankful, Lord, that You are able to go against all the temperaments, all of the spirits of this world and society, even as we hear that the millennial generation is totally selfish and into themselves. We stand against that and say, "That is not what the man of God is." May those in that millennial generation be those who are willing to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus and to be faithful witnesses. For those who are older and for those who are younger, we look back and see that You have providentially prepared us with many blessings and much deposit. Lord, we do not want to lose that deposit. We guard it, and not only do we want to guard that deposit, but we want to pass along the things which we have received on to other faithful people who will carry the torch down the road. We thank You that we can watch as Timothy came to this moment in his life. We do not know if he ever saw Paul again but we know he was faithful for another thirty years until he died a martyr as a faithful brother in the church at Ephesus. So we pray for ourselves that we will be found faithful regardless of the change of the guard or what may happen. Lord, may we be those who take the torch and carry it forward for Jesus' sake. In Your name we pray. Amen.