

Finishing the Race – Part 1

Introduction

- Paul is a mature saint now (possibly in his late 50s or 60s).
- Paul has suffered severely for Christ & yet he served Him faithfully without reservation.
- Paul has faithfully evangelized the lost, taught believers & made disciples for Christ.
- Now he is awaiting execution, the end of ministry, persecution & suffering; he has been abandoned by most of his friends & fellow saints (2Tim. 1:15-18).
- Timothy was one of Paul's disciples & he is charging Timothy to be faithful in the ministry to which he has been called (4:1-5).

I. Considering the Present (2Tim. 4:6)

A. Discerning death

*“poured out as a drink offering” – phrase from OT ceremony signifying death. “already being” – he had already begun to die physically for Christ. Are discerning about your own demise & mortality? Do you or will you ignore signs from God that point to your death?*

B. Readiness for death

*“departure” (ἀνάλυσις) –unloosing or breaking up[ship or soldier to go home]. Paul was ready to go home to heaven (Phil. 1:21-23; 3:20). Since heaven is home for the believer, matters of the present time are temporary – possessions, careers, natural family, friends, bodies, ministries, etc. Are you holding to the things of life with an open hand – Job?*

II. Considering the Past (2Tim. 4:7)

A. Opposition in life & ministry

*“fight” (ἄγών) means a struggle against opposition – athletic & military. The gospel life & ministry is a struggle against opposition (physical & spiritual). The struggle involves suffering, hard labor, humiliation, self-control, prayer & grace (Phil. 1:29-30; Col. 1:29; 1Th. 2:2; 1Co. 9:25; Col. 4:12; 2Tim. 2:1). “good” means that it was for God & in His will. Paul fought/struggled for Christ to the*

*end – there was no respite from opposition. This is the true Christian life & ministry – good fight or struggle....*

B. Endurance in life & ministry

***NEXT WEEK if the Lord wills!***

**ILL:** A runner in a long distance race does not expect the race to get easier as he runs. There is wind resistance, resistance from the track or terrain, thirst, fatigue, possible muscle spasms, interference from other runners & even cheaters can negatively affect a runner. But the faithful runner must stay with the plan, keep the right pace & stay on the course.

**APPL:** The same is true for a faithful Christian running the race of life & ministry...