2 TIMOTHY 2:1-13

1 You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2 What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer.
5 Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.
6 The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops.
7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.
8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and descended from David, according to my gospel,
9 for which I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But the word of God is not bound.
10 This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.
11 This saying is trustworthy:
12 if we die with him, we will also live with him;
13 if we endure, we will also reign with him;
14 if we deny him, he will also deny us;
15 if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A Paul thought of Timothy as his child in the faith.
B God’s grace is His kindness to us because He loves us, even though we don’t deserve it (Rom. 3:24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:16; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).
C “Reliable” (NIV) and “trustworthy people” (NLT)
D “Capable and qualified” (AMP)
E “The one who enlisted him” (NASB)—an analogy for a single-minded devotion to pleasing God
F Paul’s second analogy declared that a person must obey God’s rules in order to succeed.
G In this third analogy, Paul encouraged hard work by holding out the promise of blessing.
H Jesus’ messianic credentials included His being in the family line of King David (Matt. 15:22; Luke 18:38, 20:41; John 7:42; Rom. 1:3, Rev. 5:5).
I “Sitting in jail” (The Message); “chained” (NIV)
J Hebrews 4:12 says “the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
K All who receive Christ; “God’s chosen ones” (GNT)
L Judas Iscariot permanently deserted Christ (Mark 14:10). Peter was a believer who denied Christ, but only temporarily and in a moment of weakness (Luke 22:54-62).
M “Christ cannot deny who he is” (CEV).
1. FUTURE FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:1-2)
• Paul called on Timothy to pass on the things Paul had taught him to others who in turn could also teach others, and so on.
• Timothy was to act out of the grace of Christ.

2. MISSION FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:3-7)
• Paul identified three images—a faithful soldier, the disciplined athlete, and the hard-working farmer—as symbols of the Christian life.
• Paul exhorted Timothy to consider the lessons he could learn from these occupations and apply them to his life.

3. CHRIST FOCUSED (2 Tim. 2:8-13)
• Paul challenged Timothy to remain focused on Jesus and His resurrection.
• He explained that any hardship faced must be balanced with the potential of sharing the gospel with any and all.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
Believers can find strength for life’s hardships by focusing on God’s grace and the gospel.
• Believers are to invest in the lives of future church leaders.
• Believers must remain focused on the gospel when facing hardships, knowing God will reward their faithfulness.
• Believers can take strength in knowing that their faithful witness opens doors for the gospel to be heard and believed.
FOCUS ATTENTION

Who was your spiritual parent or mentor? Describe his or her qualities.

- Christians are encouraged to mentor others in the faith, helping build up the body of the church and share the love of God with those who don’t yet know Him.
- Having strong Christian examples to follow helps us endure hardships faithfully and achieve our God-given purposes.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY 2:1-2

What's the motivation for making a five- or ten-year life plan? Is there value in that for the Christian life?

- Many researchers point to the value of setting goals for various areas of our lives.
- Planning goals for the future means we don’t get so sidetracked by present circumstances but find purpose to stay the course.
- To accomplish future goals requires that we must meet the challenge of incremental steps, too.

How important is focusing on the future for the individual believer, the church, and the kingdom?

- Deciding early as Christians what kind of impact we want to have on our families and communities demands we order our steps accordingly.
- Without a plan for passing on the faith, the church decreases in power with each succeeding generation.
- Christians can’t complete their part in God’s redemptive plan without a strategy for reaching the next generation.

2 TIMOTHY 2:3-7

What can soldiers, athletes, and farmers teach us about staying focused on our mission?

- Military personnel operate under a strict chain of command. The soldier doesn’t act merely to please himself or follow popular opinion; he serves at the direction of his commanding officer.
- Athletes such as Olympians may spend years training relentlessly to meet a singular goal. Winning the prize means they aren’t only in superb condition but also understand exactly what it takes to come first in the competition.
- The farmer toils in season and out of season, trusting that what he planted will come to fruition at the proper time.

What insight did Paul give Timothy that can increase your focus on the mission?

- Meditation on Scripture increases understanding. Think deeply rather than contenting yourself with a shallow reading.
- Suffering and endurance are part of the Christian life, but we can lean on God for His guidance and grace.

2 TIMOTHY 2:8-13

What practical and inspirational measures can we employ to stay focused as Christians?

- The resurrection serves as a key focal point. Remembering the cross of Christ reminds and motivates us because of what Jesus gave up and what we gained from His sacrifice.
- Keep in mind that circumstances may seem to constrict us, but the gospel is unfettered. Regardless of how limited we may seem to be, there are no restrictions on the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Thinking about the privileges of an afterlife helps with endurance; it will be worth it.
- Whatever we must endure can be satisfactorily balanced with the satisfaction of knowing our faithful witness opens doors to the gospel.

How do verses 11-13 challenge us to remain faithful to sharing the gospel despite the hardships we face?

- Living and dying with Christ depends on both Jesus’ power and our acceptance.
- Likewise, rejection of Christ inevitably becomes a two-way street.
- When our humanity and fallen nature overtake us Jesus again steps in to save the relationship.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

When it comes to living out your Christianity, what do you do to stay focused?

- Focusing on the right things results in a strong, enduring, and others-centered faith. On the other hand, when we focus on the wrong elements, we’re more likely to end up as distracted, disillusioned, and wondering souls.
- A focus on the future helps us do our part to evangelize and disciple the next generation of believers.
- When we understand our mission and keep it central, we accomplish far more than we would’ve without being strategic.
- Unless we keep our minds on Jesus, we’ll lose heart; by His example we find fresh strength.

Personal Challenge: Would you say that you’re a focused person? Write goals for your Christian life for the next five to ten years. You might include such things as leading a family member or friend to Christ, sharing God’s Word on a regular basis through social media, volunteering to mentor students, or signing up for a mission to help plant a new church. Whatever God leads you to do, stay focused on the task.
AN OPTICAL ILLUSION

Use the Internet to search for a “literal optical illusion” (two or more images within one picture). Whatever picture you select, locate the different viewpoints before you show the image to the group.

During the session, distribute copies of the image or project the image on a wall. Invite volunteers to identify the object or objects they see in the image. Lead the group to call out the object they noticed first. Ask: Once you were aware of the other image, how did that change your perspective when viewing the image?

Discuss the process of locating the different images, noting that while we typically see one object when we first look at the picture, by shifting our focus, a second image appears.

Say: The rewards of eternity are a lot like finding more meaning within a picture. Point out that for many, eternity remains a hidden or elusive treasure, but by paying close attention, weeding out distractions, and remaining focused, we find the blessings to which we’re entitled through Jesus Christ.

Outline the ways to stay strong in God’s grace, according to 2 Timothy 2:1-13. Remind the group to stay future-focused, mission-focused, and Christ-focused.

Reassure them that, similar to finding a picture within a picture, staying focused on the Christian life will yield what we’ve been promised: salvation for ourselves and others.

SHAME VS. HONOR

Shame and honor take center stage when we study 2 Timothy 2:1-13. Most in our twenty-first-century Western culture strive toward individualism. We live to do what we consider to be best for us personally, even if nobody agrees with us. Accordingly, we don’t shame easily, and honor comes easily because we always feel free to pat ourselves on our own backs.

However, in Paul’s day, such rugged individualism didn’t abound. People didn’t want to be shamed by others, and they favored honor. Such a life principle could have developed from the glee that came from being honored and the pain associated with being shamed. The Roman Empire may have added to the “honor/shame” principle. Romans didn’t affirm free thinking or tolerate someone marching to the beat of a different drummer. For these and other reasons, people in the New Testament world seemed to accept living by the shame/honor principle. That’s probably why some of Jesus’ instruction had to do with the shame and honor of being humbled and exalted (Matt. 23:12; Luke 14:11; 18:14).

The life principles of shame and honor come into play when we reflect on the death of Christ. The cross ordinarily conveyed shame because the Romans used it to execute criminals. An instrument of shame, the cross became a signal of honor for believers. Granted, raising it up as a symbol of honor then would be like a man today placing an electric chair in the living room of his house and then telling everyone how it changed his life.

For Paul, being in jail for the good news of Christ brought honor, not shame. When Timothy heard that Paul had been arrested and chained (2 Tim. 2:9), the news could’ve left him ashamed. That’s why Paul encouraged him to connect his suffering to the cross of Christ. Notice how he pushed away shame by affirming the honor due to the Lord. First, He had the unique honor of overcoming death by being resurrected. Furthermore, He was honored to be in the family line of King David, from whom the Messiah would come. Equally notable, He reigns with “eternal glory” (v. 10), and faithful believers reign with Him. Therefore, Paul challenged Timothy to push through the pain like a devoted soldier, a top-shelf athlete, and a diligent farmer. The honor of following Christ drives away the shame that can creep in when we suffer because we belong to Him.