

**2 Timothy 2**  
**May 1, 2022**

**Open with Prayer**

**HOOK:**

We find all kinds of metaphors in the Bible to describe what our journey might look like. We are like pilgrims in a foreign land, we are a priesthood of believers, we are like athletes who run a race for the prize set before us, we are like farmers who sow and reap, and we are like an army. So today, I want us to look through the lens of a soldier in the army.

Q: What do you think makes a “good soldier for Christ?” [Let people engage]

**Transition:** In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he references at least three metaphors to help describe what our journey could look like. Clearly, Timothy is in a position of leadership and growing a church in Ephesus. But I think there is much for us to derive from this passage as a soldier of the army. Let’s read it and learn the characteristics of a good soldier from Paul’s point of view. Let’s begin.

**BOOK:**

<sup>2</sup> You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. <sup>3</sup> Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. <sup>5</sup> Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. <sup>6</sup> The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. <sup>7</sup> Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

<sup>8</sup> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, <sup>9</sup> for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. <sup>10</sup> Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

<sup>11</sup> Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him,  
we will also live with him;

<sup>12</sup> if we endure,  
we will also reign with him.

If we disown him,  
he will also disown us;

<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless,  
he will remain faithful,  
for he cannot disown himself.

**A Workman Approved by God**

<sup>14</sup> Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles

the word of truth. <sup>16</sup> Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. <sup>17</sup> Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup> who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. <sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," (Num 16:5) and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

<sup>20</sup> In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. <sup>21</sup> If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

<sup>22</sup> Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. <sup>23</sup> Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. <sup>24</sup> And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. <sup>25</sup> Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

### **Process Observations/Questions:**

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

- The centrality of the cross – Paul willing to suffer b/c of this
- The ineffectiveness of being drawn into foolish arguments
- The priority of pursuing faith, hope and love
- Emphasis to guard the gospel, the truth, and make sure to keep communicating it
- The Word of God is NEVER CHAINED! It is eternal and can't be snuffed out

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

- Spiritual warfare is alive and well

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

### **LOOK:**

We can see how important and how demanding a work it is. The ministry is no place for a loafer because it demands discipline and work. It is no place for a shirker because there are enemies to fight and tasks to be completed. Church members need to pray for their pastors and encourage them in the work of the Lord.

### **Close in Prayer**

## **Commentaries for Today's Lesson:**

**Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 244–249). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.**

While attending a convention, I noticed a man wearing two name badges. When I asked him why, he replied, “Oh, I’m having an identity crisis!”

Paul did not want Timothy to have an identity crisis, so he carefully explained what a pastor is and does. (Of course, the same principles apply to all Christians.) Paul represented seven pictures of the Christian minister.

### **The Steward (2 Tim. 2:1–2)**

The ministry is not something we get for ourselves and keep to ourselves. We are stewards of the spiritual treasure God has given us. It is our responsibility to guard the deposit and then invest it in the lives of others. They, in turn, are to share the Word with the next generation of believers.

It is important that we get our original treasure from the Word of God, and not from the ideas and philosophies of men. We do not test modern teachers by their popularity, education, or skill. We test them by the Word of God, and particularly the doctrines of grace as given by Paul. It is not we who examine Paul to see if he is right; it is Paul who examines us!

It takes strength to teach the Word of God. We must dig out of the rich mines of Scripture the “gold, silver, precious stones” that are hidden there (see Prov. 2:1–10; 3:13–15; 8:10–21; 1 Cor. 3:10–23). This strength can only come from God’s grace. The secret of Paul’s great ministry was the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10).

The ability to study, understand, and teach the Word of God is a gift of God’s grace. “Apt to teach” is one of God’s requirements for the pastor (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24). “Apt to teach” implies apt to learn; so a steward must also be a diligent student of the Word of God.

### **The Soldier (2 Tim. 2:3–4, 8–13)**

Paul often used military illustrations in his letters. This is not surprising since he lived in a military state and was in prison himself. He described in these verses the characteristics of a “good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

***He endures hardship (v. 3).*** Many people have the idea that the ministry is a soft job. Preachers are often the butt of jokes that suggest they are lazy and should be ashamed of accepting their salaries. But a dedicated Christian minister is in a battle that requires spiritual endurance (see Eph. 6:10ff).

***He avoids worldly entanglements (v. 4).*** He is totally committed to his Commanding Officer, the One who enlisted him. In our case, this is Jesus Christ. I recall a story about a Civil War soldier who happened to be a watchmaker. One day the bugle sounded and the men were told to break camp. “But I can’t go now!” the soldier complained. “I have a dozen watches to repair!”

It is sometimes necessary for a pastor, or a pastor’s wife, to be employed because their church is not able to support them. This is a sacrifice on their part and an investment in the work. But a pastor who is fully supported should not get involved in sidelines that divide his interest and weaken his ministry. I have met pastors who spend more time on their real estate ventures than on their churches. Our purpose is to please the Lord, not ourselves.

***He magnifies Jesus Christ (vv. 8–9).*** “Remember Jesus Christ!” is the way this phrase should be translated. It sounds almost like a war cry, like “Remember the Alamo!” or “Remember Pearl Harbor!” Jesus is the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), and our purpose is to bring honor and glory to Him. What an encouragement Jesus Christ is to a suffering Christian soldier! For He died and rose again, proving that suffering leads to glory, and that seeming defeat leads to victory. Jesus was treated as an evildoer, and His soldiers will be treated the same way.

The best way to magnify Christ is through the ministry of the Word. Paul was bound, but God’s Word cannot be bound. “His Word runneth very swiftly” (Ps. 147:15). “The Word of God grew and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).

***He thinks of the whole army (v. 10).*** “The elect” are God’s people, chosen by His grace and called by His Spirit (2 Thes. 2:13–14). Paul not only suffered for the Lord’s sake, but he also suffered for the sake of the church. There were yet many people to reach with the Gospel, and Paul wanted to help reach them. A soldier who thinks only of himself is disloyal and undependable.

***He trusts his Commanding Officer (vv. 11–13).*** This “faithful saying” is probably part of an early statement of faith recited by believers. (For other “faithful sayings” in the pastoral letters, see 1 Tim. 1:15; 4:9; and Titus 3:8.) It is faith in Jesus Christ that gives us victory (1 John 5:4). We do not fear the enemies, for He has already conquered them. Through our identification with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection, we have won the victory (see Rom. 6).

What a pair of paradoxes! Death leads to life! Suffering leads to reigning in glory! We have nothing to fear! The important thing is that we not “disown” our Lord; for if we disown Him here, He will disown us before the Father (Matt. 10:33). In that great “roll call” in glory, when the “medals” are given out, we will lose our reward if we disown His name.

But Paul makes it clear (2 Tim. 2:13) that even our own doubt and unbelief cannot change Him: “He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” We do not put faith in our faith or in our feelings because they will change and fail. We put our faith in Christ. The great missionary, J. Hudson Taylor, often said, “It is not by trying to be faithful, but in looking to the Faithful One, that we win the victory.”

### **The Athlete (2 Tim. 2:5)**

Paul sometimes used athletic illustrations in his writings—wrestling, boxing, running, and exercising. The Greeks and the Romans were enthusiastic about sports, and the Olympic and Isthmian games were important events to them. Paul had already urged Timothy to exercise like an athlete (1 Tim. 4:7–8). Now Paul admonished him to obey the rules.

A person who strives as an athlete to win a game and get a crown must be careful to obey all the rules of the game. In the Greek games in particular, the judges were most careful about enforcing the rules. Each competitor had to be a citizen of his nation, with a good reputation. In his preparations for the event, he had to follow specific standards. If an athlete was found defective in any matter, he was disqualified from competing. If, after he had competed and won, he was found to have broken some rule, he then lost his crown. Jim Thorpe, a great American athlete, lost his Olympic medals because he participated in sports in a way that broke an Olympic rule.

From the human point of view, Paul was a loser. There was nobody in the grandstands cheering him, for “all they which are in Asia” had turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). He was in prison, suffering as an evildoer. Yet, *Paul was a winner!* He had kept the rules laid down in the Word of God, and one day he would get his reward from Jesus Christ. Paul was saying to

young Timothy, “The important thing is that you obey the Word of God, no matter what people may say. You are not running the race to please people or to get fame. You are running to please Jesus Christ.”

### **The Farmer (2 Tim. 2:6–7)**

This is another favorite image found in Paul’s letters. Paul once compared the local church to a cultivated field in which all the believers worked together (1 Cor. 3:5–9). Each Christian has his particular task to perform—plowing, sowing, watering, or harvesting—but it is God alone who gives the increase.

Several practical truths are found in this image of the farmer and field. For one thing, *a farmer has to work*. If you leave a field to itself, it will produce mostly weeds. Solomon had this truth in mind when he wrote about the field of the sluggard (Prov. 24:30–34). Real ministry is hard work, and a pastor (and church members) ought to work in their spiritual field as diligently as a farmer works in his field. Pastors do not punch clocks, but they ought to be up in the morning and at their work just as if God blew a whistle for them.

*A farmer needs patience*. “See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the fall and spring rains” (James 5:7, NIV). A pastor friend of mine often reminds me, “The harvest is not the end of the meeting—it is the end of the age.”

*A farmer deserves his share of the harvest*. “The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops” (2 Tim. 2:6, NIV). Paul is stating here that a faithful pastor ought to be supported by his church. The same idea is found in 1 Corinthians 9:7, where Paul used a soldier, a farmer, and a herdsman to prove his point: “The laborer is worthy of his reward” (1 Tim. 5:18). Paul deliberately gave up his right to ask for support so that nobody could accuse him of using the Gospel for personal gain (1 Cor. 9:14ff). But this policy is not required for all of God’s servants.

As a local church grows and progresses, the people ought to faithfully increase their support of their pastors and other staff members. “If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?” (1 Cor. 9:11, NIV) It is sad to see the way some local churches waste money and fail to care for their own laborers. God will honor a church that honors His faithful servants.

Something else is true in this image of the farmer: The spiritual leaders who share the Word with the people are the first ones to enjoy its blessings. The preacher and the teacher always get more out of the sermon or lesson than do the hearers because they put much more into it. They also get great joy out of seeing planted seeds bear fruit in the lives of others. Farming is hard work, and it can have many disappointments; but the rewards are worth it.

### **The Workman (2 Tim. 2:14–18)**

The word *study* (2 Tim. 2:15) has nothing to do with books and teachers. It means “to be diligent, be zealous.” It is translated in this way in 2 Timothy 4:9, 21, and also in Titus 3:12. The emphasis in this paragraph is that the workman needs to be diligent in his labors so that he will not be ashamed when his work is inspected. “Rightly dividing” means “cutting straight” and can be applied to many different tasks: plowing a straight furrow, cutting a straight board, sewing a straight seam.

The pastor is a workman in God’s Word. The Word is a treasure that the steward must guard and invest. It is the soldier’s sword and the farmer’s seed. But it is also the workman’s tool for

building, measuring, and repairing God's people. The preacher and teacher who use the Word correctly will build their church the way God wants it to be built. But a sloppy worker will handle God's Word deceitfully in order to make it say what he wants it to say (2 Cor. 4:2). When God tests our ministries in His local churches, some of it, sad to say, will become ashes (1 Cor. 3:10ff).

An approved worker diligently studies the Word and seeks to apply it to his own life. An ashamed worker wastes his time with other "religious duties" and has little or nothing to give his class or congregation. An approved worker does not waste his time arguing about "words to no profit" (2 Tim. 2:14) because he knows that such arguing only undermines God's work (see 1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:9).

An approved workman will shun "godless chatter" (2 Tim. 2:16, NIV; and see 1 Tim. 6:20), because he knows it only leads to more ungodliness. I fear that some "sharing times" do more harm than good as well-meaning people exchange their "spiritual ignorance."

An approved workman knows that false doctrine is dangerous, and he will oppose it. Paul compared it to gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17). Much as gangrene spreads, infects, and kills other tissue, so false doctrine spreads and infects the body of believers, the church. This infection must be exposed and removed. Only the "sound [healthy] doctrine" of the Word of God can keep a church healthy and growing.

Paul named two men who were false teachers, and he also identified their error. It is likely that the Hymenaeus named here (2 Tim. 2:17) is the same man named in 1 Timothy 1:20. We know nothing about his associate, Philetus. Both of them "wandered from the truth" by teaching that the resurrection had already taken place. Perhaps they taught that salvation is resurrection in a spiritual sense, so a believer must not expect a physical resurrection. But the denial of a physical resurrection is a serious thing (see 1 Cor. 15:12ff), for it involves the resurrection of Christ and the completion of God's plan of salvation for His people. No wonder these false teachers were able to "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18). The Resurrection is a foundational truth of the Gospel.

Each of us as God's workman will be either *approved* or *ashamed*. The word *approved* means "one who has been tested and found acceptable." The word was used for testing and approving metals. Each trial that we go through forces us to study the Word to find God's will. As we rightly use the Word, we succeed in overcoming our trials, and we are approved by God. Martin Luther once said that prayer, study, and suffering make a pastor; and this is true. We cannot be approved unless we are tested.

What does it mean to be "ashamed"? Certainly, it means that such a workman's work is below standard and cannot be accepted. It means loss of reward. In fact, in Paul's day, a builder was fined if he failed to follow the specifications. When the Lord judges our works, it will be revealed whether we as workmen have handled the Word of God honestly and carefully. Some who are now first will end up last!

### **The Vessel (2 Tim. 2:19–22)**

In this illustration, Paul described a "great house," which is the professing church. The *foundation* of the house is safe and secure because God's seal is on it. (In the Bible, a seal is a mark of ownership and security. No one would dare break a Roman seal.) Paul quoted Moses: "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (Num. 16:5). This refers to the Godward aspect of the Christian life: God chose us who trust Him as His elect (see 2 Tim. 2:10).

But there is also a manward aspect of the Christian life: “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19). This refers back to Numbers 16:26, where the Lord warned the people to get away from the tents of Korah and the rebels. In other words, those who are the elect of God prove it by living godly lives. We are chosen in Christ “that we should be holy and without blame” (Eph. 1:4).

This great house not only has a solid foundation that is sealed, but it also has vessels (utensils of various kinds) for performing household functions. Paul divides the utensils into two categories: those of honor (gold and silver) and those of dishonor (wood and clay). He is not distinguishing between kinds of Christians, but rather is making a distinction between true teachers of the Word and the false teachers he described (2 Tim. 2:16–18). A faithful pastor is like a gold or silver vessel that brings honor to Jesus Christ. The head of a house displays his costliest and most beautiful utensils and gets honor from them. I remember the first time I viewed the crown jewels of England in the Tower of London, along with the priceless table vessels and utensils. I was overwhelmed with their glory and beauty. That is the kind of beauty God gives to his servants who faithfully handle the Word of God.

False teachers are not valuable; they are like wood and clay. They are utensils to dishonor, no matter how popular they may be today. Wood and clay will not survive the test of fire. It is worth noting that the name *Timothy* comes from two Greek words which together mean “God-honoring.” Paul was encouraging Timothy to live up to his name!

The important thing is that the honorable vessels not be contaminated by the dishonorable ones. The word “these” (2 Tim. 2:21) refers to the vessels of dishonor (2 Tim. 2:20). Paul is admonishing Timothy to separate himself from false teachers. If he does, then God will honor him, set him apart, and equip him for service. “Useful to the Master” (2 Tim. 2:21, NIV)—what a tremendous honor that is! A useful human vessel of honor does not get involved in the popular things of the world, even the “religious world.” He must remain holy, and this means he must be separated from everything that would defile him.

This includes the sins of the flesh as well (2 Tim. 2:22). Paul used a similar admonition in 1 Timothy 6:11–12—“Flee ... follow ... fight.” True Bible separation is balanced: we flee sin, but we follow after righteousness. If we are not balanced, then we will be isolated instead of separated. In fact, God’s man Paul commands us to fellowship “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). After all, this is the purpose of the ministry of the Word (1 Tim. 1:5). It is sad when true believers are isolated because of a false view of separation.

For God to be able to use us as vessels, we must be empty, clean, and available. He will take us and fill us and use us for His glory. But if we are filled with sin or defiled by disobedience, He will first have to purge us; and that might not be an enjoyable experience. In the “great house” of the professing church, there are true believers and false. We must exercise spiritual discernment and be careful that we are vessels sanctified unto honor.

### **The Servant (2 Tim. 2:23–26)**

“Servant” (2 Tim. 2:24) is the Greek word *doulos* which means “slave.” So Paul called himself “a slave of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1). A slave had no will of his own; he was totally under the command of his master. Once, we Christians were the slaves of sin, but now we are the slaves of God (Rom. 6:16ff). Like the servant in Old Testament days, we say, “I love my master ... I will not go out free” (Ex. 21:5).

God’s slave does not have an easy time teaching the Word. Satan opposes him and tries to trap his listeners (2 Tim. 2:26). Also, some people are just naturally difficult to teach. They enjoy

“foolish and stupid arguments” (2 Tim. 2:23, NIV) and have no desire to feed on the nourishing Word of God. Until you have experienced it, you have no idea how difficult it is to impart spiritual truth to some people.

How easy it would be to ignore them! But then Satan would get them. Paul admonished Timothy to avoid the arguments that create strifes, but not to ignore the people. He must not argue or fight. He must be patient and gentle, teaching the Word of God in meekness. It is not enough just to expose error and refute it; we must also teach positive truths and establish the saints in faith.

A servant of God must instruct those who oppose him, for this is the only way he can rescue them from Satan’s captivity. Satan is a liar (John 8:44). He captures people by his lying promises, as he did Eve (see Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:3). A servant’s purpose is not to win arguments but to win souls. He wants to see deceived persons brought to repentance (“I was wrong—I have changed my mind”) and the acknowledging of the truth.

The word *recover* (2 Tim. 2:26) describes a man coming out of a drunken stupor. Satan makes people drunk with his lies, and the servant’s task is to sober them up and rescue them. The last phrase in 2 Timothy 2:26 can be interpreted three ways: (1) they are delivered from the snare of the devil who took them captive to do his will; (2) they are taken captive by God’s servant to do God’s will; (3) they are delivered out of the snare of the devil, who took them captive, to do God’s will. I prefer the third interpretation.

As you survey these seven aspects of the work of the ministry, you can see how important and how demanding a work it is. The ministry is no place for a loafer because it demands discipline and work. It is no place for a shirker because there are enemies to fight and tasks to be completed.

Church members need to pray for their pastors and encourage them in the work of the Lord. Church officers should faithfully do their work so that the pastors can devote themselves to their own ministry (see Acts 6:1–7). Churches should provide enough financial support for the ministers so that they can fully devote themselves to the work of the ministry.

In other words, ministers and members should labor together in the work of the Lord.

**Litfin, A. D. (1985). 1 Timothy. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 2, pp. 752-756) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books**

### **III. Challenge to Endurance (2:1–13).**

#### *A. Enduring hardship for Christ (2:1–7).*

2:1. After the reminders of Timothy’s ordination, his own example, and that of others, Paul addressed Timothy with a direct application: **You then, my son** (*teknon*, “child,” an endearing term), **be strong** (lit. “be empowered”; cf. Eph. 6:10). Yet Timothy’s strength was not his own; it was a divine “gift” (**grace**, *charis*) found only **in Christ** (Phil. 4:13).

2:2. Traveling with Paul, Timothy had **heard** the apostle address scores of diverse audiences. Among all those groups the essence of Paul’s message had not changed. It was the same body of truth Paul had taught Timothy personally. Now, with the apostle nearing the end of his own ministry, what Timothy had heard from Paul he was in turn to **entrust** (cf. 1:14) **to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others** (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:9). This has come to be called



“the ministry of multiplication,” and it is God’s method for propagating the good news of Jesus Christ.

2:3–4. Such faithfulness to God’s truth would inevitably involve Timothy in suffering, even as it had Paul. Thus, without varnishing Timothy’s prospects the mentor once again called his *protégé* to share in **hardship** or suffering (cf. 1:8 for the same word used only in these two places: *synkakopathēson*, “to suffer hardship with someone”; also cf. 4:5) for the sake of Christ (cf. John 15:18–20). Paul introduced three common illustrations to emphasize his point (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7, 24 for the same three): **a ... soldier**, an athlete, and a farmer (2 Tim. 2:3–6). Military images were common in Paul’s thought (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18), no doubt because the word pictures were familiar to his readers (cf. Rom. 6:13 [“instruments” can be translated “weapons”]; Rom. 7:23; 1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 6:11–18; Phil. 2:25; Phile. 2). A Roman soldier’s single-minded purpose, rigorous discipline, and unquestioning obedience to **his commanding officer** combine to make the figure of a soldier an apt one for a servant of the gospel.

2:5. With a quick change of metaphor Paul switched to **an athlete**. The thought here is similar to 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 (and Heb. 12:1–2). **According to the rules** translates *nomimōs* (lit., “lawfully”). The metaphor clearly draws on athletic games such as the Olympics, but do “the rules” refer to the regulations governing each event or to those governing the training of those qualified to take part? Competitors in the Olympic games, for example, were required to swear that they had trained diligently for at least 10 months. Though the second is in some ways easier to explain, the first is required by Paul’s grammar, which suggests that the issue is not whether one is qualified to compete but, among those competing, who will win the **crown**. Every athletic event has its boundaries, its rules; moreover, all who fail to discipline themselves to observe these rules are disqualified. Paul wanted Timothy to run so as to win the crown (cf. 2 Tim. 4:7–8) and not be disqualified. This requires a Christian to have strong qualities of discipline, self-control, endurance, and a certain toughness.

2:6. The final image is that of a **farmer**. The language puts an emphasis on the word **hardworking**, in contrast with idle, lazy workers. The diligence Paul has just described in each case has its reward (cf. vv. 11–12): A diligent soldier gains the approval of his commanding officer; a diligent athlete wins the victory; a diligent farmer wins **the first ... share of the crops**. The three illustrations have in common the point that success is achieved through discipline (cf. 1:7), hard work, and single-mindedness.

2:7. Paul appealed to Timothy to **reflect on what I am saying**, confident that with meditation and contemplation **the Lord** would grant the young man the **insight** (*synesin*, lit., “understanding”) **into** the wisdom of Paul’s instructions (cf. James 1:5).

#### *B. Christ’s example of endurance (2:8–10).*

2:8. Paul rather abruptly introduced the ultimate example of endurance leading to success: **Jesus Christ** (cf. Heb. 12:2–3). The words **raised from the dead, descended from David** may represent a fragment of some familiar creed or catechetical formula (cf. Rom. 1:3–4). The purpose of the fleeting reference is not to expound, but simply to suggest to Timothy a rich subject for his meditation (2 Tim. 2:7), the place of suffering in the life of God’s servant (cf. 1 Peter 2:19–24). The quick reference to Jesus’ identity (via His ancestral line) and resurrection represents only a portion of Paul’s **gospel**, of course, but a central one. The Gospel writers and the messages of the apostles in Acts address both Christ’s lineage and His resurrection in great detail.

2:9–10. Preaching the good news about the crucified but resurrected Son of David was what had landed Paul in a Roman jail. Much of the Book of Acts catalogs Paul’s suffering for the cause of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:23–33 for a summary). With every move as he wrote or dictated this letter, the clinking iron reminded him that he was **chained like a criminal** (*kakourgos*, lit., “evildoer”). But though he was chained, **God’s Word is not chained** (Paul equated “my gospel” with “God’s Word”; cf. 1 Thes. 2:13; 2 Thes. 3:1). God would continue to use it through Timothy, and those to whom Timothy entrusted it. Paul’s apparent shame and impotence should be no cause for alarm, discouragement, or faintheartedness. God’s Word accomplishes its purpose of calling out God’s people, **the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory**. If this process required **suffering** from Paul, so be it. He was willing to **endure** (*hypomenō*, “be steadfast under”; cf. 2 Tim. 2:12) **everything for the sake of** “the chosen ones” (*tous eklektous*; cf. Col. 3:12; Titus 1:1). The contrast with Paul’s original, natural sentiments could not be more stark (cf. Acts 22:4; 26:9–11; 1 Tim. 1:13), giving full meaning to the apostle’s words in 1 Timothy 1:14. The greatest enemy of the saints became their greatest friend, all as a result of the gracious outpouring of Christ’s love into his heart.

### C. A faithful saying (2:11–13).

2:11–13. Once more Paul used the trustworthy-saying formula, so common in the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; Titus 3:8), to introduce a quotation. The formula serves to place Paul’s stamp of approval on the content of the quotation, which may have been part of a baptismal ceremony. The quotation sets forth four couplets, the first two of which are positive: (1) **If we died with Him, we will also live with Him** expresses the idea so powerfully portrayed in the rite of baptism and explained in Romans 6:2–23. The reference is not to martyrdom for Christ, but rather to a believer’s mystical identification with the death and life of Christ (cf. Col. 3:3). (2) **If we endure** (*hypomenomen*; cf. 2 Tim. 2:10), **we will also reign with Him** furthers the believer’s identification with Christ. In the previous couplet the focus is on the contrast between death and life; here the parallel contrast is between suffering and glorification (Rom. 8:17). Christ endured and will one day reign (1 Cor. 15:25), and those saints who endure will one day reign with Him (Rev. 3:21). The last two couplets are negative: (3) **If we disown Him, He will also disown us** speaks of the possibility of apostasy (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 10:38–39; 2 John 9) and the Lord’s ultimate rejection of those who professed Christ only temporarily (cf. Matt. 10:33). Instead of identifying with Christ, the apostate finally dissociates himself with Christ. (4) **If we are faithless, He will remain faithful** speaks not of the apostate, but of a true child of God who nevertheless proves unfaithful (cf. 2 Tim. 1:15). Christ **cannot disown Himself**; therefore He will not deny even unprofitable members of His own body. True children of God cannot become something other than children, even when disobedient and weak. Christ’s faithfulness to Christians is not contingent on their faithfulness to Him. The significance of these couplets could hardly have been lost on Timothy.

## IV. Marks of a Good Workman (2:14–26).

### A. Faithfulness in ministry (2:14–19).

2:14. The instruction of the previous verses was not for Timothy only. Timothy was to **keep reminding** others of **these things**. The verb is a present imperative, which means that this was to be Timothy’s regular practice. The bulk of preaching to a knowledgeable audience frequently

consists of reminding them of what they already know. In the case of the Christians at Ephesus, they were to be solemnly charged in the presence of God (cf. 1 Tim. 5:21) to avoid **quarreling about words** (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3–4; 4:7; 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:9), a tendency in the early church (cf. Acts 18:15). Such wrangling **is of no value**, but worse, actually **ruins those who listen** (cf. 2 Tim. 2:16, 18; 3:6). The destructiveness, but especially the worthlessness, of false teaching is a recurrent note in the Pastorals.

2:15. As for Timothy, he was to **do his best** (lit., “be zealous”) to be sure he would meet with God’s approval, a “laborer” (*ergatēn*; cf. Matt. 20:1, 8) **who does not need to be ashamed**. Paul had spoken of shame before men (2 Tim. 1:8, 12, 16); far worse is shame before God. Timothy need not fear such shame if he would **correctly handle the Word of truth** (cf. Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; James 1:18), which for him included both Old Testament Scripture and what he had heard orally from Paul. The Greek *orthotomounta*, “correctly handling,” found only here and in the Septuagint in Proverbs 3:6 and 11:5, means literally “to cut straight,” but just what image Paul had in mind here is uncertain. Stone masons, plowers, road builders, tentmakers, and (least likely of all) surgeons have all been suggested, but a firm conclusion remains elusive. What is clear is that the shame of God’s disapproval awaits those who mishandle His Word.

2:16–18. Timothy was to **avoid godless chatter** (lit., “shun profane empty utterances”; cf. 1 Tim. 6:20) which only advances ungodliness like **gangrene** (*gangraina*). (Such godless chatter contrasts with “the Word of truth” [2 Tim. 2:15] and “the truth” [v. 18].) The medical image is striking. Participating with those who engage in such profane speculations will only, literally, “give their words a feeding place like gangrene.” They must be amputated instead. Two who deserved such treatment were **Philetus** about whom nothing is known, and **Hymenaeus**, whom Paul had already “delivered over to Satan” for chastisement (1 Tim. 1:20). These two had **wandered away from the truth** (lit., “concerning the truth missed the mark”; cf. 1 Tim. 1:6; 6:21) regarding the crucial doctrine of **the resurrection**. Greek philosophers typically viewed the soul as immortal and the body as its temporal prison. The idea of the physical resurrection of the body, both Christ’s and the Christians’, was therefore foreign and difficult for them to grasp. Hence there was a natural tendency toward heresies which rejected bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15; Acts 17:32). The heresy of Philetus and Hymenaeus probably involved the idea that resurrection was a purely spiritual affair which occurred at conversion or baptism. But bodily resurrection is the keystone of Christian doctrine, as Paul showed (1 Cor. 15). Without it, the entire edifice of the gospel collapses. Little wonder then that Paul said that these two false teachers **destroy the faith of some** (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19).

2:19. Yet the defection of these two, and their followers, must not shake Timothy’s confidence. **God’s solid foundation** (i.e., the church; cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–15; Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Tim. 3:15) **stands firm**, with two inscriptions as a “seal” to indicate the structure’s authenticity and integrity (cf. Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 9:2). The first is a reference to the rebellion of Korah in which the Lord differentiated between the true and the false (Num. 16:5; cf. Jude 11). The second inscription is possibly a loose reference to Numbers 16:26 or more likely some other Old Testament passage such as Isaiah 52:11. The two inscriptions emphasize respectively both God’s sovereign control over the church and every Christian’s responsibility to turn away from evil. Thus Timothy did not need to fear for the destiny of God’s work, but he was to make every effort to keep himself free from the contamination of the false teachers.

*B. A clean instrument (2:20–21).*

2:20–21. Paul furthered his point about noncontamination by introducing a new but similar metaphor. The image changes from a building to a household (cf. 1 Tim. 3:5, 15). In a **large** and varied household are all sorts of containers. Some are made of **gold and silver** and others of **wood and clay**. More importantly, **some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble**. Clearly the reference so far is to the faithful and the unfaithful within the church. But Paul then shifted the metaphor slightly to show how one can **be an instrument for noble purposes**, by cleansing **himself from the ignoble vessels**. The metaphor is somewhat mixed (one would usually think of cleansing from corruption, not cleansing from the corrupted vessels), but the apostle’s point is clear: Timothy was to have nothing to do with the false teachers. In this way he would be a vessel: (1) “for noble purposes” (“unto honor,” *timēn*), (2) **made holy** (“set apart”), (3) **useful** (“serviceable”) **to the Master, and (4) prepared to do any good work** (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16). What is clean and set apart for special use can easily get contaminated and be rendered unusable through contact with the corrupt. Paul was concerned that Timothy, his choicest disciple, keep himself in a usable condition for the Lord.

### C. Faithfulness in conduct (2:22–26).

2:22–23. Timothy was still a young man (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12), and even though he was probably mature beyond his years, he might have still displayed some of the characteristics and passions of the young: impatience, intolerance, love of argument, self-assertion, partiality. Timothy was to **flee the evil desires of youth** (probably Paul did not have sexual passions in mind here, at least not primarily), **and pursue** the opposite virtues: **righteousness, faith, love** (cf. 1 Tim. 6:11 for the same trio), **and peace**. The NIV wrongly places a comma after “peace”—the phrase should read straight through: “peace” **along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart** (cf. “pure heart” in 1 Tim. 1:5). While Timothy must oppose the false teachers, he was to be at peace with his brethren who were honest before God. The clear implication is that the false teachers were dishonest before God (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5; 4:2; 6:3–5). Timothy must refuse to get caught up in **foolish and stupid arguments** (*zētēseis*, “debates”; cf. 1 Tim. 6:4; Titus 3:9) which only **produce quarrels**.

2:24–26. False teaching will always be divisive, but **the Lord’s servant** should **not** be a fighter but a promoter of unity, by being **kind** (“gentle”) **to everyone** (cf. 1 Thes. 2:7), **able** or ready **to teach** (cf. 1 Tim. 3:2) those who are willing to learn, and forbearing in the face of differences (*anexikakon*, lit., “ready to bear evil treatment without resentment”; used only here in the NT). He must treat even his opponents with gentle instruction characterized by “meekness,” **in the hope that God will grant them repentance** (“a change of heart and conduct”) **leading them to a knowledge** (*epignōsin*, “full knowledge”; cf. Col. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:7) **of the truth**. The goal is always remedial, never punitive, when dealing with brethren (cf. 2 Thes. 3:6, 15). The purpose must always be to edify Christ’s body, not tear it down (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26). Thus when brethren fall into false teaching they must be treated with gentleness and Christian love in the hope **that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil** (cf. Gal. 5:1; 1 Tim. 3:7; 6:9) **who has taken them captive to do his will**. False teaching and all its negative consequences in the church are always the handiwork of Satan, but God in His grace often salvages the situation through the Christlike ministry of His servants.

**Dockery, D. S. (1998). The Pauline Letters. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 608). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.**

## **BE STRONG (2:1–13)**

In this section Paul provided special advice to Timothy. After exhorting Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, Paul declared his frequent message about preserving and passing on the truth.

Paul gave three examples for Timothy to follow: (1) a soldier who wants to please his commander, (2) an athlete who follows the rules of the game, and (3) a farmer who toils faithfully. The three figures of speech used here are found in 1 Corinthians 9:6, 24–27. Paul encouraged Timothy to faithful devotion and self-discipline in his service for the Lord. Again the apostle’s exhortations were grounded in his own experience of suffering.

## **FALSE TEACHERS (2:14–26)**

Paul then offered advice regarding false teachers in the church. Positively, he urged Timothy to be an unashamed workman. Negatively, Timothy was to avoid godless chatter. Paul contrasted true and false teachers, noble and ignoble vessels, and the kind and the quarrelsome.

Not only was Timothy to refute the heretical teachers, but he also was to practice and encourage godly behavior and attitudes. Paul concluded this section by saying that a good minister must gently instruct “those who oppose him” so that God might grant them a “change of heart.”

***Fields, W. C. (1972). 1 Timothy. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher’s Bible Commentary (p. 767). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.***

## **Courage and Faith in Hardships (2 Tim. 2:1–13)**

In both letters to him there is an inference that Timothy may be hampered by timidity. Trouble is coming for him, however. He must be strong for the task of passing on the gospel to others. They in turn will do the same thing in an endless chain of witness (vv. 1–2).

Timothy will need the discipline of a good soldier (vv. 3–4), a winning athlete (v. 5), and a successful farmer (v. 6). God’s power cannot be imprisoned or destroyed, therefore Paul has found strength to endure whatever happens. He commends this kind of confidence to Timothy (vv. 7–10). Paul apparently quotes a hymn or series of familiar sayings among the Christians (vv. 11–13). They emphasize God’s faithfulness in all circumstances.

## **An Approved Worker (2 Tim. 2:14–26)**

Paul sets down seven imperatives. They are for Timothy and those whom he will train to be leaders of the church. These are important rules of conduct which he commends to them.

1. Don’t fight over words. Hairsplitting discussions are unproductive (v. 14).
2. Work hard for God’s approval of you. Be an accurate teacher (v. 15).
3. Avoid profane, foolish discussions. They drive people away from God (v. 16).

Paul condemns such empty, irreverent activities. They are like open sores. He cites the example of two men. They were erroneously teaching that the resurrection had already passed (vv. 16–18). But such false teachers cannot destroy the foundation God has laid. God knows who are his own (v. 19). It should come as no surprise, however, that the church, like a household, has

a mixture of vessels that vary in their usefulness (v. 20). Each vessel of Christ must separate himself from defilement and strive to be a useful vessel (v. 21). He resumes his rules of conduct.

4. “Avoid the passions of youth” (v. 22, TEV).

5. “Strive for righteousness, faith, love, and peace” (v. 22, TEV).

6. Stay away from foolish, contentious arguments (v. 23).

7. Don’t quarrel. Instead, be kind and gentle, a patient teacher who helps those in error to return to their senses (vv. 24–26).

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (2 Tim 2). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.**

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