

## II Timothy, Sermon #7

Turn to II Timothy 2

I have entitled today's message "Who We Are"

God used metaphors in the Bible to help us understand our responsibilities as believers

We are:

- Vs. 2 Stewards – we are to pass on what we have learned – to what kind of people? Faithful
- Vs. 3 Soldiers – what kind of soldiers? Good soldiers – to be tough, to endure, please the Commander, not get tangled up in the world

In this passage, God used two more metaphors to describe our duties.

He used the athlete and the farmer.

II Timothy 2:5

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

II Timothy 2:5-7

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

## Who We Are

The phrase “strive for masteries” is a very popular phrase for us today.

You say – How so?

It is one word in the Greek

- It is the word – *ath-leo* – from which we get our English word “athletics”?
- *Athleo* means to contest, to wrestle, to struggle.

The idea is that of a struggle that requires great determination to win.

And the Bible says we are to strive

Some of us put more effort into cooking, cleaning, and mowing than into our own spiritual development and spiritual service.

- We ought to strive to be the best.
- I don’t want to be a part of an average church with average people (no to status quo).
- The Christian life takes effort. The Bible says, pressing toward (pursuing after) the mark (the goal) for the prize of the high calling (invitation) of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14). Our children, our teens – young champions for Christ.

“Strive” refers to contending in the game – refers to competing – My desire for myself, my family, and our church is that we are in the game and we are competing.

We ought to want to strive for masteries and to do everything we can to be a successful servant of the Lord.

The difference between first and second place in an athletic event is not always a matter of talent.

We have seen that with the New York Yankees over the years.

Their payroll is the highest, yet they are not performing.

As in the fable of the tortoise and the hare, a less gifted athlete often surpasses another who is physically superior and more experienced, simply by having greater determination and persistence.

God used athletic illustrations in the Bible—wrestling, boxing, running, and exercising. God spoke of the Christian life as being a racecourse, and we each have our lanes to run in.

**Hebrews 12:1e**, “. . . *let us run with patience* [endurance] (God is not interested in the sprint, He is interested in the marathon) *the race that is set before us.*”

**I Corinthians 9:24-27**, “*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate (self-controlled) in all things. Now they (the athletes) do it to obtain a corruptible crown (trophy, wreath, gold medal); but we an incorruptible.*

*I therefore so run, not as uncertainly (chicken with its head cut off; a lot of activity; misses the target); so fight I, not as one that beateth the air (hit something): But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.*”

Sports is a part of our world.

The Greeks and the Romans were enthusiastic about sports. The Olympic and Isthmian “Ismeen” games were important events to them just like the Super Bowl and March Madness are to us.

Even the most gifted and determined **athlete**, bringing the most effort to the struggle, **does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules** – vs. 5

- He is to compete lawfully – legitimately
- He is to “strive lawfully.” That is, he has to play by the rules, follow the rules.

What are the rules for the church, the home, for us? The Bible.

There is a right way for us in all endeavors – The Word of God.

There is no shortcut toward living the Christian life.

God admonishes us to obey the rules.

We must be legitimate in our striving—Barry Bonds is closing in on the home run record of Henry “Hank” Aaron – of 755 (751 – cloud of scandal).

An athlete can't cut the corner of a racetrack and be crowned the winner.

Neither can a baseball player skip first base without touching it; he has to touch all the bases to score.

In the Greek games, which have continued for centuries, every participant had to meet qualifications.

- He had to compete within the specific rules for a given event.
- To fail in any of those requirements meant automatic disqualification.

A person who strives as an athlete to win a game and get a crown (wreath) must be careful to obey all the rules of the game.

In the Greek games in particular, the judges were most careful about enforcing the rules.

In his preparations for the event, he had to follow specific standards.

- If an athlete was found defective in any matter, he was disqualified from competing.
- If, after he had competed and won, he was found to have broken some rule, he then lost his crown.

Jim Thorpe, one of the greatest American athletes, lost his Olympic medals because he participated in sports in a way that broke an Olympic rule – regarding his amateur status.

Ben Johnson of Canada – the fastest man in the world in the 100 meter sprint (world record 9.79 seconds) – won the Olympic Gold Medal in the 100-meter sprint in Seoul, Korea, in 1988, but he tested positive for steroids.

He was stripped of the Gold Medal – banned from competing for two years then tested positive again and banned for life.

Rosie Ruiz won the Boston Marathon in 1980 – they crowned her – she accepted the victor's laurels and stood on the winners' podium, but there was not much sweat on her body.

No one remembered seeing her in the race; come to find out, she had jumped into the race with a half mile to go and sprinted to the finish line.

The next day, she was found out to be a phony! Come to find out, she had taken the subway train to win.

We need to understand there is a right way and a wrong way – for church, for home, for work, and for me individually.

The winner is the person who keeps the rules laid down in the Word of God, and one day he will get his reward from Jesus Christ.

II Timothy 4:7-8

We are responsible like an athlete to strive and to live Biblically.

We are also responsible like a farmer

**Vs. 6**

Husbandman – in ancient language, what was an husbandman?

He was a farmer – realm of agriculture

The farmer works to gain the crop for himself. That is how he makes his living.

In New Testament times, farm laborers often were paid with a portion of the crops they helped to plant, cultivate, and harvest.

The farmer was to be hard-working, to toil intensely, to sweat and strain.

The industrious farmer starts his hard and demanding work early and quits late.

- He endures the cold, the heat, the rain, and the drought.
- He plows the soil whether it is hard or loose.
- He does not wait for his own convenience, because the seasons do not wait for him.

When the time comes to plant, he must plant; when weeds appear, he must remove them; and when the crop is mature, he must harvest it.

The believer is to work hard, to labor for the Lord.

- II Timothy 2:21; 3:17
- Titus 2:7, 14

The Lord assures us, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).*

**Ephesians 2:10:** *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*

We are to work hard and we will share in the fruit.

Now look back to II Timothy

In vs. 7, we have the exhortation now from these requirements/metaphors

**Vs. 7**

**Consider what I say** (think over and carefully ponder what I have been saying).

It denotes perceiving clearly with the mind, of understanding fully, of considering carefully, of pondering and mulling over.

And “the Lord give thee understanding in all things”

Specifically, this is the Holy Spirit’s work – His ministry is to help us understand

**Matthew 16:15-17**, *“He (Jesus) saith unto them, ‘But whom say ye that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.”*

**John 14:26**, *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”*

This verse talks about the illumination of the Spirit of God, which enables us to comprehend Divine truth

Spiritual illumination – the Word of God without the illumination of the Holy Spirit remains a closed book

Five major terms

**Ephesians 1:18a**, *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling”*

*Photizo* – we get our word “photograph” – light shining on it to illuminate it

- The eyes of my heart (*cardia*)
- The inner man – Spirit of God shed light – shedding light – illuminating things

#2 – **Luke 24:45**, *“Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.”*

- Lord Jesus is meeting with disciples
- Second term – opened – opening up the understanding

#3 – **I Corinthians 2** – most extensive passage on the necessity of illumination

**I Corinthians 2:10**, “*But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*”

Revealed – revelation – means to take the lid off of something – unveiling

#4 – **I Corinthians 2:13-14**, “*Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man (lost man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know (experientially) them, because they are spiritually discerned.*”

#5 – **John 16:13**, “*Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide [lead] you into all truth.*”

Illumination is application of God's truth to our hearts so that we grasp the reality for ourselves what the sacred text sets forth.

Vs. 7 – consider – listen to what I say – apply our minds

A kernel of corn

How do we benefit from this ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Serious Bible study, serious prayer, and serious response in obedience

Oration – prayer

Meditation – thinking in God's presence about the text

Temptation – trial, the struggle for Biblical fidelity in the face of pressure to disregard what Scripture says

**Illumination is not**

## 1. Direct revelation of new truth

From the mind of God to the mind of man

**II Peter 1: 20-21**, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*

## 2. Inspiration

- From the mind of God to the mind of man to paper
- Process of the Holy Spirit in writing the Word

**II Timothy 3:16**, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God”*

**Illumination is not:**

## 3. Information

- Grasping Bible facts – a pagan (heathen) can do this

## 4. Distortion of the true teaching

- “It means this to me.”
- “Well, it means this to me.”

One interpretation – objective truth

Who we are

We are God’s people.

1. Pursue the goal
2. Live within the guidelines
3. Work hard
4. Understand by the Lord’s help

**Let us stand for closing invitation**

Without the Spirit of God, we cannot understand

Ephesians 2:1, *“And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”*

We need to be born again.

The Holy Spirit will teach us:

- To work hard
- To contend for the faith and in doing so – being obedient to the Word of God

We cannot cut corners and win with God.

We cannot disregard the rules.

Is there anything in my life that is disregarding the Word of God?

We must strive lawfully!