



2 TIMOTHY

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You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. 2 Timothy 2:3

Within the verse, the words chosen by Paul include the thought of “with.” In essence, Paul is telling Timothy that he is not alone in the hardships he will endure. What he says conveys the idea of, “You therefore, must endure hardships along with me.” Paul is in prison, and he is suffering privation and loneliness. Along with that, his entire ministry is one which was fraught with troubles. One good list of them is given in 2 Corinthians 11. There he provides a record of his trials that Timothy would have been fully aware of –

“Are they Hebrews? So *am* I. Are they Israelites? So *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So *am* I. ²³Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶*in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— ²⁸besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. ²⁹Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?” 2 Corinthians 11:22-29

Although Timothy would probably be spared from the majority of these difficulties, Paul is letting him know that his work, by nature, would bring out hardships. And so, he was to remember that Paul suffered, and he was simply joining him in that honor.

From there Paul tells him to endure those hardships “as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” The life of a soldier is typically filled with deprivations and difficulties. They sleep in the rain, they often go without proper food. They are attacked constantly. They face extreme physical trials. But more, they tend to face these many trials without complaint. A soldier is expected to follow his leader faithfully. As soldiers of Jesus Christ, if we are faithful and obedient, whatever comes our way is because He has allowed it to occur. Paul is telling Timothy (and thus anyone who is faithful in the ministry) that this is what is expected in following after our Commander.

Life application: The life of a faithful minister is one which is guaranteed to be quite difficult at times, and almost always very tiring. As the enemy lobbs in his spears and shoots his arrows, the minister has to be ready for them, and to put his trust and faith even more in the Lord who is leading. The question for you is, “Are you acting on the Lord’s behalf, or are you acting on the enemy’s behalf, as you interact with your pastor, preacher, or minister?”

No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. 2 Timothy 2:4

Continuing on with the simile of the previous verse (being as a soldier), Paul next says to Timothy, “No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life.” When people are enlisted in the military, that is their sphere of life. This may appear less so in modern times, but Paul is writing during the time of the Roman empire. They lived as soldiers, they trained as soldiers, they served under their commanders as soldiers, and they – if called to do so – suffered, fought, and died as soldiers. Even today, those in the military have lives set apart for the call of the service which is different than those in civilian life.

This is their profession, and the affairs of a civilian life are set apart from their conduct as military men. Civilians go to work, they come home to their family, they buy and they sell, and they go on vacations if time and money permit. In a host of other ways as well, the life of a civilian is entirely different than those of a military man. Further and especially, civilians have a different structure of leadership. The military has a set line of command, and soldiers are dedicated to their commander’s authority.

Because of this, the soldier does not get involved in regular civilian affairs. The soldier’s priority and conduct is first and foremost geared toward that of the military so “that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.” The soldier isn’t concerned about a civilian boss, and he isn’t concerned about a company’s profit. He was enlisted into the military by an overall military commander, and it is to that individual that he is to show his allegiance.

Paul's words are to be equated to the minister of Christ, and to Christ who has chosen him for the ministry. Timothy is being instructed that his allegiance is to be first, foremost, and solely to the Lord Jesus. This is certainly true with all Christians, but Paul is addressing Timothy as a minister. He is ensuring that nothing of worldly entanglement will draw him away from his whole-hearted allegiance to serving his Commander, Jesus. As an interesting connection to this thought, the Constitution of the State of Tennessee states the following –

Article IX. Disqualifications.

Section 1. Whereas ministers of the Gospel are by their profession, dedicated to God and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their functions; therefore, no minister of the Gospel, or priest of any denomination whatever, shall be eligible to a seat in either House of the Legislature.

Section 2. No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of this state.

In the Tennessee constitution, they consider ministers in the light which the Bible proclaims here in 2 Timothy. Their calling is one which, by necessity, should preclude them from becoming entangled in the full-time political affairs of the House of the Legislature. Atheists, being morally unqualified because of their lack of belief, are also prohibited from holding office. If their oaths cannot be trusted, their moral direction is therefore unreliable and perverse. Good job Tennessee!

Life application: Atheists in Tennessee are no different than atheists anywhere else. The difference is that their constitution explicitly recognizes what others fail to see. If a person does not believe in a Creator, they thus acknowledge that there is no afterlife where judgment will be executed on humanity. Because of this, they believe they are not accountable for immoral decisions made now. Therefore, they identify themselves as wholly unsuited to make decisions on behalf of people who are moral beings. Consider this as you place your vote for those in public office. Find out what they believe, and base your voting decisions, first and foremost, on a sound, moral, and godly standard.

And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. 2 Timothy 2:5

Paul now changes his comparison from the soldier to an athlete to continue to open Timothy's mind to proper Christian life. He says, "And also if anyone competes in athletics." The word is found only in this verse (twice), *athleó*. It means to wrestle; to compete as an athlete. One can

see the germ of our modern word “athletics” in it. Paul returns to what is an obvious favorite metaphor of his, that of the Grecian games. He uses it elsewhere, such as in 1 Corinthians 9 –

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*.²⁵ And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for an imperishable crown*.²⁶ Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air.²⁷ But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

For all who compete, Paul notes that “he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” How obvious this is in the modern Olympics. Doping is not allowed; it is one of the rules of the game. If someone is found to be using steroids or other physically enhancing drugs, they are rejected. The same was true in Paul’s time. The athletes had certain rules in which to conduct themselves. If they did not complete accordingly, they not only failed to receive a crown, but they would be disqualified completely.

But the crown is what all of the years of training was intended to obtain! And so only a desperate person, or a truly deceitful fool, would attempt to break the rules. In Paul equating the work of the minister to the athletes in Greece, he is showing that ministers must strive according to the rules set down for them – Scripture. To not follow the manual, is to disqualify oneself for the prize. How many preachers, teachers, priests, and pastors think they will receive the inheritance simply because of the title they held! And yet, which of those failed to run their course in faith? For those who do not, there shall be no crown awaiting them.

Life application: The finest manager, the greatest orator, the seemingly wisest counselor, or the most knowledgeable theologian, may not even be on the right track while running the race. It is the unwise congregant that sits in a church only because he appreciates one of these qualities in their minister. A meticulous manager who increases the church’s size and budget may be skimming the till in the process. A great orator may be preaching a completely false gospel. A counselor’s instruction may not even be biblical. And the most noted Bible scholar of all may not actually have faith in what he is teaching. Be sure to properly evaluate your leader to ensure that he is running his race according to the rules.

The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. 2 Timothy 2:6

Paul now goes to another metaphor to describe the responsibilities and benefits of being a minister of the Lord. He began with the soldier, he then moved to the athlete, and now he speaks of the farmer by saying, “The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.”

Speaking of the soldier, he relayed the concept of obedience by ministers to Christ, and not mixing in the affairs of the world. In his words about the athlete, he conveyed the message that the minister of the Lord was to conduct his affairs according to the set rules, implying the word of God. Now, in these words about farmers, he is showing that there are other requirements, and also benefits, of the ministerial office.

When a farmer works his land, he takes what is necessary for himself before selling off his produce to others. He takes enough for food for himself and his family. He takes enough to feed his animals. He also sets aside enough to be used for planting future crops. All of this happens before he sells his first bushel to others. It is a laborious, time-consuming process. It takes great exertion of energy and dedication in order to come to this state. If he has not cared for his own house first, then he will fail as a farmer in the future. The same is then true with the minister.

In this lesson, there is both a spiritual and a physical aspect to be understood. First, from a spiritual aspect, the minister must feed himself with the word. There must be a dedicated effort of growing in the word, cultivating it, and caring for it. Any minister who has not put his effort into the spiritual growth of his harvest will be a pretty horrible minister. Further, he must ensure that his family is set in the word as well, living in accordance with its precepts. And he must store up his knowledge of the word for the future. He must always be ready to apply it to his life and actions.

Secondly, the minister must tend to his needs in a physical sense as well. He must sow into his crop, tend to it, harvest it, and store up what is needed. Some pastors are known for giving of themselves to the point of having nothing left to give. Paul would call this unwise. There must be a store from which one can be willing to give, and it must be accessed with wisdom and prudence. If it is depleted, then it is he who will then be the soul needing other's help. If it doesn't come, then there will be no ministry at all.

Paul speaks of this elsewhere of this general precept in 1 Corinthians 9 –

For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? ¹⁰ Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things? ¹² If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? 1 Corinthians 9:9-12

Life application: The minister's job is one which must be cultivated through hard work, and it is also a job which requires the minister to be wise and careful in how he deals with both his physical and spiritual gain. To allow either to fall into shortage will cause him to be less effective in his ministerial duties. There must be a storehouse which will be accessible for the future to meet the obvious needs which will arise in his own life, in that of his family, and also in the ministry.