

Spiritual Commissary

2 Timothy 2:5 KJV “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.”

Hello brothers in Christ, PRAY and grab your Bible.

May God continually be blessing you with grace, peace, and mercy, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Well, let me start with an update since you have not heard from me since Resurrection or Easter week. It's been crazy, to say the least, working overtime, vehicles breaking down, and the nonstop wheels of life grinding away at us. So hopefully you all received your books, “Living by the Book” - Howard & William Hendricks. My pastor loaned this book to me early on when I met him, but to be quite honest I rushed through it and put very little effort into it. I am not even sure if I finished it completely before giving it back to him. This was about three years ago, let me tell you all what a mistake I made by not giving this book my serious and whole attention. I pray you all will not make the same mistake I did. I pray you will not just read this book for entertainment, or some suggestions. This book will help your Spiritual Growth tremendously when after prayer you actually apply these principles to reading and studying Scripture. So that also brings me to where we were before Easter week, Resurrection Sunday. If you can remember back to the 03/22/2021 week, our text was 2 Timothy 2:2-4 KJV, and we discussed Paul encouraging Timothy, and us to be as soldiers for Christ. We briefly discussed the Romans army and some of the training the soldiers endured. Well, this week we are going to pick back up finally and hopefully continue on through in the weeks ahead God willing. We will be looking at the next verse and analogy Paul used in writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:5 quoted above from the King James Version.

In second Timothy 2:5, Paul goes directly from a comparison of being a soldier for Christ, to compare it to Olympic athletes. More specifically at the time in Corinth, there were the Isthmian games. Corinth was destroyed by Rome in 146 b.c. as punishment towards the Achaean League of Greek city-states for resisting Roman advances, as Rome was seemingly out to conquer and control the World while building their empire. Claudius was ruler from 41-54 a.d. During Paul's first two missionary journeys, Paul met Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth. The Jewish couple had recently been expelled from Rome after Claudius' edict (Acts 18:1-2). Under the Romans, Corinth was rebuilt into a major city, with a large population of Romans, Greeks, and Jews. Paul stayed here for eighteen months and worked as a tentmaker with Priscilla and Aquila (Acts

18:11). Julius Caesar refounded the city around 44 a.d. And it was mostly deserted before then. At this time an amphitheater was built as well. Corinth is a small strip of land that connected two masses of land from East to West and being a very narrow strip of land surrounded by the seas to the North and South. It was easier for ships to dock at Corinth and move their goods across the land to another ship, or actually take their boats across the land than it was to sail all the way around. So Corinth was a major hub for everything going anywhere in any direction. You can imagine it grew quickly and was a prime area for merchants and trade. Thus the Isthmian games were a huge event.

“Isthmian Games - ancient Greek festival. Isthmian Games, in ancient Greece, a festival of athletic and musical competitions in honor of the sea god Poseidon, held in the spring of the second and fourth years of each Olympiad at his sanctuary on the Isthmus of Corinth. Legend attributed their origin to either Sisyphus, king of Corinth, or Theseus. Open to all Greeks, the Isthmian Games were especially popular with the Athenians. The victors’ prize, originally a crown of dry wild celery, was changed to a pine wreath in Roman times, the pine being sacred to Poseidon. Celebration of the festival died out when Christianity became dominant in the 4th century AD.” (britannica.com/sports/Isthmian-Games, accessed 4/28/2021, 10:44 p.m.)

Paul was not only reminding Timothy and us, of all the hard work and training the athletes were willing to endure just to receive this crown. Yet importantly noting that they would not be crowned unless they strive “lawfully”. If an athlete trained and worked hard to compete yet cheated then it would all be wasted time and effort as they would be disqualified. Well if we are soldiers of the cross, spiritual athletes for Christ, we must likewise train hard and abide by the rules. Paul was not talking about the “law” as in Old Testament Jewish law, that is a whole different can of worms we will not be opening today. What Paul was referring to was obedience to Christ. It’s not a matter of rules, and he who follows all the rules gets to Heaven. We know better, it is all by the Grace of God and nothing we do. Christ did it all for us. Yet to think we can freely accept this gift and live as we please and spend no time training as a soldier or athlete would, is foolishness. We must obey God above all else. Now thank goodness we have a God of much grace, mercy, longsuffering, and love who knows we will never be able to do this flawlessly. He is faithful to forgive us, but we can not let forgiveness be an excuse to be lazy or keep disobeying God either if we expect to see the fruits and promises of Spiritual victory and growth.

He reminds us and also mentions this in *1 Corinthians 9:24-25 KJV* “***Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.***”

Paul is clearly telling us, if we don't "run" how can we expect to win a race? If we don't train we won't grow. We will never see the fruits or promises of God in this lifetime if we neglect to obey God's training and spend little time running towards and with Him. Paul is not saying we do this to obtain or earn our salvation, that is impossible. He is saying that if men are willing to train, fight, and follow the rules for military victories, or to win some silly medal for some games, how much more will God reward those who diligently, obediently, and faithfully obey Him. What could be of greater honor than to receive crowns in Glory to lay at the feet of Christ.

There was a book called "Outliers: The Story of Success" by Malcolm Gladwell where he studied the rise of Bill Gates, Tiger Woods, the Beatles, and other major success stories. He determined through much research that regardless of computers, music, sports, or whatever your craft or skill, a person has to dedicate at least 10,000 hours to it. This was a minimum threshold he calculated of very focused and serious dedication to whatever area of interest you pursued. That 10,000 hours minimum would put you on another level in your field compared to the rest of the world or amateurs. Now I broke this down even further and 10,000 hours of dedicated and serious training/study/practice is 416.67 days. Almost 417 days, but this is calculated at 24 hours a day. No one can train or practice in any field 24 hours a day. This would be just 1 year and 2 months approximately though if we could. This is where the rubber meets the road as they say. We have responsibilities in life, even you all while doing your bits, jobs, classes, eating, sleeping, things necessary to survival. Out here it can actually be worse for those not well disciplined because of the vast amount of distractions, although there are plenty of distractions in there as well. Yet how much more profitable and wise would we be to train hard and spend the free time we do get in prayer and God's Word.

We so easily can be lazy and watch television or get into conversations about sinful things, or foolishness, when we could be spending that time spiritually growing and training. You have no control over the time you are doing now in a sense, but on the other hand, you still have control over how you use all the free time you do have. Common sense would tell any born again child of God that even if you were doing a double life sentence and never leaving that place. How great of things might God do through you if you dedicate your entire life to living for Him. For those who will eventually get released, if you discipline yourselves being obedient to God as these analogies of Roman Soldiers, or Olympic Athletes you will probably come out standing on more solid ground than the majority of professing Christians out here in the free world.

Much love my brothers in Christ, you all STAY in my prayers,
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