

# The Christian Soldier

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's get into the chapter we read in 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 2, and reading at verse 3 and 4.

Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Paul, as we know, had a very, very strong bond with Timothy, and that bond, of course, was born in the gospel. You find Paul addressing Timothy, and he says in chapter 1, he says to Timothy, my beloved child, and then again here in chapter 2, you then, my child.

And it would seem that Paul was instrumental in leading or being used by the Lord and Timothy coming to faith in the gospel.

And that, I'm sure, is the way that he calls him a child. He's a child in the gospel, a child that there is this bond. And I think it's true that people that you share with in the gospel are people that have an influence or an impact in your life for good in the gospel, or people that you're able to speak to and to share with in the gospel.

[ 1 : 37 ] A bond develops, and you find a closeness, a greater maybe closeness to that person or these people than to others.

And that's perfectly natural within the Christian life, that you're drawn to people that you are maybe able to share, or people who have created a great impression upon you or have been influential in your coming to faith or your growing in the Lord.

And many of the experiences that we go through, we go through with others. And it creates a bond. And there's no doubt whatever that here we have this, a great bond between Paul and Timothy.

Now, Paul is encouraging Timothy. And he's saying to him, Timothy, he's saying, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

He's telling Timothy that he needs to be strong. Because there are difficult times happening, and there were people, it was one of the sad things of the day, that there were people who were abandoning the faith, and people who were beginning to embrace new kinds of teachings.

[ 2 : 51 ] And people like, for instance, like it's mentioned there in verse 17 and 18, these two men who were already saying that the resurrection had already taken place.

And there's nothing new under the sun. You'll find that down throughout the years, that people are always coming forward with new ideas. And some people drift away because of these teachings.

So Paul is saying to Timothy, look, you've got to be strong. Whatever anybody else is or isn't.

Whatever anybody else does or doesn't. You must be strong in the Lord.

And I think we can echo that teaching to ourselves today. We need to be strong in the Lord, irrespective of what goes on around and about.

Because we live in a society that is incredibly secular, a society that has little place or time for God, a society that challenges our faith all the time.

[ 3 : 49 ] And we need to be strong. There's a lot that is, if we're not strong, will begin to shake us and make us question things. So it's imperative that we are strong.

And we've got to be not strong in ourselves. Our own natural strength won't do in this sort of thing. Because we'll discover very quickly that our own natural strength is not up to standing firm for the Lord.

It is in the Lord. Stand in the Lord. Stand fast in the Lord. That's the one we have to stand in. And the Lord is able to give us strength. And you look back in your life right up to where you are today.

And you know of how the Lord has helped you over and over and over again. He's helped you to move forward. He's helped you to stand firm. He's helped you to cope with things that you thought you would never cope with.

And as you look back over your life and right to where you are today, you're able to say, you know, if it weren't for the Lord, I couldn't be where I am today. I couldn't have done what I have done.

[ 4 : 57 ] Were it not for the Lord's hand upon me? Were it not for God's grace? Was it not for God's helping? And we all have to look back. And even today, if you have never come to the place where you have made a public commitment or where you have even made a private commitment, yet you still have to say that.

And I believe you do say that. You look at your life and you say, well, I know that God is the one who has helped me. God is the one who has strengthened me. God is the one who has taken me to where I am today.

And it's good for us to make that acknowledgement. And so that's part of what Paul is encouraging Timothy with. And then Paul reminds Timothy of what he has heard.

And he's saying, you then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

And you see, one of the fundamental charges that Paul is giving Timothy here is that he isn't just to protect and guard the gospel, but he's also got to spread the gospel.

[ 6 : 07 ] You see, these were important days. And Paul was so, he had such a passion for the truth being kept pure and intact.

He didn't want it in any way soiled, added to, or detracted from. And although we, today it's so easy for us because we have a collected written word.

They didn't have the collected word as such, although the letters were being sent by Paul to the different churches and so on. But at that particular time, Paul was still in the middle of everything. And the word was still being passed orally. And it was vital that it be kept clean and pure. And that is why it had to go to faithful men who weren't going to tamper with it and change it and spoil it in any way.

And so Paul is saying this is that you have to be so careful with this word. And Paul put tremendous emphasis upon the message and upon the word.

[ 7 : 14 ] In fact, to this extent that Paul is saying, the messenger is irrelevant. It's a message that's all important. And we've got to remember that today as well. That it's at the end of the day, it's a message.

What is this message? It's the word. And we are not at liberty to add to it or detract from it. And we must always be careful that we don't come to the word and put our own slant on it.

You know, many of the, many people who have gone away or gone astray, have gone astray because they have all kinds of fancy ideas.

And then they say, you know, I'm going to find somewhere in the Bible that will back up what I'm thinking. And you can always find something if you take it out of context. You could back up anything in life from the Bible.

If you can find it and take it out of its context. And hang, sometimes you can hang something just on part of a verse. But you see, the Bible doesn't work like that.

[ 8 : 23 ] The Bible sheds light on the Bible. And you can't take things out of context. One thing shines light on another. It's all part of one great package.

And so Paul is warning, and we need to warn as well, that we've got to be faithful to what God's word says. The moment we derail, the moment we go away from the word and change the word, then we're in trouble.

And then Paul, as you see here, he likens, as he often does, the Christian life to different things or different activities. And he mentions three of them here. And it's the first one I'm going to look at. He mentions, for instance, in verse 5, though, that the Christian's like an athlete. And Paul often uses that figure to describe the Christian life.

An athlete is somebody who has to be disciplined. Somebody has to be denying himself or herself. It's impossible to reach the top by not denying yourself many things.

[ 9 : 26 ] You'll hear that said. There are many people, supposing in the world of athletics or in the world of football or whatever, people of immense potential. And many people would say they could make it if only.

If only they were disciplined. If only they were prepared to deny themselves the ordinary things of life. Because in order to get to the top, a lot of sacrifice has to be made.

And Paul used, in many different ways, the example of the athlete. And then he uses the example of the farmer who sows and plants and works.

And then he looks for the harvest. That's in verse 6. It's a hardworking farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. And so on. And again, we've got to remember that in the likes of the work of the farmers, it often takes patience.

You often have to wait before you see the result of what is happening. But Paul is here focusing, in verse 3, upon the soldier. He's using the soldier as an example.

[10:32] And he's saying, share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. Or in another translation it says, endure hardness. And it's got the same idea.

It's endure the suffering. Endure the hard things that are part and parcel of the Christian life. You endure it or you share in it.

And this whole idea of the word sharing has this idea of sharing and enduring, keeping going within the suffering. Endurance is a very important word in the Christian faith because it's part and parcel of what the Christian has to do.

It's keeping going in the face of difficulty. And all these ideas, the pictures that Paul highlights here of both the soldier and the athlete and the farmer, that is part and parcel of what makes them what they are.

It's keeping going. If you were an athlete who might be incredibly fast or very strong but has no endurance, he won't last. If you have a farmer who gives up after the first knock, he's never going to be a successful farmer.

[11:51] And it's true also for the Christian. The Christian is somebody who has to keep going despite all that comes our way. And there's plenty to knock us off. Plenty to knock us off stride.

And you know it and I know it and we probably often experience these things. But the mark of the Christian is somebody who keeps going. Jesus said, Those who endure to the end, the same will be saved.

Who will be saved? Those who keep going to the end. That's the evidence. That's the mark of the grace of God within your heart. That you're still following the Lord.

Even although sometimes we can wander and waver and stumble and fall, yet there is still within you that which won't give up.

What won't give up? It's the Lord who won't give up with you. That's why you're still following.

Despite everything that has happened. There might have been times along the way and you thought, I am going to make shipwreck of my faith.

[12:55] I am going to disappear without trace. And yet today, you're still here. And you're still following the Lord. That is the endurance that has been spoken of here.

That is that keeping going despite everything. And of course it is because of the grace that is within you. You see, the Lord has staked His glory.

His name upon taking you with Him to glory. And so, the Christian is somebody, Paul is saying, who's like a good soldier.

And we can see different examples of that. For instance, a soldier has to be loyal. That is one of the marks of a soldier. Somebody who is completely loyal. Totally committed.

In fact, the soldier, before they become a soldier, before they become somebody who is loyal to queen and to country, they have to enlist in the army.

[13:56] And that's what we have all done. The day we have become a believer in Jesus Christ, we have enlisted, as it were, in the Lord's army.

We are with Him. We are fighting with Him. We are Christian soldiers. And the Bible makes it abundantly clear that our journey to heaven is not one of ease and laziness, but one of fighting.

We wrestle. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers. Paul says, I have fought the good fight. Our heavenly journey is a journey of conflict.

And if we don't realize that, we soon will. So, the Christian is somebody who is, first and foremost, who enlists, and then somebody who is loyal, totally committed to the cause.

The soldier is also obedient. That is something that a soldier has to do. Because the soldiers are made to serve. And that's one of the things that's part of a soldier's training, is learning obedience.

[15:07] Because I'm sure many of the young men that sign up, and it's not, I think, but we know that many of the young men who sign up, a lot of them are real characters.

A lot of them are probably lacking in personal discipline and lacking in many things. But before long, they're whipped into shape. Because they learn obedience.

They learn to submit to the authority that is over them. And that doesn't happen naturally. A lot of these young lads who join up, they're anything but willing to submit to everything that is happening. It is often, and it's harsh, it's hard, it's brutal. But eventually, they become men and women who are there. They're totally disciplined.

And they're totally giving obedience and ready to serve at the drop of a hat. At the first command, that's saying, how has that happened? They've learned it.

[16:04] They've been taught it. And it's through the discipline. And it's hard. It's often through suffering. You'll find, and these soldiers, they're pushing their bodies to the absolute limit.

And even when they think they can't do any more, they've got to do more. And they've learned obedience. A lot of it through what they're having to suffer.

And that's what the Bible tells us. It's the same for ourselves. In fact, one of the great mysteries, it even tells us that about Jesus Christ. Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience through the suffering.

And that's what happens with ourselves as well. That the Lord is teaching us. All the time he's teaching us. He's teaching us through these things that we suffer.

These pains, these difficulties. Because you see, obedience, obedience is not natural to us. Right at the very beginning, when Adam and Eve sinned, disobedience becomes natural.

[17:10] Not obedience. You watch little children. They have to be taught. Everybody has to be taught. Obedience is not natural to us. Disobedience is what is natural.

And when we become Christians, we aren't overnight, that's it. That's me. I'm a totally obedient, disciplined Christian. And everything, I will walk every single day absolutely in accordance with God's word.

Never putting a foot wrong. No, it doesn't work like that. We are still filled with our own pride, our rebelliousness, and all these things.

So that there's this conflict. But as the years go on, God is working bit by bit by bit. So that there's a growing submission within the heart of the believer towards the Lord.

And so we go through all these things. And there are many pains and difficulties and sorrows and trials. But we've always got to remember that at the end of the day, the Lord has a goal in view for you, for me.

[18:19] And he's saying, these things might be hard for you just now. They might be difficult. They might hurt. It might be painful. But if you could see the finished article, if you could see what you're to become, then you would say, bring it on.

Yes, I'm ready for this. I know what you're doing now, Lord. Do it. But it's only by faith, you see, that we can know this. We have to just accept what the Word says.

And the Word tells us that God is working all things together for our good. It does not yet appear what we shall be. But it does tell us this, that we shall be like him.

We're going to be like Jesus, our Redeemer. That is who we are going to resemble. In all the glory and splendor. And as a Redeemer in glory, we will mirror him, resemble him.

So there's a lot of work to be done. And again, the soldier is somebody who must wear the uniform of the army. And you can straight away identify soldiers right away and say, oh, that person's a soldier because of what he wears.

[19:36] The Christian, they've been given clothing. What is it? A robe. The robe of righteousness. That's what covers. Reflecting the beauty and the loveliness of Jesus Christ.

And we hold aloft a banner as we march in a robe of righteousness. And what is that banner? It's a banner of love. The Bible makes that also very clear.

That he has set a banner over us and that banner is love. And so that's how we go forward. In rightness. In righteousness. In other words, our lives should be right lives.

We must be. That means that we deal honestly and fairly with one another. That there's our justness.

There's our dishonesty about life. And our gentleness. We should be reflecting Jesus. The things that the Bible tells us that Jesus was in this world.

[20:38] And Jesus is. That is the kind of life we should be living. The kind of life we should be reflecting. The fruit of the spirit. Of love. Joy. Peace. Gentleness. There's all these things.

This is how the Christian ought to be. And reflecting in his and her life. But at the heart of it all is this love. The banner of love. Remember it is love that first of all drew us to the Lord.

Love is all conquering. It's the greatest force. The greatest power in this world is the power of love. And so as we go forward as soldiers.

We've got to remember. That all power is given to us. In heaven and in earth. We must never lose sight. Never lose sight.

Of the. As we could say the soldierly aspect of Christianity. So we've always got to remember that. So to be a good soldier. Of Jesus Christ.

[ 21 : 42 ] As we come to conclude. We can say two or three things. About this. First and foremost. We must be dependable. That's one of the things. Soldiers are dependable. Absolutely dependable.

If you're not. It's not only your own life. That's endangered. But also others. The soldier. Isn't only about himself. That's one of the things.

The soldiers learn. That they are part of a team. They're part of a unit. They are in it all together. One for another. And we see it so often. Very heart-rending stories.

And it's happening even. Week by week. Where we see. A soldier being killed. As he's trying to. He's given his life. For his comrades. Given for others. He's gone to try and rescue.

In the face of fire. Risked his own life. And lost his own life. So there's this sense of. Incredible dependability. And that's how it has to be.

[ 22 : 41 ] Within. The Christian life. We must be reliable. We must be there. For one another. We must be seeking. To be there. And encouraging one another.

It's one of the worst things. Is to see. The Christian church at war. To see the Christian church dividing. To see the Christian church arguing. There has to be a unity.

A togetherness. A going forward like that. Again. The soldier must be courageous. If you aren't courageous. You've had it. Courage. Is one of the essentials.

Because if you don't have courage. You can't fight. And it's true for the Christian. The Christian has to be courageous. Because there's plenty to knock you. Plenty to push you back.

Plenty to defeat you. But our courage. As we said before. Must be found. In the Lord. And again. We've kind of touched on that.

[ 23 : 38 ] The soldier must be disciplined. Disciplined in all things. And so must we. But one. The final thing. We've got to remember. Is this. That although there are many.

Many battles. To be won. There is only one war. And that war. Has already been won. The actual victory. Victory is guaranteed. You know.

That's a wonderful thing. Imagine. Can you imagine. What it would be like. If the Christian life was. That in this world. We didn't know.

What the outcome. Was going to be. We didn't know. At the end of the day. Whether we would arrive. In glory or not. That it was kind of like. A lottery. At the end of the day.

But that. Throughout this world. As we journeyed through it. We had to. We had to fight. And to follow the Lord. And we had to. But we didn't know. How our final battle would be.

[ 24 : 34 ] Would we die in it. And be lost. Or would we win. In our final battle. And there was. An uncertainty. About it all the way through. Can you imagine. What it would be like. Well praise the Lord.

It's not like that. The victory. Has been won. The place in heaven. Is guaranteed. And that doesn't. In fact.

This is the beauty of it. That doesn't. Sort of say. Oh well. I don't need to fight anymore. I don't need to bother. Not at all. In fact. It spurs us on. It's the impetus.

Saying the Lord. Has done everything. He's won the victory. But the Lord. Still requires us. To take up the sword. He still requires us. To follow him.

Whatever it costs. Wherever that will be. But he has told us. I've won it for you. Death. When it comes knocking at your door. Yes.

[ 25 : 31 ] There's an element of fear in it. And nobody wants to part. With their own body. And to close their eyes. To all the many blessings. Of this life. And there's a fear of the uncertainty.

But you know my friend. When that time comes. God will give you grace. The grace to live. And the grace to die. And he will remove. The sting of death.

From you. Oh death. Where is your sting? He will remove. The claims of the grave. So the grave. Won't have the victory.

He'll only be in the grave. For a wee while. And then it'll have to open up. And give you back to God. See he's one. He's one at all. Surely he's worth following.

Surely he's worth giving your life. Your all to. Because without. The captain of our salvation. Leading us in life. I don't really know where we're going.

[ 26 : 28 ] Where are you going? If you don't have him. Throw in your lot with him. And be persuaded. He will at the end of the day. Only do you good. Let's pray. Amen.

O Lord our God. We pray that. We may follow the Lord. With all our heart. Forgive us Lord. For any times. When there are. When we may display. Cowardice.

When we may display. Lack of discipline. Where we may. Display. A lack of unity. Give us Lord. A single mindedness. To follow the Lord.

And to live for him. In this world. Bless us. We pray. And do us good. Guide each one of us. And part us now. With a blessing. Taking away our sin. In Jesus name.

We ask it. Amen. Amen.