

## **The Hard Work of Christian Growth**

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 2, 2 Timothy chapter 2, verses 4 through 6. I went through 1 through 8 last week, I want to drill into 4 through 6. Let us listen intensively to the word of God. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

The hard-working farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Let us pray. And in these short illustrations, these simple metaphors of the Christian life, God, may we be encouraged and reminded again of the hard work, of the battle, of the strenuous effort.

We are called as believers to be holy, to be obedient, to follow you all the days of our life. Our Lord, we know that you are working in us to this end, that you've given us your spirit and we can be strong in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we read in verse 1 for Timothy and for ourselves, for the grace comes from you, the strength, the ability to do said hard work. Lord, may we be encouraged thereby by this sermon not to give up but to ever persevere in our efforts to be more like our Lord and Savior.

We ask these things by the blood of Christ. Amen. So given the importance of our Christian walk, and I hope it's important to you, and our desire of course to progress in holiness, to stand firm when temptations beckon us off the path of sanctification, I think it's good to go into more details about our Christian walk and our life here in these three verses because of these three metaphors.

One thing in particular stands out that the holy call of our Lord and Savior is hard work. Like the effort we put in, or should put in, for our job, for our career, for our family, for our house, our friends, we ought to put forward for our path to heaven. That's the idea here that Paul is expressing to young Timothy, the pastor, and it's the same for us.

It's not just pastors who are called to warfare, to work hard, to compete like in athletics, or hardworking farmer metaphor, but indeed for all of us. Now certainly difficulties arrive among Christians in varying degrees to be sure, and the circumstances that drive us into strenuous labor in our earthly race change over time. For some of us some things are easier than others, on the other hand for other matters it's more hard for us than you.

Yet there is a constant that remains nevertheless that we should be reminded about, constant things that we need to be encouraged about, and that's what we have in this sermon. And so I'm using these three illustrations by Paul, and I want to show from these perspectives the work before us as believers, that we have the power and the grace of our Lord and Savior as promised to us so that we can persevere in the hardship and the work of spiritual warfare.

## **Christian Growth is Warfare**

The Christian's growth in warfare, the first point, the first illustration he gives, no one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

To get with it and focus on the task at hand is the idea here, and not to be distracted from the things of this world. The Christian walk is a walk of warfare. He says in verse 3 that you must endure hardship as a good soldier.

From that picture of a soldier he goes into simply the warfare here. We have other verses that describe the Christian walk in these terms, it's not just a one-off here. Romans 7.23, for example, but I see another law in my members, warring, fighting, there's a conflict against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

So they have two words there, warring and captivity, warfare, that's the Christian walk. 2 Timothy 4.7, he also talks about as well in the prior, later on as I get through 2 Timothy, he tells the young pastor, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There's fighting again, that's how he pictures it.

The Christian walk is not a walk in the park or a cake walk as we would say when we were younger. And it shouldn't be presented that way to the world either. As though you're born again and all your problems go away, in fact, a number of problems may intensify as a believer.

We have a burden to carry and that's just part of the burden which is the warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now these vivid descriptions reinforce an important truth, that is this particular picture of warfare, of combat, reinforce an important truth, that following Jesus involves hardships and battles. It's a struggle, like wrestling with our sins and with ourselves and with one another, obviously not physically but spiritually, morally, trying to do the right thing.

When everything fights against you in the world, all the temptation out there, even family members telling you, oh, don't do that, that's silly, what are you, a goody-two-shoe? Why do you want to obey God and go to church and read his word and not curse and things like that? That's crazy. And then your own gravity pulling you down to sin within you as well. It's an ongoing strife and conflict that drains the body and the soul during the hardest conflicts.

We fill it in our bodies when we wrestle against sin at times, it can affect us, and of course our body can affect our soul as well. But we cannot persevere in this battle, in this warfare against sin and temptation if we think otherwise. Now war here, I already alluded to it, has two fronts.

We have a two-front battle, external, that which is around us, even close to us like family members. 1 John 2.15 we read, do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

And that's a constant theme there by the apostle John in his epistle there, 1 John, about the world, the world, the world. The world there is the sum total of temptation and sin out there. He's not referring to this physical planet and the trees and the beautiful mountains and even the cars you drive, but they can be part of the world in the sense of that which is sinful out there and temptation.

If they are used for sin, if they are a temptation towards sin, you must resist them as well. It's primarily this picture of the world that we are supposed to not love and the things of the world, he says, do not love the world or the things of the world or within the world are primarily out there. That's why I have this two-front war is how the Bible paints it and that's how reality is.

It's outside of us and there's things inside of us, our soul, our own thoughts and our prayers before God or our own sins and sinful thoughts as the case may be. We certainly have temptation from within. For all these things without us may or may not attract us.

It's like a magnet. For some of you, you look at a car, remember a friend of mine, we're talking and he's like, I was never into cars. There are no what? Temptation to him.

How's that the case? It's not a temptation to him, but someone else, he's obsessed with cars and his wife's like, what's your problem? You're out there fixing the car all the time. You're always thinking about the car. You don't think about our marriage.

Our marriage is falling apart. You can imagine anything else, drugs, maybe books, your job, getting in the way and becoming a temptation. The difference is this, between one person and another, the internal attraction.

If you don't have that magnet towards that sin of being obsessed with a car, your job or whatever the case may be, it's not an attraction. You have other sins you're attracted to. I can guarantee that.

But there's two parts. There's the external and the internal, typically, in temptation and there's warfare and the battle. So the internal war is one we're most familiar with as well, I'm sure.

Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul. There's another passage, a third or fourth passage, using this language of combat, of the struggle, that war against the soul, 1 Peter 2.11, Galatians 5.17, is the classic text, or one of the classic texts, you'll recognize here, for the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary, the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would.

You have this wrestling going on within your soul. Even if there was nothing out there tempting us to sin that we were attracted to, you have your problems within already. You're born with it.

We're born in sin. And thus, the internal war is there from the get-go. We're not aware of this.

If we're not taught this, if we forget this in our life, then when the hardships and temptations come upon us, it's easy for us to just give up, whoa, what's going on here? You should be warned. I'm warning you now. I'm encouraging you, in fact, that it's going to happen and you need to be equipped for it and ready for it.

And one of the best ways is to realize it's a war. It's not just, oh, well, you know, having a little struggle. It's outright combat, morally speaking, to say no, no, no, a thousand times no to wickedness and yes to righteousness.

And of course, this is the final location of all the battles with sin within our hearts. The external allurements may start the fight, as it were, but it's resolved here. Will we repent of our sin or will we keep engaging in that wickedness and sin? Here we must take the stand and we can by the Spirit of God.

We can, as we read here again in verse 1, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. It's not in you. It's not the power in you.

The grace here is a gift. It's the gift of power that you can be strong. And so you can have the battles.

Now, war means killing, carrying out the metaphor even further. Romans 8.13, for if you live according to the flesh, you will die. Paul's very clear about that.

If you keep this up, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death, right, you kill the deeds of the body, you will live. So, Paul isn't just using the warfare as a, just a broad metaphor, a little handle, trying to, here's a little, I'm trying to get your attention.

He goes a little further into the details and uses the language of killing, putting to death or mortifying, right, a mortifiary. Here it's a mortification, to kill, death, it's about death. You want to kill sin or sin will be killing you.

That's Romans 8.13 in a nutshell. Put to death is a language of warfare and destruction. It is not a pleasant imagery.

It is not a pleasant thought. And it's not meant to be because sin isn't to be perceived that way. I know it comes to you sometimes as being pleasant, even enjoyable, but it's not.

It's lying to you. It's using the warfare of subterfuge, of being deceitful and pretending that it's something that it's not. But if we know what sin is and we know therefore the severity of the battle and its finality and its imagery of warfare, then we will say no and flee from it.

Galatians 5.24 continues on in this language, this strong language of Paul especially, in this warfare that we have, in this battle. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with his passions and desires. Now that's quite a shocking image.

We're so used to it, I suppose, in the language there, but crucified, crucifixion is pretty bloody, pretty deadly and gruesome. And that's a picture, again, of the severity, of the seriousness of what we are called as believers in following Jesus, no matter what the world says. The battle is not with our souls as such, but with the wrong and sinful passions of the soul.

Being born again, we are being purified by the Spirit of God, yes, but we still have remnants of temptation within us and the battles therein. And so when he talks about here, crucify

the flesh with its passions and desires, he's not saying, and we'll run across this in Sunday school class when I go over the history of the monks and whatnot in the early church, they went a wrong direction with this word flesh. The word flesh, yes, is the body, translated body, this thing right here, we all have it, but it's shorthand for the sinful desires of the flesh.

That's why it's attached here, the flesh, with its passions and desires. They are being misused towards sin, because they're often associated with these sins, and we use our body for sin. Not always, sometimes you're not doing anything with your body, now the sin is just simply in your mind, that's true, in your heart, yes, but often with our body and our bodily passions and desires, which in other circumstances are otherwise okay.

Brothers and sisters, I hope you get sleep, and I hope you get enough sleep, and I hope you don't think sleep is somehow sinful because it's a desire of the flesh. No, he means sinful desires of the flesh, which is what? Sleeping too much, being lazy, never getting up. Now I know older in life it becomes the opposite side, you have a hard time sleeping, so maybe this is more relevant to the kids and teenagers who like to sleep in and not get anything done.

But you can feel that pull even as an older adult, you're like, I just don't want to get anything done, I'd rather sleep all day, that's the allurements of the flesh with its passions and desires, what, going in the wrong direction now. You're having too much sleep, too much food, too much work. That's often the case with sin, it's taking that which is otherwise okay and even good and proper, you need sleep, you need to work, you need to eat, I hope you're doing all those in good proportion.

You do it too much, you're going into sin there, now it's controlling you. That's what he refers to when he talks about the flesh with its passions and desires. So we're called to battle these things when they become sinful.

The mindset of a warrior, therefore, is we are supposed to fight to win. Now we don't need to be like football players headbutting each other, we can do it, yeah, grab each other and hit each other, that has its place, to build up morale, in other words. But we need to take the call of holiness as important and serious, and I hope the sermon helps in this regard.

But what you do and think outside of Sunday is important, to be sure.

## **Christian Growth is a Race**

And so he continues on here with another metaphor, the Christian growth is a race, a race to the finish line, it's a run, it's a marathon, which he uses that word, as I recall, elsewhere, and we know that has the Greek history there, not only a few hundred years earlier from this time period, it's really part of our history, isn't it? That language and that word, to run that far, was it 23 and a half miles or something in one day, as fast as you can? And the guy died, and we may die in our run as well, in fact we will, Christ Jesus has not returned, but we must run. So that's verse 5, also, if anyone competes in athletics, he's not crowned unless he competes according to the rules, now it's very broad and generic, I pick race to make it more

specific because Paul uses race elsewhere a couple of times, in fact I read one of those verses earlier, I fought the good fight, I have run the race, right? So this picture of a race now illustrates the long-term idea, it's not a short-term battle, it's a long-term battle, it's not going to be done in a couple of days, months, or even a few years, it's the rest of our lives, and so the warfare imagery is about the intensity, the severity, the seriousness of the Christian walk.

The race metaphor therefore shows the longevity and the requirement of perseverance, don't give up, you got to keep going, you got to keep running, you got to make it to the finish line. The perseverance of the saints, behind that is the preservation of the saints. Those words are so close together, when you try to say it real fast in a sermon, you're in trouble.

The preservation of the saints is the basis of the perseverance of the saints. You are called to persevere, that is to keep on keeping on, keep on trucking, they used to say in the 70s, right? You got to keep going, you can't give up, you can't fall down, you got to keep following Jesus, obeying Him, reading the Bible, working hard as a husband, as a wife, whatever your calling and vocation in life is, that's to persevere. But you can persevere because God is preserving you, He's the basis of all of this.

You can be strong, as He says in verse 1, be strong in the grace of our Lord and Savior because you have the grace of our Lord and Savior. That's why. And that's all the difference in the world, because it's not about you.

I don't like running. I think I've said this before, I would never want to do a marathon, I've been told I got the body for it, no thank you. Give me a bike, give me a long walk, nice long, long walk, fast walk maybe.

But not running. But if I have to run, I will run from a bear, right? And if we take seriously this battle, we will run, we will have to run. We must run.

We have the union with Christ, this gives us our perseverance, we are preserved by our union with Christ. 1 Corinthians 1.8-9, 1 Corinthians 1.8-9, Who will also confirm you to the end, that is God will confirm you to the end, the end of all time, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, that's clearly the end of time. God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, you will be brought to the finish line.

While you are running, God is running with you and indeed holding you and sustaining you and carrying you to the finish line, but run you must. Timothy is called to be strong and we are called to be strong as well, but that's possible because God is faithful, as it says there in 1 Corinthians. He will carry you to the end, Christ's blood covers all our sins, because you will stumble in this race, you will fall down and scrape your legs and knees, I remember doing that in gym class, I think some of you my age, maybe the older, you had gym class in elementary school for whatever crazy reason, had carpet on the ground like this, yeah, and you would fall down or you would get a scrape, that carpet would eat up your knees, but you got to get up and you got to keep walking, maybe even crawling, whatever it takes to keep following our Lord and Savior.

John 10.28 continues with this idea that God preserves us even as we persevere. John 10.28, and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. What more encouragement do we need? It feels like you're not going to make it to the finish line, I know, that you fell down and you fell down the hill and you're going the opposite direction of the finish line, in fact, but Jesus tells us we are in our Father's hands and neither one shall snatch them out of his hand.

He has the power of heaven and earth and he's exercising it to preserve you. He will grab you at the bottom of the hill and turn you around and you will walk your way up again. Neither the world, your sinful flesh, or the devil can drag you from heaven.

That's what the promise of John 10.28 is. One of those verses you should perhaps put in your Bible somewhere. The external and internal battles may seem hopeless, but they're not going to stop our Lord and Savior.

In fact, they're part of his plan. They haven't caught him off guard. He is the master general who knows every move of the devil, of the sins of your life, and he will use it for your good and for his glory.

This should encourage us to keep on keeping on. We are called, therefore, because Christ, by the power of the Spirit within us, is preserving us. We are called, therefore, to endure, to run with endurance.

Hebrews 12.1. Well, here we go again. Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us, what, run with endurance the race that is set before us. That's the idea of perseverance.

You got to run that race. Our forefathers ran before us in the hall of faith, chapter 11 of Hebrews. Now we're at the chapter 12.

Therefore, because of this long list of Abraham, David, Moses, the prophets who did not give up, yes, they even died in following our Lord of the Old Testament, but they did not give up. They are the ones, the great cloud of witnesses that surround us, and we are, therefore, called to follow their example, to lay aside every weight, that is, don't let us hold us back, and the sin which so easily ensnares us and tells us, don't run, give up, and let us run with endurance that race, this godly race. When he says run with endurance, he doesn't mean kind of endurance you might have used that word sometimes.

Well, you got to endure it. You got to endure being with your in-laws over Thanksgiving or something. That's not the idea he has here, although you may have to do that.

There are things in your Christian walk that you just simply have to endure. There's nothing literally you can do about it. You just are a passive agent, and things are swirling around you, and all the bad decisions you can't stop are being done.

You must endure it. That's true. But here, by endurance, he means persevere.

It's a race, right? You got to keep it up. Your body is tired. It wants to fall apart.

You say, no, I must keep running. I must keep obeying my Lord. I must follow Him all the days of my life.

And I want to note here on the side that this description that he has here, them running, is not a description of isolation, of just me and my Bible, and I'm on my own, but we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. The history of the church is our history and our children's history, and so we're not running by ourselves, in other words. And I can include, of course, we know from other Bible verses, just life in general.

You've got your family, family members who are Christians, and friends in the church. We're all running this race together. But why run? It seems as though it can be hopeless, helpless.

What's the point? I sin. I'm going to fall apart again. God tells us I'm supposed to do this.

I don't have the energy, Pastor. God is indeed working in us. God is working in us.

And this is an encouraging point I want to highlight here, that this doctrine is known in theology as the doctrine of concurrence. You can hear concurrence. You have that kind of an English, we concur with one another, we are in agreement to coming together.

The doctrine of concurrence means there are two moral agents in the same event. It's you and the Holy Spirit. Now, you may have meant it for sin, we see this in the Old Testament.

You may have meant it for evil, but what? God meant it for good. The same event, two moral agents, God and the sinner, you, you're a sinner, although saved by grace. You meant for one thing, God meant it for another.

His counts, really. And it will go for that great glorious purpose. The doctrine of concurrence is important because in the call of perseverance, it is easy for us to see our sins, because you will sin, you are sinning, and you will struggle with sin the remainder of your life.

Some sins you will conquer to some degree, that's true, a larger degree than others, but you're going to still see something there, and that can really drag you down, and I hope this will drag you back up into the race before us. The Confession, Chapter 5, the Westminster Confession of Faith, written by our forefathers the Puritans, although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, without God we would have nothing, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly. God has a plan.

Yet by the same providence, he orders them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently, which is to say, all things come to pass by God's plan, but they come to pass by cause and effect. And our cause and our effect in our Christian life is we are called to persevere. We can do it, because the Spirit is behind us as the cause, as our motor, as our engine to keep going.

Acts 2.23 is a good illustration of this fact, of the doctrine of concurrence, two moral agents acting in the same event, him, that is Jesus, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. Who delivered Jesus to the cross? You would say, well, the evil Jews did. Well, that's true, he continues here, you have taken by lawless hands and have crucified and put to death, Peter tells his audience, Peter tells his audience to their face, you're a bunch of murderers.

Can you imagine that? You did it, but he also says, God delivered and determined from beforehand to deliver him over to and through these methods of the evil Jews. They're both involved in the same event, but God had a greater purpose. And that's your deliverance and salvation.

Psalm 127.1 is a good verse, this puts it in a nice summary fashion. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

And you can expand that to say, unless God is preserving you, your perseverance will be in vain, right? You're not a watchman, that's true, but you can reverse the imagery and say you are a watchman. And you're out there, watchman of your soul, which is a castle and you're protecting it from sin. So you can use this imagery as well.

You can, the imageries are all there to help you get a better handle upon the battles before us. And so you need God behind all your acts and we have him behind our acts and he's promised that if we are his. Psalm 37, we read, the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delights in his way.

Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down for the Lord upholds him with his hand. He will fall, but a father, what, holds the son and pulls him back up again, doesn't he? And thus, without this, and I had this growing up as a young believer in the 80s, I didn't have the doctrine of God's providence, that he's in control of all things. And I lived in fear, in mortal fear, because I sinned, I saw my sins, I'm like, now what? How can I persevere to heaven, I keep sinning, what's going on here? And then I was taught, well, God covers your sins and he'll keep carrying you, he'll carry you to the finish line.

So it's a comforting doctrine and I hope it is for you. God's plans never fail and his plan is that we will fight, we will run, and we will work hard and that leads us here to the third point, Christian growth is hard work.

## **Christian Growth is Hard Work**

A battle and combat is hard work, running is hard work, here farming is hard work, that's the imagery, right? The hard working farmer must be first to partake of the crops, which he's saying, if you want the fruit of your labor, you better be hard working, Timothy, that's what he's saying.

Now I've never worked on the farm, but I know it's hard labor, I can see it, I can imagine it, I've seen enough, read enough things, carrying bales of hay, they're very heavy, tilling the

ground. We have a tractor that does that nowadays, right, you just dig it up with large pointy spiky things, in the old days you did it by hand. And if you're rich, you probably had an ox and the ox would probably try to drag some things along until the land.

And you did it all day, in the middle of the heat, and then you had to weed, and you had to seed, it is hard work. But they persevered, because otherwise what? They would starve to death. War, race, farming, all these illustrate a facet of the Christian walk, and here especially is the hard calling, the high calling, the hard work of being a believer.

For indeed, good things, all good things require some labor and some work. If you want a pay raise, you better work hard. If you want a good family, you better work hard.

If you want wealth and health, you better work hard. First Corinthians 9.24 is the passage elsewhere I had in mind about the race, but the picture covers two things here in Paul's illustration, is the race and running and preparing yourself for that race, that is the hard work, the effort involved in this. Do not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize.

Run in such a way that you may obtain it. So there he picks up the idea of it's every man for himself, but in the best sense of, look, it's you against the world, as it were, and sin, and you're going to outrun them, and you're going to get to the finish line, you better be the winner. Verse 25, and everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things.

Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. So part of the earthly race, in other words, he's picking up the metaphor and saying, look, I've said this before, right? I'll probably say it again. Many things in the Christian life are very much just what the rest of life is.

It requires work, it requires planning, it requires commitment, all the same stuff, except now you have something in addition to it. It's God is the object of your love and of your efforts, and that you love your family for a different reason than the unbeliever would, because they are yours in Christ and things like that. But all the other methods and tools are very much the same.

And this is one of them. Hard work, perseverance, commitment, and our faith in Jesus Christ, and temperance or moderation in all things here. He uses the word temper in the translation you have, which means to prepare yourself for conflict before you, the race or the wrestling and the like.

And so in everyday life, you don't want entertainment, you don't want food, you don't want comfort, it's distracting you from important things that need to be done in the right order at the right time. And the same with the Christian walk, it requires self-control, that's the picture of temperance there. Which, of course, is what? Hard work.

To say no to yourself, no, I need to get up now, no, I'm done eating, no, I need to get to work, no, I better stop being lazy, no, I shouldn't talk that way, whatever that is. That does take work at times, and sometimes it requires planning, it requires lots of Bible reading and prayer. That takes time, that takes a little effort and energy.

So work here I have in mind isn't necessarily obviously physical, although that may be part of it. You may need to do more physical exercise to wake yourself up, I don't know. Therefore, I run, he continues, not with uncertainty, lest I fight, not as one who beats the air.

But I discipline my body, there it's a different word, and bring it to subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. So he's honing in there in 1 Corinthians 9, the effort it takes, the self-discipline and controlling of your body, of beating it into subjection. The physical body, of course I mean the spiritual body, your soul, your thoughts, your emotions, your will, should be beaten into submission to follow our Lord and Savior, and can because you have the Spirit of God within you.

Do you trust in Jesus? Then you have the power. Have you repented of your sin? Do you hate it? And then you are His and you can. Now disciplining our physical body looks different at different times and different places, to be sure, and so it does with the soul.

But morally, it could be simplified as simply this, whatever necessary to keep me from sinning and to keep me obeying, that's what we're called to do. Guarding our eye gates, movies and books, guarding our ear gates, what we hear and listen to, and again, even physical exercise and diet can help in this matter. Hard work, of course, is empowered by the Spirit of God.

It's not natural, it is not in the flesh, that is, without being born again, we could strive this way and we would get nowhere, but frustration all the time because we are not His, but we are His by His grace and strength and so we can. Now the hard work is not physical as a farmer, as I said, or tiring as a run or threatening like war, but it's every bit as important since we're talking about our eternal soul. And we have the corruption we deal with in Romans 7.23, but I see another law in my members.

Warring against the law of my mind, I read that at the beginning, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. Paul there in the discourse of Romans 7 talks about their, early on in chapter 7, he talks about their division, their separation, their divorce from the Mosaic law, and then he continues on to apply this to this Christian walk, the internal battle and the structure that we have of warfare against sin within us. And he goes on, he describes, right, I do what I don't want to do and I don't do what I want to do.

And he goes back and forth and says it several times in different ways in chapter 7. And he ends that saying, my conclusion is I see another law in my members. I look inside myself, I see a war, a struggle, a fight of the flesh against the spirit. And he concludes that there is nevertheless hope in the midst of spiritual warfare and battles within us.

Who will deliver me from this body of death? It seems so hopeless. I keep sinning. I keep not doing what I should do and don't do what I should do and all that.

It's a mess. And he concludes, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God but with the flesh the law of sin.

Yes, I accept the fact there is a battle and it's just going to be that way. But I have God and my Savior Jesus Christ who is with me, who has covered my sins and I can persevere. That's what he's saying in verse 25 of chapter 7 of Romans.

Yes, I see this battle but I thank God. He's not going to deliver it immediately. He has his purposes.

But you can persevere. The battle lines are still there in Paul and in Timothy and in you. Yet hope is still with us for our Savior is with us and for us.

And we can still serve him in battle, in the race, in the hard work of sanctification because of that. Let us pray. Indeed, Father God above, may we stand firm, may we be energized by your truth to carry on this week, I pray, to do our duties, to love our family, to instruct our children, and to encourage one another in whatever calling and place we find ourselves in the Christian life this week.

And may we do this, Lord, with much zeal and desire to follow you all the days of our life because you have called us and you will preserve us. Amen.