

2 Timothy - Part 9

by John Hunter

This sermon explores the themes of loyalty, discipline, and reward in Christian service through the metaphors of a soldier, athlete, and farmer.

Duration: 32:03

Scripture: 2 Timothy 2:2-6, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Timothy 2:21, 2 Timothy 2:24

Topics: "Christian Service", "Spiritual Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the metaphors used by Paul in 2 Timothy chapter 2 to teach about service to God. The metaphors include the faithful steward, the dedicated soldier, the obedient athlete, the industrious farmer, the skilled workman, the sanctified vessel, and the gentle servant. The speaker emphasizes that these metaphors represent different aspects of service and the motives behind it. He highlights the importance of absolute loyalty, observing the rules, and toiling energetically in serving the Lord. The sermon concludes with a reminder that time is running out and there is much work to be done in serving God.

Transcript

Verse 3, please. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead, according to my gospel, wherein I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful thing.

For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us.

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself. Last night we saw that chapter 2 was divided into 3. Verses 1 and 2 we dealt with last night on the chain of teaching. Paul committing to

Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, faithful men to others.

The passage that we have read tonight, verses 3 to 13, bring before us hardship, suffering and reward. Verses 14 to 26, bring before us the servant of God and doctrinal error, that is, how he meets it in his ministry. As well as his attitude toward those who teach it.

I drew attention last night too broadly on chapter 2, that Paul uses 7 metaphors, around which if you cared in one address, you could bring forward the whole teaching of the chapter. Verse 2, the faithful steward. Verses 3 and 4, the dedicated soldier.

Verse 5, the obedient athlete. Verse 6, the industrious farmer. Verse 15, the skilled workman.

Verse 21, the sanctified vessel. Verse 24, the gentle servant. We'll go over them again later for you after the meeting if you want.

Now, let's come back again please now William. And no matter how you deal with verses 3 to 13, that is, no matter how you break it up, you must take account of the three metaphors of the soldier, the athlete and the farmer. So that in verses 3 to 7, you have figures of service.

The figure of a soldier, an athlete, a farmer. Figures of service. Verses 8 to 13, you have motives for service.

Verse 8, remember Jesus Christ. Verses 9 and 10, the sufferings of Paul. Verses 11 to 13, the future reward.

Motives for serving. Not perchance that as you serve you might ever think of reward. I've no doubt at all that every true servant gives little thought of reward.

But the scriptures are full that there's a day of recompense coming for how you have served the Lord. Verses 3 and 4, the soldier of Christ. Verse 5, the athlete of Christ.

Verse 6, the worker, the toiler of Christ. Verse 9, the criminal of Christ. Treated like a criminal.

Tremendous, isn't it? Now, please, let us come now for a few moments to deal with the three metaphors of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. Now would you allow me please to approach it broadly and set it out in relation to the three before I touch them individually. Now listen carefully.

The soldier, the athlete, the farmer. The leading idea in the soldier, absolute loyalty. The leading idea in the athlete, observing the rules.

The leading idea in the farmer, toiling energetically. The soldier, leading idea, absolute loyalty. So he serves in relation to the will of the Lord.

He carries out his will as a soldier, carries out the will of the commander. The athlete, leading idea, observing the rules. He serves in relation to the word of the Lord.

That's his rule book. The farmer, he toils energetically, so therefore he serves in relation to the work of the Lord. Come again.

The soldier, absolute loyalty, serving in relation to the will of the Lord. His enemy is the world. No man that worth entangleth himself with the affairs of this world.

The athlete, observing the rules, serving in relation to the word of the Lord. His enemy is the devil. He'll get him to break the rules so that he's disobedient.

The farmer, toiling energetically, serving in relation to the work of the Lord. His enemy is the flesh. Take it a wee bit easy.

No need to work so hard. Come again. The soldier, absolute loyalty, serving in relation to the will of the Lord.

His enemy is the world. Therefore life to him is a campaign. The athlete, observing the rules, serving in relation to the word of the Lord.

Having to meet his enemy, the devil. Then life to him is a contest. To the farmer, toiling energetically, serving in relation to the work of the Lord.

His enemy is the flesh. Life to him is a field of labor. If the soldier serves as he ought to serve, then there will be recompense, as it pleases him who hath called him.

If the athlete serves, carries on the contest, in the game, so to speak, and observes the rules, he'll win the prize. He'll receive the crown. If the farmer, toiling energetically, does it, as he ought to do his job, and serves in a field of labor for God and Christ, then he'll partake of the fruits of his labor.

The laboring husbandman shall first partake of the fruits. Now, let's come to, very briefly, to the soldier. The primary idea in a soldier is loyalty.

Now, what makes a man a soldier, normally? Now, it's not the uniform, while he looks good in the uniform. What makes a man a soldier is his oath of loyalty to the Sovereign. You and I will understand that in coming into this great business of living for Christ, we have taken an oath of loyalty to the Sovereign.

I think I've said before, we do suffer a little from defective gospel preaching. This idea of coming to Jesus now, and later on recognizing Him as Lord, is not New Testament preaching. Apostolic preaching in the Acts of the Apostles was a presentation of Christ as Lord, for Lordship involves Saviorhood.

Some of you reared in Christians' homes have known it since you were a child, unlike the speaker. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. And there would be a lot less so-called backsliders, if when people come forward seeking this salvation, they were given to understand that they were abdicating the throne of their life, and handing it over to Christ.

That Christ was ascending to rule over the empire of their life completely. Absolute loyalty to Christ. That means, of course, that there must be complete obedience.

Total. You wouldn't think too hard of me, would you? Knowing me now for eight years, coming around here. You wouldn't think I was going too far, would you? If I had to say that we are producing a brand of brethrenism, that as long as you keep certain things you're alright, but total obedience is never expected.

That we'll give Christ a place, and quite a good place, but not first place. That we'll read our Bible and choose what we want to obey, and just quietly bypass the rest. But you can't have loyalty in a soldier without obedience.

And if need be, obedience right on to death. When Philippians 2 says Christ was obedient unto death, that's not him obedient unto death as a master. It's not him bowing subservient to death.

It means that he became obedient right on to death. Even the death of the cross. It doesn't matter the cost price.

You'll obey because it will please the Lord. Loyalty, obedience, suffering. Take thy share in suffering, Timothy.

But just a minute, Timothy wasn't too well. Would you not excuse him in that ground of health not being too good? He had a weak stomach. That could lead to depression and discomfort.

Hardly the physical background for accepting suffering. Would you not eliminate a little Paul for Timothy, seeing that he's timid, backward, doesn't keep too well the times? Timothy, take thy share in suffering. You can't be a leader and not be prepared to go through the same as those whom you lead.

Again, he says, No man that wreath and tangleth himself with the businesses of this life. What does that mean? Well, now, you'll notice that this soldier is not in the barracks and he's not on parade showing off his uniform and the way that they can do the drill. Oh, no, this man, this man's on the battlefield.

He's in the front line. No man that wreath and tangleth himself with the affairs of this life. You see, he's separated unto the job.

His complete concentration is on the battle. He's no time to think about the business. Hardly time to think of his wife and family.

As in the heat of the battle, he makes his war. So it is, brethren and sisters, there is no time to be occupied with a thousand and one things in the world that surround because we're at war with sin. We're at war with death.

We're at war with hell. We're at war with the devil. He calls for an all-out supreme effort.

Everything else submerged to the great business of living for Christ. That's true. And while it's necessary to work to pay expenses, while it's necessary to work to provide for your own, and while it's necessary to work to provide for others, that would about sum up what the New Testament teaches about working.

The supreme thing in life is that we are here to serve Christ. But this brings its problems. For instance, if you intimated to your sweetheart that all your love must be centered in Christ and Christ must come first, well, the engagement could be broken.

If you intimated this and laid the line down, the guideline in your home, that Christ must be first and everything else will need to go past, it might create a lot of problems in the home. You see, brethren and sisters, it all depends on how you begin. It all depends on your outlook from the very start as a soldier.

No man that wreath and tangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. Under this idea of a soldier, you're a conscript. You've been chosen to be a soldier.

Now please, look at verse 5. Maybe not too clear in the way that our authorized version translators have put it. It should read, And if a man contend in the games, he is not crowned except he keep the rules. So

now here's an athlete, not a soldier now, an athlete.

And we are told, as we know from the Roman games and from the Olympic games, that if a man or a woman is going to take part in the race, or whatever nature the sport might be, it will be expected of them that they'll keep the rules. Because if they don't keep the rules, they're disqualified. You'll never gain the prize, the reward, the crown.

Is that right? Now notice what it says. Except he strive lawfully, except he observe the rules. Now I want to talk to you about the rules.

What are the rules in this business that have got to be observed? If you're going to be something for Christ, as an athlete, so to speak, ready to do the job, you're the athlete of Christ, and there are certain rules that you'll need to observe. Now, rule number one is that there must be complete submission and acceptance of the rules. That is, you must know the rules, and you must be prepared to keep the rules.

Got that? Now this is your rule book. So if you don't know the Bible, you'll hardly do very well at this business. For if you don't know the Bible, you don't know the rules.

So the first fundamental thing is that you read the rules, that you might get to know them, and be prepared to obey them and accept them. Got that? That's the first thing. The second thing, rule number two, is that you must have a good character.

Now please, I base that on 1 Timothy 1, verses 18 and 19. When Paul says to Timothy this charge, I commit unto thee, according to the prophecies which went before in thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience, which some, having put away concerning faith, have made shipwrecked. So holding faith and a good conscience indicates this, that you must be a person of sterling character.

Brethren and sisters, listen. 1 Corinthians 13, the opening verses indicate this, that what I am is as important as the gift I possess. I could be able speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet be nothing, a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

What I, yes, character, is every bit as important as gift, for the weight of ministry will flow from the dedication of the person. Is that why some brethren and preachers don't touch us too well? There must be a good character. People must never say, I can't hear what you're saying, because of what you're doing.

Timothy, be an example to the believers. Yes, Timothy, you cut out criticism from others by the way that you live. Now, come again.

Rule number three. There must be self-discipline. Self-discipline.

You know that in the references that Paul makes to the games in the New Testament, this idea is prominent. I want to approach it in two ways. First of all, there must be self-denial.

Do you remember in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul talks like this, Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. So I keep under my body and bring it into subjection. What does he mean? Well, now, he says there must be self-denial and self-control.

Now, a way back in the old Roman days, a person trained for ten months for the games. I think the Olympic Games now are every four years, I think, and some of them are training up to three years before it, for it, having in view the Olympics. What does it mean? Well, you know yourself, don't you? You'll read sometimes in the paper of even young girls and young men swimming.

Sometimes before they go to college or work, then at night again, and every spare hour is spent practicing. You know yourself, they'll talk about golfers, these professional men, and they'll practice and practice and practice, as well as playing in tournaments. The whole idea being to condition themselves for the job.

Many a time they would like just to give up the discipline a wee bit and indulge, but they can't. Isn't that right? When you come to this great business, there must be self-denial. Now, listen to me, please, without criticizing anyone.

You'll never be anything for God and Christ if you live the way the other Christians live. You'll need to be prepared if a man denies self, if a man says no to self. There'll be many a time when you'll be tired.

You don't feel like praying, but you'll need to pray. There'll be many a time you'll not feel like reading, but you'll need to read. There'll be many a time when you'll want just to go in for the things that the other Christians go in for.

But you see, if your eye is on the crown, if you're going to prove yourself as you ought to, you can't relax the discipline. And you can't do that. Brethren and sisters, listen.

Have you found this? The right way is not always the most attractive. The hard thing is invariably the right thing. Self-discipline, self-denial.

Ah, but again, secondly, along this line of self-discipline, not only self-denial, but there must be an abandonment of self-interest. Philippians 2. Look not every man on his own things. My, there's no doubt about it, brethren and sisters.

Let's be honest. There's a great deal of number one about us. And our interests come first.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others. If in the glory Christ had been marked by self-interest, he never would have reached Bethlehem, far less Calvary. Isn't that the teaching of Philippians 2? That you surrender all for the benefit of others.

Rule number three, self-discipline. Rule number four, you'll need to keep to your own place. Or, if you like, in running, to your own lane.

Now, Paul deals with this in Romans 15. He says, I keep to my own place. He says, I don't preach what another man has preached.

I don't build on another man's foundations. And he got, he got his authority and guidance for that in the last verse of Isaiah 52. He says, to whom he has never been spoken of, they shall see.

Those who have never heard shall understand. He'll take the gospel that it hadn't been preached before. You begin to wonder, don't you? Now, I can't say anything about here.

Brother Wacho, say amen to this. We have had lots of young men who have gone out, some up to the Midlands and some to the north of Scotland. On the whole, a very sparsely populated areas.

Yet in the vast city of Glasgow, there are huge housing estates like Black Hill and Easter House. And as far as I know, there are thousands of people there, thousands of them. There's not a servant working, not a preacher.

Now, I want to say very humbly, brethren, there's a day of account coming for the preachers. Paul was quite clear about where he would serve. Again, you can understand this, that every man to his own sphere.

For instance, a man who had trained to be a boxer would hardly line up for the marathon race. And a man who had trained to be a marathon runner would hardly line up for the high jump. Isn't that right? You surely don't think that every preacher is a teacher.

When Ephesians 4, that the Lord gave gifts, plural, to some apostles, to some prophets, to some evangelists, to some shepherds and teachers. I don't say that they can't teach certain things. But if a man is an evangelist, gifted of the Lord, he's be limited in other realms.

Just the same as the man that can teach can preach. But he may be limited as to evangelizing. On the other hand, like Paul, a man could carry both gifts.

You'll appreciate, please, there's a difference between an exhorter and an expositor. Isn't that right? Every man will keep to his own sphere and to his own lane. And mind you, if he's under the control of the Spirit of God, he'll control his movements.

Isn't that right? Acts 16, the Holy Spirit forbade him. The Spirit of Jesus suffered him not. Know anything about it, brethren? The control of the Spirit keeping you in your own sphere, and just where you should serve, and directing future engagements.

Rule number five. I'll need to hurry, I'm keeping you late. I have strict instructions on these meetings to finish at 9.15. So it'll likely be my last visit to Vancouver.

Rule number five. You must have a worthy motive. Your motive must be pure.

What's your motive? The love of Christ constrains me. Do you do it out of love to Christ? You make all the sacrifices, not to glory in yourself denial, but simply because you love Christ. And if you love Christ, you love his people and you love sinners.

Isn't that right? Didn't the Lord say to Peter, Lovest thou me? Feed my sheep. So I am. You see, you will appreciate this, won't you, that there were men in their day and they criticized Paul.

Sometimes an odd friend will say to me, You know, Jack, you don't know what they're saying about you behind your back. Well, now, it goes well just to say it to my face, because it possibly wouldn't upset me too much at all. Any man that serves God must be prepared for criticism.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4, With me it is a very small thing that I should come under your judgment. You see, a man serving God with a pure motive, he's too big in a spiritual sense to worry too much about snipers. Someday a wee pop gun having a go at him.

He says, He says, I know nothing against myself. I'm quite clear in my own mind. But he says, I'm not thereby justified.

So he says, would it not be far better to judge nothing before the time? Till the Lord comes. And he'll bring to light hidden things. Make manifest the counsels of the heart.

And a whole host of things will come out in favour that you never thought about. And maybe a whole host of things that will condemn your favourite preacher. And thus show that you weren't maybe as discerning, or I wasn't, as we thought we were.

Again, you can read 1 Corinthians 4 and 2 Corinthians 10 on this. You know there were people who asserted that Paul was in this business for what he could get out of it. He was in it for money.

He never was as well off in his life. Well, mind you, I'm quite prepared to admit, I don't know about the rest of the preachers, I'm quite prepared to admit, it's the greatest job in the world. That's right.

I have no complaints. Do you know that Paul wouldn't take money from Corinth because he knew there were critics there? Eh? Mind you, Paul was quite happy to serve Corinth, you know that. He founded it.

He poured out his life for it. But because of certain opponents, he was quite prepared to refuse the gift. And tell them quite plainly, accept it from others to make up for you.

Would you know any preachers like that today? You see, if your motive's pure, that's basic and essential. Finally now, please, rule number six. If you break the rules, you're disqualified.

Now tell me, have you read 2 Samuel 12 recently? No? Well now, you go home and read it. You'll find that David broke the rules. He broke rule number one.

You must obey the rules of the book, and he coveted another man's wife. He broke rule number three. He failed to discipline himself and allowed his passions into play against Bathsheba.

He wasn't prepared to forfeit self-interest, but served his own passion, passionate interests. He broke rule number four. He had an impure motive.

He broke rule number five. Sorry, broke rule number four. Number one, coveted another man's wife.

Broke rule number three, self-interest. Broke rule number four, he didn't keep to his own place. If he'd been doing that, he'd have been out at war leading in battle instead of idling at home to get into mischief.

Broke rule number five, an impure motive against another. Brethren, now I'll need to sit down. Can I repeat to you what Christ said to them at Philadelphia? Let no man take thy crown.

Hmm? You're ambitious, aren't you? Wouldn't you like to hear the Lord saying to you, Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Rule thou over many cities.

Then you live to please him who hath called you to be a soldier. You observe the rules, and you'll gain the crown. And if you labour industrially, you'll gain the fruit and reward of your labours.

Brethren and sisters, time's running out. Time's running out. There's far more to be done than ever will be fit to do.

The days are not long enough, and the weeks and the years. Away you go. Away you go.

Get into the presence of God tonight. And ask him to save you from becoming a lazy old man. Or a lazy woman.

Ask him to save you from giving all your time and energy to your employer and your business. Not by what you need to take care of it, thank God it's prospering. But don't let the devil get you down on your knees choking your life out of you.

May God help us all to live. And labour, and sacrifice, and give everything for the man that loved us and died for us on the cross.

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