Today our devotional is again in 2 Timothy. Today we will look at 2:3-10.

In this letter Paul gives many short commands to Timothy. 1:3 “Retain the standard of sound words…” 1:14 “Guard… the treasure entrusted to you.” 2:1 “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus…”

This morning we will look at 2:2 “Suffer hardship with me…”

50 years ago today, a good friend of mine from High School went down to the recruitment center and enlisted in the Air Force. Since he volunteered while the Vietnam War was still on, service was a very serious business. Roy Batzel became an airman, then sergeant, went to officer’s candidate school and retired a major. He was dedicated to serving as a soldier and was rewarded for that dedication.

Military service in Paul’s time was even more a serious business. After a year of strenuous training you served for 20 years if you lived. You went where you were sent and did whatever you were told. Training was continual, hardships were expected, and redeployment to new and unexpected areas was frequent. Most were not allowed to marry or have families. So when Paul likens the ministry to military service it looked a lot like the life he had already been living. It was a life Timothy had also grown accustomed to.

Timothy was a young man brought up in the Greek tradition of his father, so he also understood the dedication of an athlete. To compete as an athlete you had to follow the rules or you were tossed out of the games in front of the whole crowd. Winning was celebrated by everyone in the crowd.

There is a reward that Paul alludes to in his reference to farmers. Farmers are always the first to enjoy their crops before the people in the marketplace. Harvest time was a celebration for the farmer often in country wide festivals. It was a reward for your labor.

Paul brings all these illustrations together with the reminder of what he and Timothy work for with the simple words: remember Christ. He is risen from the dead, defeating death for us all. The truth is that Paul’s imprisonment cannot imprison the Word. It will continue, and grow and be victorious because people take seriously their commitment to it. We are all soldiers of the cross, striving to one thing, and remembering whom we serve: Jesus Christ our Lord.

Verse ten is Paul’s victory song. Training is necessary, work is continuous and suffering is sure - but so is victory. People will come to know Jesus Christ; that is a fact. In a prison facing death Paul was still excited about being part of this Gospel ministry. Jesus still wins – and we still win with Him.

Suffer hardship with Paul and remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead and the eternal glory from belonging to Him.

In Christ Pastor EA