

Spiritual Warfare – “**Learning to Endure**” part 2 lesson # 9

Life always deals blows to us that either cause us to be strengthened or tempt us to give up and succumb and admit defeat.

We must make a determined decision that if we’re ever blindsided by something hurtful that others do or say, or negative situations come; we will immediately forgive and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts.

Matt. 24:10 Last days words from Jesus – “Then many shall be offended and shall betray one another & shall hate one another.”

2Tim. 2:3 Paul told Timothy: “You therefore **endure hardness** as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

Paul used four Greek words that conveyed a very strong message to Timothy and to us today:

1. “Endure hardness”
2. “Good”
3. “Soldier”
4. “Of”

1. “**You are to ENDURE HARDNESS...**”

- Hardness = Believers in the Western world have not had to deal with much “hardness.”
- A small portion of the Western population has had to fight in wars and knows its effects. PERSECUTION OF BUSINESS OWNERS STANDING FOR THEIR CHRISTIAN VALUES AND CONSCIENCE.

The baker Jack Phillips in CO – came under persecution when he refused to make a wedding cake for a transgender couple which was against his Christian convictions. The courts of CO took his case and made an example of his beliefs as being antagonist. He was heavily fined, mocked and almost put out of business.

The Supreme Court took up his case based on Phillips statement of faith:

L.A. Times reports that: “Phillips is a Christian believer who states he will not make cakes or baked goods celebrating any marriage that is contrary to his understanding of Biblical teaching. He refuses to make cakes that celebrate Halloween or that carry anti-American or anti-family themes.” The Supreme Court decided in favor of Jack Phillips.

Update: Phillips is now being taken back to court in CO for the refusal to make a cake celebrating a transgender female who called his shop requesting a cake that blue on the outside and pink on the inside to celebrate her transgender life.

Phillips lawyers are saying it appears the State of CO is not trying to make a point of defending people, but are trying to put a particular person out of business – Jack Phillips.

- Most of us live in nice, safe, comfortable homes with good transportation systems and amenities. We have so many extras beyond our necessities.
- Hardness to us is when we may have to work on days we didn't want to, or our job benefits were not all that great, or we didn't have the funds to live the life we desired to live.
- This is not a popular message for American believers, especially in the times we live in as described by: 2Tim. 2:2, 4 "For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;"
- Hardness for some means getting to church on time after a busy week at work.
- When and if the pastor preaches too long or too hard and cuts into people's leisure plans, or appeals to funds for ministry
- Or when they are asked to volunteer their time at the church in an area that may not be their preference.
- The concept of commitment has been greatly diluted in modern times.

Thank the Lord for the way He does bless the church in the Western world; but typically most Christians will only do something for the Lord when it is easy or meets their time schedule or personal needs.

- Today's mindset is when it gets tough being a Christian, many don't resolve to stay put and fight where God has called them to fight.
- Their comment is usually: "Well, it's hard. And if it's hard, it must not be God." "If it were God, it would all fit together nicely and be smooth without problems, because when God does something, it just falls into place."
- **Where did we ever come up with that theology?**

Try telling that to the first through the third century believers or to believers today who live persecuted lives in most areas of the world.

They would never think of saying: "I'll live for Jesus if it's easy."
They know the real meaning of a life commitment.

How did the church continue strong for generations?

Satan hates the church and wants to tear it up, divide us, and confuse us, so people will run

away when things get hard.

The early believers were more committed to the task of representing Christ than their oppressors were to theirs of living an immoral life without the Lord.

They stood their ground and defied Satan and the Roman government who persecuted them mercilessly – and they outlasted them all.

What are you committed to do in this day?

We need to thank the Lord these believers were not “wimpy” in their commitment to the faith.

It is sobering to think how many believers in the Western church would defect if we were subjected to the same persecutions those early believers experienced.

For many Western believers, Christianity simply means getting together once or twice a week to sing, raise their hands, give a little to the Kingdom, receive something for themselves, endure a sermon, shake hands with each other and be off their way to live their lives.

Many think they can enjoy God without personal cost or having to pay any price.

But there are those who are deeply committed spiritual warriors who boldly stand their ground for the Kingdom of God.

It is rare, but refreshing when you find a group of believers like this.

This is what and who the Lord wants us to be, it's a group of believers I want to pastor and lead to fulfill God's will in these last days.

Songs filled with victory, the glory of the Lord, messages filled with challenges & conviction, challenge and a call to a higher commitment.

In a committed church, believers walk away confronted knowing what God is requiring of them – responding with a YES TO THE LORD

In this kind of congregation, sickness is healed, bondages are removed, sin is dealt with; slothfulness is shaken off, weak – wimpy – **don't make it too hard thinking** is nonexistent.

God's people view themselves as enlisted in the ranks of God's army.

Will you take your place in the ranks of God's end-time army?

Paul's admonition to Timothy and us: 2Tim. 2:3 "You endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

Timothy had to have a warfare mentality:

- "**Endure Hardness**" = *sunkakopatheo* =
Sun = "To be in partnership with others, either the Lord or other believers for the Kingdom purposes."
Kakos = "Something wicked, foul, bad or evil."
Pathos = "Suffering."

Suffering has a lot to do with Christian combat fighters.

- Timothy was suffering in many ways because of the stressful situation he was in.
- He knew his future, as well as other believers, could include physical suffering—even death in the near future.
- He lived in the tension of the Roman government knowing his name and location and could come for him at any time and kill him.
- His mind was potentially tormented with thoughts of how will they kill me: Torture, hanging, crucifixion, burning at the stake, how would he die as a martyr?
- Nero was killing Christians with a vengeance and Timothy could be next.
- Makes sense that Paul would say to him: 2Tim. 2:7-8 "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

When compounded, these three words making up Endure Hardness mean:

"Join in as a partner with the rest of us [sun] who are soldiers for the Lord; face the vile, horrible, foul, ugly circumstances [kakos] that are all around you; and if you must, suffer [pathos] to get the job done."

Paul was telling Timothy that:

1. He wasn't the only soldier serving the Lord. *Sun*
 - Although it looked like everyone had abandoned the Lord, this wasn't the case, many believers were still faithful.
 - You are not in this mess alone. Your problems are not unique! A bunch of us are facing the same dilemma right now. Rather than running away from it, join in with the rest of us as soldiers.
2. Using the word *kakos*, Paul was telling Timothy –
 - "Yes, you're right. It's pretty bad out here in the combat zone! This is a bad, foul, wicked situation we're facing right now.
 - Timothy needed to hear that he wasn't alone, so do the rest of us.

3. Paul told Timothy to “*Pathos*” suffer if he must.
 - Paul know what it was like to suffer, and he didn’t want to believe that on anyone; but a job needed to be done and if it meant suffering to get it done, then suffer he must.

What has been your determination as you suffer for the sake of being a Christian and follower of Christ?

What is a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

Paul telling Timothy to Endure Hardness was laying it on the line to Timothy; making it clear what is required of a soldier in the Lord’s army.

Paul was telling Timothy: “You’re not the only one who has been wounded on the battlefield. The rest of us have too. Quit thinking you’re the only one who’s ever been through hardship, and join in with the rest of us who are faithfully fighting it out. You must come to grips with the horrible situation around you. It doesn’t look like it’s going to change soon, and in fact, it might get worse before it gets better. Instead of living the remainder of your life in fear, rise to meet the occasion. Face your fears, and if necessary, suffer to get the job done that God has called you to do. Suffering is no fun, but someone must do the job. Even if your mind is under great stress, keep doing your ministry anyway.”

2. **“As a GOOD Soldier”** 2Tim. 2:3

“Good” *kalos* = “something good, beautiful, excellent, fit, capable, virtuous.”

- In that day, the virtues of what made a Roman soldier were well known – skilled, disciplined, committed, fierce, hard working.

Paul used military language to refer to himself, his friends, and the Church.

In using this terminology, Paul is telling believers what God expects of them to be - His army and to win against the enemy.

Anyone desiring to be successful as a believer in the Kingdom of God must know that their assignment will set them apart from other people.

The early believers had a very militaristic view of themselves, believing that they were to “**take**” the world until every nation had been evangelized and converted to the knowledge of Jesus.

So sure were the early Christians of their mission that they were successful in changing their world and the course of history for all time.

They didn't sit around and wait for another wave of the Spirit before they rose up in power. They had already received power.

They knew what Jesus wanted them to do, and they went and did it.

In order to accomplish their mission – they were willing to sacrifice everything.

3. **“Of” Jesus Christ –**

“Of” could be translated “***like***”

- “Be a good soldier ***like*** Jesus Christ.” Jesus was a good soldier.
- Paul was a good soldier for Christ. He cut no slack for his flesh at all.
- He knew he was called by God to do whatever was required in order to finish the job God had called him to do.

The message of the Kingdom of God was highly controversial and political in nature. It demanded allegiance to a Higher Power, a Higher King, and another Kingdom. Because of their allegiance, they were suffering for the Gospel – just like soldiers who had been captured by hostile forces.

When Jesus gave the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20 “Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”

The believers of that day – took it seriously!

That's why Acts 1:8 happened to them – “You shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you shall be witnesses of Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth.”

They really believed they were to take the Gospel to the entire world not just to **affect** the World – but to **take** the world.

The kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of Light are battling for this world – mankind.

Many believe today this command from the Lord is saying:

“**Try** to go into all the world. **If** you can, send missionaries to some parts of the world. Although it's really not possible to win them all, try to win some in every nation. Of course, it will never happen, but give it your best shot to bring the Good News to every segment of society.”

We've taken the Great Commission and turned it in to the Little Commission.
Our thinking says: "Go into every nation and try to win some, if possible."

Jesus meant for us to rise up so strong in the Spirit and be so militant in our faith that we could literally reach the entire world and give every member of every nations the opportunity to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fully equipped the early church drove the forces of hell back – this is why Paul used so much military terminology.

Where are your front lines of today's battle?

It is where God has told you to take a stand of faith.
This is precisely where satan will oppose/resist you.
When you take your stand for righteousness and put your knowledge to work, that's when the battle really begins and the enemy starts throwing darts at your life.

The battle starts when you begin obeying the Word of the Lord.

The Lord has called us to fight where we are!
When it gets rough where we are, we must join with other brave warriors to face the reality of opposition, overcome it, and get the job done – even if it causes our lives to be uncomfortable.

That's why Paul told Timothy: "Endure hardness, and join with others who are fighting.
Face the vile circumstances, and if it means you must suffer, then suffer.
You must do whatever it takes to get the job done."

Prov. 28:19 "Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies will have their fill of poverty."

If you stay right where God has planted you and work the ground, you're going to eventually produce a crop. It might take time, but the harvest will come.

Gal. 6:9 "Do not be weary in well doing, for in due season, you will reap, **IF YOU FAINT NOT!**"

ERV "We must not get tired of doing good. We will receive your harvest of eternal life at the right time. We must not give up. "

Just When Your Breakthrough Is About to Occur:

God is getting your life into alignment, hell's forces are being driven back; but then pressure becomes so intense that you give in to fear and decide to slip away to try something else that's a little easier.

This is why it is critical to determine to ENDURE HARDNESS.

God is looking for spiritual fighters who will stay steadfast at their assigned post and fight the good fight of faith.

You may ask and wonder:

“Won't this require a great deal from me?”

Yes, it will probably require our very lives.

That is the decision that lies before each of us:

Will we choose to follow Heaven's Commander in Chief and give our lives to become good soldiers of Jesus Christ?

Or will we give up and become defeated & whimper back like many believers are today?