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**"Grace Driven Discipleship"**  
**(II Timothy 2:1-13)**  
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**March 26, 2017**

**(II Timothy 2:1-13)**

<sup>1</sup> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup> Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

<sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,  
we will also live with him;  
<sup>12</sup>  
if we endure,  
we will also reign with him.  
If we disown him,  
he will also disown us;  
<sup>13</sup>  
if we are faithless,  
he remains faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.

**Core Issue:** True discipleship is founded in the grace of Jesus Christ; it entrusts the Gospel and joins in suffering for the sake of the elect. In order to do this, we must continue to reflect on the Gospel and remember Jesus Christ who is our example.

**Opposing Values:** Although we are saved by grace, we continue to attempt to earn our salvation and approval from God by works. As a result, we disfigure and distort biblical discipleship because of our sin.

## INTRODUCTION

Pastor Peter has been sharing from Psalm 119 – teaching us the beauty of the Word of God; how it satisfies us, calls us to be holy, and comforts us. And I pray that this sermon series has been and will continue to be a great challenge to you – leading you to love the Word and allowing the Word to take a deep root in your hearts so that it becomes the center of your lives – dictating all that you do, think, and say.

But, today, we'll be taking a break from Psalm 119 and will look at 2 Timothy 2:1-13 to talk about **discipleship**. As you know, our church has been emphasizing discipleship in many ways – defining what it is and challenging us to engage in it. Remember your jade plants? I hope that they're not only growing well but that you also had an opportunity to re-plant it and give it to someone you discipled. Well, *how do we define discipleship?* Simply put, it's to understand **what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ**. Then, *who is considered a disciple of Jesus Christ?* Before we answer this, the first thing we must understand is that **disciple is an identity** – it's who we are; everything else is a role. We are disciples first and parents, employees, students second. We know this because our roles are temporary but our identity will last forever.

With that in mind, again *who is a disciple of Jesus Christ?* I like how Pastor James Dodson puts it: **“A disciple of Jesus is someone who learns the Gospel, relates in the Gospel, and communicates the Gospel.”** In other words, being a disciple is to follow the example of Christ and invite others to follow your example. Isn't that what Jesus did? Jesus taught His disciples the Gospel and lived it out for them in everyday life. Jesus shared His meals, His heart, His teachings, His sufferings, and His hopes with these men as they were asked to do the same with one another. **Then discipleship is not a project but a lifestyle. It's as simple as living our lives with Christ at the center.**

Then let me ask you: *how is your discipleship going?* Do you sense that you're constantly growing in love for Jesus and the community or do you find yourself just coasting? Do you sense that you're working, studying, interacting with others, and serving the church with Christ at the center or do you find yourself compromising? Do you sense that you're making decisions in regard to money, career, relationship, buying a house, raising your children, your plans for next 5, 10, 20 years with Christ at the center or do you find yourself always deciding what's best for you? Some of you may be vibrantly growing in discipleship; praise God. But if you are struggling, I pray that this message will teach and strengthen you to do discipleship in a way that pleases God and brings joy to your heart. Let me read our passage from 2 Timothy 2:1-13:

*<sup>1</sup> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup> Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor's crown except by competing according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. <sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my Gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. <sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; <sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; <sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself.*

I want to share three things about Christian discipleship by looking at three imperative verbs in the passage:

- **The Foundation of Discipleship – Be Strong in the Grace of Christ (V. 1)**
- **The Task of Discipleship – Entrust the Gospel (V. 2)**
- **The Character of Discipleship – Join in Suffering (V. 3)**

## 1) The Foundation of Discipleship

Let's look at verse 1: *"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."*

Considering the situation Timothy was in, this command seems appropriate. Although we didn't read it, just a few verses before, in 1:9, Paul gives a short description of what the Gospel is – how God has saved us and called us to a holy life. God finished the complete work of our salvation through Jesus Christ who destroyed death and brought life to us. Then in verse 14, Paul says, *"Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you [talking about the Gospel] – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us."* We have to ask ourselves, "Why? Why do we have to guard it? Why does Paul talk this way?" It's because the Gospel was threatened in many ways. The strongest threat came from the fact that there were false teachers who claimed that salvation cannot be received but must be worked out. They said, "What kind of God will give life to undeserving sinners like us? We must please him; meticulously obey the law that's given to us; offer sacrifices; be good; be generous; and do all you can in order to please God and be saved from your condemnation." This kind of teaching was penetrating Timothy's church and leading people astray.

In the midst of this fierce spiritual battle against false teachers, difficulties of life, and temptations that are aimed to distract and mislead Timothy, Paul calls him to be strong in the grace of Jesus Christ. **The truth is that discipleship is not easy.** It's messy, imperfect, and uncomfortable. We don't always want to obey God's Word, share the Gospel, or invest our time in others to help them grow in their faith. It's time-consuming, money-consuming, and energy-consuming. Living with Christ at the center in this broken and evil world almost seems impossible. We feel weak and powerless. Therefore, we need a strong and unshakable foundation that we can stand on so that we can continue in our discipleship. Then the question is: *"When we feel weak (when we feel distant from God), where are we looking to get that strength? Where is the foundation of our discipleship that securely anchors us when the storms of life come at us? Is it really grace as Paul says – or are we turning to something else as our source of strength?"*

**If you think about it, we know that our answer should be grace.** It only makes sense. But the problem is that too many of us don't really know what this means – it's vague and abstract. We feel defeated and frustrated because we "know" the answer but we don't really know how to apply it. Therefore, in our confusion, we end up resorting to something less or something that is actually opposite to grace.

Now, when we think of grace, we almost always associate it with our salvation. And you are absolutely right. **Grace is defined as receiving something that we don't deserve.** As unrighteous sinners, we don't deserve salvation – rather we deserve God's holy wrath. But through God's generous grace, we receive salvation by the saving act of Jesus Christ on the cross. Now, we must remember that the Bible teaches that we're not only saved by grace, but we also live by grace. It is this important aspect of grace that seems to be so little understood or practiced by Christians. **Instead, just like the false teachers of Timothy's days, who claimed that we are right with God only when we do the right things, we are always challenging ourselves and one another to "try harder" (when we feel weak, when we feel distant from God) because we seem to believe that the success in the life of Christian is basically up to us: our commitment, our discipline, and our zeal.** We feel better about ourselves and in our relationship with God because we do the right things. In contrast, we feel guilty and we feel like we're doing badly in our relationship with God and in discipleship when we are not doing the right things. In other words, **because we don't know how to be strengthened by grace, we resort to work to find strength.** For example, when I meet people for visitation, I often ask, "How are you doing with God?" **Most of the people answer using terms that are associated with performance not relationship.**

Here's what I mean. People often say, "I'm doing well with God. I'm reading the Bible consistently and I'm praying." Or they say, "I'm not doing well with God. It's been awhile since I read the Bible and prayed. I missed church a number of times too. I know I need to get back on these things soon." It's almost rare that I hear someone say, "I'm growing in love for God and His Word. I know I'm doing well with God because I love getting to know who God is. I want others to know and experience what I have with God." Or "I'm doubting God's love for me and I need to reflect on the Gospel to remember His love for me. I'm totally living in sin and I need to repent and be right with God." I hope you can see the difference. The first used performance-terms but the second used relational-terms. Now if this is true, *how do you assess your relationship with God today?* What's the basis of your answer – your performance or your relationship with Jesus? The wonderful news of the Gospel is that Jesus frees us from trying to impress God because He has impressed God on our behalf.

The realization that our relationship with God is based on the infinite merit of Christ instead of our own performance is a very freeing and joyous experience. But it's not meant to be a one-time experience; the truth needs to be reaffirmed daily. In order to live out this truth, we must understand that God doesn't first rescue us from the penalty of our sins, equip us with new spiritual abilities, and then leave us on our own to grow in spiritual maturity. Listen to what Paul said in Philippians 1:6: "*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*" **Salvation is not a one-time event but it is an ongoing event which must be fueled by the power of grace in our lives as God carries us to completion.** We must experience this grace-driven discipleship which is not about how we perform but who we are. One pastor says, "**We are imperfect people, clinging to a perfect Christ, being perfected by the Spirit.**"

*Now, does that mean that it's okay for us to remain in sin? Are you telling me that I don't have to do the right things to be loved by God?* Yes, your failure to do the right things will not change your relationship with God. His love will never change. But the amazing thing about this is that as we receive His grace, we don't just linger in imperfection, unbelief, and disobedience. **We fight for holiness because this is what we are saved for.** We begin to want to say no to sin and live in such a way that pleases God. We want to see God glorified in our obedience. And what's hopeful is that we're not on our own – **the Holy Spirit empowers us to live with Christ at the center of our lives.** That's what it means to find our strength in the grace of Jesus Christ. It's not in your ability to be disciplined. **It's to affirm our relationship with Jesus Christ and rely on the work of the cross as we pursue holiness with the help of the Holy Spirit.** The foundation of our discipleship must be grace – then we will work not to be saved but because we're saved.

## 2) The Task of Discipleship

In the beginning, I mentioned that the Gospel was being threatened. And against these threats, in verse 2, Paul reminds Timothy to entrust the Gospel to others. In other words, **believing the Gospel means that we're not only receiving salvation but there is also the calling and responsibilities that come with it.** If you think about it, this is no different today. Christians are facing similar criticism and challenges by other religions and people. They say, "How can you claim that Jesus is the only way? How can Jesus be both God and man? How can Jesus' death bring salvation to my soul?" They challenge the validity and truth of the Gospel message. The Gospel is being threatened even today. If this is true, **what Paul says to Timothy is relevant and valuable to us as well.** We all have been entrusted with the Gospel if we have made the confession of faith to make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. We didn't discover this on our own – I'm pretty sure you can think of someone who became like Paul in your life (someone who taught you, shaped you, and helped you). And just as we have been entrusted with the Gospel, we have the same responsibility of entrusting the Gospel to others to those who may be qualified to teach others. What does that mean? I think it simply means this: **We must make and mature disciples. This is the task of Christian discipleship.**

Now, I find two reasons that often prevent us from doing this. **Number one, we are too busy.** We have so much on our plate and we have no time for others. **Number two, we feel inadequate.** We may think that we don't have what it takes to disciple others. "I'm not as wise or talented as that person. I'm still too immature. I'll do more harm than good." And we begin to make excuses. Of course, these could be legitimate reasons; but if we're honest with ourselves, they are self-focused excuses. We're thinking from our own perspective.

Now, let's think from God's perspective. God wants us to live in obedience as we make and mature disciples – not only when we have time or when we have adequate skills and knowledge, but in any and every given moment, because He will be with us always until the very end of the age. **Brothers and sisters, we don't have to wait until we're fully ready because all that we need (power, wisdom, and knowledge), we receive from God.** Look out for people around you to disciple at church, school, work, or your neighborhood. **This is how the Gospel will be passed on to our next generation.** Young people, there are amazing godly men and women at our church. Get to know them and learn from them. Older people, there are amazing godly men and women at our church who need guidance. Get to know them and lead them. Let us all be intentional about it.

In my visitation, one of the phrases that I use to challenge people is this: **"make an eternal impact on someone today."** And let me say the same thing to all of you today: "Brothers and sisters, I invite you to make yourselves available and make an eternal impact on someone today." The truth is that you are not here by accident. God has placed you here (in this city, in this church, at your school, work, at this time) for a purpose. *Where* you are in your life is exactly where God wants you to be. *What* you went through is exactly what God wanted you to experience – joy, success, pain, grief, loss, failures, or confusion. God wants to use you.

Now, this doesn't have to be big and dramatic. Let me give you an example. One of the people who made an eternal impact in my life is **my dad**. As some of you know, my dad is one of the custodians who works at this church. This is how it happened. After my dad was let go from his work, he was frantically looking for a job to support the family. During that time, he had heard that this church was looking for a custodian. So he sat me and my brother down to make sure that we were okay with this and obviously, we were okay with it. Now, what he said after made a huge impact on me. He said this, "I know that this is going to be hard work. And maybe some people may look down at me for what I do. But I'm okay. I want to work in a way that pleases God. I recently read about **Brother Lawrence**, who worked at a monastery as a cook." Now, Brother Lawrence was a monk who wrote a famous book called *Practicing the Presence of God*. My dad must have read this book; he said, "Although most of his work involved cooking, he discovered that he was able to experience God's presence even in the simple task of cooking. And that's what I want to do. As I pick up the garbage or clean the washroom, I want to experience God's presence. I want to serve God and this church in a way that will bring glory and honor to God. Pray for me that I'll be filled with joy as I work." And that's exactly what my dad is doing today. And his faithfulness has made an eternal impact on my life – in the way I see ministry and life. **Brothers and sisters, you too can make an eternal impact on someone today.** It doesn't have to be big. It could be as simple as sharing the Gospel to your non-believing family members, friends, or co-workers – or even one of the lost sheep in your life. It doesn't have to be complex. It could mean that you love your spouse faithfully that you become an exemplary husband or wife for others to follow. It could mean that you work and study hard for the glory of God so that others will imitate you. It could mean that you share successes, failures, joys, and sorrows as you do life together.

And here's a reason why we all should do this: verse 10 says, "*Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus.*" Did you get that? **Paul is telling us that he endures all things for the sake of God's chosen people.** Let me make this clear; friends, **we do this because we have this growing love for the people** – because we want the lost to see Christ; because we love the church so much that we want more people to taste the goodness of God that we've tasted. You cannot and will not engage in the task of discipleship unless you grow in love for the people. Then I pray that you'll come to love the lost sheep in your life. I pray that you'll come to love the people of City on a Hill.

### 3) The Character of Discipleship

Verse 3 says, "*Join with me in suffering.*" As I mentioned several times, **the reality is that living for Jesus will not be easy because the Gospel is offensive to this world.** Paul was persecuted. Many disciples were killed for their faith. Many believers around the world are living in fear because of their faith. The church is seen as the enemy of humanism here in North America. This is the world we're living in. **We will be hated; therefore, we will suffer.** We will be chained like a criminal as Paul says in verse 9 maybe not physically, but most definitely in many other ways. *Then what must be our response?* Should we run away? No, **Paul exhorts us to join in suffering with him** – and he gives three metaphors that describe the characteristics we should have as Christ-followers.

**First, from verse 3, we see a metaphor of soldiers.** Regardless of how difficult the mission may be, Paul tells us that a good soldier will not be distracted or be led astray by fear but will do everything in their power to accomplish the mission. **From this, we learn that a good soldier is focused and determined.** That's why no soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs because they don't want to be sidetracked and become ineffective in their missions. Elizabeth Elliot used to say that when Jim Elliot (the famous missionary and Christian martyr) was in college, he gave her 2 Timothy 2:4 to explain why he could not get involved in a romantic relationship with her. Jim had no time to date because his heart was on missions. Of course at the end they got married but the point still is this: **there's no time to waste.** Don't do all the easy things before you get to the hard things; do the things that are most important, first. Limit the time you spend on entertainment and other distractions. Live with urgency as if you're engaging in a war. **Paul gives us a motivation to do this – to please his commanding officer.** We must be focused in being faithful to the task of discipleship because we want to please God.

**Second, from verse 5, we see a metaphor of athletes.** This metaphor seems very similar to the previous one. Just like a soldier, an athlete must be focused to win the prize and receive the victor's crown. But Paul adds something that's really important for us to note. He says that an athlete must compete according to the rules or else will not receive the victor's crown. What does this mean? **It means that we must have integrity in our discipleship.** Let me explain. The word "integrity" means whole, complete, or consistent – in other words, what you say and do are consistent. **You live out what you preach.** If this doesn't happen, it just looks foolish. Think about it. Your dad tells you to quit smoking while holding a cigarette in his hands. A doctor telling you to lose some weight but he has a bigger belly than you. You judge others for getting drunk but you're addicted to pornography, shopping, games, or TV shows. You tell others to control their anger while you still can't forgive your parent, friend, or co-workers. We cannot preach one thing yet live another way. **If we do this, we make ourselves, God, and the Gospel message a mockery.** Remember that it's not only about finishing the race but how you finish the race. Pastor Robert McCheyne once said, "**The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.**" He said this to remind the pastors how important our holiness is to the church. But I want to apply this to us all: **your holiness matters to the church, the community, and this city.** Is integrity evident in your life? Are you authentic in your living? The only Christian exposure that your friends may have is you – your words, actions, and attitude matter greatly. Only when we approach discipleship with this kind of heart will we remain eligible for the crowning prize.

**Lastly, from verse 6, we see a metaphor of farmers.** Farming is interesting. This is how Jerry Bridges describes farming in his book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*:

“A farmer plows his field, sows the seed, and fertilizes and cultivates – all the while knowing that in the final analysis he is utterly dependent on forces outside of himself. He knows he cannot cause the seed to germinate, nor can he produce the rain and sunshine for growing and harvesting the crop. For a successful harvest, he is dependent on these things from God. Yet the farmer knows that unless he diligently pursues his responsibilities, he cannot expect a harvest at the end of the season. In a sense he is in a partnership with God, and he will reap its benefits only when he has fulfilled his own responsibilities. Farming is a joint venture between God and the farmer.”

*If this is true, how diligently are you living out the Gospel? You see, we can be determined in our hearts but lazy in action.* Brothers and sisters, we can talk the talk but we must also walk the walk diligently. Only then will we be the first to receive a share of the crops.

Focus, integrity, and diligence – these are the characteristics that we must possess in our Christian discipleship as we suffer for His Name.

## APPLICATION

As we end, let's read verse 7. “*Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.*” The application is simple: **Continue to reflect on this truth.** Three questions you can ask yourself:

- Are you intentionally dwelling in the Gospel and the grace of Jesus Christ?
- Are you intentionally making and maturing disciples?
- Are you intentionally involved in discipleship with focus, integrity, and diligence?

Whenever you get weary (because we will), as verse 8 says, **remember Christ** – because His example will fan the flame in your hearts. You see, even though He knew how painful the cross may be, He endured everything. He didn't run away from His mission; He spent time with His disciples and loved them. Jesus completed His mission on the cross with focus, integrity, and diligence. If Christ lived this way, how can we not live this way? **Jesus must be the foundation and motivation of all that we do.** *Why do we read the Bible and pray?* Because we want to know more of Jesus. *Why do we serve the church?* Because Jesus served us. *Why do we pursue holiness when it is absolutely difficult to do so in this world?* Because Jesus desires us to be holy. *Why do we go to India, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Toronto, school, work, or our neighborhoods when we know how difficult it is to share the Gospel and live out the Gospel?* Because that's exactly what Jesus did for us – giving up everything He had (His glory, His authority to rule the universe, His joy of being in the presence of the Father) in order that through His death, we may have life.

## CONCLUSION

**Grace-driven discipleship reminds us of our identity in Christ which prevents us from trying to live for God with our own works.** Brothers and sisters, do you trust God that He is for us and is with us? Then let us go and give ourselves for the work of His kingdom and be effective in our mission work wherever we are. And have hope, for even in our faithlessness, God remains faithful. This kind of discipleship will bring glory to God, joy to the world, and joy to your hearts.

Let's pray.