

JUNE 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NERSES BALABANIAN

Congratulations, Graduates

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2 Timothy 2:1-9

When I was graduating from college, our Dean said something I cannot forget. "Today you are receiving a degree, a piece of paper which says you don't know anything." You should have seen my face. All those years of hard work, all those nights of labor were for nothing! He continued, "We equipped you with the proper means to be able to keep on learning."

Hearing these words made me think. I thought I was at the center of the world. I thought I had achieved, I had arrived, and I was done. These were good yet deceiving feelings.

This year our graduates did not have normal graduation ceremonies. My heart aches for them. I would love to organize a huge graduation celebration for all our graduates once we come together again. For now, I thank God for all our those who graduated. These students worked hard to reach to this meaningful day. I would like to focus on what **Paul** taught to his student/disciple **Timothy**. In fact, he gave Timothy three basic pieces of advice that I would like to share with you, graduates, and everyone (remember we should always be students): **Be Strong, Suffer Hardship, Remember Jesus Christ.**

Timothy is entering to serve in a new church established by Paul in the city of Ephesus. The members are imma-



ture and are facing a lot of hardship. Paul, as Timothy's teacher and counselor, prepares him to face this tough life. And, as your pastor, I would pass those words to you, graduates:

1. Life is tough. BE STRONG in the GRACE of JESUS CHRIST.

"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." You think there is a contradiction here. On one hand, Timothy should stand firm on his feet, should be tough, should be strong. On the other hand, he should do that in "the grace of Christ Jesus." What does it mean?

Do you hear these words,

"Do your best." Well, we should do our best. For Christians just doing the best is our side of the end. We need to learn to do things with the HELP of the Lord. **Timothy needed to learn to trust utterly in the grace of Jesus.**

This is a reality not just in Christian life or Church life. This should be our attitude in our daily life, in school, university, workplace, office, homework, home management. Learn to do your part, but never forget to ask God to give you His grace through Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine said, "Lord, command what you will, but give what you command." In other words, "Tell me what to do, and enable me through your grace to do the things you have called me to do."

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Graduates

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I hear from Christians, “The Lord saved me with His grace; now it is up to me to do the rest.” Bad theology. One can accomplish nothing without His grace, nothing.

We have many graduates this year, some from Middle School, High School and some from college. You are entering to new zone, a new phase of your life. Life is going to be tough. You are prepared to face them. Besides doing your part, give Jesus the best place in your life. Let Him be the priority in your life. Experience His grace daily in your life. Have Christian friends, read the Scriptures, pray and meditate on His Word, serve the Lord in the community.

2. Suffer Hardship – No pain, No Gain.

Paul gives three practical examples: a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

The first example is a soldier. ³*Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.* (2 Tim. 2:3-4 NIV).

Paul uses this imagery in many passages:

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight. (1 Tim 1:18 CSB)

Paul is urging Timothy to **learn to fight** the good fight. He calls Epaphroditus, the messenger of the Philippian Church, “my fellow soldier” (Phil 2:25). He himself said, “I fought the good fight” and so on. The image of being a soldier of the Lord is very biblical. What qualities does a soldier have?

• **Focused service.** A soldier is a soldier. Military people should not be in politics or in civilian affairs.

Once we are Christians, we should not play around. Either we are Chris-

tians or not. Commitment is the word.

• **Obedience.** Without this quality, there is no army, and the battle is defeated. If the soldier will question his/her commanders and argue with them, I don’t know whether the battle can be won. It is not the duty of the soldier “to know the reason why”. When the soldier is the in the middle of the battle, he cannot see the bigger picture.

• **Sacrifice.** We just celebrated Memorial Day. We all know how people have sacrificed their comfort and their lives for our sake. The greatest sacrifice is when one lays his life for the other.

• **Loyalty.** Whatever happens, the soldier is loyal to his commander.

All these qualities, focus, obedience, sacrifice, and loyalty we are called to practice in our lives. Our example is Jesus Christ, and then his faithful followers. Paul trains Timothy to remain faithful in his service to the church in spite of all difficulties. Learn to have the mind of a soldier. To become a man or woman of God means to endure hardship and fight the good fight in His Grace, of course.

The second example is the athlete.

³*Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing according to the rules.* (2 Tim 2:5 NIV)

An athlete should be prepared according to the rules. In ancient Greek times, athletes were required to come before the judges prior to the contest and swear to **Zeus** that they had been trained for **at least ten months**. This is an old athletic rule. In fact, the words *athlein nomimos* that Paul used is difficult to translate, (“according to the rules” NIV, “striving lawfully” KJV). The Greek writers later used these words to describe a professional athlete.

An athlete should compete in accordance to the rules and regulations. An athlete should take this very seriously; he/she is professional.

I love the 100-meter sprint race. I have had several heroes in that field. One of them disappointed me. Do you know who I am referring to? Her name

is **Marion Jones**. She was the first female track and field athlete to win 5 medals at a single Olympics. Later it was found out that she used **steroids**. She was taken to court, all her medals were stripped, and she went to jail. What humiliation to her and to the country! “Run according to the rules.”

Satan tempted Jesus in the desert. Satan was ready to give the world to Jesus if Jesus obeyed and worshiped him. What a temptation. Satan gives an easy solution. Jesus did not give in.

We need to understand that not only the purpose of the fight and race are important, but also how we conduct the fight.

These days people can become very rich quickly. Beware of those. In your college or school, you often face the temptation to cheat. Listen now, it is not important that you just graduate. It is also important how you graduate.

For an athlete, discipline is the key word. Ten months of hard work before being eligible to participate in the games according old Greek laws.

The third example is the farmer.

⁶*The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.*” (2 Tim 2:6 NIV)

Here I am in Fresno. I learned a lot of patience from you, my farmer friends. You work hard, day and night. You are always on call. You prepare the soil before the planting. You clean the soil from rocks. You plant seeds and keep watching the field and caring for it for a long, long time. You do all that without being sure if the weather will be favorable. You know that there are no quick results.

I was reading the following story in the Daily Bread: “A man who played the double bass in the Mexico City Philharmonic told me that the finest instruments are made of wood that has been allowed to age naturally to remove the moisture. ‘You must age the wood for 80 years, and then play the instrument for 80 years before it reaches its best sound,’ said Luis An-

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Graduates

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tonio Rojas. 'A craftsman must use wood cut and aged by someone else, and he will never see any instrument reach its peak during his own lifetime.'"¹

Wow! We need 160 years to get a good instrument, a perfect one.

A farmer waits for the result with patience. Sometimes he does not see it.

Young Timothy went to a new mission field with enthusiasm. We plant things, but the result is with the Lord.

3. Remember Jesus

How does Paul end this section? ⁸*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ⁹for which I am suffering...* (2 Tim 2:8-9a NIV)

Paul is amazing. He does not sit passively. He is writing from the jail. He is chained like a criminal. Instead of becoming bitter, he is writing a letter of encouragement to his disciple Timothy and he is giving the best advice: **REMEMBER JESUS**.

Paul reminded Timothy that he could only fight with the grace of Christ Jesus. Then he continues saying that the Christian life and service are based on the person of Christ, on the work of Christ, on the truth of Christ, nothing else.

WHY? Why so much emphasis on this?

Without Christ, all the other teachings of Paul to Timothy are like moral lessons. Christianity is not a set of moral lessons, although the essence of moral behavior is in Christ. Paul is saying, "Teach Jesus. Teach the Gospel. Don't be just a 'good' teacher, with good techniques of teaching. Teach the cross and resurrection." Paul is asking Timothy not to forget the main dish: Jesus Christ.

Graduates: Well done, you worked hard, and you finished only a small part of the journey of education. Some of you are going to a new college. Some of you joining the Army. Some of you don't know if the colleges will open for in-person or on-line teaching.

Whatever happens, you are entering a new phase. Remember Christ in your lives. Remember what PACC taught you. If you are leaving Fresno, find a local church on or off campus. Be part of a Bible study and fellowship group. But most importantly, work hard, but "fight" the battle with His Grace.

Amen

MODERATOR'S REPORT

***For dominion belongs to the Lord
and He rules over the nations...***

(Psalm 22:28)

The Church Council met in person, adhering to the social-distancing guidelines, on Tuesday, May 26, to conduct church business.

The meeting opened with a devotion entitled, "God is always in control". As His children, we are to accept that things that will not always make sense to us. As Isaiah 55:9 teaches, we must trust Him for His ways and thoughts are higher than our own. We praise God for His protection and provisions enabling us to continue our service for His glory.

As the result of the modification of the California COVID-19 Industry Guidelines for places of worship, a lengthy discussion ensued regarding the re-opening of the church. Each member expressed their opinion regarding whether or not to open the church at this time in accordance with the conditions dictated in the CA CDC guidelines. as they relates to PACC.

Following the discussion, a resolution was passed to continue our Sunday Worship Service virtually for the month of June while monitoring the situation; and to resume the discussion during our next Council meeting scheduled for June 23, 2020:

As the June Congregational Meeting has been postponed to a date to be determined as soon as possible after the "shelter-in-place" has been lifted, a resolution was made by the Nomination Committee to extend the term of the Council members whose terms will expire in June 2020. Their terms shall expire at the next Congregational meeting when new members are elected.

In closing, the Council wishes to remind the Congregation that an opportunity has been made possible to continue contribution to the ministries utilizing the "**On-line Giving**" for your convenience. If God leads you to contribute, please refer to the PilgrimChurch.com website, where you will find a sub-menu called "**On-line Giving**".

We praise God for the opportunity to serve Him through Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church,

As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

(1 Corinthians 12:20 NIV)

– by Moderator Edward Saliba

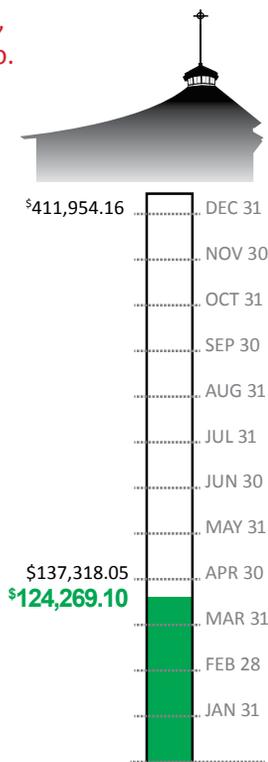
¹The Daily Bread by David McCasland May 22, 2008

2020 ANNUAL GIVING RECAP

For where your Treasure is,
there your heart will be also.

– Matthew 6:21

I begin by offering an apology to everyone. During a recent meeting it was revealed to me that I had not entered the 2020 budget correctly for current reporting purposes. There were several new expense accounts for 2020 and I inadvertently did not set one of them up. I apologize for my error. The last three (3) months have not had the correct amount of Total Budget for Contributions. Also the expected monthly based on the budget would be incorrect as well. The actual collected amounts reported for January through March have been correct. Corrections have been made and the amounts you see for April are



correct for all budgeted amounts. Again I am very sorry for the error. If you should have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

I am overwhelmed by the April report. As you can see by the graph the budgeted amount through April is \$137,318.05 and the actual amount collected through April is \$124,269.10. We have met the budget by nearly 91%. That is amazing and a blessing from God. Thank you to everyone for worshiping God in this manner. A huge THANK YOU to Cristel Tufenkjian for setting up online giving on the website as well. This was not an easy task and we greatly appreciate the time and effort she put in to make this a reality. Again, thank you for choosing to worship God in this way as well. We hope it provides an easy way to send in your offering. And while you're on the website be sure to sign up for emails, check out what's happening in church groups and listen to a sermon you may have missed. Or better yet watch one of the past Sunday sermons that have encouraged and inspired us during this difficult time. Badevelis Nerses and Kevin have persistently endeavored to keep our church family together during these less than normal times.

You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.

(Psalms 118:28-29)

– by Treasurer Patrice Ruble

YOUTH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Samantha Petrosyan 6/10 Nadia Jones 6/21
Elen Israyelyan 6/10 Tammy Petrosyan 6/24
Artie Darakjian 6/11 Emilia Overbay 6/30

**“May you be blessed by the Lord,
the Maker of Heaven and earth.”**

Psalm 115:15, NIV



DIVE INTO GOD'S WORD THIS SUMMER

PACC Sunday School Friends:

Free streaming Sunday School Lessons through LifeWay Christian Resources ended with the May 31 lesson. Throughout the summer, we will be providing you with resources that will be a fun way to learn God's word and to provide “refreshing spiritual nourishment.”



AVAILABLE NOW FROM SAMARITAN'S PURSE



Aboard a time traveling spaceship, GREATEST JOURNEY gives kids a bird's eye view of the Old and New Testaments, introducing them to major events in the Bible and focusing on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In addition, kids memorize Scripture as they play, which is critical for their spiritual growth.



MIGHTY MEMORIZER



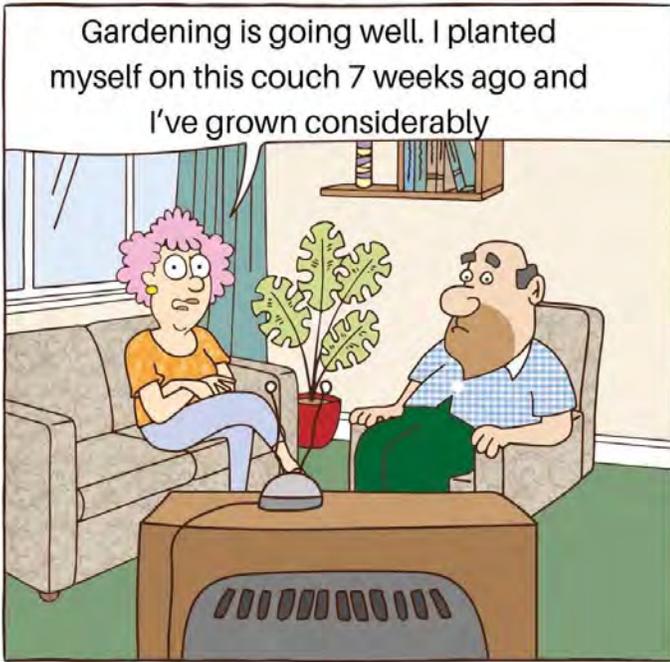
You can call Teacher Cathy at 285-5780 to say your verses

Mighty Memorizer is FUN – CHALLENGING – and A VERY REWARDING WAY to learn God's Word.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT CONGRATULATIONS

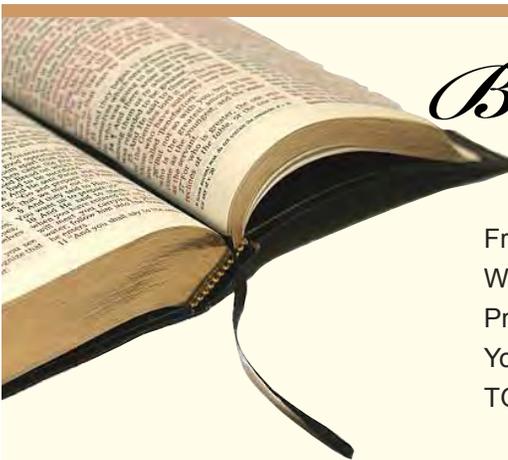
Jeff and Evan Taylor
on the birth of their son
Reagan River Taylor
born Friday, May 29, 2020

Grandparents: Kenneth and Robyn Esraelian



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Bible Study Opportunities

- Fruit of the Spirit Fellowship Monday Night Bible Study 6:30 PM Zoom
- Women's Morning Bible Study .. Tuesday 10:0 AM Phone Conference
- Prayer Time Bimonthly To be Announced Zoom
- Young Adult Bible Study Thursday Night BS 7:00 Zoom
- TGIF Men's Group Friday Morning 7:00 AM Zoom

Join any group... or more!

Please contact the church office, Badveli Kevin, or Badveli Nerses for details.

Sunday Morning Worship Heard Online!

As the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) continues to evolve, we want to assure you, our valued members of the church, that we are monitoring the situation closely. We do so from a position of faith and trust in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and not from fear. Our greatest concern is for your health and safety, as well as our church staff and their families.

We want to let you know that we are here to support you. With that being said, and in accordance with the lock-down we will not be gathering for worship service on Sunday Morning. Instead you will have the capability of watching and listening to the Sunday worship service remotely from the comfort of your home by visiting the church's web page:

www.pilgrimchurch.com.

As always, we trust in God's plan and encourage you to trust in Him and not be afraid. Going forward, we will monitor and evaluate the COVID-19 situation regularly and update you with any further changes. We pray for health and peace during this challenging time.



Let us be faithful and vigilant in our prayer for those nations, communities, families and individuals most affected by this outbreak, and for the medical personnel and government officials seeking a solution. Above all, let us remember and rejoice that "nothing in life or n death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans: 8:38-39)