

Main Idea: According to 2 Timothy 2:1-7, when the world turns up the heat on Christ’s followers, must must fulfill three important tasks, by His grace.

- I. We must receive (1).
- II. We must reproduce (2).
 - A. We must learn God’s truth.
 - B. We must teach God’s truth to faithful followers.
- III. We must resolve to endure (3-7).
 - A. This takes the discipline of a soldier (3-4).
 1. The soldier’s life is marked by duty.
 2. The soldier’s life is marked by denial.
 3. The soldier’s life is marked by delight.
 - B. This takes the determination of an athlete (5).
 1. An athlete knows about the present grind.
 2. An athlete knows about the future gain.
 3. An athlete knows about the guidelines.
 - C. This takes the diligence of a farmer (6).
 1. Farmers know about hard work.
 2. Farmers know about the harvest.

Make It Personal: It’s vital that we reflect on what we have heard (7).

1. Am I living a dependent life?
2. Am I passing on to others what I have received?

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Someone turned up the heat.

I’m not talking about the temperature. I have in mind the moral and spiritual climate these days, which is reflected by some headlines you may have seen this past week.

The first was on Monday, June 8, called, “*Tony Campolo: For the Record.*” Tony Campolo is an evangelical leader and former counselor to President Clinton. He’s had a lot to say to the church about caring for the poor, and I’ve quoted him before. Back in 1999 he told students at Calvin College that he believed the Bible does not allow for same-sex marriage. But on Monday he decided to set the record straight. He is “finally ready to call for the full acceptance of Christian gay couples into the Church.”¹

On Tuesday, June 9, Sarah Pulliam Bailey of *The Washington Post* wrote, “*From Franklin Graham to Tony Campolo, Some Evangelical Leaders are Dividing Over Gay Marriage.*”²

On Wednesday, June 10, Albert Mohler posted this blog, “*Which Way, Evangelicals? There is Nowhere to Hide.*” Here’s his conclusion:

In this season of testing, Christians committed to the gospel of Christ are called upon to muster the greatest display of compassion and conviction of our lives. But true compassion will never lead to an abandonment of biblical authority or a redefinition of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ Tony Campolo, “[Tony Campolo: For the Record.](http://tonycampolo.org/for-the-record-tony-campolo-releases-a-new-statement/#.VXfJxWTBwXA)” Monday, June 8, 2015. <http://tonycampolo.org/for-the-record-tony-campolo-releases-a-new-statement/#.VXfJxWTBwXA>

² Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “[From Franklin Graham to Tony Campolo, Some Evangelical Leaders are Dividing Over Gay Marriage.](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/09/from-franklin-graham-to-tony-campolo-some-evangelical-leaders-are-dividing-over-gay-marriage/)” *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, June 9, 2015. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/09/from-franklin-graham-to-tony-campolo-some-evangelical-leaders-are-dividing-over-gay-marriage/>

I was contacted yesterday by Sarah Pulliam Bailey of *The Washington Post*. She asked about these very developments. As I told her, this issue will eventually break relationships — personally, congregationally, and institutionally. This is the sad reality and there is simply no way around it. No one, especially in a position of leadership, will be able to fly under the radar on this issue.

The last two days have been very revealing. The present moment is very demanding. The issues before us are compelling and urgent. The Bible is clear. Are you ready to give an answer?³

I don't like controversy. I feel like Jude who said in Jude 3, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

The question is, how shall we respond as society turns up the heat against the biblical truth of historic Christianity? Will we believe, teach, and live in light of what the Bible says, or will we tailor the Bible to fit society's expectations?

That's, in essence, the very issue Timothy was facing when he received the letter to which we now turn our attention. Paul was in prison, facing execution as a preacher of Jesus Christ and salvation through Him alone. Timothy was ministering in Ephesus, but fearful and gun-shy. What was needed, for him, and for us?

According to 2 Timothy 2:1-7, when the world turns up the heat on Christ's followers, we must fulfill three important tasks, by His grace.

One, we must *receive* (that's verse 1). Two, we must *reproduce* (that's verse 2). And three, we must *resolve to endure* (that's verses 3-7).

I. We must receive (1).

Notice verse 1, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The "you" is emphatic. As for YOU, Timothy! In contrast to those mentioned in 1:15 who deserted Paul, including Phygelus and Hermogenes, *you* be different!

You, Timothy, are "my son"--a term of affection which speaks of an intimate relationship. Paul addresses Timothy just like a father on his deathbed would speak to his son, with warmth, and admonition.

What did Paul want Timothy to do? "Be strong." It's a passive verb, so it's literally, "Be empowered, be strengthened."

Timothy, this is no time to cave in, but to be strong.

However, Paul is not telling Timothy to pull up his boot straps. Nor to look deep within himself and find strength for facing the pressures of life.

What he needs is external to himself. Therefore, it must be received. "Timothy, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

What does that mean, to "be strong in grace"? Let's start here. What is grace? Grace is God's unmerited favor. Grace is God giving us what we don't have and don't deserve. Grace is God's provision, God's supply for our need.

What does it mean to be strong in grace? Consider the opposite. The opposite of being strong in grace is to be what? Strong in *works*. That is, to try and live my life depending on my own merit, my own ability, my own productivity.⁴

Grace living is just the opposite. When we live by grace, we're admitting our own inadequacy and weakness and need.

³ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2015/06/10/which-way-evangelicals-there-is-nowhere-to-hide/>

⁴ I listened to a tape years ago by David Hocking who made this observation.

Friends, we can't make it without grace. We need grace for salvation (Eph 2:8). God will save any sinner here this morning, but you must first acknowledge you need to be saved, and can contribute nothing to your salvation. Then, through simple faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice, God will save you, by His grace.

But our dependence on grace doesn't stop there. We need grace for sanctification day by day. 2 Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in grace..." In 2 Corinthians 12:9 Jesus told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you."

Yet it goes even further, for we need grace for service too. Hebrews 12:28 says, "Let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably."

God is so generous. He gives us what we don't deserve, yet desperately need. But where? Where can we find this grace?

"that is in Christ Jesus," says Paul.

This is critical. Paul is reminding Timothy of the key to the Christian life. It is a *received life*.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ...Christ lives in me..."

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:19 "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

This is so basic, friends, but it's something we tend to forget. We're called to live a dependent life. We must *receive*.

That's Paul's first plea to Timothy. "Timothy, my son, I'll soon be gone. If you're going to prosper in life and ministry, you must *depend on the Lord*. Day by day. Moment by moment. Tap into His grace Timothy! Be empowered by His grace!"

Is that happening in your life? Are you experiencing the power of God in your daily life? Or are you running on empty, with your soul barren and dry?

Do you make a decision daily to tap into the grace that is in Christ Jesus? You say, "How do I do it?" The Bible teaches us that there are some important *means of grace* that we must utilize, and here are three.

1. Prayer--Hebrews 4:16 "Let us come...throne of grace..."

2. God's Word--Acts 14:3 "...the word of His grace..."

3. Church—Galatians 1:2-3 "To the churches in Galatia: Grace and peace to you." Revelation 1:4 "To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come."

So to receive grace, you must prioritize into your schedule prayer, the study of God's Word, and the fellowship of the local church. Grace-living starts right there.

When the heat is on, we must receive.

II. We must reproduce (2).

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

When the heat is on, it's time to remember why we're here. We've been given the task of *spiritual reproduction*.

Don't miss the urgency of 2 Timothy 2:2. It has "TOP PRIORITY" stamped all over it!

"Timothy, if the church of Jesus Christ is going to prosper in the future, this is what you must do. Even though the heat is on, in fact, especially because the heat is on."

Entrust. That's the main verb. *Commit.* Which means, "to place beside, to set before"

We see the same word in the LXX translation of Exodus 19:7. Let's look at it:

19:1 At Sinai

19:3 God speaks to Moses on the mountain...What did Moses do?

19:7 "And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and LAID BEFORE THEIR FACES all these words which the Lord commanded him."

That's it. God gave Moses His Holy Law. What did Moses do with it? Add to it? No. Subtract from it? No. He faithfully passed it on to the elders just as he had received it from God.

Now, what was Timothy to pass on? "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses."

Timothy knew what that meant. He'd traveled with Paul for 15 years, listening to him preach in city after city.

Let's look at a sampling of what he heard, starting in Acts 18 in Corinth.

Acts 18:5 "When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ." Then verse 11 says, "So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God."

Jesus is the Christ. The Word of God. That's what Timothy heard. And that's what Timothy was to pass on. The truths of the gospel. Who God is, who man is, what sin is, what the consequence of sin is, what God's solution for sin is, the coming of the God-man, Jesus the Christ, His substitutionary death and resurrection, and salvation by faith alone in Christ alone.

This is what Paul said among witnesses, and Timothy heard, and now was to pass on.

To whom? "To reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Simply put, to men of character ("reliable men"), competency ("qualified to teach others"), and commitment (a willingness to be taught, and then teach others).

To make it personal...

A. We must learn God's truth.

B. We must teach God's truth to faithful followers.

When the heat is on, the church needs learners and teachers, those who will learn the things Paul passed on to Timothy, and then teach them to others, so they can then teach them to still others.

Spiritual reproduction. We must receive. We must reproduce.

This, of course, is not a new thought to this church. It's in our DNA. It's what our Men's Two:Two ministry is all about, and our ladies' Titus 2 ministry, teaching men and women sound doctrine, so they can teach others. It's a point of emphasis for several of our missionaries, Gary and Nancy Storm, Dave and Sue Dernlan, Steve and Vicky Stairs, and Paul and Kathy Holritz, who are involved in training nationals worldwide.

And as the world turns up the heat on the church, we must do this, receive and reproduce, or we'll go out of existence.

Many of you in this room are faithful followers of Jesus. Who did the Lord use to disciple you? Think back. It was a team effort. Perhaps your parents, some Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, camp counselors, pastors, a neighbor, etc. Thank the Lord! And now, more than ever, resolve to be a reproducer!

And to do this, something else is needed.

III. We must resolve to endure (3-7).

In chapter two, Paul uses seven different images/metaphors to show Timothy (and us) the kind of leader the church needs when the heat is on. Remember Paul is passing the baton to Timothy. A leader must see himself as a:

1. Teacher (1-2)
2. Soldier (3-4)
3. Athlete (5)
4. Farmer (6)
5. Workman (15)
6. Vessel (21)
7. Servant (24)

We've seen the first. A leader must be, not just a doer, but a teacher of others, one who faithfully entrusts God's Word to them, so they can embrace it, live in light of it, and do the same with still others.

But a person can do this, and then *stop* doing it. That's Timothy's predicament. He knew the truth—he'd heard Paul teach for years, and done so himself, also for years. But due to fear, apparently, he was looking for the sidelines. Perhaps you can relate.

You're the only Christian at work, or in your home, or in your class at school, and you're getting weary of all the attacks on your faith.

What's needed? The resolve to endure. Yes, *endure*. If we're going to keep living for Jesus in this hostile world, it will take three things.

A. This takes the discipline of a soldier (3-4). "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer."

You say, "I want to keep serving Christ!" Okay, know this. It will take the discipline of a soldier.

The Roman Empire was full of soldiers. Paul spent some four years of his life chained to soldiers during his first imprisonment (Acts 21-28). I don't know how long this second prison term lasted, but he's seen his share of soldiers.

And as the apostle looked at the soldiers he met, he realized he had the perfect illustration to motivate Timothy, and us.

Soldiers are marked by three characteristics which we need serving Christ.

1. *The soldier's life is marked by duty.* "No one serving as a soldier," says the NIV. The AV, "No man that warreth."

The soldier is consumed by one reality. The word "warreth" means "to make war". The NASB translates, "No soldier in active service." Paul's not talking about the reservists. He's thinking of those soldiers in active duty.

What's true of that soldier? He serves his country, no matter what the cost. And since his service is a life and death matter, he prepares himself. He stays alert. He trains. Why? It's his duty.

So it must be for the Christian. It's his duty to serve. Yes, it's more than that, but not less.

"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier." That's Paul's invitation. The verb means "to suffer evil treatment along with." Paul used the same word in 1:8, "...be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel..."

Remember Timothy's problem? He was intimidated by the crowd, prone to hang out in the barracks, but needed on the front lines! So Paul urged him, "Come on Timothy! Don't put down your weapon. Pick up that sword of the Spirit, join me in the battle, and be a good soldier! It's your duty!"

Secondly, a soldier is...

2. *The soldier's life is marked by denial.* Verse 4 again, "No man...entangles himself with the affairs of this life," says the AV. "No man" is in the emphatic position. "Entangles" means to weave in, to entwine with (used of sheep whose wool is caught in thorns).

Where? "the affairs of this life" What's Paul mean? The Greek word is *pragmateia*. PRAGMATIC. The word refers to any activity, occupation, undertaking, or business dealing in everyday life. The NIV calls it "civilian affairs."

To paraphrase, "If you are a soldier of Jesus Christ, don't get wrapped up in the pragmatics of this world."

That's one of the reasons I don't like the term "full time Christian service" that we sometimes use to refer to pastors and missionaries and camp workers. They're in *full time Christian service*.

But that implies there's what? *Part-time* Christian service. Is there? Is not every Christian called to live for his or her Lord *full time*?

I fear that 2 Peter 2:20 has become more a reality than we care to admit. "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning."

A soldier knows all about self-denial. There are things he chooses not to do. He doesn't live like the general population.

Nor should we. Do you? Is there a marked difference between the way you live, and your unsaved neighbors live? Or your classmates? Or the people at work?

But why? What motivates a soldier to deny himself? A third characteristic...

3. *The soldier's life is marked by delight.* And what is the soldier's delight? Verse 4, "He wants to please his commanding officer."

I just finished listening to the audio book, *The American Sniper*. I learned a lot about the Navy Seals, and war tactics, but this one sort of shocked me. The love this man had for his fellow seals. When it's all said and done, it's not about guns and bullets. It's about love for and devotion to the people with whom you're serving.

And here's where it starts. You want to please the commander, to know what he wants, and do what he wants.

Fellow soldiers, who is our commander? Who gave us this duty? Who motivates us to deny ourselves? Who is it we long to delight? Verse 3, "a good soldier of *Jesus Christ*."

We give our lives to please the One who gave His life for us.

I remember visiting my brother years ago when he was at the Air Force Academy. I couldn't believe what I saw. I was attending a Christian college at the time. I heard people say *we* had a lot of rules. We were on a picnic compared to the cadets! Talk about rules. He had to dress a certain way. He had to chew his food a certain way. He had to walk a certain way. He had to make his bed a certain way.

For him, it all boiled down to duty, denial, and delight.

Jesus said, "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." (Lk 9:23)

Are you entangled with the affairs, the pragmatics of this life? There's nothing wrong with caring for daily concerns. We have jobs. We have to work. The laundry is there. The grass has to be mowed. But the question is this. Have the pragmatics of life taken control of us?

What are we living for, safety and security and a nice retirement? *I gave, I gave My life for thee, What hast thou given for Me?* says our Savior in the hymn.

If we're going to endure when the heat is on, it takes, first, the discipline of a soldier.

B. This takes the determination of an athlete (5). "Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules."

Paul likens the Christian life to what we would call the competing athlete. Not the weekend warrior, the guy who plays around in his spare time, but the one who lives for the prize.

I like to win a game of h-o-r-s-e when I'm in the gym, but LeBron isn't satisfied unless he brings a championship to Cleveland. That's what we're talking about.

I love athletics. As with the military, there are a lot of lessons from athletics that transfer into the Christian life.

An athlete knows three things that the Christ-follower must know, based on three phrases in verse 5.

1. An athlete knows about the present grind. "If anyone competes as an athlete." Or in the AV, "If a man also strive for masteries."

The Greek word is *athleo*, from which we get athletics, "to compete as an athlete, to compete in a contest."

Any athlete knows this. Before the glory comes the grind. And there is no glory in the grind. I marvel at the Olympic athletes. They are totally dedicated. They spend four years doing the same thing over and over and over. The grind.

I want to break it to you gently, but listen. There is a certain amount of grind to the Christian life.

Paul didn't mince words in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, "...I run...I beat my body and make it my slave...so that I will not be disqualified from the prize."

Why does an athlete subject himself to the grind?

2. An athlete knows about the future gain. Notice phrase 2, "he does not receive the victor's crown unless."

There it is. An athlete knows there's a crown, a prize. In Paul's day, Olympic victors received a wreath. That was his gain. But he also knew this. No pain, no gain, but the gain is worth the pain!

There's a crown coming, beloved. Paul tells us about it at the end of this letter in 4:8, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness..."

I love the song...

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ.

Once glimpse of His dear face, all sorrow will erase.

So bravely run the race, till we see Christ

But not every athlete wins the prize. There are stipulations for the crown.

3. *An athlete knows about the guidelines.* Phrase 3, “unless he competes according to the rules.” AV, “except he strive lawfully.”⁵

What rules? There were two sets of rules for professional athletes in Paul's day:

1. The Rules of Competition--for the particular event
2. The Rules for Preparation

Before an athlete could even compete in the games of Paul's day, he had to adhere to a strick list of training rules for ten months. He had to eat certain foods. He had to avoid certain foods. He had to train in a prescribed manner. And he had to sign his name to the fact that he trained and competed "according to the rules." No rules, no wreath.

Do you know the most tragic words for an athlete? Not, "I lost." But, "I was disqualified."

It still bothers me when I think about a scene from close to 40 years ago. I was watching the state track meet. The previous year's mile champion was in the race, and heavily favored to win. But when the gun when up, the athlete stepped across the starting line, and was immediately *disqualified*. The crowd booed, but the athlete missed out on what could have, and should have, been theirs.

There's something far more tragic, and it happens far too frequently. Christians disqualify themselves from the prize of God's service. How? By violating God's rules, God's Word.

Twenty years ago I scanned a book entitled, *The Day America Told the Truth*, by James Patterson and Peter Kim (Prentice Hall Press, 1991). The authors led a massive survey of Americans. Their purpose was to give people the opportunity to express what they really believed about things that really matter. Their findings were alarming.

The question was asked, "What are you willing to do for \$10 million?" Does cold cash change our morals? Yes, they discovered, money talked to people across the country. For \$10 million, 1 in 4 Americans would abandon all their friends or abandon the church. About as many would turn to prostituion for a week. 7% said they would murder someone for money (that's 1 in 14 people).

Only 13% of Americans believed in all the Ten Commandments. 40% believe in 5 of the 10 commandments. We choose the laws of God we believe in.

Almost one-third of all Americans have had or are now having an affair. To top that, nearly 50% admitted they have considered being unfaithful to their spouse.

That was almost 25 years ago, and the numbers certainly would be higher today.

Brothers and sisters, this is our world. But it's not our assignment to bemoan how bad the world is. Rather, we're called to be light in the world, and this requires, one, the fresh experience of the grace of Christ, and two, by His grace the determination of an athlete.

Here's the question again. What will it take if I am serious about enduring for Christ when the heat it on? First, the discipline of a soldier. Second, the determination of an athlete. And third...

C. This takes the diligence of a farmer (6). “The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.”

I grew up watching and working for farmers. Men like Wes Miller, Charlie Moore, Jim Yoder, Cyril Woodard. If farmers know anything at all, they know that farming involves two things, and it's no different in the Christian life.

⁵ "lawfully"--key word; lit. "according to the rules"

1. *Farmers know about hard work.* “The hardworking farmer,” says the text. Paul’s term means “to become weary, tired, toil, strive, struggle.”

Farmers that milked cows used to amaze me. They lived a very predictable life. Every morning at 5:00 they were in the barn for 2 to 3 hours. Then again every evening. Milking the cows. Hard work.

Grain farmers know about hard work too. More than once I’ve driven along a farm road at night, glanced over into the field, to see the headlights of a combine shining a path so the farmer could harvest his crop.

Farmers know all about hard work. So why do they do it? Because, secondly...

2. *Farmers know about the harvest.* “Should be the first to receive a share of the crops,” says Paul.

A farmer would throw in the towel if he didn’t get to enjoy the harvest. The harvest is what makes the hard work worthwhile.

I used to work for one farmer named Wes Miller. We’d bale hay in the heat of July. We’d crawl up in the top of the barn and stack that dry, dusty hay. The temp had to be over 120 degrees!

So why’d we do it? This farmer was a wise man. He knew how to get hard work out of some teenage guys. His family owned the local Tastee Freeze. The standing deal was always this. You work for me, and you can eat all you want at the end of the day! Foot longs. Fries. Milkshakes!

Hard work. Then the harvest. The diligence of a farmer.

It’s impossible to live the Christian life without diligence. It takes diligence to get out of bed and get in the Word in the morning. It takes diligence to get to bed at a decent hour Saturday night so you’re fresh and ready for Sunday School in the morning. It takes diligence to overcome stubborn habits.

Indeed, we have the potential in Christ, every spiritual resource (Eph 1:3). But the question is, will we utilize it?

A lot of people want the easy way out in living the Christian life.

One of the best words of counsel I ever received was from my NT professor in seminary was this. “Look out for books with titles like, ‘The Secret of the Christian Life.’ There is no secret.”

The successful Christian life involves two realities, to which Paul gives personal testimony in 1 Corinthians 15:10. One, God’s grace. And two, hard work. He says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”

That’s what Timothy needed, and so do we. When the heat is on, we need the grace of God which He offers in Christ, the One who died in our place and conquered death. And we also, by His grace, need to exhibit the discipline of a soldier, the determination of an athlete, and the diligence of a farmer.

Receive. Reproduce. Resolve to endure.

Paul concludes this section in verse 7. “Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.” In other words...

Make It Personal: It’s vital that we reflect on what we have heard (7).

With two simple questions.

1. *Am I living a dependent life?* “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ.”
2. *Am I passing on to others what I have received?* “Entrust to reliable men.”