

Be Strong

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[0:00] It is good to be with you all this evening and we are working our way through the book of 2 Timothy.

! It is helpful for us, I think, to remember that Paul is advising! and instructing Timothy to carry on as shepherd of the flock after Paul's departure.

And in some respects, Paul had already departed. He was writing this letter from a Roman prison. And we must also look at this letter as counsel from the Holy Spirit to the church down through the ages, including our time now.

The Holy Spirit, of course, is eternal. And as God changes not, what he tells Timothy is applicable to the church in the Roman Empire.

It applied in the 4th century and the 14th century and the 21st century. So this letter is actually written to each of us.

[1:28] And we are commanded to take in God's instruction and then to live our lives accordingly. And it has been said many times, we communicate to God through prayer.

God communicates to us through his word. It is also important to point out that his word changes not because we live in a time when there are a lot of men and women that claim extra biblical information from God.

God, I once heard a man, I was traveling in my little pickup truck. Jerry and Mike would remember those days when I was a fire and arson investigator.

And I'm traveling all over the southwest and south. And I'm getting these Christian channels on AM radio. You know, and they're fading in and out. In Arkansas. In Arkansas.

A whole different country. And I heard this man preaching. And he says that if he says something that conflicts with the word of God, the Bible, we are to trust him because he has the latest information from the Almighty.

[2:43] And I was trying to, I jammed my hand because I'm trying to reach through the radio to grab him and choke him out, but I couldn't do it. I mean, we are to flee from such blasphemy.

I found another station pretty quickly. Well, we live in a time of weak churches. How does a church get weak?

A weak church is a product of weak leadership. Many individuals and churches will not stand up to the onslaught of the world and the devil which seek to destroy strong doctrine and our commitment to obey Christ.

And we live in a time when weak churches have brought into the cultures, a culture demand that we be tolerant of all beliefs and embrace whatever the latest fad may be.

We hear this buzzword of tolerance. And when a church is weak and vacillates on the point of doctrine, it leaves itself wide open for the latest fad to come along.

[3:57] This has manifested itself in our day and in our culture with the rapidly emerging acceptance of homosexual behavior as a lifestyle sanctioned by God accepted in many of our churches.

A few days ago, I had lunch with a brother in Christ who attends a local church here in town. It is a church that I would classify somewhat as charismatic, but I'm proud of the fact they're at least not trying to make trees walk or talk and do silly stuff.

They're not into that at all. And this friend said that they have a lesbian couple visiting the church, and one member of that union has come forward expressing a desire to be baptized.

To which I said, well, what are you guys going to do? And he said, well, we initially hesitated, but the pastors agreed now to do so so the woman can better identify with the body of Christ.

I said, well, okay. I said a few other things too. Closer to home, a local Baptist church recently issued a position paper on homosexuality.

[5:21] I read it. They still claim that it is sin, but in order to reach members of the homosexual community, the church has taken a position to allow them into the congregation as visitors, and they were issuing a warning to church members not to react negatively if they witness some level of display of affection between two men or two women holding hands, arms around each other, or kissing during church.

Just a few days ago, I read about a Christian college in Boston, very small. I never heard of it. I don't even remember the name now. They are losing, they're on the verge of losing their accreditation, and the reason being they went before this accrediting board, the northeast area, and they said, well, you won't allow same-sex couples to engage in sex, and therefore you're going to lose your accreditation.

They said, we don't allow anyone to do that on campus. We have a men's dorm and a women's dorm, and men aren't allowed in there, you know, and we're a Christian college.

We don't allow any of that activity. Well, you've admitted that you're in violation of whatever.

Amazing time we live in, guys.

Amazing time. This weakness has created churches around the country that are being tossed about by every strange wind of doctrine.

[7:01] To combat this, Paul wrote the Corinthians, the Ephesians, and Timothy, and in those three books he said, be strong. That was really a buzzword for Paul.

Be strong. We are to be strong in the Lord. We are to be on the alert. We are to depend on the strength of the Lord. The church must be on constant guard against unseen forces of evil that lurk in the shadows.

And this is especially true because of the stand we have taken under the leadership of our pastor in the area of global missions.

Let me assure you, the world and devil are not happy about that. They're happy when we stay within the walls, but when we go out, they're not at all happy about that.

So Paul has a message for the leaders of Highland Park Baptist Church, and you all are. He is going to issue to us a command that comes from the very Spirit of God, and the command is this, be strong.

[8:19] Be strong. And then he's going to tell us how to be strong. That's the good news. So the first thing I want to say to you is, the first thing we're going to cover in 2 Timothy 2, verse 1 is this, Highland Park Baptist Church is commanded to be strong.

Here's what Paul says, You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

That's the command. Be strong. Paul commands Timothy to be strong. Paul commands all believers who came after Timothy to be strong.

Why did he issue such a command? Most conservative theologians believe that Timothy was experiencing a period of weakness and some vacillation in his own life and in his ministry.

He may have become bogged down in issues within the church that were sapping his strength as he sought to lead the church.

[9:39] And while we do not know the specifics of what Timothy was engaged in, we do know one thing for certain. He was facing an onslaught of false teachers that were infecting his church.

By the way, his church was the church at Ephesus. And there was an onslaught of false teachers. And, you know, Paul dealt hard with those guys as well he should have.

John did the same. And yet, John and Jesus also, and Jesus said, in the end times there's going to be more false teachers running around than in any other period of history.

And we know we're in the end times because John told us that 2,000 years ago. He said these are the last days. And there are. There are false teachers that abound in churches.

And I could point out churches in this town that are led by false teachers. I know them personally. I know them personally. Like Timothy, we too must be on guard for false teachers that would enter the flock and spread seeds of heresy.

[10:57] My brothers, there are churches and entire denominations in our community that are being led by false teaching and the preaching of error. They're everywhere.

Now, we do get a glimpse of what may be going on in Timothy's life. Note that the verse begins with the word, therefore.

And what is the rule when we see the word, therefore? You all know it by now, I know. Figure out what it's there for. Consider what Paul has just told Timothy.

And we all know in here, surely, there were no chapter divisions. This was a letter. But this is what came immediately before Paul says, therefore, be strong.

In the previous chapter, which we studied, kindle afresh the gift of God. Remember, that's verse 6, Remember to exercise power, love, and discipline.

[12:06] Verse 7. Do not be ashamed, Timothy, of the testimony of the Lord. Verse 8. Timothy, be willing to suffer for the gospel.

Verse 8. Be convinced that God is able to guard what he entrusts to Paul and then through him to Timothy. Verse 12. Retain the standards of sound words which he heard from Paul.

Avoid faithless church members. And here's those names, Pastor. Such as Phygallus and Hermogenes. I don't know if that's even close. It doesn't matter. I'm going to move on before I get taken to task.

Identify with faithful believers such as Onesiphorus and those in his household. And we studied those guys last time. Those commands explain why therefore is present at the beginning of the second chapter.

Because of those eight commands, Timothy is told, Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Be strong.

[13:18] Now the word strong there is quite instructive. It is spoken in the form of a command, but at the same time it is a command that is given to help Timothy face the difficult days that are coming for the church.

And if you know anything about the church at Ephesus, they had some difficult days, didn't they? I mean, look at when you get to chapter 2 of the book of Revelation.

What happened to them? The first church there spoken of, of the seven churches. They were facing very difficult days.

And God had an important work going on in the church. And Timothy was the chief instrument that God would use to display his power and glory in that church.

Now we know that God is absolutely sovereign. I have that argument with my Arminian friends all the time. And if you can find a molecule in this universe over which God is not sovereign, let us build an altar to that molecule and bow down and worship it.

[14:33] But we know that molecule doesn't exist. God is absolutely sovereign. As sovereign, if he had wanted to, he could have raised up legions of donkeys.

I really cleaned that up from the Old Testament. Or even the rocks and the boulders to declare his gospel. He says that in the Old Testament, doesn't he? Instead, God sovereignly chose his adopted children to propagate the good news across this planet.

Brothers, never underestimate the privilege of spreading the gospel, whether on State Street, right out here, or Vietnam, or anywhere else.

Brothers, never underestimate that privilege. What a high calling. And I pray this church will continue that commitment, and all evidence is that we are.

So the question we want to address tonight is, how are we going to be strong? How are we going to live lives that are obedient and spiritual, particularly in a day of the onslaught of the church?

[15:46] How are we not going to compromise? Many churches, maybe most churches have compromised. Whole denominations have compromised. It's a sad time.

I got a letter the other day from Congressman Bridenstine's office. He closed it by saying, we live in dangerous times. It's a congressman. He happens to be a believer. He just said, we live in dangerous times.

So how are we going to be obedient and spiritual? How are we going to do that in the midst of this intense battle on this planet?

Because let's face it, we are daily being attacked by the world, the devil, and even our own unredeemed flesh. It's a war. So how are we going to be strong?

Paul, writing by the power of the Holy Spirit, is going to provide us the answer in a unique way.

[16:45] He's going to use four examples from everyday life, and we're to use these examples as analogies in our own life and thus fulfill the command to be strong.

We'll draw from these. These four examples are those of a teacher, a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Those four examples.

And the first thing we're going to look at is the teacher. And the, verse two, and the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Dr. MacArthur points out something that is absolutely amazing about this passage. I never saw it before. Here we have a teacher teaching a teacher so he could teach other teachers who will then teach still other teachers.

We have in that verse, two, four generations of teachers. Now I know that sounds like a tongue twister, but it is precisely what is happening here.

[18:08] Paul mentions four generations here, and they are links in a chain that continues down to our day. Our day. Let me read it again.

And these things which you've heard from me, that's Paul. That's your first teacher. Who's he talking to? The second teacher, Timothy.

You've heard this from me, Timothy. Entrust what I'm telling you to faithful men. That's the third generation who will then be able to teach others.

That's the fourth generation. That is an exquisite passage of Scripture. I never once thought about that, realized it, or focused on it until now.

It is God's design that the gospel be handed down from generation to generation. And there's a link here. There's a connection.

[19:09] I told Dr. McBride one time, I bet if we could somehow peer into history that the path that he took or that Don took from their ministry, their call back to the Apostle Paul probably was fairly short considering the span of time.

I mean, we would be talking about a few thousand men, but I bet if you could trace it, you'd find out that these are pretty direct links.

Pretty direct links. So God wants the gospel to be handed down generation to generation. All of that flows from the Master Teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was Jesus who taught the Apostles who taught others and so forth. William Barclay said this, the Teacher is a link in the living chain which stretches unbroken from this present moment back to Jesus Christ.

The glory of teaching is that it links the present with the earthly life of Jesus Christ. He's the first link, or maybe we better call him the anchor.

[20:32] And coming off that anchor is this flow of teachers. It's an amazing concept. Now it is God who raises up faithful men in every generation to pass on the good news concerning Christ.

The Apostles, all of whom were martyred save for John, proclaimed the gospel to faithful men. They included elders, deacons, and others among whom was a young man by the name of Timothy.

So he was a link, and that link could be traced back. Now it appears that Timothy was weakening. Paul says, Timothy, you don't have that option.

God doesn't want you to be weak. You have been called by God to be a link in a line of godly teachers that will stretch down through the ages even to the 21st century.

Paul reminds Timothy that what he has heard was also heard by other teachers that are at that time fulfilling their God-ordained role to teach others.

[21:50] he refers to these others as many faithful witnesses. That's what he calls them. These witnesses would have included guys like Barnabas and Silas, among others.

No doubt, Timothy was exposed to many that publicly taught and privately counseled him. Privately counseled him. He had an amazing journey.

Now, I want to speak just a moment concerning just who God's teachers are in the church age. And in the widest sense, and I'm going to use a wide application here, every true believer is essentially a teacher because every true believer is responsible to pass on God's truth whenever that opportunity presents itself.

So in the broad sense, we're all teachers. Now, I know there's a gift of teaching, a teacher, a gift of pastor, teacher, but in the broad sense, we're all to teach. We're to teach our wives.

We're to teach children and grandchildren. We're to teach friends. We're to teach enemies the truth of the gospel. I was in an amazing situation because I had to teach parents or tried and in-laws us.

[23:17] Diana and I led our father and mother to the Lord many years ago. We hope it took. We'll find out, won't we? But that's our role as followers of Christ.

So in the broad sense, all of you guys are teachers. And I would encourage you to really look at this section of scripture as a teacher for your families circle and get a hold of what Paul is saying here. He also uses the example of the soldier. He uses this example of a soldier. Verses 3 and 4. Suffer hardship with me.

Did Paul suffer hardship? Oh my goodness. I'll tell you what. Shipwrecked, snake bit, refer dead. suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life so that he may please the ones who enlisted him as a soldier. If we are to have a strong spiritual life, we need to consider the life of a soldier.

[24 : 49] And Paul even carries it a step further by telling Timothy, Timothy, serve as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

You know, we don't say it much anymore, but I grew up with onward Christian soldier. And you know, marching as to war, man, I was ready to go out and shoot somebody.

I was only about five years old, you know. I didn't get the concept. I mean, look, I'm still there. I'm still doing this. But I used to love that song. I would get up and march around the church, you know. There's a song for you Sunday. I'll do a solo. Timothy, I better rush back to Timothy, serve as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

Like a good soldier, we are to serve the Lord without reservation. Without reservation. No good soldier serves half-heartedly.

[25 : 52] If he does so in combat, people die. People die. Just the way it is. the call that Paul issues to Timothy is, like a good soldier, suffer hardship.

And he adds then, with me. Timothy's not alone. Paul says, suffer hardship with me. If you've got to suffer hardship, it would be good to be in the prison cell with Paul.

That would be a good partner to have. What does he add with me? I think it's the same concept I have at the police department. Never ask those that you're mentoring or that are below you, and I don't mean below in the negative sense, but in a rank structure, to do something you would not be willing to do.

And that's what Paul was saying. Hey, he's not going to ask Timothy to do something that Paul says, but I'm not going to do that. I told you guys I got sprayed with OC spray not long ago, and boy, it will knock you for a loop.

And why did I do that? Because I got 25 officers below the age of 30 that said, I don't want to do that. It might hurt. So there's a 67-year-old guy out there doing it.

[27 : 15] And it shamed a bunch of them. And a couple of them said, I think I better do that. That's why I did it. I did it as an example. I'm not going to ask you guys to do something that I wouldn't do.

In my experience, though, it is often difficult for believers in the West, and especially America, to get their hands around suffering.

The folks that were in church yesterday morning from VOM, I know a lot of them. Some of those guys have been through it. They have been through it. And I dare say if the Lord doesn't come back the next 10 years, some of those people there won't be alive.

We worry a lot about Brother Isaac from Nigeria. And he's in a Muslim area. But America has a hard time. The American church has a hard time getting its hands around suffering.

For one reason, we really have not had to suffer yet. I could see it coming. I could smell it on the horizon.

[28 : 20] And the other is that we've grown up with an idea that some godly suffering or some suffering is caused by lack of faith.

And I always get upset because of my connections with VOM through the board of directors with the extreme charismatics who will say, well, if they had more faith, they wouldn't be in prison or they wouldn't have lost their life.

Many teach that God would never allow his people to suffer, but when they do, it is from Satan and because of their lack of faith.

It makes me wonder what Bible they're reading. Paul said, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. I heard Dr.

Sproul on the radio last year and he said, how come more of us aren't going to prison in America? What are we doing wrong? that so many are doing right?

[29 : 21] And I do think we all realize that the surrounding culture is becoming increasingly hostile to Christians and Christianity.

I mean, you saw that last week in the Supreme Court ruling. Don't underestimate what the Supreme Court did. And let me say a couple things here, okay? First of all, one thing about the Supreme Court, it's not.

It's not. But let me tell you what they did. They might as well have walked up to Jesus and spit right in His face.

They might as well have done an obscene gesture toward God. Because they turned His revealed Word upside down.

God makes it abundantly clear that it's Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. That is abundantly clear. And I've always found it interesting that in the first chapter of Romans where it talks about this and it says, what does it focus on there toward the end?

[30 : 31] Women. Women with women doing those things that are not natural. Why do they single out women? women. In a culture, historically, women have been the last to fall morally.

Why? They have a mothering instinct. A very strong mothering instinct. When you see in a country, in a nation, men with men followed by women with women, women, you can know God has removed the restraints, backed off, and said, you want it your way, we'll see how well you do without me.

Call the wrath of abandonment. Now, be assured, God never abandons the church. That's not the issue. Never leave you, never forsake you. And our call today is be strong and teach and preach truth and hold the banner high as a onward Christian soldier.

But I'm telling you guys, you want an explanation for what's going on in this country, we're under the wrath of abandonment. I'm convinced of that. I don't think you can kill 4,400 babies a day and take God out of the public square and replace him with practicing homosexuals and not be under God's wrath.

I don't see how you possibly can. Like one of the greats, I've heard this, Billy Graham, and I've heard it was J. Vernon McGee, and I heard it was Dwight Moody, but it said, if God doesn't condemn San Francisco, he's going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah for what they did.

[32 : 15] Rampant. We live in an increasingly hostile environment. We must prepare our children and grandchildren because this is not going to decrease in their lifetime unless the Lord Jesus comes back.

It's not going to decrease. Another thing to point out here is that a soldier, like a police chief, serves 24 hours a day.

I mean, I'm never off. I've got a phone ready to ring. You know, I've got all kinds of communication devices. Even in times of quiet, he is still a soldier.

Because of this, the soldier, this is Paul, does not entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life.

Now, we should be the same. It does not mean that we are unconcerned about our country or our community. It does not mean that we never relax or recreate.

[33 : 24] But we do not allow those things to crowd out our primary task of building God's kingdom in the face of encroaching darkness.

We're still in the business of building the kingdom of God, of being ambassadors for Christ and telling the good news. the Lord Jesus himself had some things to say about this, recorded by Dr. Luke. As they were going along the road, someone, oh, this is Luke chapter 9, verse 57 to 62. As they were going along the road, someone said to him, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head. I heard one of those guys the other day, extreme charismatic.

Diane had a thing on her little handbill, and he said when Jesus was on earth, he lived in a mansion, wore designer clothes, had the biggest bank account in Israel.

[34 : 28] Where in the world? I don't know. He didn't get it from Dr. Luke. The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

And he said to another, follow me. But he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. And there's a lot of evidence that he's waiting for dad to die. Dad probably wasn't dead yet.

Just when my dad dies, I'll bury him, get his affairs and his inheritance, and then I'll come follow you. I'll be able to give you a couple bucks too. And Jesus said, allow the dead to bury their own

dead.

But as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God. Another also said, I will follow you, Lord, but first permit me to say goodbye to those at home. But Jesus said to him, no one after putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.

Jesus knew something. Why shouldn't he know something? He's God in human flesh. Jesus knew that these men would never be willing to serve as good soldiers.

[35 : 35] soldiers. He was thinning the ranks. He knew they weren't qualified. A good soldier, according to Paul, wants to please the one who enlisted him in the ranks.

As good soldiers of Christ, we should be anticipating the day when we will hear the master say, well done, good and faithful slave.

And by the way, that's the word there, *doulos*, servant, slave. You were faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your master.

Matthew 25, 21. And then the Lord draws out of the ranks of an athlete. In verse 5, and if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

Very interesting. I really get aggravated like in pro football where like the thing will bounce and the guy will pretend that he's...

[36 : 46] When I was going up, you wouldn't... You didn't do that. If I trapped up ball in baseball, I knew it. I didn't pretend like I caught it. I mean, Mike, you played ball and you were a referee and an umpire.

I never saw rock and my wooden collar. And I always had trouble with people that trapped them and then lied about it.

You've trapped them in softball for the church. What are you talking about? about? When I hit the fence out there and went over and...

I was dying and that minister from the other church was yelling, he didn't catch it. He didn't catch it. I'm dying here. Don't worry about the ball. Paul here uses the example of the athlete.

He talks of one who competes, meaning one who contends, wrestles, or struggles with. The difference between those who win and those who lose is not based on talent.

[37 : 52] It's heart here. Paul's talking about the heart. That has much to do with winning as anything. Many years ago, there was a competition between the old Soviet Union, Poland, and the USA.

It was in a non-Olympic year. Someone asked an American coach his predictions for the winner of the decathlon. And he points out to this guy, he says, he's going to win it right there.

And this was the smallest guy, slight build, he wasn't as fast as everyone else. And they asked this coach, how in the world did you pick him?

And he said, because he has the heart to win. He's dedicated at the heart level to win. And two years ago, two years after that, that man won the Olympic gold medal in the decathlon, Bruce Jenner.

And when you win the decathlon Olympics, you're declared the greatest athlete on earth at that moment. And he won that. Now, we of course know that we're not in competition with other believers.

[39 : 03] I always remember the pastor came up to Dr. McBride and said, oh, you're my competition down the street. He said, if we're in competition, we're in the wrong business. I mean, my gosh, what a foolish thing to say.

Neither are we trying to outperform other Christians. Our competition is against our unredeemed flesh, the world, and against Satan, and against Satan's demons.

So what is our competition, and what is our goal? To press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

That's our goal. Philippians 3.14. Paul says, we must compete according to the rules. Dr. MacArthur points out that in the Olympic Games of old, the old Greek deals, there were three rules for the competitors.

The three dealt with birth, training, and competition. First, the athlete to compete had to have been born in Greece. This is the old Olympics.

[40 : 12] second, the athlete had to train for a minimum of ten months, and to verify that, before the Games, he went and knelt before the statue of Zeus, and swore an oath that he'd been training for ten months.

And then, he had to compete strictly according to the rules. There were no shortcuts. Well, what about rules by which we compete?

Christians compete. Well, rule one, we must be born again, born from above. Got to be a genuine believer if you're going to be in the competition.

Second, we must be faithful in the study and obedience to God's Word. You cannot live a bifurcated life, a two-level life.

Well, I'm doing great in my Bible study, I'm doing good in my prayer life, but I am having an affair with my secretary. If I could just finish that, I think I'll even be better. You can't do that. If you leak in one area, you leak everywhere.

[41:19] You leak everywhere. Got to be faithful in the study and in obedience to God's Word. And three, we must live according to Christ's divine standards of discipleship.

Live as Christ would have us to live. So that's the athlete that Paul uses as his example, instructing Timothy, who will instruct others, who will instruct others.

And then he draws another one close to my heart, the farmer. Verse 6, the hard working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

If anyone picks up a couple of it says it's not shard of the crops, it's share. Make that correction. I think the E and D are pretty close. Paul uses as his last example the characteristics of a farmer. The farmer makes a living raising his crop. In Paul's day, the farmer usually did not own the land.

[42:23] But if they farmed hard, the actual landowner said, hey, you did a great job this year. You really brought in a great crop. you have the right of receiving the first share of crops that were produced so you can get your family through the winter.

And that was accorded to the hard working farmer. Usually the farmer's life is one of routine. He gets up early.

He works hard. Often he works alone. He goes to bed early. Pretty much it. our lives are for the most part like that of farmers.

Pretty routine. Pretty routine. I get a gun battle right now. But other than that, it's a pretty routine existence. There may be occasional times of excitement, but usually our lives are the routine.

We say about the infantry, 97% boredom, but that other 3% will keep you around for a few years. we are to do the routine faithfully.

[43:37] Nothing wrong with routine. Just be faithful in the routine and we will receive the promised blessing of our God. We will receive our share of the crops.

The reward we receive is never deficient, unfair, late, or forgotten. God's always right on time when he gives out the crops to his faithful people.

We are saved by grace, we are kept by grace, but we are working out our salvation day in and day out. What does that mean?

We do that through the good works that God has prepared beforehand for us to do. He prepared them before we were even born. I love the fact that most of us have memorized Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, but we also need to memorize 10.

Because that tells you why 8 and 9 is what it is. We've been created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And God has those all planned out for us.

[44:50] Well, Paul's going to bring all this to a conclusion. and he says this, verse 7, Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Well, that's pretty powerful promise there. What sort of conclusion of that? Paul says the Christian is to do the following. We are to endure suffering for the faith.

We are to avoid becoming entangled with the affairs of the world. We are to obey the commands of the Lord.

We are to complete the word that God has given us, including the routine and mundane. Complete what He's given us. When we do this, the Lord tells us that our toil will not be in vain.

He said as much in 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Your toil will not be in vain. So consider these questions about your life. Are you a strong Christian?

[46:02] Are you a spiritual Christian? Are you a mature or maturing Christian? Are you devoting yourself to guarding and teaching God's word, even if your students, your little grandkid or your child?

God's Do you deny yourself and count your life as nothing in order to faithfully serve the Lord? Do you keep a distance between yourself and the affairs of the world?

Do you prepare yourself to serve the master through prayer and a systematic study of God's word? And I think that's important, systematic. Just don't let your Bible fall open and say, I'll read this today and it'll fall open again tomorrow.

Do you understand self-denial and self-sacrifice? Are you willing to pay the price the Lord demands? Well, if you can answer yes, Paul says the Lord himself will give you understanding in everything.

The Lord will bless you with understanding. And I think that's a tremendous promise.