

Are You Entangled?

ARE YOU ENTANGLED? - In some of his last words to Timothy, Paul wrote that "No soldier in active service ENTANGLES himself in the affairs of everyday life ("civilian pursuits"), so that he may please the One Who enlisted him as a soldier." (2Ti 2:4-note)

What is the meaning of **ENTANGLED**? Webster says that to be ENTANGLED is to be interwoven, wrapped or twisted together in such a manner as not to be easily extricated (freed from what binds or hinders). It pictures something twisted together or entwined into a confusing mass/mess (think of your fishing line!) Now think of your life - Are you caught, as in a net, vine, etc., in some "little" sin, so that escape seems difficult? As Solomon warned one's "own iniquities will capture (Lxx = agreuo = used in hunting or fishing - to catch by snare, figuratively to take advantage of a person in an unguarded moment! Only use Mk 13:12) the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin." (Proverbs 5:22+) Remember - "entangled" is only a few letters (cf "steps") away from "enslaved!"

The Greek word for ENTANGLE is **EMPLEKO** (en = in + [pleko](#) = to weave) which literally means to "weave in" and thus to intertwine or interconnect closely as by wrapping or twisting together. Empleko means "to be involuntarily interlaced to the point of immobility." (BDAG) It was used in secular writings meaning "to ENTWINE one's hand in another's clothes, so as to hold him." Empleko was used to describe a runner entangled in his long robe, which would hinder his ability to run in such a way so as to win (cp Heb 12:1-note, 1Cor 9:24-27-note). Figuratively **empleko** means to become so entwined in an activity that it interferes with other activities or objectives. The related noun (emphoke) was used by Peter to describe the BRAIDING of hair (1Pe 3:3-note). The root verb (pleko) described "WEAVING a crown of thorns" for Jesus' mock coronation (Mt 27:29). Can you begin to get a sense of why Paul warned soldiers of Christ to avoid becoming ENTANGLED "with the affairs of everyday life?" In the context of Paul's exhortation, **empleko** depicts one who becomes so entangled that they are hindered, even controlled, and no longer free to function effectively as a Christian soldier. Clearly, "a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:3-note), enabled by the Spirit, must continually choose to focus on eternal priorities, not temporal peripherals, holding the temporal loosely and prizing the eternal passionately. As F B Meyer explains "The less encumbered we are, the more easily shall we be able to execute the least command of our Great Captain." "Let worldly minds the world pursue, It has no charms for me; Once I admired its trifles too, But grace has set me free." (John Newton)

ILLUSTRATION - In Brazil there grows a common plant which forest-dwellers call the [matador](#) or "murderer." Its slender stem creeps along the ground, but no sooner does it meet a vigorous tree, than it sends out an entangling tentacle, which cleaves and climbs up the tree, at intervals sending out arm-like tendrils that further entangle the tree. As the "murderer" ascends, these ligatures grow larger and their clasp becomes tighter. Up and up the rogue vine climbs until the last loftiest spire is gained and fettered. Then, as if in triumph, the parasite shoots a huge, flowery head above the strangled summit, and there from the dead tree's crown, scatters its seed to begin its entangling work again. In a similar way everyday affairs can subtly entangle soldiers of Christ, in effect neutralizing their effectiveness in the ongoing spiritual war with the world, the flesh and the devil. John Piper says when a Christian soldier's "evenings and days off (begin to be) filled up with harmless, enjoyable diversions... the whole feel changes. The radical urgency fades. The wartime mentality shifts to a peacetime mentality. The lifestyle starts to get cushy. The all-consuming singleness of vision evaporates." Spurgeon adds that "Many of God's children are in this condition -- entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast!" Are there any "matador vines" in your life that need to be eradicated?

INVOLVED VERSUS ENTANGLED - The word for entangle (**empleko**) was also used to describe sheep whose wool was caught in thorns. This word picture helps illustrate the main difference between getting INVOLVED and becoming ENTANGLED. Simply stated, one is entangled when he is not free to get loose! When the everyday affairs of this life hem us in so tightly that we cannot free ourselves to fulfill the call of Christ our Commander, then we have become ENTANGLED in the "thorns" of non-eternal pursuits! Indeed, you can be sure that you have become entangled when your possessions (or projects or passions) possess you! How easily this can happen in our increasingly materialistic, hedonistic, self-absorbed society! Before we realize it, our soul can be subtly seduced away from the path of discipleship until we find ourselves inextricably snagged by the "thorns" of popular philosophy, godless values of society or the "passing pleasures of sin." (Heb 11:25-note) Solomon gives us a good antidote instructing us to "Guard (keep watch over [as you would a precious treasure]) your heart (your moral "control center") with all vigilance and diligence, knowing that out of it flows the springs of life (as that which "determines the course of your life" -NLT)." (Pr 4:23-note) We need to continually "be alert and sober" (1Thes 5:6-note) and to meditate on those things which will still be standing long after the breath of God has swept all other non-eternal entities into oblivion, ever choosing to "set our mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth, for we have died and our life is hidden with Christ in God, and when Christ our life is revealed, then we also will be revealed with Him in glory." (Col 3:2-4-note) Indeed, attachment to Christ is the secret of detachment from the world. "The nearer to heaven in hopes, the farther from earth in desires." (Gurnall) As Calvin said "The mind of a Christian ought not to be filled with thoughts of earthly things or find satisfaction in them, for we ought to be living as if we might have to leave this world at any moment.

If meditation on the heavenly life were the prevailing sentiment in our hearts, the world would have no influence in detaining us." John Piper asks several probing questions we would all do well to ponder - "Do we live like our citizenship is in heaven and wait eagerly for the Savior to return (Php 3:20-note)? Do we feel like death would be more gain than loss (Php 1:21-note)? Are we so entangled with this world that leaving it is the worst thing we can think of?"

INVOLVED IN EVERYDAY AFFAIRS - In the Garden, Jesus prayed for us to be **IN** the world but not **OF** the world. (Jn 17:11, 14, 16) As Blanchard observed "Jesus did not ask that His Father take Christians out of the world, but that He take the world out of Christians." (cp Jn 17:17, 19) Indeed, we are to live **IN** the world, but must not let the world live **IN** us. A boat in water is by design, but water in the boat is disaster! As Wiersbe explains "Identification with the world and its needs is one thing. Imitation of the world and its foolishness is quite another." Clearly Paul is not advocating isolation **FROM** the world, for then we could no longer function as salt and light **IN** the world (Mt 5:13-16-note)! An excellent example of a good soldier of Christ who lived in but not of the world is seen in the life and legacy of Christian businessman [R. G. LeTourneau](#), a philanthropist ([founder of LeTourneau University, a Christian school](#)) who was such salty salt and appealing light in the marketplace that his secular contemporaries referred to him as "God's businessman!" May his tribe increase! "In this world but never of it, Help me, Lord, to live this day, Free from all that would entangle, Of the dazzle and array." Amen (Graves)

PLEASING HIM - Our motivation for pursuing the unentangled life should be to "please Him." (2Ti 2:4bnote), indeed, always making it "our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him" (2Cor 5:9-note), to Christ—not others, not ourselves. What passing pleasure in this present world can even begin to compare with the indescribable satisfaction of hearing those words, "Well done, My good and faithful servant" (Mt 25:21, Lk 19:17) from the lips of the One Who breathed eternity into existence (Jn 1:3)? Thomas Brooks reminds us "The stars which have least circuit are nearest the pole, and men whose earths are **LEAST ENTANGLED** with the world are always nearest to God and to the assurance of His favor." "Now may the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you with every good thing (God's provision) to do His will (Our responsibility), working in us (by His indwelling Spirit) that which is **PLEASING IN HIS SIGHT**, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb 13:20-21-note) "Living for Jesus—O what rest!, Pleasing my Savior, I am blest. Only to live for Him alone, Doing His will till life is done!" (Weigele)

A GOOD SOLDIER - 2Timothy 2:4 was [Jim Elliot's](#) life verse and it was this eternally focused mindset that prompted him to write those memorable words, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose," an excellent summary of the "**UNENTANGLED LIFE**!" As **Thomas Guthrie** said "If you find yourself loving any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any house better than the house of God, any table better than the Lord's table, any person better than Christ, any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—take alarm!" (cp 1Jn 2:15-17-note) [Jonathan Edwards](#), like Jim Elliot, understood Paul's call to an **UNENTANGLED LIFE** and even as a young man sought to live his spiritual life with a radical single-mindedness - "Resolved, Never to do any manner of thing, whether in soul or body... but what tends to the glory of God. Resolved, Never, henceforward, till I die, to act as if I were any way my own, but entirely and altogether God's. Resolved, That I will not give way to that listlessness which I find unbends and relaxes my mind from being fully and fixedly set on religion (Christ), whatever excuse I may have for it. Resolved, Never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." Indeed, every soldier of Christ should ask of every earthly activity (even ostensibly good things) the simple question - "Will it entangle me?"

SUMMARY - Paul's description of the Christian soldier who seeks to please his Lord could be summed up as " Whole-Hearted, Single-Hearted, Undivided Heart, Single-Minded, Pure Heart," in short a heart **NOT ENTANGLED** by the everyday affairs of life! [Dawson Trotman](#), a man who was greatly used by God wrote to his thousands of disciples "We are not out to raise monuments to man's creeds and accomplishments, but we are looking to GOD to raise up living stones – monuments to His grace – yielded young men and women whose eyes are **SINGLED** to His glory." As Wiersbe says us, "David did not have a sinless heart, but he did have a **SINGLE HEART**; and this made him a man after God's own heart." (Acts 13:22) May our cry be that of David who asked the Lord "Give me an **UNDIVIDED HEART** to fear Your Name." (Ps 86:11-[note](#))

See related discussions -

- [An Undivided Heart](#)
- Backsliding
- [No Compromise](#)

Below is a song from Craig Smith which captures Paul's call to every soldier of the Cross to be whole heartedly devoted to the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10KJV-note), so that we might stand before Him in that great day, pleasing in His sight.

PURE HEART [Play this song](#)

Over and over I hear it again
That the Father desires pure hearts.

Not to seek earthly treasure or the favor of men,
But to be found with pureness of heart.

Pure heart is what the Father desires,
Holy heart, purified by God's holy fire,
Broken hearts, proven to be faithful and true,
Fashion in me a heart that's thirsting for You.

Search every chamber, expose them to me
Create motives of honor and simplicity
May You find faithfulness, integrity,
In a heart that is worthy for Your eyes to see.

My only ambition is to stand before You
And find I was pleasing in Your sight
An obedient child of God, faithful and true,
Found with pureness of heart.

PRAYER FOR A RENEWAL - If you are like me, there are times when you are prone to wander into the "briar patches" of this passing world, too often finding yourself entangled by some temporal concern at the expense of the eternal. We might all do well to pray this old Puritan prayer - "O my Savior, Help me. I am so slow to learn, so prone to forget, so weak to climb; I am in the foothills when I should be on the heights; I am pained by my graceless heart, my prayerless days, my poverty of love, my sloth in the heavenly race, my sullied conscience, my wasted hours, my unspent opportunities. I am blind while light shines around me: take the scales from my eyes, grind to dust the evil heart of unbelief. Make it my chief joy to study Thee, meditate on Thee, gaze on Thee (Heb 12:2), sit like Mary at Thy feet (Lk 10:39-42), lean like John on thy breast (Jn 13:23-25), appeal like Peter to Thy love (Jn 21:15-17), count like Paul all things loss (Php 3:8). Give me increase and progress in grace so that there may be more decision in my character, more vigor in my purposes, more elevation in my life, more fervor in my devotion, more constancy in my zeal. As I have a position in the world, keep me from making the world my position. May I never seek in the creature what can be found only in the Creator. Let not faith cease from seeking Thee, until it vanishes into sight. (Rev 22:3-4, 1Cor 13:12) Ride forth in me, thou King of kings and Lord of lords, that I may live victoriously, and in victory attain my end (1Jn 5:4-5)." ([Valley of Vision online](#))

NOTES BELOW ARE "WORKING NOTES" (a bit "tangled" so to speak) THAT RELATE TO ENTANGLING AFFAIRS AND PLEASING CHRIST... THEY ARE NOT IN ANY PARTICULAR ORDER.

Paul's metaphor of a soldier can be summed up in the phrase "Stay focused." Believers must be constantly on guard against the distractions of the world and the impulses of our self-centered nature. Entertaining a sinful thought, even for a moment, may lead to ruin (Mark 4:19; James 1:15).

"A good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3) has single-minded devotion to Jesus Christ, the "captain of ... salvation" (Hebrews 2:10, KJV). Single-mindedness, the ability to focus, to shut everything out when necessary, is the key to success in virtually every area of life. It is the essential ingredient of the manic virtue of basketball heroes Michael Jordan and Tim Duncan or of golf great Jack Nicklaus or the creative musical genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. But here the focus is not a basketball rim, a flag fluttering on a distant green, or a musical score—it is Christ himself and how to please him. The single-minded disciple is in the world, but he does not get "entangled" (literal translation) in the world. He avoids anything that will hinder single-minded dedication to his Master. Paul put it this way to the Philippians: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:13-14). Paul was fervent! - Preaching the Word – 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Post.

Plummer observes that the Christian soldier "has a duty to perform "in the affairs of this life," but in doing it he is not to be entangled in them. They are means, not ends; and must be made to help him on, not suffered to keep him back. If they become entanglements instead of opportunities, he will soon lose that state of constant preparation and alertness, which is the indispensable condition of success." (Plummer, Alfred: 2 Timothy). (Bolding added)

What must be avoided is involvement in the world's ways and acceptance of the world's values, all of which subtly or overtly pose a challenge to the ways and values of biblical Christianity. But let us not be fooled into thinking this is an easy task. We face the same danger as the frog in the pan of slowly heating water. Unless we remain sharp in the faith, constantly testing the thoughts and trends of the world about us against the revealed will of God, we too will slowly die. In all walks of life Christ (our commanding officer) is the priority. - The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – 1-2 Timothy & Titus.

We should not be distracted by the normal affairs of everyday life in such a way that they cannot and do not give themselves

wholeheartedly to their commander and his orders

The New International Greek Testament Commentary – The Pastoral Epistles.

While civilian affairs are not wrong in themselves, they become a problem if the Christian gets so entangled in them that his or her ministry suffers. Christian workers, whether pastors or laymen, must watch their outside involvements carefully. Business ventures, serving on committees or boards, volunteer assignments, and/or home projects can eat up valuable time and energy. Paul wanted Timothy to understand that a good minister of the gospel must have a single-minded purpose - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

Every child of God is to recognize that he is a soldier. And we are to recognize that the Christian life is not a playground; it is a battlefield. It is a battlefield where battles are being won, and where battles are being lost also. There is a real spiritual battle going on. - Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee.

As someone has said, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." We must be men and women on a mission, refusing to be distracted.— Journey To A Faithful Finish: A 13-lesson study of 2 Timothy.

MacArthur - Paul is not speaking about things that necessarily are wrong in themselves. It is not that a soldier should have no contact at all with his former friends and surroundings, but that he is not to become caught up and enmeshed in them. Those things are irrelevant to his soldiering and are always subject to being relinquished. In the same way, a good soldier of Christ Jesus refuses to allow earthly matters to interfere with the fulfillment of his duty to his Lord. Many Christians, pastors, special ministries, and doctrinally sound churches have been undermined by concerns and activities that are innocent in themselves but have been allowed to crowd out the primary purpose of serving Jesus Christ in the advancing of His kingdom against the forces of darkness. "The worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches" of which Jesus spoke are among the affairs of everyday life that can keep an unbeliever from receiving Christ and can keep believers from faithfully serving Him. The faithful Christian's fondest hope is to be rewarded for loyal service and to hear his Master say, "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" (Matt. 25:21). When Christ is our first love, we will "have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him" (2 Cor. 5:9; 1 Thess. 2:4). - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 2 Timothy.

Matthew Henry - If we have given up ourselves to be Christ's soldiers, we must sit loose to this world; and though there is no remedy, but we must employ ourselves in the affairs of this life while we are here (we have something to do here), we must not entangle ourselves with those affairs, so as by them to be diverted and drawn aside from our duty to God and the great concerns of our Christianity. Those who will war the good warfare must sit loose to this world. That we may please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers. The way to please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers is not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life, but to be free from such entanglements as would hinder us in our holy warfare.

Like a soldier, a Christian leader must resist the distractions that would make **peripherals** seem like **priorities**. Wesleyan Bible Commentary

This illustration can be summed up in the phrase "Stay focused." Believers must be constantly on guard against the distractions of the world and the impulses of our self-centered nature. Entertaining a sinful thought, even for a moment, may lead to ruin (Mark 4:19; James 1:15). Christians have to deal with everyday events, but we should not allow them to engross us. Our goal and motivation is to "please the one who enlisted" us, namely, Christ. It is no easy task to maintain this concentration on holy matters. It requires the power of the Holy Spirit. -Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series - – The Books of First and Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon: Goals to Godliness.

Any worldly pursuit which gets in the way of our service for God must be pushed to one side. The Christian should have one aim in life: he should seek to please his commanding officer. In Hebrews 11:5 we read that Enoch was 'commended as one who pleased God'. To the Corinthians Paul writes, 'We make it our goal to please him' (2Cor. 5:9). - Welwyn Commentary Series – Passing on the Truth: 1 and 2 Timothy simply explained.

God's pleasure is my first and highest calling. The primary point of application is that of single-minded focus. A soldier exists to "please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." Nothing should distract him from that commission. The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors.

APPLICATION - There is nothing wrong with owning nice things. In fact, God wants to bless us with nice things. But we are not to allow material possessions to become so ingrained in our hearts that they become the central focus of our lives. Our souls, emotions, and desires are not to become so ensnared, entangled, and caught up in the things of the world that we become meshed together with them. How do you know if you've become materialistic? How do you know if natural possessions mean too much to you? Well, could you give them up if the Lord asked you to? Or have they become so woven into the very fabric of your life that you are now entangled in them? Only you and the Holy Spirit know the answers to these questions. Do everything in your power to keep

the temporal things of this world in the right perspective. Keep them in your hands but out of your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you areas of your life that need to be “untangled” and brought back into balance. Then after He speaks to you, it’s up to you to STAY untangled.

Alan Carr - I read about a massive oak tree. A vine had grown up along its trunk. The vine started small—nothing to bother about. But over the years the vine had gotten taller and taller. After many years, the entire lower half of the tree was covered by the vine's creepers. The mass of tiny feelers was so thick that the tree looked as though it had innumerable birds' nests in it. Now the great tree was in serious danger. This huge, solid oak was quite literally being taken over; the life was being squeezed from it. But the gardeners in that park had seen the danger. They had taken a saw and severed the trunk of the vine—one neat cut across the middle. The tangled mass of the vine's branches still clung to the oak, but the vine was now dead. That would gradually become plain as weeks passed and the creepers began to die and fall away from the tree. How easy it is for sin and other seemingly little things, things which begins so small and seemingly insignificant, to grow until they have a strangle hold on our lives. And yet, Christ's death has cut the power of sin and of anything else that would entangle itself around our lives seeking to choke us out. What kind of vines do you have in your life? What kind of entanglements are choking out your spiritual life today?

Black - Like a soldier, a Christian leader must resist the distractions that would make peripherals seem like priorities. The cost of leadership is full devotion to duty and full attention to the task at hand. This holy detachment does not make the Christian culturally, politically, or economically irrelevant. The idea is not to look away from the issues of the day but to look beyond them to Christ, who is eternally relevant.

William Wilberforce is a prime example of a man who was in the world but not of it. At age 41 after years of fighting unsuccessfully against slave trade prayed, **“Oh Lord, purify my soul from all its stains. Warm my heart with the love of Thee, animate my sluggish nature and fix my inconstancy, and volatility, that I may not be weary in well doing.”** On July 26, 1833, the final passage of the emancipation bill was insured when a committee of the House of Commons worked out key details. Three days later, Wilberforce died. Parliament continued working out details of the measure, and later Buxton wrote, “On the very night on which we were successfully engaged in the House of Commons in passing the clause of the Act of Emancipation ... the spirit of our friend left the world. The day which was the termination of his labors was the termination of his life.”

Cunningham - You cannot be a soldier and a civilian at the same time. You have to be one or the other. You cannot live the Christian way of life and be involved in cosmic activity at the same time. You have to choose one or the other.

Hiebert - As a soldier under arms his duty is not to **“entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life.”** The Roman soldier avoided all preoccupation with the daily affairs of the marketplace in order to be free to obey without hindrance the orders of his commander. Engaged in a spiritual battle, the Christian soldier likewise must concentrate on his work; he must not devote his time and interests to a business on the side which hinders his faithful performance of his primary responsibility. Paul's language does not mean that the Christian worker must never engage in any secular work or tentmaking (Acts 18:3). Rather, he must be on guard against becoming so involved in such pursuits that he no longer feels free to give himself fully to the call of Christian service. As a loyal soldier of Christ he may “feel compelled to lay aside certain things, certain habits, certain amusements, certain pursuits, certain methods in business, and even certain friends-not because any of these may necessarily be wrong in themselves as such, but because they are a snare and entanglement” to him.

In another note **Hiebert** wrote the good soldier of Christ Jesus “must keep habitually free from getting himself tied up in these pursuits so that he is not at liberty to devote himself to his primary duty. That does not mean that the Christian minister must never engage in “secular work” for a living, but rather **“he is to avoid absorption in it, or complications in connection with it, such as may divert him in spirit from his higher, divine calling”** (Harvey). Paul engaged in “tentmaking” for a living, but it was only a means toward his master passion of preaching the Gospel. Nor did the early Christian church understand this passage as forbidding a trade to the minister. (Second Timothy- Everyman's Bible Commentary)

Steven Cole - The key here is the word, “entangle.” It's easy for all of us, including those of us supported by ministry, to get entangled with things that are not wrong in themselves. They're wrong because they distract us from seeking first the kingdom of God. There is nothing wrong with a limited use of sports or computers or recreation or hobbies, if we use them to refresh us for the battle. But it's easy for these legitimate things to suck you into the quicksand and before you know it, you're not seeking first God's kingdom.

In light of the length of eternity and the brevity of our life, it follows that a simple question to evaluate all of our temporal, passing, worldly activities is “Will it entangle me?” If not, then know that you have pleased your Commander in this life and will one day hear those wonderful words “Well done, My good and faithful servant (soldier)!”

Possessions are not bad but they can entangle. You know that you are entangled by your possessions begin to possess you, when you hold them not just in your hand, but in your heart! You are entangled when the temporal hinders your good fight of faith for the

eternal. **Gene Getz** adds that nothing "entangles a Christian in the affairs of this life more quickly and subtly than materialism."

Example of Abraham - In Ge 23:4 Abraham tells the men of the city that he is still a pilgrim among them. He had lived among them for some 62 years, but he had never settled down. He says that he is a "newcomer" who is just one "passing through". Even after all this time, he had never set down roots in this world. What a lesson to the children of God! The less our spiritual roots go in this world, the less we will become too entangled in its affairs. May we never forget that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world (1Pe 2:11). May we so live as not to settle down, but to keep looking for that city that will be our eternal home, fixing our "hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Carr - When we get too close to the world around us, we will soon find ourselves entangled with them in their sins. The company you keep will determine how close you walk to the Lord, 1Cor. 15:33. That is why God has ever commanded His people to keep their distance from the lost world around them, 2Cor 2:14. We must interact with the world so that we can be a light to them and give them the Gospel, Mt. 5:16; Acts 1:8. But, we must keep our spiritual distance. It is but a short step from walking with the world to living like the world. (**Ed**: Remember Lot - He looked. He lusted. He sought to live in Sodom and some Sodom entangled him.)

G Campbell Morgan - **The soldier on active service breaks with everything except the War.** We saw them go in millions, leaving father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and lover; we saw them march away from promising careers, loved occupations, high ambitions, and the finest things of responsibility. Nothing was permitted to entangle them, to hinder them, or in any way to interfere with the one thing. This new understanding has brought a new revelation of the claims which our Lord's campaign makes upon us.

Spurgeon - Every Christian indeed, though he takes part with common things, is to take care that he be not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way of making the actions of the every affairs of life promote the purposes of divine grace. This is the Christian's business. "Let him take care that 'he be not entangled with the cares of this life.

" The picture is of something wrapped around the feet like an animal entangled in a net. No runner in his right mind would try to run a race with a net wrapped around his feet. That is what sin does! It entangles us! Therefore, we are to lay aside sin. That is we are to repent of it. = {Spencer, Glen

We must be ready for action and prepared to fight and suffer. We can't afford to be entangled in civilian affairs. There has been much discussion as to what Paul meant here by "the affairs of this life," but the key lies in the word entangles. It is not just sin that entangles but other things which, while legitimate, may hamper our effectiveness for Christ. A test for any activity we're considering is: Will it hamper my Christian service? Paul added that motive for this suffering is our desire to please Christ, our commanding officer. = {Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook-2010

ILLUSTRATION - General Douglas MacArthur faced the consequences of entanglement. He was an American war hero and is remembered for many things, especially for his ringing pledge to the people of the Philippines when the Japanese overran their country: "I shall return!" At the end of World War II, he accepted the surrender of the Japanese aboard the American flagship. He is also remembered as the commander of the United Nations troops in the Korean War. He is best remembered for being fired by President Truman when he entangled himself in politics and attempted to defy Truman's foreign policy.

Spurgeon - To be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, there must be a passion for

Spurgeon's prayer - "Lord, keep thou me as the apple of the eye, with many protections. Thou hast been pleased with the strong bastions of thy providence to surround thy people: I ask for such protection. Lead me not into temptation; **do not suffer the events of my career or the incidents of my daily life to entangle me so that I shall be unable to escape out of the perplexing snares.** Let the powers of heaven fight for me as of old the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Let me be in league With the stones of the field, and command the beasts of the forest to be at peace with me. Let my tabernacle be in peace; and let no plague come nigh my dwelling. Do thou, O God, visit my habitation; and so abide with me beneath that lowly roof that I may not by any means through outward circumstances or inward thoughts be led into sin. Guard me, O my God! by all the power of those mysterious wheels, whose motions I cannot understand, but of whose results thou hast said, 'All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.'"

Spurgeon - The devil **entangles** the youthful with beauty, the miser with gold, the ambitious with power, the learned with false doctrine.

Spurgeon - You must take heed how you vow, for you may **entangle** yourself. Very often it is best not to vow at all; but if in the hour of sorrow you have opened your mouth unto the Lord, take heed that you do not withdraw from the thing your heart has purposed and your lips have uttered.

If you realize that you are entangled remember that "The Lord shall guide thee continually." (Isa 58:11) **Spurgeon** asks "WHAT aileth thee? Hast thou lost thy way? Art thou **entangled** in a dark wood, and canst thou not find thy paths? Stand still, and see the

salvation of God. He knows the way, and He will direct thee in it if thou cry unto Him. Every day brings its own perplexity. How sweet to feel that the guidance of the Lord is continual! If we choose our own way or consult with flesh and blood, we cast off the Lord's guidance; but if we abstain from self-will, then He will direct every step of our road, every hour of the day, and every day of the year, and every year of our life. If we will but be guided, we shall be guided. If we will commit our way unto the Lord, He will direct our course so that we shall not lose ourselves... He will also pluck our feet out of the net. We shall not be entangled by the deceit of our malicious and crafty foes. With such a promise as this, let us run without weariness, and walk without fear. He who keeps our feet will do it effectually.

Spurgeon - Do you feel the world entangle you? You may struggle against this evil so long as you please, but if it be your besetting sin, you will never be delivered from it in any way but by the blood of Jesus... You must be conquerors through him who hath loved you, if conquerors at all. Our laurels must grow among his olives in Gethsemane.

Luke 12:35 'Let your loins be girded, and the lamps burning.' Eph 6:14 Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH**, -- **Spurgeon** - We need to bind the girdle of truth more and more tightly around our loins. It is a golden girdle, and so will be our richest ornament, and we greatly need it, for a heart that is not well braced up with the truth as it is in Jesus, and with the fidelity which is wrought of the Spirit, will be easily **entangled with the things of this life**, and tripped up by the snares of temptation. It is in vain that we possess the Scriptures unless we bind them around us like a girdle, surrounding our entire nature, keeping each part of our character in order, and giving compactness to our whole man.

The Christian has been enlisted by the Lord, and is on active service for Him. He must not entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life. The emphasis here is on the word entangle. He cannot completely divorce himself from worldly business. He must work in order to provide the necessities of life for his family. There is a certain amount of involvement in everyday interests that is unavoidable. Otherwise he would have to go out of the world, as Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 5:10.

But he mustn't allow himself to become entangled. **He must keep his priorities straight. Even things that are good in themselves can sometimes become the enemies of the best.**

Wm. Kelly says that "to entangle oneself in the businesses of life means really to give up separation from the world by taking one's part in outward affairs as a bona fide partner in it."

I have become entangled when I become involved in the world's politics as a means of solving man's problems. That would be like spending my time "rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Or I have become entangled when I put more emphasis on social service than on the Gospel as a panacea for the world's ills.

I have become entangled when business gets such a grip on me that I give my best efforts to the making of money. In thus gaining a living, I lose a life.

I have become entangled when the kingdom of God and His righteousness cease to have first place in my life.

I have become entangled when I am caught up by things that are too small for a child of eternity—like the mineral deficiencies in the tomato and cocklebur, the summer habits of Wyoming antelope, the microbic content of cotton T-shirts, the browning reaction in potato chips or the post-rotational movements of a pigeon's eye. **These studies may be all right as a means of livelihood but they aren't worthy of a life passion. This begs the question - about what are you passionate?** (Truths to Live By-Daily Devotional)

MacArthur "a spiritual Christian does not simply do minimum duty for his Lord, Christ Jesus, but serves Him with everything he is and has."

Every believer is in "active service" and must expect some measure of ill-treatment, even as every soldier does.

Paul is urging Timothy to be a fit, useful **soldier** (4757) "**of Christ Jesus**", this latter phrase indicating that Timothy was not his own but belonged to Christ Jesus and was His to engage in spiritual warfare for Him. Roman troops were a model of discipline, and because of that discipline, they were unbeatable. In a greater, grander degree we as Christian soldiers who are obedient to our Commander and empowered by His grace are even more than conquerors through Christ.

As a **good soldier** named Joshua learned, Christ (Messiah) Jesus is the **Commander of the army of the LORD** (Josh 5:14 **NKJV**) and in recognition of His Commander's authority, "Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to Him "What does my Lord say to His servant?

Joshua's response should be the attitude of all who would be known by the glorious title "good soldier" -- "What do You command Your servant, my Lord?" (NRSV)

C Campbell Morgan has an interesting note for those of us who have never suffered through a global war: "This word of Paul took on new meaning for many of us during the years of the Great War (WWI). Indeed, today it seems to some of us as though we had never seen it at all before. Of course, we had seen it, and we had given it a certain conventional interpretation. Our thinking, however, of what was included in the phrase "**the affairs of this life**," was very superficial in many cases. We thought of certain liberties and comforts, which the soldier is denied; and, of course, that thinking was correct so far as it went. We needed the stern and awe-inspiring experiences of those dread years to enable us to apprehend the full content of the phrase. Now we know that nothing is left out. **The soldier on active service breaks with everything except the War.** We saw them go in millions, leaving father, mother, brother, sister, wife, and lover; we saw them march away from promising careers, loved occupations, high ambitions, and the finest things of responsibility. Nothing was permitted to entangle them, to hinder them, or in any way to interfere with the one thing. This new understanding has brought a new revelation of the claims which our Lord's campaign makes upon us. He only asks His people to do what the sons of the commonwealth did, grudgingly. Does not the consideration bring a sense of shame with it? How often those who should constitute the sacramental host of God have played at war! May God forgive us, and give us another chance! And if in His grace He will, may we be worthy of it!" (Morgan, G C: Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible. page 326, 1926). (Bolding added)

An Example of a Good Soldier - William Wilberforce's Source of Strength - When wanting to faint after years of fighting against slave trade William Wilberforce leaned upon the Lord for his strength. On his forty-first birthday, as he rededicated himself to his calling, he prayed, "**Oh Lord, purify my soul from all its stains. Warm my heart with the love of Thee, animate my sluggish nature and fix my inconstancy, and volatility, that I may not be weary in well doing.**" (Neh 8:10, Isa 40:31, Gal 6:9, Eph 3:16, Col 1:11, 2 Tim 2:1) ([Amazing Grace in the Life of William Wilberforce - Desiring God](#)) ([Peculiar Doctrines, Public Morals, and the Political Welfare - Desiring God](#))

Spurgeon - The passion for victory with the soldier often makes him forget everything else... The Christian is a soldier in an enemy's country always needing to stand on his watchtower, constantly to be contending, though not with flesh and blood, with far worse foes, namely, with spiritual wickednesses in high places... The wars of a Christian are against principles, against sins, against the miseries of mankind, against that evil one who has led man astray from his Maker, against the iniquity which keeps man an enemy to himself; and the weapons that we use are holy arguments and consecrated lives, devotion and prayer to God, and teaching and example among the sons of men. Ours is battling for the peace, and fighting for rest. We disturb the world to make it quiet, and turn it upside down to set it right; we pull down strongholds that they may not pull down the Zion of God; we dash down the mighty that the humble and the meek may be established.

Maclaren - We are not bound to abandon the affairs of this life, but we are called upon to prevent their interfering with our warfare. If we are caught in the thicket whilst we are pressing on to the fight, out with the billhooks and hew it down. It may be full of pretty peeps, where there are shade and singing-birds; but if it stands in our way, it has to be grubbed up. 'If thy right eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for thee.'

And that interference can easily be detected, if we honestly wish to do so. Does a certain thing - some legitimate, or even praiseworthy occupation, or possession, the exercise of some taste or accomplishment, some recreation, some companionship-clog my feet when I ought to march; clip my wings when I ought to soar; dim my eyes when I ought to gaze on God? Then no matter what others may do about it, my plain duty is to give it up. It is entangling me. It is interfering with my warfare, and I must cut the cords. I can only do so by entire abstinence. Perhaps I may get stronger some day, and be able to use it as not abusing it; but I cannot venture on that at present. So go it must. I judge nobody else, but whoever may be able to retain that thing, whatever it be, without slackening hold on Christ, I cannot.

So, brethren, if you find that legitimate occupation and affairs are absorbing your interests, and interfering with your clear vision of God, and making you less inclined and less apt to high thoughts and noble purposes, to lowly service and to Christ-like life, your safety lies in at once shaking off the venomous beast that has fastened on you into the fire. Unless the occupation be a plain duty, a post where the Captain has set you as sentry, and which it would be fiat disobedience to forsake, leave it at any cost, if you would kept your Christian integrity.

The affairs of this life must not entangle us; that is the one indispensable condition to pleasing Him. That they may not, they must always be rigidly subordinated, and used as helps to our higher life.

The point is that a **good soldier** in active service does not have a 9 to 5 job but is on duty (and needs to be alert) around the clock, "7x24". All that the soldier belongs to the military in which he serves. A soldier on active duty is always a soldier. He can't call a "time-out" in the middle of battle. As we have seen in recent wars in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc, even when the soldier is on leave, he is still subject to recall without notice. Whenever he is ordered into dangerous duty, he is expected to put his life on the line without question or hesitation. This picture emphasizes the **total commitment** necessary in order to be a **good soldier**.

Expositors - Military service involves self-sacrifice, endurance, discipline, vigilance, obedience, ready co-operation with others, sympathy, enthusiasm, loyalty. ([2 Timothy 2 Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

William Kelly - No doubt (for a Roman soldier) furlough might allow of relaxation, and completed service, (a time) of perfect liberty; but to Christ's servant here below is NO furlough and NO discharge from his duty.

As **Solomon** writes "there is no discharge in the time of war." (Eccl 8:8)

How would your "military service" be evaluated?

Are you AWOL?

Are we acting like children playing "toy soldiers"?

Active service calls for **rigorous self discipline** (1Ti 4:7; 4:8; 4:9; 10-notes 1Ti 4:7; 4:8; 4:9; 4:10; cf Ec 9:10) and unquestioning obedience (see Jn 14:15, 1Sa 15:22, 23). A good soldier must have a steady intake of the "solid food" of truth who by practice train his or her senses (He 5:14-note) to distinguish between the "good and evil", between "good" and the "best", constantly striving to choose the Commander's priority.

Either perpetual warfare
or
Perpetual preparation

Plummer observes that "Military service implies **vigilant, unwearying and organized opposition** to a **vigilant, unwearying, and organized foe**... Military service is **either perpetual warfare** or **perpetual preparation** for it. And just such is **the Christian life: it is either a conflict, or a preparation for one**. The soldier, so long as he remains in the service, can never say, "I may lay aside my arms and my drill: all enemies are conquered; there will never be another war." And the Christian, so long as he remains in this world, can never think that he may cease to watch and to pray, because the victory is won, and he will never be tempted any more. It is for this reason that he cannot allow himself to be "entangled in the affairs of this life." (Plummer, Alfred: 2 Timothy) (Bolding added)

C. Garret - "You cannot be a saint on Sundays and a sinner in the week; you cannot be a saint at church and a sinner in the shop; you can not be a saint in Liverpool and a sinner in London. You cannot serve God and Mammon. You are a soldier everywhere or nowhere, and woe to you if you dishonour your King."

Albert Barnes - He "wars a good warfare" who is engaged in a righteous cause; who is faithful to his commander and to his post; who is unslumbering in observing the motions of the enemy, and fearless in courage in meeting them; who never forsakes his standard, and who continues thus faithful till the period of his enlistment has expired, or till death." (Barnes' Notes on the New Testament)

F B Meyer - "It is good to begin, but it is better to keep on steadily to the end. It is much when the **young soldier**, well equipped for battle, steps out into the early dawn, with the light shining upon his weapons, but it is more important far, if, in the late afternoon, he is found standing in the long thin line, resisting the perpetual onset of the foe. We are told of Daniel, that he "**continued**" (Da 1:21-note). This, perhaps, is the greatest tribute to him, that through decades he did not swerve from his loyalty to God, or devotion to the high interests which were committed to his charge. The men that are steadfast in their loyalty to truth, in their prosecution of duty, in their holding the post assigned to them by the providence of God, are those which leave the deepest impression on their contemporaries. It is not the flash of the meteor which the world really wants, but the constant radiance of the fixed star. What though the storm beats in your face, and every effort is made to dislodge you, though it seems as if you were forgotten in that lone post of duty, still stand fast: the whole situation may depend upon your tenacity of purpose, the campaign may be decided by your holding your ground without flinching. If the Master has put you as a light on the cellar stair, never desert that post because it is lonely and distasteful, and because the opportunity of service comes rarely. To be found doing your duty at the unexpected moment, when His footfall is heard along the corridor, will be a reward for years of patient waiting." (Meyer, F B: Our Daily Walk) (Bolding added)

Twist together (weave) is the root verb **pleko** ([4120](#)) meaning to plait, to braid, to intertwine, to weave together, twist together, e.g., "ivy intertwined with acanthus," "plaited fish baskets," "rope", metaphorically in secular Greek = "complication." Pleko is used 3 times in the NT, first by Matthew who writes "And after **twisting together** (weaving - pleko) a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Matt 27:29, Mk 19:2, Jn 19:2) As a side note, the soldiers placing the crown of thorns on his head were unwittingly symbolizing God's curse on humanity (Ge 3:18)! It is also interesting that this same verb (**pleko**) is used in the Septuagint in Isaiah 28:5 of another "crown," but this crown is not the object on His head, but is a description of the King (Jesus) Himself (Lxx = "the woven crown of glory") in that

great future day when He returns to set up His millennial kingdom and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. Amen (Rev 19:16, cp Rev 17:14)! **See derivative empleko (1707) = entangle.**

Service as a Christian soldier calls for wholehearted devotion.

It is notable that **empleko** is similar in sound to our English word “**implicate**” which means to bring into intimate or incriminating connection

The only other use of **empleko** is by Peter who warns of the danger of “becoming entangled” or “being entrapped” in the defilements or corruption of the fallen world system which is opposed to God. -“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they **are** again **entangled** in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.” (2Peter 2:20-note)

Spurgeon - So Timothy, as a Christian minister, is to act as the Roman soldier did. It was a law in Rome that no soldier was to plead in court for another as a lawyer, or to act in business for another as a bailiff, or to have anything to do, while a soldier, with either husbandry or merchandise. And so should it be with the men of God who strove to break the Word, and every Christian indeed, though he meddled with common things, is to take care that he be not entangled by them, not to be caught, as it were, as game is entangled in a net. There is a way, you know, of making the actions of common life subservient to the purposes of divine grace. This is the Christian’s business; let him take care that ‘he be not entangled with the cares of this life.

Philip Schaff notes that Paul’s warning is “not against engaging in, secular callings, but against so ‘entangling’ ourselves in them that they hinder the free growth of our higher life.” ([2 Timothy 2 - Schaff’s Popular Commentary on the New Testament](#))

Everett - The word “entangle” implies that a person can get into bondage to the cares of this world without really intending to do so. Some habits have a way of getting a grip on a person’s life so that he is not able to get loose and be free to serve the Lord any longer. There are a lot of things that we can do in life, but most of this entertainment and business has no eternal value. The sign of a mature Christian is seen in their interests. They have set their affects on things above, and not on the things of this earth. We should find God’s plan for our lives and focus on that plan. The cares of this world, called here the affairs of life, are like a snare or a trap. Jesus used a similar analogy in the Parable of the Sower (Mk 4:18–19). “And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” (Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures)

Chuck Smith on **do not be entangled** - And that’s our problem so often. As Jesus said, “(In the last days) **Be on guard**, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.” (Luke 21:34). Catch you unaware. Jesus is talking about how thorns grew up with wheat. Identifying the thorns, He said the desire for riches, the cares of this life and the desires of other things choke out the fruitfulness of the Gospel within their life. So the cares of this life can choke out the fruitfulness. No man who is in war, no man who has signed up for the army is to get involved in the little mundane things of life. Hey, I’m in a battle and I can’t get bogged down with the cares of this life.”

Laansma - The things for Timothy that would amount to being “tied up in the affairs of civilian life” can scarcely be limited to inherently immoral things. Rather Paul likely had in mind anything—even something otherwise morally acceptable—that distracted from Timothy’s particular responsibility to the Good News (cf. Mt 8:18–22; Acts 6:1–7; 1Cor 7:26–34), especially things that go with “getting on in the world.” A misapplication of this principle has certainly contributed to the mocking accusation that some servants of the gospel are “so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good.” Paul cannot be blamed for this. He was by no means forgetting his own emphasis on public good works (2Ti 2:21; 3:17; cf. Titus 2:14). We may not use the gospel as an excuse for disinterest in very earthly justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matt 23:23) or for indolence (2Th 3:6–15). But it is also true that the mocking accusation of being “too heavenly minded” can represent a misvaluation of the world (see Jn 6:26–27). It is appropriate to be oriented to heaven and the age to come, but this does not make sense to a mindset that values the world too highly, a mindset that believers themselves can at times have. The servants of the gospel represent a Kingdom that must finally be described as “heavenly” (4:18), and the sacredness and urgency of the call to discipleship in its proclamation requires total allegiance (Matt 4:18–22; 6:19–34; 19:16–30; 28:16–20; 1Cor 7:29–34). **What that looks like for each individual varies** (John 21:22). (Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Volume 17: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews)

Huther - The literal interpretation, according to which the apostle or preacher should take no concern whatever in civil affairs, is contradicted by Paul’s own example; according to the precept here given, he is to avoid them only when they are a hindrance to the duties of his office. (Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus, 1881, T&T Clark)

THE CHOICE:

PERIPHERALS OR PRIORITIES

A man entangled with this world is ill-prepared for the next one.

Guthrie explains that **empleko** "envisages a soldier's weapons entrammelled (hampered or obstructed by entangling) in his cloak. The main point is therefore the renunciation of everything which hinders the real purpose of the soldier of Christ. There is nothing intrinsically wrong, in other words, about civilian affairs until they entangle. Then they must be resolutely cast aside. (Guthrie, Donald . 2 Timothy).

Empleko was also used of **weaving or braiding the hair**. This latter picture reminds us of Samson, a strong soldier, who lost his power because he got **entangled** with Delilah at first lying to her saying that "If you **weave** the seven locks of my hair with the web and fasten it with a pin, then I shall become weak and be like any other man." (Judges 16:13-note)

Lot was a lot like Samson, for he **LOOKED** at Sodom (Ge 13:10), then pitched his tent **"TOWARD Sodom"** (NIV **"near Sodom"** Ge 13:12), and finally was **"LIVING IN Sodom"** (Ge 14:12). Little by little, Sodom began to move **INTO** Lot and **entangle** him to the point that he did not **please** the Lord, eventually costing him dearly. (Ge 19:15ff). Don't we all have a "lot" of Lot in us?

Empleko pictures a soldier's sword becoming so entangled in his cloak that he is unable to defend himself in battle! The position of the soldier demands detachment from all that would hinder his **wholehearted obedience** to the call of His commander. James would call a soldier who entangles himself "a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8-note) Like a single-minded soldier, we should respond to the orders of our commanding officer, the Lord Jesus, with unquestioning and immediate obedience.

Deuteronomy 20:5, 6, 7, 8 warns a man not to go to war if there are unsettled affairs in his life. The battle is serious and a soldier cannot be distracted by entanglements of business or family affairs.

Plummer observes that the Christian soldier "has a duty to perform "in the affairs of this life," but in doing it he is not to be entangled in them. They are **means**, not **ends**; and must be made **to help him on, not suffered to keep him back**. If they become **entanglements** instead of **opportunities**, he will soon lose that state of constant preparation and alertness, which is the indispensable condition of success." (Plummer, Alfred: 2 Timothy). (Bolding added)

Kent Hughes - Single-mindedness, the ability to focus, to shut everything out when necessary, is the key to success in virtually every area of life... But here the focus is not a basketball rim, a flag fluttering on a distant green, or a musical score—it is Christ himself and how to please him. The single-minded disciple is in the world, but he does not get "entangled" (literal translation) in the world. He avoids anything that will hinder single-minded dedication to his Master. Paul put it this way to the Philippians: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (3:13, 14). Paul was fervent! Single-minded devotion to a thing (a sport, a philosophy, or a cause) can turn you into a machine. But when it is given to Christ who is perfect God and perfect man, whose commands are consonant with perfect love and wisdom and our highest good, then we become what we ought to be and can stand tall even in suffering.

We must purposely focus on him and willingly join with his followers in suffering hardship like good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Charles Spurgeon expressed the point with such power: "Up, I pray you now. By him whose eyes are like a flame of fire, and yet were wet with tears, by him on whose head are many crowns, and who yet wore the crown of thorns, by him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and yet bowed his head to death for you, resolve that to life's latest breath you will spend and be spent for his praise. The Lord grant that there may be many such in this church—good soldiers of Jesus Christ. (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: to guard the deposit).

Bernard in his Pastoral Epistles writes that "Singleness of purpose and detachment from extraneous cares are essential conditions of successful service."

ILLUSTRATION OF SINGLE MINDED FOCUS - "What does it take," someone asked a circus tightrope walker, "to do what you do?" "Three things," he answered. "Raw courage. You commit yourself to begin walking, and then you can't change your mind. Balance. You can't lean too far this way or that. Most of all, concentration. You fix your eyes on that wire, and until it's all over you never shift your attention." He paused. "Never," he said firmly. What consumes you? Where are you going? Have you pinpointed your aim? Does your life have a specific target? It's the look that saves, but it's the gaze that sanctifies.

ILLUSTRATION - Uriah was a great example of NOT ENTANGLING himself in the everyday affairs of the world! – when David had taken his wife Bathsheba and she conceived, to hide it he brought Uriah back from the battle so he'd come home to be with his wife. Instead, Uriah slept at the door of the king's house. The second night David got him drunk, but still Uriah didn't go home to his wife. Finally David sent him into the heat of battle and had Joab retreat back. Uriah died as a loyal soldier!

ILLUSTRATION - Shortly after joining the Navy, the new recruit asked his officer for a pass so he could attend a wedding. The officer gave him the pass, but informed the young man he would have to be back by 7 p.m. Sunday. "You don't understand, sir,"

said the recruit. "I'm in the wedding." "No, you don't understand," the officer shot back. "You're in the Navy!"

The Roman code of **Theodosius** said "We forbid men engaged on military service to engage in civilian occupations."

John Bunyan (Pilgrim's Progress) would undoubtedly refer to a soldier who entangled himself in the everyday affairs of the world as **"Mr. Facing-both-ways."**

Matthew Henry has an interesting way to describe **not entangling** oneself "A soldier, when he has enlisted, leaves his calling, and all the business of it, that he may attend his captain's orders. If we have given up ourselves to be Christ's soldiers, **we must sit loose to this world**; and though there is no remedy, but we must employ ourselves in the affairs of this life while we are here (we have something to do here), we must not entangle ourselves with those affairs, so as by them to be diverted and drawn aside from our duty to God and the great concerns of our Christianity. **Those who will war the good warfare must sit loose to this world.** That we may please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers. Observe, 1. The great care of a soldier should be to please his general; so the great care of a Christian should be to please Christ, to approve ourselves to him. The way to please him who hath chosen us to be soldiers is not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life, but to be free from such entanglements as would hinder us in our holy warfare. (Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible) (Bolding added)

Guy King writes that the **good soldier** "must not allow himself to get entangled with civilian interests, when all his energies are supposed to be devoted to the war. He must, for the time, forswear anything, and everything, that would prejudice his soldiering. A like sacrifice must be seen in the **soldier of the Cross**. **He may find that he will have to give up certain things, certain interests, certain habits, certain amusements, even certain friends - not because any of these are wrong in themselves, but because they are a snare, an entanglement, to him; they get in the way of his success as a soldier.** He will not criticise his fellow Christians if they find no harm in such matters - it is not his business to criticize; though, when asked, he is free to give his opinion, and to explain the reason for his own avoidance. **Anything that interferes with our being the best that we can be for Him is to be sacrificed - however harmless it may be to others, and however attractive it may be to ourselves;** even though it be so darling a possession as a hand, or a foot, or an eye, Matthew 18:8-9. Let it be made clear that there are many things in "this life" that, for the Christian soldier, are plain duty, family things, social affairs, business matters, that must be attended to - and done all the better for the very reason that he is a Christian - but the point lies in that word "entangleth": that is where the emphasis rests. When anything, however otherwise legitimate, becomes an entanglement, it must be severely, and sacrificially, dealt with. ([2 Timothy 2:1-7 Some Things Every Christian](#))

Solomon picks up on Paul's warning and exhorts all "soldiers" on active duty to **Watch over** (command) (Greek word *phulake* pictures setting a sentry at the "eye gate" of your heart) your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life." (NLT translates it **"Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do"**) (Proverbs 4:23-note)

Paul would add that Christian soldiers "have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel" and thus should "speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts." (1Thes 2:4-note)

A great example of a man who did not entangle himself was the Christian song writer and singer, Keith Green. After he died, his wife wrote and entitled his biography "No Compromise," which is certainly a major aspect of avoiding entanglement.

Life Application Bible makes the point that ""Christian workers, whether pastors or laymen, must watch their outside involvements carefully. Business ventures, serving on committees or boards, volunteer assignments, and/or home projects can eat up valuable time and energy"... (and goes on to add the caution that) "Some have taken Paul's advice to mean that Christians should do nonstop Christian work. While the image of the soldier presents helpful insights about endurance, even soldiers need rest. Wise commanders know their soldiers need breaks from the action. Even when there have been no wounds, the soldier needs relief from the stress of the battle. We must maintain a healthy balance in our lives between spiritual activity and spiritual rest. Pastors, teachers, and other ministers cannot function without times of refreshment. Do you give yourself permission to take time away from work? ([Barton, B. et al: The NIV Life Application Commentary Series: Tyndale](#))

Where would an army be if every soldier had part-time work that took him away from his military duties! Our main task is to please our Commander and Lord—not others and not ourselves.

It was **disobedient double-mindedness** of one (bad) soldier ([Achan](#)) that led to Israel's defeat at [Ai](#) after their great victory at Jericho (Joshua 7:1-26). Joshua had given a clear command to the soldiers to dedicate to God all the spoil from Jericho, but Achan who failed to guard the "eye gate" of his heart, "saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then" he "coveted them and took them" (Josh 7:21)

Peter Lange emphasizes that Paul, a tent maker, was not saying a Christian should never do secular work writing that "Paul also, while working with his hands, has eaten his own bread (Acts 20:34; 1Cor 4:12; 9:6); and certainly he will not have given this counsel to Timothy unconditionally. But, assuredly, special tact and wisdom are necessary so to manage the inevitable cares and

occupations which daily life brings with it, that the cause of the kingdom of God shall be thereby in no way be injured, but rather can gain advantage from their results; as was the case actually with Paul himself, who found occasion, in his own activity, to set forth his example to the community for imitation (see 2Th. 3:6-9)."

Thomas Adams (discussing entangle in 2Pe 2:20) - "They are entangled," as birds are caught in an evil net; where the more they struggle to get out, the faster they stick.

Melanchthon: "So he wishes the minister of the gospel to serve in his own vocation unreservedly, and not to engage in outside affairs, in political management. Let not the minister of the gospel have one foot in the temple and the other in the curia (any of the ten subdivisions of the Latin, Sabine, or Etruscan tribes; a meeting place of such a subdivision; the senate house of Rome)."

Achan (and his entire family) were stoned and then burned with fire. Israel also reaped a bitter defeat in their first attempt to conquer Ai including the loss of 36 Israelites. Why such tragedy? All because of one unfaithful selfish soldier unwilling to remain unentangled.

The Roman soldier was to avoid all preoccupation with the daily affairs of the marketplace **in order to be free to obey without hesitation or hindrance** the commander's order. Engaged in a continual spiritual war, the Christian soldier likewise must ever concentrate on his Lord's work and must not devote his time and interests to a business on the side which hinders his faithful performance of his primary responsibility. Paul is not saying that a Christian soldier should have no contact at all with his former friends and surroundings, but that he is not to become caught up and enmeshed in them. Furthermore, Paul **does not** mean that the Christian worker must never engage in any secular work, for Paul himself was engaged in "tent making" for a living, but it was only a means toward furthering his passion of preaching Christ crucified. What Paul is saying is that the **"good soldier"** must not allow ordinary affairs of life to become the **main object of existence**. Instead, the **active service for Christ** must always occupy the prominent place, while the things of this life are kept in the background.

The active soldier must be on guard against becoming so involved in such pursuits that he no longer feels free to give himself fully to the call of Christian service. Stated another way, a believer's life is not to be wrapped up in the passing pleasures and non-essentials of this life. Because we live on the battlefield continually, all things are to be subservient to winning the battle, remembering that "the battle is the Lord's". (1Sa 17:47)

Christians like soldiers in the field must avoid anything that hampers their effectiveness in battle. Christian soldiers should be so consumed with their duties that they are oblivious to the passing pleasures and enticements of the world like God's servant Moses (He 11:24, 25, 26-note, He 11:27-note).

John reminds us that "the world is passing away, and also its lusts, but the one who does the will of God abides forever." ([1Jn 2:17](#))

Paul advised the Corinthian saints "Those in frequent contact with the things of the world should make good use of them without becoming attached to them, for this world and all it contains will pass away." (New Living Translation paraphrase) (1Cor 7:31)

MacArthur - "Paul is not speaking about things that necessarily are wrong in themselves. It is not that a soldier should have no contact at all with his former friends and surroundings, but that he is not to become caught up and enmeshed in them. Those things are irrelevant to his soldiering and are always subject to being relinquished. In the same way, a good soldier of Christ Jesus refuses to allow earthly matters to interfere with the fulfillment of his duty to his Lord. Many Christians, pastors, special ministries, and doctrinally sound churches have been undermined by concerns and activities that are innocent in themselves but have been allowed to crowd out the primary purpose of serving Jesus Christ in the advancing of His kingdom against the forces of darkness. ([MacArthur, J. 2 Timothy. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

A. Plummer, D. D. - Paul does not suggest that Christians should keep aloof from the affairs of this life, which would be a flat contradiction of what he teaches elsewhere (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12). He has a duty to perform "in the affairs of this life," but in doing it he is not to be entangled in them. They are means, not ends; and must be made to help him on, not suffered to keep him back. If they become entanglements instead of opportunities, he will soon lose that state of constant preparation and alertness which is the indispensable condition of success. ([Not Entangled with the World](#))

ILLUSTRATION - Paul's point is illustrated by the story of the Civil War soldier who had been a watchmaker in civilian life and set himself up in business in his camp, repairing watches and earning extra money. One day the bugle blew and his company was ordered to be ready to move within the hour. "I can't do it!" the watchmaker lamented. "I have too much work to do and I'll lose my customers!"

Luke 9 gives 3 examples of entanglement in the lives of individuals which impeded their active service in the Lord's army. The first person confidently declared to Jesus ""I will follow You wherever You go."

but Jesus who knew all men's hearts replied

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" indicating that this individual was more concerned with comfort than truly following the Lord.

To another person Jesus said "Follow Me" to which the individual answered with the excuse "Permit me first to go and bury my father."

To which Jesus in turn replied "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

Finally, the third said "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."

But again Jesus made it clear He was not recruiting part-time, half-hearted soldiers answering that "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (see Lk 9:57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62) (**See similar idea** in Mark 10:28-30; Lk 10:41, 42; 1Cor 7:29-31; Heb 12:1).

Similarly, Jesus taught that "the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Mt 13:22) are some of those affairs of everyday life that can keep an unbeliever from receiving Christ and by extrapolation certainly can keep believers from loyal, single minded service to their Commander-in-chief. Just as the dutiful soldier places his life willingly on the line in service of his country, so the faithful Christian will willingly "deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow" his Captain (Mt 16:24).

A soldier has to give up many things; some of them are bad things (pride, independence, self-will), and some of them are good things (his home, his family) - but if he is not willing to suffer hardship, he is not a "good soldier of Christ Jesus". The issue doesn't have to be between "good" or "bad." Whatever gets in the way of serving our Commanding Officer, and in the way of being a good soldier, must be removed. Using the figure of an individual in a race, the writer of Hebrews gives a similar exhortation that we "lay aside **every encumbrance** (superfluous bodily weight athletes shed during training), and the sin which so easily entangles us, and... run with endurance the race (agon = fight, conflict) that is set before us." (He 12:1-note)

One race. One war. One life.

Will you fight the good fight?

Will you be willing to lay aside the good in order to experience God's best?

Here is a good **barometer** by which you can assess every activity --

Does it entangle you?

We are called to be **IN** in the world but not to be **ENTANGLED** by it. In His great prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed His disciples "are **in the world...** (but) "They are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world." (Jn 17:11, 16)

One can do many things during wartime, but a faithful soldier does not have the right to do anything that will entangle him and make him less effective as a soldier. A good soldier must put priority on his calling and be completely dedicated to his task and his Commander. When a soldier makes a decision, the big question is not "Is it safe, popular or right" but "Is it what my Commander-in-chief wants me to do?" We should follow the lead of our Captain, Who in the heat of His most agonizing battle left us "an example... to follow in His steps" (1Pe 2:21-note) declaring "Not My will, but Thine be done". (Lk 22:42)

McGee - Imagine a soldier in the midst of battle going to his sergeant or his lieutenant and saying, "Sir, I'm sorry to have to leave, but I have to go over into the city to see about some business; and then I have a date with a local girl, and I just won't be able to be here for the battle tonight!" A great many Christians are trying to fight like that today!... **There are those who interpret this verse to mean that a Christian is not to get married. Well, he is not talking about celibacy**, but he is talking about being so entangled in worldliness that he is not able to live the Christian life. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#)) (Bolding added)

This idea of "**separation**", of being in the world but not of the world, is not an easy task. Every believer faces the same danger as the frog in the kettle where the water temperature is being slowly, imperceptibly increased.

Barclay - The point is not that the Christian minister is to withdraw completely from everyday life. Rather, he is to keep his focus on the goal—the service of Christ in the furthering of his kingdom. He is to be single-minded in this task. The love of this world, especially its comforts and pleasures, has hindered many ministers from taking up the cross daily to follow Christ. (A Study Commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy, EP Study Commentary)

Soldiers must "examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good, abstain from every form of evil" (1Th 5:21,22note) "trying to learn (dokimazo [word study] = proving a thing as worthy or not as in Ro 12:2-note) what is **pleasing** to the Lord" (Ep

5:10-note) in order to remain ready for action. We are to be constantly testing the thoughts and trends of the world around us against the revealed will of God (in the word of God) or we too like the frog in the kettle will become gradually, imperceptibly entrapped in the web of this evil world system and will become ineffective soldiers of Christ.

A. Barnes - Nowhere else is it so true that the will of one becomes lost in that of another as in the case of the soldier. In an army it is contemplated that there shall be but one mind, one heart, one purpose — that of the commander; and that the whole army shall be as obedient to that as the members of the human body are to the one will that controls all. The application of this is obvious. [\(One Mind Rules the Army\)](#)

A. Barnes - Roman Soldiers were not allowed to marry or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctor in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was thought would **divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit.** [\(Roman Soldiers\)](#)

Peter using military language warned the saints "as aliens and strangers to abstain (present tense = continually) from fleshly **lusts** (strong desires that emanate/originate from the **fallen flesh** , still present in all believers until glory - It can never be improved, only defeated by walking in obedience to the Spirit - see Ro 8:13-note) which wage war (present tense = strategizes continually - this is why Jesus warned/commanded us to continually watch and pray Mt 26:41 - we are continually in "harm's way" and the moment you forget this fact, you are in even greater peril, dear soldier of Christ. Furthermore, if you think you've conquered your flesh, you are deceived! Only the power of the Cross conquers the flesh. So daily [yea, even moment by moment] we must take up the mighty cross [Lk 9:23, Mk 8:34, Mt 10:38, 39] and deny ourselves! No furloughs in active spiritual combat [the war is incessant, our enemies -- the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil** -- are relentless] dear brother or sister!) against the soul. (1Pe 2:11-note)

If we yield to our sinful appetites, then we will start living like the unsaved world around us, and will become ineffective soldiers. And don't forget the truth of Proverbs 5:22-note! A good "soldier's prayer" would be to pray "that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, **so that you may approve the things that are excellent**, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (Php 1:9, 10, 11-see **notes** Php 1:9; 10; 11)

David Guzik - A soldier has to give up many things. Some of them are bad things (pride, independence, self-will), and some of them are good things (his home, his family). Nevertheless, if a soldier is not willing to give up these things, he is not a soldier at all. The things that might entangle a soldier might be good or bad for a civilian. The soldier can't ask if something is good or bad for those who are not soldiers; he must give up anything that gets in the way of being a good soldier or serving his commanding officer. A faithful soldier does not have the right to do anything that will entangle them and make them less effective as a soldier.

John Calvin - It is as if he is saying, "The rule of military discipline is that as soon as a soldier has enrolled under a commander he leaves his home and all his affairs and concentrates only on the war. In the same way, we also can only be devoted to Christ if we are free from all the world's entanglements."... When we apply this to the present subject we see that it means that everyone who wants to fight under Christ's command must let go of all the diversions of the world and devote all his energies to the fight. We must, in short, remember the old proverb, "Do what lies to hand." This means that when we undertake our sacred duties we should be so completely absorbed in them that nothing can distract us.

W. M. Statham - In the fourth verse Paul speaks of the "affairs of this life," in which Timothy, like the rest of us, was in danger of "**being entangled**;" and unquestionably, apart from evil, the innocent side of the present life is most attractive to us, in all its forms of pleasure seeking and outward prosperity and honour.

John Trapp - The Council of Chalcedon strictly forbiddeth ministers to meddle in worldly matters: Clericus in oppido, piscis in arido. (Canon 31.)

Noyes - The Christian soldier is to be unentangled.—In the world—he must not be of it. He should aim at freedom from a worldly spirit. With regard to to-morrow he must have no anxious thought. His comrades should be one with him in the service of the Lord. His commercial or professional pursuits should be subordinate to the duties of his higher calling. He must not live in pleasure-seeking, or ever consider himself 'off duty'—free to indulge in that which the service forbids. (The Church Pulpit Commentary: Philippians—Hebrews)

John Gill - Christ's people, his soldiers, and especially his ministers, should not be involved and implicated in worldly affairs and cares; for no man can serve two masters, God and mammon (Mt 6:24-note); but should wholly give up themselves to the work and service to which they are called; and be ready to part with all worldly enjoyments, and cheerfully suffer the loss of all things, when called to it, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel.

Spurgeon - Milton excuses Oliver Cromwell's want of bookish application in his youth thus: "It did not become that hand to wax soft

in literary ease which was to be inured to the use of arms and hardened with asperity; that right arm to be softly wrapped up amongst the birds of Athens, by which thunderbolts were soon afterwards to be hurled among the eagles which emulate the sun." Carnal ease and worldly wisdom are not becoming in the soldier of Jesus Christ. He has to wrestle against principalities and powers, and has need of sterner qualities than those which sparkle in the eyes of fashion or adorn the neck of elegance. ([Carnal Ease not Becoming a Soldier](#))

Thomas Manton - It is a hard matter to enjoy the world without **being entangled** with the cares and pleasures of it.

Thomas Browne - The created world is but a small parenthesis in eternity.

Matthew Henry - This world is our passage and not our portion.

C. S. Lewis - There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.

J C Ryle - The money, the pleasures, the daily business of the world are so many traps to catch souls.

Adam Clarke - It is well remarked by Grotius, on this passage, that the legionary soldiers among the Romans were not permitted to engage in husbandry, merchandise, mechanical employments, or any thing that might be inconsistent with their calling.

William Kelly - To entangle oneself in the businesses of life means really to give up separation from the world by taking one's part in outward affairs as a bona-fide partner in it. The servant of Christ is bound whatever he does to do it unto the Lord and therefore in conformity with His word. In everything he serves the Lord Christ; nor is this bondage of the law but liberty in the Spirit, though he be the Lord's bondman.

Knofel Staton gives us insight on everyday (civilian - pagan) affairs - During the early centuries of Christianity, the Latin word for being a civilian was pagani. A pagani was not involved in the military in any way. It was that Latin word that was carried over into Christian talk to refer to someone who had not joined God's army. That non-Christian was referred to as a pagan. Our word pagan comes from that "civilian-military" terminology; the civilian in this metaphor is the non-Christian. So when Paul talked about Timothy's being a soldier who did not get involved in civilian affairs, he was referring to a Christian's not getting involved in pagan affairs. He is to make the break. Learn to say no. Learn to flee. Learn to run. Live the holy life to which God has called us (2 Timothy 1:9). (Timothy-Philemon: Unlocking the Scriptures for You, Standard Bible Studies)

Gene Cunningham - You cannot be a **soldier** and a **civilian** at the same time. You have to be one or the other. You cannot live the Christian way of life and be involved in cosmic activity at the same time. You have to choose one or the other. Paul is saying this: At any point of time you are either in fellowship or out of fellowship; you are either in the battle or out of the battle; you are either with the cause of Christ or an enemy of the cause of Christ. No soldier has time for the occupations of the civilian. Why? The military dictates every moment of the soldier's life. The soldier must be here at a certain time; he must be there at a certain time. He is told when to go, when to stay, what to do, and how to do it. He is expected to do what he is told, and he does. That is—or should be—the Christian life for the individual believer under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. No soldier involved in a campaign entangles himself in the activities or the occupations of a civilian. Why? "So that he may please the one who enlisted him." "That he may please" is a contingency. The subjunctive mood indicates that this is based on personal response. You make your own free-will decision to please God, to commit yourself to the service He has enlisted you for. The word, enlist is stratologeo; it actually means, to call into service. In the ancient world, if a man wanted to be a commander, he went out and signed up however many people he could. If he signed up 50, if he signed up 100—those were his troops. He was the commander and he led the men he recruited into battle. The man who wanted to be a commander had to be the kind of man people could trust or else no one would volunteer to follow him. Jesus Christ is signing up troops for His army, and He challenges you to follow Him. One of the highest motivations you could have in life is to please the One who enlisted you, to have the Lord Jesus Christ tell you that you did well in combat, you succeeded, you were victorious. (Christian Warrior)

Alexander Maclaren qualifies **do not be entangled** and then offers practical advice about how to know you are entangled and what to do about it - Now it is to be noticed that the parallel of the soldier on service and the Christian in his warfare fails in this one respect: that the soldier had to abandon entirely all other occupation, even the most needful and praiseworthy, because he could not both do them and fight; but the abandonment of the affairs of this life is not necessary for us, because occupation with them is not incompatible with our Christian warfare. Nay, so far from that, these 'affairs' furnish the very fields on which a large part of that warfare to be waged. If these are abandoned, what is left to fight about? What is our Christian warfare but the constant struggle with evil in ourselves and temptation in the world; the constant effort to bring all the activities of our spirits and hands under the power of Christ's law, and to yield our whole selves, in heart, mind, will, and deed, to Him? How then can that warfare be waged, and that ennobling self-surrender achieved, but by the heroic, patient effort to deal with all the affairs of this life in a Christ-like temper, and to Christ-pleasing ends? The Christian who abandons any of these is much liker the frightened deserter who runs from his post, and may expect a stern rebuke, if nothing worse, than the faithful soldier, whose face will one day brighten beneath the

smile of his chief. We must put stress on that word 'entangled,' if we would rightly understand this saying. It is not occupation with the things of life, but entanglement in them, that is fatal to the possibility of pleasing the King. The metaphor is plain enough, and vivid enough. As some poor struggling fish in the meshes of a net vainly beats its silver scales off, and gasps out its life, and swims no more in the free deep; or as some panting forest creature is checked in its joyous bounding, and, tangled in the half-seen snares, only tightens the cords by its wild plunging; or as some strong swimmer is caught in the long, brown seaweed which clings to his limbs till it drags him under and drowns; so men are snared and caught and strangled by these multitudinous cords and filaments of earthly things. The fate of Jonah befall, many a professing Christian, who, if he know what had really come to him, might cry with him, 'The weeds are wrapped about my head.'

We are not bound to abandon the affairs of this life, but we are called upon to prevent their interfering with our warfare. If we are caught in the thicket whilst we are pressing on to the fight, out with the billhooks and hew it down. It may be full of pretty peeps, where there are shade and singing-birds; but if it stands in our way, it has to be grubbed up. 'If thy right eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for thee.'

And that interference can easily be detected, if we honestly wish to do so. Does a certain thing - some legitimate, or even praiseworthy occupation, or possession, the exercise of some taste or accomplishment, some recreation, some companionship-clog my feet when I ought to march; clip my wings when I ought to soar; dim my eyes when I ought to gaze on God? Then no matter what others may do about it, my plain duty is to give it up. It is entangling me. It is interfering with my warfare, and I must cut the cords. I can only do so by entire abstinence. Perhaps I may get stronger some day, and be able to use it as not abusing it; but I cannot venture on that at present. So go it must. I judge nobody else, but whoever may be able to retain that thing, whatever it be, without slackening hold on Christ, I cannot.

So, brethren, if you find that legitimate occupation and affairs are absorbing your interests, and interfering with your clear vision of God, and making you less inclined and less apt to high thoughts and noble purposes, to lowly service and to Christ-like life, your safety lies in at once shaking off the venomous beast that has fastened on you into the fire. Unless the occupation be a plain duty, a post where the Captain has set you as sentry, and which it would be fiat disobedience to forsake, leave it at any cost, if you would kept your Christian integrity.

The affairs of this life must not entangle us; that is the one indispensable condition to pleasing Him. That they may not, they must always be rigidly subordinated, and used as helps to our higher life. Sometimes, when they cannot be so used, they must be abandoned altogether. Each must settle that for himself. Only let us make it our one great purpose in life that, whether present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to Him; and that single, lofty motive will breathe unity into our life, and giving us clear, sure insight into good and evil, will instruct us, by the instinct of hearts and wills tuned to harmony to His, to shun the evil and cleave strenuously to the good. So living, ever looking to His face to catch His smile as our highest reward, it will not be hard to give up anything that hinders the light of His countenance shining upon us. So surrendering, we may hope to be His obedient, and therefore in highest reality, His victorious soldiers. So fighting, we may possess in our hearts the assurance that His wonderful mercy accepts even our poor service as well-pleasing in His sight, and may lay ourselves How, in peace on the field where we seem to ourselves to have berne ourselves so badly and been so often beaten, with the wondrous hope to keep us company in the grave, that when the triumph comes, and our King goes up as conqueror, we, even we, shall follow, and receive from His lips the praise, and from His face the smile, which make the highest heaven of reward for all Christ's soldiers. ([2 Timothy 2 Maclaren Expositions Of Holy Scripture](#))

Steven Cole gives a real life **illustration of entanglement** - The key here is the word, "entangle." It's easy for all of us, including those of us supported by ministry, to get entangled with things that are not wrong in themselves. They're wrong because they distract us from seeking first the kingdom of God. There is nothing wrong with a limited use of sports or computers or recreation or hobbies, if we use them to refresh us for the battle. But it's easy for these legitimate things to suck you into the quicksand and before you know it, you're not seeking first God's kingdom. In his book, **Your Money Matters** ([Bethany Fellowship, 1977], pp. 22-23) Malcolm MacGregor tells of a man who had gone into business for himself, who came to him for counsel. A tremendous opportunity had come along. Once he got this business established, he was going to have a lot of time available to minister at the church and help others. He had excitedly told his family that he had found an opportunity to be his own boss and have the freedom he wanted. They must understand that for a short period of time, he was going to have to pour a lot of work and time into getting the business started, but after that he would have a lot of extra time. He would be able to help out at church, perhaps coach Little League, and they would do things together as a family. So, the first thing he did was to resign his position on the church council, because the council met on Saturday and that was the one day he had to be at work. But as soon as he got the business started, he would be back. Business was going well, but he was not going to the midweek service any more, because that was the night he had to catch up on paper work. Then he quit teaching Sunday School, because he didn't have time to prepare his lesson. Next, he stopped coming Sunday evenings. Then a crisis set in and he was not in church on Sunday morning for six, eight, ten weeks. Now, sitting across the desk from MacGregor, his business was destroyed and he was facing bankruptcy. He asked, "Why would God put

me into this business just to see it fail?" Before we sit in judgment on that man, let's admit that it's very easy to drift into that kind of situation. But if anything—even your family—comes before seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, it is wrongful entanglement. ([2 Timothy 2:3-7 Embracing Hardship for Gospel](#))

J Hammond - In evil times (2Ti 3:1) it fares best with them that care most careful about duty, and least about safety.

J. J. Wray - Ofttimes a commander is so beloved and idolised by his soldiers, that they know no higher wish than to please him for his own sake. A French soldier lay sorely wounded on the field of battle. When the surgeons were probing the wound in the breast to find the bullet, the soldier said: "A little deeper, gentlemen, and you will find the emperor." So heart-deep was his devotion to his captain. But there never, never was a captain who so held the heart and charmed the love of His soldiers as Immanuel does. For Him they fight, for Him they live, for Him they suffer, and for Him they die! if only they may "please Him who hath called them to be a soldier." This Commander loves to mention his beloved "braves" in His dispatches, and these are kept as a book of remembrance. ([Heart Devotion to Christ](#))

British Weekly - The Countess of Aberdeen, speaking at Millseat, said, "If you have noticed Mr. Gladstone as I have done, he considers it a sacred duty never to think any part of his time his own while he is in office. He considers he has no right to have anything to do with his own private affairs. He has told me himself that he never reads a book which he does not think will help in some way to prepare his mind for the work which he has to do for the country. He never takes any relaxation, any recreation, but what he thinks is just necessary to prepare him in doing the work of his country. It is a life of hard and continuous work, and yet we all look upon that as the most honourable place in the country, that of being absolutely the servants of the country."

G. Huntingdon - **What are the things with which we are in danger of entangling ourselves?** 1. Doubtless we are in the greatest danger from our sins and especially from our besetting sin, i.e., that peculiar sin to which each one is liable either from some natural bias, or from acquired habit arising out of the evil within. We are in danger of entangling ourselves with our sins — (1) From their deceitfulness. (2) From the power and force of habit. (3) Because we cannot be the slaves of sin and be the servants of God. 2. **But the Christian's dangers arise not only from his sins, but also from the ordinary affairs of daily life.** These are more especially meant in the text. And what snare can be greater? Actual sin we may generally know to be sin. But in the affairs of this life, our daily occupations and our lawful enjoyments, it is often hard to find where the entanglement begins. If as moralists say and as experience proves, the difference between things lawful and unlawful is frequently one of degree, it must require both an enlightened conscience and much self-examination to ascertain the middle path of safety. Then keep as your safeguard the motive the text supplies: "to please Him who hath chosen you to be a soldier." It is possible, we may think we do God service by acts which a more enlightened judgment would convince us do not; we cannot mistake a sincere desire to please Him. The old Crusader who, his heart aroused by the preaching of a Bernard or a Peter, laid his hand on his breast and swore to scare away the infidel from the holy sepulchre by his good broadsword, needed more light to learn that "our weapons are not carnal"; and yet who can doubt his desire to please his Saviour? Let us, then, see to it that we have this motive — Am I desirous to please Him who hath chosen me to be a soldier? ([The Christian Warfare](#))

Affairs ([4230](#)) (**pragmateia** from **pragma** = matter, business) refers to transactions, negotiations, business affairs.

Paul's point is that it's hard to obey our Captain's orders when there are so many distracting influences. Paul is emphasizing single-mindedness and focused purpose (cf "one thing I do" see [Php 3:13-note](#)), abstaining from anything contrary to the will of the Lord.

It is interesting to note that the related word (**pragmateuomai**) is translated **occupy** (KJV) in [Luke 19:13](#) Jesus told His disciples to "**Occupy** (do business in the **aorist imperative** = Do this now! Don't delay! Conveys sense of urgency) until I come back."

Our word, **pragmatic**, is derived from these Greek words. As Christian believers, it is pragmatic for us to be active in our daily responsibilities while waiting for Christ, but it is also spiritually pragmatic not to be so involved with these activities as to hinder our service to our Commander. In fact, even our daily occupations should be carried out in His name and in ways that please Him (1Co 10:31, [Col 3:23-note](#)).

Plummer - Paul does not suggest that Christians should keep aloof from the affairs of this life, which would be a flat contradiction of what he teaches elsewhere (1Th 4:11,12-note). He has a duty to perform "in the affairs of this life," but in doing it he is not to be entangled in them. They are means, not ends; and must be made to help him on, not suffered to keep him back. If they become **entanglements** instead of **opportunities**, he will soon lose that state of constant preparation and alertness which is the indispensable condition of success. (Plummer, A: 2 Timothy)

Albert Barnes - Roman soldiers were not allowed to marry, or to engage in any husbandry or trade; and they were forbidden to act as tutors to any person, or curators to any man's estate, or proctors in the cause of other men. The general principle was, that they were excluded from those relations, agencies, and engagements, which it was thought would divert their minds from that which was to be the sole object of pursuit.

JIM ELLIOT'S

"LIFE VERSE"

2Timothy 2:4 was **Jim Elliot's** "Life Verse" as related by his widow Elizabeth Elliot. Before she became Jim's wife, she was Elizabeth Howard a student at Wheaton College. Elizabeth had scrutinized the boys on campus and decided that there was really only one who interested her and his name was Jim Elliot. He displayed a maturity and godliness she found most attractive. When the school yearbooks were handed out, Elizabeth asked Jim to sign hers, hoping that if there was any interest in her, he might indicate so in signing her yearbook. When he returned it, she rushed to her room, found his signature and read beneath it **2Timothy 2:4**. He later wrote

**He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep
to gain what he cannot lose.**

He was willing to suffer hardship as a good soldier even it meant dying for his Commander which is exactly what he did. His actions backed up the words he lived by in 2 Timothy 2:4. **Jim Elliot** was a **good soldier** like Paul who said "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

ILLUSTRATION OF "DISENTANGLING" = Learning to Discard "Necessities" - In Jules Verne's novel *The Mysterious Island*, he tells of five men who escape a Civil War prison camp by hijacking a hot air balloon. As they rise into the air, they realize the wind is carrying them over the ocean. Watching their homeland disappear on the horizon, they wonder how much longer the balloon can stay aloft. As the hours pass and the surface of the ocean draws closer, the men decide they must cast overboard some of the weight, for they had no way to heat the air in the balloon. Shoes, overcoats, and weapons are reluctantly discarded, and the uncomfortable aviators feel their balloon rise. But only temporarily. Soon they find themselves dangerously close to the waves again, so they toss their food. Better to be high and hungry than drown on a full belly! Unfortunately, this, too, is only a temporary solution, and the craft again threatens to lower the men into the sea. One man has an idea: they can tie the ropes that hold the passenger car and sit on those ropes. Then they can cut away the basket beneath them. As they sever the very thing they had been standing on, it drops into the ocean, and the balloon rises. Not a minute too soon, they spot land. Eager to stand on terra firma again, the five jump into the water and swim to the island. They live, spared because they were able to discern the difference between what really was needed and what was not. The "necessities" they once thought they couldn't live without were the very weights that almost cost them their lives. The writer to the Hebrews says, "Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1 NIV).—Ed Haynes, *Edwardsville, Illinois. Leadership*, Vol. 11, no. 4.

The one who enlisted him (4758) (**stratologeō** from **stratos** = warfare + **legō** = in this instance **legō** means "to choose") primarily means to gather or select as a warrior or choose to be a soldier and is used here in the verb participle form to describe the soldier's commander.

As discussed above, a Christian's commander is Jesus Christ Whom, the One we are endeavor to please. Paul's constant "ambition, whether at home or absent (was) to **be pleasing** to" his Lord. (2Cor 5:9-note)

The paramount concern of every saint should be to please their Lord in every area of their life. And remember that you can't always be a "people pleaser" and "God pleaser" at the same time. It is impossible to serve two commanders, just as it is impossible to serve two masters (Mt 6:24-note). As the "good soldier" gives himself fully to his calling, allowing no outside pursuits to interfere with his duties as Christ's soldier, he may appear radical to those less committed but he will "please" his Commander. To obey is better than sacrifice. The faithful Christian's fondest hope is to be rewarded for loyal, obedient service and to hear his Master say, "Well done, good and faithful slave (Note reasons he heard well done - "good", "faithful" or trustworthy - **Are you? Am I?** We all have some responsibility to be good stewards - e.g., we all have been allotted precious moments of time to redeem and use wisely for His glory! Don't waste your life - see video by John Piper = [Don't Waste Your Life](#)); you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master (Mt 25:21)

Please (700) (**aresko** [word study] from **airo** = through the idea of raising up, elevating or exciting emotion - not everyone agrees) originally meant to make peace, to reconcile someone, to be well disposed to someone. It came to mean to be satisfied with, to take pleasure in and then to take a pleasant attitude toward someone. In short it means to cause someone to be pleased with someone or something or to be pleasing to or acceptable to. **Aresko** can sometimes mean to strive to please to accommodate one's self to the opinions desires and interests of others.

To **please** means to give or be the source of satisfaction, pleasure or contentment to another. It means satisfying or behaving properly toward one with whom one is related and so to agreeable and to please them.

Paul a **good soldier of Christ Jesus** explains to the Galatians what it means to please one's commander writing "am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to **please** men? If I were still trying to **please** men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." (Gal 1:10)

Indeed a **good soldier** is in a sense a "bond-servant" of his Commander-in-chief. Paul writes to the Romans that "those who are in the flesh (non-believers) cannot **please** God" (Ro 8:6-note). So clearly to please the Commander one must be a believer and secondly like a bondservant, he must be willing give up his will and surrender to His will as Albert Barnes elaborates on below.

Barnes adds that a **good soldier's** "great object is to approve himself to (his Commander). It is not to pursue his own plans, or to have his own **will**, or to accumulate property or fame for himself. His **will** is absorbed in the **will** of his commander, and his purpose is accomplished if he meet with his approbation. Nowhere else is it so true that the **will** of one becomes lost in that of another, as in the case of the soldier. In an army it is contemplated that there shall be but **one mind, one heart, one purpose** - that of the commander; and that the whole army shall be as obedient to that as the members of the human body are to the one will that controls all. The application of this is obvious. The grand purpose of the minister of the gospel is to please Christ. He is to pursue no separate plans, and to have no separate will, of his own; and it is contemplated that the whole "Corps" of Christian ministers and members of the churches shall be as entirely subordinate to the will of Christ, as an army is to the orders of its chief. (Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible)

William Barclay asks - What then were the qualities of the soldier which Paul would have repeated in the Christian life?

(i) **The soldier's service must be a concentrated service.** Once a man has enlisted on a campaign he can no longer involve himself in the ordinary daily business of life and living; he must concentrate on his service as a soldier. The Roman code of Theodosius said: "*We forbid men engaged on military service to engage in civilian occupations*" A soldier is a soldier and nothing else; the Christian must concentrate on his Christianity. That does not mean that he must engage on no worldly task or business. He must still live in this world, and he must still make a living; but it does mean that he must use whatever task he is engaged upon to demonstrate his Christianity.

(ii) **The soldier is conditioned to obedience.** The early training of a soldier is designed to make him unquestioningly obey the word of command. There may come a time when such instinctive obedience will save his life and the lives of others. There is a sense in which it is no part of the soldier's duty "to know the reason why." Involved as he is in the midst of the battle, he cannot see the over-all picture. The decisions he must leave to the commander who sees the whole field. The first Christian duty is obedience to the voice of God, and acceptance even of that which he cannot understand.

(iii) **The soldier is conditioned to sacrifice.** A. J. Gossip tells how, as a chaplain in the 1914-18 war, he was going up the line for the first time. War and blood, and wounds and death were new to him. On his way he saw by the roadside, left behind after the battle, the body of a young kilted Highlander. Oddly, perhaps, there flashed into his mind the words of Christ: "This is my body broken for you." The Christian must ever be ready to sacrifice himself, his wishes and his fortune, for God and for his fellow-men.

(iv) **The soldier is conditioned to loyalty.** When the Roman soldier joined the army he took the sacramentum ([See discussion of sacramentum](#)), the oath of loyalty to his emperor. Someone records a conversation between Marshal Foch and an officer in the 1914-18 war. "You must not retire," said Foch, "you must hold on at all costs." "Then," said the officer aghast, "that means we must all die." And Foch answered: "Precisely!" The soldier's supreme virtue is that he is **faithful unto death**. (Ed: Cp Paul in his last letter - 2Ti 4:6-8) The Christian too must be loyal to Jesus Christ, through all the chances and the changes of life, down even to the gates of death. ([Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible](#))

Guy King writes...

One bitterly cold winter's morning, long before the War, the business men, warmly and snugly wrapped up, arrived at their city terminus, to be met with the ticket-collectors' chorus, "All seasons, please!"

So they had to unwrap and unbutton, to search in every pocket for the ticket that, of course, they had forgotten that morning and had left at home. Tempers ran out, and strong words, likewise. As one man came to the barrier he said to the collector,

"I'm afraid you're not very popular this morning", to which the official replied, with a grin, "Well, I don't care so long as I'm popular up there" - pointing to the office of the General Manager of the Line. Splendid if he could manage to retain his popularity with the passengers, but the principal thing, the essential thing, was to be well-thought of by the Company.

Would you deem me irreverent if, pointing my finger heavenwards, I say that the thing that counts is to be "popular up there"? - "that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier". To receive His smile - what honour, what ineffable happiness, what all embracing satisfaction, And we haven't to wait till the end to

receive it, for, as Hebrews 11:5 says of Enoch, "before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased GOD."

Having come with me thus far, do you wonder that both Timothy and we need strength to carry out what has been laid before us? It will have to be a strength beyond our own. Very affectionately Paul reminds Timothy of that strength before ever he shows him why he will so badly need it. In the opening verse: "My son" - it is "my child," really; so affectionately does this father think of his son in the faith - "be strong [strengthen yourself] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus".

You will only adequately strengthen yourself when you learn day by day to draw upon His grace which alone is sufficient to strengthen you for a life so strategic, so strenuous, so sacrificial - and withal, so satisfying,

That will be, as we shall see later on, the very last word that the Apostle will write to him: "Grace be with you. Amen." ([2 Timothy 2:1-7 Some Things Every Christian](#))

ILLUSTRATION - Audie Murphy ([Wikipedia](#)) was an unlikely hero. Weighing in at only 112 pounds and with the face of a child, Audie was 18 years old when he went overseas during World War II. Nothing about him suggested a hero in the making. Yet when called upon by his commanding officers to do the duty of a soldier, Murphy held nothing back. By war's end, the quiet boy from Texas had fought with extraordinary bravery and saved the lives of countless fellow soldiers. He returned home to an adoring public, was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and received at least 36 other medals—more than anyone else in U.S. history, all because nothing meant more to him as a soldier than the will of his commanding officer.

The great puritan preacher **Richard Baxter** wrote

It is a most lamentable thing to see how most people spend their time and their energy for trifles, while God is cast aside. He who is all seems to them as nothing, and that which is nothing seems to them as good as all. It is lamentable indeed, knowing that God has set mankind in such a race where heaven or hell is their certain end, that they should sit down and loiter, or run after the childish toys of the world, forgetting the prize they should run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see this business as the all-seeing God does, and see what most men and women in the world are interested in and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight imaginable. Oh, how we should marvel at their madness and lament their self-delusion! If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or what was before them in another world, then there would have been some excuse. But it is His sealed word, and they profess to believe it.

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INTENTIONS - A strong desire to please God is the highest incentive for doing His will and shows a true understanding of godly fear. We may have other worthy motives, such as the inner satisfaction of doing what's right or the anticipation of heavenly rewards. But we bring the greatest glory to God when we obey and serve Him because we long to do what brings Him delight.

Craig, a first-grader, beamed with satisfaction as he handed me a spelling test on which his teacher had written a large "100—Good work!" Craig said,

I showed this to Dad and Mother because I knew it would please them.

I could just see him riding home on the bus, hardly able to wait for the moment when his parents would express their excitement with how well he had done. His desire to make Dad and Mom happy obviously was a strong motivating factor in his life.

When Paul used the **simile** of a soldier serving with single-minded devotion to please his commanding officer (2Timothy 2:3, 4), he wanted Timothy to know the supreme reason for serving God, even when the going gets tough. Wholehearted devotion, marked by hard work and careful attention to God's rules, brings the greatest glory to the Lord when it comes from a yielded, loving heart. Our Savior, Who in His humanity shrank from the prospect of being made the sin-offering for mankind, nevertheless prayed,

Not My will, but Yours, be done (Luke 22:42)

Our motive, like His, should be the desire to please the Father. —H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

**Man weighs the deeds;
God weighs the intentions.**

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What Comes Naturally? - The story is told about an elderly man who retired after many years in the British Army. One day a man who knew about his long and distinguished military career decided to play a prank on him. As the old soldier walked down the street with his arms full of packages, the jokester sneaked up behind him and shouted, "Attention!" Without hesitation, the military man dropped his arms to his side, and every package went tumbling to the sidewalk. Without a conscious thought, the veteran was doing what comes naturally for a soldier. Similarly, as believers in Christ, we should respond in a manner that corresponds with our new life. Our behavior is to be more and more in line with the example of Jesus' life. We still must deal with sinful desires, so we need to discipline ourselves to be the kind of person God wants us to be. Like a soldier or athlete in training (2Timothy 2:3, 4, 5), we need to practice repeatedly until doing what's right comes naturally.

Through faith in Christ we are children of the heavenly Father. By the power of the indwelling Spirit, therefore, let us develop the habit of submitting to God's Word. Then, in every situation of life we will increasingly find that obeying Him is "doing what comes naturally." —R W De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, may our lips and lives express
The blessed gospel we profess;
So let our works and virtues shine
And speak of Him who is divine. —Anon.

When we walk with Christ, we become more like Him.

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Supreme Motive - April 15, 2006 READ: 2 Timothy 2:1-13

"walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work." —see **note** Colossians 1:10

A first-grader beamed with satisfaction as he handed me a spelling test on which his teacher had written a large "100%—Good work!" The boy said, "I showed this to Mom and Dad because I knew it would please them." I could just see him riding home on the bus, hardly able to wait for the moment when his parents would express their excitement with how well he had done. His desire to make Mom and Dad happy was obviously a very important motivating factor in his life.

In 2Timothy 2:3, Paul used the image of a soldier who serves with single-minded devotion to please his commanding officer. He wanted Timothy to know the supreme reason for serving God, even when the going gets tough. Wholehearted devotion, marked by hard work and careful attention to God's rules, brings the greatest glory to the Lord when it comes from a yielded and loving heart.

In His humanity, our Savior desired that the prospect of a cruel death and of becoming the sin-offering for mankind would pass from Him. Nevertheless He prayed, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus' supreme motive was a desire to please His Father. That should be our incentive too. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

In all I think and say and do,
I long, O God, to honor You;
But may my highest motive be
To love the Christ who died for me. —D. De Haan

Others see what we do, but God sees why we do it.

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Is Faith An Escape? - November 25, 1996 - READ: Hebrews 11:32-40

Endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. --2Timothy 2:3

Travel to the moon is no longer a fantasy. Human beings have walked on its surface. But years ago when the Hayden Planetarium in New York advertised (merely in jest) that it would take reservations for that lunar trip of 240,000 miles, 18,000 people applied within a few days.

A psychologist who studied their letters concluded that most of them were eager to escape from their responsibilities and problems. One woman wrote, "It would be heaven to get away from this busy earth ... and just go somewhere that's nice and peaceful, good,

safe, and secure."

Many who don't believe in Christ think of Christians as emotionally weak people who are looking for an escape from real life now and pie-in-the-sky later. But biblical faith is not an opiate that induces drug-like passivity. In Hebrews 11:32-38 we read about men and women who chose to endure torture rather than renounce their spiritual convictions. And today, bold missionaries throughout the world illustrate that following Christ is difficult.

As modern-day believers, we may not experience great persecution for our faith, but we do face hardships and trials. Our faith in Christ is not an escape; it gives us the strength to endure. —Vernon C Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Against the foe in vales below
Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world. --Yates

Great faith is often built during great trials.