

## Lesson Eleven

SUFFER FOR THE FAITH!

II Timothy 2:1-26

BE STEADFAST

SECTION ONE 2:1-7

**2** You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, **2** and what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. **3** Take your share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. **4** No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him. **5** An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. **6** It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops. **7** Think over what I say, for the Lord will grant you understanding in everything.

Vs. 1, 2 Being unashamed of Christ and His servant Paul is the key concept in chapter one. This will involve suffering and patience as the **then** indicates. Suffering could affect Timothy's personal faith so he must **be strong**. It could also weaken the message he was delivering so he must pass it on to **faithful men** even as Paul had passed it on to him. The Gospel is always one generation from extinction. The best way

to grow is to teach others the way.

Vs. 3, 4 The Apostle encourages Timothy through his three favorite illustrations (cf. I Cor. 9:7, 24-26). Each suggests a respected profession with two elements — a prize to be won and a way to win it. A **good soldier** was one who knew self-sacrifice, discipline, endurance, and obedience (Eph. 6:10-18; I Thess. 5:8; Phil. 2:25; I Tim. 1:18; 6:12; II, 4:7). Paul specifically mentions **suffering** (enduring hardship) and single-mindedness as he forsakes **civilian** interests. Getting a Christian side-tracked from the Gospel warfare remains one of Satan's most effective strategies. A soldier's reward is the "well done" of his captain. One who fled battle or pursued self-interest was unfit to be in the Roman army. Does our Lord deserve less?

V. 5 The **athlete**, highly respected by the Greeks, is alluded to more than twenty times by Paul. The basic idea is that of self-control and endurance (cf. I Cor. 9:25; Heb. 12:1-14). Athletes, then as now, spend weeks or months disciplining their bodies so as to achieve. Before the Greek games, the athlete took an oath that he had practiced ten months, had kept the dietary regulations, and had lived a life of separation from his usual state. Otherwise, he was disqualified for not **competing according to the rules** (cf. I Cor. 9:27). His reward was the laurel wreath proclaiming him a victor (cf. 4:8).

V. 6 The patient, **hard-working farmer** expects a crop for his efforts (Gal. 6:7, 9). The emphasis of the soldier is that of endurance; that of the athlete, self-discipline; that of the farmer, hard toil. Timothy must suffer as the Lord's soldier, obey Christ's rules as an athlete, and as God's farmer patiently plant and water God's seed planted in the hearts of men (I Cor. 3:5-9).

V. 7 It is not enough to read these words, they must be **thought over** ("ponder, consider, grasp"). We should saturate our minds with Scripture and meditate upon it night and day (Psalm 1; Deut. 6:4).

## DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. What are some ways to "pass on" the faith to faithful men?
2. How many comparisons can you make between an American soldier and a Christian soldier? Or athlete? Or farmer?
3. Suggest practical ways we can fill our minds with Scripture.

## THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

### BE AN EXAMPLE!

#### SECTION TWO 2:8-14

8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel, 9 the gospel for which I am suffering and wearing fetters like a criminal. But the word of God is not fettered. 10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which in Christ Jesus goes with eternal glory. 11 The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;

12 if we endure, we shall also reign with him;

if we deny him, he also will deny us;

13 if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself.

14 Remind them of this, and charge them before the Lord to avoid disputing about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers.

V. 8 The above examples are helpful, but the one Paul always returns to is that of Jesus (Heb. 12:1). He is the One **risen from the dead** after steadfastly enduring suffering and, as **descended from David**, sits upon a more glorious throne than that of His ancestor. The ideas implied here are expressly stated in vs. 11, 12.

V. 9 A beautiful thought! We can be bound, but the Word of God cannot! In fact, Paul's imprisonments spread the word even into Caesar's household (Phil. 1:12, 13; 4:22) as he witnessed to those guarding him. Jerome, an early Christian, wrote, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

V. 10 Paul's reason for **enduring** suffering is for God's people who will be encouraged by his example. The Apostle measured all of life, not by how it affected him personally, but by the effect it had upon the church and Gospel. Thus, if suffering furthered the faith, it became a reason for rejoicing (Acts 5:41). **Endure** is not a passive resignation, "Let's make the best of it," but a triumphant, courageous, patient expectation (Heb. 12:2) as that of a mother carrying her first child. Others always profit from our suffering if we do it in this spirit.

Vs. 11-13 This fifth of the five "faithful sayings" (see I, 1:15) may have been part of a martyr's hymn or statement of faith to encourage those entering Nero's death arena. It well climaxes Paul's preceding statements of "No cross, no crown." Some see the death as a reference to baptismal death and resurrection (Rom. 6:4, 8; II Cor. 5:14, 15), but as the entire

passage deals with physical suffering and death, we prefer to view it as actual martyrdom. Christians will reign with Christ (I Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 3:21; 4:4; 5:11). If we confess His name, He confesses ours; if we deny Him, He must deny us (Mt. 10:32, 33; Mk. 8:38). He will be **faithful** in saving those who obey, or condemning those who do not.

V. 14 Just as Paul had **reminded** Timothy and **charged** him (I, 5:21; II, 4:1), so Timothy is to do to faithful men. Again we see the "word wars" dividing the church (cf. I, 6:4; 1:3-7; 4:7; 6:3-10; II, 2:16, 23; Tit. 3:9). Most of the "great theological debates" which have divided the church have been over matters of little importance and of unclear Bible teaching. For example, one of the issues dividing the Eastern church from the Western in the Eleventh Century centered around the Holy Spirit — was He sent by the Father only or by both Father and Son. As if it really mattered one way or the other. Our word "catastrophe" comes from the Greek word translated **ruin**.

## BE A WORKMAN!

### SECTION FOUR 2:15-19

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 16 Avoid such godless chatter, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, 17 and their talk will eat its way like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 who have swerved from the truth by holding that the resurrection is past already. They are upsetting the faith of some. 19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity."

V. 15 **Do your best** (same word in 4:9, 21) is more accurate than the KJV "study" which limits the word too much. Study of God's Word is included, but "giving diligence" extends to all aspects of Christian growth and service and applies more to attitude than action.

Again the idea of productive effort is emphasized. A good workman is **not ashamed**: (1) Because his work passes the Divine Inspector's examination; (2) Or because even though the world looks down on Christian service, he need not wince in shame for God approves this work.

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A skillful carpenter uses his tools carefully. The tool of God's **workman** is the "sword of the Spirit" (Heb. 4:12). **Rightly handling** ("dividing," KJV) carried the root idea of "cutting straight" as in making a path (Prov. 3:6; 11:5 uses same word), plowing a furrow, or cutting a straight seam in camel skin to make a tent (Acts 18:3). A man cannot misuse God's Word and be sound in the faith!

Vs. 16, 17 Paul again warns against what must have been a pervasive danger in the Ephesian church (cf. 2:14). **Godless** talk is that which is devoid of God, centering on myths and old wives tales; it may even be anti-God. Does God and the concerns of His church fill much of our conversation? (Eph. 5:4-6; Phil. 4:8; Mt. 12:36, 37)

What we believe determines what we do, and unhealthy doctrine makes for sick souls afflicted with a spreading **gangrene** (or malignant cancer) which quickly destroys. This affliction must be removed or the whole body will be destroyed; thus, Paul had urged excommunication from such men (I, 1:19, 20). Notice that **Hymenaeus** has a new partner (I, 1:19, 20). Alexander has evidently moved, died, or repented.

V. 18 Their main perversion was denying the future bodily resurrection of believers. They could have done this by affirming: (1) Christ's resurrection was the only resurrection; (2) Resurrection has already taken place in baptism (Col. 2:12, 13); (3) Resurrection is spiritual, from legalistic and outmoded concepts (a gnostic view). However one denies the resurrection, he has undercut the very foundation of faith.

V. 19 But men can never overthrow God's truth even though they may lure some from it. **A seal** indicates *authority* and warns against tampering (Mt. 27:66); it is a mark of *ownership* (Song of Sol., 8:6); it *certifies* as genuine (I Cor. 9:2). All three ideas could apply here.

The O.T. passages referred to (Num. 16:5, 26) deal with the rebellion of Korah who sought to overthrow Moses. Read that chapter to see how God saved His people by separating them from the wicked ones before destroying them. The implication is that man does not destroy God or His truth; God destroys him (I Cor. 3:17).

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Jesus was made "complete" through His sufferings (Heb. 5:7-9). How does suffering "complete" ("make perfect") us?
2. Does persecution destroy or spread the church?
3. What are the standards by which men measure life? What was Paul's standard?
4. If death is a doorway to glory, should we fear it? Seek it?
5. How can we distinguish between defending the faith and simply arguing about words?

## BE A SILVER BOWL!

## SECTION FIVE 2:20-26

20 In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and earthenware, and some for noble use, some for ignoble. 21 If any one purifies himself from what is ignoble, then he will be a vessel for noble use, consecrated and useful to the master of the house, ready for any good work. 22 So shun youthful passions and aim at righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. 23 Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, 25 correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, 26 and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Vs. 20, 21 With a vivid word picture, Paul illustrates the principle of separation and service. Dog bowls and silver platters exist in the same household and both are used by the master. But few of us stack both in the china closet. God can use a Pharaoh or a Cyrus (Isa. 44:28) to accomplish certain purposes, but will eventually cast them into the "garbage can" as worthless vessels for **He knows those who are His** and is not dazzled by outward greatness or goodness (Mt. 7:21-23; 13:47, 48). While we dare not judge the heart or eternal destiny of others (Mt. 7:1), we must determine if we are being helped or hurt spiritually by our association with these **vessels** and, if the latter, avoid them (I Cor. 15:33). Openly evil men are to be disfellowshipped by the church (I, 1:20; I Cor. 5:1-13). These hypocrites, who appear righteous but who are influencing us in the wrong direction, should be avoided until God eventually judges and makes eternal separation. However, let us always remember that God can take a "cracked pot" and make of him a silver bowl!

V. 22 Earlier Paul had warned this young man of middle-thirty about intellectual vices; now he cautions about **youthful passions** ("strong desires"). The young are enticed by certain temptations and those who are older by others (Tit. 2:2, 6). One naturally thinks of sexual passion, competitiveness, and popularity among others. The way to avoid evil is to fill our lives with good things (cf. list in I, 6:11). Again he is urged to maintain a **pure heart**, one of the greatest lacks in the church then as well as today. Those in whom the world is, constantly woo us into

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walking a far distance from our Lord. Let's see how close we can stay, not how far we can stray!

V. 23 For the third time in this chapter, Paul warns against worthless words whose end result is argument (II, 14).

Vs. 24, 25 God's true **servant** ("bondslave") avoids contention as he is: (1) **kindly** or gentle, a word often used to characterize a patient mother with trying children (I Thess. 2:7) or a teacher with slow-learning students; (2) **apt**, skillful and ready in teaching with a desire to make Christ known; (3) **forbearing** (lit., "holding back evil"), patient with those who injure us even as we try to help them (I Pét. 2:21-24); (4) **correcting with gentleness** (the first "kindly" is gentleness in outward action; this one denotes gentleness in inner attitude or disposition). These **opponents** are opposing God, the truth, and their own best interests and will be more open to truth bathed in Christian charity than words charred by hell-fire. Let us be tactful in teaching, skillful in content, and patient when attacked by our student, that we might someday correct him. We should never use the cross as a club to browbeat people (I, 5:1)!

V. 26 Sin is a snare that traps (I, 3:7; 6:9), and enslaves (Rom. 5:16-23), and destroys (Jas. 1:14-16). **Escape** (lit., "to return to soberness") suggests that a dull stupor caused us to stumble into the snare and only after being brought back to our right senses are we able to escape. To be in sin is to be "insane" (Lk. 15:17). **Him** may refer to God Who is now our "Captor" or, more probably, to the devil from whom we are now free.

### DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. When is judgment of others right? When wrong?
2. How can you be a more "fit" vessel? Please be specific.
3. What temptations are peculiar to youth? To men? To women? To the elderly?
4. Did Jesus practice the characteristics of a good teacher (vs. 24, 25)?
5. How did the devil capture us? How did we escape?