

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 6/14/92
II Timothy 2:3-7 "Who Said the Christian Life Was Easy?"

Skit: Soldier Skit by Camp Staff

Scripture: II Timothy 2:1-7

Intro: Illust: News reporter demanding person take him up in plane...

Q: Do you like surprises?

I find most people like to have the truth up front.

"Level with me. What will it cost me? What'll it take? What are the expectations?" Listen. The Christian life is not an easy life.

Illust:

Q: What will it take if I am serious about giving my life to serve Christ?

Q: 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. Black and white. It's a no nonsense passage. Up front, plain simple language.

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

I. The Discipline of a Soldier (3-4)

A. Marked by Duty

B. Marked by Denial

C. Marked by Delight

II. The Determination of an Athlete (5)

A. The Grind

B. The Gain

C. The Guidelines

III. The Diligence of a Farmer (6)

A. Hard Work

B. Harvest

Note: I want to tell you at the beginning where we're going. This morning, we're going to see what it takes to serve Christ. Plain and simple. At the end, I'm going to ask each of us this question, "Am I willing to serve Christ on those terms?"

Q: What will it take if I am serious about serving Christ?

I. The Discipline of a Soldier (3-4)

Last week we listened as Paul told Tim to do 2 things: Depend on the Lord (1), and Develop Leaders (2). That's God's design for preserving His Church.

But listen. If we get serious about doing this, if we get serious about serving Christ, we can expect hardship! In fact, 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! Whoever said the Christian life was easy?!

What's involved in being a good servant of Jesus Christ?

Here's what Paul told Timothy. He used 7 images/metaphors of a leader. Remember Paul is passing the baton to Timothy. A leader must see himself as a:

1. Teacher (1-2)
2. Soldier (3-4)
3. Athlete (5)
4. Farmer (6)
5. Workman (15)
6. Vessel (21)
7. Servant (24)

If I am serious about serving Christ, it will take the Discipline of a Soldier.
V 3 "Thou therefore endure hardness..."

Tim, be like a soldier! The Roman Empire was full of soldiers. Paul spent several years of his life chained to soldiers while under house arrest. As the apostle looked at the soldiers, he realized the soldier illustrated several key ingredients of the Christian life.

Soldiers are marked by 3 characteristics which we need serving Christ:

A. Marked by Duty

V 4 "No man that warreth"

A soldier is consumed by one reality. The word "warreth" means "to make war". The NASB translates, "No soldier in active service." Paul's not talking about the Reservists. He's thinking of those soldiers in active duty. What's true of that soldier?

He's in a battle. He knows it's a life and death matter. 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 notice our duty in v 3.

"endure hardness" = "to suffer evil treatment along with"

Paul used the same word in 1:8, "...be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel..." Remember Timothy's problem? He was intimidated by the crowd. He was needed on the front lines! But he was prone to hang out in the barracks! So Paul urged him, "Come on Tim! Don't put down your weapon. Be a good soldier! Get in the battle! It's your duty!" Secondly, a soldier is...

B. Marked by Denial

V 4 "No man...entangles himself with the affairs of this life"

"No man" = emphatic

"entangles"--to weave in, to entwine with (used of sheep whose wool is caught in thorns)

"the affairs of this life"--What's Paul mean? Greek word "pragmateia." Guess which English word we get from that? PRAGMATIC. The word refers to any activity, occupation, undertaking, or business dealing in everyday life. Civilian affairs.

Paraphrase--"If you are a soldier of Jesus Christ, don't get wrapped up in the pragmatics of this world." Quote: Barclay, 159

That's why I don't like the term "full time Christian service." It implies there's what? "Part-time Christian service!" Every Christian is called to FULL TIME SERVICE! For some, as pastors and missionaries. For others, as teachers and nurses.

Illust:

I fear that II Peter 2:20 has gripped many American Christians more than we care to admit, "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in it, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

A soldier knows all about self-denial.

Q: Why? What motivates a soldier to deny himself? A third characteristic...

C. Marked by Delight

What is the soldier's delight?

V 4 "...that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier"

Q: Christians, Who is our Commander in Chief? Who gave us this duty? Who motivates us to deny ourselves? Who is it we long to delight?

A: V 3 "...of Jesus Christ"

Christian, remember you're a soldier. It takes discipline to serve Christ!

Illust: I remember visiting my brother 11 years ago when he was at the Air Force Academy. I couldn't believe what I saw. I was attending a Christian college. I heard people say WE had a lot of rules. We were on a picnic compared to them! Rules abounded! He had to eat 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 it all boiled down to this--duty, denial, delight.

Listen. So it is with a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He must be willing to deny himself. Jesus said, "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." (Lk 9:23)

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

Illust: Men coming out of Seminary, "Lord I'll serve You IF you call me to a church with a 4 bedroom parsonage, with at least 250 people, a lucrative salary, and 4 weeks of vacation year!"

Illust: 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!"

Parents, are you willing to let your children go where the Commanding Officer wants them to go?!

Q: Is it your goal in life to be secure, to be comfortable, to enjoy life?

Q: Or is it your goal in life to please the One who enlisted you, Jesus Christ?

Tran: What does it take to serve Jesus Christ? First, the Discipline of a Soldier.

II. The Determination of an Athlete (5)

V 5 "And if a man also strive..." (=Professional, not amateur; not spare time thing)

I love athletics. As with the military, there are a lot of lessons from athletics that transfer into the Christian life.

Illust:

Key: An athlete knows about 3 things (note 3 phrases in v 5)...

A. An athlete knows about The Grind.

Phrase 1--"If a man also strive for masteries"

greek = "athleo" = athletics, to compete as an athlete, to compete in a contest

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 4 years doing the same thing over and over and over. The grind.

Illust: I don't like especially like to run. But I like what it does for me!

I want to break it to you gently, but listen. There is a certain amount of grind to the Christian life.

See: I Cor 9:24-27 "...I run...I keep under my body...subjection..."

Q: Why does an athlete subject himself to the grind?

B. An athlete knows about The Gain.

Phrase 2--"yet is he not crowned"

An athlete knows this. There's a crown, a prize. In Paul's day, Olympic victors received a wreath. That was his gain. But he knew this--No pain, no gain. But the gain is worth the pain!

II Tim 4:8 "the crown of righteousness"

Hymn: "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus..."

Caution: Not every athlete wins the prize! Who receives the crown?

C. An athlete knows about The Guidelines.

Phrase 3--"except he strive lawfully"

"lawfully"--key word; lit. "according to the rules"

What rules? There were 2 sets of rules for professional athletes in Paul's day:

1. The Rules of Competition--for the particular event
2. The Rules for Preparation

Before an athlete could even compete in the games of Paul's day, he had to adhere to a strick 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.

Q: Do you know what are the most tragic words for an athlete?

A: Not, "I lost." But, "I was disqualified."

Illust: State Track-Former mile champion stepped forward...disqualified

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.

Stats: I scanned a book this week entitled, 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 our friends or abandon the church. About as many would turn to prostituion 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.

--Quote: "90% of all Americans believe in God. It is Who that God is that contains the surprises."

Challenge: We need Determination. Just like the Athlete. To keep God's rules.

Tran: Are you with me? Here's the question--What will it take if I am serious about giving my life to serve Jesus Christ? First, the Discipline of a Soldier. Second, the Determination of an Athlete. And third...

III. 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 2 things: Hard work, and the Harvest.

It's no different in the Christian life.

A. Hard Work

V 6 "The farmer that labors" (=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 of...

B. Harvest

V 6 "must be first partaker of the fruits"

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!

Illust: I used to work 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 temp had to be over 120 degrees! Why'd we do it? How'd 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!

Problem: 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! It takes diligence to set aside quality time each day for personal fellowship with God. It takes diligence to overcome bad habits. Listen. We have the potential in Christ! The question is, Do we want to tap into it?!

Warning: A lot of people want the easy way out in living the Christian life.

Illust: One of the best words of counsel I've ever received was from my NT professor in seminary. "Look out for books with titles like, 'The Secret of the Christian Life.' There is none.

The Christian life is a matter of doing 2 things--Find out the Potential you have in Jesus Christ (that takes hard work of studying God's Word). Then tap into that potential day by day by day. That demands diligence. And diligence involves hard work. Just ask the farmer!

Q: Why was Paul so used of God? See I Cor 15:10

1. God's Grace--"By the grace of God I am what I am"
2. His own hard work--"I labored more abundantly than they all"

Conclusion:

Q: Are you serious about being used by Christ? S.S. teachers, Camp Staff, choir members, each Christian. Do you want to be used by God?

What do you need to do? Look at v 7...

V 7 "Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding..."

Here's what Paul is saying. Use your MIND 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.

Q: "How can I be that kind of person?"

A: II Tim 2:1 "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Now we've come full circle. We'll never please God unless we learn to be strong in Jesus Christ. And if we're strong in Christ, we'll delight in serving Christ. But if we're going to serve Christ, we must be strong in Christ!

Q: Are you serious about giving your life to serve Jesus Christ?

Illust: One summer day while growing up, I remember making home made ice cream. Nothing like it! My mother mixed up the contents. My brother and I took care of adding the ice, and the salt. 45 minutes later we finished. We carefully removed the lid. And stuck our finger in to sample the heavenly product. We gagged! It was salty! Come to find out, the container had a bad rust spot in it. We went through all the motions for nothing. The ice cream was ruined by a rust spot in the vessel.

Listen. God doesn't bless and use vessels with rust spots. They only curdle the pure milk of the Word. God uses people whose lives are right with Him. Obviously that means we must be saved. But it also means...