

**International Training  
for Elders and Responsible Ones**

April 2024

**BEING A VESSEL UNTO HONOR, A FULLY EQUIPPED MAN OF GOD,  
BY BEING EMPOWERED IN THE GRACE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS  
TO FULLY ACCOMPLISH OUR MINISTRY  
IN THE UNIQUE MINISTRY OF GOD'S ECONOMY**

(Friday—Evening Session)

Message Three

**Being Empowered in the Grace Which Is in Christ Jesus  
to Be Teachers, Soldiers, Contenders, Farmers, and Workmen**

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 2:1-7, 15

- 2 Tim 2:1 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;
- 2 Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.
- 2 Tim 2:3 Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
- 2 Tim 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.
- 2 Tim 2:5 And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.
- 2 Tim 2:6 The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit.
- 2 Tim 2:7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.
- 2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

**I. Even during a period of decline, a downward trend when most of God's people are carried away, we need to be among the remnant of God's people, who receive mercy from the Lord to remain faithful to Him—1 Cor. 7:25b; 1 Kings 19:14, 18; Rom. 11:5; Ezra 9:8; Neh. 1:3; Hag. 1:14:**

- 1 Cor 7:25b ... but I give my opinion as one who has been shown mercy by the Lord to be faithful.
- 1 Kings 19:14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword; and I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.
- 1 Kings 19:18 Yet I have left Myself seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.
- Rom 11:5 In the same way then at the present time also there has come into being a remnant according to the selection of grace.
- Ezra 9:8 And now for a brief moment favor has been shown by Jehovah our God to leave us a remnant to escape and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a little reviving in our bondage.
- Neh 1:3 And they said to me, The remnant who are left from the captivity there in the province are in an exceedingly bad state and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates have been burned with fire.
- Hag 1:14 And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of Jehovah of hosts their God,

- A. Onesiphorus was an overcomer who resisted the general trend and stood against the downward current to refresh the Lord's ambassador in spirit, soul, and body, not being ashamed of the apostle's imprisonment on behalf of the Lord's commission—2 Tim. 1:16-

18.

- 2 Tim 1:16 May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain;  
2 Tim 1:17 But being in Rome, he sought me out diligently and found me.  
2 Tim 1:18 May the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord in that day. And in how many things he served me in Ephesus, you know best.

B. Timothy was one who was fully perfected and equipped to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church but also in confronting the worsening decline of the church; he was like-souled with the apostle Paul to genuinely care for the church with all the saints and remind them of Paul's ways which were in Christ—3:13-17; Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12.

- 2 Tim 3:13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.  
2 Tim 3:14 But you, continue in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from which ones you have learned them  
2 Tim 3:15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.  
2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,  
2 Tim 3:17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.  
Phil 2:19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged by knowing the things concerning you.  
Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;  
Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.  
Phil 2:22 But you know his approvedness, that as a child with a father he has served with me unto the gospel.  
1 Cor 4:17 Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.  
1 Tim 1:16 But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.  
1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

C. Luke was the beloved physician, a faithful companion of Paul until his martyrdom—Col. 4:14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11.

- Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, greets you, as well as Demas.  
Philem 24 As do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.  
2 Tim 4:11 Luke alone is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for the ministry.

D. Titus walked in the same spirit and in the same steps as Paul to care for the churches—2 Cor. 7:6-7; 12:18; Titus 1:4-5; 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:10.

- 2 Cor 7:6 But He who comforts those who are downcast, that is, God, comforted us by the coming of Titus;  
2 Cor 7:7 And not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted because of you, declaring to us your longing, your lamentation, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced the more.  
2 Cor 12:18 I entreated Titus and sent with him the brother. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not walk in the same spirit? In the same steps?  
Titus 1:4 To Titus, genuine child according to the common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.  
Titus 1:5 For this cause I left you in Crete, that you might set in order the things which I have begun that remain and appoint elders in every city, as I directed you:  
Titus 3:12 When I send Artemas to you or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.  
2 Tim 4:10 For Demas has abandoned me, having loved the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus to Dalmatia.

- E. Mark was useful to Paul for the ministry—v. 11; cf. Acts 15:37.  
 2 Tim 4:11 Luke alone is with me. Take Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for the ministry.  
 Acts 15:37 And Barnabas intended to take John, who is called Mark, along with them also;

**II. Second Timothy reveals that in these last days before the Lord's coming, we need to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus to be faithful men, those who are teachers, soldiers, contenders, farmers, and workmen who cut straight the word of the truth—2:1-7, 15; Neh. 8:10; 2 Cor. 12:9:**

- 2 Tim 2:1 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;  
 2 Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.  
 2 Tim 2:3 Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.  
 2 Tim 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.  
 2 Tim 2:5 And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.  
 2 Tim 2:6 The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit.  
 2 Tim 2:7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.  
 2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.  
 Neh 8:10 Then he said to them, Go your way; eat the fat, and drink the sweet wine, and send portions to him for whom nothing has been prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your strength.  
 2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.

- A. If someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord's healthy words, he should train the faithful ones that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others so that they may be good stewards, dispensers, of the varied grace of God—2 Tim. 2:2; 1:12-14; 1 Tim. 6:20; Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10:

- 2 Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.  
 2 Tim 1:12 For which cause also I suffer these things; but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit unto that day.  
 2 Tim 1:13 Hold a pattern of the healthy words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.  
 2 Tim 1:14 Guard the good deposit through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.  
 1 Tim 6:20 O Timothy, guard the deposit, turning away from profane, vain babblings and oppositions from what is falsely called knowledge,  
 Eph 3:2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God which was given to me for you,  
 Eph 4:29 Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only that which is good for building up, according to the need, that it may give grace to those who hear.  
 1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

1. We must shepherd the saints with the teaching of God's economy—Eph. 4:11; Col. 1:27-29; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16:

- Eph 4:11 And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as shepherds and teachers,  
 Col 1:27 To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory,  
 Col 1:28 Whom we announce, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man full-grown in Christ;  
 Col 1:29 For which also I labor, struggling according to His operation which operates in me in power.  
 1 Tim 3:2 The overseer then must be without reproach, the husband of one wife,

- temperate, of a sober mind, orderly, hospitable, apt to teach;
- 1 Tim 4:11 Charge and teach these things.
- 1 Tim 4:12 Let no one despise your youth, but be a pattern to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
- 1 Tim 4:13 Until I come, attend to the public reading, to the exhortation, to the teaching.
- 1 Tim 4:14 Do not neglect the gift which is in you, which was given to you by means of prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.
- 1 Tim 4:15 Practice these things; be in them, that your progress may be manifest to all.
- 1 Tim 4:16 Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things; for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.
- a. We should shepherd people by dispensing the divine life in the humanity of Jesus to cherish them and by teaching them the divine truths in the divinity of Christ to nourish them—Eph. 5:29.  
 Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church,
- b. Shepherding the flock of God by declaring to them all the counsel of God, the economy of God, protects the church from the destroyers of God's building, mingles them with the Triune God as grace, and binds them together in His oneness—Acts 20:26-30; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 16:17; cf. Ezek. 33:1-11; 34:25; Zech. 11:7.
- Acts 20:26 Therefore I testify to you on this day that I am clean from the blood of all men,  
 Acts 20:27 For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.  
 Acts 20:28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood.
- Acts 20:29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.
- Acts 20:30 And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.
- Eph 4:14 That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error,
- 1 Tim 1:3 Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things
- 1 Tim 1:4 Nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.
- Rom 16:17 Now I exhort you, brothers, to mark those who make divisions and causes of stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them.
- Ezek 33:1 Then the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,  
 Ezek 33:2 Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them, Whenever I bring the sword upon a land and the people of the land take a man from their midst and set him up as their watchman,  
 Ezek 33:3 And when he sees the sword come upon the land, he blows the trumpet and warns the people;  
 Ezek 33:4 Then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and ignores the warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood will be on his own head.  
 Ezek 33:5 He heard the sound of the trumpet and ignored the warning; his own blood will be on him; whereas if he had taken warning, he would have delivered his soul.  
 Ezek 33:6 But if the watchman sees the sword come and does not blow the trumpet and the people are not warned and the sword comes and takes someone away from them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.  
 Ezek 33:7 It is you, O son of man, whom I have appointed as a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore when you hear the word from My mouth, give

- them warning from Me.
- Ezek 33:8 When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you will surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man will die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.
- Ezek 33:9 Yet if you warn the wicked man of his way to turn from it and he does not turn from his way, he will die in his iniquity, and you have delivered your soul.
- Ezek 33:10 And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, This is what you speak, saying, Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and because of them we are wasting away. How then can we live?
- Ezek 33:11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn away from his way and live. Turn away, turn away from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?
- Ezek 34:25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish evil beasts from the land, so that they will dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.
- Zech 11:7 So I shepherded the flock of slaughter, and thereby the afflicted of the flock. And I took to myself two staves; one I called Favor, and the other I called Bonds; and I shepherded the flock.

2. The teacher, as a good minister of Christ Jesus, is nourished with the words of the faith and exercises his spirit to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—1 Tim. 4:6-7.

1 Tim 4:6 If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

1 Tim 4:7 But the profane and old-womanish myths refuse, and exercise yourself unto godliness.

- B. Their serving the Lord as soldiers indicates that the apostle considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare—2 Tim. 2:3-4; Num. 4:23, 30, 35; 2 Tim. 4:7:

2 Tim 2:3 Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2 Tim 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.

Num 4:23 From thirty years old and upward to fifty years old you shall number them, everyone who enters to carry out the service to do the work in the Tent of Meeting.

Num 4:30 From thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old you shall number them, everyone who enters into the service to do the work of the Tent of Meeting.

Num 4:35 From thirty years old and upward even to fifty years old, everyone who entered into the service for work in the Tent of Meeting.

2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

1. The Lord's ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war; to war the good warfare is to war against the different teachings of the dissenters and to carry out God's economy according to the apostles' ministry— 1 Cor. 14:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18.

1 Cor 14:8 For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

1 Tim 1:18 This charge I commit to you, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you might war the good warfare,

Num 10:9 And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with the trumpets, so that you may be remembered before Jehovah your God and be saved from your enemies.

Judg 7:18 When I and all who are with me blow the trumpet, you also blow the trumpets around all the camp and say, For Jehovah and for Gideon!

2. To fight a good fight for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must clear away all earthly entanglements and lay hold on the eternal life, not trusting in our human life—2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:4.

- 2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.  
 1 Tim 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.  
 2 Cor 5:4 For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
3. We must be vigilant to fight the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by being filled with life to reign in life—Num. 6:6-7, 9; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 5:17; 8:6, 11.  
 Num 6:6 All the days that he separates himself to Jehovah he shall not come near a dead person.  
 Num 6:7 He shall not make himself unclean for his father or for his mother, for his brother or for his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is upon his head.  
 Num 6:9 And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him so that he defiles the head of his separation, then he shall shave his head on the day he becomes clean; on the seventh day shall he shave it.  
 2 Cor 5:4 For also, we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, in that we do not desire to be unclothed, but clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.  
 Rom 5:17 For if, by the offense of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.  
 Rom 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.  
 Rom 8:11 And if the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.
4. Our will must be subdued and resurrected by Christ to be like the tower of David, the armory for spiritual warfare—S. S. 4:4; cf. 1 Chron. 11:22.  
 S. S. 4:4 Your neck is like the tower of David, / Built for an armory: / A thousand bucklers hang on it, / All the shields of the mighty men.  
 1 Chron 11:22 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man from Kabzeel, was great in mighty deeds. He struck the two sons of Ariel the Moabite; he also went down and struck a lion in the midst of a pit on a snowy day.
- C. We must run the Christian race as contenders, athletes, until we finish our course, fully accomplishing our ministry in the unique ministry of God's economy so that we may receive Christ as our prize—2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 9:25-27:  
 2 Tim 2:5 And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.  
 1 Cor 9:25 And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible.  
 1 Cor 9:26 I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air;  
 1 Cor 9:27 But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved.
1. We must subdue our body and make it a conquered captive to serve us as a slave for fulfilling our holy purpose, not by our own effort but by the Spirit— Rom. 8:13.  
 Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you must die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the practices of the body, you will live.
2. We must look to the Lord to be graced with His grace in Christ as the Beloved (Eph. 1:6) in order to finish our course so that we can be awarded in the next age with Christ as our incorruptible crown in the following aspects (1 Cor. 9:24-27):  
 Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved;  
 1 Cor 9:24 Do you not know that those who run on a racecourse all run, but one receives the prize? Run in this way, that you may lay hold.  
 1 Cor 9:25 And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that

- they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible.
- 1 Cor 9:26 I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air;
- 1 Cor 9:27 But I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest perhaps having preached to others, I myself may become disapproved.
- a. **He will be our crown of life—Rev. 2:10; James 1:12.**
- Rev 2:10 Do not fear the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that you may be tried, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.
- James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures trial, because when he has become approved by testing, he will receive the crown of life, which He promised to those who love Him.
- b. **He will be our crown of righteousness—2 Tim. 4:6-8.**
- 2 Tim 4:6 For I am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand.
- 2 Tim 4:7 I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.
- 2 Tim 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, with which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will recompense me in that day, and not only me but also all those who have loved His appearing.
- c. **He will be our crown of holiness—Exo. 28:36-38; 29:6; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 5:26.**
- Exo 28:36 And you shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave upon it, like the engravings of a signet: HOLINESS TO JEHOVAH.
- Exo 28:37 And you shall put it on a cord of blue strands, and it shall be on the turban; it shall be at the front of the turban.
- Exo 28:38 And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel sanctify for all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before Jehovah.
- Exo 29:6 And you shall place the turban on his head and put the holy crown on the turban.
- 1 Pet 1:15 But according to the Holy One who called you, you yourselves also be holy in all your manner of life;
- 1 Pet 1:16 Because it is written, "You shall be holy because I am holy."
- Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
- d. **He will be our crown of glory—1 Pet. 5:4.**
- 1 Pet 5:4 And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.
- e. **The very attributes of God that guarded the tree of life from fallen man are now being dispensed into us as we eat Christ as the tree of life for Him to become our righteousness, holiness, and glory in order for us to display Him as the multifarious wisdom of God to the whole universe—Rev. 2:7; Gen. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:10; 3:10.**
- Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.
- Gen 3:24 So He drove the man out, and at the east of the garden of Eden He placed the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned in every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.
- 1 Cor 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom to us from God: both righteousness and sanctification and redemption,
- Eph 2:10 For we are His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand in order that we would walk in them.
- Eph 3:10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the

- multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- D. The church is God's farm, God's cultivated land, and we are God's fellow workers, working as farmers together with Him by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—2 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63:
- 2 Tim 2:6 The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit.  
 1 Cor 3:6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth.  
 1 Cor 3:9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.  
 2 Cor 6:1a And working together with Him, ...  
 Luke 8:11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.  
 John 7:38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.  
 John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.
1. The word of God, as a grain of wheat, dispenses God as life into us to nourish us; it is also fire and a hammer to purify us and breakdown our self, our natural life, our flesh, our lusts, and our concepts—Jer. 23:28-29.  
 Jer 23:28 The prophet who has a dream, let him tell the dream; and he with whom is My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the straw to the grain? declares Jehovah.  
 Jer 23:29 Is not My word thus-like fire, declares Jehovah, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?
  2. God has sent forth His word as rain and snow to water His people in order to sanctify them, transform them, and conform them to His image that the Body may be built up—Isa. 55:8-11; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26.  
 Isa 55:8 For My thoughts are not your thoughts, / And your ways are not My ways, declares Jehovah.  
 Isa 55:9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, / So My ways are higher than your ways, / And My thoughts higher than your thoughts.  
 Isa 55:10 For just as the rain comes down / And the snow from heaven, / And does not return there, / Until it waters the earth / And makes it bear and sprout forth, / That it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
 Isa 55:11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; / It will not return to Me vainly, / But it will accomplish what I delight in, / And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it.  
 John 17:17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.  
 Eph 5:26 That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word,
  3. In our contact with the saints, we should have only one motive—to minister Christ to them that they may grow in the Lord—1 Tim. 5:1-2.  
 1 Tim 5:1 Do not upbraid an elderly man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers,  
 1 Tim 5:2 Elderly women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.
- E. To cut straight the word of the truth as God's workmen means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry); there is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track—2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Acts 26:18; Psa. 119:130.  
 2 Tim 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.  
 Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.  
 Psa 119:130 The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple.



## Excerpts from the Ministry:

### THE INOCULATOR

We have pointed out that the subject of 2 Timothy is inoculation against the decline of the church. In this message we will consider five specific titles given to the inoculator in 2:1-15. These titles are a teacher, a soldier, a contender (an athlete), a farmer, and a workman. If we read these verses carefully, we will see that Paul regarded Timothy and his other co-workers as those who should be teachers, soldiers, contenders, farmers, and workmen.

### A TEACHER

In 2:1 Paul says, “You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” The word *therefore* refers to chapter 1. Paul’s exhortation in 2:1 is in view of what has been mentioned in the preceding chapter. Based upon what he has just written to Timothy, Paul now goes on to encourage him to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Paul did not charge Timothy here to be empowered in knowledge or in gifts. He charged him to be empowered in grace. The apostle himself had experienced the empowering of grace in life (1:9-12). Now he exhorted Timothy to be empowered in the same grace. This grace is God’s provision in life given to us that we may live out His purpose. Instead of being discouraged, Paul was empowered in grace, even though he was in prison. He realized that grace is nothingless than the processed Triune God—the Father embodied in the Son and the Son realized as the indwelling Spirit. Second Corinthians 13:14 indicates that grace is the very Triune God Himself: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Grace is not a thing; it is a unique person, the living, divine person of the Triune God processed to be the all-inclusive, life-giving, indwelling Spirit. This Spirit now dwells in us as our grace. We all can be empowered in this grace in the indwelling Triune God processed to be our enjoyment.

The more we are empowered in this grace, the more able we will be to teach others. Thus, in 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul goes on to say, “And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.” The things to which Paul refers here are the healthy words in 1:13. The healthy words, after being committed to faithful men, become the good deposit in them (v. 14). This word indicates that if someone in a local church has a deposit of the Lord’s healthy words, he should train the faithful ones, the trustworthy ones, that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others.

Paul realized that Timothy had received a good deposit, that he had been taught and nourished with the riches of grace. Therefore, he charged Timothy to commit these things to others who would be faithful and competent to carry on the same ministry. This indicates that more than one person is needed to carry on the riches of God’s New Testament economy. My hope is that through all these Life-study messages thousands of saints in the Lord’s recovery will receive a good deposit of the riches of grace concerning God’s New Testament economy. Then those who have received these riches will be able to commit these things to others. Imagine what the situation would be if the Lord had ten thousand saints filled with His good deposit, spreading the riches of His economy throughout the earth. No doubt, this would hasten the time of His glorious appearing.

There is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, and one church. Because God is one, His way must also be one. Is this way to be found in Catholicism or in the denominations or in the charismatic movement? Certainly not! Neither is God’s unique way found among the independent Christian groups. God’s way is in His recovery. Actually, the recovery is the recovery of the unique way. Many saints can testify with a pure conscience from the depths of their being that if they do not take the way of the recovery today, they have no other way. The Lord’s recovery is *the* way. I say this not because I have been used of the Lord in His recovery but simply because it is a fact. Some who became dissenting and left discovered that they had no way to go back to the denominations. In certain cases the denominations might not even be willing to accept them. This shows that if we touch the recovery and then leave it, we

commit spiritual suicide, for we turn away from God's unique way.

In 2:1 and 2 Paul was burdened to charge Timothy, one who had received such a good deposit, to pass on the riches of grace to others. Then there would be many teachers, many ministers of Christ, to spread the riches of God's New Testament economy.

### **A SOLDIER**

In verse 3 Paul continues, "Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." The apostle considered their ministry a warfare for Christ, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare, in Numbers 4:23, 30, 35 (lit.). Whenever we minister Christ to others, we find ourselves in a battle. Hence, we should not only be teachers committing the deposit to others, but we should also be soldiers fighting for God's interests.

Second Timothy 2:4 says, "No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him." The word for *life* here in Greek is *bios*, denoting the physical life in this age. To fight a good fight (4:7) for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must clear away all earthly entanglements. The matters of our material, physical life should not entangle us as we are endeavoring to minister Christ to others. This ministry is a fighting, and the fighting requires that we be free from entanglement. On the one hand, the priestly service is a ministry to God; on the other hand, it is a warfare against God's enemies. As the priests were bearing the Ark of the Testimony, they had to be prepared to fight against those who might attack this testimony.

### **A CONTENDER**

In 2:5 Paul likens Timothy to an athlete contending in the games: "And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully." At the same time that Timothy was to be a teacher and a soldier, he was also to be an athlete. A soldier must fight to win the victory, whereas an athlete must contend lawfully to receive the crown.

It is important for a runner in a race to run fast. That is not the time for him to exercise patience. In a foregoing message I encouraged you to wait and pray. But when it comes to running the race to win the crown, we should not wait. On the contrary, we should run to reach the goal.

### **A FARMER**

Verse 6 continues, "The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit." Here Paul likens Timothy to a farmer. Just as a soldier must win the victory and an athlete must receive the crown, so a farmer must partake of the fruit, the food. This requires patience. As athletes, we should be quick, but as farmers, we need to be patient. If out of impatience a farmer would pluck up the tiny sprouts, his crop would be ruined. Likewise, if he drives his cattle too much, he may hurt them. With both crops and livestock, farmers must learn to have patience.

Verses 7 through 14 are related to Paul's charge to Timothy that he be a farmer. After telling Timothy to consider what he says and that the Lord will give him understanding in all things (v. 7), Paul goes on to say, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel." The word *raised* in verse 8 indicates Christ's victory over death by His divine life with its resurrection power. The expression *seed of David* indicates Christ's dignified human nature, which was exalted and glorified along with His divine nature. The words *my gospel* indicate that Paul's gospel was the glad tidings of the living person, Christ, who possesses both the divine nature and the human nature, who was incarnated to be the Son of Man and resurrected to be the Son of God, as related in the parallel portion, Romans 1:1-4.

Paul says that he suffered evil "unto bonds as a criminal," but that "the word of God is not bound" (2 Tim. 2:9). In spite of all the opposition by human efforts that were instigated by the enemy, Satan, the bonds of the apostle caused the word of God to be released, to be preached by men freely and to become more prevailing.

In verse 10 Paul continues, "Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they themselves also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." *The chosen*

*ones* denotes the believers in Christ, who were chosen by God the Father before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) and selected from among mankind for salvation. The apostle endured all sufferings for the sake of us, the chosen ones, that we too may obtain salvation, as he did.

In 2 Timothy 2:10 Paul does not speak of salvation *and* eternal glory but of salvation *with* eternal glory. Eternal glory is the ultimate goal of God's salvation (Rom. 8:21). God's salvation leads us into His glory (Heb. 2:10). This encourages us to endure sufferings for the gospel (Rom. 8:17).

Immediately after charging Timothy to be a farmer, Paul speaks of suffering. This indicates that a farmer must be one who is able to suffer and endure. As a farmer, he must learn not only to suffer but also to die.

In these verses Paul not only speaks of his own sufferings, but he also presents the Lord Jesus as a pattern of one who suffered, died, and was resurrected. Second Timothy 2:11 through 13 may have been a hymn. This passage corresponds to Romans 6:8 and 8:17. Second Timothy 2:11 says, "Faithful is the word: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him." The expression *died with Him* is related to Christ's crucifixion, as symbolized by baptism (Rom. 6:3-8). Likewise, the words *live with Him* mean to live Christ in His resurrection (vv. 5, 8; John 14:19).

Second Timothy 2:12 says, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us." Enduring is related to life in this age, and reigning with Christ, to the coming age. If we deny Him, He will deny us; that is, He will not acknowledge us (Matt. 10:33; Luke 12:9).

Second Timothy 2:13 continues, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." The word *faithful* in this verse refers to the Lord's faithfulness to His own word. If we are faithless, the Lord will remain faithful, for He is not able to deny Himself. If we become faithless toward Him, though He remains faithful, He cannot accept us as faithful by making Himself unfaithful, that is, by denying Himself, by denying His nature and His being.

In verse 14 Paul says, "Remind them of these things, solemnly charging them before God not to have contentions of words, which is useful for nothing, to the ruin of those who hear." By "these things" Paul refers to the charge that faithful, competent men, to whom the good deposit has been committed, should be not only teachers but also soldiers, athletes, and farmers. Like the Lord Jesus during His life on earth, they need to be patient and have endurance.

The Lord suffered with patience, and He endured. After He was put to death, He was resurrected. Based on this, Paul says that if we die with Him, we will live and that if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him.

## A WORKMAN

In verse 15 Paul says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth." Here Paul indicates that the inoculator is to be a workman. As a carpenter, this workman must cut straight the word of the truth. This means to unfold the word of God in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion. Just as a carpenter has the skill to cut wood in a straight way, so the Lord's workman needs the skill to cut straight the word of the truth. This is necessary because in the decline of the church so many truths are twisted and presented in a warped, biased form.

"Contentions of words" (v. 14), "profane, vain babblings" (v. 16), the word that eats away like gangrene (v. 17), and "foolish questionings and those arising from an untrained mind" (v. 23) are often used by the devil (v. 26) in the downward current among the churches to beget contentions (v. 23), to ruin the hearers (v. 14), to promote ungodliness (v. 16), and to overthrow people's faith (v. 18). Hence, there is the need of the word of the truth, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track.

Among Christians today, only the superficial aspects of the truth are not twisted. Virtually all the deeper things of the truth have been distorted. Concerning these things, many have not cut the word of the truth straightly but cut it in a way that is curved and biased. Therefore, we should be not only teachers, soldiers, contenders, and farmers but also workmen, carpenters, cutting straight the word of

the truth. *The truth* here does not merely denote biblical doctrine; it refers to the contents and the reality of God's New Testament economy. The main elements of this truth are Christ as the mystery of God and the embodiment of God and the church as the mystery of Christ and the Body of Christ. We all need to learn to cut straight the word of the truth with respect to Christ and the church.

Certain Brethren teachers interpret Paul's word about cutting straight the word of the truth to mean dividing the Bible into various dispensations: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom. The Bible can be understood according to these dispensations. However, arranging the Word into dispensations is not what Paul means in 2:15 about cutting straight the word of the truth. As used in the three books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, the word *truth* has a specific significance: it denotes the contents of God's New Testament economy. Not realizing this, many readers of the Bible think that in 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul is speaking of truth in a general way. But we need to understand the word *truth* in this verse according to its usage in the three books of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. First Timothy 3:15 says that the church is "the pillar and base of the truth." This truth is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh. The church should bear, uphold, this truth, this reality. Numerous times in these three Epistles Paul speaks of the truth. For example, in 1 Timothy 2:4 he says that God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth." *The word of the truth* in 2 Timothy 2:15 refers to the healthy words of God's New Testament economy. As workmen, we should learn not merely to divide the Bible into dispensations. This is too superficial. We must learn to unfold the word of the truth concerning God's economy. If we would do this, we need to consider carefully Paul's use of the word *truth* in these three Epistles. If we consider these books carefully, we will see that *truth* here denotes the reality of the contents of the New Testament economy of God. Therefore, to cut straight the word of the truth is to unfold without bias or distortion the reality of God's economy revealed in the New Testament. (*Life-study of 2 Timothy*, 2nd ed., pp. 21-28)