**Module 20: Am I A Soldier of the Cross?**

**2 Timothy 2:** [**3**](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=2+Timothy+2%3A3&ver=niv)  ***Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*** [***4***](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible.php?q=2+Timothy+2%3A4&ver=niv) ***No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.***

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Bible Book: 2 Timothy 2: 3-4

Subject: Soldier of the Cross; Independence Day; Commitment; Dedication

**Introduction**

We’ve asked the question “Who here has served or is currently serving in either the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard

But in preparing for our emphasis for today, I’ve had another question on my mind. It’s a question that I want to ask of you, and it’s a question that I want to ask of myself. And this question is the title of my message this morning…“Am I a Soldier of the Cross?”

The apostle Paul and those who first read his epistles would have been well acquainted with the concept of a military army. The presence of the professional soldiers in the imperial Roman army could be found in virtually every place where the early seeds of Christianity were sown. So when Paul used a military metaphor to describe the Christian life, it was something that people understood.

And there are several places in the New Testament where this soldier analogy is used to speak of Christian experience.

• In Philippians 2:25, Paul referred to Epaphroditus as his “fellow-soldier.” In the 2nd verse of Philemon, Paul referred to Archippus as a “fellow-soldier.”

• In speaking of the financial support of those in ministry in 1 Corinthians 9:7, Paul used the comparison of soldiers whose rations and expenses are provided by the army in which the soldier serves. Paul said, “Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges?”

• In Ephesians 6:10–18, Paul talked about truth, faith, righteousness, and other aspects of Christianity as being the “armour of God” (vs. 13).

• In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was saying that when he or someone else spoke (even using the gift of tongues) in the Christian assembly, it should be a clear message that could be understood. And he said in 1 Corinthians 14:8, “For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”

• It was a great honor for the Roman soldier to be branded with a hot iron to identify him as a soldier. The scar from a war wound was also something for the soldier to be proud of. It was such a soldier’s branding or scar that Paul had in mind when he said in Galatians 6:17, “… I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”

• When Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:14 to “warn them that are unruly,” the word “unruly” has the idea of a soldier who is undisciplined or disorderly or has gotten out of the ranks.

• Jude also used a military analogy when said that we should “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 1:3).

So you can see that there are quite a few military metaphors used to describe Christian experience in the New Testament.

The one that I want to deal with this morning is found in 2 Timothy chapter 2. Paul subsequently compares the Christian to an athlete in verse 5 and to a farmer in verse 6, but in verses 3 and 4 he is speaking of a soldier.

What does it mean if I use the expression, “A Soldier of the Cross”? Generally speaking, it would refer to a Christian and particularly a Christian who is committed and faithfully following the Lord Jesus. So, in asking the question, “Am I a soldier of the cross,” I’m basically asking if we are saved and serious about serving the Savior.

There are three main things that I want to draw out of our text that will help us all to answer the question, “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?” It’s at the end of our text verses, but I want to point out FIRST that…

**I. Paul Mentioned the ENLISTMENT of the Soldier**

(2 Timothy 2:3–4) Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. {4} No man that goes to war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

A. There Is A Savior – “HIM”

In keeping with our military metaphor, the writer of Hebrews called this Savior the “captain of our salvation” in Hebrews 2:10.

Saul had been on the warpath fighting against the cause of Christ. But when we see him going into battle in Acts chapter 9, the best way I can describe what happened is to use a Bible term that has to do with a stronger force bringing an opponent to their knees. Saul was DISCOMFITED by Jesus. The Bible says…

(Acts 9:1-5) And Saul, yet breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, {2} And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. {3} And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: {4} And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? {5} And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutes: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

I’ve never served in the military, but I almost enlisted once. The recruiter that I talked to was very persuasive, but ultimately I didn’t feel that was the right path for my life. I won’t say that I was forced into the army of Christ or that I was drafted. But to use a term that means to call or gather the troops together, I was MUSTERED in by the MASTER. He is both the recruiter and the reason for my involvement in this fight of faith.

**B. There Is a Selection –** **“CHOSEN TO BE A SOLDIER”**

chosen … to be a soldier – Greek 4758. stratologeo, strat-ol-og-eh'-o; from a comp. of the base of G4756 and G3004 (in its orig. sense); to gather (or select) as a warrior, i.e. enlist in the army:--choose to be a soldier.

Paul later recounting his experience on the Damascus road said…

(Acts 22:7-15) And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutes thou me? {8} And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutes. {9} And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spoke to me. {10} And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. {11} And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. {12} And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, {13} Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. {14} And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou should know his will, and see that Just One, and should hear the voice of his mouth. {15} For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

Charles Spurgeon said we should be…

From the hour of our spiritual birth, the sworn enemies of sin, the enlisted warriors of the Cross; to fight on for Jesus till life’s latest hour. (And we should) look upon every young convert as a recruit; not merely as one who has been himself saved, but as having within his new-born nature the possibilities of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (From The Biblical Illustrator)

“Am I A Soldier of the Cross?” If we are, there will be an Enlistment into the Lord’s army as Paul mentioned. Secondly…

**II. Paul Mentioned the ENTANGLEMENT of the Soldier**

(2 Timothy 2:3–4) Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. {4} No man that goes to war entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

A. Let’s Consider the Meaning of Such Entanglement – “ENTANGLETH”

There’s a little song that says, “It’s a battlefield Brother, not a recreation room. It’s a fight and not a game.” And Paul’s instruction here is that we are not to get caught up in things that are secondary to our mission. Not to “entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life.” We are “warring.” We must not be distracted from the battle.

entangles – Greek 1707. empleko, em-plek'-o; from G1722 and G4120; to entwine, i.e. (fig.) involve with:--entangle (in, self with).

The UBS (United Bible Societies) New Testament Handbook says that…

Gets entangled (“entangles”) translates a rare verb that occurs only here and in 2 Peter 2:20, and refers to the act of getting so involved in something that one becomes restricted and controlled, no longer free to do what one should.

R. Kent Hughes said that…

Perhaps he was referring to the Roman code of Theodosius: “We forbid men engaged in military service to engage in civilian occupations.”

Adam Clarke said…

It is well remarked by Grotius, on this passage, that the legionary soldiers among the Romans were not permitted to engage in husbandry, merchandise, mechanical employments, or anything that might be inconsistent with their calling.

John MacArthur said that…

A soldier … is a soldier 24 hours a day, every day of the year. … Consequently, he is separated from his normal environment, so that he will not entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life. Entangle himself translates a passive form of emplekō, which literally means to weave. Paul is not speaking about things that necessarily are wrong in themselves. It is not that a soldier should have no contact at all with his former friends and surroundings, but that he is not to become caught up and enmeshed in them. Those things are irrelevant to his soldiering and are always subject to being relinquished. In the same way, a good soldier of Christ Jesus refuses to allow earthly matters to interfere with the fulfillment of his duty to his Lord.

**B. Let’s Consider the Motivation to Shun Entanglement – “THAT HE MAY PLEASE HIM”**

Please – Greek 700. aresko, ar-es'-ko; (through the idea of exciting emotion); to be agreeable (or by impl. to seek to be so):--please. As a soldier of Christ, we are in agreement with Him, following His orders!

John Phillips said that…

The word translated “please” here is used in Genesis 5:22 in the Septuagint to describe the translation of Enoch. It reads, “Enoch pleased God.” A similar word occurs in the New Testament comment about Enoch: “Enoch... pleased God” (Heb. 11:5). So Timothy was challenged to join with the Enochs of this world. Enoch, who stood for God in a pagan and pornographic society, was rewarded by rapture.

Again, John MacArthur wrote that…

The strong desire to please other people is an integral characteristic of fallen man. And because of the continued influence of the old self (Eph. 4:22), even Christians are tempted to be men-pleasers. Many Christians succumb to that temptation and become more concerned about pleasing their fellow workers, their neighbors, and their friends than about pleasing the Lord. … That desire inevitably leads to moral and spiritual decline, because pleasing the world, including worldly Christians, demands compromise of God’s truth, God’s standards, and personal holiness. It demands forsaking Christ as our first love.

H. Y. Satterlee said that…

There are three aims, or motives, under which men act, and these three give birth to three different kinds of lives. Each of these principles of action is exclusive. I. LIVING TO PLEASE SELF. This is the keynote of most lives. … II. The second type of life is THAT IN WHICH THE FIRST AIM IS TO PLEASE OTHERS. The highest good, some say, is to sacrifice all for selfish pleasure. The highest good, say others, is to sacrifice all to gain the … admiration of the world. … III. From the slavery of these two motives -- living to please self, and living to please others -- let us now turn to the glorious liberty of the third -- St. Paul's motive -- LIVING TO PLEASE CHRIST. (From The Biblical Illustrator)

“Am I A Soldier of the Cross?” If we are, there WILL be an Enlistment. If we are, there WON’T be an Entanglement. And then too…

**III. Paul Mentioned the ENDURANCE of the Soldier**

(2 Timothy 2:3) Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

A. To “Endure Hardness” Is A Challenging Experience

Endure hardness – Greek 2553. kakopatheo, kak-op-ath-eh'-o; from the same as G2552; to undergo hardship:--be afflicted, endure afflictions (hardness), suffer trouble.

The UBS (United Bible Societies) New Testament Handbook says that…

In much the same way that a soldier patiently endures the hardships in the battlefield, so Christians must also endure the hardships that come their way as a result of their faithfulness to the Christian way of life as exemplified by Jesus Christ himself.

Adam Scott said…

Here the apostle is not thinking of the soldier on the field of battle engaged in conflict with the enemy. His exhortation to Timothy is not to fight well, but to endure, or, as the same word is rendered elsewhere (2 Timothy 1:8), to suffer affliction well. He thinks of the soldier being drilled and disciplined for the fight. As a prisoner at Rome he would be, very probably, a daily eye-witness of the severe training through which the emperor’s troops had to pass. These were good soldiers of Caesar. They were true patriots, laying upon the altar of their country their very lives. Now Timothy was, like the apostle himself, a soldier; but the soldier of a very different King from Caesar, and had a very different warfare to wage than such wars as the Roman soldiery were so frequently engaged in. He was the soldier of Jesus Christ. … Christianity means to-day as it always did, continual cross-bearing. The word “duty” has still a rough edge. (From The Biblical Illustrator)

The late Dr. John Phillips wrote these words…

When I was eighteen, I was drafted into the British army. In boot camp, we raw recruits were turned into soldiers by being taught to “endure hardness.” The officers instilled into us the army’s concepts of discipline and obedience. We endured hours of drilling, endless parades, long-route marches, constant pressure, tasteless food, guard duty, bullying sergeants, lectures, and exposure to inclement weather. The whole procedure was designed to toughen us up.

The Roman soldiers of Paul’s day were the toughest, most disciplined, and most efficient soldiers in the world. Paul had known many of them, and their example was in his mind when he reminded Timothy that he was a “soldier of Jesus Christ.” He had been enlisted the moment he had accepted Christ. He needed to learn to “endure hardness.” A good soldier does not quit just because he faces a difficult task or a dangerous situation. He knows that his life is expendable, and he must be prepared to lay it down when required.

The word translated “endure hardness” means literally “to suffer evil, to suffer trouble, to endure affliction.” God does not hand out brochures offering all kinds of fringe benefits to those who become Christians. On the contrary, He enlists them as soldiers and calls upon them to engage in a battle that will not end until their death or until the Lord returns. Even as Paul wrote, he was an embattled warrior, a prisoner of war who was sentenced to death. He would remain faithful to the end, and he wanted Timothy to have as much endurance as he did.

**B. To “Endure Hardness” Is A Common Experience**

Adam Clarke said that Paul’s instruction to “endure hardness” is specifically given as…

He considers a Christian minister under the notion of a soldier … not so much for his continual conflicts with the world, the Devil, and the flesh, for these are in a certain sense common to all Christians … but for the hardships and difficulties to which he must be exposed who faithfully preaches the Gospel of Christ.

This instruction to “endure hardness” may have been specifically to someone in ministry, but there is merit in this message for any professing Christian who walks the path of commitment. It is not for the faint of heart or that person who is merely a weekend warrior in their faith. Rather, Paul’s directive is for the career soldier whose whole life is defined by being in the Lord’s army. It is for that child of God who proudly declares…

I may never march in the infantry, Ride in the cavalry, Shoot the artillery.

I may never fly o’er the enemy, But I’m in the Lord’s army!

There’s a little nuance in Paul’s statement that is not visible in the King James Version, in that he basically said, “endure hardness … with me … as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” The Greek word (NT:4777 – sugkakopatheo) means “to suffer hardship in company with.” A. T. Robertson said that “The old preacher challenges the young one to share hardship with him for Christ.” Paul is summoning Timothy to “be a partaker in afflictions with him.” And this gauntlet of suffering is a shared path that every faithful soldier of the cross must go through.

**Conclusion​**

Just as there are several scriptures that show us the military metaphor of the Christian life, there have been several songs that used this type of army analogy to describe our Christian experience.

For example, listen to these lines from a few familiar songs …

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross”

“Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before.

Christ, the royal Master, leads against the foe; forward into battle see his banners go!”

“If you’re in the battle for the Lord and right, Keep on the firing line;

If you win, my brother, surely you must fight, Keep on the firing line!”

I’ve taken my sermon title from the opening line of a song written by Isaac Watts back in 1709. Dr. Watts was about 35 years old, and his entire life had been devoted to the study of the scriptures and the writing of hymns. He was preparing a sermon on 1 Corinthians 16:13 where Paul, again using military language, said “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.”

Isaac Watts wrote the song to follow this sermon. The song asks the question…

Am I a soldier of the cross,

A follower of the Lamb?

And shall I fear to own His cause

Or blush to speak His name?

Are you a soldier of the cross? Have you been Enlisted? Are you a Christian?

If you are a Christian, have you become Entangled with the things of this world? Have you become distracted in your service to the Lord? Are you AWOL as a Christian?