

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
January 14, 2018

Basic Trainings

2 Timothy 2:3-7

2:3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2:4 No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

2:5 An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.

2:6 It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.

2:7 Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.

Leonardo da Vinci thoroughly studied human body in order to draw them accurately. One day, he was trying to draw a human hand, but he could not do it as he wanted. Then, he drew tens and thousands of human hands until he was satisfied with the drawing.

Mike Singletary was a professional football player who was included into Hall of Fame. Mike possessed a world record of breaking the tackles, but he used to break his helmet as well every time he broke the tackles. Therefore, he used to prepare three helmets in every game. Mike always knew where the ball would exactly come. After his teammates left for home, Mike used to watch a film of the game recording for hours and hours and remembered how his opponents would make a next move. He never omitted daily weight training. He continued to have a daily training session only for 20 or

so games per year.

We are often struck with admiration for the great art works, but we tend to forget how the artist trained themselves before their master pieces became known to the world. We get excited over the super performance of athletes, but we often forget how hard they train themselves every day. Young people imitate and wear a same uniform and put on the same shoes as their favorite athletes do. If it is a basketball, they imitate a posture of shooting, if it is a baseball, they imitate how the player grips a bat. But these are all visible aspects of athletes only at the game. If you want to become an athlete like your favorite one, you have to imitate how they train themselves behind the scenes.

It is same in “training for godliness”. The Bible teaches as in Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” We can learn how to train ourselves to be godly from the Bible, but also from various things around us. In today’s scripture, the Bible tells us to learn from a soldier, athlete and farmer, and each of them teaches us how to be godly.

1. Royalty

First, it is “royalty”. Verse 3 and 4 say “Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.” The Bible describe God people as an army. In the matter of fact, during Exodus,

Israel people were organized into the army. Churches in the New Testament was also considered to be a front line of spiritual war. Each believer was a soldier of Christ and they called each other fellow soldier (Philippians 2:25 and Philemon 1:2). We call a church as “body of Christ” and make it a place to support each other, and call it as “God’s family” and make it a place where we can feel at home and relax, but we must not forget that church is more than that, it is an army of Christ.

As any paramilitaries in any countries, when people were enlisted in the Roman army, they had to take off all the clothes and put on what was provided by the army. This was to visibly clarify that once they became a soldier, they had to obey commander’s orders, not to act according to their thoughts or judgments. After they prepared themselves, they made an oath to obey commander’s order. In Rome, the oath was called “sacramento” in Latin and “sacrament” in English. Churches used the word, “sacrament” to express baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In other words, they performed Baptism as the oath to enroll in the Christian army, and the Lord’s Supper as an oath to Royalty to Commander Jesus Christ.

Believers abandoned the old way of thinking and living style and entered into a new life guided by God’s words and made alive by the Holy Spirit, through sacrament of Baptism, just as soldiers did. They swore through sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, that they would follow God’s words and obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit and act for Christ, throwing things for ourselves that we did through our own judgment and philosophy. Christians were soldiers of Christ at the same time.

In the real battlefield, if the soldiers act selfishly only protecting themselves, the whole army could be destroyed. If one soldier tries to monopolize the achievement, it might lead the entire army unit into a dangerous situation. What is required for a soldier is not to “please himself” but to please his commander. Likewise, we, the soldiers of Christ, need to learn a basic attitude to live for Christ, not for ourselves.

Soldiers are required to have a strong body and mind, but what is more important is to be royal to their commander. It is the same thing in faith. Christ looks at what we do for whom and what purpose we do, not how much we do. Even if it is a small thing, if you do it for Christ and His glory, He would be pleased. Christ wants our royalty than any other things.

2. Self-control

Next training is “self-control.” In verse 5, it says, “An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” Athletes prepare and practice more than we expect; sometimes it’s been for many years to win the moment. They may like to quit, forget everything, or pursue laziness, yet they overcome such temptations and keep practicing.

Self-control is needed even in the actual playtime in addition to practice time. As it says, “Unless he competes according to the rules,” they can’t win if they broke the rules. Their crowns would be taken away if they fail the doping test. They fail as the athletes.

Likewise, some people fail their lives because of scandals or law break; and it needs only one day to lose the social position established

by their accomplishments. It is very sad, but we have to think about this as our own – the leaders’ problems in churches and religious organizations. We have to follow the law to be blessed in every action for good works to energize churches. It’s wrong to think such, “If we have the right purpose, we can choose any resources to reach out.” Churches have to follow the right goal and right resources for their works.

Apostle Paul caution himself in 1 Corinthians 9:25-27, “Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” As he suggests, we have to question ourselves to determine if we work truly for God and we follow His mind; it is not good to just run. We would like to be trained for self-control with determined mind to be “qualified” as long as we work.

3. Patience

Finally it’s patience to talk here. As verse 6 says, “It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops.” This “hard-working” includes “patience.”

James 5:7 teach us about farmer’s hard working and patient waiting, “Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.” Agriculture is not easy. Farmers cultivate, plant seeds, water, spread fertilizer, clean up weeds, get rid of insects, and prune. They can’t

gain their rewards right after they work as same as other jobs. Farmers have to keep waiting for the time of fruit even though working very hard. We need the same patience to wait for the time of fruit and cropping and to keep working restlessly.

So is “Training for Godliness.” No one could be godly Christian in the next morning without constantly participating in worships, reading the Bible, or praying. If we want to be like Christ, we have to follow the steps to let the Word of God dwell in us and ask for His guideline in prayer. If you became a Christian very recently, and don’t understand the Bible or don’t know how to pray, please go to your pastor and train yourself for such basics according his coaching. Be patient and stay in the training.

If you keep training yourself for godliness, you will be successful. One said, “Our patience achieves more than our abilities.” Other said, “Don’t quit five minutes before the miracle happens.” These are the cautions that your patience will let you see God’s work. We had seen His great works if we could have a little patience. Believe that patient leads you success, and let’s add patient to our training for godliness.

God leads us to the training for godliness through the Word of God, and through the people and happenings around us. Let’s keep learning loyalty of soldiers, self-control of athletes and patience of farmers, and acquire them as our own nature.

(Prayer)

Our Father, give us the loyalty as Christ’s soldiers, self-control as the athletes running the race of faith, and patience of farmers working in God’s garden. Then lead us to the godliness. In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen.