

Message Series: **Stronger: Discovering Truths for a Resilient Life**

Message Title: **Stronger: Choosing to Endure**

Scripture Passage: **2 Timothy 2:1-13**

Date: Sunday, November 6, 2016

Teacher: John Garner

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### **A Story of Endurance**

The New York City Marathon of 1986, one entrant named Bob Wieland took just over 4 days to complete the marathon...this is a story of resilience and endurance, with a purpose.

“He ran with his arms...he ran with the greatest endurance, overcoming the greatest adversary.”

This man exhibited robust endurance in the face of a daunting situation and irreversible hardship.

Let this word take root in your mind and heart...hardship. “a condition that is difficult to endure; suffering; deprivation; oppression”

What does it take to endure hardship with hope and purpose? What have you learned and experienced?

### **You and Your Hardships**

Hardship comes in many different forms and experiences. Can you name a hardship that you are currently experiencing? Can you identify a past hardship that still haunts you and has damaged you...making it difficult for you to move forward?

Relational hardships. Medical/physical hardships. Emotional hardships. Financial hardships. Spiritual hardships. Work related hardships. Take a moment to name the hardship that has caused you suffering, that has caused you to wonder if you could be ‘stronger’ and move forward with hope and purpose.

None of us is immune from suffering hardship of one kind or another. Sometimes these difficult realities are of our own doing, sometimes they come from the hands of others and sometimes they just invade our lives, shrouded in mystery. Yet, hardship comes and demands a response. What will my choice be? What will yours be?

### **We Do Have a Choice**

What can we learn from Paul’s letter to Timothy? Instruction on how to handle hardships is readily available to us in chapter 2. The key phrase is verse 3. “Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Paul uses the language of choice and personal responsibility: “Endure hardship”.

Many of us at times curse hardship. Or try to deny the reality of suffering and uncertainty. At times we anxiously medicate ourselves to dull the pain of suffering. What have been some of your responses to hardship? These approaches only make things worse, we may experience a measure of relief in the immediate moment, but the lasting effects are negative...guilt, regret, physical consequences, spiritual alienation...what might you add to the list?

God’s Word offers us a better way forward...endure hardship with the help of God’s love, wisdom and power.

### **Reality Checks for Timothy, You, and Me!: 2 Timothy 2: 1-2**

In the midst of hardship, be mindful of God’s resources for you, and be aware of others and your responsibilities to them.

Paul challenges and encourages Timothy to ‘be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.’ As we have learned, Timothy struggles with emotional ups and downs, with a tendency to indulge and believe fearful thoughts and emotions. 2 Timothy 1:7

Yet, there is great hope for Timothy...and you and me. The grace and help God gives by his Spirit...grace to face hardship, grace and mercy to comfort and strengthen us when life is overwhelming us...grace radiating from the pages and promises of Scripture that infuse us with perspective and fresh purpose. Acts 20:32 Grace to endure that is mediated through the compassionate actions and thoughtful prayers of others.

Personal Application: Is this a time to draw heavily from God's gracious resources, especially God's Word and his people?

Paul also reminds Timothy to be fully engaged in entrusting God's good news into the hands of competent people who can pass on God's truth and grace to others. In the midst of your hardship, be mindful of others. Endure with purpose. Build into the lives of others. Do your part to further the gospel message of Jesus. Endure with hope and purpose. As many of you do at RBC!

### **Developing an Enduring Spirit: 2 Timothy 2:3-13**

REFLECT on everyday people and the insights they pass on:

**Soldier:** vs. 3-4: loyalty, steadfastness of spirit and focus on the task at hand

**Athlete:** vs.5: play by the rules, live a disciplined and future oriented life: "state on oath that fulfilled 10 months training prior to the games"

**Farmer:** vs.6: work hard and patiently wait for the harvest and enjoy a share of it!

Personal Application: which example most challenges and instructs you? Why?

God will give us insights needed to address the challenges, the hardships and opportunities that are before us. Compare James 1:5

REMEMBER Jesus Christ: 2 Timothy 2:8: Ponder the fact of his resurrection and the implications of this historical event. See Romans 8:10-11 read. "It is not so much the resurrection as a fact of history, important as that is, but the risen Christ as the central factor of the Christian's ongoing experience." (Guthrie)

RECALL the example of Paul: 2 Timothy 2:8b-10 Paul endured with resilience and an unshakeable sense of purpose...as can we, if we choose to endure.

Remember we can sabotage endurance through chosen self-pity, self-centeredness and chronic indulgence of fear. Let's be honest about the tendencies we have to sabotaging an enduring spirit!

### **One Final Source of Hope in our Hardships: 2 Timothy 2:11-13**

God's unwavering faithfulness to us in our hardships... and promise of eternal connection with God and his people. One day the need to endure will be replaced with the joy of community...with God and the family that bears his name. Until then...let us choose to endure, with hope and purpose, in the strength of Jesus, given by his strong and wise Spirit.

### **One Truth, One Action**

What truth will you take to heart and act upon today?