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# Sermon Notes

September 5, 2021

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

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## A Soldier, An Athlete and A Farmer 2 Timothy 2:1-7

### The Christian Life

- ❖ A balancing act between
  - what God gives us and does in our lives
  - our need to exert personal responsibility to utilize and benefit from what God provides
- ❖ Pray/Work

### A “How-To” Lesson

- ❖ How are believers meant to “guard the gospel”
  - there is more to this than simply understanding and claiming the power and the promises of God
  - a personal responsibility that impacts our character and our behavior
  - discipline, devotion, and diligence in preserving and proclaiming the gospel
- ❖ An unbroken chain of gospel ministry
  - no chain is stronger than its weakest link
  - as links in this chain, we are *strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*
- ❖ Grace lies at the center of who we are in Christ (John 1:16)

- God’s children receive the ongoing, unmeasured outflow of God’s grace (1 Corinthians 15:10)
- the treasure house of God’s grace can never be depleted
- *be strengthened*, NOT “strengthen yourself”
  - continually remind yourself that it is “Holy Spirit grace” you are relying on
  - there is ALWAYS more grace (James 4:6)
- whatever God calls you to, He will strengthen and equip you for it through *the grace that is in Christ Jesus*
- ❖ We must diligently, carefully, intentionally instruct others about what the gospel message is, what the gospel implications are, and what the gospel demands
  - this process begins in the home
  - the process continues as we cultivate relationships with others who show promise and interest in being “another link” in the chain of faith

### Blood, Sweat and Tears

- ❖ *Share in suffering*
  - following Christ and being part of the church Jesus builds is not something to be entered into unaware
  - suffering is involved and that suffering is shared among all who set out to do what Christ commands
  - serving Christ requires more than a “one-time decision”
- ❖ Serving Christ requires dedication, devotion & discipline

### 3 Illustrations

#### ❖ The Soldier

- Paul's military metaphors (*fight the good fight... a fellow soldier...* spiritual armor)
- obedience, loyalty, commitment, courage, sacrifice
  - those who serve pay a price and must exhibit extraordinary endurance
  - the duties of military service **ALWAYS** take precedence over civilian concerns
  - keeping distractions off the radar (Philippians 3:13)
- a soldier's supreme desire is to please his/her commanding officer

#### ❖ The Athlete

- competing according to the rules
- no one wins Olympic gold without possessing and exercising single-minded, wholehearted discipline
- if you follow Christ, your whole life is a training period which includes the suffering Paul mentions earlier

#### ❖ The Farmer

- farming is hard work, and it was even harder in the 1st century without the benefit of modern tools, etc...
  - early and long hours
  - constant toil
  - regular disappointments
- for the farmer, everything happens in slow motion

- like farming, gospel ministry requires strain, struggle and diligence, all of which tend to be linked to suffering in one form or another

#### ❖ Although suffering is an important part of the story, it is not the end of the story!

- diligent service **WILL** be rewarded
- the diligent Christ follower receive a reward (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- suffering is part of the normal, everyday Christian life

#### ❖ A Christian must decide to be a soldier who will suffer, a well-trained athlete who will compete according to the rules and a hardworking farmer who works diligently

- on the other side of warfare there is victory
- after the athlete's rigorous exercise comes the prize
- beyond agricultural labor lies the crop

### Personal Application

1. In what unique ways is God using you as a link in the unbroken chain of gospel ministry that extends from the Apostles to the present and on into the future? In what specific ways are you engaged in guarding the gospel?
2. As you consider Paul's 3 illustrations (the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer) which is most familiar to you? With which do you most identify? What hope and encouragement does that bring to you?
3. Suffering is part of the normal, everyday Christian life. In what way are you sharing in suffering for the gospel?