

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/26/03 Brad Brandt

2 Timothy 2:3-7 "Survival Training for the Christian" **

Main Idea: If you are serious about living for Jesus Christ daily, it will take three things according to 2 Timothy 2:3-7.

I. Living for Christ requires the discipline of a soldier (3-4).

A. The soldier's life is marked by duty.

1. You can't do this if you live by your feelings.
2. You must do what's right no matter what the cost.

B. The soldier's life is marked by denial.

1. In Christ's army, you cannot be a weekend soldier.
2. In His army, you must report every day.

C. The soldier's life is marked by delight.

1. You must refuse to live for personal comfort.
2. You must choose to live to please your Commander.

II. Living for Christ requires the determination of an athlete (5).

A. An athlete knows about the grind.

B. An athlete knows about the gain.

C. An athlete knows about the guidelines.

1. You must know God's standard.
2. You must obey God's standard.

III. Living for Christ requires the diligence of a farmer (6).

A. Farmers know about hard work.

B. Farmers know about the harvest.

1. A lot of people want the easy approach to Christian living.
2. There is no such thing.

A Personal Question: How serious am I about living for Christ?

Boarding the SS Dorchester on a dreary winter day in 1943 were 903 troops and four chaplains, including Moody alumnus Lt. George Fox. World War II was in full swing, and the ship was headed across the icy North Atlantic where German U-boats lurked. At 12:00 on the morning of February 3, a German torpedo ripped into the ship. "She's going down!" the men cried, scrambling for lifeboats.

A young GI crept up to one of the chaplains. "I've lost my life jacket," he said. "Take this," the chaplain said, handing the soldier his jacket. Before the ship sank, each chaplain gave his life jacket to another man. The heroic chaplains then linked arms and lifted their voices in prayer as the Dorchester went down. Lt. Fox and his fellow pastors were awarded posthumously the Distinguished Service Cross.

Jesus said in John 15:12-13, "Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

That's true Christianity. Jesus gave His life for us and He calls us to do the same for Him.

I want to tell you at the beginning of this message where we're going. This morning, we will see from God's Word what it takes to serve Christ, in plain and simple terms. Then at the end I'm going to ask this question, "Are you willing to serve Christ on those terms?"

We are in the midst of a series I've entitled, "Living with a Warfare Mentality." We learned about the destructive intent of our enemy in week one, from 1 Peter 5:8-9. In week two we examined the subtle strategy the Evil one uses, as seen in Genesis 3:1-7. Last time we pondered Jesus' warning about living in

enemy territory in John 16:1-4.

One thing's for sure about warfare. It is dangerous.

What will it take if you are serious about living for Jesus Christ daily? This morning, I want you to see a passage from God's Word that lays it on the line. It's black and white. It's a no nonsense passage. It's up front, plain and simple language. If you are serious about living for Jesus Christ daily, it will take three things according to 2 Timothy 2:3-7.

I. Living for Christ requires the discipline of a soldier (3-4).

We are jumping into a context that needs some attention. This letter was written by Paul to Timothy just prior to Paul's execution. Paul is passing the baton of leadership to his junior associate. But Timothy wasn't so sure he wanted it.

Ministry is hard. It's costly. How can anyone do it then? Verse 1, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." You can't do the ministry in your own strength. You must depend on the Lord.

Please notice that. The challenge you are about to hear is for people who know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, as Timothy did. A person enters a relationship with God by grace through faith, not by works. Likewise a person does the ministry by grace, not by personal merit.

But grace is a wonderful motivator. If you've experienced the grace of God you have ample reason to give your all as a soldier.

But you mustn't do it alone. Paul told Timothy to develop other workers who could join him in this awesome assignment. Verse 2, "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."

That's God's design for preserving His church under enemy fire. Timothy was to depend on the Lord and develop other workers. It's no different for us. And it won't be any easier for us than it was for Timothy.

It's true. If we get serious about this God-given agenda, we can expect hardship. If you are serious about giving your life to serve Christ, it won't be easy. The gospel of Christ is free, but it's not cheap. It doesn't cost anything to be saved, but it costs everything to serve.

What does it take? Here's what Paul told Timothy. He used seven images or metaphors of a leader in chapter two. Remember Paul is delivering the mantle to Timothy. A leader must see himself as a teacher (1-2), a soldier (3-4), an athlete (5), a farmer (6), a workman (15), a vessel (21), and finally, a servant (24).

We'll focus on three in this study, starting with the *soldier*. If you are serious about serving Christ, it will take the discipline of a soldier.

Notice verse 3, "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

Timothy, be like a soldier! The Roman Empire was full of soldiers. Paul spent several years of his life chained to soldiers while under arrest. As the apostle looked at the soldiers, he realized the soldier illustrated several key ingredients of the Christian life. Soldiers are marked by three characteristics which we need serving Christ:

A. The soldier's life is marked by duty. Verse 4 begins, "No one *serv*ing as a soldier." The KJV says, "No man that warreth." A soldier is consumed by one reality. The word "warreth" means "to make war". The NASB translates it, "No soldier in active service."

Paul's not talking about the Reservists here. He's thinking of those soldiers in active duty. What's true of that kind of a soldier? He knows it's a life and death matter, so he prepares himself. He stays alert. He trains. Why? It's his duty.

So it must be for the Christian. Duty is not a popular word, but it's vital for the Christian life. Just what is our duty? Paul spells out one piece of it in verse 3, "Endure hardship with us," he says. The term means "to suffer evil treatment along with."

Paul used the same word back in 1:8, "Do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God."

Timothy had a problem that plagues some of us. He was intimidated by the crowd.

Though needed on the front lines, he was prone to hang out in the barracks. So Paul urged him, "Come on Timothy! Don't put down your weapon. Be a good soldier! Get in the battle. It's your duty!"

Allow me to make a couple of observations about duty for the Christian soldier.

1. *You can't do this if you live by your feelings.* My hunch is that few, if any, soldiers have ever felt like going into battle.

2. *You must do what's right no matter what the cost.* Philipps Brooks once said, "It does not take great men to do great things; it only takes consecrated men."

Yes, the soldier's life is marked by duty. Secondly...

B. The soldier's life is marked by denial. "No one serving [the "no one" is emphatic] as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs." The KJV says, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life."

The term "entangles" or "gets involved" means "to weave in, to entwine with." It was used of sheep whose wool got caught in thorns.

What does a good soldier not get caught up in while the battle is raging? Paul says, "civilian affairs" ["the affairs of this life" in the KJV]. What does Paul mean? Soldiers are civilians, too, aren't they? They need the things of this life, too, don't they? The Greek word is *pragmateia*. Guess which English word we get from that? PRAGMATIC. The term refers to any activity, occupation, undertaking, or business dealing in everyday life. That's why the NIV uses the phrase "civilian affairs." We could well paraphrase this, "If you are a soldier of Jesus Christ, don't get wrapped up in the pragmatics of this world."

The Roman code of Theodosius said, "We forbid men engaged on military service to engage in civilian occupations." A soldier is a *soldier*. That is his identity and it supercedes everything else. He may be a husband and father, but if his commander says to go to the battle front, he goes.

So for the Christian. To say that a Christian doesn't get involved in civilian affairs doesn't mean we refuse to have civilian jobs and other interests. We do live in the world. But it does mean this...

1. *In Christ's army, you cannot be a weekend soldier.*

2. *In His army, you must report every day.* If your idea of serving Christ is going to church one day a week, you have settled for a deficient brand of Christianity.

That's why I don't like the term "full time Christian service." That term implies that there's what? *Part-time*

Christian service. But every Christian is called to FULL TIME SERVICE. Granted, God intends for some to serve as pastors and missionaries, and others to serve as teachers, nurses, and factory workers. But all who know His Son are to serve Him. How often? *All the time.*

In his book *One Crowded Hour*, Tim Bowden describes an incident in Borneo in 1964. Nepalese fighters known as Gurkhas were asked if they would be willing to jump from airplanes into combat against the Indonesians. The Gurkhas didn't clearly understand what was involved, but they bravely said they would do it, asking only that the plane fly slowly over a swampy area and no higher than 100 feet. When they were told that the parachutes would not have time to open at that height, the Gurkhas replied, "Oh, you didn't mention parachutes before!"

Now those men understood the radical nature of being a soldier!

I fear that 2 Peter 2:20 has gripped many American Christians more than we care to admit, "If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning."

We must face the fact that many today are notoriously careless in their living. This attitude finds its way into the church. We have liberty, we have money, we live in comparative luxury. As a result, discipline practically has disappeared. What would a violin solo sound like if the strings on the musician's instrument were all hanging loose, not stretched tight, not "disciplined"?

A soldier knows all about self-denial. Why? What motivates a soldier to deny himself? A third characteristic...

C. The soldier's life is marked by delight. Just what is the soldier's delight? Verse 4 concludes, "He wants to please his commanding officer."

Fellow Christians, who is our Commander in Chief? Who gave us this duty? Who motivates us to deny ourselves? Who is it we long to please? It's Jesus Christ.

I need this reminder, and you do, too. If I'm going to please my Lord, it's going to require the discipline of a soldier.

I remember visiting my brother years ago when he was at the Air Force Academy. I couldn't believe what I saw. At the time I was attending a Christian college and had heard people say we had a lot of rules. We were on a picnic compared to the Air Force Academy! Rules abounded! My brother had to dress a certain way. He had to chew his food a certain way. He had to walk a certain way. He had to make his bed a certain way. And life for him boiled down to this: duty, denial, and delight.

Listen. So it is with a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He must be willing to deny himself. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23)."

Are you entangled with the affairs of this life? Are you wrapped up in the pragmatics of this world? There's nothing wrong with caring for daily concerns. We have jobs. We have to work. The laundry is there. The house has to be painted. But the question is this. Have the pragmatics of life taken control of you?

If you want to cut the improper ties with this world, you must make two decisions.

1. *You must refuse to live for personal comfort.* There's a greater delight...

2. *You must choose to live to please your Commander.*

Let me mention one application. Moms and dads, what attitude do you convey to your children? Lots of

Christian parents don't see anything wrong with the following attitude, "Johnny, we love you very much. We hope you'll live for Jesus. We even hope you'll consider the ministry...so long as you find one with job security, decent wages, and live close enough so we can see the grandkids." Are you willing to let your children go where the Commanding Officer desires?

It boils down to this, for each of us. Is it your goal in life to be secure, comfortable, and self-fulfilled, or are you living to please the One who enlisted you, Jesus Christ?

Here's what's involved in serving Christ. First, it takes the discipline of a soldier.

II. Living for Christ requires the determination of an athlete (5).

Verse 5, "Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules."

I thrive on athletics, too much so at times. I enjoy participating and watching. As with the military, there are a lot of lessons from athletics that transfer into the Christian life. That's why Paul used it to help Timothy.

An athlete knows about three things (note the three clauses in verse 5).

A. An athlete knows about the grind. Phrase 1, "If anyone competes as an athlete" [KJV, "If a man also strive for masteries"]. The Greek verb is *athleo*. It means "to compete in a contest in an arena." We get the English term "athletics" from it.

Any athlete knows this. Before the glory comes the grind. And there is no glory in the grind. I marvel at the Olympic athletes. They are totally dedicated. They spend four years doing the same thing over and over and over. The grind.

I don't like especially like to run. But I like what it does for me. Can you relate?

I want to break it to you gently, but it's true. There is a certain amount of grind to the Christian life. Paul talked about it in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. ^{?25?} Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. ^{?26?} Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. ^{?27?} No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

Did you catch those words? Fight, beat, make it my slave.

John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, once made this astute observation, "When people are right with God, they are apt to be hard on themselves and easy on other people. But when they are not right with God, they are easy on themselves and hard on others."

You can't be a good Christian without self-discipline, without subjecting yourself to the *grind*.

But why? Why does an athlete subject himself to the grind?

B. An athlete knows about the gain. Phrase 2, "He does not receive the victor's crown." An athlete knows this. There's a crown, a prize. In Paul's day, Olympic victors received a wreath. That was his gain. And he knew this. No pain, no gain. But the gain was worth the pain.

Paul knew about the gain. Later in this same letter he wrote (4:7-8), "I have fought the good fight, I have

finished the race, I have kept the faith. ^{28?} Now there is in store for me the *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

The songwriter is right, "It will be worth it all." When? In this life? No. The gain doesn't come in this life. When? "When we see Jesus."

Now a word of caution. Not every athlete wins the prize. Who does? An athlete knows. Insight #3...

C. An athlete knows about the guidelines. Phrase 3, "Unless he competes according to the rules" [KJV "except he strive lawfully"]. What rules? There were two sets of rules for athletes in Paul's day. There were the rules of *competition* (for the particular event). There were also the rules for *preparation*.

Before an athlete could even compete in the games of Paul's day, he had to adhere to a strict list of training rules for 10 months. He had to eat certain foods. He had to avoid certain foods. He had to train in a prescribed manner. And he had to sign his name to the fact that he trained and competed "according to the rules." No rules, no wreath.

Do you know what the most tragic words are for an athlete? In my estimation they're not, "I lost," but, "I was disqualified."

Several years ago I watched the State Track street from the stands. On the track was the previous year's mile champion and record holder. She was the definite favorite. The But when the starter raised his hand, she stepped forward across the starting line. She was disqualified. The crowd booed, but the judge had no option. She broke the rules.

Sad, yes. But not nearly as what's happening to Christians these days. Right and left, people are disqualifying themselves from God's service. How? By violating God's rules, God's qualifications.

Several years ago I ran across the book *The Day America Told the Truth*, by James Patterson and Peter Kim (Prentice Hall Press, 1991). The authors led a massive survey of Americans. Their purpose was to give people the opportunity to express what they really believed about things that really matter. Their findings cause me to tremble.

The question was asked, "What are you willing to do for \$10 million?" Does cold cash change our morals? Listen. Money talked to people across the country. For \$10 million, 1 in 4 Americans would abandon all their friends or abandon the church. About as many would turn to prostitution for a week. 7% said they would murder someone for money (that's 1 in 14 people).

--Only 13% of Americans believe in all the 10 commandments. 40% believe in 5 of the 10 commandments. We choose the laws of God we believe in.

--The baby boomers (age 25-44) were asked the question, "Were you a virgin on your wedding night?" Only 29% could answer "yes".

--Among the baby busters (18-24 years old), two-thirds revealed they had lost their virginity by the age of 16.

--Almost 1/3 of all Americans have had or are now having an affair. To top that, nearly 50% admitted they have considered being unfaithful to their spouse.

--1 in 7 Americans has been sexually abused as a child.

--The number one cause of our business decline is low ethics by executives. Who says so? Workers and

executives themselves.

--A letdown in moral values is now considered the number one problem facing our country. 80% of Americans believe that morals and ethics should be taught in our schools again.

A change is needed! Not out *there*, but inside the circle of professing Christians. We need determination, just like the athlete. To keep God's rules you must do two things...

1. *You must know God's standard.* That requires time in His Word.
2. *You must obey God's standard.* Not to merit His favor—that's impossible (remember we are saved by grace)—but *because of His favor.*

Are you with me? Here's the question again. What will it take if I am serious about giving my life to serve Jesus Christ? First, it takes the discipline of a soldier. Second, there's the determination of an athlete. And third...

III. Living for Christ requires the diligence of a farmer (6).

I grew up watching and working for farmers. Men like Wes Miller, Charlie Moore, Jim Yoder, Cyril Woodard. Listen. If farmers know anything at all, they know that farming involves two things: hard work, and the harvest.

It's no different in the Christian life.

A. Farmers know about hard work. "The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops." The term translated "hardworking" means "to become weary, tired, toil, strive, struggle."

Farmers that milked cows used to amaze me. They lived a very predictable life. Every morning at 5:00 they were in the barn for 2 to 3 hours. Then again every evening. Milking the cows. Hard work.

Grain farmers know about hard work too. More than once I've driven along a farm road at night, glanced over into the field, to see the headlights of a combine shining a path so the farmer could harvest his crop.

Farmers know all about hard work. Why do they do it? Because in addition...

B. Farmers know about the harvest. Paul says, "The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops." A farmer would throw in the towel if he didn't get to enjoy the harvest. The harvest is what makes the hard work worthwhile.

I used to work quite a bit for one farmer named Wes Miller. We'd bale hay in the heat of July. We'd crawl up in the haymow and stack that dry, dusty hay. The temperature had to be over 120 degrees! Why did we do it? How did Wes motivate us to keep going? He was wise. His family owned the local Tastee Freeze. The standing deal was always this. You work for me, and you can eat all you want at the end of the day! Foot longs. Fries. Milkshakes! The harvest made the hard work worth it all!

The following says it well...

*Press on.
Nothing in the world
Can take the place of persistence.
Talent will not;
Nothing is more common*

*Than unsuccessful men
With talent.
Genius will not:
Unrewarded genius
Is almost a proverb.
Education will not;
The world is full of
Educated derelicts.
Persistence and determination
Alone are important*

We have a problem today. We have a low view of diligence. Yet the Christian life is impossible without it. It takes diligence to get out of bed and be in time for Sunday School. It takes diligence to get to bed at a decent hour Saturday night so you feel like getting up on Sunday morning. It takes diligence to set aside quality time each day for personal fellowship with God in His Word. It takes diligence to overcome bad habits.

If we're in Christ we can do these things. We have the potential in Christ. Grace makes it possible. The question is, are we willing to exhibit the diligence of a farmer?

Simply put...

1. *A lot of people want the easy approach to Christian living. But know this...*
2. *There is no such thing.*

One of the best pieces of counsel I've ever received came from my New Testament professor in seminary. Dr. Hoch warned, "Look out for books with titles like, 'The Secret of the Christian Life.' There is no *secret*."

He's right. There's nothing secretive or mysterious about it at all. The Christian life boils down to this. First, make sure you are *in Christ*. Then find out the potential you have in Christ (that takes the hard work of studying God's Word). Finally tap into that potential day by day by day. That demands diligence. And diligence involves hard work. Just ask the farmer!

Answer this. Are you *in Christ*? The fact is, you were not in Christ when you entered the world. You were *in Adam*, separated from Christ and cut off from God. To be in Christ you must come to grips with what Jesus did on the cross. You must believe that He died for your sins and rose again for your salvation. You must repent and accept Him as your Savior and Commander. The moment you do He will give you new life.

Many of you are in Christ today. What do you need to do? The same thing Timothy needed to do. Look at verse 7, "Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this."

We need to *reflect*. The term *noeo* means "to think." Paul is saying we need to use our *minds* and ponder these illustrations. If we're going to be used of God, here's what it takes. We must have the discipline of a soldier, the determination of an Olympic athlete, and the diligence of a farmer.

We've been in survival training this morning. I told you at the beginning of this message that we would conclude with a question. Here it is. Are you willing to serve Christ on those terms?

A woman rushed up to famed violinist Fritz Kreisler after a concert and cried: "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you do." Kreisler replied, "I did." How about you? Ask yourself...

A Personal Question: How serious am I about living for Christ?

May God help us to be like the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer.