

Redeemed, Resourced and Rewarded

Note for diligent students: In 2 Tim 2 – whole chapter – we find Paul depicts or presents the believer using 7 metaphors or characters: the “son”, the “soldier”, the “athlete”, the “farmer”, the “diligent workman”, the “vessel to the glory of God” and the “servant of the Lord” – and he shows us that in all these different characters the believer is called upon to represent and present the Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives. It’s a part of the Word worth studying. Today we will focus on three of these characters.

2 Tim 2:1-13 ...“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²The 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. ³Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴No 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. ⁵Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. ⁷Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. ⁸Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, ⁹for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. ¹⁰For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. ¹¹It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

In a nutshell – This passage is about enduring, living and serving gracefully, in the grace and strength of Christ, in the face of hardship, so that others might receive the gospel. There’s a call here for effort – diligence – perseverance. “Suffer hardship with me.” And the purpose of our endurance in the face of hardships is so that others may receive the gospel – **we live the life to share the life.**

Preliminaries Concerning Grace:

Before looking at the three characters – soldier, athlete and farmer – let us first look at a couple of important facts concerning grace found in this passage.

V1 – ... “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” – (ἐνδυναμοῦ endunamou) “be continually inwardly strengthened or empowered” - present (linear or ongoing) passive imperative. Speaks of daily, ongoing inward empowerment. This is to be characteristic of our daily living.

... “In the grace that is in Christ Jesus” – Inwardly empowered by the grace that is in Christ, who is in you. That’s the sphere in which all Christian life is lived – in Christ. We live by the life, the faith and the grace of Christ. (Col1:27; Gal 2:20) – we are to make use of this powerful resource that’s within us.

V2 - ... “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.” It’s not only for salvation that we are dependent on

grace, but also for service. We are not only to know and preserve the truth but to also pass it on – to others, who will faithfully pass it on to others... and so on... **We live the life to share the life.** And the grace of Christ is our great enabler. By His grace we are saved; by his grace we serve.

This sentiment is reiterated in verse 10 ... *“For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

3 Metaphors – Soldier, Athlete and Farmer:

3 metaphors/characters – soldier, athlete, farmer – each with a call to suffer, in order to fulfill a particular purpose, for which there is a due reward.

V3 – Soldier: ... *“Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 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.”*

... *“Suffer hardship”* – well certainly soldiers know what it means to suffer hardship – carrying heavy backpacks, weapons and ammunition; enduring highly disciplined training over challenging assault courses; walking kilometers after kilometer in harsh terrain; in the heat, or in the rain; digging trenches in hard ground; facing ambushes; facing enemy fire; and so on.

1 Pet 5:8 ... *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

Paul uses the analogy or metaphor of a soldier because we, as believers, are engaged in constant warfare. We have three subtle and cruel enemies constantly arrayed against us – the **world**, the **flesh** and the **Devil**. This is a harsh war, there will be hardships. – Satan and the world will not fight on a fair basis – there will be injustice, deceit, lies, unkindness and unfairness that we have to face.

2 Tim 3:12 ... *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”.*

John 16:33 ... *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world”.*

On that basis we have hope – Christ is the victor and He lives in us! We do not fight in our own strength; we are empowered by Christ whose soldiers we are. So we are encouraged to fix our eyes upon Him in the midst of our hardships and not to be “entangled” in the distractions around us.

A good soldier is **focused**; he displays **single-mindedness** – to please the One who enlisted him; to win the battle.

We are called and encouraged to give wholehearted devotion to our divine commanding officer. There will be the everyday affairs of life one faces, but should not get “entangled” in them – or we will not win.

2 Pet 2:19-20 ... *“For by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they*

are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first."

In other early literature the word "entangled" is used to describe a rabbit or sheep snared in a thicket of thorns. A warning – if we get so caught up in the daily distractions we may end up "entangled" and highly vulnerable. We'll be a stationary target for the enemy to come in and devour us. Rather, we are called to walk apart from the ways of the world in devotion to the great Captain of our salvation.

V5 – Athlete: ... *"Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.*

... "Compete according to the rules" – there are rules governing who may compete (your credentials – professional or amateur competitor), you have to qualify for the Olympics, rules for preparation, training and the equipment you use, as well as rules for running the race itself.

2 Tim 3:16-17 ... *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for **training in righteousness**; ⁵⁰ that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."*

Heb 5:13-14 ... *"For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses **trained** to discern good and evil."*

Training calls for discipline. Training is tough – but if we are to win the race, which is our purpose, we need to be fit as well as well trained in our running technique. This takes discipline and diligence.

Heb 12:1-11 ... *"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. ⁴You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; ⁵and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprovved by Him; ⁶For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." ⁷It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;*

yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

V6 – Farmer: ... *“The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.”*

Farming is hard work. However poor the soil and whatever the climate brings (too little rain, too much rain), the farmer has to keep hard at his work. Having put his hand to the plough he must not look back.

Also, unlike the soldier and the athlete, the farmer is remote from being noticed and is not in the limelight of applause for winning or gasps from the crowds for failure. No crowds around to urge him on, no press gallery to report his victories or failures. His is a solitary effort. It requires much steadfastness and resolve to get the job done regardless of the odds he faces.

The farmer can't just plant the seed and then forget about it. He has to constantly till the land to keep the weeds back; he has to ensure the irrigation systems are in place and working so that the crops are watered; he has to keep the pests away with crop spraying; and so the list goes on.

What this implies for the “believer farmer” is that after sowing the seeds of the gospel in the soil of the unbeliever's heart, by sharing the word and sharing the Christ-life, the ongoing work of bringing that person to salvation is that of prayer, unconditional love and consistent upright behavior as a good example to them. After planting the seed there's follow up work to be done.

Then, the first share of the crop belongs to the farmer. And for the farmer there are two types of harvest:

1. The harvest of holiness. This is the “fruit of the Spirit”.

Gal 5:16 ... *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”*

Gal 6:7-9 ... *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”*

2. The harvest of converts. Winning people to Christ.

Matt 9:37-10:1 ... *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. ³⁸Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” ¹Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”*

In this harvest we go out and sow the seed and water the seed and then God brings the growth.

1 Cor 3:6-7 ... *“I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.”*

Common Things the Soldier, Athlete and Farmer Share

1. They all face hardship:

- Soldier faces hard disciplined training, harsh battle conditions and enemy fire.
- Athletes face disciplined training in fitness and technique and suffer painful endurance in the race.
- Farmers face harsh weather, poor soil conditions, weeds and pests.

2. They all have a purpose:

- Soldiers have a battle to win – to protect their own lives as well as secure the safety of the people of their nation from enemy attack.
- Athletes have a race to finish and win for their personal honour as well as for national honour.
- Farmers have to grow a crop for their own sustenance as well as that of the people of the nation.

3. They all obtain a reward:

- Soldiers win medals for valour and bravery
- Athletes win prizes, medals and sponsorship awards
- Farmers enjoy the first fruits of their crops

We face hardships: Unkindness, injustice, hatred, jealousy, misunderstandings, and even more...

We have a purpose: To know Christ and make Him known. ***We live the life, to share the life.***

We have a reward: Awaiting us one day is a crown of righteousness and eternity with God in heaven.

Three more common things The Soldier, Athlete and Farmer share

1. They all had to have the right qualities, attributes and characteristics to be what they were – a soldier, athlete or farmer. I can't run fast; my body is not the body of a sprinter.

Redemption – we have to have the right credentials to be a soldier, athlete or farmer in God's kingdom.

That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus John 3:3 ... *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

Rom 8:8-10 ... *"those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness".*

1 John 5:11-12 ... *“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.
¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

Only the **redeemed** qualify to be God’s Soldiers, Athletes or Farmers. It is the life of Christ in us that is absolutely foundational to our success. Without Christ we don’t qualify, we can’t run, there’s no reward.

That’s why the message of **redemption**, or the message of the cross, is so prevalent or dominant in Paul’s writings. Paul who suffered hardship more than most any others (2 Cor 11:23-29), knew that because he was redeemed, born again, living by the life, faith and grace of Christ he could face the most severe hardships and be secure.

That’s why we see the sequence in v8 ... *“Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendent of David, according to my gospel”* – the order places the resurrection of Christ first and foremost – the message of **Redemption** is central to the apostolic gospel.

“Remember” ... let that thought always be in your mind. He is risen! He is Lord! He is life! He is in you! He is your strength! Be continually inwardly strengthened in the grace that is in Christ, who is in you! Know your spiritual heritage. You are the **redeemed**! You are qualified to fight, run and harvest.

2. The Soldier, Athlete and Farmer all had to have the appropriate training, equipment and other resources they needed to succeed in their tasks.

Resources – we have to have to be appropriately resourced and equipped for the job.

Eph 1:3 ... *“Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”.*

Eph 1:7-8 ... *“the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us”.*

Eph 3:8 ... *“the unfathomable riches of Christ”.*

Eph 3:16-20 ... *“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”*

Phil 4:19 ... *“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*

2 Pet 1:2-4 ... *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so*

that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

In Christ we have everything we need to succeed! We just need to appropriate what He has deposited in us. Know what is in your spiritual bank account and know how to use it.

3. The Soldier, Athlete and Farmer all received a reward for their success.

Reward – we also have a reward

1 Cor 3:11-14 ... *"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward."*

Col 3:4 ... *"When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory"*.

Titus 2:13 says we can look forward to ... *"the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."*

And we can contemplate *"that great day"* in which we will receive the crown of righteousness and glory.

2 Tim 4:7-8 ... *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing"*.

And with confidence we can speak out the words of:

Phil 2:16 ... *"holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain"*.

Conclusion:

As **focused Soldiers**, as **well prepared Athletes** and as **hard-working Farmers** in Christ:

We the **Redeemed** through Christ are qualified to fight, run and harvest with success

We the **Resourced** in Christ are fully equipped and prepared to achieve victory in the face of hardship.

We the **Redeemed** and **Resourced** in Christ **live the life to share the life** for which we will be **Rewarded** with a crown of righteousness, eternity in the presence of our Lord and Saviour and those amazing words of our Saviour to look forward to ... *"well done good and faithful servant enter the joy of your Master."*