

One Who Endures for the Gospel

2 Timothy 2:1-7 ¹ You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men^[a] who will be able to teach others also. ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. ⁵ Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops. ⁷ Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

INTRODUCTION If one wants to be “*An Approved Servant of the Lord*,” he or she will need to practice faithfulness in their Christian life. We have all be called out of a “**kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His Love.**” (Col. 1:12-14) We must be ones who put a premium on faithfulness. We must realize that we are in “*for the duration.*” The Lord takes us from where we were and, if we are willing to grow, He will provide the resources we need to be equipped for service. This process will involve “*endurance.*”

In **2 Timothy 2:3-7**, Paul uses three simple but powerful images; the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer. He uses them to illustrate some important truths. This first article will center on the “*Soldier of Christ.*”

An Approved Servant of The Lord Is One Who Endures for The Gospel - The Dedicated Soldier

The Dedicated Soldier (2 Tim. 2:3-4). ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in the concerns of civilian life; he seeks to please the commanding officer. One of the many “*pictures*” of the Church in the New Testament is that of a “*soldier.*” The writers of the New Testament, especially the Apostle Paul, used that terminology. Paul and his readers were familiar with the military concept in their lives. There were various degrees of military occupation in the provinces of the Roman Empire in the First Century. Some provinces required more military presence than others. Palestine was one of the most volatile places in the Empire so there was a large military presence there.

The Christian “*soldier*” must, like the Roman soldier avail himself of all the equipment needed to be effective as a soldier. Because of our faith in, and obedience to the Gospel, we are now in the Lord’s Army! Jesus expects us to “**let our light shine**” and use the training we receive to not only help us be better soldiers for Him, but to help others in the same manner.

Charles Wesley wrote, “*Stand then in his great might, with all his strength endured, and take, to arm you for the fight, the panoply of God.*” If we do this, we will fulfill the words of Paul in **2 Tim 2:3-3**. Because we have our eyes on Jesus at all times (**Heb. 12:1-2**), we will not as Paul says, “**get entangled in civilian pursuits.**” One of the songs we sing goes like this: “*More about Jesus I would know, More of His grace to others show; More of His saving fullness see, More of His love who died for me.*”

Christians must strive to be the best soldiers we can be. We can rest assured that our Commander, the Lord Jesus, is leading us by example and is out in the forefront of the battle. He has provided all that we need to fight the spiritual battle. We only need to be willing to “take up the whole armor of God.”

An Approved Servant of The Lord Is One Who Endures for The Gospel - The Disciplined Athlete

2 TIM. 2:5 ⁵ Also, if anyone competes as an athlete, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. If one wants to be “An Approved Servant of the Lord,” he or she will need to practice faithfulness in their Christian life. We have all be called out of a “kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His Love.” (Col. 1:12-14) We must be ones who put a premium on faithfulness. We must realize that we are in “for the duration.” The Lord takes us from where we were and, if we are willing to grow, He will provide the resources we need to be equipped for service. This process will involve “endurance.”

The Disciplined Athlete: (2 Tim. 2:5-6. One of the descriptions of a Christian in the New Testament is that of an athlete. The Apostle Paul uses this terminology often. We read in 2 Tim. 2:5:” An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” Paul writing in 2 Tim 4:7 says that “I have finished the race.” In I Cor. 9:25-27 we read of one who is running a race. John MacArthur writes the following: “The Gr. Verb (*athleo*) expresses the effort and determination needed to compete successfully in an athletic event.”

During the time of Paul, the Greek Games (Olympics) were very prominent and many participated or at least had an interest. Paul used words and phrases that talked about how an athlete prepares himself for his “sport.” Then he makes an application for the Christian.

To participate in the Greek games, one had to be a citizen of the city he lived in. Paul talked about “Christian Citizenship” in Phil. 3:20. The person would have pride in his city or country and would seek to bring honor to it. He would be willing to put in all the training so that he would be at a peak performance state when the games began.

So, it is with the Christian. The participants in the Games were competing for a physical crown, but we, an imperishable or incorruptible crown. Paul wrote in I Cor. 9:25: “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we are imperishable.”

The athlete would put all he had into training and would not let anything hinder him in that area. The Christian must be the same. He or she must equip themselves with everything the Lord has for us. Jesus said he came to give us “the abundant life.” We must keep our eyes on Jesus and according to Titus 2:12 “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

The Christian life is not a bed of roses, rather it is an ongoing life of commitment and steadfastness. In I Cor. 15:58 we read: “Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

Let’s run with endurance the race set before us, always keeping our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2). If we will do that, concentrating on improving our spiritual life daily, we will draw nearer to Jesus! Being a Christian “athlete” will mean you are “growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus!” (2nd Peter 3:18)

An Approved Servant of The Lord Is One Who Endures for The Gospel - The Hard-Working Farmer

The third example in this passage is that of a hard-working farmer. 2 Tim. 2:6. **6 The hardworking farmer ought to be the first to get a share of the crops.**

Farmers must toil every day if they are going to be successful in farming. John MacArthur writes the following, *“Hardworking is from a Gr. verb meaning ‘to labor to the point of exhaustion.’ Paul is urging Timothy not to be lazy or indolent, but to labor intensely with a view to the harvest.”* Paul also reminded the Colossians that he, along with us, need to be striving in the Lord’s work (Col. 1:28-29)

The farmer, as well as the soldier and the athlete must not take any shortcuts in their labor. Just like the farmer we must be laboring in the Lord’s harvest. We must be found sowing, planting, plowing, and monitoring our work. The farmer is one who is always devoted to his work. So, it is with the Christian.

Paul told the Galatians **“we must not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we do not give up”** (Gal. 6:9) We must put all our efforts into learning more about God’s Word and not be lazy in our study of the Bible. We must work hard and believe that God will help us. We must have a heart of humility in our lives. If we labor like a *“hardworking farmer,”* we will see the results in our lives that the Lord wants. We will be the ones who know what we believe and why.