

# PICTURES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*Pictures with images of the Lord Jesus commonly hang in people's homes and in some church buildings. But no literal portrait of Jesus exists. What we can be sure of, however, is the likeness of the Son of God who makes us free can be seen in the lives of His followers. The New Testament often calls us to live like Jesus and act like Jesus. Our lives as believers should imitate His.*

*Similarly, Paul revealed several pictures of the Christian to Timothy as a way to instruct him on how to live the Christian life and how to respond to difficult times. We have many of those pictures in 2 Timothy 2. Therefore, as we make our way through chapter two, let's turn our attention to the outline below as our guide:*

- I. The Christian is Pictured as a Soldier (vv. 1-4; cp. 8-13)**
- II. The Christian is Pictured as a Sportsman (v. 5)**
- III. The Christian is Pictured as a Sower (vv. 6-7)**
- IV. The Christian is Pictured as a Student (vv. 14-19)**
- V. The Christian is Pictured as a Servant (vv. 20-26)**

## I. The Christian is Pictured as a Soldier (vv. 1-4; cp. 8-13)

Paul begins chapter two by offering Timothy a picture of the Christian life likening it to a soldier in the army. He writes, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:1-4). This is not the only time, nor the first time Paul employs military images to explain life in Christ (cp. 1 Tim. 1:18; Eph. 6:10-18). Though Satan was thoroughly defeated at Calvary, the Christian life is in constant conflict in this world and will remain so until Jesus comes again.

### Reflection Connection

*Take a few moments and consider similarities that exist between the Christian and a soldier in today's armed forces.*

According to the Apostle, grace in the Lord Jesus is the source of the believer's strength (v. 1). There was nothing we could do to earn salvation, and there is nothing we can do to keep it. From beginning to end, being saved is thoroughly drenched in grace. Indeed the message of grace is the message we must pass on to faithful servants of Jesus Christ (v. 2).

Therefore, rather than a playground, the Apostle likens the Christian life to a battleground which involves *suffering* on the one hand and *separation* on the other. We must learn to "endure hardness" as a soldier on the frontlines of battle. Life involves sacrifice; Jesus comes first. And, as a soldier, there must be instant obedience. We take our orders from heaven's authority. Total allegiance must be to our Commander-in-chief, the Lord Jesus. And, while some Christians are "AWOL," we must not "entangle" ourselves with the affairs of this world (cp. 2 Pet. 2:20). Nothing can distract us from living the life of Christ. We must "please" the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. The Christian is Pictured as a Sportsman (v. 5)

Next, Paul looks toward athletics to glean a picture of the Christian life. He writes, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (v. 5). The Greek term translated



“strive” was a term used in the public games performed in the arenas. Our English term “athlete” has its roots in this term. Paul gives two aspects concerning the athlete.

*First, the athlete must compete lawfully.*

In other words, he must abide by the rules of the game (cp. 1 Cor. 9:24-27). Note Paul’s image is not of an amateur; that is, one who pursues sports in spurts. Instead the athlete Paul has in mind is a professional. Unfortunately, there are far too many Christians who view the Christian life as an amateur. Rather than pursuing godliness as a way of life, they perform “godly” deeds in spurts. For them, being Christian is relevant only when it is convenient. Paul insists believers must “play by the rules” of life’s game. And those rules are determined by the Word of God.

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*Second, the athlete will be crowned eventually.* The discipline the believer maintains possesses an incredible payday. All the toil, sweat, and tears eventually give the faithful servant a crown of joy. To another church Paul expressed it like this, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Our crown comes from Heaven’s King, Christ Jesus. One day the race will end, and Jesus will call us up. What medal will we receive? “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21, 23).

### III. The Christian is Pictured as a Sower (vv. 6-7)

The Apostle switches pictures from athletics to agriculture. He writes, “The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:6-7). The believer is likened to a farmer who sows seeds and/or harvests crops. As a laborer, the farmer works hard; life is not as easy as many seem to think. While there is always fresh air, homegrown food, and other niceties, there is also draught with which to contend; predators that kill the herds; varmints that eat the crops; pests that destroy the harvest. Farmers constantly toil by plowing, sowing, cultivating, gathering, and taking to market.

In addition to being a laborer, the farmer is also a partaker. Like the athlete who wins the crown, the farmer gains a heavenly harvest. His hard work pays; he partakes of the land he so faithfully toiled. Perhaps years pass before he sees his hard work produce. But the harvest finally comes, and he is rewarded. His barns become full. His vats flow with freshly, squeezed juices from abundant grape harvests.

#### Reflection Connection

*Reflect on the similarities between growing a garden and living a Christian life.*



## IV. The Christian is Pictured as a Student (vv. 14-19)

Following the image of the Christian life in the context of agriculture, Paul depicts the believer's life in the academy. He writes, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some." (2 Tim. 2:14-18). When Christians suffer, we need the truth of God's Word to get us through. Hence, the picture of the Christian as a student in an academy is not irrelevant to his or her everyday life. Paul contrasts two types of teaching the believer may receive—*false* teaching based upon *fallacious* words and *true* teaching founded upon *faithful* words.

*Fallacious* words possess two basic characteristics. First, fallacious words *spoil* everything and anyone who listens (vv. 14,16-18). These words offer "no profit" to those who heed them. Indeed the design is specifically for "subverting" the hearers. The Greek term translated "subverting" carries the idea of being overturned (cp. 2 Pet. 2:6). We must avoid useless word battles and needless bickering over unimportant issues. More harm than good comes from inflamed rhetoric about insignificant matters. Stand on the Word of God and leave extra-biblical concerns alone.

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In addition, *fallacious* words not only *spoil* anyone who listens but faulty words also *spread* to every place they touch (vv. 16-18). Paul employs the term "canker." The Greek term translated "canker" is *gangraina*, and is the word from which we get "gangrene." This is the only place in the New Testament the term is used. It literally means "an eating sore," which spreads corruption and produces dead tissue. Paul could not have chosen a word stronger to describe the destruction which takes place when the Word of God is absent. False teaching kills every church in which it remains untreated.

And what is the only cure for *fallacious* words? Preaching and teaching the *faithful* Word of God. Paul insists believers must both *study* the Word and *stand* on the Word. By studying, Paul means for us to give diligence to the Word. Why? To show ourselves "self-approved." In other words, after being tested, we will come forth unscathed. We learn how to "rightly divide" God's truth. That is, we "cut straight" the Scriptures. The Bible is like an orchard of grapes ready for the harvest. We must carefully tend to the harvest lest the grapes be destroyed.

### Reflection Connection

*How is the Christian best equipped to deal with false doctrine? Explain.*



In addition, we must *stand* on the Word of God (v. 19). The church is the strong foundation. But the church cannot exist without the Word of God to guide it. The Scriptures serve as an anchor to keep the church in line with the will of God lest we drift far out in the worldly sea. Scripture directs us into all truth and will safely lead us until Jesus returns.

## V. The Christian is Pictured as a Servant (vv. 20-26)

Paul continues with his explanation of the Christian life by offering another picture—the *servant*. He writes, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work” (vv. 20-21). Three qualities of a servant’s life are revealed.

*First, the servant possesses a dedicated life* (vv. 20-21). He dedicates his life to the “great house” which is none other than the church of Jesus Christ. As “vessels” every believer is “placed” within the household of faith for God’s glory alone. While some do bring “dishonour” to the Lord Jesus, our purpose is to honor Him through our sanctification. Hence, we will then be “meet for the master’s use.” Indeed our lives will be prepared “unto every good work.” Full dedication of one’s life is key to being a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus. Our old lives must be “purged” (cp. 1 Cor. 5:7) as we allow Christ to become our all in all.

*Second, the servant possesses a determined life.* Paul writes, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes” (vv. 22-23). While it seems to be hardly fashionable today, the Bible places a spiritual premium on separation. We must purge ourselves from the worldly, fleshly values of the life outside Christ. Hence, the Apostle counsels Timothy to *flee* “youthful lusts.” The verb Paul uses is a present tense which suggests a continued behavior. Any strong abnormal tendency to sin is what he has in mind. Every age has its unique temptations. In fact, the devil has custom designed temptations for each one of us. Unfortunately he knows our soft underbellies too well. Whether power, profit, or prestige is the culprit the devil exploits, we must ever be on guard against him.

In addition, Paul says we must not only flee, but we must follow (v. 22b). Christians must detach themselves from this age and then attach themselves to righteousness. We must focus on faith, love and peace. We seek to be right with God while we live peaceably with others. Consequently, that means we will *forsake* the “foolish” and the “unlearned.” Christians must

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not allow themselves to get sidetracked on matters which carry no eternal significance.

*Finally, the servant possesses a disciplined life.* The Apostle writes, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (vv. 24-26). A disciplined person is one whose *attitude* is in check with the Word of God (v. 24). The servant does not “strive” which means to have a tendency to quarrel over matters insignificant. Instead he or she is to be “gentle” and “patient.” Consequently, one remains teachable. In addition, to possessing a healthy *attitude*, the disciplined servant takes a godly *approach* in his or her dealings with others (vv. 25-26). Their instruction to those who oppose is saturated with “meekness.” Hence, the devil’s “snare” misses its prey, and the unsuspecting are not “taken captive” by him. Our ultimate goal is to see “repentance” given to all men and women. In other words, full “recovery” from the world is our personal mission.

### Golden Greek Nugget

Paul offers several qualities which describe the servant of Jesus Christ, one of which is being “apt to teach” (v. 24). The Greek term behind this English phrase is *didaktikos*, which literally means “skilled in teaching.” Believers must be able to verbalize the Christian faith once for all given to the saints else the church would disintegrate in a mere generation. While it is true God gave pastor-teachers to the church (Eph. 4:11) to edify the body of Christ, nonetheless faithful servants must be able to communicate the wonderful acts of God even if it is only to their own children.

### Wrap Up

*Paul explains the Christian life by giving snapshots of the many roles people play in everyday life. From soldiers in the army to students in the academy, the believer’s life is teased out in practical terms. Whatever the case, Christians must be sure to be dedicated servants of the Most High, the Lord Jesus Christ. Only as life is completely surrendered to Him is life lived to its fullest abundance.*

