

HWMR: BEING A VESSEL UNTO HONOR, A FULLY EQUIPPED MAN OF GOD, BY BEING EMPOWERED IN THE GRACE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS TO FULLY ACCOMPLISH OUR MINISTRY IN THE UNIQUE MINISTRY OF GOD'S ECONOMY (Week 3)

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 2:1-7, 15

Being Empowered in the Grace Which Is in Christ Jesus to Be Teachers, Soldiers, Contenders, Farmers, and Workmen

- 2 Timothy 2:1 You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;
2 Timothy 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.
2 Timothy 2:3 Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
2 Timothy 2:4 No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.
2 Timothy 2:5 And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.
2 Timothy 2:6 The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit.
2 Timothy 2:7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.
2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

Day 1

- 2 Timothy 1:16* - May the Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain;
1 Corinthians 4:17 - Because of this I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church.
Philippians 2:20 - For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;

- I. Even during a period of decline, a downward trend when most of God's people are carried away, **we need to be among the remnant of God's people**, who receive mercy from the Lord to remain faithful to Him—1 Cor. 7:25b; 1 Kings 19:14, 18; Rom. 11:5; Ezra 9:8; Neh. 1:3; Hag. 1:14:**
- A. Onesiphorus was an **overcomer** who **resisted** the general trend and **stood against** the downward current to refresh the Lord's ambassador in spirit, soul, and body, not being ashamed of the apostle's imprisonment on behalf of the Lord's commission—2 Tim. 1:16-18.
 - B. Timothy was one who was **fully perfected and equipped** to minister the word of God, not only in caring for a local church but also in confronting the worsening decline of the church; he was like-souled with the apostle Paul to genuinely care for the church with all the saints and remind them of Paul's ways which were in Christ—3:13-17; Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:12.
 - C. Luke was the beloved physician, a **faithful companion** of Paul until his martyrdom—Col. 4:14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11.
 - D. Titus walked in the same spirit and in the same steps as Paul to **care for the churches**—2 Cor. 7:6-7; 12:18; Titus 1:4-5; 3:12; cf. 2 Tim. 4:10.
 - E. Mark was **useful** to Paul for the **ministry**—v. 11; cf. Acts 15:37.

Day 2

2 Timothy 2:1-2 - You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; And the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also.

II. Second Timothy reveals that in these last days before the Lord's coming, we need to be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus to be **faithful men**, those who are **teachers, soldiers, contenders, farmers, and workmen** who cut straight the word of the truth—2:1-7, 15; Neh. 8:10; 2 Cor. 12:9:

- A. If someone in a local church has a **deposit of the Lord's healthy words**, he should **train** the faithful ones that they too may have a good deposit from the Lord and be competent to teach others so that they may be good stewards, dispensers, of the varied grace of God—2 Tim. 2:2; 1:12-14; 1 Tim. 6:20; Eph. 3:2; 4:29; 1 Pet. 4:10:
 - 1. We must **shepherd** the saints with the **teaching of God's economy**—Eph. 4:11; Col. 1:27-29; cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:11-16:
 - a. We should shepherd people by dispensing the divine life in the humanity of Jesus to cherish them and by **teaching them the divine truths** in the divinity of Christ to nourish them—Eph. 5:29.
 - b. Shepherding the flock of God by declaring to them all the counsel of God, the economy of God, **protects the church** from the destroyers of God's building, mingles them with the Triune God as grace, and binds them together in His oneness—Acts 20:26-30; Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4; Rom. 16:17; cf. Ezek. 33:1-11; 34:25; Zech. 11:7.
 - 2. The teacher, as a good minister of Christ Jesus, is **nourished with the words of the faith** and **exercises his spirit** to live Christ in his daily life for the church life—1 Tim. 4:6-7.

Dear brothers and sisters, you all are elders and co-workers, but unless you **thoroughly** get into all these points of the economy of God, your teaching is inadequate. If your teaching is inadequate, your shepherding will also be lacking. According to 1 Timothy 3, the first skill of an elder is to teach, and according to 1 Peter 5, it is to shepherd. **Shepherding altogether depends on teaching**. If you cannot teach, you cannot shepherd. Then, what do you teach? You teach the teaching of the apostles. **When you shepherd, spontaneously you shepherd by the apostles' teaching that you teach**. For example, a couple in the church may be in discord. As an elder, how do you shepherd them? Many elders would help them according to human feelings and speak to them some words of exhortation and encouragement. This is not enough. You must release some messages concerning Christ and the church in the ordinary church life. When this couple is having a problem, you should shepherd them according to the teaching of husbands and wives as symbols of Christ and the church.

You can also shepherd this couple according to the truth concerning the New Jerusalem. You may say, "Whether you are a brother or a sister, you are a constituent of the Body of Christ, and the consummation of the Body of Christ is the New Jerusalem. One of the main materials of the New Jerusalem is transformed stone; there is no wood, clay, or bricks. Therefore, **we need to be transformed by the Lord in our marriage life today**. If you are not transformed in the age of grace today, you will be disciplined in the kingdom age; the Lord will use the thousand years to transform you. In any case, the Lord will cause you to be transformed; there is no way for you to escape. As an elder, I must speak frankly. We must all be transformed by the Lord; otherwise, the Body of Christ cannot be produced. If as a husband or wife you quarrel, how can you be in the Body of Christ? Every member of the Body of Christ has to be transformed. After God has regenerated us, He goes on to sanctify, renew, transform us, and eventually conform us to His image. Today the Lord has arranged for us to live a marriage life in order to help us to be transformed." You should shepherd in this way. This kind of shepherding is high, proper, and fitting. (*The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible, chapter 3*)

Day 3

2 Timothy 2:3-4 - Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please the one who enlisted him.

1 Corinthians 14:8 - For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?

- B. Their **serving the Lord as soldiers** indicates that the apostle considered their ministry a **warfare for Christ**, just as the priestly service was considered a military service, a warfare—2 Tim. 2:3-4; Num. 4:23, 30, 35; 2 Tim. 4:7:
1. The Lord's ministry is the sounding of the trumpet for the army to go to war; to war the good warfare is to **war against the different teachings** of the dissenters and to carry out God's economy according to the apostles' ministry—1 Cor. 14:8; 1 Tim. 1:18; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18.
 2. To fight a good fight for the Lord's interests on this earth, we must **clear away all earthly entanglements** and **lay hold on the eternal life**, not trusting in our human life—2 Tim. 4:7; 1 Tim. 6:12; cf. 2 Cor. 5:4.
 3. We must be vigilant to fight the battle against death, the last enemy of God, by **being filled with life to reign in life**—Num. 6:6-7, 9; 2 Cor. 5:4; Rom. 5:17; 8:6, 11.
 4. Our **will must be subdued** and **resurrected** by Christ to be like the tower of David, the armory for spiritual warfare—S. S. 4:4; cf. 1 Chron. 11:22.

What is the real Christian life? The real Christian life is **Christ being lived out through us**. We have our own personality and our own human life, but we **should not live by this human life**. Instead, we should turn to the **divine life**, which is Christ Himself living within our spirit. We must do this not once in a while or even once a day but all the time and in every situation. We must deny our natural human life and turn to Christ, exercising our spirit to contact this living person. The religion of Christianity cannot save or deliver us, nor can mere Christian teachings. Only Christ Himself, who is the living Lord and a living person, is able to deliver us. Today we are contacting a living person—Christ Himself. Day by day and moment by moment we should realize that Christ is life in our spirit. **He is so real and living, and He is moving and working in us**. When we turn to Him in our spirit, He motivates us to live, energizes us to walk, and strengthens us to work. Then it is no longer we who live but He and we living together.

This mingling of the divine life with the human life is the real Christian life. In our love toward others there should be such a mingling. In our service in the church there should be such a mingling. We should be able to say with assurance, "Lord, although I am serving You, You are actually serving within me. Although I am praying to You, You are actually praying within me. I am not doing these things merely by myself. Rather, You are strengthening me within to do everything." What a wonder, a miracle, a rest, and a joy this is! There is no need for us to try to do anything. We should not try by ourselves to overcome sin, to be patient, or to do good things. Instead, **we must see that today we have the glorious Christ within us as our life**. Simply pay attention to this fact and say, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord! Lord, You are my life within. I can take You as my life and experience You in the way of life. I can take You and experience You not just once a day or in certain matters but day by day, all the time, and in all my circumstances." If we experience Christ in such a way, we will be in the heavenlies, all the sinful and worldly things would be under our feet, and we would be spiritually enriched. (*Experiencing the Mingling of God with Man for the Oneness of the Body of Christ, chapter 5*)

Day 4

2 Timothy 2:5 - And also if anyone contends in the games, he is not crowned unless he contends lawfully.

1 Corinthians 9:25-26 - And everyone who contends exercises self-control in all things; they then, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we, an incorruptible. I therefore run in this way, not as though without a clear aim; I box in this way, not as though beating the air;

- C. We must **run the Christian race** as contenders, athletes, until we finish our course, **fully accomplishing** our ministry in the unique ministry of God's economy so that we may receive Christ as our prize—2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Cor. 9:25-27:
1. We must **subdue our body** and make it a **conquered captive** to serve us as a slave for fulfilling our holy purpose, not by our own effort but by the Spirit—Rom. 8:13.
 2. We must **look to the Lord** to be graced with His grace in Christ as the Beloved (Eph. 1:6) in order to finish our course so that we can be awarded in the next age with Christ as our incorruptible crown in the following aspects (1 Cor. 9:24-27):
 - a. He will be our **crown of life**—Rev. 2:10; James 1:12.
 - b. He will be our **crown of righteousness**—2 Tim. 4:6-8.
 - c. He will be our **crown of holiness**—Exo. 28:36-38; 29:6; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Eph. 5:26.
 - d. He will be our **crown of glory**—1 Pet. 5:4.
 - e. The very attributes of God that guarded the tree of life from fallen man are **now being dispensed into us** as we eat Christ as the tree of life for Him to become our righteousness, holiness, and glory in order for us to display Him as the multifarious wisdom of God to the whole universe—Rev. 2:7; Gen. 3:24; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:10; 3:10.

Day 5

2 Timothy 2:6-7 - The laboring farmer must be the first to partake of the fruit. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

1 Corinthians 3:9 - For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's cultivated land, God's building.

- D. The **church is God's farm**, God's cultivated land, and **we are God's fellow workers**, working as farmers together with Him by an all-fitting life to sow the seed of life into people and water them with the Spirit of life by His healthy words—2 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:6, 9; 2 Cor. 6:1a; Luke 8:11; John 7:38; 6:63:
1. The **word of God**, as a grain of wheat, **dispenses God as life into us to nourish us**; it is also **fire and a hammer to purify us** and **break down** our self, our natural life, our flesh, our lusts, and our concepts—Jer. 23:28-29.
 2. God has sent forth His **word as rain and snow to water** His people in order to sanctify them, transform them, and conform them to His image that the Body may be built up—Isa. 55:8-11; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26.
 3. In our contact with the saints, we should have only one motive—to **minister Christ** to them that they **may grow in the Lord**—1 Tim. 5:1-2.

Day 6

2 Timothy 2:15 - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.

Psalms 119:130 - The opening of Your words gives light, / Imparting understanding to the simple.

- E. To cut straight the word of the truth as God's workmen means to **unfold the word of God** in its various parts rightly and straightly without distortion (as in carpentry); there is the **need of the word of the truth**, rightly unfolded, to enlighten the darkened people, inoculate against the poison, swallow up the death, and bring the distracted back to the proper track—2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Acts 26:18; Psa. 119:130.

"All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Tim. 3:16). Just as the nature of a table is wood, so the nature of the word in the Bible is the divine breath. If you consider the Word as only letters on a page, you will use only your mentality in reading it. But because it is God's breath, we must breathe it in. How do we do this? By praying. **When we are taking in the Word for nourishment, we need to pray over the words we read.** We should use the very words of the Bible to pray; our prayer will turn the printed matter into breath. The verses, in other words, become spirit to us.

But how can we say that 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us the Scripture is for breathing? Does not the rest of the verse say, "and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"? Is instruction breathing? Is correction breathing? Is conviction breathing? To argue this way shows blindness. If you use only your mentality when you study the Word, you may read that it is "profitable for...correction" and feel that you do need to be corrected and convicted for your attitude toward your wife. This is not the life way to take the Word.

Rather than exercising your mentality, **exercise your praying spirit.** Do not bring in your thought. Do not interpret. Do not explain. Do not even pray for the Lord to help you to understand the verse. Just breathe all the words into your being. "O Lord, profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction. Lord, for instruction in righteousness." Eventually, the verse will be wrought into you as a life supply. Because the nature of the word is divine breath, when you breathe it in, it becomes life to you. "The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). The words become spirit and life through your prayer, through your breathing. (*Life-Messages, Volume 1, chapter 10*)

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