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Finishing Well What We Have Started

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8

Introduction

1. Do you have a project which you started at some point in your life, but have not finished?
 - a. Renovation or restoration project?
 - b. Woodworking project, quilt or afghan?
 - c. Undergraduate or graduate degree?
2. I imagine that many of us have seen some piece of construction which was started — a house, building, roadway, bridge, etc. — but still remains uncompleted.
3. There is one thing which none of us as Christians should leave undone — our life in Christ.
4. Many of these other things we may leave unfinished, but it is vitally important that we finish well what we started when we obeyed the gospel.
5. In the passage before us, Paul sits imprisoned in Rome awaiting his execution.
 - a. He has already gone through his first defense before Caesar Nero (4:16).
 - b. Though, as he states, he “was rescued out of the lion’s mouth” (4:17), he knows his next appearance in the imperial court of Rome will have different results.

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6. So, as he concludes his letter to Timothy, his young protégé, he informs him of his impending death (v. 6).

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.”

- a. The “drink offering” of which he writes is a reference to the pouring of a liquid usually wine upon a sacrifice as it was being offered (Numbers 28:4-7).
 - b. “Departure” comes from a Greek term used by both sailors and soldiers of Paul’s day.
 - 1) For the sailor it referred to the hoisting of the anchor in preparation for setting sail.
 - 2) For the soldier it indicated the taking down of the tent in order to break camp.
8. In essence, what Paul is this, “Timothy, be faithful, because I won’t be in this world much longer. My end is near and my life will shortly be poured out on the altar of sacrifice — but you must carry on God’s work.”
9. Down through history, God has always had those who carried on His work:
- a. For Moses it was Joshua
 - b. Elisha followed Elijah
 - c. Timothy would follow Paul
 - d. Today, you and I follow those who have gone before us.
 - ❑ It is important that we continue to be the hands of Jesus and finish well what we have started.

[The question for each of us this morning is this, “Will we be able to say what Paul says to Timothy concerning his service in the Lord’s kingdom?”

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I. “I Have Fought the Good Fight”

A. THE GOOD FIGHT

1. Paul enjoyed his sports and the word translated “fight” was often used in his day to refer to the wrestling or boxing matches in the sporting arena.
2. It spoke of any contest in which there was intense struggle.
3. But the fight of which Paul writes here is “the good fight”.

4. In his first letter to Timothy, he had called it “the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:12).
5. There were times in the life of the apostle Paul when it involved great struggle on behalf of the Christians he helped bring to Christ (Colossians 2:1).

“For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face” Colossians 2:1).

6. It is a good struggle because it involves for us, not only the proclamation and defense of the gospel, but our daily living it out in our lives.

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B. WHAT WE NEED FOR THE GOOD FIGHT

1. Discipline & self-control (1 Corinthians 9:25)

“Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things.”

- a. “I box in such a way, as not beating the air” (v. 26) — a boxer doesn’t want to waste his energy swinging at empty air, he wants to make each blow count.
- b. “I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified”(v. 27) — no athlete wants to be disqualified because of a simple mistake which proper training and discipline could have prevented

2. A willingness to face great opposition:

- a. From within — sin and temptation in our own hearts (Proverbs 4:23)

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”

- b. From without — the forces of evil operating in society (Ephesians 6:12)

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.”

- ❑ The question for each of us is, “Am I fighting the good fight?” Do you have a sense of satisfaction that you are giving your best in the warfare, and can say, at this moment, ‘I am fighting the good fight’?

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II. “I Have Finished the Course”

A. THE COURSE

1. The word (*dromos*) which is translated “course” in the NASB, and “race” in the KJV and most of the other modern translations was often used to refer to the race course of the athletic events in Paul’s day.
2. For Paul, however, “the course” was not some race course in the Greek games, but his own journey through life which we call the Christian life.
 - a. Paul had finished the course of his ministry in spite of persecution, hardship, criticism and desertion by friends.
 - b. He was able to finish because he kept his focus on Jesus, “the author and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).
3. It is this course which each of us as Christians are traveling upon today.

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B. IT IS VITAL THAT WE FINISH

1. Many of us know individuals who started the race, but are no longer running.
2. It is vital that we finish what we have started.
3. We must cross the finish line if we hope to receive the “imperishable” wreath (1 Corinthians 9:25).
4. In his letter to the Christians in Galatia, Paul spoke to the issue of some who were bumped off the track (Galatians 5:7)

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying

the truth?" (Galatians 5:7, NIV84)

5. In his Parable of the Sower, Jesus addressed some reasons as to why we do not finish:
 - a. For some, it is affliction or persecution which drives them off course.
 - b. For others, it is the distractions and cares of this world which cause them to abandon the race.
6. Only by putting things in proper perspective can we finish our course (Acts 20:24)

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

7. In Hebrews 12:1-2, the writer reminds us that the Christian race both begins and ends with Christ.
 - a. Our race is a marathon, not a sprint.
 - b. A marathon calls for staying power, determination to keep going in spite of the obstacles which Satan and the world may put before us.
8. Only by focusing on Jesus can we be sure to finish our course (Hebrews 12:1-2)

"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

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III. I Have Kept The Faith

A. THE FAITH

1. **“The faith”** is the deposit of truth which God had entrusted Paul.
2. He considered it a treasure which had been given to Timothy.
3. Sadly, Paul spoke of those who had or would
 - a. “Suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith” (1 Timothy 1:19).
 - b. “Depart or fall away from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1).
 - c. “Denied the faith” **by their lack of care for their families** (1 Timothy 5:8).
 - d. “Wandered away from the faith” **as a result of their “love of money”** (1 Timothy 6:10).

Slide 7**B. THE FAITH IS A TREASURE WHICH WE MUST PRESERVE AND PROTECT**

1. The word translated **“kept”** (*tereo*) is a word which means “to preserve,” “to protect,” “to guard.”
2. He had defended the faith against attacks from . . .
 - a. His own fellow countrymen, Jews, who either . . .
 - 1) Rejected the faith outright, or
 - 2) Argued for circumcision and law keeping as requirements for salvation.
 - b. The philosophers in Athens who trusted in their numerous gods and rejected a God who would die for sinners and be raised again.
 - c. The Gnostics, the knowing ones, who claimed the way to God was through special experiential knowledge.
3. Paul’s work of safe-guarding the truth was now at an end.
4. As a soldier who had grown old in the service of Christ, he would lay his treasure down at the feet of his King.
5. Now, 2000 years later, we continue to defend the truth against the schemes of the devil.
 - a. He wants us to doubt God.
 - b. He challenges the belief in Jesus as God’s Son and the only way to eternal life.

- c. He pressures us to believe that we can live any way we choose and still go to heaven at the end of our lives.
6. But we must continue to safe-guard this precious “faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 3).

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Conclusion

1. Like the apostle Paul, those of us who “have fought the good fight,” “finished the course,” and “kept the faith” there is something which awaits us.
2. It is that which . . .
 - a. Paul called “the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8), the crown which is righteousness — it declares us righteous before God.
 - b. James called “the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).
 - c. It proclaims us as victors over Satan, sin and death.
3. The one who will award it to us is none other than “the Lord, the righteous Judge”.
 - a. He is the Son to whom the Father has given all judgment (John 5:22).
 - b. God set Him in place as our judge when He raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:31).

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4. Let us each work to finish well — until we reach the end of life or the Lord’s return we must . . .
 - a. Continue to fight the good fight.
 - b. Finish the course
 - c. Keep the faith