

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES: GOD'S DIRECTIVES FOR HIS UNDERSHEPHERDS

III. II Timothy: Church Ministry Amid Hardship

E. Enduring Ministry Hardship

(2 Timothy 2:3-7)

I. Introduction

- A. Christ in Matthew 13:24-43 taught that a great spiritual war exists in the discipling of people, so those who minister God's Word today risk falling for Satan's lures to turn from Biblical beliefs to error, 2 Timothy 4:1-5.
- B. The believer who serves the Lord is thus caught up in this discipling war, and he needs to understand **how** to deal with the spiritual hardship he faces in his ministry.
- C. Paul clarified this truth by way of three pithy illustrations in 2 Timothy 2:3-7, so we view them for our insight:

II. Enduring Ministry Hardship, 2 Timothy 2:3-7.

- A. Paul told Timothy to "suffer hardship with" (*synkakopatheson*) him as an "unobjectionable, blameless, excellent" (*kalos*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 401) soldier of Christ, 2 Tim. 2:3.
- B. To illustrate **HOW** to endure ministry hardship, Paul in 2 Timothy 2:4-6 likened Timothy's ministry to that of a soldier, then that of an athlete and finally to that of a hard working farmer (as follows):
 1. To endure ministry hardship, God's servant like a soldier must put his calling above all other pursuits, v. 4:
 - a. Paul claimed that no one who "serves as a soldier" (*strateuo*, Ibid., p. 778) "becomes entangled" (*empleketai*, present passive of *empleko*, "entangle;" Ibid., p. 256; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 136) in the "affairs of the [civilian] life" (*tais tou biou pragmateiais*, Ibid., p. 704) in order that he might please the "one who enlisted him" (*stratologeio*, Ibid., p. 778) to serve in his military mission, 2 Timothy 2:4.
 - b. The apostle thus referred to the practice of a Roman centurion who would enlist men to serve under him, paying them with the agreement that they were to obey the centurion above all other pursuits! Thus, God's servant must serve God's interests as his top priority, not letting himself get entangled in civilian affairs lest he fail in his calling and God's blessing be removed from his ministry so that his ministry fails.
 2. To endure ministry hardship, God's servant like an athlete must heed correct methods and means, v. 5:
 - a. An athlete must obey the rules of the sport in which he competes if he wants to win the crown and not be disqualified in the competition, Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 752-753.
 - b. Similarly, God's servant must follow God's Biblical guidelines on how he ministers lest he be disqualified and God's blessing be removed from his ministry, causing that believer's ministry to fail!
 3. To endure ministry hardship, God's servant like a hard working farmer must partake of his own work, v. 6:
 - a. Referring to a farmer, Paul explained that "it is necessary" (*dei*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 733; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 171) for the "hard working" (*kopiao*, Ibid., p. 444) farmer to be the first to "receive one's share" (*metalambano*, Ibid., p. 512) of the crops that the farmer labors to produce, 2 Timothy 2:6.
 - b. The verb *kopiao* rendered "hard working" is the first verb in the sentence, making it emphatic (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T., p. 753), and the verb *dei* denotes "logical necessity" as opposed to "moral obligation" had Paul used the verb *opheilei* instead of *dei*. (Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 99) These grammatical and syntactical factors clarify Paul's message (as follows):
 - i. Paul taught that if Timothy worked hard at expounding Scripture (cf. 1 Timothy 5:17), he would be the first to receive spiritual nurture in his own heart from what he had gleaned in his Bible study.
 - ii. In thus edifying his own spirit, Timothy would also gain confidence that what he taught was God's truth regardless whether his hearers responded positively or negatively to his sharing of that truth!
 - iii. Since understanding and using Scripture also gives one victory over Satan (cf. 1 John 2:14b), by working hard at expounding God's Word and applying it himself, Timothy would become immune to discouragement and faithlessness brought on even by Satanic opposition to his ministry!
 - C. Paul added that as Timothy thought on these illustrations, God would cause him to understand them, v. 7.

Lesson: Timothy was to suffer hardship together with Paul as an excellent soldier of Christ. Specifically, (1) he was to prioritize God's calling above all other pursuits in life, (2) he was to watch that his methods and means in ministry remained Biblical and (3) he was to work hard at Bible exposition for blessing in his own life and work.

Application: As we serve the Lord, may we handle ministry hardship well by prioritizing our calling from God above all other pursuits in life, watch that our methods and means remain Biblical and apply our own hard-work at Bible exposition to our own hearts and lives for personal edification and encouragement from the Lord.