

Turn in your Bibles to **2 Timothy 2**. Before we delve into the text of **2 Timothy**, it's important we understand the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Over in **Acts 16**, Paul stops in Lystra to pick up this young man Timothy who has a good reputation among the people and Timothy accompanies him, assists him, and serves as a sort of apprentice under him. Timothy's biological father was Greek, but no evidence is ever given that he was a Christian. So Paul filled the shoes of a spiritual father to Timothy. He circumcised him and off they went on their journeys.

Paul and Timothy then spend about 17 years together working and ministering and they form a very close, very tight bond. A relationship like that of a Father and Son. Hold your place in **2 Timothy**, but let's look at some of the phrases Paul uses when describing Timothy.

- 1 Corinthians 4:17** *"...my beloved and faithful son in the Lord..."*
- Philippians 2:19-23** *"...as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel."*
- 1 Timothy 1:2** *"...a true son in the faith..."*
- 2 Timothy 1:2-4** *"...beloved son...greatly desiring to see you..."*

There's no doubt about it, Paul loved Timothy! And as Paul is writing this letter, Paul is in prison and he knows this is probably his last letter. Look at **4:6-8**. Paul knows he is near the end of his life and he is not worried about himself. We can see here that he has fought the good fight and he has finished strong. No he is not worried about himself, he has someone that he cares about and loves so deeply that he just wants to see him in Heaven one day. And that's Timothy!

Do you have someone like this? I imagine most of us do. If we knew this is the last thing we will be able to tell them and you need to make every word count, what would you tell them? Paul tells Timothy to be strong! Look at **2:1-2**. Paul knows he has fought the good fight and finished strong but he tells Timothy to NEVER GIVE UP, to BE STRONG! Paul then gives three different people to illustrate what Timothy should do. This is where we will spend most of our time tonight. Let's read **verses 3-6**. Paul uses the illustrations of a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Let's break each of these down.

1. Soldier

a. Leave

- i. The first thing said about soldiers is they don't meddle in the affairs of everyday life. They don't "entangle with the affairs of this life". If you think about the Roman soldiers at this time, they were completely focused and concerned on the conquest to get more power! They weren't worried about buying and selling or any employment of civil life – being a soldier was everything to them and the only thing they focused on.
- ii. Christians are called to have this same idea. We must leave the world. The Master's commands and the Master's service must be high above everything else. We are not to meddle in the affairs of worldly things that may detract us from our General. **1 Peter 2:9-12 – Verses 9-10** are what we should put our focus on! Those things of God the blessings and gifts! But **verses 11-12**, we are to abstain from fleshly lusts and things of this world so we may glorify God. We have to leave the world.

b. Please

- i. The next thing said about the soldier is he wants to please the one who enlisted him. Only the soldier's that devote themselves heart and soul to the military work win the heart of the commander. There was a movie called Gladiator and the main character was a high ranking official for the Roman army and he loved Rome and fought whole-heartedly. As a result, the ruler in the movie loved him and would do anything for him.
- ii. Christians are called to this same kind of service. We are trying to please so much more than the ruler of Rome. The one who has enlisted us is the Supreme Creator of the Universe! We are to fight heart and soul in devotion to our General, in devotion to our King. **Galatians 1:10**, we can see here that if we are trying to please men rather than God, we are not a bondservant of Christ. Who we choose to please will have a great effect on how we live our lives. We want to please God.

c. Focus

- i. By leaving the world and by trying to please God we are focusing. We are focusing on the spiritual nature of life and not of the things which will perish on this earth. Those Roman soldiers were focused on power and the military pursuits and they were largely successful. But we focus on God and on heavenly things.

Matthew 6:33 – Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you. Focus on the kingdom and we'll be successful. In **Colossians 3:2** we are told to set our mind on things above! Not on things of this earth. If we want to be a soldier for God, then we have to focus on him.

- d. For the younger people here around my age, this looks like using your age to increase your influence. When people see young people doing what is right it's extremely encouraging! Most think teenagers are going to be making a mess of their lives and going wild and partying all the time because that's what most teenagers do! We can stand out by doing what's right and our influence can be huge.

2. Athlete

a. Compete

- i. The first thing an athlete has to do in this passage is compete. That may sound a little silly but what makes an athlete an athlete, is actually competing against another team or another person. A person can train and train and prepare as much as they like, but they're not an athlete until they put that training into practice and actually compete.

- ii. As Christians we can do this too. We can read our Bibles, we can know what to do, but then we need to compete. We need to get out there and do what we know is right because this is a competition!

1 Corinthians 9:24 – We need to run this race in a way that we can obtain the prize. There's only one who gets the prize in a race and there's only one person who can do what is necessary for us to compete for Heaven; and that is you. That is me. We can only affect what we will do so let's run hard. Let's put our training to the test. Let's compete for Jesus.

b. Abide

- i. While the athlete competes, they must do so according to the rules. I did a little bit of reading and according to what I was reading, a lot of times in the Roman games if someone cheated or didn't follow the rules they would banish them or they would kill them. It was a very serious matter to break the rules.

- ii. For us as Christians it is so much worse for us to break the rules. Every time we sin we are separating ourselves from God and bringing about eternal death for ourselves. **1 Corinthians 9:27** – Paul disciplined himself. He understood the seriousness of breaking the rules. He didn't want to be disqualified and I don't think one person in here wants to be disqualified either. Let's bring our bodies into subjection, let's abide by the rules.

c. Obtain

- i. When we compete and we abide by the rules we set ourselves up to obtain the crown. This doesn't mean that we obtain it, it just means we have set ourselves up to. So what we ought to do is give every ounce of energy and every bit of strength we have because this crown is eternal!

- ii. **1 Corinthians 9:25-26** – Everybody else in this race is good at what they do. They run for a crown that's going to go away but we for an eternal crown! We don't get participation trophies. That's why in **verse 26** Paul gives it everything he has! He strains with every fiber in his being to obtain that imperishable crown! Let's run in a way that we may obtain it.

- d. For those who are a bit older than me, mid 20s to 50s. This is perseverance. You've been competing longer than I have and probably know the rules better than I do. It's now a matter of sticking with it! Even though your bodies may not be what they used to in terms of athletics, you're far better suited to face life's challenges than the 18-year-old skinny guy up here. You've been competing and you know the rules, just keep on keeping on! Run to obtain the crown!

3. Farmer

a. Sow

- i. Something that isn't directly stated in **2 Timothy 2:6** is that the farmer must sow. You can't have crops if you haven't sown seeds to grow. Choosing the seeds is a vital part of choosing what crop you get. I had a friend in high school who bought some tomato seeds from some guy on the road and when he had planted them and he took care of them, he had some nice strawberries. What he had sown wasn't correct and so he didn't the yield he was hoping for.

- ii. As Christians we have the same problem. We want the end result which is heaven but sometimes we're not willing to sow good seed in our lives. **Galatians 6:7-8** – When we sow earthly things that's exactly what we'll get out of it. We'll get strawberries instead of tomatoes. But if we focus on God and sow him first in our lives then we will see a much better crop yield.

- b. Work
 - i. This verse says the “hardworking farmer”. To be a farmer, hard work is a must. You could plant the best seeds in the world and have the nicest tractor but if you don’t tend to the crops and maintain the fields then you won’t have the crop yield you were hoping for. When I was little I was eating an apple and got to the seeds and decided to plant one in our backyard. I was expecting that tree to grow and I could have all kinds of apples, but I was little and didn’t understand I had to take care of it. So the tree didn’t grow.
 - ii. We as Christians are expected to work hard so we will grow. In **Colossians 3:23-24**, we can see that we are to work hard because everything is to the Lord. This applies to every field we have: in our jobs, our families, and in our time with God. We know as it says in **verse 24**, knowing that our hard work will give us a reward from the father. Let’s work for Jesus.
- c. Reap
 - i. This verse says that the farmer should be the first to partake of the crops. If the farmer has sown good seed and has worked hard then there should be no reason why the crops would fail. **Galatians 6:7-8** – You reap what you sow. If we have sown what is good and if we have worked hard in our faith and given God everything that we have, then we will reap the rewards. If we have sown the Spirit, then we will also reap everlasting life.
 - d. To the older Christians here you may have retired and take it easy now and that’s great. Most of your life’s work is done. But you can still sow seeds every day. For me personally, seeing the older people who may have trouble getting out show up to worship services that alone is very encouraging for me. Then I get to talking with you and the wisdom and experience that you have, sows seeds in young people like me. Who knows, just one conversation may cause someone to catch fire for God.

Conclusion:

No matter your age, no matter the stage or circumstances of your life – from headed to college like Terah and I, or raising a family like Kris and Sommer, or in the retirement years like Mr. and Mrs. Eugene McClenny – these three pictures should drive us forward.

And, as Paul concludes the section telling Timothy, regardless of age or circumstances, in the end, 4 things will always be true:

Look at **verses 11-13**

1) If we died with him, then we will live with him

2) If we endure, we will reign with him

Those two are great but there’s also warning:

3) If we deny him, he will deny us

4) If we are faithless, he remains faithful, he will go on without us.

What an important message! And remember, this was a dying man, sending this last letter to his companion who he loved as a son, someone whom he cares greatly for. Question – whom do you care greatly for? Does anyone you know need this message? The second thing you should do is share it with them. Do you know the first? You, today, be the soldier, the athlete, the farmer – live for Him.