

*Not Entangled with This World's Affairs*  
*2 Timothy 2:4*

**2 Timothy 2:3-4** gives the instruction, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

While we are not to be enthralled with this world’s wisdom, as we learned in the previous chapter, we also are not to be entangled with this world’s affairs. Even so, in **2 Timothy 2:3-4** the instruction is given, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

I. Be a Good Soldier of Jesus Christ

The primary principle of this passage is that we believers are to serve as good soldiers for our Lord Jesus Christ. Involved in this principle, **2 Timothy 2:3-4** presents two responsibilities for us to fulfill. The first of these spiritual responsibilities is to endure the hardness of the Christian life and warfare. Indeed, the Christian life is an intense warfare against our adversary the devil and against his ungodly allies, our own sinful flesh and this present evil world. Even so, **Ephesians 6:10-13** gives the instruction, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” Every day in this world is an evil day of temptation and tribulation. For this reason we are instructed through God’s Word to “war a good warfare” (see **1 Timothy 1:18**), to “fight the good fight of faith” (see **1 Timothy 6:12**), to be spiritually sober and vigilant, resisting the devil steadfastly in the faith (see **1 Peter 5:8-9**), to be strong in the grace and the power of our Lord (see **2 Timothy 2:1 & Ephesians 6:10**), to “stand fast in the faith” (see **1 Corinthians 16:13**), to be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the will and work of our Lord (see **1 Corinthians 15:58**),

Then according to **2 Timothy 2:3-4**, the second spiritual responsibility that we are to fulfill as good soldiers of Jesus Christ is not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life. Indeed, **2 Timothy 2:4** declares, “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.” First, we take notice of the motivation in this matter. Indeed, the motivation for resisting any entanglement with the affairs of this life is in order that we may please our Lord Jesus Christ, our Commander in Chief, the One who enlisted as soldiers for His service. When an individual enlists for military service, he does so in order to serve his country. Even so, when we were enlisted in “the good fight of faith,” we were enlisted in order to serve our Lord Jesus Christ. We were redeemed from sin through His shed blood, reconciled unto God the Father through His sacrificial death, justified through His glorious resurrection, and enlisted in His service through His gracious lordship. Let us then serve worthy of our Lord with all purpose to please Him as His good

soldiers. In addition, let us reject and resist any entanglement with the affairs of this life; for such entanglements will be displeasing unto our Lord and will distract us from serving unto His good pleasure. This is the choice before us – being entangled or pleasing the Lord.

Second, we take notice of the problem in this matter. The specific engagements with which we are not to entangle ourselves are “the affairs of this life.” Herein the word “affairs” refers unto the activities, engagements, and business that are primarily invested in the temporal existence of our lives upon this earth, rather than being invested in the eternal kingdom of our Lord. These things are such a problem because we tend to focus our attention so much more upon these affairs of this life, rather than upon the affairs of our Lord. Indeed, these things are such a problem because we are so inclined to root our hearts in the affairs of this life, and to wrap up our lives in the affairs of this life, and thereby to entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life. Even so, third, we take notice of the requirement in this matter. We must not allow ourselves to be entangled with the affairs of this life. This does not mean that we cannot at all engage with the affairs of this life, for then we would have to depart from this life altogether. In fact, **1 Corinthians 7:31** grants permission, but also gives warning, saying, “And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.” Indeed, some of our God-given responsibilities and relationships require us to engage with the affairs of this life. However, if we are to serve our Lord as good soldiers for Him, we must never allow ourselves to become entangled with those affairs. As the god of this present evil world, our adversary the devil has arranged the system of this world to snag us and draw us into a web of temporal entanglements that have no value for the kingdom and righteousness of our Lord. Therefore we must ever be on our guard against such entanglements that they might not ensnare us and choke out our walk of fellowship with and service for our Lord. Yet this matter is even more spiritually intensive because our selfish flesh actually hungers for the entanglements of this world. For this reason, **2 Timothy 2:4** does not simply indicate that we must not allow ourselves to be entangled, but actually indicates that we must not purposefully entangle ourselves in the affairs of this life. This is not simply a matter of carefulness, but is rather a matter of willfulness. We must willfully deny our own desires for the entanglements of this life, must willfully take up the cross of submission unto our Lord’s will, and must willfully follow Him as good soldiers for His sake that we might do all unto His good pleasure.

## II. Beware of Choking Entanglements

So then, what are these temporal, worldly entanglements, against which we must beware? Our Lord Jesus Christ revealed the answer within His parable of the sower and the four grounds upon which the seed fell. In **Mark 4:3-8** (see also Matthew 13:3-9; Luke 8:5-8) our Lord Jesus Christ delivered the parable, “Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: but when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit. And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.” Then in **Mark 4:14-20** (see also Matthew 13:18-23; Luke 8:11-15) our Lord Jesus Christ explained the parable, “The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side,

where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended. 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. And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

So then, in this parable the seed represents the truth of God's Holy Word, beginning with the truth of the gospel for lost sinners and extending to the rest of God's truth and wisdom for believers. The four different grounds represent four categories of human hearts, in their differing responses toward the truth and wisdom of God's Holy Word. The first ground, the way side ground, represents the category of lost sinners whose hearts are hardened against the truth of the gospel. They reject the gospel message that is "sown" unto them, and the devil takes the opportunity to blind their minds even more against "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ." (See **2 Corinthians 4:4**) The second ground, the stony ground, represents the category of those believers who easily receive the truth of the gospel, but who do not allow the further truth and wisdom of God's Word to take deep root in their hearts. So then, specifically because they do allow God's truth to take only shallow root in their hearts, they are easily overcome and spiritually withered when affliction or persecution arises in relation to God's truth. The third ground, the thorny ground, represents the category of those believers who receive the truth of the gospel and even allow the further truth and wisdom of God's Word to take deep root in their hearts, but who allow the entangling thorns of this world also to take root in their hearts. It is upon the details concerning this ground that we shall focus our attention for the remainder of this study. Finally, the fourth ground, the good ground, represents the category of those believers who receive the truth of gospel, allow the further truth and wisdom of God's Word to take deep root in their hearts, go forth with honest and good hearts in faithful obedience to God's Word, and thereby bring forth spiritual fruit unto the glory of God, "some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

As we have noted, the thorny ground is that ground in our Lord's parable which represents those who are ensnared by the entanglements of this life and this world. Although they do allow the truth and wisdom of God's Word to take deeper root in their hearts, they allow the thorny entanglements of this life and world also to take root in their hearts. Even so, over time these thorny entanglements rise up to choke out the transforming work of God's Word upon their hearts. Indeed, over time their Biblical obedience and spiritual growth becomes stunted; and thereby they "bring forth no fruit to perfection." (See Luke 8:14) Although spiritual fruit may begin to show in their lives, that fruit is choked out from becoming perfectly ripened and harvestable fruit unto the glory of God. So then, what are these thorny entanglements of this life and world that choke out the transforming work of God's Word in a believer's heart and life? In **Matthew 13:22** we find two categories of worldly entanglements presented – "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches." In **Mark 4:19** we find a third category of worldly entanglement added – "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things." Finally, in **Luke 8:14** the three categories of worldly entanglement are

presented as the “cares and riches and pleasures of this life.” So then, Biblically these are the three worldly entanglements with which we must not entangle ourselves – the temporal cares of this life, the deceitful riches of this life, and the desirable pleasures of this life. Yea, these are the three worldly entanglements against which we must beware lest they ensnare the affection of our hearts and thereby choke out the priority of our Lord’s Word, will, fellowship, and service.

### III. Not Entangled with the Cares of This Life

First, we must not entangle ourselves with the temporal cares of this life. Now, the temporal cares of this life encompass those basic, natural burdens of the human heart concerning life. These basic, natural burdens would include the burden for survival acquirements, the burden for successful achievements, and the burden for social acceptance. In the first place, the burden for survival acquirements is the burden to acquire whatever is perceived as necessary for survival in this life. This perception of necessity may vary somewhat from individual to individual, from context to context, and from culture to culture. Yet every human heart possesses some perspective of necessary things for survival and carries some burden to acquire those things. Concerning this burden, our Lord Jesus Christ declared in **Matthew 6:25-33**, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Herein our Lord Jesus Christ presented food, drink, and clothing as the basic needs for survival. Yet He also indicated that we should not be entangled with the burden to acquire these necessities. In fact, our Lord revealed that the burden to acquire things perceived as necessary for survival is a common priority for those of this world. In contrast, He instructed us to follow His divine arrangement. He instructed us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and then to trust Him to provide for our necessities. Indeed, He instructed us not to entangle ourselves with the burden to acquire those things necessary for survival, but to serve and obey Him as our driving priority, and then to trust that He knows what things are truly needed and best for us and that He will provide them through His loving care for us.

In the second place, the burden for successful achievements is the burden to achieve some level of success in some pursuits of life. Indeed, every human heart possesses some desire to be successful at something and thereby to feel worthwhile in and for something. Concerning this burden, God’s Word states in **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Herein God’s Word reveals that the Lord our God is not primarily interested in calling and choosing the successful of this world. He is not primarily interested in calling and choosing the wise of this world, the mighty of this world, the noble of this world, the rich of this world, the famous of this world, the powerful of this world, etc. The reason for this is because the successful of this world tend to focus upon their own will and their own glory. In contrast, the Lord our God is much more inclined to call and choose the foolish of this world, the weak of this world, the lowly of this world, the poor of this world, the unknown of this world, the insignificant of this world, etc., because such individuals are more likely to humble themselves before the Lord, following after His will and seeking after His glory. So then, we should not entangle ourselves with the burden to attain and achieve success in this world. Rather, we should pursue success according to our Lord’s agenda. We should deny our own will and glory, and should whole heartedly and faithfully follow after our Lord’s will for our Lord’s glory.

In the third place, the burden for social acceptance is the burden to be accepted by some social class of this world as a part of their group. Indeed, every human heart possesses some desire to be accepted within their social context. Yet we have already learned from **2 Corinthians 6:17** that we believers are to come out from among the world and be separate. Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ declared in **John 15:18-19**, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” If we were of this world, we could expect the world to accept us and love us within their society. However, we believers are not of this world, because our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ has chosen us out of this world. We are now His people, and no longer the world’s people. For this reason, just as this world hates our Lord and finds Him unacceptable, even so this world shall hate us who are His faithful servants and shall find us unacceptable. This should not surprise us but should be an expected part of our daily with the Lord. So then, we should not entangle ourselves with the burden to be accepted by the social context of this world. Rather, we should seek after our Lord’s approval. We should not care whether we are accepted by this present evil world, but whether we are approved of the Lord our God. Thus in **Colossians 1:9-10** the apostle Paul prayed, “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

#### IV. Not Entangled with the Riches of This Life

Second, we must not entangle ourselves with the deceitful riches of this life. This would encompass the driving desire to acquire material wealth at any level, both in the forms of money and of material things, from the level of pennies to the level of billions, from the level

of expensive properties and possessions to the level of a child's small toy. Indeed, every human heart possesses some desire to acquire something of material substance. The world reveals this driving desire for material riches through various expressions. "Money makes the world go around." "It is all about the money." "Money is everything." "Money is life." "Money is power." "Money is freedom." "Money can buy happiness." "Money can buy love." "Whoever dies with the most material possessions wins." "My body craves more sleep, but my pocket craves more money." "Money talks, and I listen." "Trust in the almighty dollar." In addition, God's Holy Word also reveals this driving desire for material riches through its various warnings against it. In **Matthew 6:19** our Lord Jesus Christ warns us not to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth, because we are so easily tempted to put our priority on doing just that. Again in **Luke 12:15** our Lord Jesus Christ warns us to "take heed, and beware of covetousness," because covetousness is such a common desire of our hearts. In **Proverbs 23:4** God's Word warns us, "Labour not to be rich," for the same reason. Thus in **Hebrews 13:5** God's Word warns and instructs us to behave without covetousness, and instead to be content with such material things that we have, because we are so inclined toward discontentment over material matters.

Yet it must be understood that the desire for material things naturally carries a principle of deception with it. This principle of deception is that material wealth can solve all problems and can bring ultimate satisfaction to the heart. Yet this idea is a lie. It is falsehood. It is indeed a principle of deception that has ensnared the hearts and lives of so many. In truth, material wealth does not and cannot fulfill all that it appears to promise. It does not last forever. Even so, **Proverbs 23:4-5** declares, "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." Material wealth does not satisfy the heart. Even so, **Ecclesiastes 5:10** warns, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity." Material wealth cannot be taken into eternity. Even so, **1 Timothy 6:10** declares, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Finally, material wealth cannot help in the day of judgment. Even so, **Proverbs 11:4** warns, "Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death."

On the other hand, the pursuit after and entanglement with material wealth will be quite damaging to our spiritual walk with the Lord. Indeed, it is spiritually impossible to serve the Lord our God and to be entangled with the pursuit after material wealth at the same time. Even so, in **Matthew 6:24** our Lord Jesus Christ warned, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Furthermore, entangling ourselves with the pursuit after material wealth will draw us deeper and deeper unto spiritual downfall and destruction. Even so, in **1 Timothy 6:9-10** God's Word warns, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Entangling ourselves with the pursuit after material wealth will cause us to fall into temptation and a spiritual snare, and thereby into many foolish desires that will hurt us

spiritually. Yeah, entangling ourselves with the pursuit after material wealth will cause us to err and turn aside from a faithful walk in our Lord's truth and fellowship, and thereby to pierce ourselves through with the spear of "many sorrows." Thus entangling ourselves with the pursuit after material wealth will drown us in spiritual destruction. Finally, when we entangle ourselves with the pursuit after material wealth, we bring spiritual trouble into our households. Even so, in the opening portion of **Proverbs 15:27**, God's Word warns, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house."

#### V. Not Entangled with the Pleasures of This Life

Third, we must not entangle ourselves with the desirable pleasures of this life. In **Luke 8:14** this category of worldly entanglement is described simply as the "pleasures of this life." Yet in **Mark 4:19** this category of worldly entanglement is described as "the lusts of other things." Even so, this would encompass any activity that we desire for the sake of pleasure on any level, from relaxation to recreation, from comfort and convenience to entertainment and enjoyments. At the lowest level, this would encompass the pleasures that we might find in sinful activities. Certainly, within its beginning stages sin does provide a certain amount of pleasure and enjoyment. Even so, God's Word reveals in **Hebrews 11:25** that Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Indeed, this verse indicates that Moses chose correctly, against the pleasures of sin; yet it also reveals that enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season" was one of the choices before him. In like manner, in **2 Thessalonians 2:12** God's Word speaks about those who choose incorrectly against God's truth, choosing instead to have "pleasure in unrighteousness." Yet there is another level to this category of entanglement. Not everything in which we might find pleasure and enjoyment is inherently sinful. Yet we can still entangle ourselves in the priority and pursuit after such pleasures and enjoyments. Even so, **1 Timothy 5:6** warns that those who live in and for the priority and pursuit of pleasure are those who walk in spiritual deadness even as they live it up. In addition, **2 Timothy 3:4** indicates that one of the characteristics of spiritually perilous times is that people will be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

On the other hand, our daily Christian walk is not to be lived unto our own pleasure and enjoyment. Rather, we have been called by the Lord our God to live unto His pleasure. From **Revelation 4:11** we learn that the Lord our God has created for His pleasure. Even so, in **2 Corinthians 5:15** we are instructed not to live unto ourselves, but to live unto our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who died for us and rose again. Again from **Colossians 1:10** we are instructed to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Yet again from **1 Thessalonians 4:1** we are instructed that as we have taught by God's Word how we "ought to walk and to please God," so we should "abound more and more." Finally, from **Luke 9:23** we are instructed that if we would walk pleasing unto our Lord, we must deny ourselves and our own desired pleasures, and must take up our cross of submission daily, and must follow after Him in all of our ways. Even if we gain all of the pleasures that this world affords, what is the value if we completely waste our Christian lives? On the other hand, if we live our lives wholly unto our Lord and His will, then we gain the eternal reward of His pleasure and His blessing.