

2 Timothy 2A

- The letter of James opens with a counter-intuitive call for Christians to anticipate and even embrace suffering for the sake of Christ

[James 1:2](#) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Any Christian who has contemplated these words has questioned the logic of receiving suffering with joy
 - The two seem mutually exclusive
 - We understand that “to suffer” is to be without joy, and to know joy is to be without suffering
 - So how can one be compatible with the other, we wonder?
- Nevertheless, this is the Bible’s teaching on suffering in our faith, and James goes on to explain how suffering is, in fact, a source of joy for every believer
 - First, we have to understand that the suffering James speaks about is associated with trials the Lord brings us
 - He’s not speaking about all forms of suffering
 - Often we suffer as a result of our own sinful choices, and this suffering is not a source of joy but hopefully a cause for repentance
- James is referring to suffering for the sake of our testimony, whether by persecutions or other difficulties brought upon us to test our faith
 - These trials are a source of joy, for they are designed by the Lord to bring opportunities
 - James says they test our faith, to know if we are willing to stand firm for Christ and for eternal concerns over earthly concerns
 - In effect, trials are opportunities for us to reaffirm our commitment to our eternal future with Christ over our attachment to this world

- With each new opportunity, we gain spiritual strength, like a muscle growing strong under the strain of exercise
 - This is spiritual endurance, James says
 - And that endurance will lead to a “perfect” result
 - It will leave us complete, lacking in nothing, he says
 - Conversely, a failure to endure well may lead to a loss of something, a lack of completion
- What is this thing we will gain by our endurance?
 - Beyond the spiritual growth and blessings that follow maturity, James is looking forward to eternal blessings of rewards and honor in the kingdom
 - To be perfect, lacking nothing, refers to gaining a full reward
 - That reward doesn’t turn on a moment or even a season of our lives
 - Our progress is only measured at the end, and our reward is only assigned once we’ve run our race
 - So as we encounter trials, and even if we should stumble at times, nevertheless we still have good incentive to get back up and continue enduring
 - Because until the end has come, we are still growing
 - And until our race is over, we still have good cause to endure, since we are still marching toward our reward
 - Which is why we have reason to count suffering as a source of joy, because it means our race has not ended and opportunity for reward remains open
 - So if you have successfully withstood trials in the past, then count new trials as opportunities for extra credit
 - But don’t take your past success for granted, since no one is without the need for more spiritual growth
 - Or if you have stumbled in the face of trials in the past, rejoice over new trials as a sign the Lord considers you worthy to prove yourself again

- And don't be discouraged by past mistakes, since no Christian arrives in Heaven with a perfect track record
- We are all sinners, which is why we all needed grace in the first place
- Every trial is a chance to be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, James says, and today in Chapter 2 Paul picks up this same idea as he encourages Timothy to stay faithful in the face of persecution and trials
 - Last week Paul ended Chapter 1 with a sobering list of men who had failed in this regard
 - Paul told Timothy these men had walked away from him and even the faith, rather than face persecution
 - In one case, Paul said he prayed the Lord would forgive Onesiphorus in "the day", a reference to the judgment seat of Christ when rewards are handed out
 - This man had done much to support Paul in days past, but apparently he too shrunk back when the going got tough
 - Paul listed these examples to remind and exhort Timothy to do better
 - And earlier in the chapter Paul gave reason for his willingness to suffer for Christ
 - He said he knew that Christ was guarding his reward
 - And therefore, nothing could steal it from Paul
 - Ironically, the only way Paul's reward could come into jeopardy was if Paul himself retreated from his service to Christ
 - This was Paul's concern for his protege, Timothy
 - With so many in Asia making the wrong choice, Paul seems worried Timothy might follow suit
 - So as we move into Chapter 2, Paul continues to reinforce the importance of remaining faithful to his call even in the face of trials
 - And to make his point, Paul uses three analogies that teach different aspects of God's reward system
- First, Paul offers an introductory encouragement

[2Tim. 2:1](#) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[2Tim. 2:2](#) 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.

- Coming on the heels of Paul's list of faithless men in Chapter 1, we see Paul pivoting back to Timothy with a hope for better things
 - Paul says "you, Timothy" so as to distance Timothy from those others
 - We can't know how close Timothy was to following their bad example
 - Perhaps Paul didn't know for sure either
 - But clearly he was concerned, and we can hear him working hard to persuade Timothy not to make the same mistake
 - Paul implores Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus
 - We know grace means "unmerited favor"
 - That is, it's something God does for us before we even know we need it
 - In the case of salvation, it's the choice of God to send His Spirit into our hearts leading us in crying out "Abba, Father!"
 - And in the case of facing trials of one kind or another, Paul says there is yet another form of grace given us in Christ Jesus
 - This form of grace comes "in" Christ for it is only available to those who are Christ's by faith
 - This grace enables the believer to stand strong against the temptation to be unfaithful
 - This form of God's grace is an enabling power, but it does not guarantee a positive outcome, as men like Onesiphorus demonstrate
- Therefore, we must conclude that believers possess a God-given power to stand firm against temptations to flee persecution in unfaithful ways
 - Yet we must avail ourselves of this grace to benefit from it
 - As a matter of faith itself, we must first decide to remain faithful rather than shrinking back

- And then by the grace of God, we will be strengthened in our decision to stand
- That's what Paul means when he calls upon Timothy to be strong
 - He's calling Timothy to use the strength God has made available by His grace
 - But even the decision to be strong depends on something else
 - For what explains why one believer stands when another doesn't?
- The Bible's answer is that believers must renew their minds
 - We must take up a process of obtaining the mind of Christ so that we will make different decisions in moments of crisis
 - In the past, the old self made decisions based on earthly values and fleshly desires
 - Now our new self is called to make decisions based on the mind of Christ and the leading of His Spirit living in us
- We must train our mind to think like Christ so that we might live like Him
 - The Bible calls this training process the renewing of our mind
 - Making it new, changing it from the depraved ways we knew before faith and into likeness with Christ
 - For example, Paul says in Romans:

Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

- Paul says our walk must be transformed by a renewing of our mind
 - That renewing comes only through a study of God's Word
 - By knowing Christ's Word, we move away from conforming to the world and toward the likeness of Christ
 - By this transformation, Paul says we will live out the will of God
 - We will show the world by our new thinking and new behaviors what is good and acceptable and perfect to God

- Secondly, Paul says this is a daily renewal in our inner person which leads us to eternal glory

[2Cor. 4:16](#) Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

[2Cor. 4:17](#) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- Our outer, sinful nature is decaying and fading even as we are renewing our inner person day by day
 - Notice again that this renewing of the inner person will be tested by momentary, light affliction
 - Testing gives opportunity for our new self to be made visible as we live it out before the world
 - And as we endure that affliction, we gain the benefit of eternal, weighty glory far beyond comparison
- And now we see how transforming our mind brings us to the point where we can count all suffering as joy
 - By the counsel of scripture we gain the mind of Christ so we come to see our trials the way Jesus saw His trials
 - We come to understand that our afflictions for the sake of Christ are the fertile ground where God plants seeds of opportunity
 - The opportunity to respond in faith, sacrificing earthly things to the glory of Christ and for the potential of heavenly reward
 - The grace of Christ working in us gives us the power to stand in the moment
- That's why Paul emphasizes that Timothy must ensure that the teaching Paul left with him in Ephesus be shared widely by trustworthy men
 - Notice in v.2 Paul places this demand on Timothy
 - If the church in Ephesus was to withstand the coming persecution successfully, then it must be prepared with proper teaching
 - Renewing their minds was the necessary prerequisite to making the right choices

- But if the church made the choice to remain faithful as Paul did, then the grace of God would give them the strength to follow through
- Then Paul moves to teaching Timothy on the very point of suffering, using three analogies to drive home the logic for why suffering in trials is worthwhile for a believer

2Tim. 2:3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2Tim. 2:4 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.

2Tim. 2:5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

2Tim. 2:6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

2Tim. 2:7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

- For the second time in as many chapters, Paul calls Timothy to suffer hardship as Paul did
 - And to explain the sensibility of such a call, Paul draws upon three analogies
 - First, Paul says that suffering hardship for the sake of the Gospel is like a soldier called for duty
 - I have some qualification to speak on this analogy
 - I spent 9 years in the US Air Force, not counting the four years I spent as a cadet at the Air Force Academy
 - This gives me a first-hand sense of what Paul means when he compares serving Christ to military service
 - Although my Army brothers and sisters might argue that serving in the Air Force doesn't qualify as being a soldier
 - As it turns out, life in the military is great preparation for life in ministry
 - A soldier must be 100% committed to the mission and to his or her role
 - Because the mission is too important to tolerate a half-hearted effort
 - Paul says we must be a "good" soldier, and the Greek word for good means wise

- In the context of soldiering, being wise means setting the right priorities in life
 - And specifically, a soldier must set aside pursuit of the world at least to some degree
 - What passes as normal life for a civilian can't hold for a soldier
 - Military service is an all-consuming lifestyle in most cases, especially in times of war
- Therefore, Paul says a good soldier can't concern himself with the affairs of everyday life
 - Instead, the only desire of a soldier is pleasing the one who enlisted him
 - Pleasing his sergeant, pleasing his commander, ultimately pleasing the nation he serves
 - Military life has no place for token contributions
- Paul says Christians are to serve in battle in a similar way
 - Christ has called us to duty as His soldiers
 - We have a new mission in life, one that's eternally important
 - It's a battle against the enemy and the world and even our own flesh
 - Imagine if soldiers routinely ran from the battlefield at the first signs of conflict declaring they weren't prepared for such trials?
 - That's the situation when a Christian run from trials or abandons their testimony altogether
 - It means they weren't educated in the realities of serving Christ
 - You are soldiers, which means you are preparing for battle
 - Therefore when the fight comes, you can't shrink back
 - You must remain in place to serve and glorify the One Who enlisted you
 - So Paul's first example emphasizes our outlook and preparation for service as Christians

- We must understand our role and mission will eventually bring us into conflict with an enemy
- Therefore, be ready to take up the fight
- Secondly, in v.5 Paul uses the example of an athlete running in a race
 - Now, Paul has moved from how we prepare for service to how we pursue our service
 - An athlete must compete well to receive a prize, Paul says
 - The Greek word compete can also be translated strive
 - The emphasis here is in the striving, a constant expending of effort toward a goal
 - For who competes without a desire for the reward?
 - Today it's fashionable, especially with young children, to assign everyone an award at the end of a competition
 - There can be no losers or winners
 - We all know this isn't real life
 - And I suspect most children aren't fooled by this charade either
 - We may not be keeping score at the game, but you can bet they are
 - Because winning is a primal motivation for striving
 - And the incentive for striving in any competition is the prospect of a prize at the end for those who compete well
 - But as Paul says, if we want that prize, we must follow the rules
 - We must compete according to the way the race requires
 - If the rules require we stay inside our lane, then we can't stray
 - And if the rules require we cross the finish line, then we can't stop running before we reach that point
 - In other words, if we don't give our best, we cannot succeed which is the whole point in competing in the first place
- In the same way, Paul says every disciple of Christ has entered a race of sorts

- The race began the moment we became a believer in Jesus Christ
 - It continues until we die and enter the Lord's presence
 - During this time, we are competing for rewards, eternal rewards
- Only in this particular race, we don't compete against other athletes
 - Instead, we're competing against ourselves
 - Against our fleshly desires and selfish nature, against our fears and the temptations offered by the world to draw us astray
- Our challenge is to compete according to the rules
 - And the rules of this race are simple
 - Stay inside your lane and finish the race
 - The world, the enemy and our flesh are always attempting to draw us outside the lines God set for us
 - Whether by sins of one kind or another, or distractions of earthly gain or pleasure, we are presented with opportunities every day to leave our lane
- And sometimes the enemy, or our flesh or the world, places hurdles in our path
 - And as we come upon these trials, the challenge makes us consider giving up or going another way
 - To become like Onesiphorus, establishing a track record of running well only to stray off the track and forfeit the prize
- Likewise, we must bring an eternal outlook to our walk as Christians
 - We must commit to running well, according to the rules, so that we may receive a reward
 - We must give our best to Christ, in whatever form our service to Him may take
 - We must guard our own lives to ensure we stay in our lanes, so to speak
 - So the second example of an athlete reminds us that serving Christ requires a missional mind, one that isn't easily distracted

- Finally, Paul compares our life of Christian service to that of a farmer
 - And in this example, Paul emphasizes that the farmer is hard-working
 - The word for hard-working in Greek literally means weary
 - So our farmer is a weary sort
 - The life of a farmer is certainly filled with long days of back-breaking work
 - A farmer prepares the field, sows seed to produce a harvest
 - Paul says only after the harvest arrives, only then does the farmer receive his payment
 - His payment is a portion of what has been harvested, the fruit of his field
 - His provision is entirely dependent on producing a successful harvest
 - The farmer can't give up before the harvest arrives
 - If he does, he would be left with nothing to show for his efforts
 - But if he perseveres, then he knows he will be the first to profit
 - A farmer's reward comes at the end, which leads him to be patient in the long hours of the work and willing to suffer hardship
 - Giving up early means gaining nothing in the end
 - Likewise, Christians cannot lose sight of our goal in serving the Lord
 - Our service will be difficult at times
 - There will be many days when we waver in the face of suffering
 - Perhaps the trials will be intensely personal, as the Lord works to uncover our weaknesses so we can be strengthened for greater service
 - And sometimes our trials will come as public suffering for Christ under persecution
- We may feel like quitting, we may wonder if it's all worth it

- But if we think like a farmer, we understand the fruit of our labors won't be revealed until the final harvest
 - If a farmer can show patience for a few months in pursuit of a crop of grain
 - Certainly, we can endure a lifetime of serving Christ for the glories to be found in the kingdom
- How can we tell Jesus that He's asking too much of us when so often we willingly sacrifice much more, for lessor worldly goals
 - How many years will we invest in education or training for a sport or some profession
 - How many hours, how much money has been invested in meaningless things that perish with us?
 - Is seeking the pleasure of your Lord worthy of less sacrifice and effort?
- Can we see Paul's point? Farmers understand that their work will be hard
 - But they also understand the reward is worth the investment
 - And they know if they give up early, they profit nothing
 - We need to think of our walk in service to Christ in the same way
- So the first example emphasized the preparation for service
 - The second example illustrated the proper pursuit of service
 - And the final example reminds us of the need for persistence in our service even as we may grow weary
 - Simply put, if you know God to be good – and certainly He is
 - Then you can be sure that when all is said and done, we will all agree that our sacrifices were worth it
 - Trust Him in that even now, and serve Him well
- Now Paul offers one more example, the chief example for all Christians – Christ Himself

[2Tim. 2:8](#) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,

[2Tim. 2:9](#) for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

[2Tim. 2:10](#) 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.

- There can be no better example, of course, than Jesus Himself
 - Paul alludes to Jesus' example in all three of these qualities
 - First, Paul refers to Christ rising from the dead
 - This statement immediately draws our attention to Jesus' suffering and death
 - No follower of Jesus Christ will ever be able to say they suffered more in serving Christ than He did in serving us
 - He is our ultimate example of suffering in obedience to the call of God
 - Jesus willingly suffered in obedience to the Father
 - And He did so to serve God in an eternal mission
 - Secondly, Jesus was resurrected from the dead
 - So His service in suffering brought glory to Him in the end
 - But His suffering had to proceed His glory
 - He had to persevere and finish the race set before Him
- Then Paul adds Jesus was the descendant of David
 - Paul is alluding to the Davidic Covenant, which established that David's descendant would rule over Israel and all nations
 - That promise was directed at Jesus of course
 - In a day to come in the Kingdom, Jesus will receive the rule that the Father promised to Him

[Psa. 8:5](#) Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

Psa. 8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,

- In fact, Jesus has yet to receive this reward since it's waiting for the arrival of the Kingdom
- The point is that Christ Himself is still waiting for His reward
 - Like us, He is still showing patience since what He died to receive hasn't yet been awarded to Him by the Father
 - He hasn't received His Bride in full and He hasn't inherited the Kingdom
 - So if Christ suffered willingly for eternal glory, and if He persevered even to the point of death, and if He is showing patience for His reward...
 - How can we not be willing to do the same?
- Finally, Paul offers himself as one more example to Timothy
 - Paul willingly suffered hardship for Christ, he says
 - To include imprisonment as a criminal
 - He knew what he was asking of Timothy
 - He understood the risks, but he wasn't asking more of Timothy than he was willing to do himself
 - But then Paul adds that his imprisonment wasn't at the expense of the mission, for no one can imprison the word of God
 - Paul means that even as persecution comes against leaders in His church, it has no bearing on God's ability to deliver the Gospel
 - Ironically, Paul says in v.10 that he endured these things for the sake of the chosen, that is those who may obtain salvation in Christ
 - Far from lessening his effectiveness in the mission, he endured persecution in order to accomplish the mission
 - Persecution accomplishes far more in God's economy than concession and compromise ever could

- When the church stands firm in the face of persecution, it leads to growth of the best kind
- It draws attention to the love of God's people, putting it in stark relief against the hatred and sin of those who oppress believers
- Just as Abel's godliness was amplified by his brother Cain's persecution and hatred
- So will the message of the Gospel be amplified by the world's hatred of us
- As someone once said, the blood of the martyrs waters the seeds of faith
- Regrettably, the church has sometimes sought to avoid persecution by compromising with their oppressors
 - When this happens, the excuse is often that we must make some concessions to the demands of our enemies to ensure the Gospel survives
 - Paul's testimony (and the history of the church) proves this to be wrong
- Moreover, it's hubris to think that God needs us to bring His word to the world
 - The world was *made* by God's word
 - So clearly the world cannot restrain the word of God in any way
 - Timothy couldn't use that excuse to avoid the persecutions and trials God may bring, and neither can we
- This brings Paul back to summarize his central point with a memorable expression

2Tim. 2:11 It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

2Tim. 2:12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

2Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- Paul summarizes the relationship between faith, service and reward by coining a saying or memorable expression

- Paul starts with the assurance this is a trustworthy statement, something that you can take to the bank
 - In Greek, the word Paul used for trustworthy is *pistos*, which means “this is something we can place faith in”
 - And the first part of the saying holds that if we died with Christ, then we will also live with him
- This is a concise expression of the Gospel message itself
 - Essentially, the Gospel is a matter of believing in two things
 - First, that Jesus is the perfect, sinless sacrifice Who died in our place on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins
 - Secondly, that Jesus was resurrected from grace never to die again
 - These two parts are neatly summed up in Romans:

Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;

- When a person places faith in Christ in this way, the Bible says that person has died with Christ
 - In other words, God assigns Christ’s death in place of the believer’s own death for sin
 - And in that sense, all believers have died with Christ through their faith in His payment on the cross in their place
 - So Paul describes saving faith as having died with Christ
- Then he goes on to finish the thought saying if we have died with Him, then we can be sure we will live again with Him eternally
 - Our faith in Christ assures us that the death of our body is not the end of us
 - We will receive a new body
 - We will walk the earth again with Christ
 - And we will never die again

- So in v.11 we find a simple summary of the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - Notice the Gospel does not rest on your good works, for human works have no value to the Lord
 - We cannot work our way out of our debt of sin
 - We cannot earn the righteousness that comes by faith alone
 - Only God could pay our debt for us, through His Son on the cross
 - But since we know that we cannot earn our salvation through works, we may be tempted to think that our works are of no value whatsoever
 - This must be the thinking of any Christian who shrinks back in the face of trial or persecution
 - Or they fail to appreciate what's on the line in eternity
 - So they think that having saving faith is the end of the story... but it's just the beginning
- In v.12 Paul says if we endure with Christ, we will also reign with Him
 - The Greek word translated as endure carries the sense of persevering in the face of difficulty, to have patience at a work
 - Much like the farmer, Paul says if we work patiently serving Christ then we will reign with Him
 - We know that Paul is no longer addressing the topic of salvation, since he has introduced the necessity of a human work
 - Instead, Paul has moved to the next step of the Christian walk
 - Following salvation through faith, we now begin to serve the Lord as His disciple in our walk of faith
 - As a disciple we're called to serve faithfully, enduring trials and waiting patiently for a reward
 - Like a soldier or athlete or farmer
 - Paul says if we endure in our work, we will reign with Christ, which is a reference to our eternal reward
 - Scripture teaches that all believers are promised both an inheritance in the kingdom

- And we will have the opportunity to reign with Christ in governing the coming Kingdom on Earth

Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

- In the Gospels, Jesus explains that our opportunities to reign are determined by our faithfulness to serve Him now
 - Some believers will receive a greater reward than others
 - Jesus says that our present time serving Him on Earth is the test of our endurance and faithfulness
 - And by this test, the Lord will discover who is deserving of greater responsibility in the coming Kingdom
- Jesus used a parable to explain how He will assign us responsibility to share in His reign in the Kingdom
 - In the key statement in the parable, Jesus declares:

Matt. 25:21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

- We have each received a degree of responsibility to serve Him now
- We have opportunities to serve Him in our churches or to witness to Christ in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, & communities
- We have been given spiritual gifts for that purpose
- And at our judgment, we will be measured for our endurance according to what we have been given
- Those who make the most of the time on Earth to serve Christ, will be given the greatest opportunity to serve in the Kingdom
 - Scripture alludes to greater honor, greater responsibility, a greater inheritance in some form
 - Having greater things in eternity is much more valuable than having anything in this short life

- So while our salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in the death and resurrection of Christ
- Our endurance in serving Christ as His disciple grants us opportunity to enjoy greater opportunities to serve Christ in the Kingdom
- Paul's point raises an obvious question...what if a Christian fails to serve Christ faithfully?
 - What if a believer denies the Lord the service He expects?
 - Paul addresses this possibility in the second half of v.12
 - He says if we deny Him, then the Lord will deny us
 - We're still in the context of enduring and reigning, so now Paul is speaking of the opposite condition, that of failing to endure
 - Paul describes it as a denial of Christ
 - That is, denying Christ of our service and our endurance as His disciple
 - Onesiphorus denied Christ His endurance when he apparently walked away from Paul in the face of persecution
 - It's a choice to live for oneself and for this world instead of living for Christ and the Kingdom
 - In such a case, Paul says the Lord will deny us...which is to say, Christ will deny us some portion of our reward
 - He will deny us the opportunity to reign with Him in greater ways
 - Just as when we withheld our obedience to our earthly parents, they denied us privileges and rewards
 - So it will be for any in the Kingdom who deny Christ their endurance
 - The prize is for those who compete well
 - And so God holds out the prize, as motivation for us to serve Him faithfully

- Remember, the judgment in these matters comes at the end of the race, not in the middle
 - So if you are worried your reward has already been lost, you can take comfort knowing that the race is still under way
 - You need only return to your lane and pick up the pace
 - Everyone stumbles here and there
 - No one will reach the end without a testimony of good days and bad days
 - Don't let the enemy deceive you into remaining sidelined
- Now, some teachers read Paul's statement in v.12 and come away misunderstanding what Paul is saying
 - They assume that when Paul says Christ denies us he means that Christ removes salvation, as if a person ceases being saved
 - They conclude that denying means denying the faith, so therefore Christ will deny us before the Father
 - But this is not what Paul is trying to teach us
 - Paul probably wondered if someone might make just such false conclusion at this point
 - So Paul added one more line to his saying to make sure we didn't jump to the wrong conclusion
 - In v.13 Paul adds that even if we are faithless, He will remain faithful
 - That is to say, in the case where a believer foolishly walked away from Christ (like Onesiphorus), the Spirit will never leave us nor forsake us
 - The Lord has promised we will be resurrected into eternal life
 - He has promised we will live forever with Christ in the Kingdom
 - And the Lord will remain faithful to those promises
 - Paul added this statement in v.13 to make sure we didn't go too far with his saying
 - We don't earn our salvation by our good works, so we cannot lose salvation by "bad" works

- Nevertheless, if we walk away from serving the Lord, we do place our eternal rewards at great risk
- We stand to suffer loss in the Kingdom
- We will come through our judgment moment as through fire, with nothing to show for our time spent in service to Christ
- We must consider carefully our call to be a disciple of the Lord
 - Are we willing to endure hardship?
 - Do we make the most of each day to please Him?
 - Do we avoid being distracted by the concerns of everyday life like a soldier?
 - Are we running our race with an eye on the prize and competing according to the rules like an athlete?
 - And are we willing to be patient like the farmer, content to receive our rewards in the Kingdom?
 - And when trials and persecution come our way, will we have invested the time necessary to renewing our mind by God's word
 - So that renewing may prepare us to choose to stand in His power by His grace
 - A successful walk in Christ begins with an understanding that our service to Christ is a test
 - One that demands commitment, diligence and endurance
 - So when you get up in the morning, rise to serve Christ's agenda
 - As you seek to serve, meditate on His word
 - When we become discouraged or struggle with sin or fall into despair, know His grace will grant you the power to stand
 - Provided you choose that course
 - When you confront trial, persecution and even death, take comfort knowing your life is poured out for the One Who died for you