

## ***Soldiers of Christ***

*2 Timothy 2:3-4*

**2 Timothy 2:3-4: “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”**

So I'm very thankful to be here and to get to speak to you all. We're hoping to go back soon, but the Lord has kept us here for now. And I consider it a privilege. Today I want to speak on the subject of being soldiers of Christ Jesus. Soldiers of Christ Jesus – and I'm thankful for these verses – but we need God's help to enter into what it means to be a soldier of Christ Jesus. I'm thankful to be here to be speaking this message. In a way, it is a little bit intimidating, because I know that in my own life, this truth really became alive to me here, in Kirksville, among many of you. Things that I saw stirred me up in this way. And today I'm coming back to you to stir you up. And I want you all to think of this word today, as it really is, this is not just Paul telling Timothy to be a soldier, as if Timothy, the young travelling whatever-he-was, evangelist, apostles' helper, as if he was the soldier, but this is God's word to you, that you would be a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

So, today as I speak this message, I want you to apply it to yourself. Don't think so much about other people in the room, sitting next to you, people that you might think are soldiers, or people that you might think, “They're not very much soldiers of Christ, and they ought to be.” Think about yourself. What does the word of God written here – how does it affect your life today? That's when God really does his work in us, when we apply it to ourselves.

Now Christians are described in many ways in the Bible, right? They're called believers, and that's something that everyone knows about, you can't become a Christian without believing in Christ. Christians are called the children of God. Christians are the bride of Christ. They are the temple of the Holy Spirit. They are worshipers of God. They are disciples, learners, students, studying God. They are sheep being guided and fed and protected by the Shepherd. They are even called slaves of God that we serve him with all our might.

But there is one thing that we're going to focus on today. Christians are soldiers of Jesus Christ. That is one aspect of the Christian life. Now it's not all of the Christian life, but it is a part of the Christian life, and this is what we're going to focus on today. My message today is not going to be very balanced and I don't mean it to me. I mean it to be focused. We are going to focus on this one aspect of being soldiers in the army of God. This is something unique, because think about this: in heaven you will be worshipping God. In heaven you will even be, in a sense, learning more about God, as his student, as his disciple. You will be his child, you will be the bride of Christ, but in heaven, the war is over. In heaven there is peace and rest. There is something unique in this life about being a soldier. So, let me say at the outset, there is at times a temptation to view this aspect of the Christian life with a little bit of doubt, a little bit of hesitation. What I mean is, sometimes older Christians in particular look at the idea of battle, spiritual battle, being a soldier, as if it could be something perhaps a little bit overly zealous, a little bit romantic; something that young Christians might spring up and want to latch onto, and you can overreact and you cannot take seriously this verse that we are called to be soldiers.

It is not a romantic thing. It is a biblical thing. This is throughout the Bible. Think with me for a minute. Paul told the Ephesians, famous section in Chapter 6, he told them to put on the armor of God, that they were going to be

called for a day of battle, and they needed to be prepared with weapons and armor. He said in 2 Corinthians there were weapons of our warfare that were mighty for destroying strongholds. He said in 1 Timothy to fight the good fight. Wage the good warfare. Here he's telling Timothy, "Be a good soldier." In Philippians he calls Epaphroditus his fellow soldier. In the book of Philemon he calls Archippus his fellow soldier. So we see something coming up, but it's throughout the Scriptures, and the first verse we're going to look at to get the big picture is from Jesus Christ himself. And the apostle Paul did not come up with this idea of warfare in the spiritual realm. We'll turn to that in a minute.

We're going to look at three aspects today of being a soldier. And this is for you. My desire is that all of us who love the Lord, all of us who have been saved from our sin, would enter into the battle, would think of ourselves as soldiers, would think of the war, and think of the enemy that is opposing us, and opposing the Church.

The Bible says, many times it talks in a way that we would not be lacking in anything. Complete, mature. Now listen, I know you all have knowledge, I know you have theology, but I don't want you to be lacking in anything. And if there is any way in which your life really is lacking, in the terms of this battle that we are called to fight, my prayer is that today you would take hold of this. God would turn on the switch in your life. That you would not be lacking.

You know the verse that Paul says in Hebrews, he says, "By this time many of you ought to be teachers." (Hebrews 5:12) Well, I wouldn't say that here because I think many of you, perhaps the majority of you, could teach a bible study if you really wanted to, you could teach your kids things from the Old Testament and the New Testament. But you could turn it around and say, "By this time some of you ought to be soldiers."

So apply this to yourself. The first point is this: There is a warfare to be waged. Look in verse three: **"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."** (2 Tim. 2:3)

Paul just says it to Timothy, he doesn't explain it. He just knows, "Timothy's going to know what I'm talking about." Obviously he's not talking about a physical battle, that Timothy is in a physical army. He's not. And so I don't want to just assume today without covering the bases that we all have this idea of what this war really is in our minds. So let's go back to the words of Jesus Christ, our Lord's own words in Luke chapter 11. Luke chapter 11 – this will help remind us, renew our minds, paint the picture before us.

Luke 11:21: Jesus said this, **"When a strong man (that is the devil), fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe;"** What is his palace? That is the domain of darkness. The kingdom of Satan. His goods are safe when he guards his own palace. What are his goods? Those are lost souls. **"...but when one stronger than he attacks him (offensively) and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil."** (Luke 11:21-22)

You see what's happening here? This is a war. The war is not with flesh and blood. It is invisible. God's kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of darkness. There is a strong man, he is the devil. He is the greatest enemy that you can imagine. He is the enemy of God. He is the enemy of Christians. He is the enemy of lost souls. He is the Enemy. That is what his name means – adversary, enemy. What is he doing? He is leading people away from God. Why? Because he hates God. He's angry with God, on purpose, he wants to destroy God's creation. How will he do it? He will do it by leading people into sin and getting them guilty because he knows the justice of God will fall upon those people in the same way that it will fall upon him. He knows his days are numbered. And [the book of] Revelation says he has great wrath because he knows his time is short. He knows he's going to hell, but he is bent now to do as much damage to God's creation, particularly we who have been made in the image of God. He wants to destroy us, he wants to fill our lives with sin, so that we'll be swept into hell along with him. That is his goal. That is his aim. He is trying to destroy souls. Now the devil does not have power to destroy our

souls in hell. God has that power. But if we follow the devil, we suffer the same fate. And the Bible says this, **“The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”** (1 John 5:19).

He a great enemy. The battle is in regard to the souls of men. That’s what really matters. That’s what he is seeking, what he is after. He can’t touch God, but he wants the souls of men to perish. And so if we are to join up as soldiers in the army of Jesus Christ we are trying to see souls saved. We are trying to see those goods taken away from him and brought to God’s side, reconciled to God, forgiven of their sins. How do we do that? What are our weapons? Well, the Bible says, as one brother was praying this morning, the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God is a mighty weapon. To be a soldier of Jesus Christ means you are using the Word of God against the devil and his kingdom [so] that people will be set free, that darkness will be pushed back. Preaching the truth, preaching the word, spreading the gospel. The gospel is a mighty sword. It’s an amazing thing – you strike the Sword on a lost soul and they are healed not destroyed. But the devil flees, and sin is exposed, and sin is eradicated.

We have the weapon of prayer. And my brother Tim, down in Texas, gave a reminder recently. The devil is not afraid of us. He’s not. But when you pray in the name of Jesus, the devil is afraid of God, he’s afraid of Jesus Christ. Do you remember, the demons fled when Jesus came, they were terrified of Jesus Christ – “Don’t torment us.”? When you call on God and God shows up in answer to your prayer that is a mighty weapon against Satan. He’s not afraid of us, but when we pray to God, and he comes and he does something, the devil flees. He trembles. So prayer is a mighty weapon.

This is the war that we are called to enter in, and the Bible says that God has left enemies in the land that we might learn warfare. It would be one thing if God sent Christ and he died upon the cross and all were saved that day, or all were saved upon the day of the Resurrection. But that’s now how he set up this universe. And God wants us to learn something and God wants us to enter into this suffering of being a soldier and fellowship with Christ and seeing something of him saving lives, saving souls. We are to be involved. This is the great war that is going on every day, whether we remember it or not, whether we see it or not. It’s real. It’s huge. And these are the Lord’s own words, here in Luke 11. The devil is the strongman, but verse 22 says, there is one who is stronger than he. That is Jesus Christ. Stronger than the strong man. And he attacks him, offensively. He overcomes him.

Now let me say this. I know that there is a biblical reality that part of being of soldier, part of putting on your armor, part of fighting this warfare is the devil is going to attack you. And you have to know defense. That is true. And many times that’s what the word of God is bringing out. I know that the Bible says the fleshly lusts wage war against our own souls. So we have to fight for our own sanctification. We have to fight to keep false doctrine out of the church, contending earnestly for the faith. There is a sense of defense that happens.

But that is not all that there is to being a soldier. It is not all defense in the Christian life. Jesus Christ was not guarding heaven from the devil. He came down to where the devil was reigning and attacked him and overcame him. And we are called to go out with him, offensively, against the enemy. The devil will attack us and you will attack him and his fortress. Some of the promises in the Bible, they say that the seed of Abraham, I will give them **“the gates of their enemies.”** (Gen. 22:17) We go against their gates, yes. The devil makes raids here in our generation, among us, but we that are Christians are called to go on a raid in his territory, and rescue captive souls. Preaching the Word to them, praying for their salvation, that they would be set free. And that’s what I’m focusing on today.

I’m not talking about fighting the battle of sanctification in your life, not today. I’m not talking about defending the church from false doctrine. No, my emphasis is evangelism. Outreach. Going to the dark places, fighting the battles of the Lord. We read it sometimes in the Old Testament and we forget. They were warriors. They fought

battles. They went offensively out into the enemy's camp. We are called to be of the same spirit, of the same heart, soldiers of Christ Jesus.

Evangelism – are you doing it? As a church, are you doing it? Are you focusing on it? It is a command of God. It is not a zealous thing of young believers. It is the call of our Lord, to follow him. Can you say this: “I am a soul-winner.”? Now I know that that term is a little bit tricky, that it can be bound up with a lot of pride. Sometimes we know in certain circles to call yourself or to consider yourself a soul-winner is really just puffing yourself up. But there is a biblical sense too. **“He who wins souls is wise.”** (Prov. 11:30)

If you go to one who is straying, and you turn him from the error of his ways, you will save his soul from death. You will cover a multitude of sins. Can you say, “By the grace of God I am a soul-winner.”? Or can you at least say, “By the grace of God, I endeavor to be a soul-winner. Lord, I don't want to go throughout my life and not win souls for you.”?

You know Bill McCloud, he said, we're not all going to win many souls, but we can all win some. Isn't that right? By God's grace, we can pick up these weapons for our right hand and our left and we can go out and fight against the powers of darkness and God will hear our cries, and bless our words, and souls will be saved. We need to be red hot for the salvation of lost souls. Otherwise we lose this mindset, this mentality of warfare and being a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Go soul-winning. Get out. Go out. Get out of your bubble. Get out of your comfort zone, get out of the safety of Christian friends and go to places where people are needy and they don't love the Lord and they don't respect the Bible and they don't pray and they don't care, and go to them, and bring them to Christ. Lead them, point them to Christ, that they might be saved.

There is one real application, not only for yourself, but for your church. Pray to God that he would raise up evangelists in this church. Pray for that. It is a spiritual gift and God can give it. And we can help each other in this call. We can stir each other up. And certain ones can lead the way and we can all unite in the battle that we are called to do as soldiers of Jesus Christ. It's for everyone. Do not be satisfied with Lake Road Chapel growing through babies being born in the church. That's good, praise the Lord. But do not be satisfied with Lake Road Chapel growing by already saved Christians coming from other cities or other churches to join here. That is not all that there is. There is the power of God to take someone who is his enemy, who is totally clueless, totally lost, and add them here as a disciple, as a worshipper, as a child of God. We need that. We cannot lose this.

I used to fear. There was a time in my life when I started hearing good teaching. I was already saved, but by God's grace, I started hearing good teaching and for the first time really growing, and I saw the Lord using primarily these Paul Washer tapes and CDs that we have. I would give them to my friends, my friends would give them to their friends, and God was saving people through those sermons. Primarily what I saw with my eyes was people that were from a Christian background, people that had gone to a Baptist church, people that had grown up in a nominal Christian home, they were being saved, and a fear entered into my mind. Is that the only kind of person God can save? Can he not save the atheist? Can he not save the unchurched? Can he not save those who are far off? God forbid if we start to think, “Who are the easy targets that I can reach? Who are the ones that will give me the time of day, who may not come against me so hard, who may not react so violently?” We need to think of the most lost, the worst of the worst, the dark places, the people that sit in darkness and have no light.

We need to think of them. You know, I love when the Lord saves anyone. It's glorious, because all are lost, all are sinners. We're praying for our families, we're praying for those that come from church backgrounds, but I would say this, we need to be careful what our target is, what our thoughts are, because if we only look around us, and we don't look as far out as we can, then we'll be neglecting lost souls. And there is something that can creep in, a

comfort in staying put, reaching for that which is near, we need to look farther. Where are the hard places? Where are the worst of the worst? We need to pray for them. We need to care for them. We need to reach them.

Is it in the trailer park? Is it with the drug users? Is it with the homosexuals? Is it with the atheists? Where are the people that would really hate this message if they heard it? Where are the people that are totally clueless about all that the Bible says? We need to find them. We need to go to them.

We should not be content, let me say this, we should not be content to be a remnant. You know what I mean by that? Have you guys ever heard that word and just got that chill in your heart, "Let's be a faithful remnant." There is a sense which is right and biblical, but there's another sense when we're just going to circle up, we're just going to encourage each other, we've got the truth, praise the Lord, we're going to heaven, we're just going to be faithful till we die, but turning our back on those who are out in the darkness under the devil's power. He keeps his goods safe.

And you know that the devil might think? He might think, "Well, you're not a danger to me and my kingdom, okay, you escaped from me, fine, you go stay there and you worship the Lord, but I'm not worried about you because I know you're not coming for any more of my people." May it never be. May it never be that to the devil we're nobodies. We're no threat, we're no danger. Jim Elliot prayed, "God, make us dangerous."

And that is on my heart because Jesus Christ is in us. Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world. (1 John 4:4) We want to imitate Christ in every way. We want to be lacking in nothing. We need this. We need it in our prayer meetings. We need our prayer meetings to be fervent and hot, not to mumble, not to have just dry ordered prayers that we pray continually about the same things or the same people or even worldly things.

Now listen, I know that there is a place to pray for everything, no matter how small our cares are, no matter how insignificant it may seem, no matter how tied up in worldly affairs it may be, we can bring our requests to the Lord, he cares and he answers. But in the corporate prayer meeting, you can kill a prayer meeting by bringing up a lot of just normal things, isn't that right? And listen, I'll say this, you know, it's right to pray that God would help you sell your house, it's right to pray that God would help you buy a house, but your houses, when Jesus Christ returns, are going to burn up, and they're going to be gone. But if you pray for God to save souls, when he returns, that will last. That is more valuable. That should have a higher importance in our minds. That should bring a greater fervency when we pray. In our prayer meetings, we need to be thinking of souls, we need to be praying for the kingdom of God to advance, for God to go out with our armies. Do you not read the Psalms and feel that way? "Lord, go out with our armies, Lord, you've not gone out with our armies, go before us, you will win the battle." That is a call for the soldiers of Jesus Christ. That is a prayer for us to pray. Not just our physical needs.

[John] Piper said that prayer is not meant to be the telephone for room service and getting comforts. Prayer is the wartime walkie-talkie. I know that we give thanks to God, I know that we confess our sins, I know that we rejoice and praise the Lord in prayer, but there needs to be a wrestling with God for lost souls. If you examine your prayer life, how many times this week have you been wrestling in prayer with God, fighting a battle in prayer, that the devil would be driven back? We need that in our prayers. Not to be a remnant content to remain the way we are, but thinking of outreach. Spurgeon said this, he said, you know the best kinds of prayers, the most powerful kinds of prayers, he said, it's not even having all these verses that logically as an argument you can quote back to God, he said, even more powerful that that is when someone is sobbing, and they can only choke out a name before the Lord.

We need that. There is a battle. We sense it – the danger, the urgency. The day is short, the time is shortened. May the Lord help us, may the Lord make this place, and I don't just mean this room – yes, this building – but more specifically the assembly of believers, make it a birthing room for souls. A team of midwives seeing people

born again. May we be dissatisfied if it's been a while [since] we've seen anyone saved. The battle must go on. We must keep pressing on, as soldiers to the very end.

[Regarding] missionary activity and evangelism, Paul Washer said this, "I have never yet seen a church devoted to missions that God has forsaken." Now why would he say that? I mean, what's the principle there? You're saying that if you're fighting the battles of the Lord, God's going to stay with you, he's going to help you. I think that's very biblical. Where does that come from? Well, one place you might find it is in Isaiah 58. What is the fast that the Lord really wants? That you would go break these yokes off the oppressed. That you would go to those in bondage, you would go to those who are weak and sick, you would go to those that are poor, and you would lift them up. What is that a picture of? That is a picture of salvation at the deepest level. Yes, we reach out to the poor physically, but we reach out to the spiritually poor. That yoke of sin that's heavy on their shoulders, we reach out to them in love and it's broken and God says, "If you live that way, and if you do that, light will shine for you. When you say, when you call on me, I will say, 'Here I am. I will have a blessing for you, as a church, as an assembly as you seek to fight the battles of the Lord.'"

Where else? I thought of King David. King David, you know, he went to Nabal asking for help. Nabal didn't care. Abigail came out and she apologized and she gave him everything he needed and she said, "Because I know you're fighting the battles of the Lord, he will always be with you." God will not forsake his soldiers. There is something about having this outward focus, this love for souls that is important, a burden for souls, it's important in the life of every believer. It's important in the church. We dry up without it. Something is missing that is necessary to have a healthy spiritual life. We need it.

Now, that is the first point. That is the first aspect. This is the general picture of the war that we are engaged in. We need this. But let's turn back to our text, 2 Timothy chapter 2 to look at the second point. 2 Timothy 2:3: **"Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."** Timothy knew about the warfare, Paul was reminding him of suffering.

This is the second aspect of being a soldier. You must suffer. You are called to suffer. It will not be easy, there is something very hard about being a soldier, isn't there? Even in the physical realm it is not for the faint-hearted. It is not for everyone. There is hardship that comes with it. What is the suffering? It is not suffering and trials in general. That is true for every Christian, that the righteous will be tested, that we all must undergo fiery trials. And those will come whether you witness or not. Those will come just because you're saved, and God wants you to be holy, and the devil doesn't like you, even if you don't attack him. These trials will come.

But here, I believe, he's talking about an extra suffering, a special suffering, that comes when you start reaching out to people, when you go out on the battlefield and start engaging the enemy. Why do I say that? Look in verse 8 and verse 9: **"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect."** (2 Tim. 2:8-10) What is he saying here? Paul is saying, I went out, I preached the gospel, I preached Jesus Christ, Son of David, risen from the dead, and what happened? They put me in prison. They bound me with chains, and I am suffering for him, for his name's sake.

If Paul wouldn't have gone out preaching, they wouldn't have put him in prison. They would have left him alone. There was an extra suffering that came when he got on the offensive. And it is true in our life. As you live for God, the more your inner fire burns, the more burden for soul that you have, the more prayers that you pray, the more that you reach out, and go out, suffering will come. People will hate you, and that's true. We will be hated for the name of Jesus Christ.

Do you remember the Old Testament prophet Micaiah? King Ahab, he had a lot of false prophets, and then Jehoshaphat said, "But isn't there yet a prophet of Yahweh by which we may inquire?" And what did Ahab have to say? "Yes, but I hate him. I hate him." Because Micaiah was right with the Lord, he would speak the words of God, he would swing the sword of truth and Ahab hated him.

And I have seen it here in this town, I have seen it with some that get very heated for Jesus Christ, that have a passion to see God save souls. Our brother, a few years ago, up on Truman Campus was hated, to the nth degree – brother Ryan. And you know what I heard? I heard one day Colin was in class, and the professor started talking about, started slandering this crazy preacher, and started putting him down, and all the other students, "Who's Ryan?" They all started putting him down, "Yeah, we don't like that guy, we hate that guy," and Colin said, "Um, that's my brother."

You will be hated for Jesus Christ as you reach out. It's true. And that's why many times we don't reach out. That's why many times when we see the battle going out there on the field, we hesitate to follow the other soldiers. We hesitate to do what we could do, honestly. Now I realize we all have different degrees of strengths and spiritual gifts, but sometimes the Lord makes it clear what he wants us to do, even in the least of ways, and we hesitate because we know there's a price and it's painful. It's not fun to be rejected. It's not fun to be disliked. It's not fun to be hated. We have to be fools for Christ. If we want to be like Paul, and we want to be like Jesus Christ, we have to like an insane man, like a fool. Are some of you ready? Some of you have very respectable positions and jobs in this city. Dr. Berry, are you ready to be a fool for Christ? You know, being a doctor, that's a pretty respectable thing, but being a soul-winner is not. Those of you that work at ATSU, are you ready?

May our reputation as just human beings in society not be more important to us than our spiritual identity. Let them call me whatever they want – I am a soldier of Jesus Christ. He has saved me, I care about these people that are perishing. I must tell. I have to spread the word. I have to pray for souls.

You will be cursed, you will be slandered, and you will be attacked by men. Confrontational evangelism, and I know sometimes friendship evangelism is safer, but confrontational evangelism has a risk involved. "This person might beat me up, they might curse me out!" and it takes courage to do it anyway. And the devil himself will bring an extra suffering upon your life, whether it looks like persecution or not. Sometimes it's clear, that man was preaching the gospel, the devil had him put in prison. And we know that. The government and the authorities did it but we know the devil is behind it. The devil had that man martyred. The devil had that man beaten for Christ on the street. We know that, but the devil can use any form of suffering and he'll bring it when you start to reach out. Extra trials will come.

I mean, think about it. If you were the devil, who would you focus your energy on? "Okay, let them worship the Lord over there – what's that one doing? Why is he going to my slave, preaching the gospel to them? I'm going to make his life hard. I'm going to hit him if I can." I mean, in warfare if a man pulled up in a big jeep with some massive gun mounted on the back and he just started blasting away at the fortress, would they not say right away, "Take that man out!"?

And that's what the devil will do as we seek to oppose him. He will bring more suffering in your life. Are you willing to suffer more than you already have? I know it's hard. I know sometimes you just feel hopeless, like, "Lord, if it gets any harder, I'm going to break." But that's not true. Timothy might have felt that way. He might have seen Paul get beaten. He might have got beaten himself. And the temptation comes in, "I just want to be a shepherd of the sheep, I want to be a disciple, I want to be a worshiper. I don't want to go fight these battles anymore, too much suffering." May we not be afraid of the devil.

This is one way to gauge your entering into the soldier warfare – is have you suffered? Have you suffered for your faith in Christ? Have you lost? Has it cost you? Has there been pain come for preaching and spreading the gospel?

Let me say this, beware of tracts and books. Now I know tracts are paper missionaries. And I would call books maybe paper pastors. And they're good. And we want to give them out. And this is the first step, is it not? Giving out a tract to a lost soul is one of the first things you can do, you don't have to say anything; it's written here, "Sir, I want to give this to you." "Ma'am."

But beware because there can be, even with these things, I will do this because I don't have to talk to this person this way. May it be the first step, may it not be the last step. Oh, that we would all give out more tracts, and oh, that we would go beyond that. Do things that involve suffering. Now sometimes people, they'll tear up your tract, sometimes you offer a tract and they're about ready to mow you down. But oftentimes, we resort to these things because they avoid suffering. But we need to suffer as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Gauge – you're entering into the warfare with how much you've suffered, is – "Lord, is the reason why I'm not suffering because I don't want to go beyond tracts and books?" Sometimes you know if you give a book to your relative, they're not going to get mad at you. If you say one word with your mouth, it's too much. But may the Lord help us. Our relatives are lost. They are under the grip of the devil. We want them to be saved.

Beware of simply sending missionary support, financial support far away. Like Keith Green said, "It's a little too convenient, every month you just send your fifty dollars to World Vision – I'm done – I'm involved in world missions."

My desire is that we would all be intimately involved. That every church, why should it not be that every good church we know of, every sister church of ours sends out a missionary – why not? Are some of the other churches too small? That can't be. The Lord is not restricted by our size. He can raise people up to be sent out. Lake Road Chapel can send out another missionary. Why not, it's been five years? May the Lord renew our minds. May we not choose things that avoid suffering.

We need boldness. Suffering calls for boldness. Suffering – how do you overcome fear, how do you overcome this price of suffering, you have to be bold. What do I mean by boldness? I think a lot of times we don't understand this. Sometimes we'll get in our minds the idea that if someone stands behind this pulpit, and they preach with a really loud voice, or maybe they preach a really hard message – oh, that's bold. That's not bold. That's not boldness. None of you are going to come up here afterwards and beat me up and slap me around for my sermon today – you love me! I love you! We're Christians. We're brothers and sisters.

Boldness, you could redefine it as this: boldness is courage going out to a place where there's risk. Risk of being torn down, risk of being attacked, risk of suffering. Sometimes it can be easy to stand up here and preach a really loud strong message, but what do we do in our neighborhoods? Are we preaching loud and strong to our neighbors? Sometimes we're as timid as a mouse. We need to overcome fear.

You know, I thought of it the other day, I was going for a walk, I was walking by this house, the screen door was there and there was this little dog. I don't know if it was a Chihuahua or what it was. It was jumping and barking, you know how they do that. They're so vehement. They're so fired up. That dog's not going to hurt me. All bark, no bite. You know if you open the door the dog would probably run farther back inside.

And we need real boldness to be willing to go out to confront people with the need of their souls, to warn them, to rebuke sin, to pray for them, to share the gospel with them. Lord, make us bold as lions. The Bible says the devil is like a lion, prowling about, roaring, seeking to devour. But the Bible says Jesus Christ is the Lion of Judah. And the Proverbs say the righteous are as bold as a lion. We need that lion-like boldness that says, "Lord, I may be ever



so weak, I may not know what I'm even going to say, but I want to obey you and I want to see you save these people." And to go out, to put one foot in front of the other, and go out.

Let's look at the third aspect. Verse 4. 2 Timothy 2:4: **"No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him."** You have been enlisted by Jesus Christ. You want to please him. One hindrance can be fear. It's real. I've felt it on the mission field, I've felt it in Kirksville. We need grace to confess when we are afraid to share the gospel.

Fear is a stumbling block, but here is another stumbling block – distractions, entanglements, and busyness. That can stop you from being a soul-winner. That can cool you off. That can pull you away from the battlefield. It's true, verse 4 – **"...get[ting] entangled in civilian pursuits..."** If you're a soldier that's one thing you cannot afford to do, you are not allowed to do. You would be unfaithful to your captain. You have to be devoted to the war. You have to be devoted to his service. You can't say, "Lord I'm too busy, Lord, I don't have time."

And I know this is real. I know that this, perhaps here, perhaps with some of you, it's not fear, it's busyness. It is distractions. It is entanglements. Time given to other things. And you just don't have time to go out to the battlefield. There's obvious things. Things like hobbies and entertainments and worldly things. And we would say, oh, definitely, that is not obedience. That is not going to lead to souls being saved. You just flip on the TV and just hang out there, pass the hours, you just get on the computer and surf around. That's not warfare, that's not caring for the lost. Well, that's obvious. You say, oh, that person, all he ever does is go out and plays golf, you know, shame on him. Those things are pretty easy to spot. Now some of you may have them in your lives and you need to get rid of them, because it does not honor Christ as a soldier needs to be. You know, if soldiers did that in the military, guess what? They'd probably get put in the brig. They'd probably get in big trouble. Reprimand. We can't afford to be distracted by those kinds of things, just eating up our time, to where we don't think about praying for the lost. We don't even go to the prayer meeting, or we don't even go to the evangelism day. Why should it not be that the members of the church would go to the evangelism time that's organized? "Well, that's for somebody else." Or is it just because you're too busy. Is it just because you're distracted?

But there are things a lot more subtle than hobbies and entertainments and TV. A lot more subtle, but just as much time consuming. Our families are good, our fellowship is good, our reading of Christian books is good – is great. But they cannot be everything. That cannot use up all our time. Now listen, you need to read your Bible, you need to pray, you need to fellowshiping with the saints, you need to be reading good Christian books, you need to be there for your family, to play with your children, and to help your wife. I believe all of that. Those are also commands of God.

But if you choose those only, and you neglect the call to be a soldier, to go out offensively with Jesus Christ, against the powers of darkness, it's sin. It's dropping the ball. It's not obedience to choose one command and neglect another. We have to obey them all. I want you to be lacking in nothing. There is a blessing when we say "Yes, I'm going to give time for study and reading books, yes, I'm going to give time for my family, and yes, I'm going to give time for evangelism. Though I may be ever so ungifted, I'm going to go, out of faithfulness to my Lord, because he sent someone to me, and I'm so thankful someone came and shared the gospel with me. I want to go share with others." Do not be so distracted.

Listen, there were times when I was here, there was fellowship after fellowship after fellowship after fellowship....and sometimes I felt in my heart, I don't want to go to the fellowship. I don't want to go. Will there be anyone who will go with me? I want to go out sharing the gospel. Because you can get your fill of fellowship. And I realize there's different seasons in our life where we might be needier and we might need help and encouragement more than last month, okay, I will make exceptions for all of that. But have you ever felt this in

your heart where you felt like, “We need to go out, it’s been too long. I’ve forgotten what it means to pick up the gun and shoot it. I’ve forgotten how to use the sword.” We don’t want to over-fellowship. We don’t want to be so bogged down with family.

Now listen, I want to say something about children. I have two children now, alright. I’m a young father. I see a lot of young fathers and mothers. I see a lot of young little toddlers and babies. I realize that’s big. And we can get really tripped up here if we’re not careful. Praise the Lord for our children, they are blessings. But is it right to say, “I’ve married a wife and I cannot come. I’ve had children and I cannot come. I bought a tractor, Lord, and you know, I just cannot come, I’ve got to try it out.”?

These things may at first seem holy, but they prove to be excuses in the end. There is a way that we make time for everything that is important to us. Whether we have children or not. It is not just the single people that need to be thinking of lost souls, praying, sharing, giving tracts, going out, and evangelizing. That is not what the Bible says. Not – “Timothy, because you’re young and you’re single, you be a soldier of Jesus Christ and for all those older married ones with kids, well, their battle days are done.” Or, “They’re just going to fight that battle in their home, they’re never going to think of anyone besides their own kids being saved.”

No, we must all go out. We must all have the perishing world on our mind where it’s real. Where we weep for them, where we ache for them. We need to be devoted. Beloved, find a way to be godly toward your spouse and your children and still be a soldier. You must find a way. If you feel like you don’t have a way then pray. Get counsel from other people – “How do you do it, what should I do?” May we be lacking in nothing. May we not make religious, holy, pious excuses for this thing.

Curt Daniel said this. Talk about reading books, studying theology, listening to sermons, Curt Daniel said this, “Some men spend all their time sharpening their sword and never use it.” You can do that with sermons and books and theology. You know, Lord, I’ve been reading these blogs and I’ve been reading these books, I feel like I’m just growing, I feel like I’m just getting stronger. Well, do you ever use your strength to go out against the devil’s kingdom and pound on his gates with that hammer of truth that God has given you? May our theology, may our learning, not be an excuse for reaching out. And I felt that way too. Lord, I don’t want to read any more theology books, I need to preach this to somebody. Have you not felt that? I want to apply what I’m learning. I want to use it. There are good things that you’ve taught me that I could share with people that don’t know anything. I already know a thousand times more than they need to know to be saved. Oh, may the Lord help us to have a burden for the lost, no excuses, no distractions.

Here’s another illustration. Let’s say you got a man, he joins the army. He learns the name of the gun. He learns the parts of the gun. He learns how to clean the gun. He can take it apart. He can put it back together, load it, and unload it. He can do everything. He can tell you everything, all the information about the gun, but he doesn’t know how to shoot it. He’s never shot it. He can’t hit the target. If he shoots, he misses. What’s better? Knowing the parts of the gun inside and out or shooting it and hitting the target? I may not know what to call this, but I know when I point it there and I shoot it, it works. It’s powerful. We need that. We need to be familiar with these weapons of warfare. We need to say, Lord, I have seen you personally in my life with me pull down strongholds of the devil. Victory in Jesus Christ. Jesus had victory. We will not have failure. He is on our side. If we go out we will have victory too. Victory belongs to the Lord. The battle belongs to the Lord. Lord, through you, we will do valiantly. That’s what the Psalm says.

You know I love *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Think for a minute, those of you that have read it. You’ve got this story with Christian and then you’ve got the story with Christiana. Christian, he’s walking down the road, and he and Hopeful stray off into this meadow and they get caught by Giant Despair and locked in Doubting Castle. Alright,

that was the devil attacking them for their sin and foolishness, and the Lord gets them out. In a way, that's spiritual warfare. But then in *Part Two*, when Christiana is going by that same place, they have a man with them. What's the man's name? Great Heart. What does he say? He says – look what's written here, this is that meadow where they got caught – let's go to that castle and tear it down and kill that giant. And they did it. That's the offense. We need that in our lives. Not just, "Lord, protect me from the devil," but "Lord, help me with you to fight this battle that people would be saved." And you know what, they killed the giant, and then they tore down the castle, and guess what? When they tore it apart, there were these two people inside. Mister Despondency and Much Afraid, his daughter. And they rescued them and brought them safely to the heavenly kingdom. Because they went on the offense. Lord, give us this desire, this godly desire.

You want to talk about, what's something really holy? Love. You all know that. Love is the big thing. Love is the root of all obedience. Love. What about love for the lost? You see where this comes in? It comes down to a matter of love. Do you love your enemies? Do you love those in the darkness? Do you love those that don't love you? It is necessary that we love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, but there is something very difficult, very hard, that we all need to enter into about loving those that do not love us in return. That is like Christ. Sacrificial love, that is like the love of the cross. He died for those that did not love him. He loved first, that's what this is about.

Another subtle excuse – "It's not my gift." There are different spiritual gifts, "Evangelism's not my gift, Lord. I would go, but it's not my gift." Now there's something right about that, recognizing different people have different gifts and there's something wrong about that – therefore, I don't have to do anything to help the lost.

Listen, you have the gift of teaching? You say, "Well, no." Then why do you teach your children the Bible?

Do you have the gift of mercy? "Well, I don't really think so, to be honest." Well, then why do you show mercy to anyone? Just don't do that either.

You have the gift of giving and generosity? "Well, no, I can't really say that's my gift." Well, then don't give any money to the church. It's not your gift, God won't hold you accountable for that. Is that how it works? No. Whether it is our gift or our strength or not, "Lord, help me with whatever little I have. Whether it's five talents or two talents or one talent. Lord, let me do what I can to honor you in this way."

And it pulls on me, too. When I'm in India – I'm not just preaching this message for your sake, we all need this, I need this – and when I'm in India, sometimes I'm walking out of our house, and getting to the gate, I know if I lift this latch and I go out, it's going to be hard. And I have to pray: "Lord, help me to take the next step and go outside the gate and do what I know I'm supposed to do." And it is very tempting, "Oh, I've got so many things back in the house, I've got emails I've got to read, I've got this website ministry I could do, I could call somebody and have them over." I could think of a hundred things to do, you know with my family, with ministry, with whatever it may be, but I know, no, right now, he wants me to go outside the gate, and I have to pray for courage. I need to be devoted.

If you want to be devoted and not entangled in civilian affairs, set aside time to obey the Lord in this way. You do that with other things, right? You set aside time to read your Bible, don't you? You set aside time for prayer, right? Set aside time to reach out. Set aside time to go out. It is a way that we can be devoted and not get bogged down with the affairs of this life.

What is the conclusion? The conclusion is this: if you are not a soldier, or if you in some way are lacking in this area, or have despised this warfare mentality, or know that something of what I've been saying today is necessary, something needs to change today in your life, then make today the day where you resolve, where you

pray, where you confess to God the state of your heart. Where you say, “Lord, I want today to be a turning point for me. I want today to be a day when this switch is flipped in my mind and I cannot see it as acceptable any more to not go out offensively for you.” Otherwise, my message has failed. That’s the purpose of my message today. I want to stir you all up. Some of you stirred me up in the past, today I want to stir you up. Don’t forget you are soldiers. That is part of your identity in Christ. See the warfare, despise the suffering, be devoted with your time and your energies, and go out into the battle and be a good soldier of Jesus Christ and suffer with him. That is the purpose of my message.

If some of you, listening to my message, maybe you’re not even saved at all. Maybe you know: “I don’t share the gospel with anybody because I myself am lost.” You know that sometimes is a chief mark that a person is lost – that there’s no spiritual life in them – is that they’re ashamed of Jesus Christ. They don’t want to talk about him around unbelievers. They don’t want his name to come up. If you realize that’s your case, and you realize you’re lost, he will save you.

Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation. We are all soldiers. There’s not ranks in the kingdom. We are soldiers, he is the Captain. Okay? He will save you. He has the power to break the devil’s grip over you. He has the power to destroy strongholds of sin. He can do that, if you come to him, if you ask for his help. Jesus is merciful, the Lord does not turn away from slaves of Satan that want to be freed. He is very loving and merciful. If you want to be free from sin, if you don’t want to go to hell with the devil, if you want to know what it means to serve God and love God and belong to God, then come to him. Come to him today, by faith. Put your trust in him today.