



# Founders' Day 2020

# The soldier, the athlete and the farmer



“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”  
2 Timothy 2:1

For many, 2020 has been a year of many challenges and uncertainties. However, we can give thanks and praise to our Lord for his continued faithfulness, and his continued sustaining grace to us, his workers.

Many of us might be feeling a little overwhelmed, exhausted and discouraged after a difficult year in ministry. Let me encourage you not to lose heart but to be revived, refreshed and renewed through the encouragement from God’s word, just as God used Paul to encourage Timothy in a difficult time of ministry. 2 Tim. 2:1-6.

Paul had been in prison in Rome, but was then released and allowed to stay in his own rented house under house arrest (Acts 28). Later, under the Emperor Nero (66-67 AD), he found himself back in prison and facing imminent death. From there he writes his second letter to Timothy.

Timothy had been left in Ephesus to take over from Paul as the church’s pastor or spiritual overseer. His task

was to guard the truth and to raise up and disciple godly leaders who, in turn, would shepherd the church (2 Tim. 2:2). Timothy faced much opposition and numerous challenges.

Paul wrote two letters to Timothy to encourage him to persevere. By the time of the second letter, Timothy seems particularly discouraged and overwhelmed by the challenges of ministry. Paul offers Timothy encouragement and direction, helping him focus on what is important, to endure and to persevere to the end.

The encouragement is summed up in 2 Timothy 2:1, **“You therefore, my child be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus”**

i. **Be strong.** The Greek verb used here is in the passive present tense, meaning to continually be empowered or to continually increase in strength. (The context means emotional, psychological and spiritual strength rather than physical.)

Timothy is being encouraged to be

strong, or be empowered, to continue. We, too, have received power from the Holy Spirit to enable us to do the task set before each of us.

ii. **In the grace that is in Christ Jesus.** This strength and empowering is found in our Lord (Eph. 6:10). Paul reminds Timothy that his strength is to be found in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. One of the major things that can sabotage ministry and our spiritual walk is when we try and do things in our own strength. When we lean on our own understanding and rely on our own efforts, we become overwhelmed, discouraged and defeated to the extent we want to give up.

I trust and pray that you will be encouraged in your faith and in the ministry entrusted to you as you prayerfully meditate on God’s word over these next three days.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Dave MacDonald



## DAY 1

# Don't become a casualty of war



*“You therefore must endure hardship (afflictions) as a good soldier of Jesus Christ – no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

2 Timothy 2:3-4

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*

Ephesians 6:10-12

Once I met a man who had fought in the infantry during the Second World War and survived several horrendous situations. I asked how he had persevered. His response was insightful: “You had to keep moving forward with your objective in your mind, your commander’s voice in your ears and your enemy in your sights. If you did not, and you stopped for a moment, you would quickly become a casualty of war.”

The same can be said of the believer in ministry. We need to remain focused on the objective, listening to our commander-in-chief, Jesus Christ, and watching out for the attacks of Satan.

Fellow believers in Christ, we need to get clearly fixed in our minds that we are in a spiritual war! Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10-12, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against

the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

Paul uses the analogy of a soldier to encourage Timothy. He says, “You therefore must endure hardship (afflictions) as a good soldier of Jesus Christ – no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.” (vs.3-4)

When a soldier enlists, he or she is not thinking, “This will be a picnic in the park, with good coffee and cucumber sandwiches.” No, they know sooner or later they are going to be in a battle and, at some point, they will find themselves on the frontline. Therefore, they give themselves to training and equipping so they will be ready.

Paul goes on, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself in the affairs of this life.” Even as Christians, we sometimes become detached from the reality that we ARE in a war and not just spectators who can walk away when we have had enough. Like a soldier, we are on duty all the time.

We have been enlisted by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and he has commissioned us with a task. Keep on being empowered and strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1) and being strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (Eph. 6:10). Keep your mind on the objective and your ears listening to our commander as we keep a lookout for the enemy. Don’t allow yourself to become a casualty of war.

### PRAY:

- For fellow workers who might be feeling overwhelmed and discouraged.
- That we might remain focused on our Lord and Saviour as we remain committed to the ministry he has entrusted to us.
- That we might remain reliant on the empowering of the Holy Spirit and the strengthening of the grace that is in Christ in all we are called to do.



## DAY 2

# Going the distance



“And also, if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

2 Timothy 2:5

Paul's second analogy to encourage Timothy is that of an athlete. See 2 Timothy 2:5.

I can become quite competitive in sport. I particularly love being involved in team sports and endurance events. The challenge and discipline of working together and pooling our strengths, abilities, expertise and gifting can accomplish something outstanding.

If you want to be an athlete who can compete well and finish well, you need lots of training, hard work and a commitment to perseverance.

Paul says, “If anyone competes in athletics, he is not going to get crowned if he doesn't compete according to the rules.” To determine a winner, some boundaries or rules need to be set.

We need to train and discipline ourselves to compete within those boundaries or rules to win. Here Paul presents a picture that includes self-discipline, self-denial, self-sacrifice and tremendous effort.

Remember what Paul said to the Corinthians, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So, run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

“So, I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

Let us participate in this race of life, giving ourselves to the ministry entrusted to us so that we are competing to finish well.

Let us resolve to work as the team God has put together for this time. When we are tempted to sit down, give up or check out, remember we can be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

### PRAY:

- For our International Director, his leadership team, our regional directors and entity directors as they lead us in what God has called us to do as an organisation.
- That we would all be strengthened by God's grace to endure, persevere and go the distance in taking the gospel to the least-reached.
- That our workers in challenging and sensitive locations would be encouraged in their ministry responsibilities.



## DAY 3

# Sowing with expectancy



Paul's final example is that of a hard-working farmer. The Greek word is literally a "tiller of the ground", who works to the point of exhaustion to ensure the ground is ploughed, the seed is planted, the crop is taken care of and the harvest brought in.

Having been a farmer, I can identify with Paul's analogy. I can affirm farming is hard work. It requires being systematic, methodical and diligent as one sees to every step of the process from preparing the soil, to planting the seed, to managing the weeds and insects, until the day you can bring in the harvest.

There are two realities when farming.

- 1) There is always a sense of great anticipation when you plant the seed. The farmer sows with expectancy knowing that if he puts in the hard work, he will be rewarded with a crop in a few months.
- 2) The farmer who does not put in any work, cannot claim any part of the yield.

Paul is encouraging Timothy to remain focused on the ministry entrusted to him, knowing there will be rewards for his labours.

We know that the fruit of these labours is for the glory of our Lord and for the sake of his gospel.

Therefore, let us not grow weary in sowing with expectancy, as we fulfil the Great Commission, once again being strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Even if we don't see the fruit of our labours in our lifetime, we will one day stand alongside those souls who were saved, by God's grace, because we were faithful and obedient to his call in taking the gospel to the least-reached.

### PRAY:

- For new opportunities to present the gospel.
- That the seed of the gospel would take root and be cultivated carefully in the least-reached communities where we work.
- That we would the ministry of the gospel entrusted to us with a sense of anticipation and expectancy that God, in his time, will produce fruit from our labours and bring in a harvest to his glory.

*“The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.”*

2 Timothy 2:6

