

Paul Continues His Final Charge to Timothy to Be Faithful

2 Timothy 4:5-8

2 Timothy 4:5-8: *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.² ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”*

Background Notes

The apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter to Timothy. It was his last letter - his farewell letter. 2 Timothy is the most personal of all Paul's letters. As he wrote to Timothy, his heart was exposed. His heart's desire was for Timothy to remain faithful and carry on the work.

Paul knew that he only had a short time. Already, his trial before Nero had begun. But he didn't ask for prayers for himself, or that he would be released from prison. No, Paul's main concern was for the ministry. Soon after he wrote this letter, he was put to death by the Roman authorities. He was martyred for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul viewed his life as a sacrifice – offered and consumed for the glory of God. As he looked back over his life he could say, *“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”* So Paul challenged Timothy to fulfill his ministry so that he too would be able to say, *“I have kept the faith”* at the end of his life.

Since this is the Word of God, this challenge is for us as well. Are we fulfilling our ministry? Are we keeping the faith? Will we finish the race well? At the end of our lives on earth or at the Lord's return, I'm sure we all want to be able to say, *“I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”*

Doctrinal Points

1. Every Christian has received a ministry.

Verse 5: *“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”* Notice that there are four points here - a four-part charge:

a. Be watchful in all things

What does it mean to be *“watchful in all things”*? The idea is to be sober, to stay spiritually alert, to be well balanced and level headed. Watch out for Christians who are not balanced - who tend to go to extremes. Generally speaking, this is a danger signal that something is amiss spiritually.

Just about every year at Emmaus, a student or two will go off to an extreme – they’ll depart from the *well-balanced* Christian life. Sometimes it’s a good extreme, such as “Let’s go evangelize downtown Dubuque.” That’s a good idea, but unfortunately that student will almost always taper off on their Bible studies. They won’t turn in their papers, and they won’t be getting into the Word because but they’re so busy witnessing in downtown Dubuque. Now that may sound good at first, but it’s not a well-balanced life for a Christian student. Generally speaking, this type of student will fizzle out on both studies and witnessing, and may even drop out of school.

Again I would say, watch out for the tendency to go off-balance. Timothy was not to do that, and we are not to do that either.

b. Endure afflictions

The second part of the charge is to “*endure afflictions*” or hardships. Back in 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul said that that all “*who would live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*” We’re not to pray for persecution, but we can expect persecution. We are not to try to escape persecution; we’re to endure it. We can be sure the Lord will give us the strength to endure any affliction or tribulation or hardship or persecution that He allows to come into our lives.

c. Do the work of an evangelist

The third part of the charge is to “*do the work of the evangelist.*” Did Timothy have the gift of evangelism? We don’t know for sure. No doubt he had the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher, since Paul left him in Ephesus to pastor the young church there.

In any case, Timothy was to do the *work* of an evangelist - whether he was gifted as an evangelist or not. And we are to do so as well. You and I may not have the *spiritual gift* of evangelism, but we are to evangelize and share our faith. It’s unbiblical to say, “I don’t witness to my neighbor or I don’t share the gospel at work because evangelism is not my gift.” That’s an unbiblical stance. You may not have the *gift* of evangelism - but all believers are to do the *work* of an evangelist.

d. Fulfill your ministry.

The fourth part of the charge is “*to fulfill your ministry.*” Every Christian has received a ministry. Your *ministry* is **not** the same as your *spiritual gift*. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4:10 are the “spiritual gift passages.”)

A *ministry* is an area of service in which you use your spiritual gifts and natural talents. Timothy had a ministry to fulfill – and each one of us has a ministry to fulfill. The Lord is certainly not going to give you a spiritual gift and then fail to give you an area of service in which to use it!

The logical question that you're surely going to ask is this: "How do we know what our ministry is?" My answer is: "Just get involved!" Just take any opportunity that opens up to serve the Lord. You'll not only discover your spiritual gift, but you will also find that the Lord has a ministry for you. Every Christian has received a ministry.

2. Some Christians will not receive the crown of righteousness.

Every Christian has received a ministry, but some Christians will not receive the crown of righteousness. In verses 6-7, the apostle Paul shared his own personal testimony with Timothy. Then he said, *"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (v8).

What is the "crown of righteousness"? It is a reward that the Lord will give - but only to the faithful Christian.

Is the reward righteousness itself, or is it a reward for righteous living? It seems that it's a reward for righteous living, because all Christians have already had the righteousness of Christ imputed to them. 2 Corinthians 5:21: *"God made Christ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* We are already righteous in God's sight.

So there is a reward for righteous living - but some Christians will not receive it. Paul will receive it - and you will, too, if you're looking forward to the return of Christ: *"The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"* (v8).

What's the connection between living a righteous life and looking forward to the return of Christ? If you're constantly living your life in light of the return of Christ, you will surely live a more righteous life! Conversely, if you are living in sin or living an unrighteous life, you don't long for the return of the Lord.

Try this procedure. When you awake every morning, say to yourself: "Maybe the Lord will return today!" Then live out your life that day in the light of that possibility. I guarantee you that you will live more righteously! Not only that, you will receive the crown of righteousness. Sadly, some Christians will not receive the crown of righteousness.

Practical Applications

1. Do you view your life *now* as a sacrifice?

In verse 6 Paul said, *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand."* A drink offering in the Old Testament was a *libation* - read about that in Numbers 15. The libation was wine that was poured out on the sacrifice as the sacrificial animal was being consumed on the altar. Paul viewed his overall Christian life as a sacrifice, and as his life was drawing to an end he viewed his final days as a drink offering that was being poured out on his life of sacrifice.

How do you view your life? Do you view your life now as a sacrifice? Or do you consider that your life now is your own private possession, to live as you please? Do you view your life as the means by which you can experience more pleasure, or acquire more knowledge?

Paul viewed his life as a **sacrifice**. Romans 12:1 says that we are to “*present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is our reasonable service.*” What about us? Do you and I view our lives now as a **sacrifice**?

Suppose you were told to make a drawing of your life as you see it – a picture that communicates how you view your life. How would you draw it? Would you draw a person in business attire, holding a Bible? Would you draw a person in a stylish outfit, or in golf or beach attire? Would any of us draw ourselves as a **sacrifice** on an **altar**?

That’s the point! Paul viewed his life as a sacrifice that had been offered to God, and now he saw his final days as the drink offering being poured out on that life of sacrifice. Do you view your life now as a sacrifice?

2. Will you view your life *then* as a success?

As Paul looked back over his life as a Christian he was able to say, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*” (v7). Will we be able to say that? From God’s perspective, that’s a successful life!

Suppose the Lord were to take us home to Heaven today. At this point in our lives, would we be able to say to Him, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” Some Christians would be able to say they were successful in business, and they accomplished all their career goals, and they lived a full life - but have they lived their lives from God’s perspective – as a sacrifice? Will they be able to say, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*”?

When I was 34 years old, 2 Timothy 2:7 (as well as other Scriptures) convicted me. Why at age 34? I realized that I was one year older than the Lord was when He completed His ministry here on this earth. What had I done with my life? What was I doing with my life? Was it a success in God’s eyes? I was convicted!

We don’t know how many years we have left here on earth. Do you view your life *now* as a sacrifice? Will you view your life *then* as a success?