

I Have Fought The Good Fight Preach The Word (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

In the final years of his life Paul finds himself in Rome as a prisoner (AD 60-61, approximately 60 years old). He was released but then arrested again and, according to tradition he was martyred (beheaded) in Rome, probably about AD 67. It was during this time that Paul wrote this letter to his “young” pastor friend, Timothy.

Paul reminds Timothy of his early training in Scripture, that Scripture has power and that it is “God breathed”—the written word of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

2 Timothy 4:1-8 “I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires, 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But as for you, use self-restraint in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

1. In the presence of God. (1)

A. Under the gaze of God.

Paul reminds Timothy that all we do is under the gaze of God. It is God to whom Paul, Timothy, you and me are accountable. It is Christ who will judge Paul and Timothy. Timothy’s concern should be the Kingdom of God.

B. What does this responsibility look like? (2)

Preach the word. “Be ready in season and out of season” (2). The Gospel for Paul is not just an evangelistic message but the whole of scripture. It is a call to faith for “unbelievers.” It’s a call to “believers” to live out the implications of this message.

“Be ready in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction.” Timothy needs to be ready when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient.

C. Why is this necessary? And important? (3-4)

It appears that Paul is telling Timothy to be prepared for something that Timothy will soon face or may already be facing. The time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine. They will want their ears to be tickled. They will listen to those who simply affirm what they want to hear. People will be driven by their own desires and will accept “myths” rather than the truth. (4)

2. The work of an evangelist. (5)

A. Do the work of an evangelist.

This is a simple instruction. What does that mean? For Timothy it means “continue to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles.”

B. What does this mean for you and me?

It simply means to communicate the truth of God’s Word in whatever context we find ourselves. It is through the preaching of the word that the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people.

3. “I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come.”(6)

A. Paul is literally saying that the time of his death is close / imminent.

The fact that Paul’s death is close at hand emphasizes the urgency of the entire letter Paul is writing. Paul uses OT sacrificial language to describe his impending death. (Gen. 35:14; Ex. 29:40-41; Lev. 15:5-10; 28:7-8). He uses the passive voice (“I am being poured out”) which stresses that it is God who is acting here. Take note of this!

B. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;” (7)

Using athletic imagery (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Phil. 3:14). Some have suggested that Paul sounds prideful, but he makes no claim to personal glory.

2 Corinthians 4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer person is decaying, yet our inner person is being renewed day by day.”

C. “The crown of righteousness.”

This could refer to the final righteous state of believers. It could refer to the reward for righteousness / a victory crown, which fits with verse 7. This is a common theme in Paul’s writings (1 Cor. 3:14; Col. 3:24; Mt. 5:14; 46; 6:1-6; 16-18; 10:41-42; Heb. 10:35; 11:26). This reward is only because of grace (Philippians 2:13).

Whichever understanding is correct, Christ will give a crown not only to Paul but to “all who have loved his appearing”, meaning all true believers who set their heart on the return of Christ.

4. Hoping for Christ’s return is an essential element of perseverance.

A. Paul is writing this letter from the Roman prison. (AD 67)

After all that Paul has been through, he is not complaining. He’s not bitter. He does not see himself as a victim. He is encouraging. He’s anticipating, expecting the promised reward that awaits him.

B. Paul encourages Timothy to be faithful, to run the race with endurance.

It’s important for us to remember that as Paul is preaching the gospel, healing the sick, starting churches—as he is suffering the 39 lashes (5 times), being left for dead, being stoned, shipwrecked and more, his concern was for the believers, the churches he had ministered to. His heart was always for others. In this case we read of his heart for his young friend Timothy. He encourages faithfulness and boldness.

2 Corinthians 11:28 “Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.”

As his life on this earth comes to an end, he is expecting and anticipating so much more. Are you?