

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight**  
**Lesson 1: The Conflict (MA234)**

**Introduction:**

Do you feel weak when you are confronted by the Enemy? Do you feel scared when it seems as though nothing is going right in your life? My friend, God did not create us to live lives of fear and anxiety. Even when the world seems to turn upside down, we can rejoice in our victory and security in God.

In Psalm 46, verses one through three, the psalmist thinks about all the things that seem to work against him, but then he comes to this conclusion:

God is our refuge and strength,  
an ever-present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way  
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam  
and the mountains quake with their surging.

You see, even if the world shakes apart, we can rest in our confidence that God is indeed our refuge and strength. In this course, entitled *Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight*, we will see how we can trust God to go before us as our holy, all-powerful, all-loving Defender and strength.

**Lesson 1, Section 1**  
**Objectives**

By the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the cause and beginning of our spiritual warfare.
- B. Trace this supernatural conflict throughout Scripture.

**Scripture**

*Read 2 Timothy 2:1-4*

*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the*

*affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*

In a separate course, we explored the armor of God in great detail. We also saw the reason for such armor: because we are engaged in a constant spiritual war. Even though we are called to be peacemakers and to live out the love of Christ, we must not forget the harsh fact that we are indeed soldiers in the midst of battle. If you have not taken the course entitled, *The Armor of God*, I encourage you to do so before moving on with this course.

If we are to understand this great battle, not to mention our own part in it, then we must closely examine the conflict's beginning and purpose. The first thing we should notice is that this conflict began before the creation of the world. Scripture gives us a clear picture of this initial strike in Isaiah 14:12-15. Here, we see Satan's rebellion and subsequent punishment. Although Satan was once in God's heavenly court, his pride led him to challenge God's rightful place and sovereignty. As a result, the devil and his angelic minions were cast out of heaven and thrust into Sheol (hell).

***Q1: True/False. The supernatural conflict in which we are now engaged began in the Garden of Eden with the temptation of Adam and Eve.***

Because of Satan's fall, we now have two supernatural kingdoms: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. This image is made clear in Colossians 1:13, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." So, you and I were born into a world of conflict, caught in the battle between these two kingdoms. Even though we may not be able to see it at all times, we know it is there. And, it will continue until Christ finally returns to bring about the conclusion.

Now, you may not recognize this conflict, but, my friend, it is seen throughout all of Scripture. We see it in the Fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), in Moses' conflict with the Egyptian magicians (Exodus 7:8-13), in the temptation of Christ (Matthew 4:1-11), the crucifixion, and certainly all through the book of Revelation.

Still today, this conflict has permeated every area of our culture. Reading the newspaper or watching television is almost enough to make you believe that Satan's army is winning the war. It seems as though you

cannot look anywhere without seeing his influence smothering and enslaving the world.

With this in mind, what does Paul do? He tells Timothy to “be strong” because trouble is coming. We, too, should take that advice and prepare ourselves for battle. We do that not only by strapping on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), but also by understanding exactly what the conflict is and who is involved.

***J1: Have you seen Satan’s army making headway in the spiritual battle in your own life lately? What has happened that has caused you to see the enemy’s influence on the world around you? What does Paul’s admonition to “be strong” mean for that specific situation?***

## **Lesson 1, Section 2**

### **Objectives**

By the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:

- A. Recognize the three enemies in our spiritual conflict.
- B. Understand how Satan can use other people as weapons against you.

In understanding this conflict, we need to be aware of three specific enemies that work against the kingdom of God and against us as believers. **First, we must recognize our internal enemy.** All of us have this internal enemy that Scripture calls the “flesh.” This simply refers to the sinful nature with which we were born. Once we receive Christ as Lord and Savior, we are given a new, heavenly nature. (2 Corinthians 5:17) However, that old nature has not been completely wiped out within us yet. That is why we still struggle with sin, even though we may desire to be more like Christ. (Romans 7:15-25)

What does the internal enemy do? Well, quite simply, it turns our focus and attention to the needs and desires of the flesh. In this, it works against our heavenly nature. Rather than striving for the fruit of the Spirit, the internal enemy—our sinful nature—seeks the deeds of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-21 defines these acts as immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, and strife, just to name a few.

***Q2: True/False. Our internal enemy works against our heavenly nature by focusing our attention on the things that we, in our fleshly cravings, desire but do not have.***

**The second enemy working against us is our external enemy, that is, the world.** First John 2:15-17 makes this clear by instructing us not to love the world nor the things of the world, because these things are not from the Father. Now, this certainly does not mean that we should withhold love and compassion from the people in the world. Rather, this verse defines “world” as that sick, infectious system that seeks to draw us away from God.

As we watch television, listen to music, read magazines, etc., the philosophy of the world seems to take root in our lives. Over time, the result is that we start to act just like everyone else. When that happens, what evidence of our relationship with Christ is left? How can someone see Jesus in us if we act just as lost and depraved as an unbeliever?

One of Satan’s best tactics is to get us to desire the things of the world more than the things of God. How foolish! The trappings of the world will soon fall away, and all that will be left are the treasures we have stored in heaven by seeking the will of God. (Matthew 6:20-21)

***J2: In what external areas of your life do you face the most intense struggle? Is there anything in your life that you value more than God? Respond in your journal.***

**The third enemy we must face is our infernal enemy, Satan.** This is a fact that frightens many, many people. My friend, I want you to know right here and now that you do not have to fear the devil. God has already defeated Satan in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The book of the Revelation shows us that the final outcome of this battle is a complete victory over Satan. As believers in Christ Jesus, we can join in that victory.

Now, this does not mean that the devil is going to leave you alone. In fact, if you are a firm believer and a man or woman who opposes Satan by making a bold stand for Christ, then he is going to come after you. There will be things that happen in your life that will make you stop and think, “Well, where in the world did that come from?” Quite often, those obstacles come straight from the devil because his goal is to distract you from God’s will.

And, if he cannot bring your attitude down to his level, then he is going to attack you through the people in your life. He will influence others who seem to come out of nowhere with the sole purpose of hurting you. However, when that happens, we have the promise of God’s Word that we can send the devil running away. James 4:7 proclaims that

in Christ, we have the power to resist the devil. And not only that, but when we resist him in the power of the Holy Spirit, he has no choice but to flee. Satan knows he is powerless against the power of almighty God.

***Q3: Multiple Choice. Which of the following does NOT belong? The three enemies in our spiritual warfare are our:***

- A. Internal enemy*
- B. Infernal enemy*
- C. Eternal enemy*
- D. External enemy*

My friend, I know this life is not always easy. Jesus Himself revealed that, “In this life you will have trouble” (John 16:33). He didn’t say “you might have trouble”, He said you *will*. However, when trouble comes in this great conflict, we can rest in the knowledge that our God is sovereign over Satan and his demons, and, in Christ, the victory is ours.

Now that we have seen the root of our conflict, as well as the enemies at work against us, we must focus our attention on our preparation for this battle. I look forward to continuing this study with you in the next lesson of this course, when we discuss “The Challenge.”

### **Prayer**

And Father, we thank You for Your wonderful loving-kindness and care toward us. We thank You for the wonderful truths of Your Word. We pray that the Spirit of God will use this message to open the eyes of millions and millions of people to realize what’s going on around them.

And as we unfold this series, and as You give the messages, that we will be encouraged—that we will be greatly encouraged, dear God—by the fact that You are the One who said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” And so we do have the victory. And while we may get beat up on, and knocked down, and stepped on, and criticized, and ridiculed, and bloodied, we can stand up in the strength of almighty God and know that the victory has already been won for us at the cross and the resurrection, and that we can walk in that victory in absolute confidence and peace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

### **Homework**

**Scripture Memory:**

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

*2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

***J3: Meditate on 2 Timothy 2:1. Before moving on to Lesson 2, spend several hours throughout the day carefully examining the weaknesses you face regularly. In what areas of your life are you especially susceptible to spiritual attacks? In what ways can you begin to “be strong” in these areas? Respond in your journal.***

**Life Principles Center**  
**Term 4: Pressing On to Maturity**  
**Course C: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight**  
**Lesson 2: The Challenge (MA304)**

**Introduction:** This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

**Lesson 2, Section 1**  
**Objectives**

**By the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:**

- A. Acknowledge Paul's charge to "join the battle" as a soldier of Jesus Christ.
- B. Understand the confidence we have in Christ.

**Scripture**

*Read 2 Timothy 1:8-18*

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you. You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—*

*the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*

As we have seen throughout this study, the Christian life is not easy and problem-free. In fact, it is quite often painful and difficult to live the kind of life that God has called us to live. And, no one was more aware of the Christian life's difficulties than the apostle Paul. In this lesson, we will examine his encouragement and admonishment to his young apprentice, Timothy. Paul was actually in prison when he wrote 2 Timothy 1:8-18, but he still offered an amazing word of comfort. Before moving on, be sure to read this passage in its entirety.

In this passage, Paul gives Timothy three charges that relate to our lives, as well. **First, Paul calls Timothy to join the battle.** (2 Timothy 1:8) This means that we cannot “sit on the sidelines” of this spiritual battle. Whether we like it or not, we are engaged in warfare. And, if we are not actively involved in the battle, then the enemy has already beaten us into submission.

This is an unacceptable option for any believer in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul continues by revealing two necessities for joining the battle. One of these, of course, is courage. Paul essentially tells Timothy, “You have to join the battle, and you do not have to fear. Do not be ashamed of this great gospel, and do not be ashamed of me, even though I am in prison. God has a greater plan than you or I can imagine, and we have to trust Him to bring about His purposes.” (2 Timothy 1:8-12)

***J1: In what area do you need a specific word of encouragement? If Paul were sitting across from you, what would you need him to tell you personally to enable you to face the battle with strength and confidence?***

This call to courage was a much-needed admonition to young Timothy. He had seen the troubles that Paul faced, and he understood the seriousness of Paul's current position in prison. With that in mind, the apostle tells Timothy to “join with [him] in suffering” for the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8). This is an often-troubling concept, but Paul knew that it is impossible to live a bold, Spirit-filled life without enduring some degree of hardship. (2 Timothy 1:8; 2:3; John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18)

Now, it is important to see that Paul is not saying that we should face trouble and hardship with the expectation that we will falter, fail, and succumb to it. Rather, he tells us to stand firm, to be courageous, and to

be bold with the anticipation of victory in the painful situations of life because of who we are in Christ. This points back to something that I stress throughout *Faith Foundations*: it is impossible to live the Christian life without relying fully on the Holy Spirit.

***Q1: True / False. Paul calls us to be courageous, even though we know we will stumble and fail.***

In addition to courage, Paul instructs Timothy to have confidence. You simply cannot face the Christian life with a wavering faith. What is the basis for this confidence? Paul reveals in 2 Timothy 1:8-9 that the power within us is the very power of God. He is saying here, “You have a reason to be confident, because God has purposed to save you and has put a holy calling on your life.”

And, it may be that part of God’s holy calling includes leading you through a time of hardship. My friend, these times are certainly not easy, but the pressures in life are God’s tools in refining and purifying us. If we trust God to save us, we must also trust Him to safely carry us through our darkest days.

***J2: Do you believe that God is currently leading you through a time of hardship in order purify you in some way? If not now, have you thought this of some difficult period in the past? What has He revealed to You during these times?***

## Lesson 2, Section 2

### Objectives

**By the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:**

- A. Personalize the idea of guarding your treasure, as seen in 2 Timothy 1:14.
- B. Understand the value of being a good witness for Christ.

We have seen that Scripture calls us to join the battle. **Second, Paul calls Timothy to be on guard.** In 2 Timothy 1:13-14, we are told to guard “the treasure that has been entrusted to [us].” What is this treasure? It is the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus’ saving power.

You see, every single believer has been entrusted with the Bible. One day, we will all have to give an account for how we handled God’s Word. Therefore, Paul instructs us to guard it closely and to treat it like a treasure. We also see this call in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present

yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”

***J3: Carefully read 2 Timothy 1:14. What is the “treasure” that Paul mentions? How can you fulfill Scripture’s call to “guard” that treasure?***

It is not always easy to “accurately handle the word of truth,” is it? The truth of Scripture calls many people to a decision that they do not want to make. Therefore, Bible-believing Christians are often seen as outdated, or uneducated, or judgmental. Scripture warns us about this situation, revealing, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires” (2 Timothy 4:3).

This passage shows that many people do not want the truth; instead, they only want what will make them feel better about themselves and their lives. Sadly, these people simply cannot accept the call to commitment that Scripture brings. Knowing that the Bible is completely trustworthy and true, we must realize that there will be times when God’s Word speaks against our attitudes and actions. It is impossible to proclaim the Word without experiencing conviction at times. Therefore, we must be on guard from those who would try to belittle or diminish the Holy Bible.

***Q2: True / False. Even though unbelievers often seek after their own desires, they ultimately see the need to hear the truth proclaimed.***

**Third, Paul calls Timothy to be a strong witness.** We see this in 2 Timothy 1:15-16, which gives a picture of a very poor witness. Rather than supporting Paul in his hardships, the people depicted here turned their backs on Paul. In contrast to these, Paul mentions one man, Onesiphorus, who sought out the apostle in prison and ministered to him there. He was not ashamed or afraid; rather, he loved Paul and wanted to serve him in whatever way he could. By doing so, Onesiphorus showed himself to be a true witness to the grace of God.

It is quite a challenge to step up with boldness and stand firm in God’s Word against the pressures of the world. I have seen this many

times throughout my ministry. Sometimes, when I have been through heartaches and troubles, I have seen people back right off. They may not even realize it, but the message they are sending is, "This is too much trouble. I'm not prepared for this hardship, so I'm going to hide from it."

My friend, that attitude will absolutely destroy a believer's witness in this world. That is why God's perfect Word calls us to responsibility, and to a bold stand against whatever the world or the Enemy may throw at us. That is indeed the challenge of the Christian life.

***Q3: Fill in the Blanks. This lesson revealed three ways in which we can serve as good soldiers for Christ. These three ways are:***

- A. \_\_\_\_\_ the battle***
- B. B. Be on our \_\_\_\_\_***
- C. C. Be a strong \_\_\_\_\_***

### **Prayer**

Father, we thank You that You would never desert us no matter what. You said, "I'll never leave thee nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5)

Thank You for this wonderful message of encouragement to Timothy. And we accept it as a message to our own hearts today to be valiant in the warfare, guardians of the truth, and loyal to the brethren in the midst of the battle, when they are suffering, when they've been injured, when they've been hurt, and when they are down, to love, to lift.

And Father, we just ask that the Holy Spirit would take this simple message and drive it home to our hearts that we might be willing to acknowledge this wasn't just an epistle to Timothy two thousand years ago. This was a personal message for every single believer who hears it.

And Father, I pray today for someone who is unsaved, who's looking for hope; that they may understand that this gospel we preach about the saving power of Jesus and His death at Calvary, and the shedding of His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, this message is the only message that can change a person's eternal destiny and change their life here and now. And Father, I, by Your Spirit, invite them to know Christ as Savior.

And Father, I pray that You'll cause us to be loyal, faithful servants of Yours [and] faithful and loyal to one another. That in the days when the heat's on in this ungodly system in which we live, that the unbelievers will see such love and loyalty and faithfulness among the believers they'll say, "That's the kind of family I want to join, the family of the church of God." Because they'll sense a love that is overwhelming, overpowering,

penetrating, and life-changing. For we ask it in Christ's name and for His sake, Amen.

## Homework

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

### *2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

This lesson explained the need to be a strong witness for the Lord in the face of adversity. In what ways can you, like Onesiphorus, be a good witness? How can you support others in their hardships? Respond in your journal and then set specific goals in you myGoals section for how you can be a strong witness this week.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight

### Lesson 3: The Character of a Good Soldier Part 1 (MB064)

**Introduction:** What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

### Lesson 3, Section 1

#### Objectives

**By the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:**

- A. Understand the need for the soldiers of God to be dedicated and ready for the conflict.
- B. Understand the issues of strength, sharing, and suffering in relation to your spiritual battle.

#### Scripture

*Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13*

*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory. It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*

An army is made up of many different types of soldiers. Some may be quite militant, while others are passive. Some may fight out of fear, while others fight out of deep conviction. Some may express a sincere concern, while others do not seem to care at all. Obviously, the success of the army will depend upon the character of the soldiers.

Would you want to depend upon an army made up of soldiers who do not seem to care about the campaign, who worked three days and disappeared for the rest of the week? No, you certainly could not depend on an army like that. And yet, how many of us could be described in the exact same way in terms of our spiritual battle? Whether we realize it or not, we are all soldiers in the army of God. Does our character reflect that understanding?

***J1: In what way(s) does your character and behavior fail to reflect your understanding of yourself as a soldier of Christ? If everyone in God's army was just like you, would that army be very effective? Why or why not?***

This lesson's focal passage, 2 Timothy 2:1-13, Paul instructs Timothy on the necessary characteristics of an effective soldier in God's army. There are seven specific qualities that we must notice in this passage.

**First, a good soldier of Jesus Christ must be strong.** Paul says in the first verse of this passage, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." This means that we must be strong continually. There will never be a time when we can take a vacation from the battle. Satan's ploys are relentless; we never get a break from them. Therefore, we must have a constant supply of godly strength to face the spiritual warfare.

Also, Paul reinforces the source of our strength: Jesus Christ. Over and over again, the apostle makes it clear that our own human strength is insufficient. Only in Christ do we find the power to persevere. (2 Timothy 2:1, 4:17; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:13)

***Q1: True / False. Scripture calls us to be strong from time to time, whenever a specific spiritual attack takes place.***

**Second, a good soldier shares what he has with others.** In battle, a soldier can always depend on his comrades to supply his needs. If he needs ammunition, food, or medical supplies, he can be sure that

those needs will be met by his fellow soldiers. In the same way, Paul instructs Timothy to share what he has learned of Christ with others, so that they can teach them to even more people. (2 Timothy 2:2)

How could we ever justify sitting in church week after week, or working through an in-depth Bible study like this Institute, without using what we learn to help our fellow soldiers? As a community—a unified body in Christ—we each have the responsibility of not only *listening*, but also of *telling*! It is irresponsible to keep life-changing truth to yourself; moreover, it is a sin to do so. A good soldier would never withhold much-needed supplies from his comrades. As soldiers for Christ, we must be generous with the saving knowledge that we have been given.

***J2: How might you share what you have learned of God with others? In what ways do your fellow soldiers need you to renew their supplies?***

**Third, a good soldier must be willing to suffer.** We see this clearly in Paul’s instruction, “Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3). In fact, every chapter of 2 Timothy contains a word about suffering as a believer. Clearly, this is a relevant issue in the context of battle. Can you imagine a war with no suffering? There is no such thing; it is always part of warfare.

As believers in a hostile world, we are going to suffer, we are going to get hurt, and we are going to be attacked. Jesus Himself made this clear, “In this world *you will have* tribulation” (John 16:33). This may come in the form of the pressure to conform to the world’s standards, or ridicule for your stand of faith, or even in restrictions or disciplinary action in the workplace. Paul’s words ring true: “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12).

We will suffer for many reasons, but it is quite often the result of other people’s misunderstandings about our message and our motives. What they may hide from us, though, is that they desperately want to experience the joy in Christ that we have, but they want us to present it in such a way that makes them “comfortable.” My friend, if you’re a sinner in the depths of depravity, the gospel certainly won’t make you comfortable to remain in your present situation. The gospel calls for change, and those who refuse to change will react against you and your message.

***Q2: Multiple Choice. In what ways does the world make you, as a believer, suffer for your faith?***

- A. *Peer pressure to act in a way that contradicts your Christian principle*
- B. *Harassing comments from unbelievers*
- C. *Lost relationships with people who refuse to accept your faith*
- D. *Inability to express your faith in public (school, workplace, etc.)*
- E. *Physical abuse because of your faith*

## **Lesson 3, Section 2**

### **Objectives**

**By the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:**

- A. List seven specific characteristics of a soldier of Christ.
- B. Understand the connection between our eternal reward and our faithfulness today.

**Fourth, a good soldier must be single-minded.** That is, an effective believer must live a life focused on God, rather than on the praise of men. (2 Timothy 2:4) We must not become tangled in the affairs of this world so much that we become blind or useless to God's purposes. While we all must live in the world and make our living, we must be careful to not give anything in our lives a higher place or priority than our walk with Christ.

**Fifth, a good soldier must exhibit self-control.** This means that the soldier of God must be a very disciplined person. To illustrate this point, Paul refers to an Olympic athlete and a hard working farmer. (2 Timothy 2:5-6) Just as the athlete and farmer must give themselves wholly to their work in order to achieve success, so must all believers order their lives in such a way as to best glorify God. So, if there is anything in your life that can damage your walk with Christ, you must remove it completely.

**Sixth, a good soldier must be willing to sacrifice.** We should follow Paul's example, as seen in 2 Timothy 2:9-10. There, Paul explains that he is willing to endure hardship because he knows it will have a positive impact on others. If, by his suffering, others may come to the Lord, he is glad to go through the adversity.

***J3: What are you willing to sacrifice in order for someone else to find Jesus Christ as his/her Savior? What are the limits to***

***your willingness to give your time, money, and energy for the sake of the gospel?***

**Seventh, a good soldier can trust that he/she is secure.** That security comes from our position in Christ Jesus, which we have studied in detail in previous lessons. Simply, when we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, we were immediately identified with His death, burial, and resurrection. We have been raised to newness of life and will therefore reign with Christ for all eternity. (2 Timothy 2:12)

However, we must recognize that our eternal reward is dependent upon our faithfulness to Him here and now. Yet even if we are faithless, Jesus can still be trusted to keep His promise of salvation. Once we become a part of His army, we cannot escape the grace of God. If you do not understand the issue of reward, as opposed to salvation, be sure to review the course entitled, *Your Eternal Security*.

My friend, for several lessons, we have explored the harsh reality of our spiritual warfare. My prayer is that you will continually grow to see your place in the vast battle, always drawing strength from the Sovereign Commander of our army, Jesus Christ.

## **Prayer**

And Father, we love You and praise You and worship You and adore You for Your patience and Your kindness and Your goodness to us. And I pray for those who are listening who have never received Christ as their personal Savior; that, yes, the Christian life is difficult at times, but it's a whole lot better than living without God, without the power of God, without the direction of God, without the wisdom of God, without the provision of God, without being able to pray to a Father who listens and hears and answers.

And especially thinking about death and dying without God and being eternally separated from everything that is good for eternity when those of us in the Christian life, we may get injured, shot at, wounded. And one of these days we too are going to lay these uniforms aside and [are] going to glory. We praise You dear Father for the hope that is alive within us.

Now I pray for those who ought to be a member of a fellowship somewhere where they live, get involved in the work, soldier of Jesus Christ not A.W.O.L.—away without leave—but actively involved in the combat. Search out hearts. Convict us of where we are weak. Strengthen

us in Yourself as You teach us to rely upon You by faith to be all that we need.

We love You. We praise You and thank You for the privilege of being a soldier and under the greatest Commander-in-chief there has ever been, Jesus Christ our Lord. And we ask it in His name, Amen.

## Homework

### Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

#### *2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

Before moving on to the next lesson of this course, spend some time in prayerful reflection of these seven characteristics of a good soldier. Write down each characteristic in your journal and then ask the Lord to show you how you can improve in each area. Keep a record of your prayers in your journal.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight

### Lesson 4: The Character of a Good Soldier Part 2 (MB134)

**Introduction:** This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

#### Lesson 4, Section 1

##### Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the need for a good soldier to have a sound faith.
- B. Understand the image of the Bible as a “straight line.”

##### Scripture

*Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26*

*Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness.” Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. The Lord’s bond-*

*servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

In the previous lesson, we began to examine the characteristics of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. We saw that we are to be strong, ready to share, willing to suffer, single-minded in our interests, self-controlled or disciplined, prepared to sacrifice, and secure in our position in Christ. In this lesson, we will explore three additional qualities that must characterize a good soldier in this great spiritual battle.

**First, a good soldier must have a sound faith.** This means that we must understand what we believe and why we believe it, and we must be willing to stand for it in the face of opposition. Sometimes that opposition hides itself within the church. Instead of coming across as harsh accusations, it may be in the form of false teachings spoken with a loving tone. As good soldiers, we must be able to spot that heresy and correct it before it disrupts the whole church.

Paul describes this possibility in 2 Timothy 2:14. There, he explains that this “wrangling” of words can lead to the utter ruin of the hearers. In the original language of the New Testament, the word that is translated as “ruin” here is the same word from which we derive the term “catastrophe.” That means that these misleading teachings can lead to the catastrophic destruction of someone’s faith. Therefore, we must be on guard against it.

***J1: Read the following Scriptures: 2 Timothy 2:16, 23; Ephesians 4:29, 5:4; Colossians 3:8. According to these passages, what importance does the Bible place upon our speech? What are the benefits of Spirit-led speech? What are the dangers of irresponsible speech? Respond in your journal.***

A sound faith must be characterized by sound doctrine. In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul declares that we must all be able to accurately handle the Word. Now, this does not happen automatically in a believer’s life. Instead, a good soldier must be diligent in his or her studies, working hard to understand the Word of God through study, prayer, and meditation.

The phrase that we see translated as “handle accurately” literally means *to cut a straight line*. That is, when you and I come to the Word of God we are to be absolutely truthful with what we see and what we find. You see, many people handle the Bible backwards. They decide how they want to live, and then pick one or two Bible verses out of context that seem to support their own decisions. My friend, we just cannot do that.

Instead, we must *first* pick up the Word, examine what it says all the way through—not just a couple of verses in isolation from the rest—and then base our lives upon that message. That is the “straight line” that Paul mentions—the line that goes from the Word, straight into our lives.

Most people in this world do not want to hear sound doctrine. Instead, they want to hear what makes them *feel* better about themselves and their actions. Well, the Bible is not about that kind of “ear tickling” (2 Timothy 4:3). Instead, this Book is about instruction, encouragement, and, when necessary, conviction. This is a Book about issues of sin, righteousness, and holiness, and about how our holy God loves us and provides for us.

Therefore, we have to be ready at all times, “in season and out of season,” to stand up for the truth of the Word (2 Timothy 4:2). That is how a good soldier remains sound in the faith.

***Q1: True/False. People who desire “ear tickling” are generally satisfied with Scripture.***

## **Lesson 4, Section 2**

### **Objectives**

By the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

- A. List two additional characteristics of a good soldier of God.
- B. Understand your desire to enjoy life in light of your call to service to the Lord.

**Second, a good soldier must be separated unto the purposes of God.** Now, we have seen in previous lessons that all believers are different. Within the church we find people of different races, ages, professions, and economic status, for example. However, despite this vast mixture of differences, we remain a unified body of believers.

This is what Paul is talking about in 2 Timothy 2:20. He illustrates the point with a common example: house ware. He says that in a home,

you can find vessels made out of gold, silver, wood, or clay. This points to the differences in people. Just as a kitchen has different vessels, the church has different people. However, each piece and each person has a specific, valuable job to do.

***J2: How might your spiritual gifts enable you to serve in some specific way in your church? What valuable job might God have given you to do?***

Paul goes on to say that some of these vessels are honorable, and some are dishonorable. This refers to their usefulness to God. Those who present themselves for service are described as, “sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). And, if we are faithful servants of God and do a good job for Him, what do you think He will do in return? He will give us more work to do!

***Q2: True/False. God rewards our faithfulness by easing our responsibilities and the demands placed upon us.***

I get so irritated with people who work and work throughout their adult lives, looking forward to the day when they can retire and “take it easy.” If you are a faithful servant of God, then you will want to spend your time on all the things God has given you to do. Retirement is not a time for laziness, but a tremendous opportunity to serve God with even more time and energy.

Now, this does not mean that we should not enjoy life. However, it does mean that we must not live our lives in the sole pursuit of pleasure. We must focus on God, not on the things of the world that will give us temporary feelings of happiness. (2 Timothy 2:20-26) Never let laziness or earthly pleasures keep you from being a useful vessel in God’s service.

**Third, a good soldier must be a servant.** An effective servant of the Lord will be focused on two duties in the church. First, he will have a strong desire to protect the unity of the body. Paul makes this clear in 2 Timothy 2:24-25, as he instructs Timothy to be a peacemaker in his congregation. This requires us to be patient, kind, observant, and gracefully diplomatic. We must never soften the Word of God, but we must also be careful not to use it to turn someone away from the Lord.

The second concern of a servant will be to rescue and restore those who have been snared by false doctrine or sin. (2 Timothy 2:25-26) Our

love for our brothers and sisters must endure their mistakes and lead them into opportunities for correction and restoration.

This world is looking for people whose lifestyle declares that God is real, God is personal, God is available, God is powerful, God loves you, God will forgive sin, God will walk beside you. A good soldier of Jesus Christ will always display what the world needs to hear.

## Prayer

Father God, we know that we are living in a battlefield. And Lord, just like a soldier is recognized by his dress and equipment, we pray that we may be recognized by these characteristics of a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Make us strong, willing to sacrifice, willing to suffer, single-minded, disciplined, secure, sound in the faith, separated for your purposes, and always motivated by a servant's heart. Let the world see us as soldiers for You, and let us always be ready for battle. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## Homework

### Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

### *2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

***J3: We just saw that the Word will always display what the world needs to hear. How does that differ from simply demonstrating what the world wants to hear? In what specific way has God led you to reveal the truth of His Word, even though it went against the personal desires of yourself or others?***

## Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip *Handling the Word Poorly*

In all my years as a pastor, I have seen many times what happens when believers fail to handle the Word of God accurately. It is such a tragedy. It causes people to spend their time uselessly. They go through unnecessary hardships, their faith becomes shaky, and they begin to quarrel among themselves. Then, the result is that their whole lifestyle begins to change.

It happens in almost every church: a person gets saved and joins the church and starts to grow in his Christian life. But then, after a time, somebody comes in and disrupts the fellowship by trying to add things to the gospel. They may tell the new believer, “Well, all this is true, but you also need this or that,” trying to put a new twist on the Bible.

Well, what happens is that the new believer gets confused and, as a result, leaves the church looking for that new thing that he thinks he needs. And so he gets into a new doctrine, something that sounds good, feels good, but little by little is dragging him away from the true gospel. And then hardship and difficulty sets in and leaves that new believer confused and doubting his faith.

We need to ground new believers in the Word, so they can become strong, steadfast soldiers of the gospel. We must have a sound faith that can withstand false teaching. The devil knows that if he can get us to doubt God’s Word, or to follow some false teaching or new idea, then he has us right where he wants us.

God doesn’t want us to get confused or sidetracked. That’s why Paul calls us to “handle accurately the word of truth” in Second Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15. If we are to be good soldiers for Christ, then we must always walk into battle with our chief weapon held high—and that is the Bible, the very sword of the Living God.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight

### Lesson 5: Caution! A Godless Age (MB204)

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

#### Lesson 5, Section 1

##### Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Discuss the biblical response to the notion that the dark world will "get better someday."
- B. Understand several characteristics of a dark and sinful world.

##### Scripture

*Read 2 Timothy 3:1 – 4:2*

*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes' and Jambres' folly was also. Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium and at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will*

*proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.*

So far in this course, we have studied the cause of our spiritual conflict, our enemies, and our character as good soldiers of Christ. Now, in this lesson, let's change our view a bit by looking at our battleground: the world around us.

If someone were to ask you to describe our society, what would you say? As believers in Christ, we certainly need to understand the dark reality of our world, but at the same time, we may feel obligated to offer some word of hope that "everything will get better." What does the Bible say about all this?

In his letter to Timothy, Paul is clear about the condition of the world. He says, "But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come" (2 Timothy 3:1). Now, he is not saying that difficulty will come for a while and then pass; instead, he says that it will set in and stay that way. That is, it will characterize the times in which we live.

I often hear people talk about this, and they may say, "Well, things have got to get better at some point, right?" No. The Word of God says just the opposite, that as we get nearer to Christ's return, the world will just get worse and worse.

***J1: How do you react to the statement above? As a Christian, do you feel somehow obligated to encourage others by discussing the hope of a better world? Do you think that the realization of a continual decline in the world's condition reveals a weak or a strong faith? Respond in your journal.***

As the days get darker, two things are going to happen. First, we are going to be targets of attacks from the devil and from unbelievers. Second, we are going to be lamps unto the darkened world. Even a small candle can light an entire room. Similarly, a single believer can bring a tremendous amount of light into a dark world. And remember, all the darkness in the universe cannot put out a single light. In fact, the darker the world becomes, the more impact our light has upon it.

***Q1: Multiple Choice. As the world grows continually darker and more dangerous, believers will become:***

*Targets*

*Victims*

*Lamps*

*Defeated*

*Lamp stands*

*A and E*

*A and C*

*None of the above*

Well, we know that the world will continue to get even darker until the return of Christ, but what exactly can we expect? Paul outlines the characteristics of our society in the last days in 2 Timothy 3:2-8. There, he reveals that society will be characterized as:

- ***Selfish.*** People will be self-centered, driven by greed, and arrogant.
- ***Revilers.*** Men and women will be blasphemers, misusing the name of God and marked with profanity. They will hate the church and everything that is sacred.
- ***Disobedient.*** As parents seem less and less interested in their children, these young people will continue to rebel and grow into jaded, troubled adults.
- ***Ungrateful.*** How often do you hear people talk about how grateful they are to God? More often than not, the world just complains about what they do not have. Sadly, this condition will only grow worse.
- ***Unloving.*** People will be cold and harsh to the things of God. And, as a result, they will show no respect or concern for people, either.

- ***Irreconcilable***. More and more, forgiveness will become a lost ideal. Vengeance and retaliation will better characterize our relationships.
- ***Malicious gossips***. These are people whose speech is marked by sharp, bitter arrows designed to bring pain upon others.
- ***Without control***. People will be completely undisciplined, giving full reign to their impulses.
- ***Brutal***. We see this even in the youngest of children, as students give in to violence in their homes and schools.
- ***Treacherous***. Even now, it is almost impossible to find someone you can trust completely. Sadly, absolute confidence has become an outdated ideal in this dark world.
- ***Reckless***. Men and women do “their own thing,” without regard to the impact those actions have upon others.
- ***Lovers of pleasure***. We have become a generation marked by the adage, “If it feels good, do it.” The world gives more attention to what feels good than what the Word of God says.
- ***Empty religion***. Second Timothy 3:5 reveals that the world will be known for people who cling to “a form of godliness,” but that empty religion will have no substance.
- ***Opposed to the truth***. People don’t want to hear the truth, they want to hear what makes them feel better. When the Word calls them to a hard decision, they will generally go with the desires of their own hearts instead.

*This certainly seems to be a discouraging comment on the world climate and what we can expect in the future. However, this also provides an amazing opportunity for God’s children to shine their lights brighter than ever before, claiming pieces of the darkness for the kingdom of God.*

**J2: Review the above list of characteristics of a dark world. Are any of these things present in your own life? Which ones? What can you do to correct these things?**

**Q2: Multiple Choice: Which of the following is not a characteristic of a dark world, as described above?**

- A. Ungratefulness**
- B. Reviling**
- C. Gossiping**

- D. Victimization
- E. Selfishness
- F. Recklessness

## Lesson 5, Section 2

### Objectives

By the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- A. Describe four protections for believers in the dark world.
- B. Answer the question, “What will I do in this war?”

If the world is in so much trouble, what protections are there for believers in the midst of conflict? After giving his disturbing list of things to come, Paul gives Timothy some reassurances and suggestions for weathering the storm in the grace and power of God.

**First, Paul says we are to be sensitive to the work of God in the godly people around us.** (2 Timothy 3:10-11) That is, we should pay attention to what God is doing in and through the lives of His children. How do they respond to difficulty? What has God done in their lives that can bring hope to us?

In 2 Timothy 3:10-11, Paul reminds Timothy of the hardships he endured, and praises God for delivering him. What an encouragement it is to see how the Lord delivers His children! When we see it in another believer’s life, we are reminded of God’s protection of us, as well.

***J3: In what way(s) have you seen God’s protection first-hand? How have you seen Him respond to otherwise impossible situations? Respond in your journal.***

**Second, we are to be aware of the futility in the life of the ungodly.** Second Timothy 3:9 shows that the ungodly “will not make further progress.” It may look like they make some headway in their lives sometimes; we might see a wealthy unbeliever who has all the money in the world, but attacks the things of God. The world may see that person as a success, but none of their riches will last. In the spiritual realm, they will make no progress whatsoever.

**Third, we are to be committed to the Word of God as our guide.** (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Paul reminds us that we have had plenty of opportunities to see the truth of God’s Word. And, we should honor God’s Word as “inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). In the Word, we are “equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

This means that as we dig into Scripture, and the Word becomes part of us, Jesus Christ will pour into us all the energy, strength, wisdom, and power that we need to truly succeed in this dark world. That is what the Bible does! It is an instruction book for successful living in a world in which success is often hard to see.

**Fourth, we must be ready to share the saving truth of Jesus with anyone, anytime, anywhere.** Paul says we must be ready “in season and out of season” to share God’s love with others. (2 Timothy 4:1-2) This means *all of us*—not just preachers. We all have a message to share, and we all have the responsibility to do so.

***Q3: True/False. The dark days ahead of us will be easier to handle if we strive to live biblical, godly lives.***

My friend, you cannot escape the war. So, you must ask, “What am I going to do about it?” Are you going to get scared and discouraged, and then give up? No, we must never do that. Instead, we can take a firm stand on the truth of the Word of God, and we can claim our position in Christ. We can stand in the power, love, care, and protection of God. The world can be a dark and terrifying place, but, in Christ, we are fully equipped to handle the worst that the world can throw at us.

### **Prayer**

And Father, we thank You for Your wonderful love for us. That in this society that is becoming so corrupt and so darkened that we will shine like lights, brilliant radiant lights. Not to draw attention to ourselves but that we simply reflect the one who is the Light, the Son of God. You call Him the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through whom and only through whom, men and women are able to reach You, Father, as their ultimate Savior.

So we pray today that You’ll sink this message into the heart of every believer; not one will be able to escape it. Stir up in the heart that desire to proclaim Your Word with conviction, with confidence, with courage, knowing that it will not return void because it is the infallible, inerrant, inspired, all-sufficient, adequate Word of the living God, Your message to this age that is so helplessly lost in its darkness and in its vain philosophy.

We love You and praise You, Father, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

### **Homework**

## Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

### *2 Timothy 4:7-8*

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

What changes or preparations can you make in your life to be better prepared for the dark days ahead? Set some specific goals for yourself with the myGoals tool before moving to Lesson 6.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Spiritual Warfare: The Good Fight

### Lesson 6: The Confidence of a Good Soldier (MB274)

**Introduction:** What makes a successful student? The Lord answers, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it" (Joshua 1:8). Divided into two sections, this lesson contains assignments that you are encouraged to finish before continuing to the next lesson.

## Objectives

### Lesson 6, Section 1

By the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the confidence with which Paul approached the end of his life.
- B. Memorize 2 Timothy 4:7-8

## Scripture

Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

## Lesson 6

When you come to the end of your life, what will be your legacy? At that point, what will you have accomplished? Will you come to the end of life with a deep sense of satisfaction and peace, or will you be filled with regrets? We will all face these questions someday, and we will all have to give an account for our lives. (Hebrews 9:27) As Paul concludes his second epistle to Timothy, we get a special look at the apostle's own reflections of the life he lived.

Awaiting his execution at the hands of the Roman Emperor Nero, Paul writes, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come" (2 Timothy 4:6). He uses two expressions here that would have been familiar to his first-century audience.

**First, he says that he has been “poured out like a drink offering.”** You see, in that culture, it was common for Romans to finish a meal by pouring a little glass of wine as an act of worship to their gods. However, Paul changes the focus by describing himself as the drink offering. He is essentially saying, “It may look like Rome is taking my life, but they do not control me. I voluntarily give my life as an act of worship to the Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Q1: Multiple Choice. We have just seen that Paul never considered himself a victim of other people. In which Scripture does Jesus make a similar statement?**

- A. John 3:16
- B. John 1:1
- C. John 10:18
- D. John 11:25-26

**Second, Paul says that “the time for [his] departure has come.”** This expression was used in several different ways in the Greek language. For example, this was the same terminology used of a ship’s ropes that kept it tied to the dock. In that sense, Paul is saying, “The mooring ropes have been brought in and I’m setting sail for eternity.”

Paul saw himself leaving behind all the things that had sought to confine him. As he reflected upon his life of trial, hardship, and persecution, he did not complain about the difficulties, but rather rejoiced at God’s perfect plan for him. And so, he concludes, “Timothy, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, and, now, on the verge of death, I have truly kept the faith.” What a wonderful testimony!

**J1: What hardships in your past cause you to often complain or grumble? What does this type of attitude do to your testimony? How might you work to improve in this area?**

To what exactly is Paul referring in 2 Timothy 4:7? Well, **first he says that he fought the good fight.** Notice that he did not say “a good fight,” but rather “the good fight.” He’s talking about the Christian life and the day-to-day battles of the warfare we have been examining in this course. For Paul, the Christian life is a life of faith; without that, the believer is doomed to a fruitless, shallow existence. (Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20)

Even armed with his faith, though, Paul admits that his life was not easy. The word he uses here for “fought” is the same Greek word from which we get the term “agonize.” In its original context, it means to wrestle or struggle. So, Paul is saying, “I have struggled in this life, but the battles did not defeat me. I kept fighting no matter what I faced, because Christ can empower me to face any obstacle.” (Philippians 4:13)

**J2: What “fights” or struggles in your life have caused you bitter agony? How did you respond? What was the result of your response? How has your testimony changed in light of this?**

Paul knew that adversity was necessary. He faced the same types of struggles that we encounter, but he kept forging ahead in his walk with Christ. (Romans 7:14-25; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10) Can we say the same of our walk with the Lord? Too often, believers shy away from the work of Christ because they are not willing to sacrifice. My friend, if you are not willing to give your blood, sweat, and tears for the Gospel, then you are not ready to grow. Adversity is God’s way of training us for service. If we are not prepared to train, we cannot expect the blessings of a mature relationship with Him.

## **Lesson 6, Section 2**

### **Objectives**

**By the end of this section of Lesson 6, you should be able to:**

**A. Understand the reasons for Paul’s joyful reflection on his own life.**

**B. Begin to formulate a life-plan that will create a living testimony to**

**God’s glory in your life.**

**Second, in 2 Timothy 4:7 Paul says that he has finished the course.** This was an expression used of athletics. It referred to a race track, whether it was a flat running track or a trek across rugged terrain. So, Paul saw his entire life as a race, and even though he may have had some missteps like the rest of us, he was confident that he had finished the course of life that God had set before him.

You see, God has a specific plan—a specific course—for every individual. Nobody else can tell you what God’s will for your life is; that is between you and God. Now, how do we stay on course? The answer is

obedience. When we obey God's leading, we progress along the track He has set for us. However, when we disobey and try to take control of our own lives, then we begin to veer far off course. When this happens, we must repent of our rebellion and get back on track through obedience and submission to God's perfect will for our lives.

We also stay on track by the direction of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In a sense, the Spirit within us is God's divine compass, always guiding us in His truth and His ways. Through obedience and prayerful attention to His guidance, we will hear that voice in our spirit that says, "This is the way; walk in it" (Isaiah 30:21).

**Q2: True/False. We stay "on track" with God through obedience and the direction of the Holy Spirit.**

Third, Paul says that he has kept the faith. Several times in his writings, Paul refers to the faith: 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:7; 1 Corinthians 16:13. He is talking about that body of doctrine that formulated his belief in Christ, and its importance is evident in the conduct of every believer. You see, our conduct is always an expression of what we believe. If we have a solid understanding of God's promises, then our lives will be directed that way. However, if we have a shaky faith, then our lives will be marked by a series of ups and downs in which Christ may or may not be evident to others.

Paul shows us that, even after a life lived for Christ—even after claiming to have kept the faith throughout his Christian life—we can never reach some pinnacle point called "spiritual maturity." We see this in 2 Timothy 4:13, which has some personal remarks and instructions for Timothy. One of those requests from Paul was that Timothy bring him his "books, especially the parchments." Think about this. Sitting in jail, just weeks or months away from his death, Paul was still concerned with studying God's Word. He was still focused on Jesus and still looking to discover some new insights and truths. This built the faith that the apostle lived and breathed throughout his life.

**J3: To his dying day, Paul was obviously concerned with Bible study and growing in his Christian walk. To what extent do these things characterize your own life?**

Finally, what is the result of this victorious Christian life? Paul reveals, "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). This “crown of righteousness” is yet another athletic metaphor. It refers to the laurel wreath that was awarded to the champion of a contest; we still see this today in the imagery of the Olympic games. Essentially, Paul is saying, “I’m finished with this race, and God has awarded me the highest honor.”

Paul embraced his eternal future because he was confident that his life was secure in Christ. He was aware of his mistakes in life, but he trusted Christ to keep His promise of salvation and reward. Paul—an old rugged soldier—now bounded across the finish line, rejoicing that he was finally and safely in the arms of Jesus Christ for all eternity.

### Prayer

Father, we love You and praise You for grace. How good You are. And I pray the Spirit of the living God would speak to every single heart, every single person who has heard this message and who will hear it, that there will be a genuine, all-wise commitment to leave those barren, futile, empty, disappointing paths and get on the course that You’ve set for their life, through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray, Amen.

### Homework

#### Scripture Memory Review

Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, I have \_\_\_\_\_  
 the \_\_\_\_\_, I have \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_; in the  
 \_\_\_\_\_ there is laid up for me the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_,  
 which the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, will \_\_\_\_\_  
 to me on that day; and \_\_\_\_\_ to me, but also to all  
 who have \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_.

2 Timothy 4:7-8

Before moving on to another course, take time to slowly and carefully read all of 2 Timothy. Keep in mind the things that we have studied throughout this course, and try to imagine Paul’s attitude and condition as he wrote this important letter to Timothy. Remember that Paul was writing from prison, and that he was facing certain and impending death. Record any new insights from this reading in your journal.

## **Course Conclusion**

As we conclude this course on spiritual warfare, I want to challenge you to meet the battle head-on. Life is difficult, and the challenges often seem overwhelming, but there is hope, strength, and comfort to be found in the arms of Christ. My friend, I pray that, as you progress in the Christian life, you will one day be able to honestly reflect upon your walk with the Lord and proclaim with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." That is the challenge, and the confidence, of every good soldier.