

## A Call to Persevere (2 Timothy 2:1-13)

“Suffice it to say that the normative way of wisdom—the Lord’s way, the way of the Christian—is a life in which human beings make visible the presence of Christ in mission, rejoice in that visibility, and faithfully accept the opposition that his presence provokes.” ~ Philip Towner

### I. The Call (2:1-13)

#### A. Overview

This section begins with “therefore,” reinforcing what Paul penned in 1:3-18. Rather than following a logical progression of concepts, Paul will utilize examples and repetition of themes to instruct Timothy.

#### B. Serving Faithfully Despite the Hardship (2:1-7)

This section entails three imperatives or commands followed by three illustrations. Paul will then close the section with a final command—a call to endure in the face of suffering.

Observe the three commands:

*Command #1:* Be strong (v. 1). Strength or power is found in the Holy Spirit (1:7-8). The source of this power is grace through salvation, granted by Jesus Christ.

*Command #2:* Entrust to faithful people (v. 2). The things that Timothy heard refers back to the gospel in 1:13-14 (also, cf. 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6-7). The many witnesses indicates that this was a public teaching testified to and known not just by Timothy or a select few (cf. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 390). The message is to be given to men of character. Finally, the “competency” expected of these candidates “implies a divinely bestowed aptitude that makes them sufficient for the task” (Towner, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 491).

*Command #3:* Join in the suffering (v. 3). This becomes the central theme of 2 Timothy (cf. 1:8; 2:9; 4:5).

Paul utilizes three illustrations to elaborate on the third command: a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Based upon verses 3-6, note the similarities between these three illustrations:

v. 7 - Paul concludes this section with another command. Literally, “listen up!,” this command calls for the importance of seeking the source of true wisdom and uprightness—the Lord (cf. Prov 2:6).

### C. Reasons for Enduring (2:8-13)

v. 8 - The call to remember echoes 1:3-14. The remembrance entails two things: (1) the gospel, namely Jesus Christ and His suffering; and (2) Paul’s suffering for the sake of the Gospel.

Observe what Paul states concerning this gospel:

- It is about and from Jesus Christ. The unusual order of placing Jesus’ name before Christ could emphasize Jesus’ humanity (cf. Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*).
- The gospel is only possible through the resurrection.
- The Davidic lineage speaks not only to Jesus’ role as the Messiah, but also, this phrase could indicate His incarnation.
- The reference to “my” provides authenticity (cf. 1 Tim 1:11) and serves as a rebuttal against the false teachers (2:18).

v. 9 - Paul speaks of his harsh suffering as a hardened criminal (cf. Lk 23:32-33, 39). And yet, while he may be in “bonds,” the Word of God is not “bound.”

v. 10 - Paul is willing to suffer based upon the power of God and humanity’s need for salvation.

vv. 11-13 - The last three verses support and illustrate verses 8-10. The four conditional statements (“if . . . then”), with the final condition departing from the form, is a structure meant to provide a forceful argument (cf. 1 Cor 15:12-19). Note these statements:

- “*If we die . . . we also live*” - Paul appears to be speaking to a spiritual union with Christ (cf. Rom 6:8).
- “*If we endure . . . we will reign*” - To endure usually speaks of steadfast endurance of the Christian in the midst of the difficulties and tests of the present evil age (cf. Hauck, *TDNT*, 4:586).
- “*If we deny . . . he will deny*” - “Denial of Christ manifests itself in various ways in the New Testament. It can consist in denying his name (Rev 3:8) or faith in him (Rev 2:13) . . . The denial can also manifest itself in the moral realm. Some may ‘profess to know God, but by their deeds deny him’ (Tit 1:16; 1 Tim 5:8)” (Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 406).
- “*If we are unfaithful . . . he remains faithful*” - Even when unfaithfulness arises in the face of adversity, the Lord keeps His promises. The reference to “unfaithfulness” most likely refers to temporary wavering on the part of the believer rather than unbelief.

v. 13 - The final phrase ensures the trustworthiness of the statement. The Lord’s character is at stake. He cannot be untrue to himself!

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### III. Intersect

A. As a believer, we are identified with Christ—both in our union *with* Him and in our suffering *for* Him.

1 Peter 4:12-13 -

B. Believers should fear the very idea of *denying* Christ, but never the privilege of *suffering* for Christ.

Romans 8:15-18 -

C. God's faithfulness to His promises does not depend upon our faithfulness. The Lord guarantees He will sanctify and preserve His people.

1 Thess 5:23-24 -

“The Gospel gets really more advantage by the holy, humble sufferings of one saint, simply for the Word of righteousness, than by ten thousand arguments used against heretics and false worship.”

~ Puritan John Collins