

Qualified Teachers 2 Timothy 2:1-7

(Show slide 1 as soon as Bible Reading ends)

There are some parts of the Bible that I look forward to preaching more than others.

I know as a pastor that I shouldn't say that. I know it's not right. All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for building us up into mature disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, **the reality** is that not every part of the Bible fills me with the same positive emotion as I prepare to teach from it.

Last week was one of those more stressful weeks for me as I preached from the end of **2 Timothy chapter 1**. All because I couldn't pronounce one of the names properly. I've decided if we preach through it again then Pastor James will get that passage!

This week is a hard passage for me to preach and that's because it makes me feel **guilty**.

These verses present a **beautiful vision** of people intentionally trained, developed and deployed in the ministry of the word of God in local churches.

This definitely speaks to those of us who are **pastors**. However, it also has much to say to those who hold a range of leadership positions across the church where the Bible is held out to others.

Let me say **two things** straight away as we engage with this vital topic.

First, not everyone will have one of these Bible teaching roles. We are the body of Christ and we need everyone in the right roles so that together we are effective in the mission of Jesus. Each of the roles is critical for the success of the mission.

On a **navy aircraft carrier** not everyone flies the planes or pilots the ship. Everyone has a role that is vital for success.

Second, we need **more** people in our church in Bible teaching roles. I rejoice at the large number of men and women who are currently serving in this way, whether in children or youth or small groups. However, we will need many more if we are to maintain and expand our gospel ministry.

I feel **guilty** because **intentional training** is an area of church life that I've not given the attention it deserves.

Change to slide 2 What will it take to see this aspiration become a reality?

- We will need God's grace to energise us for daily service (Vs 1)
- We will need our leaders to embrace temporary hardship for eternal glory (Vs 2-7)

First, we will need God's grace to energise us for daily service (Vs 1)

Change to slide 3 Look at verse 1. **Read verse 1.**

It seems to me that we are instinctively hardwired to misunderstand how we are supposed to relate to God.

The **two popular positions** seem to be either that we are good enough as we are or that we can become good enough by our own efforts.

Against this background **it's incredibly easier to misunderstand what the Christian faith is all about**. As if it's all about trying to do your best to earn a ticket on heavenly airlines. It's not!

It's all about God's grace that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace is God's undeserved kindness in granting us **eternal salvation** when justice decrees that we experience his **eternal condemnation**.

This grace is **found in the LORD Jesus Christ**. He is the one who can save us in a way that satisfies Divine justice. His mission to save is motivated by his overwhelming love for us and for his Father in heaven.

Grace is certainly what we need for **our salvation**.

However, grace is also what we need for our **continued service** in the kingdom of Jesus.

The Christian life is not a passive spectator sport. No, one of our privileges and pleasures is to serve with our energy in an organisation that will last forever.

However, the Bible makes it clear that **serving Jesus in a Babylonian world** won't be easy and it will come at a personal cost.

This is **especially true** if we are involved in teaching the Bible to others.

This reality means that we will be **tempted** to do **one of two things**.

Either we'll be tempted not to start serving at all. Or if we are already serving, we'll be tempted to give up what we are doing for Jesus. . All this means we will need a **profound motivation** to get started and to keep going. The Bible says this is the grace of God found in Christ Jesus.

Or as the apostle Paul puts it in verse 1, we are to be strong in grace.

How can grace make us strong? Maybe eating healthily or working out but grace? Here's how it works.

Grace reminds us of what Christ has done for us and what he achieved for us. This motivates our heart to want to live in costly sacrificial ways.

Or put differently, the past and the future energise and strengthen us in the present.

Friends, if we are to see more and more Bible leaders trained, developed and deployed across our church we will need the grace of God to strengthen.

Without it, we'll never be prepared to offer ourselves at a level of commitment that costs us personally.

Second, we will need our leaders to embrace temporary hardship for eternal glory (Vs 2-7)

Change to slide 4 Look at verse 2. **Read verse 2.**

In this verse we are reminded that the future growth of the church is not dependent on one or two individuals.

Timothy is told that he needs to **intentionally multiply** the number of leaders who can teach the Bible to others.

This **leadership vision** definitely includes the raising up of future pastors. Let's pray we see this happening from Trinity. However, it also includes the intentional multiplication of those teaching the Bible across the life of a local church.

Two qualities of these people are emphasised.

- These people must be reliable or faithful.
- They must have the ability to teach.

Or to use the **three C's of Christian ministry**. They must have the right convictions, character and competence.

As we seek to recruit and train people for these critical roles we must be honest about what it will feel like to do them.

Ernest Shackleton was a famous explorer to Antarctica. Before his expedition in 1914, the story is told of an advert to put in a London newspaper before setting off. It supposedly read, "It is said to have read: "Men wanted for hazardous journey. Low wages, bitter cold, long hours of complete darkness. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in event of success." **Honest words are required for such a hard mission.**

What words are appropriate for those involved in the ministry of the word of God?

Look at verse 3. **Read verses 3 to 7.**

These **three** illustrations have **two** things in common.

- Each one involves discomfort
- Each one has its rewards

Let's start with the **discomfort**.

Being a **soldier** or an **athlete** or a **farmer** is hard work.

Those who join the **army** simply because they like the uniform and like travelling the world are unlikely to last. There is a huge amount of discipline required and discomfort experienced. It's impossible to be a soldier in any other way. A soldier may prefer a life where they eat out for meals at nice restaurants, miss out on the long runs with full body pack, and avoid situations where bullets are being fired. But they can't. A soldier must live in a certain way. .

It's the same with an **athlete**. Whether it's training for the event or the actual race itself, to be an athlete means experiencing discomfort and suffering. There is always the temptation to cheat in ways that lower the pain and increase the performance. But here's the truth, the athlete must compete according to the rules.

What about the **farmer**? I don't know how they do it. Early starts. Late finishes. Relentless days. By definition farming is hard work. It cannot be done in any other way

Why do any of these roles? There are future rewards that motivate someone to keep going even when it's hard.

For the **soldier** there is the pleasure of the commanding officer and the honours that come from that.

For the **athlete**, it's the prize of winning the race and the medal that follows.

For the **farmer**, it's the harvest that comes from all their labours.

And so they keep going when life is hard.

What's the point of all this?

Those involved in Bible pastoral ministry need to get our expectations right. **It will be demanding, draining and sometimes discouraging.** There are many joys but there are times when we will want to give up or seek ways to continue with a more comfortable experience.

Really? Authentic Bible ministry isn't just preparing a talk or a Bible study. That's challenging in itself as we wrestle with God's word to ensure that we teach it faithfully. However, we are seeking to disciple **people** through the word of God. We want people to understand and live out the truths. We do this in the context where not everyone is proactively looking after the good of their souls.

Effective Bible ministry cannot be done in a comfortable way. It involves personal cost.

What will help us keep going or start out in this role? The rewards of eternal glory. Eternity is real, which means temporary hardships are bearable.

The pleasure of our commanding officer, the Lord Jesus Christ. Well done, good and faithful servant.

The prize of getting to the end of the race.

The harvest of working hard. People's lives are changed forever because of the investment we have made.

If you are **currently involved** in Bible ministry then keep going and resist the temptation to take more comfortable shortcuts. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus and keep serving the precious ones of Jesus.

As we look to the **future**, let pray for the many others who the Lord wants to mobilise to serve in this way. Let's pray for a culture in our church where many of us are prepared to embrace temporary hardship for eternal glory.

Let's not misunderstand this. The Lord Jesus will refresh us as we come to him and his desire is not to break us. However, as he fills us with his joy, he wants us to pour ourselves out for the sake of others and the growth of his kingdom.

Let me assure us that every sacrifice will be worth it when we see Jesus face to face and enjoy eternity in his eternal kingdom.

Let's pray.