

**Running the Race of Faith
2 Timothy 2:1-7 (Week 03) 04/26/2026
Guidance for Gospel Ministry**

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

¹ You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. ⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. ⁷ Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. (2 Timothy 2:1-7)

Introduction & Review

- In **Chapter 1 of 2 Timothy**, the Apostle Paul, writing from a Roman Prison,
- gives several **challenges** to his child in the faith, **Timothy**.
- In **verse 6** he calls him...

⁶ ...to fan into flame the gift of God... (2 Timothy 1:6)

- Paul wants Timothy to light a fire under his gifts, **to use them as God intended**.
- And Timothy's gifts were in the area of preaching and teaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Then, because of Paul's imprisonment,
- there were those who'd turned away from him and his gospel.
- And so, in **verse 8** Paul commands Timothy...

⁸ ...do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God... (2 Timothy 1:8)

- Again, Paul want's Timothy to preaching and teaching the gospel, **even if it means suffering**.
- Then in **verse 13** Paul **exhorts** Timothy to...

¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me... (2 Timothy 1:13)

- Paul wants Timothy, not only to preach and teach the gospel but follow it, **live out the gospel**.
- Then in **verse 14** Paul add this challenge...

¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:14)

- The good deposit entrusted to Timothy also refers to **the gospel of Jesus Christ**.
- Paul had received the gospel from the Lord himself, **and he passed it on to Timothy**.
- And now he calls Timothy (by the power of the Spirit),
- to guard the gospel against all who would seek to do it or its messengers harm.

- And following these **challenges** Paul then, in **verses 15-18**, gives two examples.
- one of those who, in shame, deserted Paul and the gospel.
- And another of **Onesiphorus** who was faithful to Paul and the gospel.
- And his point is, be like **Onesiphorus**, be faithful to the gospel and its messengers.
- So, throughout **Chapter one** Paul's emphasis has been on calling Timothy **to engage in what I and others have labeled gospel ministry**.
- To not be ashamed of the gospel, but instead to continue preaching, teaching, following and guarding the gospel, **even it means suffering**.
- Even it means, **like it did for Paul**, imprisonment and condemnation to death.
- Then in **2 Timothy 2:1-7**, our passage for today,
- **Paul not only continues to challenge Timothy but to give him...**
- **Guidance for Gospel Ministry.**
- And this **guidance** is **crucial for each and every one of us**.
- I understand that since **Timothy was the Pastor at the church in Ephesus**,
- Some people believe that **1 & 2 Timothy** are mainly for Pastors, Missionaries and other full-time Christian workers.
- **But I disagree,**
- Because the Bible teaches that **every believer** is a minister of the Gospel.
- Whether you have a **different full-time job** or you're a student, or **retired**.
- **As a Christian you are part of the body of Jesus Christ.**
- **You have a role to fill in Gospel Ministry.**
- No matter what you do for a job...
- You (and I) are all called to be ambassadors, representatives, witnesses for Jesus Christ.
- In fact, **to the Ephesians Paul wrote...**

11 And [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

- Jesus gives to his church those who he has specifically called and gifted for **certain roles**.
- And these roles (**these ministries**) may take extra study and time,
- and therefore, those who fill these roles may **receive financial compensation**.
- **However**, their job is not to take on every aspect of **gospel ministry**...
- while the rest of the church watches from the sidelines. **Their job Paul says is...**

12 to equip the saints (that's every believer) for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:11-12)

- Every saint is equipped for ministry therefore every saint must engage in ministry.
- That's why one of the core values of Bridges Church is **Including Members in Ministry**
- And what is the work of ministry?
- Well, for the Christian, **all ministry is gospel ministry**.
- Everything we do preaching, teaching, worshiping, witnessing, caring for those in need, counseling those in pain, sending and supporting missionaries, etc....

- Everything must center on **the gospel of Jesus Christ**.
- On living out the gospel ourselves and proclaiming the gospel to a lost world.
- **All for the glory of God.**
- Therefore, we must be people who use the gifts God gives us to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, both in word (preaching, teaching, sharing the gospel)
- and in deed (living the gospel out that people might see the love and glory of God).
- **Bottom line, every Christian is to engage in gospel ministry.**
- But to do that, **we (Like Timothy) need Guidance.**
- And that's what we find in our passage for today, **so let's get to it...**
- The first, and **probably** the most important guidance Paul gives involves...

1. The Strength for Gospel Ministry

- Verse 1...

¹ You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2 Timothy 2:1)

- Timothy (Paul's child in the faith) is being called to a **difficult task**.
- **A task that may involve suffering.**
- **Therefore, Timothy needs strength, he** needs power, perseverance, passion and more.
- And Paul says, the strength you need, the strength for **doing gospel ministry** does not come from **our own willpower or natural abilities**.
- It comes from **grace that is in Christ Jesus**.
- Now we should be **familiar with grace** (charis in the Greek).
- It means **unmerited favor, merciful kindness**.
- So would define it as getting what you don't deserve.
- And when we think of God's grace we usually think of His unmerited favor that forgives sinners and brings about their salvation. **As Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us...**

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- We are saved by grace, **but God's grace doesn't end with our salvation**.
- God's grace (his unmerited favor to the underserving) continues on in the life of the believer.
- It is by grace that we are empowered (strengthened) to live the Christian life.
- God's grace works in us that we might overcome sin and become more like Christ.
- **And God's grace works through us to accomplish His works in this world.**
- **To the Church in Corinth Paul testifies to God's grace in his life...**

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain.

- Here Paul may be referring to God's saving grace that changed his life,
- then he adds

On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Corinthians 15:10)

- Paul was able to **work hard, to serve the Lord,**
- because of God's grace at work in and through Him.
- And it's this **aspect of grace** that Paul is speaking of in **2 Timothy 2:1...**

Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus

- Timothy, it's by grace that you are strengthen, empowered, to accomplish what God has called you to do, **that is to engage in Gospel ministry.**
- And what is crucial to understand is that this **grace is in Christ Jesus**
- Because what this means is those who are **in Christ Jesus,**
- **Those who've given their lives to Christ**
- **Those who are united with / in Christ.**
- **They (Timothy and all believers) share in his grace.**
- And so, what Paul is saying is that Timothy, and all who are **in Christ,**
- have available to them **grace that strengthens us for Gospel Ministry.**
- And the Bible tells us that this grace is **abundant and never ending.**
- The apostle John wrote...

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...

- Jesus Christ, the word that became flesh, is full of grace and truth and...

¹⁶ ...from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (John 1:14-16)

- In Christ, Timothy had, and we have **Grace upon Grace.**
- Grace that can never run out, **more grace is always available to be poured on God's children.**
- **And here's Paul's point...**
- It is by grace that we receive the strength (the power) to accomplish the work that God has called us to.
- So, the question is, **how can we...**

Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus

- Well, the command is "**Be Strengthened.**" **So JUST DO IT, JUST Be Strengthened!**
- **Now that's not very helpful is it.**
- So, to better understand what Paul is saying, **we need to delve into a bit of Greek Grammar.**
- "**Be strengthened**" is one word in the Greek. **It is** a verb, an action word.

- However, this verb is in the **present passive tense**.
- **Present** means it's always happening in the present, it is **ongoing**.
- Being strengthened is not a one-time thing, **it is a continuous action**.
- So, you are always being strengthened or at least strength is continually available to you.
- But the verb is also **Passive** which means that it is not something you do yourself,
- but something that is done **to you or for you**.
- So how do we acquire the strength that is continually available to us.
- How do we **receive the strength needed to engage in Gospel Ministry**.
- Well, since salvation, **comes by grace through faith**.
- Then it would follow that strength, which also comes by grace, **would require faith**.
- We must believe that **being in Christ** means we already have His Grace that Strengthens.
- We must trust that we've **received Christ's grace - "grace upon grace."**
- And therefore, he has and will continuously provide the strength we need for gospel ministry.
- You say but I don't **feel like I have the strength to for example** "share the gospel" with a co-worker.
- Well, this is where **faith must triumph over your feelings**,
- **In faith** you must step out and **"share the gospel"**.
- And when you do, and usually not until you do...
- **Then by His Grace, you will receive the strength needed to share your faith.**
- So, Paul BIG PICTURE is saying to Timothy...
- By the grace that is in Christ Jesus, as you engage in gospel ministry, you will be strengthened
- Nothing will come your way that you will not have the strength to handle,
- no person, no problem, no question, no suffering....
- There will be no time or circumstance when you can't carry out the ministry God had called you to.
- And that is true for all who are **in Christ and thus filled with his grace**.
- When God calls you to do something, by his grace, he will supply the strength you need.
- When he calls you to **share your faith**, he will give you the **power to be his witness**.
- When he calls you to **train a new believer**, he will give you the **fortitude to make a disciple**.
- When he calls you to **endure ridicule** from others, he will give you the **patience** to put up with them.
- And notice I said when, not if.
- God will call you to engage in these and other **God glorifying, gospel tasks**.
- So will you step out in faith,
- Will you trust that by his grace God will give you the strength to do what he calls you to do.
- Or will you ignore his call, giving in to **fear and unbelief**.

- **I've done both**, and I can testify that **faith is far superior to fear**.
- I could give you many examples, **but as I prepared one came immediately to mind**.
- When I was a missionary in Thailand, I was not great at speaking the Thai language.
- Even after two years of study, I was just okay,
- I could get by but there was still a lot of struggling **to understand and be understood**.
- And this greatly increased my resistance to sharing the gospel.
- Part of me (fear) didn't think I could do it,
- I thought Thai people wouldn't understand, and I might do more harm than good.
- However, another part of me (faith) knew that God had called me to share the gospel in Thailand.
- And so, I stepped out in faith, sharing the gospel with many Thai people.
- And every time, by God's grace, **I received the strength I needed**.
- God gave me boldness, he gave me calmness, he gave me the words I needed.
- I'm not saying that every Thai person I shared with, trusted in Jesus and their Lord and savior.
- But some did, and my Thai, although not perfect,
- was noticeably better when I was sharing the gospel.
- I noticed it, Christina noticed it and Thai people noticed it.
- When I shared the gospel with my language teacher, **Awd, who eventually became a believer**.
- She knew how bad my Thai was, and she was amazed at how fluent I became when we started talking about Jesus - **PraYeSu**.
- So, I can testify that when God calls you to engage in gospel ministry.
- If you don't give in to fear and unbelief and instead you step out in faith,
- God is faithful, by the grace that is in Jesus Christ,
- He will strengthen you to accomplish whatever He calls you to do.
- OKAY, so having **given Timothy guidance on the strength for Gospel Ministry**,
- Paul then turns to...

2. The Strategy for Gospel Ministry

- Grace empowered Timothy for his work, **and what was that work?**
- Well, as we saw last week it was **the same work that got Paul thrown into jail**.
- It was **Gospel ministry**, and for Timothy that meant preaching and teaching the word of God.
- And here in verse **2 of 2 Timothy 2**, Paul describes **this work and its strategic nature**.

2 and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:2)

- **You tell two or three people, and they tell two or three people and so on...**
- **This is disciple making one 101.**
- This verse, **this strategy** of taking what you've learned and passing it on to others,
- Others who will then pass it on to others, has been the church's strategy for the past 2,000 year.

- In fact, this is the reason you and I are here,
- because someone who'd received the gospel from someone else,
- Then passed it on to you,
- **And now (like Timothy) you are responsible for passing it on to others.**
- So, let's **examine this strategy a little closer.** Paul begins with...

What you have heard from me

- This reflects a relationship in which Timothy listened to Paul often and carefully.
- Paul took the responsibility to **disciple Timothy.**
- Now the verses don't tell us what Timothy heard from Paul, but the context does.
- As we saw earlier, In **Chapter 1**, Paul told Timothy to not be ashamed of the gospel.
- To use his gifts of preaching and teaching.
- And in **verse 13 he said...**

13 Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me... (2 Timothy 1:13)

- And in **verse 14...**

14 By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you. (2 Timothy 1:14)

- The context is clear, what Timothy had heard from Paul was the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- He was not **to be ashamed of it, preach it, teach it, follow it and guard it.**
- **And what is the gospel?**
- It's the good news of Jesus Christ,
- it is the heart and soul of God's word, **both Old and New Testament.**
- As Luke tells us, after Jesus' resurrection, he met two disciples on the Road to Emmaus,
- And after some conversation we read...

27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets (The Old Testament), [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:27)

- The Scriptures are about Jesus; they are the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Which includes the doctrines of the virgin birth, the Deity of Christ, the Trinity,
- Man's sinfulness, the atonement, the resurrection, salvation by faith, sanctification and more.
- Simply put the gospel has everything to do with Jesus Christ who he is, what he has done.
- **And what he wants us to do about it.**
- So that's what Timothy heard from Paul and that's what **We NOW Have in Our Bibles.**
- Now Timothy heard the gospel...

In the presence of many witnesses

- Why does Paul focus attention on **these “witnesses”**?
- Well, it seems that Paul is highlighting **the validity of his teaching**.
- Timothy, **what you’ve heard from me**, are the same things I’ve taught to many others.
- And you’ve been there and heard me teach them.
- I haven’t changed the gospel; it is the same message I received from Jesus Himself.
- And I’ve passed it on to you.
- Timothy had received the sound (uncorrupted) gospel of Jesus Christ from Paul.
- And we have the same sound (uncorrupted) gospel, in our Bible.
- And what was Timothy to do with what he’d heard?
- And what are we to do with what we have in our Bibles?

entrust to faithful men, (or faithful people) anthropos (man or mankind). who will be able to teach others also.

- That word faithful is the Greek *pistos* and it means trustworthy or reliable.
- ***Pistos*** can refer to someone’s faith or their faithful character, **and both fit here.**
- Timothy must train believers of character—**trustworthy people**.
- He needs to pass on the faith (the gospel) to disciples who are capable, godly,
- and committed to guard and teach what they have heard from him.
- Such men and women will then make disciples through the generations and to the nations.
- In fact, Paul’s strategy for Timothy is taken from Jesus’s strategy for the Church.
- Which we call the **great commission**, found in **Matthew 28...**

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

- Here **Jesus emphasizes the gospel going to all peoples.**
- But how **it goes is through teaching**, through taking what you’ve heard, (learned)
- and passing it on to faithful people (**that’s the heart of making disciples.**)
- And notice also that Jesus emphasizes that he will be with you...
- (he will strengthen and empower) you as you engage is the gospel ministry of Disciple making.
- And so, what Paul (who learned it from Jesus) is saying to Timothy and all believers is that..
- We are called to **proclaim the gospel (transmit the faith) make disciples.**
- And so, the question for us is, are we **following this strategy for gospel ministry.**
- Are you taking what **you’ve learned from God’s word**, from Godly teachers and preachers.
- And are you then **seeking to transmit** that to faithful men and women.
- **Are you involved in making disciples.**

- If yes then keep it up, continue to seek out faithful people who need to be disciplined.
- **But if not** then you might **want to have a conversation with God**.
- Asking him, **is there someone in my life** who you **would like me to disciple**?
- And when he answers positively, **and you feel fearful and inadequate**,
- You will need **to step out in faith and be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus**.
- One final thing, **maybe before you go make disciples**,
- **or while you are making disciples**,
- you also **want to be one** of those faithful men (or women) who is being disciplined.
- If that's the case then talk to a mature Christian you trust,
- ask him or her if they would be willing to help you grow in your faith.
- And if you don't have that kind of relationship with someone,
- then come to me or Pastor Brian we would be happy to help you be disciplined.
- **So that you can make disciples**.
- **OKAY**, so Paul has told Timothy where he can receive strength for gospel ministry.
- And what his strategy ought to be.
- And maybe **he paused here and thought...** Timothy could use some reinforcement,
- He could use a better understanding of what it means to **engage in Gospel Ministry**.
- He could also use **some inspiration** to help motivate him as he moves forward.
- And that's what **Paul provides** in the rest of our passage for today,
- And he does this by giving **Timothy and us...**

3. The Symbols of Gospel Ministry

- What's involved in Gospel Ministry.
- Paul answers this question with **three symbols (or metaphors) First...**

A. The Suffering Sacrificial Soldier

- In **verse 3** we read...

³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3)

- Even today the life of a soldier is difficult, **but it was even more so in Paul's day**.
- The soldier suffered **separation from family, sleeping on the ground**,
- **enduring heat and cold, hunger and thirst**, and many other hardships,
- including the stress and trauma of **battle, injury and possible death**.
- And in a similar way, those who **engage in gospel ministry** will experience suffering.
- In **verse 8** of **Chapter 1** Paul called Timothy to...

⁸ ...share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, (2 Timothy 1:8)

- Throughout his ministry Paul had suffered from **the sake of the gospel**.
- Even **as he writes this letter he's...**

9 ...suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. (2 Timothy 2:9)

- He knows that those who **engage in gospel ministry** will face suffering,
- and he wants Timothy to understand this as well.
- Jesus also sought to prepare his disciples for the suffering they would face...

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Matthew 16:24)

- Following Christ involves self-denial, being willing to give up your own life.
- Peter who accepted Jesus' call to suffer, makes the same call clear to all believers...

21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

- We follow **the suffering servant**, why are we surprised when we face suffering for the gospel.
- Again, **Peter says it well...**

12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings... (1 Peter 4:12-13)

- So, the New Testament is clear, following Jesus involves suffering.
- And **that suffering will only increase when you engage in gospel ministry.**
- This has certainly been **the case in many nations and most times.**
- The stories of martyrs, those who died for the sake of the gospel, fill the pages of church history.
- And today in **totalitarian nations** and nations where another religion is dominant,
- **the danger of suffering is great.**
- And even though, the **American church** is not currently facing this kind of suffering.
- We must be prepared; **for we have no assurance that our freedom to worship and proclaim the gospel will continue.**
- So, two things, **first**, let's take advantage of our ability to engage in gospel ministry with less suffering than many others throughout history and in our world today.
- **And second**, let's prepare ourselves for **potential suffering.**
- Let us think and act like soldiers, **ready/training for the battles that may come our way.**
- Paul then in **verse 4**, adds...

4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Timothy 2:4)

- A good soldier is devoted not to **civilian pursuits**, like wealth, comfort, safety, security, entertainment and more.
- But instead, he is single-mindedly devoted to the affairs of the one who enlisted him,
- **For the soldier that is his nation, his commanding officer.**
- And for Christian, that is Jesus Christ.
- As those who've been enlisted into the army of God by Jesus Christ,
- We must care more about pleasing our Lord and Savior,
- than accumulating possessions, living in comfort and safety, being entertained.
- The good soldier of Jesus Christ is willing to **make sacrifices for Christ**,
- To forego the pleasures (sinful and otherwise) of this world
- because of his **great love for Christ** and his desire to **please him above all else.**
- And so, the question for each of us is this:
- Are you, as a soldier of Jesus Christ, in the face of suffering and sacrifice,
- **are you willing to engage in Gospel ministry, to please him?**
- That's what we learn from the Symbol of the **Suffering Sacrificial Soldier.**
- Paul then compares the work of gospel ministry to...

B. The Disciplined Athlete

- **Verse 5...**

⁵ An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:5)

- The quality that victorious athletes all seem to share is **discipline.**
- **(At least with regards to their sport)**
- An athlete must be **disciplined to train their bodies and their minds,**
- Like they soldier they must have **discipline to forgo many of the pleasures of this world.**
- And Paul emphasizes that they must have discipline **to compete according to the rules.**
- For an athlete to receive the crown (to be victorious) he or she must discipline themselves to **follow the rules of their sport.**
- Just a few examples:
- **Runners** must stay in their lanes and stick to the course.
- **Basketball players** can't dribble with both hands at the same time,
- or stay in the key for longer than 3 seconds.
- **Football players** can't go offsides or hold onto opponents who don't have the ball.
- **Soccer players** can't use their hands (goalie), or tackle an opponent.
- There are lots of rules in sports, and if an athlete is not disciplined enough to follow those rules he or she **will be disqualified or penalized they won't be crowned.**

- And in a similar way, **if you're going to succeed in gospel ministry**,
- You must disciple yourself to follow the rules as well.
- **What rules, you ask? Well God's rules of course!**
- The Bible is filled with God's rule for life, **but I think we can focus on two.**
- In fact, according to Jesus, **these are the greatest rules,**
- and in fact, they summarize all the other rules. **Jesus said...**

37 ... "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

- Imagine Gospel Ministry, **if we were disciplined enough to follow these two rules.**
- If we loved God so much that **we lived for his purposes**, not ours.
- If we cared so much about **his glory** that we shared the gospel with everyone so that they might **worship the God we love.**
- And then love for your neighbor would just add to that.
- If we **truly love other people** as much as we love ourselves,
- then wouldn't **our first priority** be for them **to at least hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- Wouldn't we want them to have **every opportunity to experience the forgiveness**, salvation and eternal life that we have receive?
- But the problem is most Christians aren't disciplined enough to follow these rules.
- Because we love ourselves (in an unhealthy way) more than **we love God or our neighbor.**
- And so instead of focusing on **the gospel ministry** that God has called us to.
- We focus on our own **projects**, our own **hobbies**, our own wealth, comfort, safety,
- **and yes entertainment.**
- So, I would challenge you as I challenge myself,
- Call upon the Lord to give **you the discipline you** need to follow his rules.
- Call upon him to help you **overcome your selfishness** and obey his command to **love.**
- That your **love for God and other people** will compel you (like a runner coming out of the blocks) **to engage in Gospel Ministry.**
- Okay, Paul has given us the symbols of the suffering sacrificial soldier and disciple athlete...
- **And then he brings it home with...**

C. The Hard-Working Farmer

- **Verse 6...**

6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. (2 Timothy 2:6)

- Farming is hard work today, but it was especially hard before the machine age.

- **The farmer's life involved:**
- 1) Early and long hours because he could not afford to lose time;
- 2) Constant toil (plowing, sowing, tending, weeding, harvesting, storing);
- 3) Regular disappointments - frost, hail, pest, and disease;
- If you ever want to see just how hard a farmer had to work,
- just watch the **show Little House on the Prairie**,
- **Pa Ingles** was the hardest working man on TV.
- Scripture sings the virtues of Hard Work and looks down on laziness.
- This is especially of the book of **Proverbs**... in **Proverbs 14:23** we read...

23 In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23)

- Paul also believed in Hard Work for himself and others...
- In **Acts 20** he says...

35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak... (Acts 20:35)

- Paul worked hard, he supported himself as a tentmaker. (Bi-Vocational)
- He sometimes taught the word of God for hours.
- He also walked great distances in his missionary journeys.
- And so, he uses this symbol of a farmer to show the importance of hard work in gospel ministry.
- The fact is, if you want to engage in Gospel ministry,
- if you want to see the word of God, go forth in this world,
- if you want to see people rescued from hell and receive eternal life.
- Along with suffering, sacrifice and discipline, it's going to take some hard work.
- We are going to have to get our hands dirty.
- Gospel ministry requires strain, struggle, and diligence, **it's not always fun.**
- It involves studying the word of God (the gospel) so you can teach it to others.
- Going to church, listening to sermons, taking classes, reading books that will equip you to do Gospel Ministry.
- It involves time in prayer (which is definitely hard work)
- Praying for Pastors to preach the gospel well.
- Praying for Missionaries in places where the gospel is not known.
- Asking God to lead and guide you to people who need to hear the gospel.
- Asking God to give you the strength to share the gospel.
- Then it involves getting off the coach and getting out into the world.
- Meeting people who need the gospel.
- It involves **volunteering** to help your church be a place that people can come and hear the gospel.
- And so much more.

- Paul then concludes,

7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. (2 Timothy 2:7)

- These symbols of the suffering soldier, the disciplined athlete and the hard-working farmer
- are meant to help Timothy (and us) engage in gospel ministry.
- But we need to think about what Paul is saying, we need to gain understanding of what he means.
- And so, in conclusion, let me give you two things to think about.
- **First and obviously**, none of these symbols point to a life of ease.
- In fact, the opposite is true.
- **These symbols are meant to show the difficulty of gospel ministry.**
- This isn't the recruiting strategy that the world uses.
- Come join us in **suffering, sacrifice, discipline and hard work.**
- But God is honest, he wants his Children to know what they are in for.
- Timothy, Christian, preaching the gospel, teaching the bible, sharing your faith with unbelievers,
- making disciples, caring for the needy, serving believers and unbelievers, **It ain't easy.**
- BUT never forget the first, and most important point Paul made...

1 You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, (2 Timothy 2:1)

- By his grace Jesus Christ provides the strength we need to engage in this difficult work.
- God has promised that he will strengthen you for every ministry he calls you to.
- Think about that!
- Then second, think about the fact that these symbols show more than just the difficulty of ministry.
- They also show the rewards ministry offers.
- **For the suffering sacrificial soldier,**

4 ...his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Timothy 2:4)

- And if we engage in gospel ministry, we please Jesus Christ (what a reward).
- To hear Jesus, says to you, **well, done good and faithful servant enter into your rest.**
- **And for the disciplined athlete, he...**

receives a victor's crown

- And if we persevere in gospel ministry, we will receive a crown as well.
- Speaking to those **who shepherd the flock of God well**, Peter says....

4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:4)

- I don't know exactly what a crown of glory is, but I want one!

- And **finally for the hard-working farmer receives,**

⁶ **...the first share of the crops. (2 Timothy 2:6)**

- And if we work hard, engaging in gospel ministry, we too in a sense will receive a crop,
- As we proclaim and preach and disciple and more, **we will bear much fruit.**
- **Fruit in our lives and the lives of others.**
- Lasting fruit for the Kingdom of God, and in some way, we share in this fruit.
- So, think about these things,
- YES, engaging in gospel ministry, living out the gospel, sharing the gospel,
- Making disciples is difficult.
- It involves suffering, sacrifice, discipline and hard work.
- But it is well worth it, as Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and I conclude with this...

⁵⁸ **Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)**

- Because there is nothing more **eternally valuable** or **more rewarding** than Gospel Ministry.

Would you join me in prayer!