

Soldiers Of Christ, Arise!

Introduction. Of all the metaphors used in relation to a Christian, the strongest is that of a soldier. Christians are at war against the spiritual forces of wickedness (2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-12). In 2 Timothy 2, as Paul was addressing his young colleague Timothy, he encouraged and exhorted him as a soldier of Christ. We can also examine the same text and discover how we can be good soldiers.

I. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is Strong (2 Timothy 2:1-2)***

- A. The urgent admonition vs. 1 to be strong is connected to his words in 1:7-8, 12-14, where he speaks of the grace of God in Christ as a source of strength or power. To be a good evangelist, Timothy will need a full measure of God's power that only He can impart.
- B. Timothy was to hasten to complete his mission of committing the truth to men who were qualified to be entrusted with godly teaching (1 Corinthians 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6). The church will always need able people to spread God's truth (cf. Titus 2:3-4).

II. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is Strict (2 Timothy 2:3-10)***

- A. The main burden of this letter is Paul's summoning of Timothy to accept his share of suffering by coming to Rome. Paul uses three illustrations of strictness: a soldier, an athlete and a farmer. Timothy needed encouragement to persevere through danger, rigid discipline and hardship.
 1. The instruction to be a good soldier is similar to his language in Ephesians 6:13-17. On both occasions of writing, Paul is in chains guarded by Roman soldiers.
 - a) The word "entangled" pictures a sheep whose wool is caught in thorns. The word is also used in 2 Peter 2:20, where Peter speaks of being "entangled" in the "pollutions of the world."
 - b) The word "affairs" means "a carrying on of business or trade." They were "non-military activities" which were not wrong in and of themselves (Luke 8:14).
 2. Athletics supplied a favorite metaphor for Paul (1 Corinthians 9:25-27). In 4:7-8, Paul will return to the analogy of the athlete and the crown which one receives when he finishes the race.
 3. The reference to the reward due the hard-working farmer is paralleled in 1 Corinthians 9:10-11 where Paul speaks of rewards due for his service performed.
- B. To further his understanding of the mystery of the cross, Paul not only admonishes Timothy to remember Jesus Christ, his risen, living Lord (cf. Romans 1:3-4), but he also helps him to see that his suffering is

the inevitable consequence of preaching the gospel. In short, Timothy must look beyond the cross to the crown.

- C. In vs. 9 he draws an analogy from his own imprisonment by declaring that the words of a "bound" man are not bound (Philippians 1:12-14; John 8:32). In Colossians 4:3, Paul made a play on the idea of an open door for the word of a man behind locked doors.
- D. Paul's suffering was a vicarious offering of himself on behalf of the church (Ephesians 3:13; Colossians 1:24). He was even committed to dying that others might live (2 Corinthians 4:10).

III. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is Secure (2 Timothy 2:11-13)***

- A. These three verses are in the typical form of Hebrew poetic parallelism: four "if" clauses, each followed by a balancing conclusion. The first two are positive, the other two negative. Paul refers to this as a "faithful" or true saying.
 1. The reference to being dead with Him is a reference to the death of sin in our lives (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:7).
 2. If we suffer in this life, we will reign with Him in a glorified state in the life to come. The Lord suffered and then was glorified (Luke 24:26; Hebrews 2:9-10). The same will happen to a faithful Christian (Romans 8:18; 1 Peter 5:10).
 3. The first two statements are paradoxes, while the third reminds one of Matthew 10:32-33. We cannot reject Christ without being rejected ourselves.
- B. "He abideth faithful" is a statement of the consistency of God's character, a strong promise to Christians of the security of salvation and heaven (Hebrews 6:13-18; 2 Corinthians 1:18; 1 John 1:9).

IV. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is Sound In The Faith (2 Timothy 2:14-19)***

- A. Earlier Paul spoke to Timothy on the useful or lawful use of the Law in teaching sound doctrine that accords with the gospel (1 Timothy 1:8). It was a tragedy that Paul suffered for the gospel while others indulged in vanity through disputing and argumentation.
- B. "Study" means to "be diligent" (cf. 2 Timothy 4:9, 21; Titus 3:12). The word for "shew" signifies to put oneself at God's disposal (cf. Romans 12:1). Timothy is to make a total commitment of himself as the Lord's servant. An "approved" workman is one who is purified, consecrated, useful and ready (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:18; Romans 16:10). "Rightly dividing" means to cut a straight path through the word, giving it a proper interpretation.
- C. The Christian is to avoid false teaching because it will "eat as doth a canker." The false doctrines of Hymenaeus and Philetus concerning the resurrection were upsetting or overthrowing the faith of some (cf. 1

Thessalonians 4:14-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

D. God's firm foundation are those faithful members of His church. These are the solid, reliable and dependable element in the membership in contrast to the unreliable, false element represented by Hymenaeus and Philetus.

1. The last line is the same line of reasoning and admonition used elsewhere by Paul (1 Corinthians 15:30-33; 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18; 5:2-11).
2. Confusion over the doctrine of the resurrection had a discouraging effect and disastrous consequences.

V. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is Sanctified (2 Timothy 2:20-23)***

A. Paul makes the point that there are both vessels of dishonor unfit for good deeds and vessels of honor who were useful for noble deeds in the church.

1. In Romans 9:21-23, Paul said the potter makes one vessel for beauty (glory) and another for menial use (destruction).
2. In Acts 9:15, Paul himself is called a "chosen vessel" by Christ to "bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

B. Paul applies the metaphor of vs. 20 by urging Timothy to separate himself from dishonorable men and to prepare himself to be both precious and useful to the Lord for good works. It is interesting to note that the problem in Ephesus had to do with enemies of the truth within the church (Hymenaeus and Philetus), not with foes outside (cf. Acts 20:30).

1. The word for "purge" in vs. 21 is found elsewhere only in 1 Corinthians 5:7, where it means to purge out a sinful person.
2. The word for "avoid" in vs. 23 is also found in Titus 3:10, where we are commanded to "reject" the factious man.

C. The Lord's servant as a vessel of honor is urged to keep company with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (1 Timothy 1:5). Just as he is to purge himself, or separate himself from the vessels of dishonor, he is to associate with vessels of honor.

VI. ***A Soldier Of Christ Is A Servant (2 Timothy 2:24-26)***

A. Paul finally describes the necessities of a soldier of Christ. Although he must fight for the truth, he must do so in a way that demonstrates gentleness and patience.

1. The word for "gentle" is found only here and in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, where it is used in describing the gentleness of a nurse taking care of her children.

2. "Patient" can also mean "forbearing." It occurs only here in the New Testament and means patient under evils and injuries. Other versions say "patient when wronged" or "not resentful." A form of the word occurs in 2 Corinthians 11:1 and Hebrews 13:22.
- B. Paul's words that "God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" blends perfectly with other New Testament teaching.
1. God opens doors for the word (Colossians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 16:9).
 2. God brings growth from the teaching of the truth (1 Corinthians 3:6; 4:15).
 3. The power in the word is God's power (Romans 1:16-17; 2 Corinthians 4:7).
- C. By leading them into a knowledge of the truth through repentance, the soldier of Christ has helped them escape being taken captive of the devil (cf. Luke 5:10; Jude 21-23). These people have been captured by his wiles (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Conclusion. Being a soldier of Christ is not a challenge and responsibility to be taken lightly. It must be done with the greatest desire to serve God and the greatest desire to be strong for your brethren. May the tribe increase of those who are willing to "fight the good fight of faith" and "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:12).