

# 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Instructions to Timothy  
Guiding, Growing, Guarding!



**Deserted/Supported**



**Chapter 1** concludes with the example of a man, Onesiphorus of Ephesus, who was a thoughtful, conscientious man of God, who had been very helpful to Paul years before, when Paul had been ministering in Ephesus. And then, just recently, he had traveled to Rome to seek out and find Paul in the dark dungeons of that city. While Rome's Christians were hiding in their homes, with no knowledge of Paul's whereabouts, Onesiphorus was out tracking Paul's location down! In doing this, he had revealed another attribute of his godly character that he had not *had to* show so much before – that of courage! Of all the Christian leaders that came to see Paul when he was under *house* arrest just a couple of years before, all were mysteriously elusive or busy, or remote and unreachable in these newly perilous times for Christians (Nero). But Onesiphorus had traveled about 1,500 miles to find Paul and to encourage him. Then he had had to skillfully wade through some serious (and dangerous) red tape to find the location of Paul's dungeon. Then he had to find a pretext to see Paul and spend time with him, and to bring him provisions of food and clothing. But the most important thing he brought Paul was paper, ink, and pen - and with that, it is very likely that Onesiphorus had even taken dictation from Paul to write down this very letter, with the intention of taking it back with him to Ephesus and deliver it to Timothy. Paul had serious eye trouble, so, as far as we can gather, indications are that he always *dictated* his letters to someone else who wrote down his words. *Someone* had to have written this letter down and then taken it back to Ephesus. Who is a better candidate for this than Onesiphorus – the only Christian who had the crazy courage to come to see Paul?!



After pointing out the courage of Onesiphorus at the end of **chapter 1**, Paul admonishes Timothy at the beginning of **chapter 2** to be “strong” in the message of the the grace of Jesus, i.e. – the gospel! Things were not going to get better. Pressure from the outside – from government, was likely going to continue to increase, and pressure from false teachers within the church would continue to be a problem that must be confronted and dealt with! Churches did not need to retreat – but they needed to *ratchet up* their efforts to spread the gospel! So, Paul advised Timothy to make authentic disciples of Christ who could then make authentic disciples of Christ. In this way, the gospel could be passed on to successive generations. Since he now knew he was going to die before Jesus returned, Paul was convinced that the future of the church had to be protected with correct information and with unerring focus on the truth. The accurate, inspired, foundational information of the gospel had to be preserved and passed on! This disciple-making was the simple formula that would ensure success!

**In vs. 3**, Paul encourages Timothy to join Paul in enduring hardship. In doing so, Paul uses 3 analogies. **1) a soldier, 2) an athlete 3) and a farmer**. I have broken each of these analogies down into the simple point that Paul is trying to make with them. He uses the example of a **soldier** to demonstrate a Christian leader's need for **endurance, determination, and focus**. He uses the example of an **athlete** to provide a picture of **self-restraint**. And he uses the example of a **farmer** to demonstrate the need for **reward**. It is an interesting mix of images and their messages within the context I've already outlined, so let's dig into them a bit.



A soldier's life can be a hard life, obviously. To survive to be able to fight on, often requires brains and brawn. If a man has brains but no brawn – no muscles or endurance – and he runs into someone with muscles and endurance during battle, well then he will probably be overwhelmed and killed. So in his training, **a soldier** is put through many grueling exercises to **build** muscle and endurance so that **when** he encounters an enemy with hardened muscles in battle, that he will have a fighting chance by using his own hardened muscles to defend himself and to put his opponent down! But it is not just physical! A man must have the mentality to be a good soldier! The mentality of a soldier has to be that he can endure **anything** – that he will be the last to drop from exertion, or from the heat or cold, or from the weight of his own armor and weapons under grueling marches or day-long battles and sieges! He is prepared mentally to suffer anything, even multiple wounds, and to still come out on the other side of the battle still fighting! If you have an army of men with the right mentality, they can defeat an army much larger than themselves!

Likewise, Paul is telling Timothy that he will need a high degree of endurance at every level, to survive in full-time Christian ministry. He has to be prepared for any kind of suffering, because it will come at him when he least expects it. He will be blindsided, and ambushed, and severely tested by the enemies of Christ outside and inside of the church. And he will be tempted to compromise, take shortcuts, make deals. Being a fallen man, he would be most tested by his own fallen nature – by not recognizing pride within himself, or by feelings of entitlement! Hypocrisy, and personal secrets would seek to take his legs out from under him and hold him down – make him at the very least, ineffective, out of the fight, and at the worst make him **counterproductive** to the Kingdom of God! No, Timothy needed to maintain his personal focus – **1** - it was about Jesus, not himself, **2** – and he needed to maintain a struggle against sin, so that he might take into his nature the fruit of the Spirit, so that he could not be compromised, discredited, dis-empowered, and **3** – it was about maintaining the focus on playing his role in the purposes of God to win Ephesus for Jesus! He needed to always maintain his love of people so that he could continue to be an influencer and a winner of souls!

2<sup>nd</sup>, the habits and lifestyle and drive of a professional **ATHLETE** is one of Paul's favorite comparisons in his search to illustrate what it is like to be a committed Christ-follower. But in this case, it is about one small aspect of an athlete's mentality. Paul refers to the fact that an athlete has to discipline themselves to play by the rules! \*I remember back in 1985- 2005, Iron Mike Tyson terrorized the heavyweight *division* in boxing. For a couple of years, as he climbed up the ladder to become the youngest heavyweight champion in the history of boxing, he was knocking out everyone he faced within the first three or four rounds. Most went down in the first! But later in his career, he lost some of his self-restraint and he broke the rules while fighting the next big champion – Evander Holyfield. From the very beginning of the fight, Holyfield kept clinching with Tyson – grabbing him and holding him close to neutralize his punching power – and Holyfield was frustrating Tyson to no end – and actually winning the fight in this manner! Finally, when Holyfield again grabbed him and clung to him for dear life to smother another of Tyson's powerful flurries, Tyson turned his head and bit a piece of Holyfield's ear off! It was a savage move that broke the rules, ended the match, and got Iron Mike disqualified! Mike lost his discipline, lost his head, lost the match by disqualification, and lost his best opportunity to win the title back! He was **never** quite the same fighter after that, and he was never champion again even though he was a still a reasonably young man!



Paul says that **Christian leaders** are to play by the rules. Even when there is pressure and stress and frustrations aplenty, (actually, **especially when** there are extreme pressures, stresses, and frustrations) we are to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit – **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, generosity, perseverance, etc...”**! Those rules of allowable conduct are to be **kept** – especially in the most difficult times! We are to never revert back to our former pre-Christ selves when we were not obligated to play by the rules of the Holy Spirit! Lest someone misunderstands – that does not make us defenseless! Sometimes we must defend ourselves or others from physical, or emotional attack – but we don't resort to **cruelty** or **hatred** against our attacker(s), and are ready to **forgive**, so that our own soul is not embittered and we are **“disqualified from the prize”** [1 Cor. 9:27]

Finally there is the **FARMER** – and Paul brings in a rather strange comparison. He says that the farmer should properly be the first to be rewarded for his labors. I think that perhaps Timothy was not receiving what he should have. The church was still in its infancy and the tradition of paying a teaching pastor for full-time work was hit and miss. Even though Paul did not take money from the churches he had served, he was absolutely for all for other full-time pastors being paid. Paul himself did not accept money from his churches because he had so many enemies who he knew would accuse him of trying to profit from his church work. So he refused all money from those churches, and worked a second job and/or received help from wealthy backers, or perhaps from the occasional grateful church that he has served in the past. He did this so that all such accusations would sound like they were being leveled from petty jealousy, resulting in his enemies discrediting themselves in the churches that he had served! \*One time, maybe four years ago or so, I watched a short you Tube video of college students accusing former President Trump of profiting from his time in the oval office, and ripping off the American people. When they were correctly informed that - already being incredibly rich, President Trump had pledged to take no salary whatsoever from his time as President, most of the students were speechless! A few stated that they didn't believe it, and walked away. No, whatever you might think of Donald Trump, any moment like that is a mic drop moment! I hate false accusations and I hate when people just repeat them! I am against false accusations against anyone, as is God Himself! Paul, (in contrast to Donald Trump), always lived and spoke cautiously to deflate, disprove, and let his critics disgrace themselves . But for the average pastor, Paul would encourage them to accept payment, being everyone has to make a living, and churches to be as generous as they were able to be. **[I Tim. 5:17,18]**!



It is a credit to a church to be as generous as possible with their pastor, and a shame to the church that is stingy with their staff. I emphasize this not for my own gain, but because Paul emphasizes this! A church that finds it acceptable to be miserly with their pastor is a church that is made up of people that find it easy to be miserly toward God! When you call your next pastor – whenever that might be, do all that you can for them. If possible, be more generous with them than the companies and bosses you have worked for have been with you! Your pastor should not have to worry about decent housing, reliable transportation, insurance, decent food, if it can be helped. [But having made that point, I want to commend **this** church for the way we have been treated over the years. We know you have always done what you could for us, and we thank you for it! It makes us happier for you than for ourselves, because we see the hand of Jesus upon you, and that is what it is all about!