

SECOND TIMOTHY CHAPTER TWO

Be Strong

2 Timothy 2:1-7

The Olympic decathlon is internationally recognized as the most demanding test of individual athletic ability there is. It is the event that determines the world's greatest all-around athlete.

Originating in a contest held at the 708 B.C. Olympiad to single out Greece's most perfect physical specimen, the modern decathlon requires an athlete to contest ten events in just two grueling days.

He must sprint 100 meters, long jump, heave a 16-pound shot, high jump, race 400 meters, scamper the 110-meter high hurdles, sling the discus, pole-vault, throw the javelin and top off the performance by running 1500 meters (nearly a mile). The sequence is arranged specifically to prevent him from using essentially the same motion twice in succession.

Merely enduring this punishing routine is enough to leave a decathlete quivering with fatigue and 12 to 15 pounds lighter through dehydration—but not enough to guarantee him a respectable finish.

The reason: he must achieve top marks under a complicated, 78-page scoring system that is based not only on how well he performs against his opponents in each event but also on how his effort compares with the latest standards for that event.¹

With that illustration in mind, let us read the biblical text for today.

2 Timothy 2:1-7:

¹ *You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

² *The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

³ *Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

⁴ *No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday*

¹ ENCYPLOPEDIA OF 15,000 ILLUSTRATIONS SIGNS OF THE TIMES By Dr. Paul Lee Tan. Copyright © 1998 Paul Lee Tan. All rights reserved. Database © 2004 WORDsearch

life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

⁵ *Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.*

⁶ *The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.*

⁷ *Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*

I imagine you all have committed First Timothy, especially chapter one verse seven, to memory by now, but if there might be one or possibly even two who have not, here is what it says:

2 Timothy 1:6-8:

⁶ *For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*

⁷ *For God has not given us a **spirit of timidity**, but of **power and love and discipline**.*

⁸ *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,*

Now after everything that Paul taught Timothy in chapter one, examples of faith on the part of Lois and Eunice, Paul himself, and Onesiphorus. Timothy also heard from Paul about the Holy Spirit's gift to Timothy, the great salvation that is waiting for him and everyone else who perseveres. Paul begins chapter two by telling Timothy to be strong just as he had been strong.

Acts 9:22 :

²² *But Saul kept increasing in **strength** and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.*

Ephesians 6:10:

¹⁰ *Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*

Timothy could be strong because of the grace which was given to him by Christ, as we saw in 2 Timothy 1:9.

2 Timothy 1:9:

⁹ *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and **grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,*

Now, as we begin 2 Timothy chapter two, note the contrast in language as Paul moves from verse one to verse three. First, he addresses Timothy as his "son" though the Greek literally means "child." No doubt at some time in your life, whether it was with your own

child or by observing someone else's, you have seen a little boy don a "helmet," perhaps a toy or one made out of newspaper, and then go marching around like a soldier. Paul here is talking to a young man whom he affectionately considers his son and is offering him an invitation: to become a soldier for Christ, and in the process to become stronger and more mature in his faith walk. Paul points out that Timothy will be a real soldier, a soldier in a spiritual warfare, and as such he will suffer hardship.

You see, Paul knows that Timothy's strength will grow if he uses *the gifts* which Jesus' grace has provided him. Paul uses language that suggests the strong love of a father for his son: "**my child.**" As we look ahead in this chapter we see that what the teacher-father (Paul) wants the son (Timothy) to do is outlined in verses 1-7. The example which the father is setting is described in verses 8-10a. Then what *all believers* should remember about how faithfulness to Christ is rewarded, and unfaithfulness punished, is covered in verses 10-13.

Now, looking at verse two of this chapter, we see that one way of becoming strong in grace is to give others what you have, the truth of the gospel message (salvation) which captured both your heart and your mind. When I [Betty] was studying Christian Education this verse was the motto for most of our courses. What we were learning, we were to teach to others, who would in turn teach even more individuals. In that way the Gospel and biblical truth would be perpetuated. However, we were to be careful about the quality of person whom we were to train as teachers. They must meet the biblical standards. Here Paul is entrusting Timothy with the task. He will be a teacher, even better, he will teach more teachers. Paul's life is almost over. He is passing the baton so to speak to Timothy, who, in turn, will pass it on to others. Timothy must only select men who are trustworthy and capable to be teachers themselves (see 1 Tim. 3:2).

This Gospel of salvation, is described as "*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses*" (2:2). This probably refers to the journeys Timothy took with Paul and the many sermons he had heard Paul preach. It may also include a collection of Paul's sermons and lessons that he had provided Timothy.

Many men had also heard Paul's preaching and teaching, and many of them had come to believe, and so many of them were willing to teach. The man who was judged reliable and who was trusted enough to teach the Gospel also had to expect, and be willing to endure, hardship. "*Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 2:3). When a man or woman fights hard for the cause of Christ, and lives according to the rules given by God, he/she will receive a generous reward.²

2 Timothy 2:4-7:

⁴ *No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

⁵ *Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he*

² Hendriksen, William and Kistemaker, Simon J., *Baeker New Testament Commentary-Exposition of Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ©1055. WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 245-247.

competes **according to the rules.**

⁶ The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.³

⁷ Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Lest you think these words only apply to those called to vocational ministry, you need to think again. Every Christian is considered to be a **soldier in God's army**. The last chapter of Ephesians tells us that all believers are fighting a spiritual battle and that **they need to put on the armor of God**.

Ephesians 6:10-17:

¹⁰ Finally, **be strong in the Lord** and in the strength of His might.
¹¹ **Put on the full armor of God**, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, and **HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**, ¹⁵ and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION**, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Paul emphasizes his point to Timothy, and to us, by giving three illustrations. We see the first in verse 4.

2 Timothy 2:4

⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

Imagine a soldier in the middle of battle going to his sergeant or his lieutenant and saying, "Sir, I'm sorry to have to leave, but I have to go over into the city to see about some business; and then I have a date with a local girl, and I just won't be able to be here for the battle tonight!" A great many Christians are trying to fight like that today!⁴

If you claim to be a believer you have to establish your priorities and you have to expect to

³ Reward. Footnote mine.

⁴ J. Vernon McGee, – *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 2".

endure trials, hardship, and rejection. If you cannot handle rejection the ministry is probably not the life for you. Now, believe it or not, there are those who interpret this verse to mean that a Christian is not to get married, even though marriage is not mentioned.

Note that Paul is talking here about being so entangled in worldliness that one is not able to live the Christian life.⁵

Now, what is “worldliness”? Some think it is merely a list of do’s and don’ts. But, while behavior is involved, worldliness is much more. It refers to adopting the world’s value system and philosophies. It involves the attitude of “*everything else comes before doing God’s will.*” Worldliness is anything that interferes with your relationship with God. J. Vernon McGee tells the following story.

*“Let me give you an example. A lady called me one morning while I was a pastor in Los Angeles. She said, ‘I was at church yesterday when you asked for those who wanted to accept Christ. Well, I did accept Christ, but I made no move to come forward for a particular reason that I want to tell you about. My husband died recently and left me the operation of our liquor store. I am calling you now because I don’t think I can continue operating it. If you say to get a hammer and break every bottle, I’ll do it. But tell me what I should do.’ What would you have said? I’ll tell you what I told her, ‘Don’t go in there and break bottles. You won’t stop the liquor business by breaking up a few bottles. If you could, I’d be in favor it. But that has been your only income. I would say that you should sell the store and get out of the business.’”*⁶

This story tells us basically that we are not to entangle ourselves in such things that might get in the way of fighting the good fight by using the armor and power that God provides us. “The children of God are to recognize that they are soldiers. And we are to recognize that the Christian life is not a playground; it is a battlefield. It is a battlefield where battles are being won, and where battles are being lost also.”⁷ The moment you get out of bed in the morning you step out onto a battlefield.

Then, because some might not relate to the illustration of a soldier, as he moves to verse five, Paul uses another comparison.

2 Timothy 2:5:

*Also if anyone competes **as an athlete**, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.”*

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J. Vernon McGee, – *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: “Chapter 25”.

It is rather obvious to recognize that **every athlete wants to win the gold medal, not the silver or the bronze, but the gold; and he/she will do everything he/she can to be the winner.** As we saw in the opening illustration this morning, competing for the prize can be grueling and take its toll on the athlete. In several of his writings Paul likened the Christian life to a footrace, and he said:

Philippians 3:14 (NLT):

¹⁴ *I press on to reach the end of the race **and receive the heavenly prize** for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (NLT)

²⁴ *Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but **only one person gets the prize? So run to win!***

²⁵ *All athletes are disciplined in their training. **They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.***

²⁶ *So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing.*

²⁷ ***I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should.***

Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

Paul's goal was to run the Christian race in such a way that the One who is at the end of the race -- the Lord Jesus -- would be able to reward him and be able to say, "*Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master*" (Matthew 25:21). **God wants to see you win the race and He will give you all the power you need to do so, if you have accepted His Son's death and resurrection as payment for your sin, and if you ask for it.**⁸

Again Paul seems to want to be sure that everyone understands his point so he uses yet another comparison in verse six.

2 Timothy 2:6:

The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

Do you ever plant a vegetable garden? You then have the vegetables, the crop, for you and your family to eat. When there is a bountiful crop you may share the vegetables with other people. In the same way, the farmer who grows a whole field of food certainly then has food for his family, before it goes to others.

God gave us sixty-six books in the Bible, and each one of them is very important. It takes the complete picture, all sixty-six books to give us the mind and the Word of God. We are to study the entire Bible. An athlete cannot only jump over the hurdles that he wants to and win the race. The rules require that he jump over all the hurdles. A linebacker in football cannot decide that he will only try to tackle the running back on every other play. "*A child*

⁸ Ibid.

of God has to do that, too. If you're going to win, you can't take any shortcuts.”⁹ If you are going to eat your crop, you have to plant and cultivate the field.

2 Timothy 2:7:

⁷ *Consider*¹⁰ what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

I would ask you to look at the footnote below where I have placed a number of definitions of the word “**consider.**” You will see that almost all of them hold considering something to involve deep thought and careful evaluation. Timothy is told in verse seven to focus his mind on what Paul had just said. Merely reading God’s Word is not enough. God’s Word must be studied carefully. What has been spoken must be digested, mulled over and thought about at length.

Listen to some of Christ’s words and consider what they really mean.

Matthew 11:28-30:

²⁸ *"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

²⁹ *"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.*

³⁰ *"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

Matthew 13:34:

³⁴ *All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable.*

Matthew 15:15-20:

¹⁵ *Peter said to Him, "Explain the parable to us."*

¹⁶ *Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also?"*

¹⁷ *"Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?"*

¹⁸ *"But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man.*

¹⁹ *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.*

²⁰ *"These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."*

In writing to the Philippians Paul emphasized what we should consider and dwell on.

Philippians 4:8:

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ **consider** *verb* 1 to give serious thought to; **synonyms:** contemplate, ponder, study, think (out or over), weigh. **related words** meditate, muse, ruminate; cogitate, reason, reflect, speculate, think; examine, inspect, look (at), scan, scrutinize, see **idioms** bestow thought to, chew the cud over, revolve (or turn over) in one’s mind. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus.*

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

Timothy does not need to worry about God helping Him to understand what is being taught. The only requirement is to come to God and ask for that understanding. Jesus has promised this to all who believe that He died to pay the penalty for their sin, and we know that Jesus has never broken a promise.

John 14:26-27:

²⁶ *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*

²⁷ *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

John 16:13-15 (TLB):

¹³ *When **the Holy Spirit**, who is truth, comes, he **shall guide you into all truth**, for he will not be presenting his own ideas, but will be passing on to you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.*

¹⁴ *He shall praise me and bring me great honor **by showing you** my glory.*

¹⁵ *All the Father's glory is mine; this is what I mean when I say that he will show you my glory.*

All the knowledge Timothy needs will be given to him if he only obeys God by doing what the Spirit of God leads him to do. Those promises are not just for Timothy. They are also for you and me. If we obey God, walk the path He chooses for us, and ask for God's wisdom it will be given to us. Consider those things and go forth in the strength of the Lord.