

Comfort is Not a Compass

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[0 : 00] Okay, on to our text in 2 Timothy, and we're going to read from verses 1-7 to begin with. Paul, verse 1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life that is in Christ Jesus.

To Timothy, my beloved child, grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power, love, and self-control.

So that's going to be the text that we're going to be working with today, and there's a few preliminary observations that probably aren't the main idea of the text but seem worth pointing out. And the first one is, is we really do have in the book of 2 Timothy a pretty great glimpse of what I would call fatherly leadership.

[1 : 26] But don't get hung up on the fatherly aspect of it. It's just a great glimpse of godly leadership. There are three things that Paul keeps doing throughout this book. He states his affection for Timothy.

He feels real affection for Timothy. He is reflecting on Timothy and his situation, and he's giving him specific direction. So one of the things I just don't want to miss is just this glimpse of leadership we see here that is rooted in affection.

I think a lot of times we would say that, you know, it's really important as a leader to affirm and so on and so forth. And sure, that's fine. And Paul is speaking affectionately.

But more importantly for leadership is that you feel real affection for the people you're leading. People always talk about you talking about it. It's like, well, yes, talk about it. But most importantly, if you're going to lead someone, feel affectionate for them.

And we see that in Paul's writing. Another mark of leadership and love is that Paul is thinking about Timothy when they are not together.

[2 : 35] Paul is thinking about Timothy when they are not together. Husbands, this is a big deal to most wives. They are thankful that you do what, that you respond to your requests and so on and so forth.

But if they begin to see, they would hope to begin to see that throughout the day, you are spending mental energy on them completely unprompted. Now, I don't think that's unreasonable.

I actually just think that's what love is. Love is not simply showing up to do what is specifically requested. But as we see here, Paul, in a very difficult situation, is thinking about Timothy.

Not only is he expressing affection, but he's reflecting on Timothy. Verse 4, as I remember your tears, I long to see you that I might be filled with joy. I'm reminded of your sincere faith.

He's thinking about Timothy. One of the things that if you want to be a good leader, in my opinion, from what I see in the Bible anyway, is love the people that you're called to lead, but also spend time thinking about them, both in prayer and just considering their lives, their situations, what would be a blessing to them, what challenges they may be facing, and so on and so forth.

[3 : 56] So we see affection and reflection. And then we have direction. We have Paul being very bold in telling Timothy to do X, Y, and Z. And we're going to spend most of our time today looking at the direction piece.

The direction starts in verse 6. For this reason I remind you, Paul says, for this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of hands.

For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. So let's make a few observations about this passage. And what we're going to land on is we're going to try to figure out what this gift is that Paul's talking about.

But let's hold off. There's a few other things to observe first. And the first one is this, that sincere faith is not static.

Sincere faith is not static. We need to differentiate between sincere faith and insincere faith. You see that where Paul says, I'm thinking about your sincere faith.

[5 : 02] Well, the word for sincere is related to the word for hypocrisy. And the prefix that Paul puts on the word is essentially saying, I am remembering your unhypocritical, your honest, your truthful, your sincere faith.

Now, you might have heard this before, but a hypocrite was actually the name that ancient Greeks used to describe actors. So that's where our word hypocrite comes from.

It's someone who is putting on a different face. This is what an actor was called in ancient Rome. And that's really what hypocrisy means. People have hijacked that term to imply that if you have a high standard and you fall beneath your own standard, you're a hypocrite.

Now, that's called human, right? It's called being a human. People that do that are just very allergic to high standards that they didn't create, right? So we don't do that here.

We don't play that game. You're going to fall. That's part of the deal. Keep your high standards. What a hypocrite is is someone who pretends. Someone who pretends. Someone who is acting one way but is actually another.

[6 : 12] And I think it's important to understand that if you've ever watched any of these inside-the-actor-studio type shows, sometimes actors fool themselves and they kind of like become the part.

Will Smith, a couple years ago, kind of fell into the part that he was playing. So when we talk about hypocrisy, we don't necessarily mean someone who knows that they're being an actor.

Sometimes people act because that's just what they do. And Paul's saying, you're not like that. You have a sincere faith. And the thing about a sincere faith is like, well, how do you differentiate?

The Bible tells us how we differentiate between an acting, posing faith, and a sincere faith. And that is that a sincere faith is not static. It keeps growing. We all have lulls as Christians, but overall, sincere faith keeps growing.

It expands. And so what Paul is doing when he talks about fanning a gift into flame is just language that we see throughout the Bible. And that is you have salvation.

[7 : 19] You have a gift. God's given you grace in some respect. You don't leave that alone and just kind of count on it forever. You have to work on your faith. One commentator on a similar passage in 2 Peter says it this way.

Because of our new birth and the precious promises and the divine power offered us in Christ, we cannot sit back and rest content with faith.

The grace of God demands, as it enables, effort in man. We are to bring into this relationship, alongside what God has done, every ounce of determination we can muster.

Now, this is important because this gets to the nature of friendship, which is also an important part of this letter, an important part of what we're talking about today. Friendship aims to stir one another up to faith and good deeds.

That's what Hebrews tells us. Friendship goes to the other person with sincere faith and says, I'm so glad you're a real deal. You have sincere faith. Let's get this growing.

[8 : 24] Let's stir it up. Let's fan it into flames. The language in both of those is interesting because they both imply, they're both fire language. Stir up a fire, fan into flame.

And what actually ignites? What actually ignites? What are you doing when you stir a fire or you're fanning it? You're feeding it what? Oxygen.

Well, the Greek word for spirit in this passage is pneuma, which is wind. And so this is all a very cohesive idea for Paul.

Because if you listen to what he says here, he says, fan into flames. And then he says, for God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

So he's saying this is the spirit, the pneuma, the wind, that will increase your, expand and grow and illuminate your faith.

[9 : 18] It will make it grow. Okay. So those are just some preliminaries. That's not really the main point of the passage. They're just little pieces of things to pick up on our way to the main point. We'll get to the main point by asking, what is this gift he's talking about?

Verse six. For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love of self-control.

So what is the gift that he's supposed to fan into flames? Well, again, we have an answer. But the truth is, is that every aspect of what God does for us is like this.

We have to nurture it. We have to steward it. He gives us talents and we have to invest them and so on and so forth. Well, what's the gift that Paul's talking about right here? Well, we thankfully also have 1 Timothy.

Because if we didn't, then the book we're in now would be 1 Timothy. But we have 1 Timothy. So this is, anyway. And in 1 Timothy, we understand what the gift is. If you look at 1 Timothy, you can just let me read it to you or look it up on the screen or look at your Bibles.

[10 : 24] 1 Timothy 4, verse 12. The gift Paul's referring to is Timothy's teaching ministry.

Paul wants to ensure that Timothy is pressing into his teaching ministry, that he's being a good steward of his teaching ministry. And the idea is simply this.

God gives people gifts, spiritual gifts, that either completely just kind of come out of left field and, like, suddenly you have an ability you didn't have before, or are part of God's overall creative work in you, and suddenly through his spirit he gives you a unique capacity to do something you might have already been kind of good at to begin with.

Like, I think if I was, you know, not a Christian, I'd be a lawyer like the rest of the lawyers in the world. But I like to argue already the spirit just, no, I'm kidding, the spirit just gives, you know, a little help sometimes and makes you able to honor Christ and love others with a gift that you wouldn't have normally used in that way.

The gift that Timothy has is teaching. And really the entire rest of 2 Timothy is aimed at getting Timothy to fan this gift of teaching into flames.

[11 : 54] Now, so far you might be thinking, Chris, I'm not a teacher. I'm not feeling that this is a super relevant message and worth coming out in negative 20, you know, deep space weather to hear this message.

It's warmer on Pluto today than it is in Lenexa. It's like, Chris, I'm not sure I get what you're saying. What's the point? Well, bear with me.

Because first of all, we have established a few more generic patterns that are useful to everyone. The one being this. God has given you gifts. There's a temptation, we're going to talk about this, to sort of mail that, operating that gift, using that gift to mail it in at a level beneath what could be, what you could do if you worked on it.

If you put effort into it, if you were a good steward of it. So there's that kind of an idea coming forward. But this is the interesting idea.

Paul's saying, Timothy, you have this gift. Make sure you fan it into flame.

[13 : 09] Make sure you really use it. Make sure you lean into the spirit and that the pneuma brings wind into this flame and it ignites. And make sure you really put your all into serving.

Which is a beautiful statement that all of us could hear. But there is an elephant, a big fat elephant in the room in this letter. And that is that Paul is suffering for doing exactly what he's telling Timothy to do.

This is how one commentary that I read this week started on 2 Timothy. This letter was written as Paul was awaiting execution.

That's the first sentence of the commentary. This letter was written as Paul was awaiting execution. So track with me here. Because Paul's not shy about making this connection.

He speaks about the elephant in the room. He's like, Timothy, teach like I taught. Right? And where did Paul wind up for teaching that way?

[14 : 14] Well, he wound up in prison repeatedly, beaten repeatedly, forsaken repeatedly, and eventually awaiting his execution at the hand of Nero.

So what is this letter really about then? This letter is about a guy who has a gift. And if he fans this gift into the flame, it ought to be. If he's a real steward of this gift, it's going to lead him to be uncomfortable.

And Paul knows that because Paul has walked this exact same journey. So that's kind of what we're talking about. That's kind of the big idea.

Let's look back at the text. Think like at verse 3. 2 Timothy 1, verse 3. Let's read to like verse 8. And I want you to see this connection.

Paul loves Timothy. I want you to see that. Also, he wants Timothy to fan this teaching gift into a flame. And he's also speaking about the elephant in the room.

[15 : 14] Namely, that if he follows Paul's course, it's going to be hard. So verse 3. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.

As I remember your tears, I long to see you that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and now I am sure dwells in you as well.

For this reason, I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God gave us a spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in the suffering for the gospel of the power of God. The main idea, it's most broad in 2 Timothy, is share in the suffering of the gospel.

That's the main idea, repeated many times throughout the book. Paul's writing, he's awaiting execution, he's telling this one he loves, share in the suffering of the gospel. But the activator of how he might come into the same suffering is to just lean into the gift that God has given him.

[16 : 24] This is where Paul, over and over again, I'm going to skip a bunch of verses just to shorten this. This is where Paul, throughout the entire book, does over and over again something like this. Timothy, I taught faithfully, you teach faithfully, even though you know that if you teach faithfully, you're going to wind up suffering more as a result of doing better.

Which always seems like a bad deal to us. But you want me to do more and suffer more? Yes, that's what we want. So let's think about this a little bit.

Think about the dynamics of this letter. When I was a teenage boy, you know, regular sledding became old news. We needed to invent extreme sledding.

And we had the old sled with the metal runners. And we had a hill. I haven't seen a hill like this around here. I'm sure there is one. But, you know, when you're a kid, you know all the sledding hills. And we all talked our parents into driving us to this epic sledding hill.

And it was on a day of an ice storm. And so, man, we would just zip down this thing. And then we were just starting to get into physics. And we realized that if we could increase the mass, we'd go faster.

[17 : 34] And so we started piling people. And I was the biggest guy. So we would pile people on top of me. And we would have like three or four. And we eventually got to, I don't know, like five guys on top of this sled.

And we were just like this tall of guys, you know. So, you know. And anyway, so we were just zipping down this hill. And at some point, we loaded one too many guys up.

And the runners came off of the sled as we're going down the hill. And so I become the sled. And mostly the right side of my face.

See this little like patch right here? I lost all like the skin. Just all like right here. And like I just didn't. People were worried. Like they were worried it would, you know, scar.

It didn't. But anyway, I would have had a much better beard. But anyway, yeah, I'm at the bottom of the hill. And just this is all just totally raw. And you can imagine me at the bottom of the hill looking up to all my friends and be like, you guys, you guys need to try this.

[18 : 41] You know, like who's going to listen to you guys? My mouth doesn't even work at that point. You guys really need to try this. Friends, that's exactly what 2 Timothy is. The most essential thing to understanding what 2 Timothy is, is Paul is writing broken, deserted, awaiting execution.

And he says, Timothy, you've really got to try this. I think the aloneness is worth leaning into just for a second.

Because you know he's going to get killed and all that. But the aloneness is worth leaning into for a second. There was an Anglican bishop who said, I find it difficult to read this book without something like a mist forming in my eyes in chapter 4.

What he means is, is Paul's alone in prison. And he writes these things in 2 Timothy 4.9. Do your best to come to me soon. For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia.

Titus to Dalmatia. Verse 16. At my first defense, no one came to stand by me. But all deserted me.

[20 : 00] May it not be charged against them. What do we fear most? Getting our heads cut off or losing all of our friends? I don't know. I don't know. They're both terrible.

And Paul's in the dungeon writing Timothy. Friends, no exaggeration. Maybe some of the last ink and papyrus he had.

Timothy, you've got to try this. Now, there are many ways to apply that insight into our lives. Because I'm giving you just an overview of what the book is as we get into the book next week.

There are many ways to apply this insight. One of them would be... I'm an expert on knowing about this. I hope you see that this is possible for you too.

There's a way to do what I would call C-grade obedience. C-grade obedience that satisfies your conscience but keeps the heat off of you. You're mailing in the obligation.

[21 : 08] You're doing the thing. But you're not doing it with boldness. Which in the passage, the Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control.

And the first word is dynamis. It's dynamite. It's power. Remember, you're doing the thing. But you know that if you went as hard as you should and fanned the gift of God into the flame, it should be, you know that you'll draw the eye of Sauron.

You know this. You know that there's a way to do the thing, to feel like you've done the thing, and to satisfy your own conscience, but to not do it to such a significant degree as to make people mad at you or to make it hurt, to make the service hurt.

So there's something we could talk about. Maybe we'll get to that later as we progress through this book. I think another thing to just realize is that the second we pretend that cowardice isn't a temptation, is we're just setting ourselves up for a failure.

Of all the sins that Christians will admit to, they very rarely will admit to cowardice. It's actually one of the most offensive things you can say to a Christian, especially a Christian man, is you're being cowardly.

[22 : 34] That'll draw the eye of Sauron. And so one of the things that's worth noting is that I don't know that Paul is accusing Timothy. That's reading into this text a lot, that Paul is confronting Timothy, that he is cowardly.

I just think it's probably a safer bet to say that Paul loves Timothy, and he knows that cowardice in these kinds of situations is a real temptation.

A lot has been written about, you know, just from this one verse, God did not give us a spirit of fear, that just assumes that Timothy was struggling with that. It's like, well, maybe he was, but also possibly, it's just an easy thing to struggle with given the situation.

We need to normalize discussions of cowardice as a temptation, like we do sexual sin, greed, and so on and so forth.

We've got to get there. We've neglected that, and we've got to get there in a hurry. We've got maybe a little bit of time to start talking about this in the way it needs to be talked about. Paul, just if he's just using his head and he's just being loving, he would just be able to see, here's this young man I love.

[23 : 42] I'm asking him to do this incredibly hard thing. I need to remind him that cowardice is not of God. The last person that, you know, really kind of blew through the cowardice idea that I thought of in the Bible was Peter.

I just read this passage because I'm reading through John in my Bible reading plan, and Peter just assumes that this, he will not be a coward. Meanwhile, Paul specifically asks for prayer, and I think this is in Ephesians.

I just thought of this. He specifically asks, pray for me that I would share the word with boldness, because he knows he's not above this. So one of the things we could talk about is, like, we all know that there's this way that we can kind of check off the obedience box without making it hurt too much.

There's also this constant, constant temptation to fall to cowardice. We need to be thoughtful about that and understand that that's a thing. But I think the thing that we should lock into today is just that what we see here is someone, get back to this leadership idea, what we see here is someone who claims to love someone very much who is also calling that someone into suffering.

I think that's a really big deal in our culture in particular. That's the thing we should explore today, that these two statements, the world would tell us these two statements are, cancel each other out.

[25 : 15] I love you and join me in suffering. We don't, we don't, the world does not believe those two things coexist. And this is a fundamental part of a Christian's DNA that those two things do exist.

Going all the way back to, say, Abraham on Mount Moriah and many other places. I love you, join me in the crucible.

Add another layer to that. Not simply, I love you, join me in the fire. Because I love you, I'm inviting you to join me in hardship.

Paul is confident that if Timothy preaches the word like he ought to preach it, Timothy's going to suffer. And yet, he loves Timothy. He is clear.

He is calling Timothy to suffer. 2 Timothy 2.3, share in suffering, he says to Timothy, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. You know, when you understand that the whole world is at war spiritually and that life is war, it's not about calling someone into suffering.

[26 : 32] It's just about choosing what you'll suffer for. So that's an interesting piece that we'll see as we get into chapter 2 a few weeks from now. Paul's saying, yes, Timothy, I'm suffering.

Yes, I'm imprisoned, awaiting execution. Yes, I've been abandoned. Join me. And there are plenty of people in the world, maybe some Christians, who would say, that's not love.

Asking someone to deny themselves. Asking someone to voluntarily submit to restrictions. In this case, prison. Asking someone to not be their full self.

That's not love. Timothy, I love you. Join me in the suffering. Hopefully you can see why that is relevant to you, whether you have the gift of teaching, or the gift of mercy, or the gift of giving, or the gift of leadership.

You can understand what we're doing here. Fundamentally, this is a uniquely Christian idea. I love you. Therefore, join me in suffering.

[27 : 44] So why is our culture so broken? And why are we, as members of this culture, apt to be broken in the same way? Here's a phrase I'd love for you to just let stick to your spiritual ribs.

We are in a state of being at this particular time in our world where we use comfort as a compass. We use comfort as a compass.

Compasses are used to help you figure out which way you should go. And they tell you which way is right, the north, you know. Because of indwelling sin, we all struggle with using comfort as a compass.

This isn't simply a problem with out there. This is a problem with us, with me, with you. We struggle with this. Here's how that works when we're dealing with it as individuals.

When things are comfortable, we assume we're in the right direction. We think we're headed in the right direction. When things are uncomfortable, we assume we are headed in the wrong direction.

[28 : 48] And people are so adapted to talking and thinking this way as if it's legitimate, they will say to people, well, I just don't do that.

I'm just uncomfortable. And they use comfort as a compass. This is kind of Eve 101, right? This is what sin is.

Using my feelings as the indicator of where I am and where I should be going. And so as individuals, we tend to use comfort as a compass.

And it's like, if I'm uncomfortable, I must be doing something wrong. And if I'm comfortable, I must be doing something right. And that'll just get us into all kinds of trouble. There's another layer to this, though.

And if you've ever loved anybody, if you've ever been married or had a really close friend or cared for someone, there's another layer to this. And it will often be this way.

[29 : 47] It's not so much how I feel. It's about how you feel. And what I'll do is I'll use your comfort as my compass. So if you are comfortable, then I assume I'm loving you well.

And if you are uncomfortable, then I assume I'm loving you poorly. And can you see how this just gets us all kinds of screwed up?

And how we have all these gifts that could be stoked into, you know, bonfires, mid-Missouri pallet bonfire. We have all these gifts that could be just blazing.

And the world could look and see this city on a hill lighted up with all these gifts fanned into a flame. But we play these comfort as compass games, both individually to ourselves.

And really, we consider that if you're comfortable, I must be loving you well. If you're uncomfortable, I must be loving you poorly. And you could see also how the train wreck at the end of this ideology is deconstruction.

[30 : 46] Because the first time God sends a really rough thing, the comfort compass thing is telling you what you should do. So that's, I think, why this overarching idea in 2 Timothy is so profound.

We're kind of in this medium state where we see a man who loves his spiritual son, Timothy, my beloved. We see expressions of love that we know that are legitimate.

But we also see someone who is inviting Timothy to teach, to use his gift in such a way as to wind up alongside him in prison.

Chapter 4, verse 4, here's where it gets the strongest. This is where Paul really presses Timothy into this idea. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word.

Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but have itching ears.

[32 : 01] They will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

It's just really obvious where all of that level of earnestness and zeal is going to get Timothy. I love you. Join me in suffering.

That only works when we break free of this idea of comfort as compass. Paul knows that disobedience to God, this is how we lead our kids, Paul knows that disobedience to God is far worse for a person than the discomfort that obedience brings.

He's convinced of it. He doesn't have to talk himself into it. And if you have to talk yourself into that, you'd be a bad parent. You got to believe that. You got to believe that because you live it. Like, nope, obedience to God is better than disobedience.

Even if disobedience brings comfort and obedience brings discomfort. You've got to believe that. And Paul believes that. He's calling Timothy into that. But he's not a sadist. He doesn't love suffering.

[33 : 19] He doesn't want to be suffering. In 2 Timothy 4, verse 13, he says, When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas. He's cold. He wants his coat.

He's like, well, if I'm going to die, I might as well not be cold when I die. Bring the books and above all the parchments. He might be executed soon, but he wants to be warm while he waits.

In the next verse, in chapter 4, verse 14, what we see here is he's not calling Timothy into pure kamikaze mode. See, we strawman things so that we don't have to consider what they actually say.

And we'll paint Paul out to be a narcissist or a sadist or something like that. And when people call you to suffer, yeah, shoot the messenger because, my goodness, the message is rough.

But Paul isn't calling Timothy into just insane kamikaze mode. He says in verse 14, Paul's not asking Timothy to abandon all desire for comfort.

[34 : 27] He's not asking him to abandon all wisdom. He's just saying, trust Christ. See, he doesn't say this as someone who feels like he got the short end of the stick.

This is where, if you want to be a leader, this is where you got to be. In any area, you got to be convinced that your direction, the way you lived your life, is worthy of other people emulating.

Or that you see clearly where you went wrong and so on and so forth. For Paul, all Paul believes is like he got the best deal he could have gotten. To quote David Livingston, he's like, I've never made a sacrifice.

He feels like he got a good deal. He feels wealthy. And so he's able to invite Timothy into something. Yes, there's going to be a price to be paid.

But he's like, Timothy, I have a great deal that I want you to have too. 2 Timothy 1, verse 12. He says, Paul's like, Does your comfort plan have a crown of righteousness?

[35 : 49] Is that part of your perks? No. No, you're playing the short game. If you play the long game, you're going to enjoy eternal glory. Paul isn't using his comfort or his son, his spiritual son's comfort as his compass.

He's using Christ as his compass. And that's what we'll be seeing over the next several weeks. This idea of calling someone you love into discomfort that you yourself, of course, are willing to and have gone through.

This is key to Christianity. Back in the Spanish Civil War, there was a colonel who was fighting against the communists.

And he was a deeply devout Catholic man. His phone rings one day, picks up the phone.

And it's a communist leader in another town saying, We have your son, Luis. And if you don't surrender for this battle, or if you don't do something we want you to do, we're going to shoot your son.

[37 : 05] And the colonel said, Can I talk to my son to make sure he's really there? They said, yeah. So they put Luis on the phone. Luis says, What do you want me to do, Father?

They were waiting for me outside my house. They kidnapped me. There is a gun to my head. What do you want me to do? And the colonel said, Commend your soul to God and die like a patriot.

Viva la Christos. And the son said, That I can do. Hung up the phone. Took the bullet. That's the gospel, guys.

That's the gospel, guys. Timothy did what Paul told him to do.

He fanned the flame, the gift, into a flame. He did not mail in B-grade, C-grade obedience. That was just good enough to consider it done, but just soft enough to avoid hardship.

[38 : 10] He died as an 80-year-old man, feebly interrupting the annual festival to the Ephesian goddess.

He got in the middle of the parade and started preaching Christ and did not stop until he was beaten to death. Paul called Timothy to do that?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. We've really got to make sure that this ethic doesn't get jettisoned because of our cultural softness.

Because this is the ethic that made the world soft. Hard men. Now, we're dealing with the deep end of the pool right now.

I don't imagine that any of us are going to get a phone call like that. I don't imagine any of us. They're near martyrdom in Rome. We just need to grab the principle and understand that it is indeed loving to call those you know and love to follow Christ with you.

[39 : 23] It is indeed loving to call those you love to follow Christ wherever he leads. That's because we don't use comfort as our compass.

We use Christ as our compass. If you encourage someone to follow Jesus, no matter what it costs them, if you encourage them to do what Jesus said, to take up their cross and follow him, you are being loving.

Would that require someone to move out of their girlfriend's apartment? Or switch to a flip phone? Or give more generously than they'd like to?

Or confess a particular sin? Or leave a particular group of friends? Or would it require telling a woman with no education and no income, no, you can't have that abortion?

You'll obey God. Would it involve asking someone who has been wrongly harmed, deeply wrongly harmed, you've got to forgive?

[40 : 29] Yep. this is the way of Christ. There's a million of these where we, if we don't use comfort as a compass, but rather use Christ as a compass, we'll say, trust me, I do love you. The best thing for you is to obey.

This is just, as I said, the gospel. What kind of father would ask his son to suffer?

Well, this is the very foundation of our faith. This is what we believe as the basement, the foundation, ground floor, 1 John 4, 14.

And we have seen and testified that the father has sent his son to be the savior of the world. This is our gospel. And what we're seeing in 2 Timothy is it just being unpacked in a horizontal relationship. So now we have the opportunity to celebrate the foundation itself, which is the father who gave us his son, who sent his son to die for you. So that when you sin, you can look to him and say, please forgive me, not because you're nice, not because of some abstract kind of idea that maybe you should. Please forgive me because I'm an American. You know, none of that. You say, please forgive me because you sent your son to be tortured on a cross to pay for my sin. And that's what we have before us today. The table is a reminder of the God who gave his own son to set us free. So if you're a follower of Jesus, would you come and partake in the table after I pray? Lord God, we praise your holy name. We praise you for cutting through all of the fog of sin with the bright light of the gospel.

And we praise you that we can see what is true. Lord, we commend this time to you as we partake of this table. May the goodness of Father and Son and Holy Spirit just beam in our hearts as we partake of this table. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.