

TRAINED TO ENDURE HARDSHIP

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Training to participate in any sport is hard work!

Ask any gymnast or swim team member trying to excel in their sport.

Whether in grade school or the pros, our drive to excel determines how hard we're willing to work at it, and how far we'll go in the competition.

Most people aren't willing to pay the price to make it to the big leagues!

Basketball players stay late and shoot hoops; then dribble home!

Swimmers do laps for hours.

Aspiring athletes lift weights, run laps, get extra sleep, eat special foods.

All with a dream to someday become the best—to win the prize.

Not everyone is “into” paying the price to win the prize.

Some prefer an easier way!

Staff at **Bridger Wilderness Area** received comment cards:

- * Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands.
- * Please avoid building trails that go uphill.
- * Please spray the wilderness to get rid of bugs.
- * Chair lifts are needed so we can get to best views without hiking.
- * Places where trails don't exist aren't well marked.
- * Too many rocks in the mountains.

Some people aren't prepared to pay the price to enjoy the prize!

Principles of committed training and exercise
apply to people who wish to excel in any field

**Principles of commitment and training apply to
people who want to excel in godly living also.**

2 Tim. 2 demonstrates that **excelling in godliness
requires commitment, training, and discipline.**

EXHORTATION REGARDING ENDURANCE 2:1-13

Contrast between those in Asia who turned away and Onesiphorus is basis for exhortation to Timothy: *"You, then..."* like Onesiphorus,

Similar exhortations: Faithfulness (1st) and endurance (2nd) go together.

Paul urges: **endure suffering for the gospel; bear up under pressure.**

STRENGTH FOR ENDURANCE 2:1-2

Source of strength 2:1

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

**Strength to endure comes from God's grace
which is found in Christ.**

2 Timothy 2 is key passage on discipling.

Being a disciple is often defined by checklist of spiritual disciplines.

Paul starts his call to his disciple Timothy by focusing on grace.

Discipleship isn't about checking the boxes on a spiritual "to do" list.

Discipleship starts with God's GRACE, which is found in Christ.

Timothy knows he'll never find strength *in himself* to fulfill his ministry.

God's grace not only saves us;

it also enables us to "hang in there" when times are hard.

it enables us to faithfully follow Christ as His disciples.

McGee: "If you think you can grit your teeth and go out and live the Christian life on your own, you're in for a great disappointment. If you feel that you can follow a few rules or some clever gimmicks to make you a mature Christian, you have fallen into a subtle trap of legalism. Paul gives no rules, and the Word of God has no rules to tell the child of God how to live the Christian life. We're saved by grace; now we're to live by grace, and be strong in that grace."

Use of strength 2:2

"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."

Strength we receive by God's grace should be *reinvested*; we should entrust what we've received to others.

It isn't intended for us alone.

We're to look for faithful people to pass on what we've received.

Ask God to give you someone to teach what He has shown you.

Keep your eyes open for that person.

Reach out to him or her, slowly and informally.

Look for opportunities to pass on what you've learned

That's what Paul did; Timothy is to imitate what he's learned.

"Use the strength God has given you to teach others."

McGee: [End of life, concerned whether others will come along to teach God's Word, offers insight on Paul's perspective:] "It's a real concern to us older men that there be young men who will be faithful in teaching God's Word. So Paul was admonishing Timothy to pass along the things he had been teaching him to '*faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*'".

Oswald Sanders: Training of leaders cannot be done by employing techniques of mass production. It requires patient, careful instruction and prayerful, personal guidance of the individual over a considerable period. "Disciples are not manufactured wholesale. They're produced one by one, because some-one has taken the pains to discipline, to instruct and enlighten, to nurture and train one that is younger."

We use strength God gives to reinvest what God has given us, passing it on to faithful and reliable people, who reinvest it in others.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF ENDURANCE 2:3-7

Before you can pass truth about godly living on *to others*,
you must first be a committed follower of Christ *yourself*.

3 illustrations demonstrate the value of persevering in hard times.

Soldier 2:3-4 "*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.*"

A soldier suffers hardship to win the battle.

He lives under harsh conditions—bad weather, poor food,

uncomfortable beds, inadequate shelter, dirt and exhaustion. Soldiers on front lines seldom complain about hardship; focus on battle.

A soldier doesn't get hung up, worrying about routine daily necessities of life.

McGee: "Imagine a soldier in the midst of battle going to his commanding officer: 'Sir, I'm sorry... I have to go into the city to see about some business; and I have a date; I won't be able to be here for the battle tonight!'"

A soldier must be committed to fighting battle & pleasing his commander.

He leaves behind many things to which he's accustomed.

Christians who determine to live godly lives are on front lines of a *spiritual* battle.

They encounter attacks by the enemy.

They lack many of comforts of home.

We used to be "entangled" with things the world pursues; now we've separated from them and attached to our Lord.

Athlete 2:5 *"Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules."*

An athlete trains and practices to get ready for his event; he submits himself to rules and competes hard to win.

He does whatever it takes to fulfill requirements and win race.

McGee: "Forget the gimmickry that condenses Christianity into a little course or a few rules and regulations. [You'll never win the

race that way!] An athlete can't cut the corner of a racetrack. Neither can a baseball player run by 2nd base without touching it; he has to touch all the bases to score. A child of God has to do that, too. If you're going to win, you can't take any shortcuts."

**Godly living also requires training and discipline,
competing according to God's standards, to win the prize.**

Farmer 2:6-7

"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.

**A farmer works hard and waits patiently
for the harvest which he eventually enjoys.**

It's the hard working farmer who first enjoys the fruit.

He tills the soil, battles insects, diseases, drought, floods, wind.

If a farmer becomes lazy or negligent, he'll never reap a harvest.

If you leave a field to itself, it produces mostly weeds!

Because of his hard work/investment, the farmer gets the first opportunity to enjoy the fruit.

When God's people work hard, without giving up, we reap a harvest.

It's hard work; but the harvest is worth it!

Paul urges Timothy: **reflect on implications of this truth 2:7:**

***Excelling in godly living
requires commitment, training and discipline.***

It requires discipline, letting go of comforts of home, suffering, hard work.

It's easier to talk about the price than it is to pay the price.

That's why few stick with the discipline and win the prize.

PERSONAL EXAMPLES OF ENDURANCE 2:8-10

2 *personal* examples: men who endured suffering to win the prize.

Personal illustrations of the value of endurance

Jesus 2:8 *"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, ..."*

Jesus suffered death on the cross

before being raised from the dead.

First He endured the suffering of the cross—He died.

After His suffering, He triumphed through resurrection.

He didn't stay dead!

He rose in triumph from the grave.

As David's descendent He will return to claim the throne and reign over God's people.

When we suffer for our faith, we should remember how Jesus suffered.

Willing to suffer extreme pain and death; He kept His eye on the goal.

He won the prize.

Paul 2:9-10 *"... This is my gospel,⁹ for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."*

**Like Jesus, Paul's willing to suffer also
that others might receive salvation.**

Paul wrote these words while chained in a Roman dungeon.

He's there for the gospel's sake.

He may be chained; BUT God's Word is NOT chained!

They may stop him, but they can't stop the spread of the Word.

Kent Hughes: Andria Wolfe, *The Chariot*, CoMission Newsletter (1994):

After fall of Communism, CoMission sent team to Stavropol. They had difficulty getting Bibles. They discovered warehouse where confiscated Bibles were stored. They got permission to distribute them. They hired workers to load the Bibles. Antagonistic young man, who only came for wages, stole a Bible and disappeared. They found him in a corner of the warehouse weeping. Inside Bible he'd taken he discovered his grandmother's signature. She'd been persecuted for her faith all her life. She prayed for him and her city. Her Bible gave witness: "*The Word of God is not chained!*"

Though Paul suffers because of the gospel,
he's able to see God's Word work in people's lives.

For Paul, **that prize is worth the price!**

Personal examples demonstrate suffering comes first—Then the prize.

The prize is worth the price!

Tozer: "Undoubtedly the will of God brings happiness to those who obey... The soldier does not seek to be happy in the field; he seeks rather to get the fighting over with, to win war ... while war is on, his job is to be a good soldier."

That's Paul's thought: He may be suffering from the attacks,
But he's content; He sees who's winning the war!

REWARD FOR ENDURANCE 2:11-13

A trustworthy statement—Paul's poem summarizes our reward:
**In the end, those who endure suffering
receive the reward God promised.**

What's the suffering worth, from the perspective of eternity?!!

Reward granted at the *Bema*—judgment seat of Christ.

For the faithful 2:11-12a *"Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him."*

We died with Him, so we also live with Him.

God sees us in His Son. We are identified with Him in His death.

Therefore, we receive life together with Him.

If we suffer with Him, we'll also reign with Him.

Millions have died for His name—many more have suffered for Him.

That's going on in Paul's day.

It's STILL going on—we've been hearing about persecuted church.

But good news for those who suffer for Him: they REIGN with Him.

If we suffer with Him, we'll also share in His glory.

Paul doesn't promise that those who serve Jesus will never suffer.

Even Jesus didn't enjoy that experience!

Paul offers no "prosperity gospel" promises.

Those who live godly lives WILL suffer!

Godly living involves struggle, suffering, hardship.

Christ gives us the strength to endure the hardship.

If we endure the suffering...we'll reign with Him when He comes again.

For the unfaithful 2:12b-13 *"If we disown him, he will also disown us; ¹³ if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself."*

Result for those who try to escape the hardship is different.

If we deny His name, He will deny us.

If we turn from Him and deny His name, we'll miss out on the celebration of those who identify with Him.

If we don't trust Him, He still remains true.

In the midst of battle, many give up and turn back. Afraid to trust Him.

He's faithful, even if/when we're unfaithful. 13

God is gracious to us, even when we struggle and fail to trust Him.

Like Peter, there's forgiveness, in spite of our weak faith.

He can never go back on His Word.

Our unbelief can't change His plan, nor alter His truth.

He must be faithful to His own character.

We must distinguish between salvation, which is by grace alone, and service, for which reward is promised.

We aren't called to fight our way to heaven.

We're called to fight a spiritual battle, as soldiers in the Lord's army.

AND US? WHAT'S PAUL'S MESSAGE FOR US?

Tozer: A nation whose soldiers were as soft and undisciplined as the soldiers of the churches would be conquered by the first enemy that attacked it.

Triumphs are not won by men in easy chairs."

"If we would progress spiritually, we must separate ourselves unto the things of God and concentrate upon them to the exclusion of a thousand things the worldly man considers important."

So, how important is the spiritual battle we're in?

How important is the race we run?

How important is the harvest we're awaiting?

Is the prize worth the price?

In 1976 Olympics in Montreal, Shun Fujimoto competed on the Japanese gymnastics team. During floor exercises, he fractured his right leg. With the Japanese in contention for the team gold medal, he refused to give up. Fitted with a plaster cast from hip to toe, he managed to compete in the ring exercises. He finished with a triple somersault and twist that resulted in excruciating pain when he landed. He managed to maintain his balance long enough to clinch the gold, before his leg crumpled beneath him. Olympic doctor who treated him commented: "It's beyond my comprehension how he could land without collapsing in screams." Fujimoto responded: "Yes, the pain shot through me like a knife. It brought tears to my eyes. But now I have the gold medal, and the pain is gone."

Is the prize worth the price?

***Excelling in godly living
requires commitment, training and discipline.
Will WE pay the price to compete with the team?***