

(2:1) - Whenever God the Holy Spirit commands believers to be strong, it is never in our own strength, but in the strength of God's grace which "is in Christ Jesus." The kind of strength and virtue we need to withstand opposition and persecution from the world does not come from the flesh, and it is not in us by nature. It is a gift from God give us in the power of the Holy Spirit in and by the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our strength. This strength is not mystical, but it is directly connected to the work of the Holy Spirit in convincing us of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus and from His making us strong in and by the Word of God (*Eph. 6:10-18; 2 Tim. 2:15*). Our strength in God's grace through Christ comes first in the recognition of our own weakness and knowing that He our strength (*Ex. 15:2; Psa. 28:7; 2 Cor. 12:9-10*). We have power neither to save ourselves nor to keep ourselves saved and faithful against opposition (*2 Tim. 1:12*). All who are truly strong in God's grace not only recognize their own inability and impotence but also Christ's ability and power to save and preserve His people (*Heb. 7:24-25*). Our strength in God's grace is also in recognizing the power of God's Word and not our own words (*Isa. 55:8-11; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Thess. 1:5; James 1:18*). It is important that when dealing with opposition to Christ and His truth that we appeal to His Word and not our own opinions and arguments. We must speak the truth boldly and in love. That which exalts Christ and trusts in Him and His redemptive work is the only means of defeating the enemies of Christ and His people.

(2:2) - The Gospel of God's grace in Christ is not to be hidden or kept from others. It is a message of grace for all who believe, and it is to be preached to all who will listen. In this ministry of grace and truth, sometimes we may be called on to stand alone, but we do not desire this. We are to desire that God saves and equips many, many people with His grace and truth so as to be fellow-laborers with us in the ministry of the Gospel. Paul, therefore, tells Timothy to seek out "faithful men," true believers and "commit," or entrust, the "things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses." This refers to all truth consistent with the Gospel of God's grace in Christ. "Who shall be able to teach others also" - The goal here is the spread of the Gospel, the salvation of sinners, and the edification of the church. Paul's desire was not to keep these glorious truths to himself or confine them to one specific group or circle of people, but that it would be spread forth to as many as would hear and believe.

(2:3) - Paul compares the ministry of truth to a warfare and the ministers of truth to soldiers. Consider again how Paul used this analogy in *Ephesians 6:10-17* when he wrote the armor of God which is necessary in this spiritual warfare. The "hardness" to which he refers is the persecutions and opposition that come when we tell people the truth of sin and of salvation exclusively in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, based on His blood and righteousness alone. This is what brings out the hatred of the world against us (*Matt. 10:10-12; John 3:19-20; 18:15-16:3*). It takes endurance that comes from Christ alone to withstand all that the world, the flesh, and the devil bring against us. In this warfare we must always remember that our weapons are not carnal and our battlefields are not

physical. Our weapons are the truth of God in Christ, and our battlefield is the minds of men and women (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

(2:4) - Paul speaks here of a true ministers dedication to his commission in this warfare as “a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” It is true we must live in this world, but we are not of the world, therefore, we cannot intermingle or confuse that which is glorifying to God in Christ, that which is of eternal value, with the things of “this life.” A good soldier must recognize that this world is not his home, that he is a subject of a greater, higher King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and a citizen of a greater, higher kingdom, the kingdom of God. His goal is not to please men or even himself, but to “please Him Who hath chosen him to be a soldier,” i.e., to please God. If his goal is to please and honor men, he is not a true or good soldier of Christ (John 5:41-44; 12:42-43). A good soldier of Christ may have a family, and he is responsible to care for them, but he should not be so entangled with the things of this life so as to be hindered or taken away from the ministry. Like a soldier who is at war, his mind and his time must be mainly given to the warfare in which he is engaged.

(2:5) - “Strive for masteries” means literally “training to compete in the games.” Here Paul compares the true Gospel minister to an athlete training to win in the Olympic games. The athlete must train diligently in order to be crowned (crowned with the wreath of the winner). He must train properly, according to the rules of the game in which he is competing. The true Gospel minister must train also. He must study the Word of God to become skillful in the word of righteousness (2 Tim. 2:15), and he must pray and trust God. He must do so lawfully, according to God’s Word and in the strength of the Lord (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1-2).

(2:6) - Paul also compares the true minister to a farmer who sows, nurtures, and reaps the fruit of the field. The farmer that works in the field must be first partaker of the fruits. He uses an Old Testament reference to show how those who minister to the church, who labor not to be entangled with the affairs of this world, who labor in the Word, who sow the seed of the Word and nurture the field of believers, are worthy of the support of the church. They share in the joy of the conversion of their hearers, and they should share in the fruits of this life to their support and well-being. The true minister understands that, as a farmer, he plants, sows, and waters, but it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6-7).

(2:7) - Here we see the importance of understanding in all things. There is a vast difference between knowledge and understanding. To understand something is to see the particulars and implications of it, as well as to see the value of it. It has to do with right judgment concerning the things of God and the church (cf., Prov. 2:3-6).