

8/11/24 - 2 Tim. 2:7-10 - "Learning to Endure"

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Preacher: Brenton Beck

[0 : 0 0] We're going to be reading from 2 Timothy, chapter 2, 1 through 10, chapter 2, 1 through 10. You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 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.

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. It is a hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember, Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains and a criminal, but the word of God is not bound.

Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

[1 : 3 1] This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Pastor Les. It's great to see you upright and standing.

I've been waiting for that one. It's a blessing to see you in good health. Amen. Well, Paul just finished explaining to Timothy in the passage last week.

I thought that context was important to bring into the sermon today, so that's why we started all the way back in chapter 1. We're not going back in time. And I think context is important here because Paul is finishing up what he's saying.

And he just finished explaining to Timothy, his apprentice in ministry, the nature of laboring within the Christian life, how a Christian labors and what that looks like.

And specifically, it's regarding Paul's or Timothy's laboring as pastor in the Christian life. Last week, we unpacked the three analogies that Paul uses, the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer.

[2 : 4 8] So the soldier, how that laboring will look like in Paul's ministry is that it will demand his focus upon objectives, or else he's going to not make it.

Or an athlete who is to spend diligent time training and not making any shortcuts. And then also the farmer, to be patient in that laboring, keeping your eyes upon the bigger picture.

And now I would imagine that Timothy was eager to learn, eager to learn, but realizing the slow and often frustrating aspects of his call would be quite discouraging from time to time.

This may tempt Timothy to give up his call altogether. It could possibly lead to him taking shortcuts.

See, Paul needs to reinforce something deeper, deeper than the labor of his hands relating to his commission by God.

- [4 : 00] Paul needs to reinforce something deeper than the labor of his hands, and he needs to reinforce the labor of his mind, his conviction.
- Every Christian is called to be a lifelong learner, growing in their knowledge of God, growing in their love for God, to avoid becoming stagnant in the Christian life.
- Have you ever felt that stagnancy in the Christian life? As a soldier in battle, waiting for the shots to fire, an athlete knowing the race isn't for months and months away, a farmer knowing that harvest and storing season is long away.
- Have you ever felt that stagnancy? Well, every Christian is called to be a lifelong learner. And with that calling, what we discover of the soldier, of the athlete, of the farmer, or for Timothy as a pastor, or you as a parent, or you as a YSU college student, what you discover is a thoughtful engagement of your mind that you must apprehend.
- And it's more repetitious than the labor of your hands is the labor of your mind. What we'll see today is that learning and enduring are interconnected together.
- [5 : 45] Our pursuit of learning is interconnected with enduring. And with that, we will see that lifelong learners will be lifelong endurers.
- And so I want to unpack in three different sections today and break the text up sort of thematically, but with points, as Paul is encouraging Timothy, and actually, I take that back.
- He's not encouraging. He's commanding Timothy to engage his mind, his memory, and his mission. And the sermon title today is Learning to Endure.
- And I'd like to pray as we go into this time and enter into God's Word. Let's pray. Father, thank You for Your Word this morning, and thank You for revealing Yourself to us.
- I pray that as we go about this discovery process, that we be challenged by the imperatives of Your Word.
- [6 : 57] And Father, we pray that we don't leave here the same that we arrived. Your Word is a life-changing book with the power to transform a dead sinner into a forgiven saint.
- Help us not to pass this moment up and scroll on our phones, look around the room, help us to zero in on Your Word today. We pray this in Jesus' name.
- Amen. Amen. And so the first point that we'll see is in verse 7, is that we endure by God illuminating our understanding of His Word.
- He says, think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. As Paul concludes his previous analogies of the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer, it is as if Paul is telling Timothy that suffering does not always make sense.
- But all three serve a fundamental purpose. And we unpack that a little bit until the soil of those ideas last week. And C.K. Barrett, a biblical scholar of our day, observes those purposes, that beyond warfare is victory, beyond the athlete's effort is the prize, and beyond agricultural labor is a crop.
- [8 : 37] In other words, think over what I say, or think about that purpose. And Paul's emphasis gets lost in the English, I think.
- Some translations say think, like the ESV. If you go to the NASV, you'll see consider. And this word is not just a suggestion.
- This is an imperative form of the verb that is saying, you better do this. Your calling depends upon it that you do this.
- Think over what I say. It's not advice. It's a command. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.
- And so if Timothy is to endure in his commission, he must establish conviction. Not just of intellectual knowledge, not just of situational knowledge, but understanding, purpose.

[9 : 52] I'd imagine that every Christian today desires this genuine assurance and this genuine encounter with truth and with God of the Bible. And we sometimes replace the work of the mind with the work of the heart as if those two are enemies of one another.

That, we don't want to think of all that dry, boring theology stuff. Let's just get the good feelings and the tinglys.

Put the lasers on, put the fog, dim those lights. Let's create an atmosphere, right? We focus so much on that emotional appeal.

We want tingly emotions. We want that honeymoon feeling. However, the repetitive nature of Paul's commandment requires something deeper than just emotions.

That sometimes spring up like a fire on a grill that I'm very aware of of what that looks like. Most of those fires go back down.

[11 : 02] It's just a flash of flame, right? Of emotions. But the repetitive nature of Paul's command here requires something deeper than just emotions.

It demands affections. Emotions are so much different than affections. Affections are emotional.

But emotions without affections don't last. Emotions are fleeting. affections are long-lasting. Emotions are superficial at best.

But affections are deep. Emotions often have no action. Just sit in there with your tinglys. But affections always result in action.

Emotions have our feelings often that are disconnected from the mind and the will. but affection involves the whole being, mind, will, and feelings.

[12 : 07] Jonathan Edwards said a lot on this issue. And he says that true religious affections rise from the mind being enlightened rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things.

This is exactly what Paul is telling Timothy he needs to do. And so the Christian faith we realize is rational.

The Christian faith is rational. The mind is engaged within the Christian faith. It doesn't bypass the mind. Even Plato knew that in his philosophy is that the mind is the gateway to the heart.

and Paul is commanding Timothy to engage his mind and not by his own power. The Holy Spirit must drive affections which fuels conviction and conviction fuels commission.

To have any missing, Timothy is destined to fail. Proverbs 2.6 says, For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth comes understanding and knowledge.

[13 : 24] Paul, in this dark prison, a man bound in chains, starving to death, is essentially saying, Timothy, if your calling seems dry, if your calling seems dull and unrewarding, something deeper must sustain you that engages your will to carry on and it will only come through a thoughtful engagement of God's word.

Right? Think over what I say. it's easy for Timothy probably to become negative.

Sitting in a prison cell is probably easy for Paul to become negative. How many of us have become negative about our marriage?

Well, what if the key to an affectionate and enduring pursuit in marriage is as easy as sitting with your spouse and praying with them?

Opening the Bible together, reading together. Maybe negativity is common upon your work at your workplace.

[14 : 54] Well, what if the key to an affectionate and enduring pursuit of that calling, as it were for Timothy, is as easy as praying for your coworkers? And God forbid, inviting them to read the Bible with you on your 15-minute smoke break or your half-hour lunch break.

Maybe if you want to get real, maybe you have negativity about your own church, Steel Valley Church. What if the key to an affectionate and enduring pursuit in Steel Valley Church is keeping these same faculties central?

faithful. We need not just knowledge. We need not just emotions. We need affection. Affection.

Friends, our mind is, I would say, the most powerful faculty of God's creation, which governs our heart to feel rightly and guides our will to endure.

Church, pray for God to make you affectionate for His Word. And then and only then will you find delight in this repetitive command as He's telling Timothy, think over what I say, this command, and it will also bring to you understanding in this waiting season of your calling.

[16 : 24] As the psalmist says in Psalm 119, 97, oh how I love your law, it is my meditation all the day.

May that be so for us as well. Second point that we see in this passage continues into verse 8, we endure by God fortifying our memory of His promise.

We endure by God fortifying our memory of His promise. It says in verse 8 into the first part of verse 9, remember Jesus Christ risen from the dead, the offspring of David as preached in my gospel for which I am suffering bound with chains as a criminal.

What makes this concept more reliable than Greek philosophy? I mean, if we want to get real, Plato would probably amen to Paul in verse 8, but he wouldn't amen to Paul in verse, I'm sorry, in verse 7, he wouldn't amen to Paul in verse 8.

He agrees with the power of thinking about things over and over again in a repetitious manner, and to bring understanding, enlightenment into your heart, but he would not amen about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 57] Paul consistently kept Jesus at the center of everything, both the centrality of Paul's preaching was Christ and all of Scripture pointed to Christ and still points to Christ today.

And for that, Paul is commanding Timothy not just to think about anything, but to remember Jesus in your thinking, in this process, in this meditation, think about these things and remember Jesus Christ.

To think back to his, the episode in Acts 20, when Paul left the Ephesian elders, Paul left all of these men, the ones whom Timothy is called to lead.

And Paul reinforced this sentiment, the importance of remembering Jesus Christ. Because not all will remember, he said in Acts 20, verse 29, I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

It's not just about thinking, but it's remembering in your thinking. I mean, it only takes a quarter of a degree to take a ship completely off course over the stretch of a big body of water, and so too.

[19 : 37] For those who twist and add to the gospel, how much more serious when our emotions dictate that quarter of a degree away from the truth of God's word.

I mean, our day is filled with a cacophony of all these voices all proclaiming Jesus Christ, and many of them deviate from Paul's gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

speaking twisted things, drawing disciples after them. It was a problem even in Paul's day with Hymenaeus back in the day, and it's kind of compounded now that the canon of Scripture is closed, and we have this rule of faith that guards and guides our doctrine and our beliefs, and it's compounded in severity because that's a blatant rejection.

In other words, according to the Scriptures is central to endurance because it's central to the thought process and it's central to our memory.

Church, you awake? According to the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ rose according to the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah from the line of David according to the Scriptures, 2 Samuel 7 14.

[21 : 13] Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. Meaning that with Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures, you don't have a less divine Jesus Christ and you don't have a less human Jesus.

You have the almighty God, Jesus Christ, who raised himself from the dead. And if God is to illuminate our understanding, God will fortify and strengthen that understanding through remembering Jesus Christ as we endure.

Maybe this is getting too psychological this morning. You want the cliff note? Lasting endurance is Christ-centered. That's it.

Christ-centered. We must remember that Paul himself is writing under the shadow of an executioner.

Death is imminent. Darkness is coming. We can't escape it. The news will remind all of us after church today of how messed up our world is.

[22 : 33] We experience difficulties in our lives, setbacks in our lives, loss of employment, loss of desire to do anything, stuck in depression, kind of paralyzed by our own anxiety.

We go to the doctor, we receive a diagnosis that isn't going to be cured. Lord. Sometimes we just despair at our very own mundane experience of the Christian life, of praying, depending, and nothing happening.

What must we do to endure? Focus on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. Not some culturally painted guru of some moral teacher who gets us, but Jesus Christ, the Almighty, the image of the invisible God who fashioned each and every star in the sky and who fashioned you in your mother's womb, who created each of us.

us. Remember that. And through this rational engagement of our mind, our heart can do nothing but be arrested and transformed by the Holy Spirit in our will to endure.

God Maybe for you today, it's not necessarily a remembering process.

[24 : 17] Maybe for you today, this is a discovery process. To hear the words that God has a purpose in your life.

That just as God fashioned each and every star, and you in your mother's womb, that he has brought you here to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Are you discovering the love of Jesus Christ for you? That's the times laying your head down on your pillow at night, you can't escape those intrusive thoughts.

You can't escape the ruminating anxiety of what is going to happen when your heart stops beating.

What happens at the last exit of your life? And that if the Bible is true, that you may be disregarding. If the Bible is true, you know that there will be judgments at the end of your life.

[25 : 28] But who will stand in your defense? The gospel even now is informing your mind through his word and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord alone is reviving your heart to the awareness of your faith in Jesus Christ, your need for Jesus Christ to save you, to vindicate you, and to advocate for you in that judgment, in that holy courtroom.

The invitation is here for you today. You can rest well tonight. How? Placing your faith in Jesus Christ. The hope of the gospel still speaks today.

And enter into a life of endurance with Paul, a murderer of Christians forgiven and free in Christ. Join him in forgiveness by your faith.

The third point that we have today is that we endure by God renewing our affection for his mission. This is seen in the last half of verse 9 into verse 10.

[26 : 47] He says, but the word of God is not bound therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

As Paul awaits his execution, he unites his suffering and bondage sort of like as an antonym of an illustrative antonym of the freedom and the unrestrained word of God and the unrestrained will of God to save those who he called to salvation.

However, Paul did not succumb to self-pity in this prison cell, but he remained in confident power, not only in affection for the sake of those who God predestined before the foundation of the world, but also in assurance in the never-ending, the eternal glory that awaits.

He knew that his moment in this prison cell, even death within an instance, is just temporary and it will not last because of the work of Jesus Christ.

This sentiment challenges us when we suffer to take captive our selfish thoughts of self-pity, of woe is me, woe is this thing in my life and that thing in my life.

[28 : 27] What if God called you to that? Is that worshiping your God and your creator? The sentiment challenges us to suffer, to take captive our selfish thoughts and gain perspective of God's predestined plan for our lives and the lives of others.

If you want Brent's New American translation, it would read, suffer by faith, not by sight. This vapor of life we have will one day pass away as our ancestors generations from now will log in.

I don't know, maybe they'll just think about it then because computers, I don't know what will happen with that, but log into ancestry.com and they'll look back in the tree and what they'll discover is a name.

They'll see all of your names. They won't see the story. They won't see your purpose. It's humbling to think.

But how wonderful it is that God knows your story, that God sees your pain, that God sees you, he's with you, he won't forsake you, and that your name on that ancestry that's absent of anybody's knowledge, God knows intimately and how intimately he knew you before the foundation of the world, before anything came to be.

[30 : 08] A name that will one day receive victory, final victory over sin and death, secured only by Jesus Christ on the cross. You see, while our days are often dark and the news doesn't help us to escape from that reality, believers have a freedom greater than any constitution of the United States or Bill of Rights can legislate, a freedom that no chain can bind, a freedom that awaits in the future.

We don't have to worry about tomorrow, we must worry about those today who may not be with us if eternity begins tomorrow, that our commission today is imperative, and in that if we get distracted by the things in our lives and lose sight of God's plan and His will for our lives, you're going to miss it, in that if we suffer for the gospel, we suffer with a purpose that far surpasses our pain and affectionately draws us to His plan.

God's love for the gospel, we will be to our life learning process. Welcome. Scholars will call this sanctification, the period between becoming a believer and until you come into glory.

Welcome. You're among friends, and it's a learning process. It doesn't end. God's love for the gospel, and in this learning process, He keeps us.

God illuminates our understanding, He fortifies our memory, He grows our affection for His mission, and in these, the church will continue to endure as it has for centuries past and will continue for centuries forward.

[32 : 10] Too many of us today have a desire to endure, to keep on keeping on, but few actually have clear, tangible convictions of how to do it.

The book on Barnes & Noble's bookshelf might help for a season, but it won't last. Only upon God's word and paying attention to Paul's command to endure will we endure.

May we instill this conviction according to Paul's command to Timothy, that endurance involves our mind, but our memory, and also God's mission.

Lifelong learners will be lifelong endures. This is a continuous learning process. I love how the 18th century, 1800s, James Montgomery wrote his hymn, just captures our hearts upon that mission and God's plan.

He says, one thing, with all my soul's desire, I sought and will pursue. What thine own spirit doth inspire, Lord, for thy servant do.

[33 : 36] This is learning to endure, church. I know you may interact with you. I