

**2.1a—To be Christians is to belong**

- Paul calls Timothy his child.
- This means that Christianity is not static, impersonal or institutional—it's familial.
- We were created for relationship, being isolated goes against the grain.
- All around the world there are other people who are our family because they share our faith.

**2.1b—Being strong means being reliant**

- Our world teaches us that strength is about being independent.
- Paul teaches us that strength doesn't come from within, it comes from without.
- Paul stresses strength comes from Jesus.
- 'In Jesus' is a favorite phrase for Paul (see Eph. 1), Jesus is the culmination, not just of Israel's story, but of the global story (see Col. 2).
- Jesus sends us the 'helper' (John 14), his Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide us.

**2.2—The Gospel must go on**

- The gospel is made to grow.
- We pass along what has been passed down to us.
- Communion demonstrates this, we receive and pass along (1 Cor. 11.23-26).
- Healthy churches are preoccupied with passing the gospel by any means necessary.

**2.3—The Strength of Jesus can look like weakness to others**

- Paul has already spoken of his suffering in 2 Tim. 1.
- Need to be clear, there are three types of suffering
  - General suffering: a consequence of sin in the world.
  - Suffering in formation: becoming like Jesus means giving up areas and aspects of our life.
  - Suffering for Christ: persecution due to living/spreading the gospel.
- Reliance on Jesus will mean suffering in some way.
- Paul reminds Timothy that suffering is a symbol he is going the right way.
- The gospel has always grown most in places of persecution and struggle.
- This is cross bearing, the knowledge that suffering for Christ will lead to the glory of resurrection.

**2.4—Be committed to whom you follow and serve**

- Paul uses a metaphor from his surroundings. Being under guard, he draws attention to the commitment of a soldier.
- Be careful in interpreting this. The Jesus-soldier looks different than the Roman soldier—we don't conquer by violence.
- It's about commitment, not getting tangled up in things other than what your job is.

- Following Jesus means letting go of entanglement to other gods.
- Following Jesus is a daily dethroning of self.

### **2.5—Be mindful of how you follow and serve**

- Paul uses the metaphor of an Olympian. Olympians could be punished for not meeting a certain standard of athleticism.
- There is a pattern to following Jesus. Paul has shown this pattern to Timothy.
- Bible doesn't just track Jesus' accomplishments, but how he went about doing it.
- Jesus revealed this way to be the way of service and love (John 13).

### **2.6—Be diligent as you follow and serve**

- Paul then uses the metaphor of a farmer. Life with God means work with God.
- But we don't work to get our identity, we work out of our new identity in Jesus.
- Like being a mother or father or friend means doing certain things, we embody the role of being Christian with our actions.
- This work is participation, by the Spirit, in partnership with God (2 Tim. 1.7).

### **2.7—Be strong in the grace Jesus holds**

- All of this, even understanding it, is only by the help of the Spirit.
- Paul sets a high bar for Timothy and for us: full devotion to Christ, a high standard of living, and diligent work in partnership with God.
- The key to doing all of this is be strong in the grace Jesus holds.

### **Discussion Questions**

- Who gave you your marching orders this week? Was it Jesus? Why or why not?
- What are the first images that pop into your head when you think of strength? Why?
- Describe a time when you felt you were suffering for the gospel, what happened next?
- How do we remember reliance? How do we create ways of bringing to mind the fact that we need Jesus' help to even understand the gospel?