

INTRODUCTION

As we enter into Paul's gallery and view these *Portraits Of A Faithful Teacher*, it continues to be my prayer that we realize each of these portraits is intended to characterize every believer.

The first portrait in Paul's gallery is that of the steward, when he writes:

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2)

This verse rings with the sound of the Great Commission, when Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matt. 28:19, 20a)

As God's children in God's family, we are to wisely manage and invest all that God has given us to advance His Kingdom, and all for His glory. We specifically focused on the fact that we are stewards of the Scriptures and stewards of souls.

The second portrait Paul paints for us is that of...

THE SOLDIER (vv. 3, 4)

When we think of a soldier we first think of...

➤ The Conflict in Which We are Involved

Paul often uses military metaphors in his letters. This shouldn't surprise us when we consider the military state of Rome. The words he uses are not exaggerated or dramatized. Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wants us to be aware of the intense battle in which every Christian is engaged. Paul uses words like:

- *Warfare* (2 Tim. 2:4); which obviously means to be engaged in war.
- *A Boxing Match* (1 Cor. 9:26, 27).

Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul said, "I discipline my body," which means "to beat black and blue." Paul is not talking about physically torturing his body. Paul is emphasizing that as believers we should never pamper sin or play around with sin. We must hit sin right in the eye and keep it out of our lives. We must never "shadow box" with sin, but hit sin head-on.

- *Wrestle* (Eph. 6:12); which suggests “hand-to-hand” combat. This is a close encounter with the power of darkness. This battle, though unseen, is real!
- *Wage a good warfare* (1 Tim. 1:18); and suggests a series of battles.
- *Fight the good fight* (1 Tim. 6:12). The word for “fight” comes from our word for “agony.” We are to be involved in a continuous fight of agony against evil.
- *A great fight of afflictions* (Heb. 10:32; KJV). This suggests a large corporate battle, on either side.

From these words, we discover that the Christian life is not just fun and games. It’s not a picnic or a playground; it’s a battlefield. It’s all out spiritual warfare.

When we consider the conflict in which we are involved, we should also be reminded of...

➤ The Cooperation Which is Invoked

Paul instructs Timothy to “endure hardship.” He uses a similar phrase in 2 Tim 4:5: “endure afflictions.” It is a sharp command given with military snap. It isn’t optional but a command. It isn’t later but immediately. Paul is instructing Timothy to take his part in suffering and enduring hardships. Paul and other believers were enduring afflictions and so should Timothy. In fact, Paul was facing martyrdom.

Now let’s pause for just a moment and consider to what extent do you actually take part in ministry, and to what extent do you suffer and share in the hardships with other believers? I realize that for the most part believers in the U.S. see very little, if any, persecution. However, it might be sooner than we all think.

But faithful and effective ministry *is* costly. It requires time, prayer, sacrifice, and humility. Just as a reminder, the word for “ministry” comes from the same word for “deacon,” which means “one who runs errands,” a “waiter,” or a “servant.” Jesus said:

“...But whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant [diakônôs]. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave [doulôs] of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve [diakônêō], and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Mrk. 10:43-45)

Although every believer may not be an ordained deacon or pastor, every believer has a ministry and is therefore has a minister. Each believer is placed into the body of Christ and gifted by the Holy Spirit to faithfully and effectively function for the well-being of the rest of the body (Eph. 4:16). Therefore, each of us is commanded to suffer and to share in the hardship of ministry, whatever that might include. It is a command given with military snap. It’s a command to be obeyed now, not later. Without exception, each one of us is to be involved in ministry and to also share in its sufferings and hardships.

A good soldier not only thinks of himself, but he also thinks of his comrades. What each of us does greatly impacts the rest of the church. We do not serve in a vacuum.

CONCLUSION

Faithful and effective ministry is more than just doing what is good enough or just enough to get by. If we take that approach, will what we do ever be good enough? Where are the time, prayer, sacrifice, and humility in that? After all, isn't the Lord worthy of our best?

In 2 Samuel 24, we read of David's sin in requesting that a census be taken of Israel. Upon realizing his sin, David acknowledged his sin to the Lord; yet he understood God would still bring judgment upon the kingdom. So God sent a plague upon Israel and from Dan to Beersheba seventy thousand men of the people died.

So what does David do? He requests to purchase the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, so that he might build an altar there and offer sacrifice to the LORD.

Now Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up whatever *seems* good to him. Look, *here are* oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing implements and the yokes of the oxen for wood. All these, O king, Araunah has given to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." Then the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will surely buy *it* from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God **with that which costs me nothing.**" So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver [full price]. And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD heeded the prayers for the land, and the plague was withdrawn from Israel. (2 Sam. 24:22-25; cf. 1 Chron. 21; emphasis added).

May our hearts and desires be that of King David: "Lord, nor will I offer [anything] to You my God with that which costs me nothing."