

The Books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: A Good Soldier of Christ Jesus

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This passage carries one of the most doctrinally serious paragraphs in the Pastoral Epistles, the trustworthy saying of verses 11-13, and the lesson aims to let it do its searching work. Paul teaches plainly that those who endure will reign with Christ, and that those who deny Him will be denied by Him (vv. 12-13). This is the doctrine of perseverance and the real possibility of falling away. The lesson should give your class a sober, biblical conviction that salvation, once received, is preserved through ongoing faith and faithfulness, and that a Christian who denies Christ and abandons the faith can be lost (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12-14). This stands squarely against any teaching of "once saved, always saved." Handle the final line, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful," with care: it speaks of God's unshakable faithfulness to His own nature and word, including His warnings, not a guarantee that those who abandon Him are automatically kept saved.

A second doctrinal aim is to set our hope in the right place and time. Paul grounds everything in "Jesus Christ, risen from the dead" (v. 8), and he speaks of reigning with Christ as a future glory for those who endure (v. 12). This matters for the next lesson, where some had begun teaching that the resurrection had already happened (2:18). Help your class see that the believer's bodily resurrection is still future, secured by Christ's own resurrection as the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:20-23), and that reigning with Christ is the saints' coming glory. This in no way denies that Christ reigns now; His kingdom is present and He is enthroned, yet the full glory of reigning with Him awaits the resurrection. There is no earthly thousand-year reign in view here, only the certain future glory of the faithful.

Finally, the lesson aims at the heart and at the work of discipleship. Paul calls Timothy to be strengthened by grace (v. 1) and to entrust the gospel to faithful men who will teach others (v. 2). Use this chapter to renew your students' resolve to endure and to invest in passing the faith on. Aim not merely to inform them about perseverance but to fire their courage, so they leave ready to keep going and to help others keep going too.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul opens, "You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (v. 1), before calling Timothy to endure hardship. What does it mean that our strength for endurance comes from grace, and why does Paul ground the whole chapter in grace before he ever mentions hardship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin where Paul begins, with grace. “You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (v. 1). It is striking that a chapter packed with hard images, soldiering, training, laboring, suffering, opens not with a command to try harder but with a call to be strengthened by grace. Paul knows that endurance fueled by willpower alone burns out. Endurance fueled by grace lasts.

Explain the passive voice: “be strengthened.” Timothy is not told to strengthen himself but to receive strength, to let grace do its work in him. The grace “that is in Christ Jesus” is not only the grace that forgives at the beginning; it is the ongoing supply of Christ’s strength for the long road. Paul will say elsewhere, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). The same grace that saves also sustains.

Help the class feel why this order matters. If Paul had led with hardship and only later mentioned grace, the Christian life would sound like an exhausting test of personal grit. By leading with grace, Paul makes clear that even our endurance is a gift, drawn from Christ, not squeezed out of ourselves. The strongest soldiers in God’s army are not the ones with the most natural toughness, but the ones most deeply rooted in grace.

Land it pastorally. Many in your class are tired. They have been faithful for years, and the road is long. Tell them what Paul tells Timothy: the answer to weariness is not to grip harder but to lean harder, to draw daily on the grace that is in Christ Jesus, which never runs dry.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace as the source of strength for Christian endurance (v. 1)
- The ongoing supply of Christ’s grace, not only grace at conversion (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- Endurance as a gift received, not merely willpower produced
- Christ’s power made perfect in our weakness

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul open a chapter about hardship with a word about grace?
- What is the difference between enduring by grit and enduring by grace?
- Where do you most need to lean on grace rather than grip harder right now?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul gives three images of the Christian life: the soldier who suffers and stays focused, the athlete who competes by the rules, and the farmer who works hard before the harvest (vv. 3-6). Which of these pictures speaks most to your season right now, and what is it calling you to?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul hands Timothy three vivid pictures, each teaching something about faithful endurance. The soldier “shares in suffering” and refuses to get “entangled in civilian pursuits,” so that he may please “the one who enlisted him” (vv. 3-4). The Christian, like a soldier, accepts hardship as part of the calling and stays focused on his Commander rather than being tangled up in distractions.

The athlete is “not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (v. 5). There is a right way to run the race. We do not get to invent our own terms; we follow Christ’s. Endurance is not enough by itself; it must be faithful endurance, run according to the pattern Christ gave. Cutting corners forfeits the crown.

The “hard-working farmer” ought to be “first to receive a share of the crops” (v. 6). The farmer’s lesson is patient, unglamorous labor. He plows and plants long before he harvests, trusting that the work will bear fruit in its season. Much of the Christian life is like this, faithful labor with the harvest still over the horizon.

Invite students to find themselves in one of the images. Some are in a season of suffering and need the soldier’s resolve. Some are tempted to cut corners and need the athlete’s integrity. Some are weary in unseen labor and need the farmer’s patience. Let each person name the picture that fits and hear its call.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Suffering and focus as marks of the Christian, pictured in the soldier (vv. 3-4)
- Faithful obedience to Christ’s pattern, pictured in the athlete who competes by the rules (v. 5)
- Patient, unglamorous labor before the harvest, pictured in the farmer (v. 6)
- Endurance that must be faithful, not merely stubborn

Discussion Prompts

- Which image fits your season best: soldier, athlete, or farmer, and why?
- What “civilian pursuits” most easily entangle you and pull your focus from Christ?
- Where are you laboring now without yet seeing the harvest?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead” (v. 8). Why does Paul anchor Timothy’s endurance in the resurrection of Jesus, and how does a risen Christ change the way we face hardship and even death?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At the heart of the chapter Paul says, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel” (v. 8). Notice the verb: remember. When endurance gets hard, the cure is not to look inward at our dwindling strength but to look back and up at the risen Christ. Everything Paul is about to say about enduring rests on the fact that Jesus is alive.

Draw out why the resurrection grounds endurance. A dead leader inspires only memories; a risen Lord guarantees a future. Because Christ rose, death is not the end of the story, and suffering for Him is not wasted. The empty tomb means that the One we follow has already passed through the worst and come out the other side in glory. We endure because we follow a living, victorious Lord.

Note carefully that the resurrection here also points forward. Christ is risen as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). His resurrection is the down payment and pattern of ours. This matters greatly for the next lesson, where some claimed the resurrection had already happened (2:18). The believer’s bodily resurrection is still future; we remember Christ risen precisely because His rising secures our rising yet to come.

Bring it home. When a Christian faces hardship, loss, or even death, the steadying word is “remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead.” Our hope is not wishful thinking; it is anchored in a historical event and a living Person. The risen Christ turns the grave from a dead end into a doorway, and that hope can carry a believer through anything.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The bodily resurrection of Jesus as the ground of Christian endurance (v. 8)
- Christ risen as the firstfruits, guaranteeing the believer’s future resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
- The believer’s resurrection as still future, against any claim it has already occurred (2:18)
- Hope anchored in a historical event and a living Lord, not wishful thinking
- Suffering for Christ as never wasted because He is alive and victorious

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Paul tell a weary Timothy to “remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead”?
- How does the resurrection change the way you face hardship and death?
- Why does it matter that our own resurrection is still future, secured by His?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul, in chains, insists that “the word of God is not bound” (v. 9). Where have you seen the gospel keep working even when circumstances seemed to shut it down, and how does that free you from despair over things you cannot control?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul describes his own situation with stark honesty and shining hope: “I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” (v. 9). The contrast is the whole point. Paul is in irons; the gospel is free. They can lock up the preacher; they cannot lock up the message.

Help students feel the freedom in this. Paul is not in despair over his chains because he knows his imprisonment cannot stop God’s word. In fact, his very imprisonment was advancing the gospel (Philippians 1:12-14). The mission does not depend on Paul’s circumstances being comfortable; it depends on a word that no prison can hold.

Apply it to the things we cannot control. We often despair over closed doors, hostile cultures, our own limitations, illness, opposition, even our failures. Paul’s confidence frees us. Our job is faithfulness; the spread of the word is in God’s hands, and His word runs free even when we are bound. History bears this out again and again: the gospel has flourished under persecution, slander, and imprisonment.

Encourage the class to recall where they have seen this. A hospital bed that became a pulpit. A hard providence that opened an unexpected door. A failure that God used anyway. The word of God is not bound, and remembering that lifts the weight of outcomes we were never meant to carry.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The unstoppable freedom of God’s word even when its messengers are bound (v. 9)
- God’s mission advancing through, not merely despite, hardship (Philippians 1:12-14)
- Faithfulness as our task, with results entrusted to God
- Freedom from despair over circumstances we cannot control

Discussion Prompts

- Where have you seen the gospel keep working when circumstances seemed to shut it down?
- What outcomes are you carrying that God never asked you to control?
- How does “the word of God is not bound” free you to be faithful without despair?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul tells Timothy to entrust what he has heard “to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (v. 2). What does this verse teach us about how the gospel is meant to be passed down, and what does it ask of those who teach in the church?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Verse 2 is the great discipleship verse of this letter: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Trace the chain Paul describes. He heard the gospel from Christ; he taught it to Timothy openly, before witnesses; Timothy is to entrust it to faithful men; and those men will teach still others. Four generations of transmission in a single verse.

Mark the word “entrust.” It is the same root as the “deposit” of chapter 1. The gospel is a trust to be handed on intact, not altered, not improved, but faithfully delivered. The integrity of the message depends on the faithfulness of those who carry it. This is how the apostolic faith has reached us, through a long chain of reliable teachers across the centuries.

Note the qualities Paul names: “faithful” and “able to teach others.” The faith is to be entrusted to those who are reliable in character and capable in teaching. Throughout these letters, Paul commits the public teaching and oversight of the church to qualified men (1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7), and verse 2 reflects that pattern of faithful men equipped to teach others in the assembly. This is not about giftedness alone but about trustworthy people who will guard and pass on sound doctrine.

Apply it to the local church. Every congregation lives or dies by whether it keeps raising up the next generation of faithful teachers. Ask your class who is being trained right now to carry the gospel forward when today’s teachers are gone. The chain that reached us must not break with us.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gospel passed down through faithful, capable teachers across generations (v. 2)
- “Entrust” as the careful handing on of a trust, unaltered (linked to 1:14)
- Faithfulness of character and ability to teach as marks of those entrusted with sound doctrine
- Qualified men entrusted with public teaching and oversight in the church (1 Timothy 2:12; 3:1-7)
- The local church’s duty to raise up the next generation of teachers

Discussion Prompts

- What does it take for the gospel to travel faithfully from one generation to the next?
- What qualities should mark those we entrust with teaching in the church?
- Who is being trained right now in your congregation to carry the gospel forward?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul endures everything “for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (v. 10). Whose salvation are you willing to suffer or sacrifice for, and how does seeing people that way change how you live?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul reveals the motive behind his endurance: “I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (v. 10). His suffering is not aimless heroics. It is love, aimed at the salvation of others. He will bear anything if it means more people come to Christ.

Help students grasp how this transforms hardship. Suffering that seems pointless becomes meaningful when it serves someone else’s salvation. Paul can endure chains because he sees, beyond his own discomfort, real people who may obtain eternal glory through his faithfulness. The question for us is whether we love anyone’s soul enough to be inconvenienced, or to suffer, for it.

On the word “elect,” keep it warm and pastoral rather than turning it into a debate. Paul labors for the elect precisely by preaching, suffering, and enduring so they will hear and obtain salvation. Far from making evangelism pointless, God’s purposes run through faithful messengers; that is why Paul endures everything. The gospel call is real and goes out to all, and people genuinely obtain salvation as they respond to it in Christ.

Bring it to the personal level. Whose salvation are we willing to sacrifice for? A wayward child, a hard-to-love neighbor, a coworker who mocks the faith? Paul’s love for souls reframes our own hardships as opportunities. When we see people as those who may yet obtain eternal glory, we will spend ourselves for them gladly.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Endurance motivated by love for the salvation of others (v. 10)
- Suffering given meaning when it serves the gospel and others’ souls
- God’s purposes accomplished through faithful, suffering messengers
- The genuine and universal offer of salvation in Christ to all who respond
- Eternal glory as the goal of the salvation we labor for

Discussion Prompts

- Whose salvation are you willing to be inconvenienced, or to suffer, for?
- How does seeing people as souls who may obtain eternal glory change how you treat them?
- What hardship in your life could God be using for someone else’s good?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul wants the gospel to keep traveling through reliable teachers across the generations (v. 2). What is your part in that chain right now, and what is one way you could invest in someone younger or newer in the faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question returns to verse 2 and presses it personally, focusing on our part in the chain of transmission. Every Christian stands somewhere in that line. We received the faith from someone faithful, and we are responsible to pass it on. The chain is not only for apostles and preachers; it runs through parents, teachers, mentors, and friends.

Help students locate themselves in the chain. Who handed them the gospel? A grandmother, a youth teacher, a patient friend, a faithful congregation? Gratitude for those links naturally raises the question of who comes next. The faith we received was not meant to stop with us.

Make the call concrete and within reach. Investing in someone younger or newer does not require a platform; it requires intentionality. It might mean teaching a class, mentoring a new convert, leading a child to Christ, opening Scripture with a neighbor, or simply being a reliable presence in someone's spiritual growth. The point is to be a faithful link, not a dead end.

Encourage one specific commitment. Ask each student to name a person they could begin pouring into, and one step they could take this week to begin. The gospel reached them because someone took that step; now it is their turn.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Every Christian's place in the chain of gospel transmission (v. 2)
- Discipling and teaching as ordinary callings, not only roles for leaders
- The danger of being a dead end where the faith stops
- Intentional investment in the spiritual growth of others

Discussion Prompts

- Who handed the gospel down to you, and how?
- Whom could you begin investing in, and what is one step you could take this week?
- What keeps us from intentionally passing the faith on to others?

Question 8

Student Question:

The trustworthy saying ends, "if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (v. 13). When your own faithfulness wavers, where do you tend to look for assurance, and how do you understand the steadiness of God when you feel unsteady?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question sits with the tender final line of the trustworthy saying: “if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself” (v. 13). It asks where we look for assurance when our own faithfulness wavers, as it surely does. The answer Paul gives points us away from ourselves and toward the unchanging character of God.

Help students understand the comfort rightly. God’s faithfulness does not depend on the steadiness of our moods. When we feel weak, doubting, or dry, He remains who He is. He keeps His promises, He does not lie, He cannot act against His own nature. For a struggling believer who keeps clinging to Christ, this is deep comfort: our salvation does not rest on the strength of our feelings but on the faithfulness of our God.

But guard against misreading it (the full doctrinal weight belongs to the next question). “He remains faithful” does not mean that those who abandon Christ are automatically kept saved. God is faithful to all of His word, including His warnings. So this line comforts the weak who still hold on, while the preceding line (“if we deny him, he also will deny us”) soberly warns the one tempted to let go. Both are God being faithful to Himself.

Bring it to the heart. Where do students run when they feel unsteady, to their own performance, to despair, or to the faithful character of God? Encourage them, in seasons of weak faith, to anchor not in the strength of their grip but in the One they are gripping, who has promised never to leave or forsake those who are His (Hebrews 13:5).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s faithfulness rooted in His unchanging character, not in our moods (v. 13)
- Assurance grounded in Christ’s faithfulness for those who keep clinging to Him
- God’s faithfulness to all His word, including His warnings
- The difference between weak faith that holds on and faithlessness that lets go

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you look for assurance when your own faithfulness feels weak?
- How is it a comfort that God remains faithful to His own character?
- What helps you keep clinging to Christ in a season of dry or struggling faith?

Question 9

Student Question:

The trustworthy saying warns, “if we deny him, he also will deny us,” and promises, “if we endure, we will also reign with him” (vv. 12-13). What do these lines teach about the real possibility of falling away and the necessity of enduring to the end, and how should we understand “if we are faithless, he remains faithful” in that light?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, and it requires careful, marveling handling. Read the whole trustworthy saying slowly: “If we have 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” (vv. 11-13). Four conditional lines, each beginning with “if.” These conditions are the key. Our future is genuinely tied to our response.

Take the promises first. “If we have died with him, we will also live with him” recalls our baptism into Christ’s death, where we died with Him to rise to new life (Romans 6:3-8). “If we endure, we will also reign with him” promises that those who hold out to the end will share Christ’s glory and reign with Him. Note that this reigning is a future glory, the saints’ coming exaltation. This does not deny that Christ reigns now; His kingdom is present and He sits enthroned today (Colossians 1:13; Acts 2:36). But the full glory of reigning with Him awaits the resurrection. There is no earthly thousand-year reign here, only the certain future glory of the faithful.

Now the warnings, and here the lesson must be plain. “If we deny him, he also will deny us.” This is a real danger spoken to Christians. A believer who comes to deny Christ, who renounces the faith and abandons the Lord, will be denied by Him. Scripture says the same elsewhere with sobering clarity: those who fall away from Christ are “severed from Christ” and have “fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4); we must take care lest there be in any of us “an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God,” and we share in Christ only “if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Hebrews 3:12-14). This is the doctrine of perseverance: salvation, once received, is preserved through ongoing faith and faithfulness, and a Christian who abandons Christ can be lost. This stands directly against the idea of “once saved, always saved.” The whole chapter, with its soldiers and athletes and farmers, assumes that endurance is necessary and that quitting is possible.

Now hold the last line carefully: “if we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.” Some take this to cancel the warning before it, as if to say no matter how faithless we become, God keeps us saved anyway. But that reading collides with the line just above it (“if we deny him, he also will deny us”) and with the rest of Scripture. The point is that God is faithful to His own nature and to everything He has said, including His warnings. He cannot deny Himself; He will not pretend a denier is a confessor, or treat an apostate as faithful. For the weak believer still holding on, this is comfort: God stays faithful when our faith is small. For the one tempted to let go entirely, it is a warning: God will be faithful to His word, which says the one who denies Him will be denied.

Finally, marvel at the balance Paul strikes. He neither flatters us with false security nor leaves us in fear. The road is long and quitting is possible, yes, but for those who endure there is unimaginable glory, to live with Christ and reign with Him forever. Let your class leave both warned and encouraged: warned enough to take perseverance seriously, encouraged enough to endure with joy, knowing that the One who calls them is faithful and that the crown is real.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The trustworthy saying as a set of genuine conditions tied to our response (vv. 11-13)
- Dying and living with Christ rooted in baptism into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-8)
- Reigning with Christ as the future glory of those who endure, not an earthly millennium
- Christ reigning now in His present kingdom, with full glory for the saints still future (Colossians 1:13; Acts 2:36)
- The real possibility of falling away: those who deny Christ will be denied (v. 12; Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12-14)
- Perseverance as necessary: salvation preserved through ongoing faith and faithfulness, against “once saved, always saved”
- God’s faithfulness to His own nature and word, including His warnings, not a guarantee that deniers are kept saved (v. 13)

Discussion Prompts

- What do the conditional “ifs” of this saying teach us about our part in salvation?
- How do these verses challenge the idea that a Christian can never fall away?
- How should we understand “he remains faithful” without making it cancel the warning before it?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across this whole passage, from grace that strengthens, to the risen Christ we remember, to the call to endure to the end. Name one specific way Jesus is using this passage to form you, and one concrete step you will take because of it.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers the whole passage. Paul has moved from grace that strengthens (v. 1), to the gospel entrusted to faithful teachers (v. 2), to the soldier, athlete, and farmer (vv. 3-6), to the risen Christ we remember (v. 8), to the unbound word (v. 9), to enduring for the sake of others (v. 10), and finally to the trustworthy saying with its glory and its warning (vv. 11-13). The single thread is endurance: faithful, grace-fueled, hope-anchored endurance to the end.

Invite students to look back and name what God has stirred. Perhaps it is fresh strength from grace for a weary season, or a renewed grip on the risen Christ, or a sober resolve to take perseverance seriously, or a person they will begin to disciple. The aim is one specific takeaway, not a vague resolve to do better.

Press toward one concrete step. Endurance is built in particulars: a daily return to grace, a Scripture about the resurrection to hold onto, a person to invest in, a temptation to quit that they will name and resist. Help each student turn this rich passage into a single act of

faithfulness this week, trusting the grace that is in Christ Jesus to carry them, and to carry them all the way home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Endurance to the end as the fruit of grace, hope, and love
- The risen Christ as the anchor of the believer's perseverance
- The believer's responsibility to remain faithful and to help others do the same
- Spiritual formation worked out in concrete, daily steps of obedience

Discussion Prompts

- What is the single most important thing God has shown you in this passage?
- What is one concrete step you will take this week because of it?
- Who is one person you could help to keep enduring in the faith?