

Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

I like that thought of in the valley, He restores my soul. There's a verse that says, "He's the God of the mountain and the God of the valley." I want to say right now how much I've appreciated the four days with you. I always enjoy coming to Cedarville College for the ministry and chapel. And we've had a great time not only here, but many have come after the services. And we had a tremendous time yesterday for, I suppose, at least an hour after the chapel service, just talking with young people with various needs, and then going into some of the classes and special groups. I appreciate the way you listen when I preach. All this week, I've looked out and I've seen the whites of all of your eyes, and many of you been taking notes and just giving me excellent attention. And I know it's because of the Word of God that we preach, and I also want you to know how much I appreciate it.

Many have told me how they've heard you praying before the classes for God's special blessing upon this time together. They've heard you praying in the dormitories. I know many of you have been praying in private devotions, and God is answering prayer. And what I want to encourage you to do is don't just stop because we close out four days talking about successful Christian living, but let's continue it, even redouble our efforts. And may the closing months of this school year be the greatest that have ever been realized here at Cedarville. I do want to continue to mention a few books. Someone asked me today if I owned part interest in a book company, but I don't.

Relative to this matter of prayer and what we're going to be thinking about today. I'd like to recommend the book by E.M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer*, and especially for those who are going into the ministry. For everyone, I'd like to recommend the book *Power of Prayer* by R.A. Torrey, and it is now available in paperback, just like E.M. Bounds' book. And then here's a book that I think you would not only like to read, but you'd like to get a supply of to give as gifts after you've once read it, *The Disciplines of Life* by Edman. Be a great blessing to you. You can use it in devotions, et cetera, *Disciplines of Life*. And then I wanted to save just enough time today, rather than mentioning a number of other books, to tell you about a tool that you might be interested in purchasing just to help you with your daily devotional life and this whole matter of self-discipline.

For about 17 years, I've been using what they call a Seven Star diary. What this is, it serves, if you want it to, as a billfold and a diary, and they have different kinds of covers, they have plastic covers and they have leather, et cetera. I would recommend that you start with the plastic or the vinyl cover to see if you're going to like it and if you're going to use it. And then after a few years, you may want to invest in the leather. But they have these now in the bookstore, a few of them, and you can at least see it and see if you'd be interested in it, check out the price. Though, they perhaps would not have a large supply for everyone. You might like to place an order.

What you get is you get a sheet for every day of the year, and you keep a month in your diary at one time. And it has more or less a schedule of the time from eight o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night, so you can keep track of what you're supposed to do that given day. It's great for assignments and tests and so on. And then the next section, you get your whole year in front of you. You get two lines for every day of the month, January through December. You've got a term paper that's due in March, and so you can turn to March and just write it down. Then your next section has to do with [inaudible 00:04:06] section, and most of you wouldn't need that.

The next section is the alphabet section for names and addresses, and a lot of you guys would need that. You can use it for whatever purpose you would like to. And then in the back are just some plain sheets

for regular taking of notes. You might like to take notes on chapel messages back there on your daily schedule, or you might like to use the notes in the back. At least it's something I found very practical and very helpful, and I would at least recommend that you consider if not this, something that you can use consistently, some kind of a consistent notebook system that you'll be able to tie into through the years.

Let's turn again to 2 Timothy 2, shall we? Something else I wanted to mention, and I failed to, is get involved in a Scripture memory program. Never stop memorizing Scripture. I would recommend that you send \$5 to The Navigators, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and get involved in the Topical Memory System. If you want to know more about it, go by Pastor Green's office, and he has a little booklet called Beginning With Christ. It'll help you to get started and give you the first few verses in that system. I think that's only 10 cents or 15 cents, but I do encourage you to memorize the Scripture. I'm going to read in 2 Timothy 2 again, but before I do, I'd like for us to bow in prayer once again.

Our Father, we thank you for what you've been doing in our hearts and lives through these great practical verses. I pray that you'll help us never to forget what we've heard and to apply these things through our lives. We're praying especially today for some who are anything but successful. God, there's some great needs here in the lives of young people. You know this far more than I. And some have been wrestling with it, and I pray some decisions would be made today that would literally transform attitudes, study habits, devotional lives, the whole course of young people's lives blessed in a very special way, not by might nor by power, but by Thy spirit, in Jesus' name, Amen.

We've been talking about success and winning. I heard Woody Hayes say, back some weeks ago when they played Michigan in a football game, I heard Woody Hayes say, as they asked him, "Why do you go out on the football field, give it all you have after you've had a heart attack?" And as only Woody can do, he quoted Napoleon. He said, "Napoleon said better to die a winner than to live a loser, because you die a little every day." And he's absolutely right. I believe that God wants every, single one of us to live a successful, winning Christian life. Paul lived it. He said to Timothy, "Timothy, it's possible for you to realize it." And I believe if we would just study the whole plan of God, God wants us to be a success.

I don't often quote her, but I will today. Ethel Waters said, "Honey, God, don't sponsor no flops." And you know, there's something to that. God didn't create you for you to be a flop. God didn't create you for you to be a loser. You say, "Paul, what is success? How can you define it?" I like this definition. Someone said success is more than a matter of achieving the right things. It is also a matter of being the right person.

You see, that's where the world misses it. The world considers success making a lot of money, getting a prestigious position, having your name in the newspaper, having a big house, a big car, et cetera. No, it's not just achieving the right things. It's a matter of being the right person. Again, someone said success is the continuing achievement of being the person God wants me to be, and the continuing achievement of established goals God helps me to set. I like that. Being the person God wants us to be and achieving the goals that God helps us to set. We've been talking about win. Not whip inflation now, but on this campus and in our lives and in the dormitories and in our homes, to whip in difference now.

We need to whip it in the churches, all for a spiritual awakening where we would all be living that kind of a life that Paul desired for Timothy to be living. I'd like for you to put a finger in 2 Timothy 2, and look at the best Scriptural definition of success that I can find, John 17:4. The Lord Jesus was certainly exceedingly successful, the epitome of success. And I believe he summed up why we can say that in John 17:4. In this high priestly prayer, he says, "I have glorified thee on the earth," speaking to the Father. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." And I believe with all of my heart that for every one of us, if we will glorify the Father on earth in everything that we do and finish the work that He has given us to do, we will certainly be successful and hear that, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Now, in 2 Timothy 2, we've been considering the fact that in verse one, he says Timothy, if you're going to be a success, you must be on the winning team. "Now, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And then in verse two, he follows that up most logically with if you not only should be on the winning team, but you must be a witness. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." And then verses three through six, he says, "Be at war." Verses three and four, he talks about the warfare of the soldier. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who had chosen him to be a soldier."

Do you recall yesterday, we saw that the soldier teaches us dedication, and that we are not to be weaved in to the common, mundane things of this life that would sap us from our spiritual vitality and keep Christ from being the King of Kings and Lord of Lords of our lives. Total dedication to the Savior. Now in verse five, we look at the athlete and his warfare. And if the soldier teaches us dedication, the athlete teaches us discipline. "And if a man also strive for masteries," that is if a man strive to be a winner, "If a man strive to be a success, yet is he not crowned? He does not receive the reward unless, except, he strive lawfully." What's he saying? He's saying the athlete who participates in the games is not ... The champion does not receive the crown, the winner's crown, unless he runs according to the rules, unless he runs according to the law book.

For instance, I'm not a track man, but I recall participating in a few events in track. And this is about the extent of my knowledge of it. I know when you're supposed to start, you line up there at the line and the man says, "Get on your mark, get set, go." And I want to tell you how you can come in first every time. I don't care how fast you are. I want to tell you how you can go out there today and beat the fastest man on Cedarville's track team. When you line up at the line, as soon as he says, "Get on your mark," take off running as fast as you can. And you see, you will always beat the fellas who start on go, if you'll start when they say, "Get on your mark." You say you can't do that. You got to run according to the rules. You might come in first, but they would disqualify it.

That's right. It's the same way with Christianity. If you're going to win, you got to know what the rule book says. You got to spend some time in the law book. You got to discipline yourself to walk according to this book. It's easy, many times, to make an emotional decision of, "I dedicate my life to Christ and I intend to put the Lord first in my life," and we have great intentions. But it's something else to then get away from the spectacular and drill ourselves in this book day in and day out. You know, and I know, it's easy to attend a school like this. I've had a background of Christianity, to study for tests, go through the survey courses, introduction courses, all the rest, and yet not really be studying the Word of God to apply it to your life.

I recall back when I was a student in college, I worked my way through college with a dry cleaning route. We called it Cousins Courteous Cleaners. And I had a great time. I would go into all the dormitories, and they would pile up their clothes out in front of the door and put their name on it and their room number. And I'd just fill my car, back seat, front seat with dirty duds, all the dry cleaning and the shirts and all the rest. We'd just pile it up. And so then of course, I got to know all the guys real well, going into the rooms, picking up for married students. I'd deliver it to the dry cleaner and he'd take care of it. And then I'd come back and I'd pick it up the next day and deliver it. And then I'd collect the money. Always walked around campus with a little black book, and they all have their names in it and how much they owed me.

One day, I was riding along in my car, picking up the cleaning, and I was listening to the radio. And on the news report, they said, "This day, 25 years ago, X number of young men from Chattanooga, Tennessee were killed in the Second World War." I thought that's strange, that all of those men would

be killed on the same day in the war. So, I went inside to a restaurant to get a hamburger. And as I was eating, I just started talking to the fellow seated next to me and relating to him what I had just heard. "Oh," he said, "You don't have to tell me anything." He said, "Paul, I trained those kids." He said, "I was responsible for getting them ready for the battle."

And he said, "You never saw such a bunch of goof-offs in all of your life. They came in to have a big time. They didn't come in to get ready for the battle." He said, "We only had them for so many weeks. And we tried and tried to impress them that there was a war on. We didn't get it through to them. They just had a big time. We knew they weren't ready to face the enemy, so we tried to locate them some place where they wouldn't ever have to fight. And wouldn't you know it, the enemy found them and killed every last one of them." And I thought to myself, that's exactly the way it is with many Christians. They're just having a big time, just having a blast. Hey, listen, it's great to come to school and to enjoy the dormitory life and to have the few jokes that we play on one another. We're supposed to enjoy it, but there's a time to get serious.

There's a time to get down to business. And if you're not careful, you'll blow your freshman year. You may blow your sophomore year. You can blow all four years and never take advantage of all that this school has to contribute to your life. And here's what happened. You get away from your devotional life, you don't memorize, you don't study the Word, your prayer life suffers. And then all of a sudden, one day you're out there. Things are seemingly going just great, and there's a temptation. You're faced with the enemy. The world sticks its ugly head up, or the devil comes in with a knockout punch, or the flesh is weak and you haven't put on the armor of God, and you're wiped out and you blow it spiritually. Maybe you're leveled with something that you'll have to reap the rest of your Christian life.

Why? Because you didn't discipline yourself day in and day out so you could be ready for the conflict. Part of the warfare is not only dedication, it's discipline. And then the farmer teaches us diligence. Notice verse six, "The husbandman," which simply means the farmer, "That laboreth, that has the idea of the hard working farmer must be first partaker of the fruits." Now I'll be honest with you. I find that a difficult verse, but the best I can, I'd like to impress upon you what I believe Paul is trying to tell Timothy. Now, I do like this. Do you ever notice this? There's a reward for all three. Look at the soldier's reward. The soldier's reward in verse four is that he pleases him who has chosen him to be a soldier. I believe that's going to be that verbal commendation that we all should long for.

We stand before our Lord and hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." Great reward. But then the athlete gets a tangible reward. Not verbal, but tangible, because, "If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." He gets a crown, or some would like to say a wreath around him. And of course, I believe according to Revelation 4, "When we receive these tangible rewards at the judgment seat, what we will do is cast them right back at the Savior's feet and say, we would not have been able to do this had you not enabled us." It's all of grace from the beginning to the end. There's verbally, well done. We pleased the master, our Savior. There's the crown, but do we get anything in this life? Yes. The farmer must be first partaker of the fruits.

You don't have to wait to get to Heaven to reap the rewards of a successful, Christian life. I like farmers. Two of my favorite people are truck drivers and farmers. Now that may sound strange, but there's something about a truck driver I like. He just seemingly is earthy and in contact with the way a lot of meat and potato eaters are, and I like them.

Secondly, I like the farmer because he's so much in the earth. He tends to be very realistic, and the farmer may put out his garden and may be a big garden. He may harvest it. He may have it ready to truck off to the market. But while he is taking it off to the market, he's got those fresh strawberries and corn on the cob and all those other good things there on his table that he's enjoying all the time, that he's taking it off for someone else. And I'll guarantee you, you start living the kind of a successful,

Christian life that Paul is talking about here to Timothy, and you'll start realizing the benefits of it right now in your own heart, in your dormitory room, in the classroom. It'll begin to permeate this whole campus. What we need to do is to determine, though, that we're going to have the diligence of the farmer.

Last week, out at Western, there was a young man there who's from Ohio. Unusual fellow. He sold his farm just recently, 300 acres, and made a profit of over \$100,000. Believe it or not, he's driving around a Lincoln Continental, and he's a student in a Bible school. Call it the silver bullet. And you know, I met that guy and I liked him. Not just because he had the money. Not just because he took me, let me drive his car. But I liked that guy. There was just something about him, and so I started picking his brain about this matter of being a farmer. And he told me, "Paul," he said, "I'll admit." He said, "I've made a lot of money on the farm and selling farms." And he said, "I put in many times 17, 18 hours a day." He said, "It's work. It's not easy." And he said, "Many can't make it in farming because they're not willing to put the time into it."

He said, "There are many disappointments." He said, "It's not all gravy." He said, "You can lose the crop." He said, "The price may go down. It may go up. You don't know what's going to happen." But he said, "It's very rewarding, personally and financially." And I thought, that's what Paul is trying to say. There's something about a soldier that's glamorous. There's something about an athlete who is out there on the court, or out there on the race track, and everyone is looking at him. But who looks at a farmer out there on his tractor? His bib overalls, right? Maybe it's at night and he has to plow in the middle of the night, at midnight with the lights on in his tractor. There's nothing spectacular about it, but he's doing his job. That's the part of Christianity that many of us miss. We're not willing to stay at it, plug away whether anyone sees it or not, whether anyone else knows what we're doing or not.

That's the challenge. Some of you are ready to quit. Some of you are discouraged. Some of you are discouraged because your schedule is not working out. Some of you are discouraged because the finances aren't working out. Some of you are discouraged because you're having problems back home. Some of you have talked to me about it. Some of you have said mom and dad want you to come home. Some of you are discouraged because you've broken up with a boy or a girl and it's very real, and it's very deep. There all kinds of disappointments. And some of you're not having them now, but you'll have them, just like Cindy was singing about in her song. There are the valleys, but this is the point. Stay in the harness. Be steady, keep on going. Don't quit. That's what success is.

Paul said, I fought a good fight. I finished the course. That's it, finishing the course. He said in Colossians 4:17, "And say to Archippus, fulfill the ministry which God has given you." That's my challenge to you today. That's what Paul is trying to tell us. Yes, be dedicated like the soldier. Yes, be disciplined like the athlete, but stay at it diligently, like the farmer.

And these closing two minutes that I have in your life for these four days, I'd like to speak very plainly. Trust you realize that I've tried to do that for four days. I'm very sold that the Word of God is the most practical thing I know. It's not just some philosophical position that you take that doesn't change your life. There's a group on this campus that is spiritually minded. I do not know the size of that group. And frankly, I don't know which ones of you belong to that group. There's a group on this campus that's far larger. It's the largest group of the three I'm going to mention. A lot of you are in it. It's a group that I would call characterized by mediocrity. It's what the Lord Jesus called lukewarmness. You're not hot. You're not in the spiritual group, but you're not real cold either. You're just kind of in between.

You know what Jesus said about you, don't you? He said, you make me sick. He said, "I'll spew thee out of my mouth." The reason many of you stay in that group is you're just afraid. You're afraid to really let go, be the kind of Christian you know you ought to be because you're afraid some of the kids will think that you're some kind of a Holy Harry or a Pious Pete or something like that.

Paul H. Dixon  
Be at War: Part 2  
circa 1979

And I want to challenge you to be what Paul is telling you to be, no matter what anybody else does, your roommate, your friends, your boyfriend, your girlfriend. No matter what kind of opposition you might meet, you say "I'm going to be, by the grace of God, that kind of a Christian." And then there's another crowd. It's probably about the same size as the first. That's a very belligerent, critical, rebellious indifferent crowd. And you know who you are. And probably the other students know who you are, and you kind of like that because that's the way you get your attention. You don't hide it. Some of you don't like it here. Some of you don't like your roommates. You don't like the rules. You don't like the teacher. You don't like anything. You see, the problem is not with the school. Problem is with you. That's where the hang-up is. It's with you.

Some of you are living in gross sin. You have moral problems. Some of you perhaps are messing with drugs, some with alcohol, some are defiantly breaking rules, blatantly doing it. Say, Paul, how do you know this? Because I've been preaching on college campuses now for about the last seven years and I find it every place I go. I don't have to ask anybody. I don't know any particulars. I just know young people. I know what happens on the college campus. And you know, we're right on.

I remember back some years ago, I stood here and preached. There was a young man who stood on the back row, and I believe he was a senior. He came to me and he said, "You stood up there all week and you haven't preached to anybody but me." Said, "You just kept looking at me." Said, "You didn't even look at anybody else in this whole chapel. All this week, you've looked at me." He says, "It got through." He says, "I'm the one that has been going out on weekends and getting drunk." Said, "That's right. I'm a senior at this school." He said, "I can get drunk." He went on down the list of sin and he said, "I'm tired of all this." He said, "I'm going to get my life straightened out." And the last time I heard about that fellow, he was still going on for God.

And some of you can get your lives totally changed around today. And you know you're sick of the sin, and you're sick of what's going on in your life. If you are saved, you're miserable. If you're living in sin and you're not miserable, it's a good indication that you're not even saved. I'm going to give you an opportunity again to do something about it. Now, if you want to let pride, what others think, so forth, hinder you from making a vital decision today, that's entirely up to you. I pray you'll seriously examine your heart and life right now. Want us to bow our heads.

Are you a success? Are you a winner? How about it? I want you to be honest with God, with me. I haven't asked this all week, but I'm going to ask it now. If you can honestly say, "No doubt in my mind, Paul, if I died right now I know I'd go to Heaven," would you quietly slip up your hand? Don't raise it because somebody else does. Don't raise it if you've got doubts, I'm challenging you to be honest. You'll never get it settled until you get honest. Thank you. Slip them down. If you do not have the doubt settled, you could not raise your hand, would you be willing to raise it and say, "I'm concerned about it, Paul. God has spoken to me. Pray for me." Those who would say it, slip up your hands and let me see them. Yes, yes. Right? How many more? Any others?

Thank God for those who have gotten their salvation settled this week. I'm glad to see that there are not as many hands today as there were on Tuesday. Are there any others who would say that, "I'll admit it, I don't have it settled. Pray for me, Paul"? Any more? Now let me ask this. How many of you would admit there needs to be a turning point in your Christian life, and you know it? You're fed up with the way it has been going. You're not a winner. You're a loser, spiritually. It's either characterized by rebellion or lukewarmness, and God has spoken to you and say, "I'd like to see my life turned around, Paul, by the grace of God." Christians who would say that and admit it, could I see your hands over the auditorium? Thank God, many hands. Others? Slip them up, let us see.

You know where you are. God has met you today. You may be a senior, junior, sophomore, freshman. You're fed up with the way things have been going. You know what needs to change, and God has dealt

Paul H. Dixon  
Be at War: Part 2  
circa 1979

with you. Any more? Father, a lot of hands have gone up. There's no doubt indicating a lot of different needs. I pray that there might come today this turning point, as these young people desire it in their lives, as Christians. I pray for these who are not saved, who have doubts about it, that they might get it settled. I ask that You would continue to work on other hearts, some who are chafing at the bit right now, that God, they might let go and there might come a spirit of awakening and victory to the light. We pray in Jesus' name.

This is evangelist Paul Dixon. I want to thank you for listening to this message from the Word of God. I trust that it has been a blessing to your life. If you have never received Jesus Christ as your Savior, let me encourage you to do so right now. I would invite the Christian listeners to pass this tape onto a friend. Helpful literature is available to those who make decisions for Christ if you will write to the following address, Christian Educational Publications, Cedarville College, Cedarville, Ohio, 45314.