

Equipped to be a Fortress for the Gospel (Sept. 3)

(2 Timothy 2:1-13)

“Suffer for the Gospel”

Our Refuge (God’s Strength) (v.1) The phrase “be strong” is something Paul tells Timothy 25 times. It reminds me of God’s words to Joshua, “Be Strong and courageous.” The use of strength in this context is not based on one’s physical ability, but on one’s desperate dependency for God’s strength to work. Ephesians 6:12 makes it crystal clear that our battle is not physical, but spiritual. ***“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”*** Our strength doesn’t come from ourselves, but from Christ, from the Holy Spirit.

Our Replicative Duty (Discipleship) (v.2) The urgency for us to disciple others is upon us! The latest statistic conveys that only 33% of Mississippians believe John 14:6 ***“I am the way the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.”*** I love what Paul notes in Romans 10:14 “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” We are at war, According to John MacArthur 25 million children live without a biological father. That is 1 out of 3 children. This statistic means that 90% of youth who run away, come from fatherless homes. 85% of prisoners come from fatherless homes. 85% of children with behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes. We are called to duty, with an urgency to make disciple! The people of this world, Mississippi, do not realize what they are calling satisfying is biblically sin. They do not realize that Hell is real, and that a saving relationship with Jesus Christ is the only remedy! We have a duty to replicate, reproduce, and reassure others that Christ is all we need! A new stat put out by the NAMB states that for the first time in history only 50% of polled individuals were members of an evangelical church! I fear that we have taken the Great Commission and the Great Commandment seriously. We are no longer making disciples because of our deep love for God and our deep love for people.

Our Reminder (Intentional Commitment) (3-6) I love what Paul does in verses 3 through 6. He list three people that represent deep commitment. You have to be really committed to your country to be a soldier, a defender of your country! I have served in the military for 24 years! It has been a complete joy! Why? Because I get to share Christ with my heroes! I see the military as being the nation’s sheep dog! We watch and protect! The athlete competes, puts hours of practice in, is committed to being the best! The farmer has probably one of the hardest jobs listed in this line-up. The farmer must be committed 24/7 to what they are growing or raising! No one will suffer or sacrifice unless they believe in it and stand for it! That’s why Christians in the Sedan are willing to die for Christ as I speak! Christ has called us to a deeper commitment to Him. The service of our country is great, but the service to Christ is even greater! We are to represent Christ! He is our strength, our salvation, our Savior!

Our Response (Evangelism) (7-10) There are a few very strong phrases that really stick out in this passage. Look at the end of v. 9. Paul shares that all though he is bound in chains, in prison, the gospel message is not bound, specifically stating, “...**But the word of God is not bound!**” This is a great reminder of what the prophet Isaiah said, recording in Isaiah 55:11 “**so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**” Our response to evil, darkness, godlessness, and corruption is the gospel message of Jesus Christ! It’s the truth that Jesus died, was buried, and that He was resurrected on the third day! His death was the will of God for all who would place faith in Jesus Christ for salvation! You may feel inadequate, good, be desperate for God’s power alone to work, share the gospel!

Listen to verse 10, “**This is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.**” We endure the great cost of suffering, possible death, because Jesus Christ is worth it! The Green Beret is one of the toughest military groups to be a part of. They have elite training, with elite people, smart, physically fit, very impressive disciplined soldiers! Their motto is: “To Liberate the Oppressed.” Listen to Isaiah’s prophecy about Jesus in *Isaiah 42:6-7* “**I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.**” Our response must be to rescue the perishing by way of evangelism.

Our Reward (Satisfaction in Serving Christ) (11-13) Why does Paul say the cost is worth it? Because Jesus Christ is worth it! We are determined to endure so they also may obtain salvation! That is why we delight in the duty of serving Christ! Look at verse 11. This is our reward “**If we have died with him, we will also live with him;**” Our reward is Jesus! I’m not asking if you want heaven, everyone wants heaven. I’m asking you if you want Christ! He alone must be our reward because He alone must be our redeemer!

I believe you will be a fortress for Christ if He alone is your refuge, that you are willing to replicate others for His glory, that you heed the reminders, respond through evangelism, and find your reward in Christ alone!

Every time the Word of God is preached, it demands a response, how will you respond?