**ENTRUST TO RELIABLE PEOPLE**

1 Timothy 1:15-2:7 (Key Verse: 2:12)

“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

Thank God for helping us to upstart 2 Timothy after the great 1 Timothy study! From Sh. Rob’s message last week, we learned that the Holy Spirit gave us power, love, and self-discipline, not the spirit of timidity so as for us to keep fighting the good fight of faith continuously. Surely, suffering is no suffering and shame, no shame when we know whom we have believed and are convinced that He is able to guard the gospel truth until the last day. God is the ultimate guardian in whom we can put our trust and through whom we and the gospel truth are well-protected. Today, we hear Paul’s personal story and the charge toward his spiritual son, Timothy, regarding to whom he should entrust the gospel teachings and the lifestyle he should maintain to live out those teachings. May God refresh us through one person like Onesiphorus, bless our discipleship ministry through entrusting to reliable people and mold us into good soldiers, rule-abiding athletes, and hard-working farmers for the rewards to receive!

1. **He Often Refreshed Me (1:15-18)**

Look at verse 15. In the previous two verses, Paul mentioned keeping the pattern of sound teaching and guarding the deposit with the help of the Spirit. Those instructions sound dead serious, almost sounding like a will for a dying father to hand it down to his son to follow. For helping him better understand the instructions, Paul gives Timothy examples on both sides. The first is in the negative side, which is well shown in verse 15. Here, we see everyone deserting Paul, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. According to 2 Ti 4:11, only Luke was with Paul at that time. Paul was a great man of God who established many churches in Europe and Asia, laying down the majority of the New Testament through his writings. Many pastors like D. L. Moody of Chicago put Paul in the second place of their respect and adulation after our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, he was all alone in a cold prison cell, being abandoned by many believers and friends. Perhaps, Paul must have been reminded of Jesus, who like him, at the time of his arrest, trial, and crucifixion, was abandoned by everyone including his own disciples. We do not know much about Phygelus and Hermogenes, but they must have been good, committed members and yet still deserted Paul at the worst time possible when they felt they were in a losing business with Paul or afraid of the uncertain future because it was dangerous to be called a Christian in Rome in those days. Thus, they became an anti-example for us not to follow. For sure, no parent dared to name their children after Phygelus and Hermogenes and that shows the testament to which way to go.

Look at verse 16. Paul immediately illustrates a good and positive example for Tim to follow. It reads. “May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.” In stark contrast to Phyg and Herm, Onesiphorus stayed with Paul through thick and thin. His association and friendship with Paul started from the time of Ephesus. In fact, Onesiphorus was the only one who tracked Paul down and visited him in prison at Rome when all the others deserted him (17).

In our Friday meeting, one woman of God aptly pointed out that Onesiphorus might have been a former slave who shares a very similar name with Onesimus, who was also a former slave, in the book of Philemon. Surely, his name, Onesiphorus, sounds like that, which means “bringing profits.” However, he brought more than profits. He brought refreshment and encouragement to Paul physically, mentally, and spiritually. In doing so, Onesiphorus received Paul’s abundant blessings for his entire household (16, 18).

What can we learn from this? We may not always be Apostle Paul, but we can always be Onesiphorus who brings refreshment and encouragement to others when they need them the most whatever background we have. For sure, even Paul needed refreshments, so, how much more for other fellow church members? We do not care about people’s background. Rather we appreciate their bringing refreshment. Sometimes, Doug’s raspberry cake brings refreshment to me after a long night’s struggle with the message preparation. May God richly refreshes us through Onesiphorus-like people around us.

1. **Be Strong in the Grace; Entrust the Things to Reliable People (2:1-2)**

Look at verse 2:1. Here Paul asks Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This verse may sound self-contradictory because strength or power does not seem to be in the same context as grace. Grace is something you receive despite being unworthy or unqualified or helpless while strength is something you have already possessed or acquired as a token of worthiness. When we acknowledge our own helplessness and weakness, usually at that moment, God’s grace comes to us. How can we then reconcile these two things, strength and grace? We can do so with Paul’s own example in our mind. Refer to 1 Co 15:10, which reads, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” Paul considered himself as the least of the apostles and yet accepted that his renewed life was possible only by God’s grace. As such, he emptied himself completely but followed the leading of the grace of God fully so that only the grace of God would make a genuine effect in him. With this concept, that is, grace making him who he is 100%, nothing could deter him or hamper him down. Rather, he overcame all obstacles and achieved greater things than anyone else could ever do. That is the strength of God, tested and proven. Perhaps, Paul wants Timothy to emulate his example and become a great servant of God who could overcome anything and everything but would achieve greater things.

With this concept in mind, what does Paul want Tim to do? Look at verse 2. “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.” He asks him to entrust the things he has heard to reliable people so that they may also teach others. Of course, reliable people are more than likely qualified to teach the gospel teachings because they were faithful to the words given to them and even were proven to be consistent amid their trials of life. They can also teach their valuable perspectives and world views beyond the textbook contents. In our Friday meeting, one servant of God claimed that reliable people teaching the next generation is the core process of discipleship. In this day and age, where generative AIs can answer anything and everything you ask, the information we can get from them is beyond imagination. We are inundated with all types of in-depth and professional knowledge, including medical knowledge. We also have good education programs and systems everywhere. Nevertheless, discipleship is not just conveying information through the newest technology or innovative systems. Disciples are brought up through a painstaking process where one teacher’s whole person along with his/her Biblical truth is propagated through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it’s not mass production in a factory but a custom-built product like a car by a seasoned master. We owe our shepherds and Bible teachers who sacrificed their life to teach us their precious lessons. Those include their insightful perspectives, their practical faith, and their valuable experiences. I remember Dr. James Suh and Sh. KyungHee always tried to share their experiences and stories with me to boost my faith and make me a reliable person. So, may God bless our discipleship ministry in and through many reliable people in DuPage UBF with a wholistic approach!

1. **Like a Good Soldier of Christ Jesus (3-7)**

Look at verse 3. Paul encourages Timothy to join in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. He then further narrates more about being a good soldier in verse 4. From these, we can learn general principles of being a good soldier of Christ. First, we join in suffering voluntarily. We can say suffering is part of training. Second, we get less entangled in civilian affairs. Possibly, it is a process of re-focusing on Sundays where we are less entangled in worldly affairs. Third, we try to please our commanding officer, Christ. Instead of being a people-pleaser, we try to be a Christ-pleaser. In our stay in Louisiana, about 10 years ago, we used to have a house-church ministry with one US army Lt. as our Bible student. He lived about two hours away, so we used to drive to his residence to have a worship service there. And he was a US Army ranger and shared with us how difficult it was and how that intensive training time molded him to be a genuine Christian.

Look at verse 5. It reads. “Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing according to the rules.” Without the rules, sports cannot be sports and athletes cannot compete fairly. It would be rigged games. Again, on Friday, one woman of God shared with us that she observed a sports event where one athlete violated one rule and his entire team got disqualified. Maybe it was 4 by 100 m relay. What can be our rules in our spiritual competition events? They are the rule of love and the mission-first mindset. What is the prize? It would be the victor’s crown. Perhaps, Apostle Paul was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games and/or Isthmian Games where sports athletes competed on behalf of their countries. He possibly identified himself with them, anticipating the victor’s crown after the long marathon.

In verse 6, we see an ages-long principle that the hardworking farmers will receive their share of the crops first. Surely, having a harvest brings great joy to the farmers and even our God approved it in the book of Isaiah when he compared the joy of the Messiah’s birth as the joy of harvest.

In conclusion, we learned we can be Onesiphorus-like people who could refresh others physically and spiritually. We also learned that when we hold onto the grace making us who we are 100%, we can be truly strong. Discipleship is not done by mass production, but through painstakingly raising up reliable people with personal touches. Good soldiers, rule-keeping athletes and hard-working farmers all look forward to the reward and our Commanding Officer will give it to us at the victor’s crown ceremony!