

“Facing the Rigors of a Soldier!”

2 Timothy 2:1-4

Intro. – During some war games a commanding officer’s jeep got stuck in the road. The CO saw some soldiers lounging nearby and told them to help him get unstuck.

“Sorry, sir,” said one of the loafers, “we’ve been classified dead and the umpire said we couldn’t contribute in anyway.”

The CO turned to his driver and said, “Drag a couple of those dead bodies over here and throw them under the wheels to give us some traction.”

I’ve never been in the armed services, but I’ve heard accounts of the rigors that come from being a soldier... I am a soldier though, I’m a soldier of the Cross and the parallels between being a soldier of the Cross and a soldier in the armed forces are striking. This is why Paul, under the inspiration of God, urged this young preacher to compete like an athlete, work hard like a farmer, and endure like a soldier.

Purpose: to better learn to deal with the rigors of living for Christ in a pagan world

Several years ago prior to 1969 when man first walked on the moon, the Hayden Planetarium in New York advertised the following: “Reservations for a Trip to the Moon.” It went on to explain the detail of the 240,000 mile trip to the moon. Now, obviously this was a joke, but do you know they received 18,000 applications in just a few days. A psychologist who studied these applications concluded most were eager to apply simply to *escape their responsibilities and problems.*

Many view Christianity as a weakness, as an emotional crutch inducing people to escape the rigors of life. Is that what it’s all about? Read recently: “What if the Hokey-Pokey really is what it’s all about?!” This is hardly the case. Biblical faith is NOT an opiate that induces a drug-like passivity. Faith in Christ Jesus is anything but an escape. It’s the mean through which we embrace God’s grace! It’s the means enabling us to face the rigors of being a soldier. Let’s look at facing the rigors of a soldier:

I INSTRUCTIONS (Orders) are Given

A. Be a Soldier

1. Paul is making clear that to be a Christian is to be a soldier for Christ.
2. In other words – “Timothy, from now on you belong not to yourself, but to Another. You’re not to do your will or your desire; instead, you must do Christ’s will and His desire!
3. Anyone in or who has been in the military understands this vital principle – when orders are given you do them or suffer the consequences!
4. Illus. – Carl Wesneski writes when he was in the Army he worked for a Colonel who was a “take charge” leader. One day Carl drove the Colonel to Pentagon for an important briefing. In military fashion, the Colonel ran the meeting – he was in charge... When they left to return home, the Colonel was in charge. But because of wrong directions given by the Colonel, Wesneski says they were stopped and given two costly tickets. “Suddenly,” said Wesneski, “I was in charge!”
5. Christians, as soldiers we belong to “the Captain of our salvation” (Hebrews 2:10) – be a soldier!

B. Live a Soldierly Manner

1. In armed services one expects serious training... engagement of conflict... threat of physical harm
2. To be a Christian is NOT the easiest way to live – Christianity in a pagan world = conflict...
 - a. health/wealth gospel is false... it’s not an easy road we are traveling to heaven!
 - b. Luke 14:25-34 = Jesus wanted potential soldiers to count the cost of being in His forces.
 - c. Luke 9:57-58 “*Lord, I’ll follow you wherever!*” Jesus knew hadn’t counted the cost = “*I am more homeless than a fox, more destitute than the birds of the air. If you follow Me you’ll have to endure hardship.*” Note: this man slinks away and we hear nothing more from him.
 - d. Luke 13:23-24 “*Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?... Strive to enter through the narrow door...*”
 - “strive” like an athlete in competition, like a farmer in harvest, like a soldier in conflict...

C. Accept the Soldier's Lot

1. Speaks directly to the willingness to shoulder or share the burden/hardships of battle.
2. You don't have to face up to life and its disappointments:
 - a. many choose to go this route...refuse to face up and they take the easiest route.
 - b. fact is, many of today's "heroes" are those who choose the line of least resistance, they refuse to get into the battle accepting the soldier's lot.
3. 1 Timothy 4:16 *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."*
 - "save" in the sense of from undisciplined lives and faulty theology.

Our orders have been given = have we accepted the soldier's lot, are we really soldiers of the Cross?!

II Why the Instructions (Orders) are GIVEN

A. We Are Tempted to Evade Our Duties

1. Paul knew this of himself, Timothy and of you and me – we're tempted to take the easy way.
2. Many are willing for others to be overloaded with more than their part while they do nothing:
 - a. Illus. – have you heard the name of the latest guided missile: "Civil Service Servant" – It won't work, you can't fire it, and it's costing tax payers a fortune.
 - b. Illus. – plant manager giving tour. Visitor asked, "How many people work here in the plant?" Manager replied, "Oh, about one out of ten."
 - c. when it comes to being a loyal soldier of the Cross, there is no easy way about it.

B. We Are Struggling with Sin Sickness

- Timothy had three areas of struggle we also have:

1. Fears beset us
 - a. Timothy was timid and fearful...
 - b. we are timid and fearful...
 - living as Christians in this pagan world – why it's difficult to talk to friends about Christ... speak up for what is right and good... easy to settle for mediocrity...
 - c. let's face it, living for Christ in a pagan world is no "walk in the park" – we're beset by fears.
2. Immaturity besets us
 - a. Paul to Timothy – let no man look down on him because he is young (4:12) = "grow up"
 - b. why did he have a hard time growing up? – perhaps pampered by 2 women in his life... note: not putting them down... simply saying had hard time cutting the apron strings.
 - c. perhaps we have been pampered and pampered each other resulting in immaturity...
3. Physical limitations beset us
 - a. these bodies can be so frustrating can't they?...
 - b. Timothy had serious health problems... stomach (5:23)...
 - c. weak body doesn't add to one's piety – weak body can and is a terrible liability.
 - d. rightly used, can be one of those "all things work together for good" matters...

Timothy – timid, immature and sickly found life a real challenge. We're none different. We struggle... yet God's Spirit is given and we've been given instructions for a reason – let's be soldiers for Him!

III How Instructions (Orders) Should be RECEIVED

A. Crucify Self Daily

1. What Timothy did:
 - a. sickness and suffering do not always result in unselfishness...
 - b. Timothy received orders and learned to crucify SELF...
 - c. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:19-22 *"But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly... For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel, like a child serving his father."*

2. This is what we can do through the power of God's Spirit in our lives...
3. We must demonstrate as good soldiers of the Cross that SELF has been crucified with Christ!

B. Face the Task Head On

1. Timothy conquered his fears and tendency to seek the easy route/line of least resistance.
2. We can do likewise – serving and worshipping Christ in our culture is difficult at best; nevertheless, we've each been equipped to make sure the BODY is healthy.
3. When the BODY is healthy, Christ is lifted up and people are won and built in Him!
4. We've been assured that everything needed to make the BODY healthy will be provided – this excludes any excuse for not facing the task head on.

Marching On! Marching On!
For Christ count everything but loss.
And we'll crown Him King,
Toil and sing,
Neath the banner of the Cross!

Conclusion: A letter from an old friend came to Timothy one day. As he read it, certainly he had to stop more than once to wipe away the tears. The letter followed these lines:

“Dear Timothy, I write to inform you that I would be alone today but for the presence of my good friend Dr. Luke. Demas has forsaken me, while others that are dear to me I have sent to deal with difficult fronts. I want you to come to me. When you come, please bring my coat that I left at the home of Carpus in Troas. Also, bring my parchments. Do your best to come before winter. The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorous, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.”

Paul is warning Timothy that if he comes it might cost him suffering, imprisonment and even his life. Why then does Paul urge him to come? Partly because Paul really needs him, but far more because he is eager for Timothy to gain the victory that comes from being a real soldier of the Cross.

What then did this timid, sickly young preacher do? He did the very thing he was desperately afraid to do. He made his way to Rome. It was here that he, Luke, and John Mark were present when Paul said his farewell.

Now, whatever you may be doing with your life, and whatever I'm doing with mine, we must admire the way this timid, young preacher realized the grace of God and demonstrated the Lord's power through his being to face up to life.

Therefore, I challenge your heart and mine with those familiar words: *“As a good soldier of Christ Jesus, endure hardships.”* Let's concern ourselves with nothing more or less than pleasing our Commanding Officer! Let's face the rigors of a soldier!