

Leadership Principles & the Pastoral Epistles – 2015
WEEK 2: BE STRENGTHENED BY GRACE

Introduction to 2 Tim. 2

Interpretive comments on 2 Tim. 2:1

Why is this first?

Though this element receives the *briefest* coverage, it is *first* because it is *foundational*:

- All of the other elements of transformational spiritual leadership require the strength of God's grace.

- Leading our flocks into God's grace is our primary responsibility (Acts 20:24)—and we cannot do this unless we are being renewed by God's grace (Acts 20:32).

Why do we tend to drift away from this priority?

- Because our sinful nature is insidiously self-justifying.

See Jesus' warning against this in Lk. 10:17-20.

“If our heart is remembering the gospel, is rejoicing in our sanctification and adoption, then our ministry is (a) Christian sacrifice of thanksgiving. The result will be that our ministry is done in love, humility, patience, and tenderness. But if our heart is forgetting (the gospel), then our ministry can be . . . a way to convince ourselves and others that we are ‘something.’ We may be successful in some ways, but there will be the tell-tale signs of impatience, irritability, pride, hurt feelings, jealousy, boasting . . . We must beware of identifying with our ministry and making it a functional salvation and an extension of ourselves. Until we see this, we may be in the short-term successful, but also driven, scared, and either too timid or too brash—until we see what we are doing . . . Is our prayer life dead? Do we struggle with feeling slighted? Are our feelings always being hurt? Is there a lot of anxiety and joylessness in our

work? Do we find ourselves being highly critical of other churches and co-workers? Is there a lot of self-pity? If these things are true, then our ministry may be skillful and successful, but it is hollow, and probably we are headed for (burnout), or doomed to produce crowds and funds with superficial long-term effects.”¹

- Because our sinful nature tells us that we already “get” grace.

Col. 1:6 (NIV): “The gospel is infinitely deep. We do not simply learn it when we are converted and then move on from there . . . It only does its renewing work in us as we understand it ‘in all its truth.’ . . . Many people can live around the truth of the gospel and not really ‘get it.’ . . . Only as the gospel is applied more and more deeply and radically—only as we think about all its truth does it bear fruit and grow. So the key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal is the continual rediscovery of the gospel . . . This is true for either an individual or a church.”²

Are you growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18)? Ask yourself these questions:

- *“Has my understanding and appreciation of God’s grace increased over the past year?”*
- *“How have I personally experienced the truth of Rom. 5:20b this past year?”*
- *“Am I thriving off of loving other people more this year?”*

How can we be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ?

- Regularly and proactively meditate on different aspects of God’s grace, thanking God and asking Him to grant you greater understanding and appreciation of what He has given you.
2 Tim. 2:1 (“therefore”) probably refers back to Paul’s reminder of God’s gracious provision in 2 Tim. 1.

¹ *Redeemer Church Planting Manual*, pp. 62,63.

² Tim Keller, “The Gospel: The Key to Everything,” cited in Paul Thompson, “The Glory of the Gospel”

This is what Paul calls “rejoicing in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4; see Eph. 1:3-21).

The goal is to do this *even when nothing is wrong* emotionally or circumstantially.

- When your emotional life is chronically absent of peace and hope and joy, aggressively “preach the gospel to yourself.”

This is what the psalmist does in Ps. 42.

This is how Paul stays spiritually “buoyant” in the midst of great distress (2 Cor. 4:1,8,9,16-18; 5:6,8). This is what he calls on us to do in Rom. 8:28-39.

“(Paul) wants us to possess our possessions . . . the peace, hope and joy in God’s love which are the Christian’s birthright. Paul knows that ‘emotional thinking’ under life’s pressures (i.e., believing what our negative thoughts and emotions are telling us) forfeits these possessions: hence his demand for a reaction, not to *those things*, but to *these things*’ set out in Rom. 8:1-30. Think of what you know of God through the gospel, says Paul, and apply it. Think against your feelings; argue yourself out of the gloom they have spread; unmask the unbelief they have nourished; take yourself in hand, talk to yourself, make yourself look up from your problems to the God of the gospel; let *evangelical* thinking correct *emotional* thinking.”³

“O law! You would climb up into the kingdom of my conscience, and there reign and condemn me for sin, and would take from me the joy of my heart which I have by faith in Christ, and drive me to desperation, that I might be without hope. You have over-stepped your bounds. Know your place! You are a guide for my behavior, but you are not Savior and Lord of my heart. For . . . through the Gospel am called to receive righteousness and eternal life . . . So trouble me not! For I will not allow you, so intolerable a tyrant and tormentor, to reign in my heart and conscience — for they are the seat and temple of Christ the Son of God, who is the king of righteousness and peace, and my most sweet savior and mediator. He shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel through the knowledge of this passive and heavenly righteousness.”⁴

- Keep an eye out for legalistic thinking that is related to doing Christian ministry.

Do you tend to take your sense of worth and value from ministry results, how people respond to your influence, etc.? Do you tend to view teachings as auditions for people’s approval?

³ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 236.

⁴ Martin Luther, “Preface” to his commentary on Galatians

Do you tend to not only do your part in ministry, but also usurp God's part in ministry? Do you tend to feel that people's conviction, conversion, motivation, etc. are substantially up to you to generate?

Do you tend to view other Christian workers as anchors (holding the ministry back) or as rivals with whom you compete? Do you tend to spend a lot of mental time comparing yourself to certain other workers? Do you tend to feel like if you don't do the work, it won't get done by others?

- Cultivate the habit of reading and listening to quality Christian articles, books, and teachings that expound and apply God's grace (Heb. 13:9).
- Converse with other leaders and workers about what you are personally learning about grace (Col. 3:16).
- Listen to and/or sing songs that expound and celebrate the content of God's grace (Col. 3:16).

NOTE the tendency to see this as a luxury you can't afford, rather than as a stewardship responsibility in order to be faithful and effective.

NOTE the tendency to underestimate this "private" activity as less important than "public" ministry (Lk. 10:38-42).

REMEMBER: We need a slow "IV drip" rather than a one-time injection of grace!