



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

“A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST!” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:3-4

WYOMING

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Paul knew that his end was near. He had carried the torch for over 30 years and now he is concerned that the baton of faith be carried forward to the next generation. Paul commissioned Timothy, his son in the faith, to be strong in guarding the treasure of the gospel of Christ, faithful in proclaiming the gospel and now committed to passing the truth of the gospel to the next generation who will not waiver in their faith and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. “A GOOD SOLDIER OF JESUS CHRIST!” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:3-4

2 Timothy 2:3-4 “Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.”

Paul calls on Timothy to pass the baton to a new generation of mature believers who will be faithful in guarding the truth, retaining the standard of truth and committed to proclaiming that truth. Faithful refers to spiritual character and spiritual giftedness. It’s one who is believing, loyal and reliable. They would yield neither to persecution nor to error. It would be one whose heart is set on Christ and nothing can lure them from the path of loyalty to Christ or stray from the truth. They are steadfast in life and thought.¹ Faithfulness must dominate Timothy’s life and that of those he discipled. From chapter one we remember that Timothy was struggling and so in 2 Timothy 2:1, Paul exhorts him to be strong and not weak. Here in these next verses, Paul will use three analogies to instruct Timothy how he can be strong in the grace and faithful to his call. He begins with the example of a soldier.

A. “SUFFER HARDSHIP WITH ME...” - 2 TIMOTHY 2:3A

We long for an easy life but Paul once again reminds Timothy and all believers that this is not an easy life as a Christian. In 2 Timothy 1:8, Paul invited Timothy to join him in suffering; to partake, suffer together for the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must be reminded that Paul saw hardship and suffering for Jesus Christ in this life as a privilege and not a sacrifice. Remember his words in Philippians 1:29, “For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” And Paul also knew that suffering for Jesus Christ would bring God glory and further the proclamation of the gospel, “Now I want you to know brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel...” (Philippians 1:12) Paul also wanted to remind Timothy that the cost for godly living would inevitably be suffering and persecution, “And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2 Timothy 3:12) Peter would later write in his book of 1 Peter 2:21-22, “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His step Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth...” For believers in Jesus Christ, suffering for the gospel is

inevitable. Even Jesus said in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace, in the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.” Opposition to the gospel will produce persecution. And as we are faithful to preach and share the complete gospel message, suffering will follow because often the price for divine duty is affliction by the world. So Paul invites Timothy to participate with him in suffering for the proclamation of the gospel...how?

B. “AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS.” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:3B

Paul leaves no doubt as to how Timothy was to suffer... “as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word for “good” means:

“good” Greek “*kalos*” meaning fine, excellent, heroic, noble.

Paul wasn’t speaking of a soldier just in terms of function or duty here but rather exhorting Timothy that we are to be excellent, heroic and noble soldiers. We are to be the kind of soldiers who would earn medals of valor and honor. Paul is saying to join him in absolute obedience, loyalty, courage and even sacrifice as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Paul uses this metaphor from the military; one that everyone would understand in his day. Soldiers must be willing to suffer, endure and sacrifice and so Christians must always be ready to sacrifice; themselves, their time, their possessions, their own desires for God and for others.²

When a Roman soldier joined the army, he would take what was called the “*sacramentum*” which was the oath of loyalty to his emperor. The supreme virtue of a soldier was they would be faithful even to death.³ Believers must have a single minded devotion to Christ with unflinching loyalty, courage, commitment and absolute obedience to our Commander. This is necessary for effective service. Paul calls on Timothy to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ for there is a war that is raging. It’s a battle for the hearts of men and women!

C. “NO SOLDIER IN ACTIVE SERVICE...” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:4A

Paul then goes even further, reminding believers that all are on the front lines involved in a military campaign for life. We are engaged in active service as a soldier and we are a soldier 24/7. Paul doesn’t want believers to see this as a temporary profession. There is no leave. We are in active service constantly and cannot be found asleep on the front lines.

D. “ENTANGLES HIMSELF IN AFFAIRS OF LIFE” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:4B

Once a soldier enlisted in a campaign, they were forbidden to engage in civilian occupations. If you were a soldier, that’s all you were. The

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reason you must be free is so you could devote all your thought and energy to your duty as a soldier. What does Paul mean by entangled?

“entangled” Greek “*empleko*” means to be wrapped up, entrapped, literally means to weave.

Paul reminds Timothy that he must not be caught up, his life must not be wrapped up with the things of life that will distract him from faithful service to Jesus Christ. All of his life must be for the furtherance of the gospel and not caught up in the affairs of life, avoiding anything that would hinder single minded focus and dedication to Christ. You see, a soldier must be free so that he could devote all his time, thought and energy to the campaign, to the work of the military. Surely Christ’s soldier must be no less devoted to the service of our Commander Jesus Christ. ⁴

Jesus Himself talked about removing all entanglements in Luke 9:57-62. He referred to those whose lives were interwoven with non-essentials; concerned with personal comfort, another wanting to secure his inheritance first, and the final example of the one who was unwilling to give himself entirely devoted to Jesus as Lord. Paul is instructing Timothy to make sure nothing interfered with service to Christ...which is our primary purpose in life. Because we are Christians, we live on the battle front and all things are secondary to winning the battle. Paul summed it up in Philippians 3:13-14; “*This one thing I do...*” Hebrews 12:1 asks this, “*Therefore, since we have a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us...*” Paul was single minded, dedicated, fervent and focused and calls every believer to this kind of faithfulness. ⁵

E. “TO PLEASE THE ONE WHO ENLISTED HIM” – 2 TIMOTHY 2:4C

The ambition of a good soldier was to please his commander. A soldier’s first duty was absolute, unquestioning obedience to his captain coupled with the supreme virtue of loyalty and faithfulness even to death.

The training of a soldier was designed to build unquestionable obedience to the commander. Often a soldier engaged in battle cannot see the overall, big picture and so they must leave the decisions to the commander who see the entire field. It may save their life and the lives of others. So as Christians, our first duty is obedience to Jesus Christ and acceptance even of what is not fully understood. ⁶ We can’t see the whole picture but God does and we must leave the decisions to Him and follow. We have been enlisted by God as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and He is the One we seek to please, obey, and faithfully follow.

We are bound to Christ not just by duty but loyalty and even more...*love!* Our deepest desire must be to please the Lord Jesus Christ Who is our chief Commander. Remember what Matthew 6:24 says? It is impossible to serve two masters...have two commanders. But the temptation is to please people and not the Lord. Pleasing people will demand compromise of God’s truth, God’s standard and personal holiness. It demands forsaking Christ as our first love. Forsaking Christ as our first love is possible and it happens all the time. (Galatians 1:10) But when Christ is our first love; our ambition, our duty, our sole focus and purpose is to be pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:9, 1 Thessalonians 2:4)⁷

In 1 Timothy 1:18, Paul calls on Timothy to fight a fine campaign. Hardship will be inevitable in a world hostile to God. We are engaged in a lifelong battle and struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. But, you be an excellent, heroic and noble soldier seeking to please the One Who enlisted you. Don’t become caught up in the distractions of this life which will crowd out what’s eternally important. Don’t let anything hinder single minded focus and dedication to Jesus Christ. This is how you can be strong in grace and faithful to His calling of you. And one day your greatest joy will be to hear God say,

“Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.”

Matthew 25:21

¹Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.170.

²Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.180.

³Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.180.

⁴Kent, Homer A., Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles*. Moody Publishers, 1926 revised 1958, 1982, 1986 and 2010. Pg. 260.

⁵MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.45.

⁶Barclay, William, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, Kentucky, 1956, revised 1975 and 2003. Pg.179.

⁷MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on 2 Timothy*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.45.