

2 Tim 2: 3-7 - God does not call us to be expats, but as soldiers

A. Introduction

Compare your past vocational decisions with: 1) The overall message in the New Testament, 2) The great commission, 3) “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Mt 16:18

B. Exegesis

1. Verse 3 – Suffer along

As -, not like a good soldier: Paul is not using simile being literal: It is in the capacity of a soldier that Timothy was to suffer alongside with Paul and all the saints. Paul often uses warfare language to make it clear that the Christian is literally in a war - 2 Cor 10, 1 Tim 1:18. There is no other reference for Timothy to compare with than other Christians.

A good soldier: The opposite of a good soldier is a deserting soldier. Demas had deserted Paul, not from fear of persecution, but from his love of this present world. A good soldier remains loyal to the end and endures whatever difficult circumstances is presented to him.

Suffer along with whom? - For sure it includes Paul himself (2 Tim 1:8), but also all the saints (2 Tim 3:12)

2. Verse 4 - Soldier focus (Jesus enlists us - You come follow me)

The example speaks about a soldier in **active service** –Farmers and parents enlisted to active duty are expected to be free from their usual responsibilities. An enlisted soldier cannot serve two masters, Timothy’s desires were to be unbendable with respect to pleasing the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Verse 5 – Rules of engagement

The example draws upon the integrity of an athlete that competes for a crown. Paul is emphasizing that the threat of missing the crown is from within the athlete, not from outside.

Paul also comes back to this metaphor in 2 Tim 4:8 referring to the crown of righteousness. The crown of righteousness represents having clung to Christ’s righteousness for salvation. The context from verse 3 and verse 12. See also Mat 10:32-33:

4. Verse 6 – Toil that is not for nothing

Just as it is obvious for a hard-working farmer to be first in line for the fruit of his hands, so the suffering of a good soldier is not for nothing. Suffering produces godliness (1 Tim 4:8-10).

5. Verse 7 – Give serious consideration to this

Paul is adding this instruction because these three examples from ordinary life is to be extrapolated to the Spiritual life for those who profess to follow Jesus.

C. Exposition - we are soldiers, not sophisticated hedonists

1. A good soldier suffers - especially the soldier of Christ

Suffering is the most characteristic byproduct of war, not of living in the safest country. A good soldier makes sure that he is utterly familiar with suffering.

The soldier lives with violence, with loss, with the constant threat of attack. The good soldier suffers testing of his loyalty and resolutions and temptation of his flesh. He suffers for those in need of liberation, he suffers when his mates go AWOL or when they desert their call. He suffers for those that love him and for those whom he loves.

Like his Lord he suffers not only rejection, but also grief for those who walk away See Mat 23:37

The good soldier is not exempt from suffering confusion and loneliness and desperation. Ps 22:1, Mat 27:46

Shall we not be like Paul and long for fellowship with Christ in his sufferings? (Php 3:10)

2. A good soldier has a loyal-love for the Lord

Thankfulness does not equate to loyalty. The good soldier truly seeks to **please the Lord** and be happy in Him. Eph 5:10.

A **loyalty** is required in our love for the Lord. Having an ulterior motive behind our love is treachery. There must be a conversion in our hearts, minds and souls to a **covenant love** for God. We must be jealous for our relationship with Him.

The good soldier knows that the race, or the war is won with **intentionality**. He brings every area of his life into the pursuit of the Kingdom of God. We are to **purge every hidden idol**. We cannot leave our love simply to an unevaluated experience or feeling of loyalty to Jesus.

We must test our hearts in the presence of God’s Word, renounce it along with everything else in this world to follow Him (Luke 14:26–27, 33,)

3. A good soldier despises cowardice and shame

In the kingdom of God there is no such thing as an undercover Christian or a Christian in name only. A good soldier does not succumb to cowardice, but one that overcomes,. (Rev 21: 7-8)

Cowardice is a serious disqualification from the fight. I would advise reading Eusebius’ church history of the martyr’s witness in the first 300 years of the early church.

4. A good soldier suffers, but not for nothing

Paul was once an expat from Tarsus to Jerusalem. He had the most promising career before him, yet Christ had a life of suffering planned for him (Acts 9:15-16)

Paul had everything going for him, yet he ended up counting it all rubbish, having but one thing behind his name – his suffering.

Prayer: Eph 1:17-21