

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES



The Pastor as Model: 2 Timothy 2

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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Pastoral Epistles: The Pastor as Model: 2 Timothy 2
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2 Timothy 2: Introduction

Paul wants to see the work of making disciples continued for the generations to come. He instructs Timothy to work at this with vision and diligence. Then he outlines aspects of the kind of person Timothy must be if he is to model the faith for the people he is called to serve.

A pastor has three essential tools which he brings to his work: prayer, the Scriptures, and his own example. In this chapter, Paul guides Timothy in thinking about how the strength, diligence, gentleness, humility, and faithfulness of the pastor can help in nurturing and guarding the Lord's flock.

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1 Strong in Grace

Pray Psalm 126.6.

He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.1-7.

Preparation.

1. How does Paul describe what it means to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”?
2. What should Timothy *not* do? What *should* he do?

Meditate.

In 2 Timothy, Paul is counseling the young pastor on the conduct of his life and ministry. In this passage, he outlines what Timothy should work toward as he grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

First, he must learn to think and live generationally (v. 2). Paul instructs Timothy to think two generations of believers beyond himself – “faithful men” and “others also.” The calling to make disciples requires that we focus our efforts not merely on teaching, but on helping others become grounded in the good words of sound doctrine, so that they, too, will teach the truth that is in Jesus. True disciples are disciple-makers. We have been called to make true disciples, just as Paul and Timothy were.

Yes, this is hard work, and it demands sacrifices on the part of those who engage in it (vv. 3-5). It’s not always convenient to make disciples. Spiritual forces of wickedness in high places will seek to frustrate our labors. The distractions of the world can drain away our best energy and attention. But if we recognize these threats, we can discipline ourselves, like athletes (v. 5), to overcome them and persevere in our race. The crown we seek is not the plaudits or pleasures of this life, but that which comes from the King of glory, as we hear Him say to us, “Well done.”

So we must work hard (v. 6). But if we will, we may expect to see the seeds we sow bear fruit for the Kingdom and glory of the Lord. We will rejoice to see the fruit of Christ in the lives of those we are called to teach. We share in their growth and ministries by continuing to sow the good seed of the Kingdom in and through them.

Paul punctuates these words of exhortation by instructing Timothy to think about them and to make sure he understands all that is required of him as a shepherd of the Lord’s flock (v. 7). Since all believers are called to the work of making disciples (Matt. 28.18-20), we should take Paul’s words to heart. Are we teaching and nurturing others in the Lord? Are we thinking generationally? Working sacrificially? Becoming strong in the Lord and in the disciplines that can keep us from being distracted from our calling?

These are questions we must consider as well, making sure – each day – that we understand what is required of us as those entrusted with the Good News of Jesus Christ. We will know that we are growing strong in the grace of the Lord when this agenda and these objectives characterize our lives, just as Paul intended them to characterize Timothy’s.

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Reflect.

1. How does one grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? What evidence suggests that we are actually growing this way?
2. We are called to be athletes for Christ. What are the most important disciplines we need to practice to help us run our race for Him?
3. What “good seed” do we have to sow? Where do we sow it? How will you sow that good seed today?

You are a spiritual soldier. This kind of soldier does not sleep on an ivory bed but on the ground. He is not anointed with perfumed oils. These are the concern of those corrupt men who dally with courtesans, of those who act on the stage, of those who live carelessly. You must not smell of perfumes but of virtue. John Chrysostom (344-407), On Lazarus and the Rich Man

Father, help me to grow strong in the grace of Jesus! Today, as I go forth to make disciples, let me...

Pray Psalm 126.6.

Let this verse lead you to weep for your sins, and to go forth into your Personal Mission Field, sowing the grace and truth of the Lord by your words and deeds.

Sing Psalm 126.6

Psalm 126.6 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

2 Chains, No Chains

Pray Psalm 126.4, 5.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.
Those who sow in tears
Shall reap in joy.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.8-10.

Reflect.

1. Why is it important to “remember” that Jesus was raised from the dead? How can believers help one another in remembering this?
2. What does Paul mean by saying the Word of God “is not chained”?

Meditate.

Paul was a prisoner in Rome because of the Gospel. He sat chained to a wall, with a Roman guard 24/7.

As if chaining Paul could chain up the Gospel. No more than sealing that tomb could keep Jesus in it.

Paul was sustained in his suffering by the knowledge that Jesus was alive from the dead. He urged Timothy, and us through him, to remember this at all times. The Gospel is true, and though we suffer and are clapped in irons for the sake of the Gospel, nothing can stop its ineluctable march to dominion over the world. God has prepared a vast multitude to hear and believe the Gospel, and that Word will reach them, though every king on earth oppose it.

They could chain the apostle, but they could not chain the Word of God. Those faithful men – like Timothy – and “others also” who had received the Word and were now teaching it (2 Tim. 2.2) would make sure that not even the harshest, most violent opposition could put out the fire of truth.

Knowing this, Paul was willing to do or suffer whatever was necessary, so that those whose hearts God was preparing for the Kingdom might hear the truth and be saved (v. 10). Thus God would be glorified, and Paul’s mission would continue – chains or no chains.

Lord, give more of us that same attitude and conviction!

Reflect.

1. Is there a sense in which we as believers sometimes chain the truth of the Gospel? Explain.
2. Do you believe that there are many, many people in your community whose hearts God is preparing to receive the Gospel? If you did believe that, would it affect your faithfulness in proclaiming the Good News? Explain.
3. How much are you willing to do or to suffer to ensure that the Gospel goes out throughout your community?

For just as it is not possible to bind a sunbeam or to shut it up within the house, so neither can the preaching of the word be bound. And what was much more, when the teacher was bound, the word flew abroad. He inhabited the prison, and yet his

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teaching winged its way everywhere throughout the world! John Chrysostom (344-407) *Homilies Concerning the Statues* 16.5

Lord, You have set Your unchainable Word in my heart, so that, whatever it takes or costs, I should...

Pray Psalm 146.4-6.

Whatever hardship, trial, disappointment, or setback you're facing, give it to the Lord, calling out to Him for revival. Then ask Him to prepare your heart for a day of vigorous sowing in His Name.

Sing Psalm 126.4-6

Psalm 126.4-6 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing, who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

3 Faithful Saying

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.11-13.

Reflect.

1. What makes these verses a “faithful saying”?
2. What choices are we faced with in these verses?

Meditate.

Paul has been making the point that living the Christian life is not an easy row to hoe. We have to endure hardship, get ready for battle, deny everything that would distract us from our mission, discipline ourselves like athletes, and work like farmers (vv. 3-6). We should not be misled or deceived about the life of faith.

In our verses for today, Paul boils that life down to a poem, and sets it in a form that can be easily remembered. If we have died with Christ – to the ways of the world, the flesh, and the devil – we will surely live with Him in the blessedness of the knowledge of God. And if we endure – pressing on, growing in grace, fighting the good fight, rejoicing in our trials, bearing the fruit of good works, maintaining our testimony and witness – we will reign with Him, that is, we will experience the coming of His Kingdom in ever-greater measure.

The parallelism here reminds us of the structure of a psalm: die/live, endure/reign: a b b a, where the two middle verbs (live, endure) are equivalent, and the two outer verbs (die, reign), though seemingly opposite, actually are meant to mean the same thing (as dictated by the middle pair).

This first strophe puts the life of faith positively. The second casts it in a different light. If we deny the Lord – fail to live for and bear witness to Him – then He will deny us, because it will be plain to Him and everyone else that we never truly knew Him in the first place. But if we experience lapses of faith (*ἀπιστοῦμεν*, *unbelieving*) – if we give in to temptation, or fall into sin – He will not deny us, but will convict, chasten, and work to return us to Him (Heb. 12.3-11), because He is faithful, and cannot go back on what He has promised to all who truly come to Him (Matt. 11.28-30). We all experience seasons of faithlessness, but these are not the same as denying the Lord. At times of faithlessness, we need to plead with the Lord to increase our faith. He is faithful and will do so, and we will be back on track to live and endure for Him.

We see a similar structure to this second strophe: “deny Him/deny us; “faithless/faithful”, then the coda, “He cannot deny Himself”: c c d d e. So even though this part of the poem is darker, and the way it is structured makes that darkness more emphatic, it ends on a note of grace.

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Any believer could learn this simple poem, and by recalling it throughout the day, be reinforced and fortified for the ongoing struggles of the life of faith.

Reflect.

1. Why would Paul cast an important faithful saying like this in the form of a poem?
2. What are some ways that memorizing this faithful saying could help you in your walk with and work for the Lord?
3. To live with Jesus is to reign with Him. Explain.

*Let us honor the spirit of Christ, that we may receive grace from him. Let us be strangers to the world, even as Christ was not of it. Let us be humble and mild, that we may inherit the land of life. Let us be unflagging in his service, that he may cause us to serve in the abode of the saints. Let us pray his prayer in purity, that it may have access to the Lord of majesty. Let us be partakers in his suffering, so that we may also rise up in his resurrection. Let us bear his sign upon our bodies, that we may be delivered from the wrath to come. Aphrahat (270-350), *Of the Holy Spirit* 3.20.157*

Help me to live for and reign with You today, Lord Jesus, so that I...

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

Recall how our faithful God brought you to believe the Gospel. Thank Him for the people involved, and for His faithfulness to you in all things.

Sing Psalm 126.1-3.

Psalm 126.1-3 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, "The Lord has done great things for them!"
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

4 Be Careful about Words

Pray Psalm 126.6.

He who continually goes forth weeping,
Bearing seed for sowing,
Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,
Bringing his sheaves *with him*.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.14-19.

Reflect.

1. What kind of words does Paul warn against in these verses?
2. What is the touchstone for right words, and for using words rightly?

Meditate.

It's surprising how much the Bible has to say about the words we speak. Paul's teaching on the right use of our words shows up repeatedly in his epistles (cf. Eph. 4.29; Col. 4.6; 1 Thess. 4.18, etc.). A superficial reading of our passage for today might lead us to think that words don't matter, and arguing about doctrine is an unfruitful pastime.

But that would be to misread Paul's intention. He does not want us to use our words to *strive* with one another (v. 14), but to *edify* and *encourage* one another. Such words are profitable, and beneficial to those who hear them; while words that attack and provoke arguments only drive wedges between us.

Timothy must set the example for the words and lives of his flock by his careful and diligent handling of the Word of truth (v. 15). He must "present" himself at all times as one who is submitted to the Scriptures, and who, by careful reading, meditation, and study, is able to discern their true meaning and applications – which will always be in the direction of love (Matt. 22.34-40; 1 Tim. 1.5). Thus the pastor provides the model for others for how the Word of God must come to expression in our words and deeds.

We waste our time by arguing about "profane *and* idle babblings" – arguments that demean the Name of God by their trivialness, frivolity, and merely speculative or provocative content, and which aim at no constructive ends. The more we engage in such conversation and debate, the more ungodliness increases among us, and the more others will think such matters worth passing along to others (vv. 16, 17). Paul cites two examples of where such wrong use of our words can lead (vv. 17, 18).

The "solid foundation of God" is the prophets and apostles on whose teaching He is building His Church (Eph. 2.19-22). We must attend carefully to that Word, and to the Lord Jesus Whom that Word reveals. Thus we will prove ourselves to be His true people by turning away from all iniquity, and not just that which comes from the wrong use of our words (v. 19).

Reflect.

1. What opportunities for using their words do believers have in a typical day? Should all those words be seasoned with grace and aimed at edification? Explain.
2. How do words edify? What does someone look like who is being edified by words? How can we become more effective in aiming our words for edification?

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3. The Word of God – Scripture and our Lord Jesus Christ – is the foundation and touchstone for all our use of words. How would you explain this to a new believer?

But it is God's work to dwell invisibly by his spirit and by the Spirit of Christ in those whom he judges it right to dwell. Whereas it is our task, since we try to confirm faith by arguments and treatises, to do all in our power that we may be called "workmen who need not to be ashamed, handling rightly the word of truth." Origen (185-254), Against Celsus 5.1

Help me to keep focused on You, Lord Jesus, and to hide Your Word in my heart, so that my words today will...

Pray Psalm 126.6.

Think ahead to the words you will sow today. Will they be for edification?

Sing Psalm 126.6

Psalm 126.6 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

5 Set-Apart Vessels

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.20-23.

Reflect.

1. What should we as believers, and components of God’s house, be seeking?
2. How can we know when we are being useful to the Lord?

Meditate.

Patience without complacency; progress without pushiness; honor rather than dishonor. So the Christian life proceeds from one degree of sanctification to another.

Paul is reminding Timothy that the Lord’s “great house” is made up of all kinds of people, at all stages of growth in and usefulness to the Lord (v. 20). Only the Holy Spirit can work that spiritual alchemy that turns wood and clay into gold and silver. We should not be content to be merely wood and clay, for such vessels are not what God intends of us, and cannot bring increasing honor to Him.

But our calling is to bring honor to God (v. 21), and since we can bring more honor to Him by growing in grace than by settling into some comfort zone of faith, we really ought to press on, and to expect our shepherds to keep prodding and leading and directing us for greater growth in the Lord.

We do not look down on those who are not growing as fast or as much as we would hope; however, we do not want them to become complacent about their sanctification, but to seek progress daily, that they might honor the Lord more consistently.

The process in which we are engaged is sanctification. Having been set apart by God for Himself, He is now at work within us, willing and doing and transforming us, so that Jesus may increase in us. The more progress we realize in this process, the greater will be our usefulness to the Lord (v. 21). That is, the more we will be equipped, inclined, ready, and capable for doing those good works of love that are our testimony and witness to the world.

Those who are being sanctified leave behind the lusts and distractions of childhood, so that they might devote themselves to those Kingdom values that last: righteousness, faith, love, and peace (v. 22). This work begins in the heart, as Paul explained in 1 Timothy 1.5 (v. 22), and it requires us to avoid any snares or distractions that might divert us from our goal.

The more we work at our sanctification, the more consistent we will be in fulfilling our calling to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12).

Reflect.

1. How would you explain sanctification to a new believer? What is it? What does it involve? Who should be seeking it?
2. In your walk with and work for the Lord, what have been the most important contributors to progress in sanctification?
3. What are the goals of sanctification? Where should we expect to see these goals being realized?

Every one of us, indeed, who is instructed in the holy Scripture is the administrator of some one of those gifts which, according to the gospel, have been apportioned to us. In this great household of the church not only are there vessels of every kind—gold, silver, wooden and earthen—but also a great variety of pursuits. Basil the Great (330-379), Homily on the Words: “Give Heed to Thyself”

Help me to grow in Jesus, Father! Let more of His gold and silver be seen in me today, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

God has done many good things for us, to set us apart for Himself and His Kingdom. Today, how will “the astonished nations” see that God has done great things for you?

Sing Psalm 126.1-3.

Psalm 126.1-3 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

6 Dealing with Opponents

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.

Read and meditate on 2 Timothy 2.24-26.

Reflect.

1. What is the relationship between repentance and knowing the truth?
2. What can we know about those who oppose us and the Gospel?

Meditate.

Arguments are of little value in the work of spreading the Gospel (v. 24). Others may argue with us, and even oppose us in one way or another. But that does not excuse us from continuing to relate to them with gentleness and patience. We must not fight fire with fire when others begin to argue and denounce us for our faith. If we will listen carefully, ask them to explain their views, and help them to compare what they believe with what the Gospel offers, we may find that God will use our humble and loving words to accomplish the purpose of repentance and conversion.

The Greek word translated “who are in opposition” (ἀντιδιατιθεμένων – *antidiatithemenous*) is in an interesting form. It can mean “who oppose” – oppose the Gospel, that is – or it can mean “who contradict themselves” (v. 25). Because all unbelievers are captive to “the snare of the devil”, which is the lie (Jn. 8.44; Rom. 1.18-25), their attempts to make sense of their lives, apart from God, will not withstand careful evaluation. As we listen patiently, ask lots of questions, and repeat their views back to them, we may be able to help some of our unbelieving friends see that their way of thinking can’t be made to make sense. And if we keep the Gospel in the mix – especially as we have experienced it – God may use our witness to help a lost one turn to Jesus.

But that will only happen when they “come to their senses” and realize they’ve been living a lie and need the truth that is in Jesus (v. 26). Only God can bring them to this place. He may use us in the process, especially as we maintain a humble, loving, patient demeanor – minus any argumentative tone – and demonstrate a true interest in helping our lost friends see the truth that is in Jesus.

Reflect.

1. Why do arguments produce little fruit for the Gospel? When someone wants to argue with us about what we believe, what should we do?
2. Can you think of some ways that people who do not believe in God contradict themselves? Do you think they’re aware of these contradictions? Should they be? Explain.
3. Only God can bring people to their senses, lead them to repentance, free them from the devil, and give them the gift of salvation. Since that’s the case, what is our role in this process?

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Therefore, let us not be provoked with these men, let us not use anger as an excuse, but let us talk with them gently and with kindness. Nothing is more forceful and effective than treatment which is gentle and kind. John Chrysostom (344-407), On the Incomprehensible Nature of God 1.7

Give me grace, Lord, to be a humble, patient, loving witness for Christ today, as I...

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

What good things has God done in your life lately? Give Him thanks and praise, and seek someone to share His goodness with today.

Sing Psalm 126.1-3.

Psalm 126.1-3 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.

Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”

Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

7 Strong, Diligent, Gentle, Humble

Pray Psalm 126.4.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD,
As the streams in the South.

Review 2 Timothy 2.

Reflect.

1. What kind of example did Paul want Pastor Timothy to set for the people in Ephesus?
2. What does this imply about the kind of people we should be as followers of Christ?

Meditate.

A pastor has three primary tools for working his ministry: the Word of God, prayer, and his personal example. In 2 Timothy, Paul is concentrating on the last of these. He knows that the temper of the times – people drifting from God’s Word, becoming argumentative, and worse (see on, 2 Tim. 3.1ff) – could cause believers to stray from their calling to follow Jesus. But Timothy must not fall prey to such distractions.

Pastors must live the kind of lives God is looking for in all His people. If, like Timothy, they will stand firm on the Word, be on guard against false teaching, maintain a Christ-like demeanor, and seek always to serve, rather than to be admired, they can be effective in thwarting the desires of the devil and in building the Church of the Lord.

God wants all of His children to grow in the grace of the Lord. Some may be floundering at an immature stage of Christian life, while others continue to shine like gold and silver in their words and works. Churches are made up of both kinds of people. The pastor’s job is to keep teaching faithfully, shepherding diligently, witnessing humbly, and putting before the people he serves the example of Christ-like service that God is seeking from all His people.

When our pastors do this, we will be more likely to follow their lead as under-shepherds of the Lord.

Reflect.

1. How does this chapter suggest that we should pray for our pastors?
2. How should members of a local church encourage one another to grow in the Lord?
3. How can you become more consistent in bearing witness to your unbelieving neighbors?

It is the elect who are meant in the letter to Timothy, where, after mention of the attempts of Hymenaeus and Philetus to undermine the faith, the text goes on, “But the sure foundation of God stands firm, bearing this seal: ‘The Lord knows who are his.’” The faith of these latter, which works through charity, either does not ever fail, or, if it fail in some, the loss is repaired before death, the sin that intervened is blotted out and perseverance to the end is granted. Augustine (354-430), Admonition and Grace 7.16

Show me, Lord, where I need to grow in Christlikeness. Restore me from anything to which I have become captive, and free me today to...

Pray Psalm 126.

Whatever fear, doubt, or unbelief has taken you captive, give it to the Lord, and call on Him to revive and

renew you today, as you go forth to sow in His Name.

Sing Psalm 126.

Psalm 126 (*Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, "The Lord has done great things for them!"
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing, who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

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Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What is the pastor's role in modeling Christ for his church? How can people pray for their pastors to help them in this?
2. Why is arguing seldom a good way to share the Gospel?
3. What are some ways that unbelievers today contradict themselves? How can we help them to see this?
4. What kind of life must we live in order to have a credible witness for Christ?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from 2 Timothy 2? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

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