

Is It Worth the Effort?

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- [0 : 0 0] It is wonderful to be here with all of you. And you can hear me. It's good. It is great to be here. Kim and I love your church. We love the Woos.
- Love Pastor Woo. And when he says Mighty Oak, I don't know if I'm a Mighty Oak. I'm an old Oak. I don't know if Mighty is the right description of that.
- But it's great to be here. We love this church. We love our denomination. We do love Sean and Hannah. And one of the things that was very interesting, we had good friends last week that were visiting.
- They were up in the Boston area. So he emailed me. We just had dinner with him last week. He emailed me and said, hey, where would you recommend I go to church? We're up in Boston. He had heard of King of Grace.
- I said, well, that's a great church. But actually, you'll be closer to Cambridge. So I encouraged him to come here instead. And so Anthony and Nicole were here last week. They met a number of you.
- [0 : 5 7] And as we had dinner with them this week, they said, this is, they had a couple things. One, they said, it's a young church. And I thought, yeah, it is a younger church. And praise God for that.
- The other thing they said was just how friendly you were. And that's evidence of the gospel in your midst. So they are believers. They're in leadership in our church. But being here, they felt like they were home.
- And the connections they had with you. And they heard stories of God's grace here. So thank you for how you welcome people. It's a testimony of the gospel.
- When you're together and you love one another, it's the air you breathe. And you may be unaware of the effect that it has when people visit. It's the aroma of Christ.
- And those in Christ notice it. And those who may not know Christ will still notice something's different. And so just your greeting and your love for one another becomes a testimony to the gospel.
- [1 : 5 6] So thank you for that testimony of the gospel. And again, grateful to be here. Well, if you'd open up your Bibles, please, to 2 Timothy chapter 2.
- And there are Bibles in the back. If you don't have one, the church would give that to you as a gift. So you can help yourselves to them in the back. But 2 Timothy chapter 2, if you're new or not a Christian or maybe new to the Bible, it's near the end of the Bible.
- It's a small book. And you'll find it back there as you move towards the end. And this is a letter, and it's a precious letter. It's a letter from Paul to Timothy.
- And what 2 Timothy is, it's really the last written words of Paul. So these are sort of the last words in Testament, in a sense, of a man who's about to face death.
- In fact, he soon, after writing this letter, he's going to end up being beheaded on the Appian Way. So he's going to be killed for Christ.

[2 : 57] And so what he's doing in this letter is he's communicating these last words to Timothy. Timothy was someone that he sort of was a father in the faith to. He was his spiritual father, and he loved Timothy.

This is a great picture of ministry. It's not professional driven. It's not resume driven. It's really relationally driven. And so here Paul has this great love for Timothy, and he calls him his true son, his beloved son.

And he's investing in Timothy's life. And these could be the final words that Timothy might ever hear from Paul. So they are important words.

And he's writing Timothy because Timothy's now facing the daunting task. And, folks, this was a daunting task. Think about Timothy.

And actually, we know his temperament. He was actually a timid person, seemed to struggle with some fear issues, maybe even some health issues. So here's Timothy.

[3 : 58] You're Paul's right-hand man. You're the guy that's going to follow in Paul's footsteps. That alone would be intimidating. Like, Paul's going to be dead. I'm next.

So what's it going to be like when he's gone and people start looking towards me? That would be daunting. But what's even more daunting to Timothy is he's got to be a steward of the gospel in a hostile culture.

They were in a very hostile culture at this point. And please remember, this is a fledgling church. I don't know how you view yourselves because you've been a church for a while.

But you would still say, we're a newer church. You know, we're not big. You know, we're not impressive. And we might be in a hostile culture, a hostile environment.

And hostility can be open or it can be subtle. Right? Sometimes hostility to Christians is, oh, you're a Christian. Obviously, you have not, don't have a brain.

[5 : 01] You don't think. You believe in myths. You know, you're the responsibility for prejudice in the world and oppression in the world. So we can run into hostility in our culture.

Well, that's Timothy. He's running into a hostile culture with a fledgling church. Almost a sort of a church that's just still in the cradle.

And so what's going to happen when Paul leaves this earth? So he's talking about suffering in this last letter. And the theme of suffering is one of the themes in 2 Timothy.

So I've entitled this morning's message, Is It Worth the Effort? Is it worth the effort? Is it really worth the effort to suffer for the gospel? Is it worth the effort to experience scorn or condescending looks from people that you know?

People that might just look at you and go, oh, you're a Christian. It might get worse than that. Maybe it is worse than that for you. Sometimes in families, if you've come from a family of unbelievers and you become a Christian, your family can have a very negative reaction to that.

[6 : 13] What are you doing with your life? How are you investing your life? Well, is it worth it? It's the question that Paul really is going to present and advocate for Timothy.

And the main point of the message is this. The rewards of the gospel, of gospel mission, outweigh the cost. The rewards of gospel mission, and I would say the rewards of gospel mission far outweigh the cost.

And when I talk about gospel mission, how do I define that? Well, one, it's faithfulness to Christ. It's not just, it is faithfulness to proclaim Christ, but it starts with being faithful to Christ.

That's essence, the essence of gospel mission. That I'm faithful to my Savior. I'm faithful to my King. I see Him and I live for His glory.

It's faithfulness to Christ and then faithfulness to proclaim the gospel to others. So, 2 Timothy chapter 2. We're going to read verses 1 through 13.

[7 : 19] And would you please stand for the reading of God's word. 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. We'll 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 the hardworking 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. Risen from the dead. The offspring of David as preached in my gospel.

[8 : 23] For which I am suffering. Bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect.

That they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. The saying is trustworthy. For if we have died with him, we will also live with him.

If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful.

For he cannot deny himself. Himself. You can take your seats and let's pray. Lord, we pray. As we've now read your word.

God, your word is powerful. Lord, your word is never bound. Lord, your word has intent for us this morning. And it's not just information.

[9 : 26] It is not just good theology, Lord. Lord, I pray it is sound doctrine. But God, I pray that your word would have its effect on us. Its claim upon us.

And Lord, we would see that claim as life-giving. Lord, you are a giver, not a taker. So Lord, when you instruct us, it is for our good.

So Lord, I pray that the gospel would be rich. That the beauty of Christ would be clear. And this exhortation to suffer for this glorious gospel would be real.

And Lord, we, we would be faithful to this gospel. Because it is worth it. Because he is worth it. Lord, bless now the preaching of your word for the good of your people.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Teddy Roosevelt, one of my favorite presidents. I studied in political science in college.

[10 : 26] And presidential politics particularly. And he was one of my favorite presidents. Because he's one of the most interesting and colorful men. If you know anything about Teddy Roosevelt and his life.

He sort of grew up sort of a sickly boy actually. But overcame all that. Became a cowboy. And he was a rough rider in the, in the Spanish-American war. He eventually, when he, after president, he explored the Amazon River.

In a book called The River of Doubt. Spectacular. Went places where nobody else went. His son died on the journey. But Teddy just kept going. He was shot as a presidential candidate.

When he was campaigning. And at one point they said, Teddy, you know, you've been shot. Is a bullet going to, you know, knock you out? And he goes, it'll take more than a bullet to knock down an old bull moose like me.

And then it became the bull moose party. And so he's just bigger than life. Big personality. Aggressive fun. When he would have press conferences.

[11 : 26] If you wanted to interview Teddy Roosevelt. Very unlike today. Tell you what I said. You want an interview? A journalist would come to him. Say, you want an interview with me? Sure. And he goes, well, let's go for a walk. And the president of the United States would walk through Washington.

With a reporter by his side. Interviewing him. And the next thing you know, that reporter, they'd be going through fields. Climbing fences. At one point he stopped at the Potomac River.

And swam it. You know, I don't know if the reporter went with him. And be like, excuse me. That's the kind of person he was. So he's a bigger than life. Prominent figure of the 20th century.

And here's one of the things he said. Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing. Unless it means effort, pain, difficulty.

I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I've envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.

[12 : 28] Another prominent figure of the 20th century. Winston Churchill. Who obviously battled the evil of Germany and Hitler and Nazism prior to World War II.

And during World War II. Here's what he said prior to the war. Right as the war was starting. And facing the evil and menace of Hitler. He said this.

I have nothing. He had many famous speeches. This is one of them. I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat.

We have an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, what is our policy?

It is to wage war by sea, land, and air. With all our might and with all our strength that God can give us. To wage war against a monstrous tyranny never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of human crime.

[13 : 31] You ask, what is our aim? I can answer it in one word. It is victory. Victory at all costs. Victory in spite of all terror. Victory, however long and however hard the road may be.

So how does this, those quotes relate to this text? Well, this text raises the difficulty and the cost of faithfulness to Christ and the gospel.

It poses the question, is it worth it? Is it worth it? Timothy, when I leave, life might get harder for you.

Is it worth it? And it's going to be answered more than once in 2 Timothy, but we're going to look at it in 2 Timothy 2. So two points this morning. First, the exhortations.

And then we're going to look at the motives. First, the exhortation. And there are three exhortations given in the first three verses.

[14 : 36] And then three metaphors given in the next three verses to illustrate the exhortations. So you have three exhortations, verses 1 through 3.

Three metaphors, verses 4 through 6. First exhortation. Be strengthened. And you then, my child. See the affection. See the affection.

You then, my child. Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In other words, be strengthened.

Timothy, you are living in a hostile society. It is hostile politically, culturally, morally. Think about our culture right now, folks.

Is it hostile to Christianity? Is Cambridge, in one sense, hostile to Christianity? I know in New Jersey, South Jersey, there can be hostility to the gospel.

[15 : 35] Right? Politically. Christians can be marginalized. Culturally, we can be irrelevant. Morally, we can actually be attacked. Right? Our moral standards are not well accepted right now.

I mean, in the past. And Christians are, by the way, reacting to all this. Not always in healthy ways. Because it used to be Judeo-Christian ethics was the accepted morality in our country.

Well, no longer. No longer. So you get into sexual morality, sexual identity itself. All these things being questions.

And Christians are like, what's going on? And we're viewed as out of step. Prejudiced. Biased. Bigoted.

Hurtful. Harmful. That's how we're being viewed. Well, that's the world Timothy lived in. It was a hostile society. Christians were not accepted in any normative place.

[16 : 39] Politically irrelevant. Morally, out to lunch. Culturally, out of step. They just didn't fit in.

And that's what he's facing. So be strengthened in the midst of a hostile society. Be strengthened in the midst of deconstructing Christians. Right?

Think about in Timothy, we have Demas. At one point, one of Paul's great companions. You'll find Demas in a couple places. You'll find him in Philemon, where he is commended as a fellow believer, as a worker with Paul.

So this is like a guy, this is Paul. Demas is on the team. Now Demas in 2 Timothy, he has departed the faith. Deconstruction, people talk about a lot today in our culture.

Folks, it's not a new concept. It's just a new word. Christians have deconstructed from the beginning. We've just popularized it with a new word and maybe with new reasons.

[17 : 45] But he had a deconstructing Christian. Christians, Demas is leaving. There were false teachers and opponents. So we have in chapter 4, Alexander the coppersmith, who Paul says, did me great harm.

Okay? Do we have false teachers in our land today? Deconstructing Christians? Hostile culture? We can really identify with this chapter.

We can find hope and strength in a chapter like this. Sometimes we feel like we don't have anything in common. If Timothy were here, he says, I know exactly what you feel.

Paul would be, if Paul were here, he'd be like, you, this church, this wonderful, beloved church, you need to be strengthened for the call.

You need to be strengthened to be faithful to gospel and mission. And then think about this. So Paul's looking at Timothy, deconstructing Christians.

[18 : 50] Hostile culture. And probably had this thought, and he actually knows he has this thought. How's Timothy going to relate to my own imprisonment? Will my own imprisonment discourage Timothy?

How would you do as a church if Sean got arrested for preaching the gospel? Our pastor, because he preached the gospel, maybe he preached on a controversial topic, faithful to scripture, and because of that, he has been labeled and accused.

He has done hate speech in the world's eyes. And our pastor has been arrested.

How does the church respond? For some, would fear be a real temptation? What's going to happen? What's going to happen to us? What's going to happen to me? What if I say the wrong thing?

And so Paul's looking at Timothy, oh my, culture, false Christians, false teachers, my own imprisonment, all these things might land on Timothy.

[20 : 05] What will he do? And so Paul, because he loves Timothy, says, I need him to be strengthened. Notice what he says. Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In other words, Timothy, he wasn't giving him a pep talk. This wasn't like, now Timothy, be strong.

This isn't like a football coach in a locker room. All right, guys, gird up. We've, you know, we're going out there and go get them. They all get worked up in a fury and go out and then lose the game, you know.

But they get all worked up. That's not what Timothy, that's not what Paul's doing to Timothy. It's not a pep talk. It's not motivational speaking. You know, motivating you, be all you can be.

It's not the army phrase, be all you can be. You know, that's not what he's saying. He's saying, I want you to be strengthened by grace. Not by personal courage.

[21 : 04] Not by self-effort. I love this quote by John Stott. In his commentary on 2 Timothy, he said the following. Of course, if his exhortation had stopped there, be strengthened, it would have been futile, even absurd.

He might as well have told a snail to be quick or a horse to fly as to command a man as timid as Timothy to be strong.

But Paul's call to fortitude is Christian, not stoical. It's not a summons to Timothy to be strong in himself, to set his jaw and grit his teeth, but to be emirately strengthened by means of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

He wants him to be strengthened by grace. Brothers and sisters, this is the story of the Bible. The Bible's not filled with glorious heroes.

Right? It's filled with a glorious God. I mean, if you think about the Old Testament, think of the story of Gideon. And if you know the story at all, God calls him to do something that's unimaginable.

[22 : 22] Gideon does not want to do it. And so then he puts out a fleece, you know, and the fleece is, and I always get it confused. Is it wet first, then dry? Like, and the ground's dry. I get the story confused.

But, you know, what's going on? And you can just tell Gideon does not want to do this. And yet God strengthens him. Think about Samson. And one of the things he's strong, but isn't he a mess?

I mean, Samson is just, I mean, it's one of the stories in the Old Testament, like, what a messy guy. Why would God even use someone like this? I mean, you couldn't have a more up and down guy than Samson.

And yet even there, at the end, God strengthens him. You know, after they blind him and put him between two pillars, he calls out to God and God strengthens him.

David, you know, one of the great figures of the Old Testament, he was a son not even worth considering to be a king. They didn't even think about bringing him in from the field. You know, Samson goes by, like, who's going to be the king?

[23 : 21] It's going to come from Jesse's family. Well, him, him, him, him. They didn't even think about calling David. It's not until the very end. Do you have any other sons? Yes, David. And then he calls David. And then David does exploits, not because he was strong, because God was strong for him.

And it just goes on and on. The New Testament's very similar. You know, Peter, messy. If you ever worry about you're a messy Christian, can God use you? Keep reading the Bible.

It will encourage you. God uses weak and messy people to accomplish his plans strengthened by his grace. I mean, it's the story of my life.

Weak, messy. Start, stop. Do things that I shouldn't do and don't do things that I know I should do.

And yet God's like, it's the story. It's the one thing. Age gives some things. But the one thing, I've been a Christian for almost 55 years.

[24 : 28] It's this. God is constant and I am not. God is unchangeable. I am changeable. God is always faithful. God can do great things.

And you just have story after story after story of life that shows this. The Bible shows it. And Paul, by the way, Paul knew this personally.

So Paul's telling Timothy that he personally experienced. He knew the strength that came from grace. If you're in 2 Timothy 2, just turn a page, flip over to chapter 4, verse 17.

And actually, let me back in to verse 16 in chapter 4. So these are now the final of the final words of Paul to Timothy.

And so he sort of shares, he's sharing stories, concluding. And he says this, at my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me.

[25 : 26] Wow. How would you like to be a Christian, serving God with all your heart, facing death, and all your friends leave?

Jesus certainly knew that. But his friends leave. And he's gracious and generous to them. May it not be charged against them.

What a gracious heart. And then verse 17. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me. The Lord stood by me and strengthened me so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

Because Paul knew God's strength. So here's that exhortation. Be strengthened. Second exhortation is entrust. So in chapter 2, verse 2.

So he goes, now be strengthened, Timothy. Secondly, now entrust to faithful men who will also be able to teach others. So entrust this message of the gospel to others.

[26 : 36] Here's what discipleship, if you're a Christian here, here's what God calls you to, right? He calls you to have faith in him. And then he calls you to pass that on to someone else. Now you entrust this message to others.

You entrust it to others. You help others get there. Now he's obviously talking pastor, in one sense, to pastor. But we're all called to discipleship.

To make disciples. That's Matthew 28 in the Great Commission. To make disciples. So discipleship looks to pass it along. We have a number of women authors in our church.

My daughter's actually one of them. And three of them, they're published authors. And when I look at these ladies and how they live their life, their writing is to pass it along to others.

It's like, well, God's done something in me. He's convicting me of things. He's put passions in my heart. Well, now I'm writing to pass it along to others.

[27 : 38] So how do you pass it along to others? Think about the stories in this church. Right? I look out and say, okay.

Differences. Okay. What's your story? How's God been faithful? How can you pass his faithfulness and his story in your life on to others so they might know Christ?

By the way, hard times can really be strong discipleship times. Because, right, a lot of things around you that hold you up are gone. And all of a sudden, it is you and Jesus.

And sometimes you feel it's just you. And a lot of times we feel like we're in situations alone and God doesn't see. Theologically, we know he does. But experientially, we feel he doesn't. That we are alone.

And then all of a sudden, you're on the other side. And you look back. And you see something very different. See, God was faithful. God was there.

[28 : 38] God helped me. God stood with me. And ultimately, God did strengthen me. Now, share that with others. And so I think that church life, you know, if you're older in the Lord or parents, what are you doing?

You are trying to bring the gospel to the next generation. And by the way, that's not just a parental responsibility. Folks, when you see young people, the power of lives lived for the gospel to young people is massive.

We have a group of teens that, as they've gone through youth ministry, they're now young adults. They have come back and they serve in our teen ministry. Parents are training.

But you know what their lives say? I know my parents are going to tell me to go to church. Like, I know they have to tell me that. They're going to tell me to read my Bible and do the right things. But these people have choices. There's no parent telling them to serve in the church.

So if you're younger here and married or single, you have all the freedom in the world. There's no one telling you how to live. When you live for Christ, as a single person, as a young person, as a young couple, you are declaring the worth of Christ.

[29 : 50] Christ. And you could be doing a lot of other things. Remember a single man, he lived with us for a while. And he was in financial management. He made a lot of money.

And I always looked at him and said, but you don't live to your means. Because you have other views in mind. You have other goals. Other priorities. And he was such an example to me.

Because I thought, he has choice. He could spend differently. And no one could say anything. But he chooses something different.

And it's a powerful testimony. So please don't ever underestimate the testimony. There's a single woman in our church who really wants to be married.

She's older. And there's no prospects. She's got some good friends. She's a very dear friend of our family. And every time I see her, one of the things I say to her is, you know, your life, every day you come to church, your life declares to me, Christ is worth it.

[30 : 51] Because you know what? You could have a man. It would not be hard to find. You're a wonderful person. It would not be hard to find a guy. It might be very hard to find a godly guy.

So you suffer, in a sense, in loneliness. But in that suffering, you declare to me, and I know where she sits. I'm picturing her right now in my eyes. And I'll look at her, and I said, her life tells me Christ is worth it.

Because I don't have just a human happy ending story. Because you're following Christ, I know he's going to bring you that dream guy.

I don't know that. But her life declares something to me. And now her life testifies to a whole other generation of young people.

It does. My youngest son looks at her life and says, yeah, her life informs me how I should be living and what's most important. So he entrusted it.

[31 : 54] And what knows? To reliable, faithful men who can teach others. And reliable, that idea of reliable is we need to be faithful to the truth. One of the things I love about Sean is his commitment to sound doctrine and theology.

He serves in the theology committee of sovereign race churches. I'm grateful he does. Because he's a man who's going to parse over every word. Who's going to think about it and think deeply about it.

And he uses all the intellect that God's given him, all the skills, all the training to do that. He has those things that I don't have. I'm not on that committee and shouldn't be. Okay?

His knowledge, he takes there and he applies it. Why? And I think, oh, Lord, that's a gift to us. It's a gift for generations yet to come. You know, that's why our statement of faith was so important.

It took years to develop. And he served so faithfully on that committee. Why? Because truth matters. Here's what you're being assaulted with today. Truth does not matter.

[33 : 02] And it does. You know, loving one another in error is not love. We need to love one another in truth. So, strengthen and exhort.

Third, and this gets to the heart of it, suffer. Look at verse 3. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. This gets to the heart of this part of the letter.

It's the second time Paul references suffering to Timothy in 2 Timothy. In chapter 1, verse 8, he says this, Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me, his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God.

Three times in chapter 1, Paul tells Timothy not to be ashamed. He says it, don't be ashamed, instruction to Timothy. Paul then says, I am not ashamed, even though I'm in chains.

And he also instructs, talks about Onesimus, Onesimus, who was not ashamed of Paul's chains and of the gospel. So, it's suffer for this great gospel.

[34 : 12] Don't be ashamed, but suffer. See, Paul assumes this. Suffering for the gospel is the norm. And I don't know where the church stands, and I don't want to be controversial at all.

I don't seek to be that. I think Americans are having a hard time with that message. Because American Christians have not typically, historically, suffered in our country for the gospel.

Because it was the dominant ethic. It was the assumed foundations. And there can be romanticized and inaccurate views of our history and all that, and selective applications of all that, and selective inclusions of all that to that.

But the idea of suffering that's now coming, it does seem like it's on the precipice. You know, there's predictions of persecutions all the time. Christians should stay away from predictions.

Christians, they are wrong over and over and over again. And yet, somehow, they still grab our attention. But I can see out and say, you know, I can see the storm clouds gathering for persecution.

[35 : 21] Will they dissipate? Maybe. Will they intensify? Maybe. Will this storm pass us, or will it hit us?

And then how will we respond as Christians? Right now, you see a lot of anger and a lot of fear. Folks, this was the norm in the world.

This was the norm. It's just not our norm. And by the way, not only is it the norm historically, it's still the norm globally. It's still somewhat the norm globally. So Paul assumes, as does the New Testament, that suffering is the norm.

Here are the words of Jesus in John chapter 15. If the world hates you, we're on the brink of experiencing that.

If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

[36 : 29] Remember the word I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecute me, they will also persecute you. This is the words of our Savior.

This is what he is telling us, and this is what Paul is trying to prepare Timothy for. So three exhortations, three metaphors quickly to support those exhortations.

So you see them in verses four through six. What are the metaphors? Soldier, athlete, farmer. Soldier, athlete, farmer.

What do they all speak to as metaphors? Focus, devotion, discipline, perseverance, effort, being undistracted.

Right? Think about an athlete. Think about an athlete. You want to be an Olympic athlete? You'll be focused. You'll be devoted. You'll need discipline. You'll have to persevere.

[37 : 25] It'll take effort. You can't be distracted. Soldiers, same thing. Farmer, same thing. Here's what I think is interesting. Whereas a soldier and an athlete can get glory, a farmer doesn't.

Right? Soldiers can get glory. Medals, ceremonies, athletes get awards. They get glory. When has there last been farmer of the year?

Hey, have you seen this farmer? He is really making a difference. Farmers just work. It's not glorious. It doesn't seem grand.

It's not glamorous. I think there's another metaphor he could have used here. Mother. Just long work over a long time.

No glory. No words, awards. No glamour. And yet, same faithful, devoted, devotion, focus, perseverance, effort, undistracted.

[38 : 39] Farmer works behind the scenes often. Christians, we can do the same. There might be the athlete and soldier, but what about the farmer?

And then Paul says in verse 7, you know what? I've said some things. Think it over. The Lord will give you understanding. So let me tell you the same thing. Think it over, and the Lord will give you understanding to this.

There's the exhortation. Secondly, the motives. And there are several. All three metaphors point to something, don't they? All three metaphors point to reward.

Victory, crown, harvest. In other words, if you do these hard things over a long period of time, whether they are glamorous and glorious or mundane and just hard work, there is reward.

Victory, crown, harvest. And then in verse 8, we have a great phrase in this exhortation and now in this motive of the exhortation.

[39 : 42] Remember Jesus Christ. Remember Jesus Christ. And what does he highlight? He highlights two things, doesn't he? The offspring of David. What's he highlighting?

He was fully human. What else is he highlighting? He was our king. Remember Jesus, who is your king. And what else does he say?

Remember this. Remember he was risen from the dead. That's his divinity. And that's his victory. Why remember?

Because, folks, we tend to forget. Old Testament, if you say, boy, roots of sins, pride, certainly great root.

But what is one of their practices? What's one of the things that always seem to just trip up Israel? They forgot. Psalms, remember.

[40 : 41] Remember. Remember. Remember. What are Christians? We can forget. What's the meal? Remember. Do this.

Do this. Do this. And remember to me. Because tomorrow, you may forget this. Tomorrow, you may forget the grace of God, the beauty of Christ, what he did on the cross for you.

And you might get lost in your day and condemned in your day. You may not be the Christian you want to be. Tomorrow. So remember this.

Christ died for your sins. He died for your sins. He died for your sins. He died for your sins. He died for your sins. He died for your sins. He died for your sins. Remember this.

Remember, he is the king. He rules. Paul's trying to bring great realities to Timothy. Yeah, I know there's Caesar. Don't be impressed. I know there's Rome and all the power and might of Rome.

[41 : 45] Don't be impressed. Don't be impressed. We have the king of kings. We have a savior who was risen for you. Remember, because we can forget.

And then he's not only having Timothy remember Jesus, he's then reminding him of the power of God's word. Look at verse nine. So remember Jesus. And then in verse nine, he goes on.

Oh, I'm suffering, you know, and I'm bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound. The word of God is not bound.

I may be bound. God's word is not bound. Folks, don't predict this. If you're a pastor, if Sean was ever arrested, don't predict this. This is not a prophetic word.

Okay? Don't predict it at all. But the word of God is not bound. God is not dependent. God is not going to wring his hands of what to do next.

[42 : 43] He says, oh, I've got many agents. I've got many ministers of the gospel. I've got a whole slew of people that can continue to testify to the grace of God.

And so, yes, the gospel will not be bound. The word of God will not be bound. And here's what I think Paul's trying to communicate to Timothy. Circumstances may be different than they seem.

Things are not always as they appear. Circumstances don't define ultimate reality. Paul says, I'm bound. God's word is not bound. I'm sure for Timothy, he says, this doesn't make sense.

Paul shouldn't be bound. What's that mean for the gospel? Paul's saying, nothing. The word of God is not bound.

Folks, what hope? How would that strengthen Timothy? Wow. Paul, Paul, bound, facing death, is not wringing his hands.

[43 : 50] Not only is God not wringing his hands, Paul's not wringing his hands of, you've got to get me out. What will happen to the church without me?

What will happen to the truth of the gospel without me? No, the word of God, not bound. Not bound. It's power. And then in verse 10, what's Paul telling Timothy?

And what's he telling us? He's telling us it's worth it. Look what he says in verse 10. And therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Paul's saying, oh, Timothy, it's worth it. Chapter 4, verse 8 really makes this clear. After Paul talks about his time of departure, he says, I fought the good fight.

I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. In verse 8, henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

[45 : 00] And Timothy, and Cambridge Church, Trinity Church here at Cambridge, you as well. Not only to Paul and to Timothy, not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

There is reward, award for all that have loved his appearing. It is worth it. And the final motive he gives, and it's a weighty motive for Paul.

And actually, verses 12 and 13, 11 through 13, probably were an early Christian hymn is what they thought about it. It's got two couplets in it. There's a positive and a negative motivation in them.

Two couplets in verses 11 and 12, and then also 12 and 13. So what's it say? If we die with him, we live with him. That's a promise. It's a promise.

If you die with him, you live with him. And if you endure, you reign. So there's motive here. If you endure, you reign. There's also warning in this couplet in the next two verses, in verses 12 and 13.

[46 : 13] If we deny him, he will also deny us. Paul is a truth teller. He's also giving warnings. And by the way, folks, when Scripture gives us warnings, please view that as God's kindness.

Recently, I've talked to our church recently. This is an aside. How do you view warnings? In national parks, if you read any of the things in national parks, do you know how many times people die because they ignore warnings?

They do. I mean, people still walk up to Bison in Yellowstone. And, like, do selfies with them. And then they get gored. You know?

And you're just like, what are you doing? You know, I've seen selfies in the Grand Canyon, literally, where someone stood on a wall. There's nothing but air on the other side. And they did this. And, folks, people fall.

Like, they fall off the falls in Yosemite. I mean, I'm like, the warnings are there. Saw a woman. She ignored the warnings. She decided to put her hands in one of the hot spots in Yellowstone.

[47 : 19] And she, it's like, this is boiling water that can also be acidic. And she put her hand in. And you're sort of like, okay, I don't get this.

Warnings are grace. So please hear this warning from Paul as God's gracious warning to us. If you deny, he denies. And this idea of faithless, if we're faithless, he'll be faithful, that could be an encouragement, maybe comfort.

I think it's more likely to be a warning that if we are faithless to God, he will be faithful and judge that. Now, I'm not talking, folks, because right now I can see everybody like, okay, that's me.

Right? I'm faithless. This is hardened indifference. Hardened sin. This is not the stumble. Right?

This is not, I'm trying, but I'm falling. This is, no, I don't care. If you're walking in known faithlessness and sinful indifference, Scripture would not bring comforts at that moment.

[48 : 37] Scripture, because God loves your heart, loves your soul, is going to warn you. Don't live this way. Don't live this way. It's one of the hardest conversations a pastor can have.

Because you love someone. And they're starting to walk in hardened sin. And you see them, they are walking to a cliff about to walk off. And you know, at that point, you're not as gentle always.

You try to be. But you know, at that point, you tackle. And you know, sometimes when you're tackling someone who's trying to walk off the cliff, they're kicking. But you're warning, please, don't do this.

Because gravity will be faithful to its essence. And you will crash. Now, the great thing is God doesn't just try to stop us from going off cliffs.

He is often at the bottom when we do. To still restore. So it's not hopeless. But it is a warning that we're called to be faithful, not faithless.

[49 : 39] So folks, may these motives, rewards, remembering Jesus, remembering the power of grace, remembering eternity, help us to say it is worth it.

All the cost. All the cost here in Cambridge and beyond. All the cost. What are they for you?

That you could say, tonight, it's worth it. It's worth it. I'm almost 65. I believe I've known Christ for close to 60 years.

I've told my church this a number of times. I've never followed Christ and ever had a regret. Ever. Regardless of cost. Regardless of sacrifice.

Never. All my regrets are when I've lived for myself. Clear. My son, my youngest son, saying the same thing. Dad, no regrets when I follow Christ.

[50 : 42] My regrets are when I do my own thing. He goes, it's really not hard. It's simple. I said, it is simple. It's hard to live. It's not simple. It's not hard to know.

Folks, no regrets in following him. Why? Because the gospel is worth it. Why? Because the beauty of Christ. He makes it worth it.

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this beautiful gospel. Thank you for this letter from Paul to someone who he loved.

He was going to miss. He wanted to see again. But Lord, there was something bigger for Paul. He wanted Timothy to know that when Paul was gone, that Timothy could continue to run his race.

That he would have the same thing to say to someone else, to his beloved son. It is worth it. Run this race. Keep the faith. Fight the battle.

[51 : 44] Because Jesus will strengthen you. He will stand by you. And he will reward you. We thank you that you are that kind of God to us. So therefore, may we be faithful to gospel mission for you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.