

## 2 Timothy 2A

- The letter of James opens with a counter-intuitive call for Christians to anticipate and even embrace suffering for the sake of Christ

[James 1:2](#) Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

[James 1:3](#) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

[James 1:4](#) And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

- Any Christian who has contemplated these words has questioned the logic of receiving suffering with joy
  - The two seem mutually exclusive
  - We understand that “to suffer” is to be without joy, and to know joy is to be without suffering
  - So how can one be compatible with the other, we wonder?
- Nevertheless, this is the Bible’s teaching on suffering in our faith, and James goes on to explain how suffering is, in fact, a source of joy for every believer
  - First, we have to understand that the suffering James speaks about is associated with trials the Lord brings us
  - He’s not speaking about all forms of suffering
  - Often we suffer as a result of our own sinful choices, and this suffering is not a source of joy but hopefully a cause for repentance
- James is referring to suffering for the sake of our testimony, whether by persecutions or other difficulties brought upon us to test our faith
  - These trials are a source of joy, for they are designed by the Lord to bring opportunities
  - James says they test our faith, to know if we are willing to stand firm for Christ and for eternal concerns over earthly concerns
  - In effect, trials are opportunities for us to reaffirm our commitment to our eternal future with Christ over our attachment to this world

- With each new opportunity, we gain spiritual strength, like a muscle growing strong under the strain of exercise
  - This is spiritual endurance, James says
  - And that endurance will lead to a “perfect” result
  - It will leave us complete, lacking in nothing, he says
  - Conversely, a failure to endure well may lead to a loss of something, a lack of completion
- What is this thing we will gain by our endurance?
  - Beyond the spiritual growth and blessings that follow maturity, James is looking forward to eternal blessings of rewards and honor in the kingdom
    - To be perfect, lacking nothing, refers to gaining a full reward
    - That reward doesn’t turn on a moment or even a season of our lives
  - Our progress is only measured at the end, and our reward is only assigned once we’ve run our race
    - So as we encounter trials, and even if we should stumble at times, nevertheless we still have good incentive to get back up and continue enduring
    - Because until the end has come, we are still growing
    - And until our race is over, we still have good cause to endure, since we are still marching toward our reward
  - Which is why we have reason to count suffering as a source of joy, because it means our race has not ended and opportunity for reward remains open
    - So if you have successfully withstood trials in the past, then count new trials as opportunities for extra credit
    - But don’t take your past success for granted, since no one is without the need for more spiritual growth
    - Or if you have stumbled in the face of trials in the past, rejoice over new trials as a sign the Lord considers you worthy to prove yourself again

- And don't be discouraged by past mistakes, since no Christian arrives in Heaven with a perfect track record
- We are all sinners, which is why we all needed grace in the first place
- Every trial is a chance to be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, James says, and today in Chapter 2 Paul picks up this same idea as he encourages Timothy to stay faithful in the face of persecution and trials
  - Last week Paul ended Chapter 1 with a sobering list of men who had failed in this regard
    - Paul told Timothy these men had walked away from him and even the faith, rather than face persecution
    - In one case, Paul said he prayed the Lord would forgive Onesiphorus in "the day", a reference to the judgment seat of Christ when rewards are handed out
    - This man had done much to support Paul in days past, but apparently he too shrunk back when the going got tough
  - Paul listed these examples to remind and exhort Timothy to do better
    - And earlier in the chapter Paul gave reason for his willingness to suffer for Christ
    - He said he knew that Christ was guarding his reward
    - And therefore, nothing could steal it from Paul
    - Ironically, the only way Paul's reward could come into jeopardy was if Paul himself retreated from his service to Christ
  - This was Paul's concern for his protege, Timothy
    - With so many in Asia making the wrong choice, Paul seems worried Timothy might follow suit
    - So as we move into Chapter 2, Paul continues to reinforce the importance of remaining faithful to his call even in the face of trials
    - And to make his point, Paul uses three analogies that teach different aspects of God's reward system
- First, Paul offers an introductory encouragement

[2Tim. 2:1](#) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

[2Tim. 2:2](#) 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.

- Coming on the heels of Paul's list of faithless men in Chapter 1, we see Paul pivoting back to Timothy with a hope for better things
  - Paul says "you, Timothy" so as to distance Timothy from those others
    - We can't know how close Timothy was to following their bad example
    - Perhaps Paul didn't know for sure either
    - But clearly he was concerned, and we can hear him working hard to persuade Timothy not to make the same mistake
  - Paul implores Timothy to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus
    - We know grace means "unmerited favor"
    - That is, it's something God does for us before we even know we need it
    - In the case of salvation, it's the choice of God to send His Spirit into our hearts leading us in crying out "Abba, Father!"
  - And in the case of facing trials of one kind or another, Paul says there is yet another form of grace given us in Christ Jesus
    - This form of grace comes "in" Christ for it is only available to those who are Christ's by faith
    - This grace enables the believer to stand strong against the temptation to be unfaithful
    - This form of God's grace is an enabling power, but it does not guarantee a positive outcome, as men like Onesiphorus demonstrate
- Therefore, we must conclude that believers possess a God-given power to stand firm against temptations to flee persecution in unfaithful ways
  - Yet we must avail ourselves of this grace to benefit from it
    - As a matter of faith itself, we must first decide to remain faithful rather than shrinking back

- And then by the grace of God, we will be strengthened in our decision to stand
- That's what Paul means when he calls upon Timothy to be strong
  - He's calling Timothy to use the strength God has made available by His grace
  - But even the decision to be strong depends on something else
  - For what explains why one believer stands when another doesn't?
- The Bible's answer is that believers must renew their minds
  - We must take up a process of obtaining the mind of Christ so that we will make different decisions in moments of crisis
  - In the past, the old self made decisions based on earthly values and fleshly desires
  - Now our new self is called to make decisions based on the mind of Christ and the leading of His Spirit living in us
- We must train our mind to think like Christ so that we might live like Him
  - The Bible calls this training process the renewing of our mind
    - Making it new, changing it from the depraved ways we knew before faith and into likeness with Christ
    - For example, Paul says in Romans:

**Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing** of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

- Paul says our walk must be transformed by a renewing of our mind
  - That renewing comes only through a study of God's Word
  - By knowing Christ's Word, we move away from conforming to the world and toward the likeness of Christ
  - By this transformation, Paul says we will live out the will of God
  - We will show the world by our new thinking and new behaviors what is good and acceptable and perfect to God

- Secondly, Paul says this is a daily renewal in our inner person which leads us to eternal glory

[2Cor. 4:16](#) Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

[2Cor. 4:17](#) For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

- Our outer, sinful nature is decaying and fading even as we are renewing our inner person day by day
  - Notice again that this renewing of the inner person will be tested by momentary, light affliction
  - Testing gives opportunity for our new self to be made visible as we live it out before the world
  - And as we endure that affliction, we gain the benefit of eternal, weighty glory far beyond comparison
- And now we see how transforming our mind brings us to the point where we can count all suffering as joy
  - By the counsel of scripture we gain the mind of Christ so we come to see our trials the way Jesus saw His trials
  - We come to understand that our afflictions for the sake of Christ are the fertile ground where God plants seeds of opportunity
  - The opportunity to respond in faith, sacrificing earthly things to the glory of Christ and for the potential of heavenly reward
  - The grace of Christ working in us gives us the power to stand in the moment
- That's why Paul emphasizes that Timothy must ensure that the teaching Paul left with him in Ephesus be shared widely by trustworthy men
  - Notice in v.2 Paul places this demand on Timothy
    - If the church in Ephesus was to withstand the coming persecution successfully, then it must be prepared with proper teaching
    - Renewing their minds was the necessary prerequisite to making the right choices

- But if the church made the choice to remain faithful as Paul did, then the grace of God would give them the strength to follow through
- Then Paul moves to teaching Timothy on the very point of suffering, using three analogies to drive home the logic for why suffering in trials is worthwhile for a believer

[2Tim. 2:3](#) Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

[2Tim. 2:4](#) 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.

[2Tim. 2:5](#) Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.

[2Tim. 2:6](#) The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

[2Tim. 2:7](#) Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

- For the second time in as many chapters, Paul calls Timothy to suffer hardship as Paul did
  - And to explain the sensibility of such a call, Paul draws upon three analogies
    - First, Paul says that suffering hardship for the sake of the Gospel is like a soldier called for duty
    - I have some qualification to speak on this analogy
    - I spent 9 years in the US Air Force, not counting the four years I spent as a cadet at the Air Force Academy
    - This gives me a first-hand sense of what Paul means when he compares serving Christ to military service
    - Although my Army brothers and sisters might argue that serving in the Air Force doesn't qualify as being a soldier
  - As it turns out, life in the military is great preparation for life in ministry
    - A soldier must be 100% committed to the mission and to his or her role
    - Because the mission is too important to tolerate a half-hearted effort
    - Paul says we must be a "good" soldier, and the Greek word for good means wise

- In the context of soldiering, being wise means setting the right priorities in life
  - And specifically, a soldier must set aside pursuit of the world at least to some degree
  - What passes as normal life for a civilian can't hold for a soldier
  - Military service is an all-consuming lifestyle in most cases, especially in times of war
- Therefore, Paul says a good soldier can't concern himself with the affairs of everyday life
  - Instead, the only desire of a soldier is pleasing the one who enlisted him
  - Pleasing his sergeant, pleasing his commander, ultimately pleasing the nation he serves
  - Military life has no place for token contributions
- Paul says Christians are to serve in battle in a similar way
  - Christ has called us to duty as His soldiers
    - We have a new mission in life, one that's eternally important
    - It's a battle against the enemy and the world and even our own flesh
  - Imagine if soldiers routinely ran from the battlefield at the first signs of conflict declaring they weren't prepared for such trials?
    - That's the situation when a Christian run from trials or abandons their testimony altogether
    - It means they weren't educated in the realities of serving Christ
  - You are soldiers, which means you are preparing for battle
    - Therefore when the fight comes, you can't shrink back
    - You must remain in place to serve and glorify the One Who enlisted you
    - So Paul's first example emphasizes our outlook and preparation for service as Christians



- We must understand our role and mission will eventually bring us into conflict with an enemy
- Therefore, be ready to take up the fight
- Secondly, in v.5 Paul uses the example of an athlete running in a race
  - Now, Paul has moved from how we prepare for service to how we pursue our service
    - An athlete must compete well to receive a prize, Paul says
    - The Greek word compete can also be translated strive
    - The emphasis here is in the striving, a constant expending of effort toward a goal
    - For who competes without a desire for the reward?
  - Today it's fashionable, especially with young children, to assign everyone an award at the end of a competition
    - There can be no losers or winners
    - We all know this isn't real life
    - And I suspect most children aren't fooled by this charade either
    - We may not be keeping score at the game, but you can bet they are
    - Because winning is a primal motivation for striving
    - And the incentive for striving in any competition is the prospect of a prize at the end for those who compete well
  - But as Paul says, if we want that prize, we must follow the rules
    - We must compete according to the way the race requires
    - If the rules require we stay inside our lane, then we can't stray
    - And if the rules require we cross the finish line, then we can't stop running before we reach that point
    - In other words, if we don't give our best, we cannot succeed which is the whole point in competing in the first place
- In the same way, Paul says every disciple of Christ has entered a race of sorts

- The race began the moment we became a believer in Jesus Christ
  - It continues until we die and enter the Lord's presence
  - During this time, we are competing for rewards, eternal rewards
- Only in this particular race, we don't compete against other athletes
  - Instead, we're competing against ourselves
  - Against our fleshly desires and selfish nature, against our fears and the temptations offered by the world to draw us astray
- Our challenge is to compete according to the rules
  - And the rules of this race are simple
  - Stay inside your lane and finish the race
  - The world, the enemy and our flesh are always attempting to draw us outside the lines God set for us
  - Whether by sins of one kind or another, or distractions of earthly gain or pleasure, we are presented with opportunities every day to leave our lane
- And sometimes the enemy, or our flesh or the world, places hurdles in our path
  - And as we come upon these trials, the challenge makes us consider giving up or going another way
  - To become like Onesiphorus, establishing a track record of running well only to stray off the track and forfeit the prize
- Likewise, we must bring an eternal outlook to our walk as Christians
  - We must commit to running well, according to the rules, so that we may receive a reward
  - We must give our best to Christ, in whatever form our service to Him may take
  - We must guard our own lives to ensure we stay in our lanes, so to speak
  - So the second example of an athlete reminds us that serving Christ requires a missional mind, one that isn't easily distracted

- Finally, Paul compares our life of Christian service to that of a farmer
  - And in this example, Paul emphasizes that the farmer is hard-working
    - The word for hard-working in Greek literally means weary
    - So our farmer is a weary sort
  - The life of a farmer is certainly filled with long days of back-breaking work
    - A farmer prepares the field, sows seed to produce a harvest
    - Paul says only after the harvest arrives, only then does the farmer receive his payment
    - His payment is a portion of what has been harvested, the fruit of his field
  - His provision is entirely dependent on producing a successful harvest
    - The farmer can't give up before the harvest arrives
    - If he does, he would be left with nothing to show for his efforts
    - But if he perseveres, then he knows he will be the first to profit
    - A farmer's reward comes at the end, which leads him to be patient in the long hours of the work and willing to suffer hardship
    - Giving up early means gaining nothing in the end
  - Likewise, Christians cannot lose sight of our goal in serving the Lord
    - Our service will be difficult at times
    - There will be many days when we waver in the face of suffering
    - Perhaps the trials will be intensely personal, as the Lord works to uncover our weaknesses so we can be strengthened for greater service
    - And sometimes our trials will come as public suffering for Christ under persecution
- We may feel like quitting, we may wonder if it's all worth it

- But if we think like a farmer, we understand the fruit of our labors won't be revealed until the final harvest
  - If a farmer can show patience for a few months in pursuit of a crop of grain
  - Certainly, we can endure a lifetime of serving Christ for the glories to be found in the kingdom
- How can we tell Jesus that He's asking too much of us when so often we willingly sacrifice much more, for lessor worldly goals
  - How many years will we invest in education or training for a sport or some profession
  - How many hours, how much money has been invested in meaningless things that perish with us?
  - Is seeking the pleasure of your Lord worthy of less sacrifice and effort?
- Can we see Paul's point? Farmers understand that their work will be hard
  - But they also understand the reward is worth the investment
  - And they know if they give up early, they profit nothing
  - We need to think of our walk in service to Christ in the same way
- So the first example emphasized the preparation for service
  - The second example illustrated the proper pursuit of service
  - And the final example reminds us of the need for persistence in our service even as we may grow weary
  - Simply put, if you know God to be good – and certainly He is
  - Then you can be sure that when all is said and done, we will all agree that our sacrifices were worth it
  - Trust Him in that even now, and serve Him well
- Now Paul offers one more example, the chief example for all Christians – Christ Himself

[2Tim. 2:8](#) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel,

[2Tim. 2:9](#) for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned.

[2Tim. 2:10](#) 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.

- There can be no better example, of course, than Jesus Himself
  - Paul alludes to Jesus' example in all three of these qualities
    - First, Paul refers to Christ rising from the dead
    - This statement immediately draws our attention to Jesus' suffering and death
    - No follower of Jesus Christ will ever be able to say they suffered more in serving Christ than He did in serving us
  - He is our ultimate example of suffering in obedience to the call of God
    - Jesus willingly suffered in obedience to the Father
    - And He did so to serve God in an eternal mission
  - Secondly, Jesus was resurrected from the dead
    - So His service in suffering brought glory to Him in the end
    - But His suffering had to proceed His glory
    - He had to persevere and finish the race set before Him
- Then Paul adds Jesus was the descendant of David
  - Paul is alluding to the Davidic Covenant, which established that David's descendant would rule over Israel and all nations
    - That promise was directed at Jesus of course
    - In a day to come in the Kingdom, Jesus will receive the rule that the Father promised to Him

[Psa. 8:5](#) Yet You have made him a little lower than God,  
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

Psa. 8:6 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet,

- In fact, Jesus has yet to receive this reward since it's waiting for the arrival of the Kingdom
- The point is that Christ Himself is still waiting for His reward
  - Like us, He is still showing patience since what He died to receive hasn't yet been awarded to Him by the Father
  - He hasn't received His Bride in full and He hasn't inherited the Kingdom
  - So if Christ suffered willingly for eternal glory, and if He persevered even to the point of death, and if He is showing patience for His reward...
  - How can we not be willing to do the same?
- Finally, Paul offers himself as one more example to Timothy
  - Paul willingly suffered hardship for Christ, he says
    - To include imprisonment as a criminal
    - He knew what he was asking of Timothy
    - He understood the risks, but he wasn't asking more of Timothy than he was willing to do himself
  - But then Paul adds that his imprisonment wasn't at the expense of the mission, for no one can imprison the word of God
    - Paul means that even as persecution comes against leaders in His church, it has no bearing on God's ability to deliver the Gospel
    - Ironically, Paul says in v.10 that he endured these things for the sake of the chosen, that is those who may obtain salvation in Christ
    - Far from lessening his effectiveness in the mission, he endured persecution in order to accomplish the mission
  - Persecution accomplishes far more in God's economy than concession and compromise ever could

- When the church stands firm in the face of persecution, it leads to growth of the best kind
- It draws attention to the love of God's people, putting it in stark relief against the hatred and sin of those who oppress believers
- Just as Abel's godliness was amplified by his brother Cain's persecution and hatred
- So will the message of the Gospel be amplified by the world's hatred of us
- As someone once said, the blood of the martyrs waters the seeds of faith
- Regrettably, the church has sometimes sought to avoid persecution by compromising with their oppressors
  - When this happens, the excuse is often that we must make some concessions to the demands of our enemies to ensure the Gospel survives
  - Paul's testimony (and the history of the church) proves this to be wrong
- Moreover, it's hubris to think that God needs us to bring His word to the world
  - The world was *made* by God's word
  - So clearly the world cannot restrain the word of God in any way
  - Timothy couldn't use that excuse to avoid the persecutions and trials God may bring, and neither can we
- This brings Paul back to summarize his central point with a memorable expression

**2Tim. 2:11** It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

**2Tim. 2:12** If we endure, we will also reign with Him;

If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

**2Tim. 2:13** If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- Paul summarizes the relationship between faith, service and reward by coining a saying or memorable expression

- Paul starts with the assurance this is a trustworthy statement, something that you can take to the bank
  - In Greek, the word Paul used for trustworthy is *pistos*, which means “this is something we can place faith in”
  - And the first part of the saying holds that if we died with Christ, then we will also live with him
- This is a concise expression of the Gospel message itself
  - Essentially, the Gospel is a matter of believing in two things
    - First, that Jesus is the perfect, sinless sacrifice Who died in our place on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins
    - Secondly, that Jesus was resurrected from grace never to die again
    - These two parts are neatly summed up in Romans:

**Rom. 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

- When a person places faith in Christ in this way, the Bible says that person has died with Christ
  - In other words, God assigns Christ’s death in place of the believer’s own death for sin
  - And in that sense, all believers have died with Christ through their faith in His payment on the cross in their place
  - So Paul describes saving faith as having died with Christ
- Then he goes on to finish the thought saying if we have died with Him, then we can be sure we will live again with Him eternally
  - Our faith in Christ assures us that the death of our body is not the end of us
  - We will receive a new body
  - We will walk the earth again with Christ
  - And we will never die again



- So in v.11 we find a simple summary of the promise of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
  - Notice the Gospel does not rest on your good works, for human works have no value to the Lord
    - We cannot work our way out of our debt of sin
    - We cannot earn the righteousness that comes by faith alone
    - Only God could pay our debt for us, through His Son on the cross
  - But since we know that we cannot earn our salvation through works, we may be tempted to think that our works are of no value whatsoever
    - This must be the thinking of any Christian who shrinks back in the face of trial or persecution
    - Or they fail to appreciate what's on the line in eternity
    - So they think that having saving faith is the end of the story... but it's just the beginning
- In v.12 Paul says if we endure with Christ, we will also reign with Him
  - The Greek word translated as endure carries the sense of persevering in the face of difficulty, to have patience at a work
    - Much like the farmer, Paul says if we work patiently serving Christ then we will reign with Him
    - We know that Paul is no longer addressing the topic of salvation, since he has introduced the necessity of a human work
  - Instead, Paul has moved to the next step of the Christian walk
    - Following salvation through faith, we now begin to serve the Lord as His disciple in our walk of faith
    - As a disciple we're called to serve faithfully, enduring trials and waiting patiently for a reward
    - Like a soldier or athlete or farmer
  - Paul says if we endure in our work, we will reign with Christ, which is a reference to our eternal reward
    - Scripture teaches that all believers are promised both an inheritance in the kingdom

- And we will have the opportunity to reign with Christ in governing the coming Kingdom on Earth

**Rev. 20:6** Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will **reign** with Him for a thousand years.

- In the Gospels, Jesus explains that our opportunities to reign are determined by our faithfulness to serve Him now
  - Some believers will receive a greater reward than others
  - Jesus says that our present time serving Him on Earth is the test of our endurance and faithfulness
  - And by this test, the Lord will discover who is deserving of greater responsibility in the coming Kingdom
- Jesus used a parable to explain how He will assign us responsibility to share in His reign in the Kingdom
  - In the key statement in the parable, Jesus declares:

**Matt. 25:21** "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

- We have each received a degree of responsibility to serve Him now
- We have opportunities to serve Him in our churches or to witness to Christ in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, & communities
- We have been given spiritual gifts for that purpose
- And at our judgment, we will be measured for our endurance according to what we have been given
- Those who make the most of the time on Earth to serve Christ, will be given the greatest opportunity to serve in the Kingdom
  - Scripture alludes to greater honor, greater responsibility, a greater inheritance in some form
  - Having greater things in eternity is much more valuable than having anything in this short life

- So while our salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in the death and resurrection of Christ
- Our endurance in serving Christ as His disciple grants us opportunity to enjoy greater opportunities to serve Christ in the Kingdom
- Paul's point raises an obvious question...what if a Christian fails to serve Christ faithfully?
  - What if a believer denies the Lord the service He expects?
    - Paul addresses this possibility in the second half of v.12
    - He says if we deny Him, then the Lord will deny us
  - We're still in the context of enduring and reigning, so now Paul is speaking of the opposite condition, that of failing to endure
    - Paul describes it as a denial of Christ
    - That is, denying Christ of our service and our endurance as His disciple
    - Onesiphorus denied Christ His endurance when he apparently walked away from Paul in the face of persecution
    - It's a choice to live for oneself and for this world instead of living for Christ and the Kingdom
  - In such a case, Paul says the Lord will deny us...which is to say, Christ will deny us some portion of our reward
    - He will deny us the opportunity to reign with Him in greater ways
    - Just as when we withheld our obedience to our earthly parents, they denied us privileges and rewards
    - So it will be for any in the Kingdom who deny Christ their endurance
    - The prize is for those who compete well
    - And so God holds out the prize, as motivation for us to serve Him faithfully

- Remember, the judgment in these matters comes at the end of the race, not in the middle
  - So if you are worried your reward has already been lost, you can take comfort knowing that the race is still under way
  - You need only return to your lane and pick up the pace
  - Everyone stumbles here and there
  - No one will reach the end without a testimony of good days and bad days
  - Don't let the enemy deceive you into remaining sidelined
- Now, some teachers read Paul's statement in v.12 and come away misunderstanding what Paul is saying
  - They assume that when Paul says Christ denies us he means that Christ removes salvation, as if a person ceases being saved
    - They conclude that denying means denying the faith, so therefore Christ will deny us before the Father
    - But this is not what Paul is trying to teach us
  - Paul probably wondered if someone might make just such false conclusion at this point
    - So Paul added one more line to his saying to make sure we didn't jump to the wrong conclusion
    - In v.13 Paul adds that even if we are faithless, He will remain faithful
  - That is to say, in the case where a believer foolishly walked away from Christ (like Onesiphorus), the Spirit will never leave us nor forsake us
    - The Lord has promised we will be resurrected into eternal life
    - He has promised we will live forever with Christ in the Kingdom
    - And the Lord will remain faithful to those promises
  - Paul added this statement in v.13 to make sure we didn't go too far with his saying
    - We don't earn our salvation by our good works, so we cannot lose salvation by "bad" works

- Nevertheless, if we walk away from serving the Lord, we do place our eternal rewards at great risk
- We stand to suffer loss in the Kingdom
- We will come through our judgment moment as through fire, with nothing to show for our time spent in service to Christ
- We must consider carefully our call to be a disciple of the Lord
  - Are we willing to endure hardship?
    - Do we make the most of each day to please Him?
    - Do we avoid being distracted by the concerns of everyday life like a soldier?
    - Are we running our race with an eye on the prize and competing according to the rules like an athlete?
    - And are we willing to be patient like the farmer, content to receive our rewards in the Kingdom?
  - And when trials and persecution come our way, will we have invested the time necessary to renewing our mind by God's word
    - So that renewing may prepare us to choose to stand in His power by His grace
    - A successful walk in Christ begins with an understanding that our service to Christ is a test
    - One that demands commitment, diligence and endurance
  - So when you get up in the morning, rise to serve Christ's agenda
    - As you seek to serve, meditate on His word
    - When we become discouraged or struggle with sin or fall into despair, know His grace will grant you the power to stand
    - Provided you choose that course
    - When you confront trial, persecution and even death, take comfort knowing your life is poured out for the One Who died for you