

2Timothy 24-10-06b

We're picking up our study in 2 Timothy chapter two. We have noticed that there are these seven different examples, seven metaphors is a bit strong. They are somewhat figurative, but not completely.

There is a lot of value in looking at each of these closely, but we've seen the importance of recognizing our place in the family of God, our relationship to him through Christ, and our relationship to each other, and the blessings that come from healthy family life, and that connection. And we draw strength, not in isolation, but in fellowship and in union with one another. And the whole is truly greater than the sum of the parts with the Lord Jesus Christ being the head.

And so anytime we begin to be slowed down and tempted to discouragement or to confusion or uncertainty, the dark clouds seem to be gathering and we're just having a tough go of it, which Paul refers to as hardship that must be endured. Many different kinds of hardship. But if I say hardship, you can easily think of personal examples.

There's difficulties of separation, or bereavement, or health, or circumstantial setbacks, financial setbacks, relationship problems, unmerited and unwarranted rejection, or bitterness, or misunderstanding that crops up in relationships that are important to us. And it's hard. It's hard to bask in heavenly sunshine when these things are trying to take us through the valley of the shadow.

So first and foremost, the one that Paul leads with is my son. You're my son in the faith. And I have an example that you can look at and be encouraged.

You feel isolated and alone. Look at me. I am isolated and alone, but I am sustained by God's grace in Christ.

And I am strengthened. I am given strength from outside myself. So the son is the first one.

We then see the soldier in verse three. You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. When it says, therefore, why does he endure hardship? It isn't just hardship for its own sake.

It is the almost necessary opposition and conflict that is created in the function of Timothy's office, his assignment, his place, and his opportunity, the operation of his spiritual gift. He is inevitably going to endure hardship. Few, if any, believers in the exercise of their witness, their representative function as body of Christ, their opportunities to manifest the blessings that accrue to others in their spiritual gift, there is inevitably hardship involved because we are swimming against the downward tide, the evil represented by the world, the flesh, and the devil all want to create friction and

pushback on God's divine power.

This is why we are told greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. But if we find ourselves carried in a downward direction, it is because we have temporarily forgotten where the strength comes from, where the power comes from. If he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world, then the world should not overcome us.

The darkness should not extinguish the light. Light is positive. Darkness is the absence of light.

It's not a material entity. There's no such thing as a negative photon. You can't go to the shelf and get a flash dark and turn it on and extinguish the light.

Light is positive, light is energy, and darkness is the lack of it. Sometimes men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. It isn't that they find darkness compelling and beautiful, it's that they hate the light.

Those who are drawn to God are drawn to the light, and we want to reflect that light. So you therefore must endure hardship as a soldier. We saw this last time that once again, you have this idea of connection.

You don't have single soldiers that get deployed to a front line and are left to operate. It is a rare and special thing when that happens. Dan Daly is famous in the Marine Corps.

He is up there with Smedley Butler and Chesty Puller. He was a two-time Medal of Honor winner back in the turn of the last century. Timeframe, he served from, I think he earned his first Medal of Honor in 1901, and his second about 20 years later.

He was in some of the most famous battles in World War I. You think of Belleau Wood and Verdun and the Somme and some of these other battles, and Dan Daly and his unit were there. But there was a time when he went forward with another soldier, another Marine, to emplace a group of individuals, a team, but the team never showed up, and it ended up being just the two of them. And so the other Marine had to go back and find and bring the misplaced 11 other Marines that were supposed to be there.

And Dan Daly was left by himself, and he fought all night long against an entire company of Germans and successfully fended them off all by himself. But that is the rare exception. That's when someone earns a Medal of Honor.

Normally we, and of course he was holding on long enough to be joined by his fellow Marines so that they could hold that position permanently. So when you endure hardship as a good soldier, like the son idea, there is a reminder that we are not alone. So no one engaged in warfare, verse four, entangles himself with the affairs of life so that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

I wrestled with this a little bit because in the normal military, you've got the recruiters and those who enlist, but they are not the operational commanders. And that was true even in the Roman army. I read you an excerpt from Josephus.

There are about 10 pages in Josephus describing at length the life and the career and the circumstances of Roman soldiers. Very detailed, fascinating. But even in the Roman army, the one who signed up soldiers wasn't the one who commanded them.

And I thought, well, why is Paul phrasing it this way when it's a bit of a jarring note to all of us who are familiar with how military recruitment and enlistment works? Well, go back to the previous verse. This is the grace that is in Christ Jesus in verse one and a good soldier of Jesus Christ in verse three. This is a unique soldier enlistment because you serve the same one who called you and enlisted you, and it's Jesus Christ.

And so you do not want to be entangled in the affairs of this life, not because some immediate supervisor might be displeased or you might not do as good a job. It's because the one who enlisted you is the one you serve. And this is a unique reminder, not only of our lateral relationship to our fellow soldiers, but also we are all enlisted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the head and we are the body. And we want to be pleasing uniquely to him. This transcends mere military service where commanding officers come and go.

Assignments to units change in the course of a few years. And you can be in the third Marine division and be on the West Coast or overseas. You can be in the first Marine division or you can be in the second Marine division and be going the other direction.

This is different. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us. The model, the example is when he called his disciples.

We are not all disciples in that sense, but it reflects a truth that we are called to the father through Jesus Christ, each and every one of us. And because of that, if he has personally enlisted us in his service and through the Holy Spirit has gifted and equipped us for good works in our place, in our occupation, with our time, in our circumstances, whatever the limitations, whatever the distance we've traveled chronologically in life, we are here breathing air because God has a purpose and the Lord Jesus Christ still has a set of orders for us to be good soldiers and to not be distracted and fail to carry them out. People who fail to do their duty, who fail to follow orders, cause harm to themselves, disappoint those who issued the orders and can be a danger to those around them.

If you don't guard a flank because you get distracted, you're hungry and you go off. Think of a civil war soldier at Gettysburg and he's supposed to hold the line, but he's hungry. And so he goes off in search of berries or in search of something that he can eat and his portion is left unprotected.

Those around him are endangered because interlocking fields of fire means you are not only covering your assignment, but you are overlapping with those to your left and those to your right. And if you say, well, if I fail, I'm only hurting myself. Not when you are a soldier in an army and you have others who are affected by your diligence and your faithfulness, your obedience, and you're carrying out your duties.

You don't know the effect you are having on others in many cases in this life, you find out in the next. And to be faithful and to please the one who enlisted us uniquely, it's the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says in another place, let your moderation be known to all.

Let your self-control, your attention to detail, let it be known to all. Let it be manifest and evident. Everyone who knows and sees you sees that you are self-possessed.

You are focused. You have a sense of purpose and direction. You know how to be obedient.

You know how to eliminate distractions. Why? The next part of that verse is one of the shorter verses. Let your moderation be known to all.

The Lord is at hand. And you say, at hand, is he coming back soon? He is nearby. He is observing.

He is either pleased and smiles and is vindicated in choosing us and equipping us and assigning us a place, or he is disappointed. And if we deny him, if we forget about him, he will deny us. He will not present us before the Father.

He won't acknowledge us. We won't be given future opportunities. And it is a hard fact that as much as we look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus and release from the toils and the suffering and the momentary light affliction of this life, we need to remember to think past that.

As much as we want to see the Lord Jesus and we want to be reunited with those that have gone before us, we want to enter into the next phase of God's plan, what will our circumstance be when that happens? And hard on the heels of the thought of the anticipation of the return of the Lord Jesus for us should be, am I ready? Will I be approved as a workman who does not need to be ashamed? Coming up here in verse 15. Shame and being ashamed is a theme that runs throughout this letter. We see it time and time again.

Timothy, don't be ashamed of me. Don't be ashamed of my chain. Onesiphorus was not ashamed.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, Romans 1 16. Don't draw back. Don't soft pedal.

Don't quiet down and be sort of semi-tough and semi-interested and a part-time soldier. Well, I'm kind of in the Lord's reserve. I just drill a couple of days a month and the rest of the time I'm a civilian.

We are full-time soldiers of Jesus Christ in this sense that we maintain that focus. And when there's hardship, we endure it because we are a good soldier. We're not marginal.

We're not apathetic. We're not ranked last in our group. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself because he wants to please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

And that him should be capital H. That is the Lord Jesus Christ that Paul has in mind and is encouraging Timothy to remember Jesus Christ positioned him. Of any place Timothy could have been born in history, what an amazing thing that he is born to a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and he becomes known to the apostle Paul and is personally trained, spends time accompanying the apostle Paul. Wouldn't you love to hear the preaching of the apostle Paul, not just what he wrote in these letters, but the things that he said in town after town, city after city, what he talked about when he was sitting in chains in Philippi in the dark, what he talked about during the travels, walking down the road.

You have a theological question, ask Paul. He's right there. This is the one who's gonna write half of the New Testament.

And this is Timothy's privilege. With that opportunity comes the concomitant hardship. But as the song says, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

One glimpse of his dear face, all sorrow will erase. When we have run the race, when we see Christ, and this is our calling. So we should expect hardship.

It shouldn't surprise us. It shouldn't deflect us or distract us. We should not be caught up in it.

We endure it. We power through it by the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus, because we want to please the Lord Jesus. We want to be pleasing in his sight.

The judgment before which we will stand is not the judgment seat of the father. It is the judgment seat of Christ. He is the head and he will hold us accountable.

He will be pleased. He will be the one to say, well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.

Enter into the kingdom prepared for you by my father. So that is the emphasis for the soldier. In a nutshell, how would you summarize the soldier motif? The key here is distraction.

The entanglement in the affairs of this life, that's a distraction. So to avoid distraction,

we need discipline, focus on pleasing the one who enlisted us, which is the Lord Jesus. H.A. Ironside says about this passage, this entails obedience to orders, rigid discipline, holding the body in subjection.

This goes back to the parallel in 1 Corinthians 9 that we saw last time, where I treat my body as a slave. I subject my body. I don't beat the air.

I don't run aimlessly. I discipline my body. So hold the body in subjection and valor, courage in defense of the truth, steadfast endurance and abiding faith.

That's the calling of the soldier, the undistracted soldier, obedience to orders, rigid discipline, holding the body in subjection, valor in defense of the truth, steadfast endurance, abiding faith. I don't think you can summarize it any better than that. Separation from the affairs of the world in order to please him who chose him to be a soldier.

That moves us to the athlete. This is the third figure in this chapter. What is required in an athlete? There's many things you can say, but Paul emphasizes competing in athletics you don't receive the crown unless you compete according to the rules.

I want to read you something. And again, this is from Ironside and it is a, I can't think of a better example. The example that he gives, he says many years ago, I was laboring among the Laguna Indians in the Southwest.

This is H.A. Ironside. And he's talking about a hundred years ago. I was laboring among the Laguna Indians in the Southwest.

I went into a store one Saturday night and found my Indian interpreter standing on a chair reading from a newspaper. The store was filled with Indians and he was translating what he read into their language. The newspaper contained an account of the Olympic games which had been celebrated that year in Stockholm, Sweden.

These are the 1912 games that he's talking about. The man who had won most of the prizes was a full-blooded Indian known as Jimmy Thorpe. How thrilled these Indians were as my interpreter was reading and telling all about his victories.

He told him how at the time when the gold medals and other trophies were being conferred, the King of Sweden himself decorated Jimmy Thorpe and taking him by the hand before all the people, he said, you are to be congratulated. You are the greatest amateur athlete in the world today. There is a story that Ironside does not include that upon hearing those words, Jim Thorpe said, thanks King.

These Indians were most enthusiastic as they heard that one of their own people had won out over so many other athletes. I went into that same store some weeks afterward. Again, the place was filled with Indians and my interpreter was reading to them, but the

result was not the same.

There was no bright, happy faces. I wondered what had made the change. I learned that some white men in this country had been so indignant that an Indian had carried off so many prizes that they had been searching into the Indian's past and found out that one summer while attending Carlisle School in Pennsylvania, he had served on a baseball team for \$5 a week.

That information was sent to the Olympic Committee who referred it to the King of Sweden. The result was that the King had to write Jimmy Thorpe to send back all the medals and trophies because he was not entitled to them. The athletic games, the King said, were for amateurs and not for professionals.

Jimmy had taken money for playing ball and so was a professional. Poor Jimmy sent a letter to the King of Sweden saying, I am only a poor, ignorant Indian and I did not know that the fact I accepted \$5 a week one summer for playing on a baseball team made me a professional. I did not mean to deceive.

I was well-intentioned, but I broke the rules. He sent back all his honors. As these Indians listened to this account, they were stirred deeply.

They could not understand the white man's way, but no athlete is entitled to reward if he has not observed the rules. You can research that in more depth online. It is apparent that the American Olympic Committee actually knew that Thorpe had played some summer baseball for pay, but they didn't think it was important.

And then this got fluffed up as minor peccadillos get fluffed up when you want to hurt someone socially or politically. You will find some technicality. Later on, 30 years after his death, they decided that this was an injustice and they have restored all of Jim Thorpe's medals and honors and his records.

And for a while, they listed him as the co-winner, the co-gold medalist in the decathlon, in the pentathlon, which he won. But in more recent years, they have even corrected that. And now he is listed as the sole gold medalist as he should have been in 1912.

But it is a reminder that we have to be careful to color within the lines, to not disqualify ourselves by carelessness or distraction or indifference to God's requirements for faithfulness and obedience, and to not lose our crown. And this is what Paul says, let no one take your crown. Let no one take your rewards.

Don't have them be revoked because of sloppiness or carelessness in the finer details of service to God and representation of the Lord Jesus. So that is the athlete. Rules of personal conduct is one.

For Timothy, in this context, you also see that there are proper rules for rightly dividing

the word of truth. This is coming up in verse 15. There are right ways and wrong ways of presenting the word of God, of studying it and interpreting it and suggesting application of it.

And people who distort and pervert the word of God are not playing according to the rules. They may be striving for a crown, but if in order to gain popularity or to sell books or to distribute resources or to gain notoriety or to be well-known and get speaking engagements or whatever it may be, you are using the word of God and you are presenting the word of God, but you are not playing according to the rules. That is disqualification.

And there are many who are going to expect recognition in the next life. And the Lord Jesus is going to look back and say, you have your reward. You wanted adulation, you wanted notoriety, you wanted to sell and to build and to populate and you wanted to do these things.

Yes, you presented the word of God, but not according to the rules. Back to Jim Thorpe. He was playing for Pop Warner in a game and they were pinned against their own goal line and they handed it off to Jim Thorpe and he ran a 95 yard touchdown, but it was called back because one of his teammates committed a penalty.

And so they were penalized half the distance to the goal and had to repeat the down. And on the next down, Jim Thorpe ran a 97 yard touchdown. So the disqualification of someone else didn't stop him from running the distance and winning the game.

I think it was 21 to six or something that time, but he was an amazing athlete. And the idea of playing according to the rules so that your faithfulness and your obedience can be fully rewarded and not called back for a penalty. You make a tremendous catch in football, you run down the sideline, score a glorious touchdown, but the replay shows that your foot touched the sideline and you're out of bounds and the ball is pulled back to that point and the points are removed.

One quarter of an inch of contact with the sideline disqualifies the rest of the run. The play is over at the point that you step on that line, much less beyond it. No disqualification, compete, serve, operate in the sphere of your spiritual gift without descending into inadvertent gossip or compromising a confidence or leaving a bad taste in someone's mouth about someone else to be an agent of mistrust or of diminished consideration.

The sins of the tongue are the quickest way we disqualify ourselves. A soft answer turns away wrath. We're seeing this in our Proverbs study, but grievous words stir up anger and we can harm, we can divide, we can commit offense and disqualify ourselves if we're not careful with our conversation, if we are disciplined about when we speak and what we say.

A word fitly spoken, Proverbs tells us, is like apples of gold in frames of silver. A word fitly spoken. Oh Lord, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in thy sight.

Oh Lord, my strength and my redeemer. We pray about this. The tongue is a fire and it is set on fire by the flames of hell.

Have to be so careful. The quickest way to disqualification is to be careful. The second thing is lack of verbal discipline, lack of conversational discipline, lack of bridling the tongue.

James says, you bridle your tongue, you've got your whole body under control. So when Paul says, I discipline my body so that I can run the race without disqualification, first place to concentrate is our conversation, how we speak. This is the fountain that can speak the truth in love.

This is our verbal witness as well as our life witness, the way we behave. But quickest way to disqualification is lack of discipline in our speech. And for a teacher, for a pastor, to mishandle the word of truth, there is double discipline promised in the word of God for a pastor that mishandles the word because you are not only shooting yourself in the foot, you're not only knocking yourself out of the box and disqualifying yourself, but you are leading others astray.

And you get discipline for your personal malfunction and you get judgment for being a debility instead of a blessing to others. And pastors have to be doubly careful. Teachers and those who have any communication gift have to be especially wary of inserting themselves, of beginning to mix their personal opinions with scriptures so that listeners can't tell the difference.

And the most horrific thing I can think of is for someone not to say, well, the word of God says, Paul in 2 Timothy says, the Lord Jesus in Matthew says, and instead quote the source of a viewpoint or a position or a doctrine as, well, this pastor says. No, no, no, never say that about your pastor or any other pastor. We believe what we believe because it's in the word of God.

And it has the apostolic witness that was commissioned by Jesus Christ himself directly through the Holy Spirit from God the Father. That is the chain of custody for truth. The pastor can be a faithful witness, but he is not the source.

And you don't say, my telephone said that voting begins early voting. You know, I got a call from the county and my place to vote is thus and so. My telephone told me that the weather today is gonna be this.

No, cite the source, cite the authority whereby we come to understand the truth, not the telephone, not the screen you're reading. My Samsung TV told me that this is what

happened in Afghanistan or Iraq or Israel or Lebanon. It's not your TV talking.

It's the source that is coming through it. Always, always, always be diligent to show yourself approved to God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, the word of truth. Many messengers, many witnesses, but the same word, the same message, the same gospel.

Any other gospel, shoot the messenger. So that is the athlete. And then finally we come this morning, we're going to see the workman, vessel and servant in the future coverage, but we come to the farmer.

And I was using a little old-fashioned Dallas Seminary alliteration to link these three that are grouped together here in the middle. For the soldier, it is distraction that is the key. Don't be distracted.

Don't be entangled in the affairs of this life. For the athlete, it is disqualification. Compete according to the rules.

So distraction, disqualification, and for the farmer, the issue of all the things you could say is distribution. See how I did that? Distribution, distraction, disqualification. It isn't how hard does he work or how well does he weed it and protect it from blight and so on.

He says, the hardworking farmer must be first to partake. Partake. This crop is going to be partaken of.

The aspect of farming here is the crop is food. Now this has been universally, and even Ironside and many, many others talk about making your living in the gospel, that those who are full-time ministry, and I heard this endlessly when I was growing up. Well, he's in full-time ministry.

And so pastors should be paid and missionaries should be supported. And there are cases where that is true, but that's not, and this verse is pressed into service. Well, the farmer, look, if that were true, if this verse means pay the pastor, pay the missionary, pay the speaker of truth, why wouldn't this be the banker? The banker is the first to partake of the dividends.

When Dr. Pentecost, it's a genius observation. It is a solid principle that if you start metaphorically, it's metaphorical all the way through. So what is the crop? What is it that Timothy as a communicator and a faithful witness to the truth that he heard from the apostle Paul, what does he do? He is multiplying that crop so that many people can partake of it.

So what is the crop? Is it money? Is the pastor in the business of making a church profitable and then they will distribute the profits amongst the congregation? You can't switch from metaphor to material reality in the middle of a figure. What is it that Timothy

is to partake of here as a farmer? He is a hardworking farmer. This word for labor is the one that means intense work.

You are a farmer who works diligently to make sure that this crop is multiplied so that many people can partake of it. But the hardworking farmer, he must, and this is a strong word, must, D-E-I, D-E-E. The word for chains and bonds, desmos.

Don't be ashamed of my desmoy, my chains, my bonds. The D-E part of that comes from desmos. This is constraint.

This is requirement. You are bound to do this. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake.

Must be first. Not to partake of money that you can't make the crop, a money crop in one case and food in another. If you're gonna partake of it, you are in the business of feeding others by your hard work, growing a crop that will benefit many.

But you have to partake of the crop first. You must. Paul tells Timothy, you need to be, and I've used this figure so many times, but when it says, Paul describes this metaphor in detail, when he says, doth not scripture say, muzzle not the ox that treads out the grain? Is he talking about others or is he talking about us? And Paul is gonna make a case from that figure.

But in this context, it's different. Paul uses it in a different way, in a different place. But here, Timothy, you must eat the fruit of your study, your reflection, your meditation on the Word, your Holy Spirit-granted insight and understanding, your grasp of these truths.

You have to be the first one to take it in, digest it, and benefit from it, and to be strengthened by it. Verse one, the grace that is in Christ Jesus comes through the Word and the Spirit. And Timothy, you're a hardworking farmer, but you've got to feed yourself first so that you are strong and able to cultivate that crop and have it be beneficial to others.

This has nothing to do with money in this context. Nothing at all. Hardworking farmer must be first to partake.

Paul is not telling Timothy, take up a special offering for the pastor. It is a wonderful thing. I'm not saying that it's wrong for anybody to support or provide monetary encouragement, but that's not what is in this verse.

This verse is talking about spiritual priority. Why is this important? If he was talking about support the pastor, it would only apply to pastors. But these principles are to be taught and passed on to faithful men who will teach others, because all of us, as we are privileged to exercise our spiritual gift, if we are uniquely blessed with the gift of comforting others and encouraging others, we first need to be comforted and

encouraged by the power that God is distributing and manifesting through us.

We need to be comforted, not just busy ourselves trying to comfort others. We should be comforted. If you have whatever your role, whatever blessing God has granted to you, you should be a representative example of it.

Someone who teaches others should be someone who is taught. That's why we've seen the qualifications for elders. They should be exemplary in the application of the word of God in their own lives, in their own household, in their own marriage, in their own family.

Because if they're not, if they can't discipline their tongue, if they are prone to angry outbursts that manifest a lack of self-control, if their children run wild and are examples of disobedience and rebellion, they are not a hardworking farmer that has first partaken of the crop and that disqualifies them. That is a disqualification. And if you are blessed with the ability to be a blessing to others in the body, you have to yourself be a picture and a manifestation and an example of blessing in that same area.

To be a good teacher, you need to be taught. To need to be a good encourager, you need to be encouraged. To be someone who is beneficial in any way to the body of Christ, you have to embody that blessing yourself.

That is the way that it works. A teacher can't teach what he has not learned effectively. You have to know it.

You have to breathe it. You have to marinate in it, be soaked in it, exemplify it, can't get enough of it in order to be able to bless others with it. And this is true of your gift.

It's easy to look at someone else. We need to look each of us at ourselves. Am I enriched? Am I strengthened? Timothy, my son, be strengthened in and by and with the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

We all need to be able to go directly to the source of grace in Christ Jesus to be effective in our place in the body. We're all not an ear. We're all not a mouth.

We're all not a hand or a foot, but we're all in the body and Jesus Christ is our head. He is the source. When we understand a truth, it isn't because the pastor taught it.

It is because Jesus Christ authored it and inspired it and gave it to us via the Holy Spirit. That's where we go for the grace. And that's why understanding these figures, these examples is so important.

They are fraught. They are wagons burying a great amount of freight for each and every one of us, not just pastors. Well, we're going to move forward and we will encounter the workmen, the vessel, and the servant in the next week or two, but we'll close here this morning in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you so much for our direct relationship to you through the Lord Jesus. We are priests. He is our high priest.

We are enabled and empowered by your grace that comes directly to us through him. We pray that as we reflect on these truths and our specific circumstances, our opportunities, our assignments, our contacts with others, where we can be a blessing, whether it is to one another, to neighbors, to those who are outside, or even to our enemies, whether we are speaking or whether we are silent, that the light of your glory and grace will reflect from us and draw others to you through the Lord Jesus. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.