

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, February 28, 2010 – 6:00 PM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

The Christian Worker - 2 Timothy 2:1-7

Introduction: Tonight, I want to give you a job description for the Christian worker, for that is what we are all called to be. It seems as though a lot of people think that joining a church means they can just sit and sing, but that's not true. You join a church to stand up and serve. And that is my philosophy. As members of God's church, whether it's at Sonoraville or wherever, God's people should be working together for the Lord and building His church. Is it easy work? No! Will there be problems and obstacles? Yes! But it can be done if everyone will unite together and know what is expected and required of them, and keep their eyes on the goal.

This letter was Paul's last known written word. He wrote it from a Roman prison chained to a Roman guard. He wrote it to Timothy, his spiritual son, because he knew that shortly, his time would be up. Soon, he would die, but he knew that the gospel needed to go on. He wanted to entrust it to someone who would perpetuate the gospel with the same fire and determination he had.

In chapter 1, Paul had told Timothy to not ever be ashamed of the gospel or his imprisonment, but to let it be his inspiration to carry on. He wasn't ashamed (12) because he knew in whom he had believed, and knew that he could trust Christ to guard it until the day he was called home.

Now Paul was charging young Timothy to guard the things he had been taught through the power of the Holy Spirit (14). He told him of others who had been in his company who had forsaken their calling to pursue other things (15), but singled out a fellow worker named Onesiphorus for his service to him. That is why he urges Timothy in chapter 2 to keep on keeping on for the cause of Christ. In fact, that seems to be the theme of the letter, "*Keep On Keeping On.*" In the first part of chapter two, Paul gives Timothy four ways to keep on keeping on. These four ways are described as four hats he must wear as a faithful Christian worker. Let's look at them briefly, for in them, we too can learn what is expected of us if we are to get the job done as Christian Workers.

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

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer.

5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 2 Timothy 2:1-7 (NIV)

First, he says that the Christian Worker must be like:

1. A Strong Son (1-2)

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

Everyone who comes to Christ comes as a baby in Christ. If growth is to take place, it will come through learning, nourishment, exercise, and trial and error. It comes much like a baby grows into adolescence and adulthood. We start out with milk, move to solid food, and progress to the meat of the word.

I have a message that I hope God lets me preach sometime called "High Expectations." It deals with the subject of what God expects of His church. One of the things He expects of His church and its members is for them to let Scripture be the authority in their lives.

The Scripture is what Paul is referring Timothy to when he speaks of "*the things you have heard me say...*" (vs. 2). Now, if we are going to let the Scripture be our authority, certainly we must be students of the Word. We must know certain things about the Bible in order to move on up in our growth. For example, the "*milk*" of the word would be things like the doctrines of salvation, grace, repentance, heaven, and Christ, while the "*meat*" of the word would be things like righteous living, eschatology, the priesthood of the believer, and

relational principles. In other words, unless we have a basic understanding of the elementary things, we will never fully understand the weightier things. That's why some people you talk to about the Bible think they know the Scriptures when all they talk about is prophecy. Now, don't get me wrong...prophecy is important, and I am not minimizing it. However, if that is all you know, you have perhaps missed some of the basics. I'm talking about things like salvation, how to get to heaven, and the doctrines of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Paul told Timothy later in the chapter to, "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*" **2 Tim. 2:15 (NIV)**. He's saying to Timothy and the rest of the saints that it's important to know your stuff and to be strong in the word. He's saying to be careful and not misquote it or take it out of context, or read something into it that's not there. He's telling us to be sure and study God's word diligently – to know how to lead someone to Christ before you talk about end times; and to know the elementary things before you start going off on tangents about the deep stuff.

It also means that Christian workers must be able to teach the babies in Christ. Just as we must teach our children how to walk and talk, we must teach our younger Christians how to behave. Then we can teach them about responsible living, and doctrine. These are the things they will need to survive and thrive so that some day, they can teach their spiritual children the disciplines they learned, so they can say, like Joshua, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

We don't need to be like the lady who had her 25 year pin for S.S. attendance, and a whole library of notes and quarterlies she had saved. When her new Pastor came to her house for a visit, he was impressed by the display on her shelves, so he asked her about it and what she was doing with all this information, she said, "*Oh nothing! It's just for me.*"

The Pastor said, "*You mean you don't teach a class yourself? You don't share it with anyone?*"

The lady replied, "*Oh no! It took me a long time to get all this stuff. Let everyone dig it out for themselves like I did.*"

Keeping God's Word to ourselves would be like a fireman who has been through all the training of putting out fires and saving lives, responding to a fire where there are people inside, and not putting his training to use.

Being strong in the Lord is putting what we know to use. Second, the Christian Worker must be like:

2. A Suffering Soldier (3-4)

"Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs--he wants to please his commanding officer."

The Christian life or the work of the Christian is not easy. Reaching others with the gospel is hard work. When I told an insurance man one day what I did for a living, he told me "*Boy, you've got the toughest selling job of all!*" I guess he's right.

When Paul told Timothy that he would have to "*endure hardships,*" he was talking about suffering for the cause of Christ. Here are two ways soldiers suffer:

A. Humiliation. The soldier suffers humiliation as he learns the way of the soldier. He learns that he cannot do as he pleases because he's under his superior officer. He learns that his ways must be molded to the service branch's ways. Most of the time, he is humiliated in the ways he learns those lessons. He rises when they say rise, dresses the way they say to dress, speaks the way they say speak, and eats what they say to eat and when they say to eat. He does all that to learn the way of that branch of service, and in order to be a good soldier. The life of the soldier is hard.

So is the life of the Christian worker. We must all line up behind our superior officer, and march in step with Him, and learn of Him. We submit ourselves to Him and humble ourselves in His sight, lest we be humbled along the way.

Second, the good soldier suffers

B. In Combat. In the heat of the battle, the soldier is subject to injury and even death. He gives it all he's got, utilizing his training and know-how, but is aware of the danger around him. One mistake, one lackadaisical attitude could cost him dearly or could jeopardize others.

So it is with the Christian worker. In this battle, the stakes are high. Losing ground is not acceptable. Retreat is not an option. As Coach Vince Lombardi said, "*Winning isn't the only thing...it's everything.*" We

need to learn all we can so we can give it all we've got. That's the life of the soldier, and that is the life of the Christian Worker.

Third, the Christian Worker must be like:

3. A Smart Athlete (5)

"Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules."

Paul loved to use the analogy of athletics. Over and over in his letters he compares the Christian life to a race. Here, he states that in order to win the prize, the smart athlete competes according to the rules. He cannot win the prize unless he does.

Just look at some of the more famous cheaters in athletics who were not so smart: Several years ago, Zola Budd thought she could win the Boston Marathon one year by skipping a few miles. When she was caught, she was forever banned from the race. Ben Johnson thought taking drugs would enhance his speed and help him win the 100 meter dash, but he was caught and has been forever banned from the Olympics. Pete Rose thought he'd make a few bucks betting on his own team, but he got backed into a corner and was forced out of the game he so dearly loved for life.

How does this apply to the Christian worker? The Christian worker who doesn't play by the rules will not be effective, nor will they make it very far. Now, I'm not talking about following the Old Testament Law by observing them to a "T." That is what the Jewish religious leaders tried to do in Jesus' day, and He called them "*whitewashed tombs*" who only looked good on the outside.

Christian Workers will only be effective by playing by the rules. What are they? Well, I've jotted some down: "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Give with a cheerful heart. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. Go the extra mile. Forgive a person as much as it takes. Be my witnesses wherever you go. Do everything you do in the name of the Lord and with everything you've got.*" Living by these "rules" is the only way to win.

Finally, Paul compares the Christian worker to:

4. A Sweating Farmer (6)

"The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops."

Paul says that the sweating (hard-working) farmer is going to be the first one to receive his share of the crops. What does he mean? He means that the reward will be fruitful. The harvest will come to those who are strong in grace, suffering hardships, playing by the rules, and hard-working. He means that the hard-working Christian will have to be diligent in preparing the ground, planting the seeds, watering and fertilizing the plants, weeding out the unhealthy growth, praying for the rain of the Holy Spirit, and then reaping the harvest.

A lot of sweat and tears goes into a harvest, and so it is with the Christian's work. I know many of you are working hard, but since our baptisms are down, and our Sunday School has been down lately, there's still a lot of hard-work ahead if we're going to see more folks baptized this year than last year, or average more in Sunday School than last year, or begin to grow in our ministries. We can't give up! We can't give in! We can't sit back and let someone else do it. If it's going to be done, we've got to do it. We're all out of "*someone else's.*"

Conclusion: To get the job done this year: We're going to need strong sons, not timid tikes. We're going to need suffering soldiers, not defeated deserters. We're going to need smart athletes, not idle onlookers. And we're going to need sweating farmers, not lazy loafers.

So, if you need more strength, this is the place to get it. If you not in the battle, this is where you can enlist. If you're not in the race, or are trying to play outside God's rules, here's where to sign up. If you're not working hard and expecting results, here's where to roll up your sleeves and exercise your faith.

As we follow Paul's advice to Timothy and "*reflect*" (vs. 7) on what he is saying, let us make this our prayer:

"Here are my hands, use them to work for you.

Here are my feet, use them to walk for you.

Here is my mouth, use it to speak for you.

Here is my faith, help it to grow."