

STUDIES IN THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY

“THE TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH”

STEP #10: 2 Timothy 4:1-8

“PASSION: Pleasing You Is My Ruling Passion”

Key verse 2:15 — *“Make every effort to present yourself to God, approved, as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, guiding the word of truth along a straight path.”*

TEXT:

Key verse 4:2

v. 1 I am charging you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, the one who is about to be judging the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom.

v. 2 ***Preach the word, hold yourself in readiness when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with unlimited patience and teaching.***

v. 3 For the time will come when they will not listen willingly to wholesome instruction, But after their own desires, they will accumulate to themselves a great many teachers who are tickling their ears.

v. 4 And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will wander off into myths.

v. 5 But you be self-possessed under all circumstances, bear hardship patiently, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

v. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

v. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

v. 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.

INTRODUCTION:

Hagar the Horrible is having a conversation with a little monk.

Hagar asks the question:

“Mind if I ask you—exactly what do you do?”

The monk says:

“I go wherever sin and vice and worldliness hold sway.”

Hagar says:

“Hey—can I go along?”



TRUE EAST TEXICAN

You Know You Are A True East Texican (East Texican means East of IH-35)
When . . .

1. Your idea of a traffic jam is ten cars waiting to pass a tractor on the highway.
2. “Vacation” means going to the family reunion.
3. You’ve seen all the biggest bands ten years after they were popular.
4. You measure distance in minutes.
5. You know several people who have hit a deer.
6. Your school classes were canceled because of cold.
7. Your school classes were canceled because of heat.
8. You’ve ever had to switch from “heat” to “A/C” in the same day.
9. You think ethanol makes your truck “run a lot better.”
10. Stores don’t have bags; they have sacks.
11. Stores don’t have shopping carts; they have buggies.
12. You see people wearing bib overalls at funerals.
13. You see a car running in the parking lot at the store with no one in it, no matter what time of the year.
14. You use “fix” as a verb. Example: I am fixing to go to the store.
15. You go to festivals across the state that are named after a fruit, vegetable, grain, or animal.
16. You install security lights on your house and garage and leave both unlocked.
17. You think of the major four food groups as beef, pork, beer, and Jello-O salad with marshmallows.

18. You carry jumper cables in your car . . . for your OWN car.
19. You know what “cow tipping” and “snipe hunting” are.
20. You only own four spices: salt, pepper, ketchup, and Tabasco sauce.
21. You think everyone from a bigger city has an accent.
22. You think sexy lingerie is a tee shirt and boxer shorts.
23. The local paper covers national and international news on one page but requires 6 pages for sports.
24. You think that the first day of deer season is a national holiday.
25. You know which leaves make good toilet paper.
26. You find 90 degrees F “a little warm.”
27. You know all 4 seasons: Almost Summer, Summer, Still Summer, and Christmas.
28. You know if another Texican is from southern, middle, or northern Texas as soon as they open their mouth.
29. There is a Dairy Queen in every town with a population of 1000 or more.
30. You describe the first cool snap (below 70 degrees) as good chili weather.
31. A carbonated soft drink isn’t a soda or a cola or a pop—it’s a Coke (or Co-Cola), regardless of brand or flavor.
32. Going to Wal-Mart is a favorite pass-time known as “goin’ wal-martin”.
33. You recognize that cheese grits and catfish nuggets is a meal that must have been bestowed upon the people by the Lord Himself.
34. You can be satisfied with a meal consisting only of a hunk of bread with flavored flour & water (a delicacy known as “biscuits ‘n gravy”).
35. You actually get these jokes and forward them to all your friends from Texas.

(Received via e-mail from Susan Hollon, April 27, 2001)

HOPE I MAKE IT

I have always dreaded old age. I cannot imagine anything worse than being old. How awful it must be to have nothing to do all day long but stare at the walls or watch TV. So last week, when the mayor suggested we all celebrate Senior Citizen Week by cheering up a senior citizen, I determined to do just that. I would call on my new neighbor, an elderly retired gentleman, recently widowed, who, I presumed, had moved in with his married daughter because he was too old to take care of himself.

I baked a batch of brownies and without bothering to call (some old people cannot hear the phone), I went off to brighten this old guy's day.

When I rang the doorbell, this "old guy" came to the door dressed in tennis shoes and a polo shirt, looking about as ancient and decrepit as Donny Osmond.

"I'm sorry I can't invite you in," he said when I introduced myself, "but I'm due at the Racquet Club at two. I'm playing in the semifinals today."

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "I baked you some brownies . . ."

"Great!" he interrupted, snatching the box, "Just what I need for bridge club tomorrow! Thanks so much!"

". . . and just thought we'd visit a while, but that's okay, I'll just trot across the street and call on Granny Grady . . ."

"Don't bother," he said, "Gran's not home. I know, I just called to remind her of our date to go dancing tonight. She may be at the beauty shop. She mentioned at breakfast that she had an appointment for a tint job."

I called my Mother's cousin (age 83), she was in the hospital . . . working in the gift shop.

I called my aunt (age 74); she was on vacation in China.

I called my husband's uncle (age 79). I forgot, he was on his honeymoon.

I still dread old age, now more than ever. I just don't think I'm up to it . . .

(Received via e-mail from Mark Skorheim July 25, 2001)

(The Best Ever Book of Good Clean Jokes by Bob Phillips) New York, NY: Galahad Books. Portions of this work have appeared previously in several publications. Copyright - Vision House & Harvest House Publishers, 1974, 1989, 1990, and 1992. First Galahad Books edition published in 1998.

I'M FINE

I'm fine, I'm fine.
 There's nothing whatever the matter with me,
 I'm just as healthy as I can be.
 I have arthritis in both of my knees
 And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
 My pulse is weak and my blood is thin
 But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
 My teeth eventually will have to come out
 And I can't hear a word unless you shout.
 I'm overweight and I can't get thin
 But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
 Arch supports I have for my feet
 Or I wouldn't be able to walk down the street.
 Sleep is denied me every night
 And every morning I'm really a sight.
 My memory is bad and my head's a-spin
 And I practically live on aspirin.
 But I'm awfully well for the shape I'm in.
 The moral is, as this tale unfolds,
 That for you and me who are growing old,
 It's better to say, "I'm fine," with a grin
 Than to let people know the shape we're in!

p. 120

(The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories by Charles R. Swindoll) Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. Copyright - Word Publishing, Inc., 1998.

SIGN IN A FT. LAUDERDALE restaurant: "If you are 80 years old and accompanied by your parents we will cash your check."

—Lloyd Cory, *Quote Unquote*

p. 390

(Values and Virtues by Howard Hendricks & Bob Phillips) Sisters, OR:
Multnomah Books. Copyright - Howard Hendricks & Bob Phillips, 1997.

Old age does not announce itself.

Now that I finally know my way around, I don't feel like going.
p. 229

(A 4th Course of Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 More Stories to Open the
Heart and Rekindle the Spirit by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen,
Hanoch McCarty, & Meladee McCarty) Dearfield Beach, FL: Health
Communications, Inc.. Copyright - Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen,
Hanoch McCarty & Meladee McCarty, 1997.

Through the Eyes of a Child

After a holiday break, the teacher asked her small pupils how they spend their holiday. One little boy's reply went like this:

We always spend Christmas with Granma and Granpa. They used to live up here in a big brick house but Granpa got retarded and they moved to Florida. They live in a park with a lot of other retarded people. They all live in tin huts and ride tricycles that are too big for me.

They all go to a building they call the wrecked hall, but it is fixed now. They all play a game with big checkers and push them around on the floor with sticks. There is a swimming pool but I guess nobody teaches them; they just stand there in the water with their hats on.

My Granma used to bake cookies for me, but nobody cooks there. They all go to restaurants that are fast and have discounts. When you come to the park, there is a dollhouse with a man sitting in it. He watches all day so they can't get out without him seeing them. I guess everybody forgets who they are because they all wear badges with their names on them.

Granma says that Granpa worked hard all his life to earn his retardment.

I wish they would move back home, but I guess the man in the dollhouse won't let them out.

Author Unknown

pp. 229-30

(Collected Verse of Edgar A. Guest by Edgar A. Guest) Chicago, IL:
 Contemporary Books, Inc. Copyright - Contemporary Books, Inc., 1934.

Spirit

I know not whether middle age can fight again to win.
 'Tis possible that youth alone can stand the battle's din.
 Perhaps man's courage fades with time and fifty is too late
 To have to start a second bout with all the odds of fate.
 But this I know: that man is lost, though young or old he be,
 Who says: "I'm sure it's vain to try; that task's too hard for me."

Perhaps from silvered brows they turn and ask for younger men;
 Perhaps to men of middle age they give no chance again.
 But long ago was failure known, and history appears
 An endless tale of men who rose to fame when old in years.
 One fact of life is sure and 'tis the weakling soonest dies,
 And in the dust that man must stay who will not try to rise.

Too old to start anew? Ah, no! While health and will remain,
 Time locks no door against the man who wants to start again!
 Though some from thinning brows may turn, by history is it told,
 Full many a fortune has been won by men the world called old.
 'Tis not our years that cut us down, but fear and failing will,
 And who has spirit for the fight may live to conquer still.
 pp. 841-2

A woman was worried because she hadn't seen her elderly neighbor for a few days. She instructed her son, "Go next door and see how old Mrs. Bailey is."

He returned a little while later. "She's fine," he said, "but she's annoyed with you."

"At me? Whatever for?"

"She said to tell you it's none of your business how old she is."

~ ~ ~

Residents at a nursing home were sitting around comparing ailments. "My arms are so weak I can hardly lift this cup of coffee," said one elderly lady.

"Oh, I know," replied another. "My cataracts are so bad I can't even see my coffee."

"My blood pressure pills make me dizzy," a third said.

"I can't turn my head to look around because of the arthritis in my neck," added another.

"Let's look at the bright side," one woman piped up. "Thank God we're all still driving!"

(source unknown)

(The 776 Stupidest Things Ever Said by Ross & Kathryn Petras) New York, NY: Doubleday. Copyright – Ross & Kathryn Petras, 1993.

On Life Insurance, Reasons for Buying:

I'll get it when I die.

Yogi Berra,

explaining why he bought a large
life insurance policy

p. 108

On Longevity:

A lot of people my age are dead at the present time.

Casey Stengel,

baseball great, Yankees and Mets manager

p. 110

(The 776 Stupidest Things Ever Said by Ross & Kathryn Petras) New York, NY: Doubleday. Copyright – Ross & Kathryn Petras, 1993.

On Metaphors, Mixed:

Since the Government has let the cat out of the bag there is nothing to do but take the bull by the horns.

Jeremiah MacVeagh,
Member of Parliament

p. 114

On Movie Stars:

He [Steve McQueen] must have made that before he died.

Yogi Berra
about a Steve McQueen film

p. 120

When a cowboy wanted to tell you that you were **OLD**, this is what he'd say:

(That Cat Won't Flush: An Entertaining Country Dictionary by Wallace O. Chariton) Plano, TX: Wordware Publishing, Inc. Copyright - Wordware Publishing, Inc., 1991.

OLD PERSON When he was born the sun was just a match-head and there weren't no moon at all ☐ he was a stowaway on the ark ☐ he's three years older than dirt ☐ Jesus was still in high school when he was born or he went to high school with Moses ☐ he used to bang the gong to release the lions in the Roman coliseum ☐ when he was born Moby Dick was just a minnow

OLD-TIMER His back goes out more than he does ☐ the only exercise he gets is acting as a pallbearer for his friends ☐ he's so old he don't buy green bananas ☐ tells it like it used to be ☐ can remember when a woman looked the same before and after washing her face

OLD-TIMER, COUNTRY BOY He's been scrapin' manure off his boots for more years than you could count or he's scraped enough manure off his boots to fertilize the Rio Grande valley. . . .

pp. 172-3

If that same cowboy wanted to tell you someone was **UGLY**, this is what he'd say:

(All Hat & No Cattle: A Guide for New Texans and All the West of Us by Anne Dingus) Houston, TX: Lone Star Books. Copyright – Gulf Publishing Co., 1999.

UGLY

He looks like a basted turkey.

He's so bald he carries his dandruff in his hip pocket.

He's so ugly he has to set a trap by his plate to catch his appetite.

You look like you ran through the woods and the bears got you.

You look like you've been hit in the face with a sack full of nickels.

Ugly as a stump full of spiders.

If he wanted to say you were **VAIN** or **PROUD**, he'd say:

(All Hat & No Cattle: A Guide for New Texans and All the West of Us by Anne Dingus) Houston, TX: Lone Star Books. Copyright – Gulf Publishing Co., 1999.

VAIN

She leaves kiss marks all over her mirror.

She wouldn't go to a funeral unless she could be the corpse.

She walks like she's got oil wells in her backyard.

Too good to eat beans.

(Humorous Cowboy Poetry: A Knee-Slappin' Gathering edited by Gibbs Smith staff members) Salt Lake City, Utah: Gibbs Smith. Copyright - Gibbs Smith, 1995.

“PURT NEAR!”

Omar Barker

They called him “Purt Near Perkins,” for unless the booger lied,
 He'd purt near done most everything that he had ever tried.
 He'd purt near been a preacher, and he'd purt near roped a bear;
 He'd met up with Comanches once and purt near lost his hair.
 He'd purt near wed an heiress who had money by the keg.
 He'd purt near had the measles, and he'd purt near broke his leg.
 He'd purt near been a trail boss, and accordin' to his claim,
 He'd purt near shot Bill Hickok—which had purt near won his fame!
 He'd purt near rode some broncs upon which no one else had stuck—
 In fact he was the feller who had purt near drowned the duck!

Now mostly all the cowboys on the Lazy S B spread,
 They took his talkin' with a grin and let him fight his head.
 But one named Tom Maginnis sorter told it to him rough:
 “You're ridin' with an outfit now where ‘purt near’ ain't enough!
 We tie our lass ropes to the horn, an' what we ketch we hold,
 And ‘purt near’ is one alibi we never do unfold!
 In fact, right now I'll tell you that no word I ever hear
 Sounds quite so plain damn useless as that little pair: ‘purt near’!”
 That's how ol' Tom Maginnis laid it out upon the line,
 And like a heap of preachin' talk, it sounded mighty fine.
 But one day Tom Maginnis, while a-ridin' off alone,
 He lamed his horse and had to ketch some neighbor nester's roan
 To ride back to the ranch on. But somewhere along the way
 A bunch of nesters held him up, and there was hell to pay!
 Tom claimed he hadn't stole the horse—just borrowed it to ride.
 Them nesters hated cowboys, and they told him that he lied.
 They cussed him for a horsethief and they'd caught him with the goods.

They set right out to hang him in a nearby patch of woods.
 They had poor Tom surrounded, with their guns all fixed to shoot.
 It looked like this poor cowboy sure had heard his last owl hoot!
 They tied a rope around his neck and throwed it o'er a limb,
 And Tom Maginnis purt near knowed this was the last of him.
 Then suddenly a shot rang out from somewhere up the hill!
 Them nesters dropped the rope an' ran, like nesters sometimes will.
 When bullets start to whizzin'. Tom's heart leapt up with hope
 To see ol' Purst Near Perkins ridin' towards him at a lope.

“Looks like I purt near got here just in time,” ol’ Perkins said,
“To see them nesters hang you!” Tom’s face got kinder red.

“You purt near did!” he purt near grinned. “They purt near had me
strung!

You’re lookin’ at a cowboy that has purt near just been hung!
And also one that’s changed his mind—for no word ever said,
Can sound as sweet as ‘purt near’, when a man’s been purt near dead!”

pp. 18-19

(Christ and the Cowboy by Kenneth Wyatt) Tulia, TX: Y-8 Publishing Co.
Copyright – Y-8 Publishing Co., 1998.

Afore The Lamp Was Blowed Out

by Kenneth Wyatt

Remember those nights of
yesterday, when the outside
air was a-freezin' cold . . .

An' you were a-lyin' there
twix muslin sheets, almost lost
in a featherbed fold?

How you could, as you lay real
still, think over the things that had
happened that day . . .

An' in the same breath claim
all of tomorrow—what you
would do and what you would say?

Listenin' real good, you could hear
from downstairs, your father's
footsteps a-stirrin' about . . .

He was, as he should, a-doin'
what he could—just afore
the lamp was blowed out.

Remember how cold it was
when you were a-kneelin' to
say all your prayers . . .

But dare not hurry none
'cause Mama's the one a-standin'
at the top of the stairs?

Then "God-blessin'" everybody
and sayin' "Amen" twice
to get to the close,

You jumped quick into bed with
your feet on a brick to keep from
freezin' your toes.

Next was Mama a-walkin' thru
and it's true, each
child's bed was sure on her route.

She was sharin' all her love
in that kiss—just afore the
lamp was blowed out.

Remember those nights when
the snow made it quiet with
a blanket of white on the ground . . .

And the flickering lamp made the
shadows dance to the music that
had no sound?

So your mind came alive
to the things in this life
and things in the future to be.

Would you be rich, a doctor
perhaps, or a sailor who put
out to sea?

Could be a cowboy who would
ride on the range, a blacksmith
with muscles and stout.

'Twas important each night just
to be special—just afore the
lamp was blowed out.

Remember it back to your
childhood days and to the home
that kept you from freezin' . . .

Not really with quilts or
even with muslin—but a blanket
of love each season.

Know that love is the flame
that from God's Heaven came
just to sit on the soul of man.

And the soul of the home
was the love that we shared
according to God's own plan.

Keep remembering this fact
that love is comin' back when
Christ returns with a shout!

And there are many things
you must do and get done –
afore *your* lamp is blowed out.

pp. 122-3

(The Book of Cowboy Wisdom: Common Sense and Uncommon Genius From the World of Cowboys compiled and edited by Criswell Freeman) Nashville, TN: Walnut Grove Press. Copyright – Walnut Grove Press, 1997.

No real cowboy was a complainer.

David Dary

Don't complain. Complaining is what quitters do, and cowboys hate quitters.

Code of the West

p. 42

It was a land of scattered ranches, of herds of longhorned cattle, and of reckless riders who, unmoved, looked in the eyes of life and death.

Theodore Roosevelt

p. 44

The cowboy inhabits a world of his own. He has his own language, customs, humor, principles, ways of doing things and manner of thinking.

Glenn R. Vernam

p. 45

In our study of 2 Timothy, we have come to the final chapter, chapter 4.

This is Paul's **FINAL CHARGE** to young Timothy.

He also **WRITES HIS OWN EULOGY** in this very emotional passage.

Paul may be an old man who is dying but there is still fire in his bones.

I was reading in my devotions this morning about the death of **ELIJAH**. He makes his final visits to the seminaries, then with Elisha, crosses the Jordan. The chariot comes to sweep him homeward. What a moment of great victory and triumph!

(The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories by Charles R. Swindoll) Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. Copyright - Word Publishing, Inc., 1998.

DO YOU REMEMBER when the cosmonauts made that primitive little journey around the earth the first time? They came back with their thumbs under their suspenders bragging, "We have been in the air. We have been around the earth. And we did not see God!" The following Sunday W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, made a classic statement. He said, "Ah, if those cosmonauts had stepped out of their spacesuit, they would have seen God!"
p. 232

(Illustrations Unlimited by James S. Hewett, editor) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright – James S. Hewett, 1988.

COMPLETELY BEFUDDLED

A fellow bumped into his old friend whom he hadn't seen in many years. He asked, "How's your wife?" He replied, "She's in heaven. Without thinking, he responded, "Oh, I'm sorry." Then, realizing that was not the best phrase to use, he said, "I mean, I'm glad . . . well, what I really mean is, I'm surprised."
pp. 121-2

(Lighten Up! by Ken Davis) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Ken Davis, 2000.

John Ortberg learned this valuable lesson from his grandmother. The genteel woman was a ruthless Monopoly player. She seemed unbeatable. But one day the young Ortberg prevailed. His enthusiastic celebration was interrupted by a lesson he never forgot. He was gloating over his victory, gleefully dragging all the property and money he'd won toward himself. His grandmother said, "Just remember, John: When the game is over, it all goes back in the box. The money, the hotels, the cars—everything goes back in the box."

My pastor detailed the parallel truth found in life: "A businessman with hotels and houses and a huge bank account feels a twinge in his chest as he finishes his morning jog—and in a heartbeat everything goes back in the box.

"A teenager slides behind the wheel of his new car. His girlfriend sits smiling beside him. An oncoming car crosses the centerline—and it all goes back in the box. When the game is over, we too go back in the box."

p. 96

For Timothy, this is his **UPPER ROOM EXPERIENCE**, because the great apostle is getting ready to go home.

This is Paul's **LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT**.

Step #10 in the **TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH** is:

Passion: Pleasing You is My Ruling Passion.

Our **KEY VERSE** is verse 2.

Whatever you do, the later it gets in the game, the more intense should be your **PASSION** and **PARTICIPATION**.

Jesus said in:

John 9:4

We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work.

Psalm 90:12

Teach us to number our days aright,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

I love the way Phillips paraphrases:

Romans 12:11 (Phillips)

Let us not allow slackness to spoil our work, and let us keep the fires of the spirit burning, as we do our work for God.

Lenski titles chapter 4:

Hear the Last Solemn Testifying of Him Whose End is Near!

p. 849

He then says:

This is the end of the body of the letter, the last word. It is surcharged with the profoundest emotion. Paul's course is almost completed, the crown is almost won, and he calls upon Timothy to strive also to receive such a crown from the Judge's hand. Paul is not passing into the shadow but into the glory. His "beloved child" (1:1) is beckoned to follow him. He beckons all of us. Paul's life is closing as it should close.

p. 849

Liefeld says:

The present chapter constitutes his last recorded words. Verses 1-8 include a charge to Timothy and a further reflection on Paul's own life of service to the Lord. In verses 6-8, it become[s] plain that the apostle does not expect to live much longer but will be put to death as a Christian.

p. 286

Hendriksen says:

Chapter 4 brings into prominence Timothy's duty to *proclaim* this doctrine. Let him "speak out" while people are still willing to listen. They will not always be willing. Let the "herald" of the gospel discharge his ministry to the full!

p. 307

Larson says:

Paul gave his final charge to Timothy about faithfulness and ministry. Then, as he looked toward his own impending death, he summarized his life goal and purpose, concluding with thanks to others who partnered with him in his ministry and a personal request for Timothy.

p. 316

He then says:

What could be more thrilling than to stand at the end of life and say, "I have agonized the good agony. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith."

This is quite a way to go. And it is a prize available to all who wish.

p. 317

Hughes says:

Paul's words resound with passion: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom. I give you this charge" (v. 1). The charge could not be more solemn. Paul has invoked here what is in fact an eternal, unchangeable reality—the actual presence of God the Father and his Son Christ Jesus. They were present. They saw Paul write the words to Timothy. They saw Timothy read them for the first time. They read Timothy's heart.

p. 242

Knight says:

This section presents Paul's charge to Timothy (vv. 1-5), which is summarized in its own concluding words, "fulfill your ministry" (v. 5), and which is undergirded with Paul's testimony about his own ministry (vv. 6-8).

p. 451

He says further:

These verses have an urgent tone, even though they are merely summarizing what has come before. They are dominated by a hortatory tone (cf. Smith-Beekman, *Analysis*): There are nine imperatives, eight of them spelling out activities that Timothy must engage in as aspects of his ministry and attitudes that must characterize him in his work (vv. 2, 5) and the last, "fulfill your ministry" (v. 5), summarizing the specific commands in this subsection and the demands made on Timothy earlier in the letter.

p. 451

Towner titles the section:

Final Charge to Timothy: Fulfill Your Ministry (4:1-8)

p. 202

Barnes summarizes everything pretty well:

This chapter comprises the following subjects:

(1) A solemn charge to Timothy, to be faithful in preaching the gospel, and in the whole work of the ministry, ver. 1-5. The particular *reason* given for this charge was, that the time was approaching when men would not endure sound doctrine, but would turn away from the truth. Hence, Timothy is exhorted to be faithful in his work, and to be prepared to endure the trials which, in such circumstances, a faithful minister must be expected to meet.

(2) A statement of Paul that his own work was nearly done, and that the hour of his departure drew near, ver. 6-8. This statement, also, seems to be made in order to excite Timothy to increased fidelity in the ministry. His teacher, guide, father, and friend, was about to be withdrawn, and the great work of preaching was to be committed to other hands. Hence, in view of his own departure, Paul exhorts Timothy to fidelity when he himself should be removed.

p. 242

Lea & Griffin have this to say about the first five verses:

4. A Charge for Consistent Behavior (4:1-5)

In this section Paul continued an appeal for doctrinal soundness that began in 2:14. He underscored Timothy's special role in thwarting the advance of heresy in Ephesus. Paul outlined the basis of the charge in v. 1 and delivered a ministry-related charge to Timothy v. 2. He explained a reason for the charge in vv. 3-4 and repeated directives of a mostly personal nature in v. 5. The intensity of Paul's feeling is evident from the use of nine imperatives in this section. Five of these appear with machine-gun precision in v. 2, and four others are in v. 5.

p. 241

Lange summarizes the section we are considering by saying:

Solemn concluding exhortation to Timothy to fidelity in his work, strengthened by the prophetic announcement of the approaching decease of the Apostle.

p. 111

Wilson says:

In this paragraph the Epistle reaches its climax as Paul solemnly adjures Timothy to remain faithful to his charge now that the time of his own departure is at hand [vv 1-8].

pp. 159-60

Gaebelein says:

This last chapter is a most impressive one. It is a farewell of this great man of God. Joy and sorrow, confidence and love breathe in his final charge and message. “The sorrow that he might have in his soul was only for those he was leaving, and even that is almost swallowed up in the joyful consciousness of the thought with whom he was leaving them.”

p. 197

Wiersbe summarizes these verses under consideration:

Christ is coming (1)! In view of this, we must know our task and be faithful to do it. . . .

Apostasy is coming (2-5)! Indeed, it is now here. Many professed Christians have no “ear” for the Word of God. They prefer religious entertainment and sermons that will tickle their ears instead of cut their hearts.

Departure is coming (6-8)! Paul saw his approaching death as the offering of a sacrifice to God . . . the ending of a difficult race . . . and the gaining of a glorious crown . . . This is the victor’s crown given to winners at the Greek Olympic Games.

p. 804

Fee titles these first five verses:

Final Charge to Timothy (2 Tim.4:1-5)

p. 283

He then says:

Paul now brings to a conclusion the long appeal that makes up the larger part of this letter. This appeal began in 1:6 and was picked up again in 3:10 after the interlude on the false teachers in 2:14-3:9; but it now takes the form of a solemn charge (v. 1) followed by nine imperatives (five in v. 2 and four in v. 5).

p. 283

He then says further:

Since this charge is grammatically tied to verses 6-8 (“Fulfill your ministry, *for* I am already about to be poured out as a drink offering”), those verses will give us the clue to much of this section. Paul knows he is about to die. This charge, therefore, though made against the backdrop of the situation in Ephesus, looks far beyond that. Here we have a kind of changing of the guard, the word of a dying man to his heir apparent. To use the athletic metaphor of verses 7-8, it is the passing of the baton. The whole paragraph needs to be read with this reality in view.

p. 283

Calvin says:

In this chapter Paul reminds Timothy that the apostle’s own death is approaching, but he does so as a conqueror looking forward to a glorious victory, which illustrates his amazing confidence.

p. 157

Griffiths says:

Paul has been discussing the usefulness of Scripture and follows with a solemn charge to Timothy to use those Scriptures in his preaching and teaching ministry, in spite of the interference of false teachers. The charge is based upon the presence of God and the expectation of the return of Christ Jesus as judge.

p. 208

Milne says:

In the final chapter of this most personal of letters, Paul makes a final appeal to Timothy to adhere to the truth (4:1-5), he reviews his own life and work (4:6-8), and lastly makes comments on a number of individuals by name, with which are mingled remarks about his experiences in court (4:9-22).

p. 172

Kelly says:

As his letter draws to its close, Paul reiterates with solemn earnestness the appeal which has been all through its main theme . . .

A heightened note is imparted to it by his consciousness that his own martyrdom cannot be long delayed and that, when he is gone, Timothy will have to stand on his own feet and shoulder the responsibilities of leadership as Paul's successor by himself.

p. 205

Lock summarizes these eight verses by saying:

[It is the] Final appeal based on the coming judgment and the writer's approaching death. You have followed me loyally thus far: I charge you to follow me further, and to remain true to the truth until the end.

p. 111

Guthrie titles chapter 4 as:

PAUL'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

p. 165

Demarest titles this chapter:

Love's Last Appeal

p. 285

He then says:

Paul now comes to the conclusion, not only of this letter to Timothy, but of his life on earth as well. These words are dictated, probably to Luke, perhaps within a few days of his beheading by the executioner on the Ostian Way. For the past thirty years he has traveled, witnessed, worked, and preached throughout the Mediterranean world. He has been loved and hated, supported and attacked, praised and cursed. Whatever else can be said of his life, it certainly wasn't dull! Anticipating the executioner's axe, he passes the baton to his young friend, Timothy, and entrusts to him the next lap of the race.

p. 285

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say of this section:

[It is a] Solemn charge to Timothy to do his duty zealously, for times of apostasy are at hand, and the apostle is near his triumphant end: . . .

p. 1381

J. Vernon McGee says:

It is with a note of sadness that we come to the final chapter of 2 Timothy. Paul will be giving Timothy instructions for the last days. Then we will have Paul's deathbed testimony, which probably are his last written words. We will detect his feeling of loneliness. He is in Rome, alone and incarcerated in that horrible Mamertine prison. He is cold and asks Timothy to bring his cloak. I have been down in that prison—I'd hate to be imprisoned there! He is lonely and the hours are long. He asks Timothy to bring his books, especially the parchments.

But with the sadness and loneliness we will also hear a note of victory as Paul gives his final charge to his son in the faith.

p. 474

Quinn & Wacker translate these first five verses beautifully:

4¹As God the Father looks on, and Christ Jesus who is going to judge the living and dead, I adjure you, Timothy, while bearing witness to his revelation and his kingdom:

*2^{herald the message;}
stand on the alert, when convenient
when inconvenient;
refute;
reprove;
encourage—*

with utmost patience in the task of teaching. 3^{For there will come a time when they will not put up with this wholesome instruction. Instead, they will load themselves with teachers who answer their craving to get relief for their itchy ears. 4^{Furthermore, as they turn a deaf ear to the truth, they will slip off after tales.}}

p. 747

Wiersbe says:

A great person's last words are significant. They are a window that helps us to look into his heart, or a measure that helps us evaluate his life. In this chapter, we have Paul's last words to Timothy and to the church.

It is interesting that Paul expressed no regrets as he came to the end. He even forgave those who made his situation difficult (4:16). More than seventeen persons are referred to in this chapter, which shows that Paul was a friend-maker as well as a soul-winner. Though his own days were numbered, Paul thought of others.

p. 153

Stott says:

This chapter contains some of the very last words spoken or written by the apostle Paul. They are certainly the last which have survived. He is writing within weeks, perhaps even within days, of his martyrdom. According to a fairly reliable tradition he was beheaded on the Ostian Way. For about 30 years without intermission he has laboured as an apostle and an itinerant evangelist. Truly, as he himself here writes, he has fought a good fight, finished his course and kept the faith (7). Now he awaits his reward, 'the crown of righteousness' which has been laid up for him in heaven (8). So these words are Paul's legacy to the church. They breathe an atmosphere of great solemnity. It is impossible to read them without being profoundly stirred.

p. 105

MacArthur titles this section:

Marks of the Faithful Preacher

p. 165

He then says:

Although directed first of all to Timothy, Paul's commission in 2 Timothy 4:1-5 applies to every minister of the gospel in every age, every place, and every circumstance. In a broader way it can be applied to every faithful believer, because it is essential for every congregation to know and understand this charge. Churches are responsible, under God and with God, to hold their pastors accountable to these divine precepts.

p. 167

Spurgeon preaches a sermon on this passage called:

A LAST LOOK-OUT

So near, so very near the change—his removal from this is another world; and so very conscious of it; yet Paul looked back with calm satisfaction; he looked forward with sweet assurance; and he looked round with deepest interest on the mission that had engaged his life.

p. 886

He then says:

Men have usually shown us what lies at the bottom of their heart when they have come to die. Often their last expiring expressions have been indicative of their entire character. Certainly you have before you in the last sentences of Paul's pen a fair epitome of his entire life. He is trusting in the Saviour; he is anxious to show his love for that Saviour.

p. 886

Let us now turn to the eight verses that will come under consideration in this study:

Step #10 — Passion: Pleasing You is My Ruling Passion.

Our **KEY VERSE** is going to be verse 2.

v. 1 I am charging you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, the one who is about to be judging the living and the dead and by His appearing and His kingdom.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

It would be difficult to see how Paul could have made his **charge** to Timothy any more weighty . . . He adjured Timothy, not only **in the name of God and of Christ**, but in the light of the coming judgment, Christ's return . . . and the establishment of **His millennial kingdom**.
p. 757

Paul is making his final appeal and charge to young Timothy, in view of his impending death.

He is making this charge:

"IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS."

We will note in this verse that there is a **THREE-FOLD REMINDER** of what is just ahead:

1. This charge is **"IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS WHO IS ABOUT TO BE JUDGING THE LIVING AND THE DEAD."**

John 5:22

"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

John 12:48

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

Acts 17:31

because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

Romans 2:16

on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

1. This charge is **“IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS WHO IS ABOUT TO BE JUDGING THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.”**
2. **HE IS COMING AGAIN!**

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The following verses speaking of the same event:

John 14:1, 2,

1 Corinthians 15:51-54, and

Titus 2:12, 13.

Not only are we to be passionate and keep our sense of urgency and faithfulness because He is going to examine our lives as Christians and is aware of our faithfulness, but also, we need to realize that He is soon to return. At His returning, we will have had our last opportunity to be faithful to Him in service.

The next great promise and thrill we can look forward to with expectancy is:

3. **“HIS KINGDOM”**—this time when we will rule and reign with Christ.

“[Timothy] I AM CHARGING YOU IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND OF CHRIST JESUS, THE ONE WHO IS ABOUT TO BE JUDGING THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.” The One who’s coming again and the One who is going to set up **“HIS KINGDOM.”**

MacArthur says:

When we stand before our omniscient Lord, He already will know, far better than we ourselves can know even in our most honest moments, exactly how faithful and godly our life has been. Not a year or a month, not an hour, minute, or second escapes His notice or His judgment.

p. 169

Stott says:

The main emphasis of this first verse, however, is not so much on the presence of God as on the coming of Christ. It is evident that Paul still believes in Christ’s personal return. He wrote of it in his earliest letters, especially those to the Thessalonian church. Although he now knows that he will die before it takes place, yet still at the end of his ministry he looks forward to it, lives in the light of it and describes Christians as those who love Christ’s appearing (8). He is sure that Christ will make a visible ‘appearing’ . . . and that when he appears he will both ‘judge the living and the dead’ and consummate ‘his kingdom’ or reign.

p. 110

Quinn & Wacker have this to say:

As God the Father looks on, and Christ Jesus who is going to judge the living and dead, I adjure you, Timothy, while bearing witness to his revelation and his kingdom. With this long sentence (extending through v. 4) and its return to the first person singular in *diamartyromai*, one notes first of all that the whole opening phrase, literally “I charge, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . ,” occurred word for word in 1 Tim 5:21
p. 765

J. Vernon McGee says:

This is a very solemn charge or command in the presence of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Who shall judge the quick and the dead,” the *living* and the dead.

“At his appearing and his kingdom.” Christ’s appearing and His kingdom are not the same thing. His appearing is the epiphany, the rapture of the church. His kingdom refers to the revelation of Christ when He returns to earth to establish His kingdom. Twice He will do some judging. He will judge His own when He takes them out of the world. Also, He will judge those who turn to God in the Great Tribulation. All of us who are believers will come before Him for judgment at one time or another. Our lives are going to be tested to see if we are to receive a reward or not.
p. 474

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

His kingdom is real now, but not visible. It shall then be both real *and visible*
p. 1381

Barclay says:

So Paul says to Timothy: “So live and so work that you will rank high in the roll of citizens of the Kingdom when the Kingdom comes.”
p. 234

Barclay then says further:

Here is our Christian motive for work and service. Our work must be such that it will stand the scrutiny of Christ. Our lives must be such that they will welcome the appearance of the King. Our service must be such that it will demonstrate the reality of our citizenship in the Kingdom of God.
p. 234

Guthrie says:

The solemnity of the present charge is doubly impressive as the parting advice of the aged warrior to his younger and rather timid lieutenant. It would be emptied of much of its meaning and dignity if it were no more than a fictitious attempt to represent what the real Paul might have said to the real Timothy.
p. 165

Milne says:

The overwhelming sense of God's unseen presence, along with that of Jesus Christ, inspired Paul to speak in this way, as it has always done for servants of God . . . An abiding and deepening sense of the heavenly world is the most powerful stimulant for producing sincerity, urgency and integrity in the work of Christ in the midst of sufferings.
p. 172

Gaebelein says:

And so he delivers one more charge, and that solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom. He is as a servant to keep the coming of the Lord, His appearing and His kingdom before his heart.
p. 197

Lange says:

Before God and the Lord Jesus Christ . . . so that both, as invisible witnesses, were considered personally present.
p. 112

Lea & Griffin say:

Paul grounded his charge to Timothy in four realities. The first two of these are God the Father and Christ Jesus the Son. Summoning Timothy into the majestic presence of the Father and reminding him of Christ's role as judge, Paul prepared Timothy to shoulder the duties of his ministerial office. The "living" are those who will be alive at the time of Christ's return, and the "dead" are those who will experience a resurrection to a personal meeting with the Lord (1 Thess 4:16-18).
p. 241

They say further:

Because Paul viewed his departure from the scene as near, he passed the baton of the office into the hands of his younger colleague.
p. 242

Barnes says:

The word *quick* means *living* . . . and the idea is, that he would be alike the judge of all who were alive when he should come, and of all who had died . . .
p. 243

Towner says:

If Christians were able to grasp the fact fully that God is with them, really and continually present, and that they live their lives in his presence, their zeal to live holy lives would be far more evident. But the invisibility requires faith. And with so much that is visible clamoring for our attention, we think and act as if the invisible were unreal or blind.

p. 202

Larson says:

The solemnity of Paul's charge to Timothy became apparent as he issued it **in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus**. Paul was giving Timothy a binding oath to ministry. Besides the magnitude of the trust, sealed by God, Paul provided motivation for Timothy, and all Christians, to follow through.

p. 318

Hendriksen says:

It is on the eve of his death that Paul delivers this final, most solemn charge. He directs Timothy's attention to God and to Christ Jesus, in whose presence the charge is issued and received. He places Timothy under oath to comply with the charge. It is to God and to the Anointed Savior that Timothy (Paul, too, of course!) will have to render an account. And this is the Christ who "is about to" judge! In a sense, even now his approaching footsteps can be heard. He is on the way. Paul stresses the certainty of his coming and its impending character, but does not fix any date.

p. 308

Lenski says:

This is Paul's last, most earnest, and solemn testimony to Timothy. He makes it "in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus"; this is an expression that he has used before. He now wants it to be stronger, as strong as he is able to make it; it is his last, it is to impress Timothy more deeply than ever. So Paul adds the apposition: "of the One about to judge living and dead."

p. 850

Matthew Henry says:

How awfully this charge is introduced (v. 1). The best of men have need to be awed into the discharge of their duty. The eye of God and Jesus Christ was upon him: *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ*. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day, reminding him of the judgment to come. He will appear; he will come the second time, and it will be a glorious appearance.

p. 1897

Hawthorne & Martin say:

In all three Pastoral letters the immediate context of these verses suggests a future manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, . . .

p. 259

They say further:

While the idea of the kingdom of God or kingdom of Christ is certainly foundational to the whole of Paul's thought, it is somewhat surprising to discover the comparative rarity of explicit references to "the kingdom" within the Pauline letters. The term *basileia* ("reign," "kingdom") occurs only fifteen times

p. 524

They say finally:

Repeatedly Paul calls on God as a "witness" (*martys*) to apostolic truthfulness and integrity . . . The cognate verb *martyromai* is used to mean "solemnly charge" or "testify" . . . and the compound verb *diamartyromai* is employed . . . in the Pastorals this verb appears in impressive religious contexts: "I *solemnly charge* you in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ"

p. 974

(Seize the Day with Dietrich Bonhoeffer by Charles Ringma) Colorado Springs, CO: Piñon Press. Copyright – Charles Ringma, 2000.

“Alone you stood before God when he called you; alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle and pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God.”

—LIFE TOGETHER

(March 10)

v. 2 Preach the word, hold yourself in readiness when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with unlimited patience and teaching.

THIS IS THE CONTENT OF THE CHARGE.

It is summed up in **FIVE RAPID-FIRE COMMANDS** that are given in this verse.

In view of the fact that Jesus Christ is going to judge “the living and the dead,” He is coming again and He is going to set up “His kingdom,” get busy and:

1. **“PREACH THE WORD.”**

We have just studied together in our last study in 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Paul’s concept of the word is that it is:

“God-breathed” and profitable “for teaching, for conviction, for correction [improvement], for training in righteousness in order that the man of God may be adequate [complete],” well fitted for every good deed.

Now, on the basis of this, he is admonishing young Timothy to be faithful in proclaiming the truth of the Word of God.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The content of Paul's charge represents the central thrust of every minister's task: Timothy was to **preach the Word**. All the weight of verse 1 bears on this entreaty. Paul could hardly have emphasized the matter more strongly. Because the Word is inspired and profitable for all aspects of the ministry, proclaiming that Word was to be Timothy's business **in season and out of season**, that is, he was to stand by this duty whether the opportunity seemed ripe or not. Those in error he was to **correct** . . . those who were sinning he was to **rebuke** . . . those who were doing well he was to **encourage**. These are the facets of public ministry; proclamation, correction, rebuke, and encouragement—all of which must be done **with great patience and careful instruction**.
pp. 757-8

Hawthorne & Martin say:

Of primary importance in the process of building up God's people is the regular and systematic exposition of Scripture, together with the teaching of "sound doctrine" by those equipped and appointed for the task . . .
p. 129

They say further:

The continuing reality of sin and the call to sanctification means that both the individual believer and the believing community must employ all the means of grace established by the Spirit so as to walk in the Spirit and not quench the Spirit . . . Thus, discernment . . . exhortation . . . and repentant, prayerful turning to God . . . are essential to the process of sanctification in the community of the Spirit.
p. 910

Matthew Henry says:

To *preach the word*. This is ministers' business. It is not their own notions and fancies that they are to preach, but the pure plain word of God.
p. 1898

Lenski says:

“Herald the Word!” is properly put first, for this is Timothy’s greatest work and function. This connects directly with 3:14-17, especially with “all Scripture God-inspired.” This word is regularly translated “preach” and regards the preacher as a *κηρυξ* or “herald,” whose function is . . . to make a loud, public proclamation, one that has been given him by a superior.
p. 852

He says further on the phrase “stand at hand in good season and no season”:

The verb is often used with reference to the sudden appearance of a person, of an angel, etc. “Be right on the spot!” conveys the meaning and not . . . “*carry on, stick to it.*” Timothy is to be right there, namely with the Word, to herald it “in good season,” when things seem favorable, “in no season,” when it does not seem seasonable at all. We have no connective; the paradoxical oxymoron is therefore all the sharper. The Word knows no difference as to [time] or seasons; it is proper for all seasons, everlastingly in season; there is never a time in which it is not needed.
p. 852

Hendriksen says:

By means of five brisk imperatives (all of them aorists) the content of the charge is now set forth: **herald the word; be on hand in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, admonish, with all longsuffering and teaching.**
p. 308

Hendriksen says further:

According to Scripture, then, *“heralding” or “preaching” is generally the divinely authorized proclamation of the message of God to men. It is the exercise of ambassadorship.*¹⁶⁹

p. 309

He says finally:

“Be on hand in season, out of season.” Welcome or not welcome, Timothy must ever be “on the spot”¹⁷¹ with the message from God. He must “buy up the opportunity” (Eph. 5:16).

p. 310

Lea & Griffin say:

Five aorist imperatives in this verse set forth commands with the crisp forcefulness of a military order.

p. 242

They say further:

First, Timothy was to stand “prepared in season and out of season” (“press it home on all occasions, convenient or inconvenient,” NEB). The command implies that each Christian leader must always be on duty and take advantage of every opportunity for service.

p. 243

They say finally:

It is not certain that Paul intended this, but his next three imperatives may refer respectively to intellect, conscience, and will. Timothy was to correct error by the use of reasoned argument. He was to rebuke a straying conscience whenever the need appeared. He was to give hope to the fainthearted by providing tender encouragement in the face of discouraging opposition.

p. 243

Lange says:

Preach the word, . . . signifies a loud and open proclaiming, like that of the *κηρυξ* who announces the approach of his king . . .
p. 112

Quinn & Wacker say:

With the solemn introduction of the preceding verse, the drumroll of five imperatives in this verse comes as no surprise. The form of the list is not cut fully on the patterns to which the reader of the PE has been accustomed; thus the members do not gradually increase in length, and alliteration and assonance are minimal.
p. 769

They say further:

The first of the “five commandments” for “the man of God” is “proclaim the word.” Here Paul’s “child” and heir is to take up his apostolic task, to proclaim the gospel word to those who have not yet believed . . . [and] would also include congregations of believers).
p. 769

They say further:

Delling has also called attention to the fact that “timely/untimely” may refer not only to those who hear the preaching but also to the convenience/inconvenience of the preacher himself.
p. 770

Quinn & Wacker say finally:

The closing, expansive phrase . . . could be taken simply with the preceding . . . or with the whole series of imperatives that preceded. The latter option seems more satisfactory—the whole activity of the apostolic ministry is to be characterized “by all patience and instruction.”
p. 771

J. Vernon McGee says:

“Preach the word” means to proclaim the Word, to give it out, to herald it. This phrase is sort of a rallying cry, a motto that people respond to. You remember that we had such a thing during World War II: “Remember Pearl Harbor.” Back in the Spanish-American War, it was “Remember the Maine.” This is our rallying cry today: “Preach the Word.”
p. 475

For all of us who live in **TEXAS**, it is:

REMEMBER THE ALAMO!

McGee says further:

Here is another subtle point: Paul does not say to preach *from* the Word. He does not say to lift a verse from the Bible and then weave a sermon around it. Someone has well said that a text is a pretext that’s taken out of its context. We are not to preach *about* the Word of God or *from* the Word of God, but preach the Word of God itself!
p. 475

McGee then says further:

“Be instant in season, out of season.” The word *instant* means “diligent,” or even better “urgent.” There is a compulsion upon us. We should be chafing at the bit, ready to give out the Word of God. “In season, out of season” means any time of the day or night, any time of the year, under any and all circumstances.

p. 475

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

be instant—i.e., urgent, earnest, in the whole work of the ministry.
in season, out of season—i.e., at all seasons; whether they regard your speaking as seasonable or unseasonable. “Just as the fountains, though none may draw from them, still flow on; and the rivers, though none may drink of the, still run; so must we do all on our part in speaking, though none give heed to us” . . .

p. 1381

They then say further:

I think with CHRYSOSTOM, there is included also the idea of times whether seasonable or unseasonable *to Timothy himself*; not merely when convenient, but when inconvenient to thee, night as well as day . . . in danger as well as in safety, in prison and when doomed to death as well as when at large, not only in church, but everywhere and on all occasions, whenever and wherever the Lord’s work requires it.

p. 1381

Patrick & Lowth say:

Preach the word; be instant (*in that work*) in season, (*and*) out of season (*publicly and privately, by day and night, in times of peace and of danger*); reprove (. . . *repel false teachers*), rebuke (*evil livers*), exhort with all longsuffering (*though they long seem not to regard thy exhortations*) and doctrine (*i.e. all manner of instructions*).

p. 865

A. T. Robertson, speaking on the word translated “HOLD YOURSELF IN READINESS,” says:

Second aorist (ingressive) active imperative . . . “take a stand,” “stand upon it or up to it,” “carry on,” ‘stick to it.’

p. 529

Kelly says:

The two adverbs from a proverbial jingle . . . and might be paraphrased, ‘Whether the moment seems opportune or not’.

p. 206

He says further:

Timothy must **refute** error by reasoned argument; and he must not hesitate to **rebuke** when censure is called for. More positively, he must **exhort** (this is a more suitable rendering than ‘encourage’, which some prefer), i.e. urge his flock to repentance and perseverance.

p. 206

Demarest says:

“Preach the word!” In the light of what has just been said (3:14-17), there is no question as to what that word is. It is the Word of God written, the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and to us the New as well. We are first, last, and always to be proclaimers of the Word of God. Here is the picture from the ancient world of the town crier, “Hear ye, hear ye . . . !” Among all the things that demand our time and energy, nothing is to have higher priority than preaching the Word, be it from the pulpit or in a conversation in the company cafeteria.

p. 286

Hughes says:

The abruptness of these commands convey urgency—terminal urgency. Timothy must waste no time. He must get to it. It is clear that some of the commands are directed at Timothy’s reticence, at the things he did not naturally like to do. In truth, no preacher likes to do certain of these things, especially if he is the least bit shy or retiring. But Paul is insistent.
p. 243

He says further:

What a massive charge this is: “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” No one is capable for the task. The call itself is an invitation to let God possess you—to live a life of profound dependence on him.
p. 246

Towner says:

Five commands combine to summarize “ministry.” *Preach the Word* casts Timothy in the role of a herald, making proclamation on behalf of the King (1:11). Christian ministry centers on the Word of God, God’s own expression of his will for people whom he desires to bless.
pp. 203-4

He says further:

Second, ministry means availability and preparedness. Paul’s adverbial phrase *in season and out of season* is the call to be ready. It brings to mind the doctor on call in the emergency room, or an obstetrician whose schedule must be determined by need, where readiness and availability might be the difference between life and death. It is “available” Christians who will be able to seize the moment and win people for Christ or come to the aid of struggling brothers and sisters in the church.
p. 204

Barnes says:

He was always to be at his post, and was to embrace every opportunity of making known the gospel. What Paul seems to have contemplated was, not merely that he should perform the duty at stated and regular times; but that he should press the matter as one who had the subject much at heart, and never lose an opportunity of making the gospel known.

p. 243

Milne says:

So Paul adds **I give you this charge**: in the form of five plain mandates which sum up, in an easy-to-be-remembered way, the principal activities and goals that are meant to shape all pastoral leadership. When Paul says 'I give you this charge' he is using a technical term which can be used for putting people under oath before God and points to the seriousness of the matter under discussion . . .

p. 173

Guthrie says:

The apostle regards Timothy as being at a crisis in which he must make definite resolves towards positive action. He must preach the word, in which he had been nurtured, as never before.

p. 166

Guthrie says further:

. . . hence the meaning here seems to be that the Christian minister must always be on duty. He must take every opportunity to serve, whether the occasion seems opportune or not. Easton paraphrases 'be at your task whether men will listen or not', but this tends to restrict the application to preaching, whereas the reference is probably to all Timothy's varied tasks.

p. 166

Barclay says:

The Christian teacher is to be *persistent*. He is to urge the claims of Christ “in season and out of season.” As someone has put it: “Take or make your opportunity.”

p. 234

He also says:

Still further, the Christian duty of conviction, of rebuke, of encouragement, must be carried out with unwearied *patience*. The word is *makrothumia*, and it describes the spirit which never grows irritated, never grows annoyed, never grows weary, never despairs; it describes the spirit which never loses its faith in human nature, and never regards any man as hopeless and beyond salvation.

p. 237

Stott says:

. . . the essence of the charge is in the three words ‘Preach the word’. We observe at once that the message Timothy is to communicate is called a ‘word’, a spoken utterance. Rather it is *the* word, God’s word which God has spoken. Paul does not need to specify it further, for Timothy will know at once that it is the body of doctrine which he has heard from Paul and Paul has now committed to him to pass on to others. It is identical with ‘the deposit’ of chapter I. And in this fourth chapter it is equivalent to ‘the sound teaching’ (3), ‘the truth’ (4) and ‘the faith’ (7). It consists of the Old Testament Scriptures, God-breathed and profitable, which Timothy has known from childhood, together with the teaching of the apostle which Timothy has ‘followed’, ‘learned’ and ‘firmly believed’ (3:10, 14).

p. 106

He says further:

The verb *ephistēmi*, ‘be urgent’, means literally to ‘stand by’, and so to ‘be ready, be on hand, (AG). But here it appears to take on the flavour not just of alertness and eagerness, but of insistence and urgency.

pp. 106-7

Wiersbe says:

“Preach the Word!” is the main responsibility that Paul shared in this section. Everything else he said is related to this. The word “preach” means “to preach like a herald.” In Paul’s day, a ruler had a special herald who made announcements to the people. He was commissioned by the ruler to make his announcements in a loud, clear voice so everyone could hear. He was not an ambassador with the privilege of negotiating; he was a messenger with a proclamation to be heard and heeded. Not to heed the ruler’s messenger was serious; to abuse the messenger was even worse.

Timothy was to herald God’s Word with the authority of heaven behind him.

p. 154

He continues:

Timothy should be diligent and alert to use every opportunity to preach the Word, when it is favorable and even when it is not favorable. *It is easy to make excuses when we ought to be making opportunities.* Paul himself always found an opportunity to share the Word, whether it was in the temple courts, on a stormy sea, or even in prison. “He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap” (Ecc. 11:4). Stop making excuses and get to work!

p. 154-5

He then says finally:

Preaching must be marked by three elements: conviction, warning, and appeal (“reprove, rebuke, exhort”). To quote an old rule of preachers, “He should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.” If there is conviction but no remedy, we add to people’s burdens. And if we encourage those who ought to be rebuked, we are assisting them to sin. Biblical preaching must be balanced.

p. 155

Lock says of the phrase “in season, out of season”:

. . . semi-proverbial, “at all times”: *both* whether or no[t] the moment seems fit to your hearers, “welcome or not welcome” . . . “whether or no[t] it is convenient to you” . . . “on duty or off duty,” “in the pulpit or out of it,” “take or make your opportunity.”

p. 112-3

Griffiths says:

The charge contains five commands.

1. *Preach the Word.* That is, be a herald of the royal good news.

p. 209

He then says further:

2. *Be prepared* is probably a military term meaning to stand by, be ready, be on hand, suggesting the expectation of a sudden arrival or appearance. China Inland Missionaries were told they must ‘be prepared to pray, preach, eat or die at a moment’s notice’: a true apostolic succession.

p. 209

Calvin says:

Here Paul commends not merely perseverance but even aggressiveness in overcoming all barriers and difficulties. For as we are naturally timid and lazy, we easily give up on the slightest pretext, and we even sometimes welcome difficulties as an excuse for indolence. We should reflect on how many ways Satan has prepared to stop our progress and how slow we are to follow our calling. Thus the Gospel will not exist for long if pastors do not press home its claims urgently. This ruthless persistence refers both to pastor and people.

p. 158

Wilson says:

His task as a herald of God's grace means that he must preach the word, the whole word, and nothing but the word [Acts 20.27]. The remaining imperatives show how this great work is to be done.
p. 160

This is our **KEY VERSE** for Step #10 of the **TWELVE STEPS TO A FANTASTIC FINISH**:

PASSION: Pleasing You Is My Ruling Passion.

In this **CHARGE** and these **FIVE COMMANDS**, we have the **OUTLINE** of a passionate preacher:

"PREACH THE WORD, HOLD YOURSELF IN READINESS WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT AND WHEN IT IS INCONVENIENT."

This word, **"READINESS,"** is a very interesting word. It means to:

STAND BY,

BE READY, and

BE ON HAND.

KEEP YOUR SENSE OF URGENCY!

The word **PASSION** has in it the thought of:

INTENSE EMOTION,

LOVE,

JOY,

HATRED,

ANGER,

INTENSE ENTHUSIASM FOR SOMETHING,

INNER FEELINGS,

EMOTIONS,

RULING PASSION,

OBSESSION,

FULL OF FEELING,

FERVENT, and

INTENSE.

The whole passage indicates that Timothy must **CRANK IT UP A NOTCH**. That he must be intense, eager, and excited about the charge that he has been given.

PASSION means:

to have an intense enthusiasm for something.

To be **PASSIONATE** is to be:

FULL OF FEELING,

FERVENT,

INTENSE, and

EMOTIONAL.

enthusiasm (noun)

vigorousness: fervor, enthusiasm, vigor

vigor: spirit, fire, ardor, glow, warmth, fervor, vehemence, enthusiasm, passion, feeling

willingness: ready acquiescence, cheerful consent, alacrity, gameness, promptness, zeal, earnestness, eagerness, zealousness, ardor, enthusiasm

restlessness: eagerness, enthusiasm, ardor, fervor, abandon, zeal, vehemence, warm feeling

warm feeling: eagerness, keenness, fervor, ardor, vehemence, enthusiasm, dash, get-up-and-go, fire, vigorousness

excitation: climax, crisis, excited feeling, passion, emotion, enthusiasm, lyricism, feeling

hope: buoyancy, airiness, breeziness, optimism, enthusiasm, cheerfulness

love: romantic love, love at first sight, coup de foudre, passion, tender passion, fire of love, flames of love, enthusiasm, rapture, ecstasy, transport, transports of love, excitable state

applause: enthusiasm, excitement, excitation

piety: enthusiasm, fervor, zeal, muscular Christianity

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**(Life is Tremendous by Charles Jones) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.
Copyright – Charles E. Jones, 1968.**

Sometimes a person says, “I’m preparing for my next job.” You had better get excited about the one you’ve got, or there may not be a next one! Are you excited about what you’re doing? This takes *work*. The work in life is learning to be excited about work. Once a person begins to learn a little about it, he’s on his way.

There is nothing that can make you more excited about your work than a sense of its importance and urgency. *I believe that the fires of inspiration and greatness in our hearts can be kept burning only by developing this sense of urgency and importance in our work*—not the work I’m going to do, not the work I wish I could do, but the work I am doing now.

A sense of urgency in your work informs you that yesterday is gone forever and tomorrow may never come, but today is in your hands. It lets you know that shirking today’s work will add to tomorrow’s burden; it helps you accomplish the tasks that today sets before you.

p. 25

Timothy has to be really challenged by this charge!

The Christian certainly should feel a tremendous sense of urgency because in his hands he has the message of life eternal and to spurn this message of life eternal is to bring eternal death.

Romans 12:11 (Phillips)

keep the fire of the spirit burning as we do our work for the Lord.

The Greek word *Ζεω* means:

FERVENT,

TO BOIL, and

TO BE HOT.

Another translation has been:

“TO MAINTAIN THE SPIRITUAL GLOW.”

Job 32:19

inside I am like bottled-up wine, like new wineskins ready to burst.

Acts 18:25

This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

What a tragedy to see people who are **CHRONOLOGICALLY CHALLENGED** begin:

TO COOL OFF,

TO BACK OFF,

TO SHUT IT DOWN,

to let the **PASSIONS DIE**, and

to **SURRENDER** their kingdom work to others.

Revelation 3:14-19

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent.

Matthew 24:12

“And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.

Revelation 2:4

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

If there was ever a time that Timothy needed to be passionate, it was now with the impending departure of the Apostle Paul to glory.

John 4:35, 36

Do you not say, “There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest”? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.

ONLY PASSIONS, GREAT PASSIONS, CAN ELEVATE THE SOUL TO GREAT THINGS!

Passion

And hence one master-passion in the breast,
Like Aaron’s serpent, swallows up the rest.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet.
An Essay on Man (1733).

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intense

in•tense *adjective*

1. **extreme:** great, strong, or extreme in a way that can be felt
• *intense heat*
2. **effortful or active:** involving great effort or much activity
• *showed intense dedication to the task*
3. **concentrated:** narrowly focused or concentrated • *an intense stare*
4. **passionate:** feeling or showing strong and deeply felt emotions in a serious way • *a very intense young student*

[15th century. Via Old French from Lat *intensus*, the past participle of *intendere* “to stretch out” (see intend).]

—**in•tense•ly**, *adverb*

—**in•tense•ness**, *noun*

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Humankind

Because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes “Awww!”

Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), U.S. writer. *On the Road* (1957).

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Food

A man of my spiritual intensity does not eat corpses.

Attributed to: **George Bernard Shaw** (1856-1950), Irish playwright.

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Love

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), British philosopher and mathematician, 1967. *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell* "Prologue" (1967-1969).

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Love

By the time you say you're his,
Shivering and sighing,
And he vows his passion is
Infinite, undying—
Lady, make a note of this:
One of you is lying.

Dorothy Parker (1893-1967), U.S. writer and wit. *Unfortunate Coincidence* (1937).

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Greatness

Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), British statesman and novelist.
Coningsby (1844).

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Emotion

There is a road from the eye to the heart that does not go through the intellect.

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), English writer and poet.
The Defendant (1901).

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Desire

There are two tragedies in life. One is to lose your heart's desire.
The other is to gain it.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish playwright. *Man and Superman* (1903).

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I studied the lives of great men and famous women, and I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy and enthusiasm and hard work.

—HARRY S. TRUMAN

Say it simple. Say it often. Make it burn.

—ADOLF HITLER

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

THAT CERTAIN SOMETHING

That certain something that makes us great—that pulls us out of the mediocre and commonplace—that builds into us power. It glows and shines—it lights up our faces—ENTHUSIASM, the keynote that makes us sing and makes men sing with us. ENTHUSIASM—the maker of friends—the maker of smiles—the producer of confidence. It cries to the world, “I’ve got what it takes.” It tells all men that our job is a swell job—that the house which we work for just suits us—the goods we have are the best. ENTHUSIASM—the inspiration that makes us “wake up and live.” It puts spring in our step—spring in our hearts—a twinkle in our eyes and gives us confidence in ourselves and our fellow men. ENTHUSIASM—it changes a dead pan salesman to a producer—a pessimist to an optimist—a loafer to a go-getter. ENTHUSIASM—if we have it, we should thank God for it. If we don’t have it, then we should get down on our knees and pray for it.

Source unknown

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITIES

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season.

II Timothy 4:2

Spiritual Christians should ever be good witnesses. How often we excuse ourselves, however, for not giving a word of testimony by saying, "It was not an opportune moment!" And yet the words of our text tells us to scatter the living seed both when conditions are favorable, and when they seem to give little promise of success. It is true that we must be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves," but this applies to the *method* of our approach rather than to the *season* of our sowing.

R. A. Torrey tells how one day when he and Mr. Alexander were in Brighton, England, one of the workers went out before the meeting to get a meal in a restaurant. His attention was drawn toward the man who waited upon him, and there came to his heart a strong impression that he should speak to that waiter about his soul. However, it seemed to him such an unusual thing to do that he kept putting it off. When the meal was ended and the bill paid, he stepped out of the restaurant, but still had such a feeling that he should speak to that waiter that he decided to remain outside until the man came out of work. In a little while the proprietor saw him and asked him why he was standing there. He replied that he wanted to speak to the man who had served him at the table. A very solemn look came over the proprietor's face. "You will never speak to that man again. After waiting on you, he went to his room and shot himself!"

How many similar opportunities have we disregarded?

We may testify for our Lord "in season," but how are we in scattering the seed of the Word "out of season"? —H.G.B.

Sowing in the sunshine, sowing in the shadows,
Fearing neither clouds nor winter's chilling breeze;
By and by the harvest, and the labor ended,
We shall come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves.

—K. Shaw

**"The seed is the Word; the sowing time is always;
and the reward is sure!"**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, February 10, year unknown)

Quotes

The core problem is not that we are too passionate about bad things, but that we are not passionate enough about good things.

—Larry Crabb in *Finding God*

I have but one passion; it is He, He only.

—Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

ENTHUSIASM

A man can succeed at almost anything for which he has unlimited enthusiasm.

—CHARLES M. SCHWAB (1862-1939)

Enthusiasm makes ordinary people extraordinary.

—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE (1898-)

Every great and commanding movement in the annals of the world is the triumph of enthusiasm. Nothing great was ever achieved without it.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

Exuberance is beauty.

—WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

God wants no wallflowers; all must join the dance.

—GERHARD E. FROST

Nothing is so easy but it becomes difficult when done reluctantly.

—LATIN PROVERB

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

Spirit-filled souls are ablaze for God. They love with a love that glows. They believe with a faith that kindles. They serve with a devotion that consumes. They hate sin with a fierceness that burns. They rejoice with a joy that radiates. Love is perfected in the fire of God.

—SAMUEL CHADWICK (1832-1917)

The worst bankrupt in the world is the man who has lost his enthusiasm.

—H. W. ARNOLD

There seems to be a chilling fear of holy enthusiasm among the people of God. We try to tell how happy we are—but we remain so well-controlled that there are very few waves of glory experienced in our midst.

—A. W. TOZER (1897-1963)

Think excitement, talk excitement, act out excitement, and you are bound to become an excited person. Life will take on a new zest, deeper interest and greater meaning. You can talk think, talk, and act yourself into dullness or into monotony or into unhappiness. By the same process you can build up inspiration, excitement, and a surging depth of joy.

—NORMAN VINCENT PEALE (1898-)

Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.

—JIM ELLIOT (1927-1956)

Wherever you go, go with your whole heart.

—CONFUCIUS (c. 551-479 B.C.)

Enthusiasm is the element of success in everything. It is the light that leads and the strength that lifts men on and up in the great struggles of scientific pursuits and of professional labor. It robs endurance of difficulty and makes pleasure of duty.

—BISHOP DOANE (1832-1913)

Acquire enthusiasm; you can't be enthusiastic and unhappy at the same time.

—UNKNOWN

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

(God's Little Daily Devotional: 365 Days of Inspiration To Lift Your Spirit & Bring Peace to Your Soul by Honor Books) Tulsa, OK: Honor Books. Copyright – Honor Books, Inc., 1997.

As one scribe aptly noted: “There is no scribe who will not pass away, but what his hands have written will remain forever.”

If you truly want your work to last, do work that touches the eternal Truth and nature of God.

*The greatest use of life is to spend it for something
that will outlast it.*

p. 15

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright - Albert M. Wells, Jr., 1988.

Cooling down a fanatic is easier than warming up a corpse.

—W. E. McCumber

p. 9

Let It Be Said of Us

Let it be said of us, that the Lord was our passion.
 That with gladness we bore every cross we were given.
 That we fought the good fight, that we finished the course
 Knowing within us the pow'r of the risen Lord.

Chorus

Let the cross be our glory, And the Lord be our song.
 By mercy made holy, By the Spirit made strong.
 Let the cross be our glory, And the Lord be our song.
 Til the likeness of Jesus, Be through us made known.
 Let the cross be our glory, And the Lord be our song.

Let it be said of us, We were marked by forgiveness.
 We were known by our love, And delighted in meekness.
 We were ruled by His peace, Heeding unity's call.
 Joined as one body, that Christ would be seen by all.

Chorus (repeat 2 times)

Let the cross be our glory, And the Lord be our song.

"Let It Be Said of Us" words and music by Steve Fry. © 1994 Maranatha! Music and Word Music, a div. of Word Music. From Compact Disk *"The Best of Promise Keepers"* © 1997 Maranatha! Music, a div. of The Corinthian Group / (p) 1997 Maranatha! Music, a div. of The Corinthian Group.

v. 3 For the time will come when they will not listen willingly to wholesome instruction, But after their own desires, they will accumulate to themselves a great many teachers who are tickling their ears.

Here the Apostle states the **REASON** for the charge and the importance of it:

“FOR THE TIME WILL COME,” Paul says, and is probably already present with many of the difficulties they have been encountering in the Ephesian church.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The reason Paul’s charge to Timothy is so solemn is that **the time will come**—and no doubt was already partially present, in the apostle’s opinion—**when men will not put up with sound** (lit., “healthy” . . . [teaching]. **Instead . . . they** would seek out (lit. “hearp up”) **teachers**, of whom many are always available, who would tell them what they wanted to hear rather than face them with the truth . . . Such teachers merely “tickle the ear” so that they **turn** people **away from the truth** on the one hand and toward **myths** . . . on the other.
p. 758

Barclay says:

He warns Timothy that the day is coming when men will refuse to listen to sound teaching, and when they will collect teachers who will titillate their ears with their pleasant and flattering and novel teachings, and who will tell them precisely the easy-going, comfortable things which they want to hear.
p. 237

Stott says:

They suffer from a peculiar pathological condition called ‘itching ears’, ‘an itch for novelty’.¹ AG explain that the expression is a figure of speech for that kind of curiosity which ‘looks for interesting and spicy bits of information.’ Further, ‘this itching is relieved by the messages of the new teachers’. In fact what the people do is stop their ears against the truth (*cf.* Acts 7:57) and open them to any teacher who will relieve their tickle by scratching it.
p. 111

Calvin says:

We should note the phrase **gather around**, which means that in their madness they will not be content with a few imposters but will want a great crowd. As there is always an insatiable desire for vain and harmful things, the world is constantly seeking to destroy itself by every possible means it can devise and imagine, and the devil always has available as many teachers like this as the world requires. There has always been a plentiful harvest of wicked people, as there is today, and Satan has never any lack of helpers or lack of ways of deceiving people.
p. 160

Guthrie says:

The absence of any serious purpose behind this amassing of ‘teachers’ is ironically summed up in the description of the hearers as *having itching ears*, which means literally ‘having the hearing tickled’, as if what they heard merely scratched their eardrums without penetrating further.
p. 167

Barnes says:

When they will not endure sound doctrine. Greek, healthful doctrine; i.e. doctrine contributing to the health of the soul, or to salvation. At that time they would seek a kind of instruction more conformable to their wishes and feelings.
p. 244

A. T. Robertson, speaking on the word “will not endure,” says:

[It is a] Future middle (direct) of *anechō*. “Will not hold themselves back from” (Col. 3:13).
p. 629

He then says further:

Having itching ears . . . Present middle (causative) participle . . . late and rare form of the Attic *knaō*, to scratch, to tickle, here only in N.T. “Getting the ears (the hearing, . . .) tickled.” . . . Clement of Alexandria tells of speakers tickling . . . the ears of those who want to be tickled. This is the temptation of the merely “popular” preacher, to furnish the latest tickle.
pp. 629-30

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown commenting on the phrase:

after their own lusts—Instead of regarding the will of God they dislike being interrupted in their lusts by true teachers. **heap**—one on another: an indiscriminate mass of false teachers. Variety delights itching ears. “He who despises sound teaching, leaves sound teachers; they seek instructors like themselves” [BENGEL].
p. 1382

They say further:

They, as it were, tickle with pleasure the levity of the multitude [Cicero], who come as to a theater to hear what will delight their ears, not to learn . . . what will do them good.
p. 1382

Lea & Griffin say:

They would pack the pulpits of their churches with preachers who would tell them only what they desired to hear.
p. 244

They say further:

Such speakers toy with the minds of the hearers but leave the intellect uninformed, the conscience unchallenged, and the will set in a direction away from God.
p. 244

Hendriksen says:

There are always teachers that are willing to “scratch and tickle the ears of those who wish to be tickled” . . .
p. 312

Lenski says:

So they heap up for themselves teachers who will furnish them “teaching in accord with the (perverted) desires that are their own,” who will satisfy their tastes. Paul is not referring to esthetic taste but to hankering after what is unhealthy for the soul and the life.
p. 854

Hawthorne & Martin say:

Departure from the faith comes from accepting “teachings of demons” . . . referring to the demonic origin of the false teachings) characterized by asceticism, disputes about the Law and speculation . . . and a denial of the future resurrection . . . The love of money and other vices can also accompany such turning away from the faith . . . Exclusion from salvation is implied.
p. 44

Larson says:

Nothing has changed. People still like to hear only pleasant things, teachings that correspond to their **own desires**. This allows them to continue in the lifestyles and practices with which they are comfortable. The human heart works hard to fortify itself against truth, creating rationalizations and systems of thought to justify selfishness. Unfortunately, there are teachers and leaders who give people what they want to hear, tickling their **itching ears** with curiosities that allow them to remain untouched by God's transforming power.

p. 320

Fee says:

This sentence begins with an explanatory **for** and gives the reasons for the nature of the charge in verse 2: "Proclaim the message; stay by it no matter what comes; in so doing, rebuke, warn, and exhort, with all patience, for the time will come . . ."

p. 285

Fee, speaking further of the "itching ears," says:

This latter, very pejorative, expression is a metaphor for "curiosity, that looks for interesting and spicy bits of information" (BAGD) and therefore fits the speculative, dilettantish nature of the false teachings . . .

p. 286

Liefeld says:

Verse 3 explains the reasons for the charge in verses 1-2. The Word must be preached because sound doctrine is going to be rejected.

p. 287

Baxter addresses this:

The Crucial Significance

Now all our foregoing quotations about “the charge,” and “the deposit,” and “the faith,” and “the doctrine,” and “the godliness,” lead us up to the crucial significance of these two Timothy epistles. When we perceive clearly what that significance really is we realize at once what a solemn voice these two letters have for our own time.

Think back for a moment to the opening paragraph of the first letter, where we find the primary purpose of Paul’s charge to Timothy, i.e.: “That thou mightest charge *SOME* not to teach heterodox doctrine” (i. 3). Remember, too, the word in chapter[4] iv. I: “But the Spirit saith expressly that in later times *SOME* shall fall away from the faith.” Then, with that repeated “*SOME*” in mind, recall the five sad, disturbing instances in this first epistle where it tells of apostasy:

- “*SOME* have turned aside” (i. 6).
- “*SOME* have made shipwreck” (i. 19).
- “*SOME* are turned after Satan” (v. 15).
- “*SOME* have been led astray” (vi. 10).
- “*SOME* have missed the mark” (vi. 21 margin).

In the *second* epistle the “*SOME*” has become “*ALL*”. At the beginning of it we find:

“This thou knowest, that *ALL* that are in Asia have turned away from me” (i. 15).

Then again, at the end we find:

“At my first defence, no one took my part, but *ALL* forsook me” (iv. 16).

That is why these two letters were written so urgently to Timothy. They strike a crisis-point. They are a critical challenge. The first of them marks a break-away. The second marks a break-down.

p. 241

Patrick & Lowth paraphrase verse 3 as follows:

Thus it becomes thee to be instant now,) For the time will (*shortly*) come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; . . .
p. 865

“FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT LISTEN WILLINGLY TO WHOLESOME INSTRUCTION.”

Ezekiel 33:30-32

“As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, ‘Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord.’ My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

The word **“BUT”** forms the **CONTRAST**:

“BUT AFTER THEIR OWN DESIRES, THEY WILL ACCUMULATE.”

“ACCUMULATE” means to **“heap up.”**

That reminds me of one person’s definition of a **P.H.D.:**

“Piled Higher and Deeper.”

**“THEY WILL ACCUMULATE TO THEMSELVES [FALSE TEACHERS]
A GREAT MANY TEACHERS WHO ARE TICKLING THEIR EARS.”**

1 Kings 22:13, 14

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably.” But Micaiah said, “As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell him only what the Lord tells me.”

EAR PROBLEMS

Many son Stevie was complaining that his ear hurt. I thought eardrops would do the trick, so I asked him if his ear hurt inside. “No, it hurts here,” he said, pointing to the skin behind his ear. “Put some of that stuff in the blue tube on it.”

That “stuff” was an ointment for cuts, and he must have remembered how cool and comforting it felt when we used it previously, so that’s what he self-prescribed for this new hurt. Putting the cream behind Stevie’s ear didn’t solve the problem. We had to go to the doctor, who prescribed the right medicine.

The apostle Paul talked to his friend Timothy about some people with “ear problems” who would seek the wrong cure. Like a 5-year-old who doesn’t want to bother with eardrops, these people would not “endure sound doctrine,” but would soothe their ears with a message to satisfy “their own desires” (2 Tim. 4:3).

What does this mean to us? It suggests that we must be very careful where we get our spiritual help. As Paul suggested, there is preaching and teaching that will make us feel good but is not biblically correct.

The only sure cure for itching ears is sound doctrine taught by Spirit-filled teachers of godly character. —JDB

*Lord, grant us wisdom to discern
The truth You have made known,
And may we not believe one word
Beyond what You have shown. —DJD*

**GOD’S TRUTH IS THE BEST DEFENSE
AGAINST THE DEVIL’S LIE.**

(From Our Daily Bread, Saturday, December 11, 1993)

ITCHING EARS

The apostle Paul warned Timothy that he would encounter people with an ailment he called “itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). Those who have this condition reject “sound doctrine” and look for teaching that suits “their own desires.”

For example, if they’re offended by Christ’s declaration, “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14:6), they flock to a pastor who says there are many ways to God.

Or some people reject the biblical teaching that those who engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage are “fornicators and adulterers” whom “God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). So they look for a teacher who says that the sexual standards in the Bible are not binding in today’s world.

I deplore what these people do, but I’m afraid that I too have “itching ears.” I love to hear strong affirmations of biblical standards and sound doctrine. But I don’t like to be confronted with Scripture about prideful, self-righteous attitudes or lack of love for others.

Undoubtedly, all of us have this malady. We need to ask the Lord to search our hearts and forgive us. He can change us so that we will listen to what His Word says and obey it. That’s the only antidote for “itching ears.”

—HVL

*Master, speak, and make me ready,
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady,
Still to follow every word. —Havergal*

**OBEYING THE TRUTH IS THE REMEDY
FOR ITCHING EARS.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Sunday, September 14, year unknown)

v. 4 And they will turn away their ears from the truth and will wander off into myths.

When these “teachers who are tickling their ears” begin to speak, the response will be that the audience:

“WILL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH AND WILL WANDER OFF INTO MYTHS.”

In 1 Kings 13 you have one of the saddest stories of a man of God who went to proclaim a message. As he prepared to depart, there was an old prophet who lived in Bethel who found the young man of God as he was leaving. We read in:

1 Kings 13:18

. . . “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the Lord: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’” (But he was lying to him.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.

1 Kings 13:23, 24

When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was thrown down on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it.

When the old prophet heard the news of his death, he said in:

1 Kings 13:26

. . . “It is the man of God who defied the word of the Lord. The Lord has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the Lord had warned him.”

THE SAD, SAD CONSEQUENCES OF LISTENING TO THE FALSE PROPHETS.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Paul's main focus in this passage was on the inclinations of the audience rather than, as was more his custom . . . the evil intent of the false teachers. For error to flourish both sides of the transaction must cooperate. This is the sixth time Paul used "truth" in this epistle . . . five times in 1 Tim. . . . and twice in Titus . . . Obviously he was concerned about the dangers of heresies diverting people from God's truth.

p. 758

(Final Call by Steven J. Lawson) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books. Copyright - Steven J. Lawson, 1994.

Second, dead churches have dead worship. It's like walking into a wax museum. There's no excitement. No celebration. They worship as if Jesus Christ were still dead and buried in the grave. They begin at 11:00 sharp and get out at 12:00 dull. There are no "Amens," only yawns. The congregational singing sounds like two calves dying in a hailstorm. It's so cold in those churches, you have to ice-skate down the center aisle to come forward.

Third, dead churches have dead ministry. There is no evangelism. No missions outreach. No church growth. Cobwebs are spun in the baptistery. Dust collect ons [sic] the church membership roll. Who would want to join this cemetery?

Oliver Cromwell was once faced with a shortage of precious metal for coins. So he sent his troops out to find some. When they returned, they reported that the only precious metal was to be found in the statues of the saints standing in the corners of churches.

Cromwell said, "Well melt down the saints and put them in circulation."

p. 157

v. 5 But you be self-possessed under all circumstances, bear hardship patiently, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

“BUT YOU” forms the **CONTRAST** to the false “teachers” and those who “wander off into myths.”

You have the **STRONG CONTRAST** back in 2 Timothy 3:10 & 14 as well.

Here Paul exhorts young Timothy with **FOUR COMMANDS**:

1. **“BE SELF-POSSESSED UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES,”**
2. **“BEAR HARDSHIP PATIENTLY,”**
3. **“DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST,”** and
4. **“FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY.”**

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Again Paul used the strong contrast **But you . . .** (cf. 3:10, 14). Timothy must remain cool-headed in the face of difficulties. He must be ready to **endure hardship** (cf. 2:3) as the pressure mounted. He must **do the work of an evangelist**, proclaiming the gospel at every opportunity. (There is no reason to assume, as some suggest, that Timothy was without the gift of evangelism). In every way, Paul wrote, fulfill **your ministry . . .**
p. 758

When Paul says to Timothy, “**BE SELF-POSSESSED UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES,**” he is telling him to be:

WISE AS A SERPENT and

HARMLESS AS A DOVE.

He is to keep his head and play it cool. When other minds are failing them for fear and there is a tendency to pull away from those things that you have known from childhood, “**BE SELF-POSSESSED UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.**” Be determined to stay with it and to hang in there!

Fee says:

Keep your head in all situations. This verb literally means to “stay sober,” calling for Timothy to maintain control of himself. The people will go after anything because they have “itching ears.” **But you** must keep on the alert so as not to be taken in.

p. 286

Larson says:

Despite the prevalent distaste for truth and the unsettling atmosphere of multiple doctrines and philosophies, Paul declared, **But [Timothy], keep your head in all situations.** Do not panic. Keep your head “screwed on straight,” as the common expression has it.

p. 320

Hawthorne & Martin say:

Paul recognizes that all Christians simply *will suffer* as a result of identifying themselves with Christ . . . and, to varying degrees, as a result of their distinct circumstances, since such suffering is inevitable in this evil age . . .

p. 920

Lenski says:

So again: “thy ministry (service for others) fulfill,” carry out to fulness; at any time in the future let nothing be lacking in thy service.
p. 857

Hendriksen says:

He must permit nothing to stop him, but must discharge his gospel-ministry *to the full*: heralding the word, being on hand in season, out of season, reproving, rebuking, admonishing, with all longsuffering and teaching.
p. 312

Lea & Griffin say:

In contrast to those listeners who have itching ears, Timothy was to respond with spiritual intelligence. Paul indicated the nature of Timothy’s response by issuing four quick imperatives, the first in the present tense and the other three in the aorist.
p. 245

They say further:

With these words Paul concluded this charge to Timothy. He would outline his own final testimony in 4:6-8. Paul had completed the great race of service for Christ, but Timothy was in the midst of a torrid battle.
p. 246

Guthrie says:

The verb *nēphō* means 'be sober' and enjoins moral alertness or 'coolness and presence of mind'. The same verb is used in I Thes. [5] v. 6, 8 to denote a watchful and alert attitude towards Christ's second coming. The Christian minister must seek to cultivate an unruffled alertness in every aspect of his work.

p. 168

He says further:

Timothy is putting his hand to the plough and must not look back until his *ministry (diakonia)* is completed.

p. 168

Stott says:

Now follow four staccato commands which seem to be deliberately framed in relation to the situation in which Timothy finds himself and to the kind of people to whom he is called to minister.

p. 111

He says further:

It should be the same with us. The harder the times and the dearer the people, the clearer and more persuasive our proclamation must be.

p. 112

Wilson says:

In contrast to those who are intoxicated by error, Timothy must retain that clarity of mind and sound judgment which will enable him to persevere in his God-given calling without faltering. This will mean accepting the hardship which is involved in doing the work of an evangelist, i.e. preaching the gospel. With Paul's example before him [vv 6-8], he must not allow the prospect of suffering to deter him from fulfilling his ministry.
p. 162

Griffiths says:

But you (unlike the people in verses 3-4) *keep your head in all situations, endure hardship*. This phrase means literally 'suffer evil'. Urging Timothy to do the work of an evangelist leads Paul naturally into speaking of his own ministry, which is almost at an end.
p. 211

Locke, speaking of the word:

νηφε The word is probably suggested by the self-control of the athlete in training . . . here it implies free from excitement about novelties, self-controlled, vigilant. "Opposed to the morbid habit of mind which craves for fables rather than the naked truth" . . .
p. 113

Lock says further of the final command "FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY":

. . . thy task of service to the Church and its work, . . . fulfil, carry it out to the end . . .
p. 114

Wiersbe says:

A young preacher once complained to Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher of the 1800's, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved.

“How many do you preach to?” Spurgeon asked.

“Oh, about 100,” the man replied.

Solemnly Spurgeon said, “That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment.”

p. 156

Milne says:

But you (verse 5) is an emphatic appeal to Timothy . . . because he must uphold the independent authority of the Word of Christ. To do this **keep your head in all situations**, which means not allowing himself to panic but to maintain a rational approach to the problems by retaining self-control.

p. 176

Milne, speaking of the fourth and final command in verse 5, says:

He must aim at an all-round ministry centred on the Word of God, holding nothing back that is helpful, teaching publicly and from house to house, testifying to all races repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God. In all this he must serve the Lord with all humility, in the midst of tears and trials, showing by example how the gospel works.

p. 177

Kelly says:

In fine, he must **discharge his ministry to the full**. The admonition has a special urgency because he is about to become the Apostle's successor.

p. 207

Quinn & Wacker translate these remaining verses in the passage in this way:

4 ⁵You, however, Timothy,

*keep calm, in every sense;
accept being wronged;
do the work of one who announces the gospel;
carry out fully the ministry that is yours.*

⁶For now my own blood is to spill as a wine-offering. The time set for my embarkation has come. ⁷I have contended in the fine contest. I have run the whole track. I have kept the faith. ⁸Whatever happens, there lies in store for me the crown of the upright life with which the upright judge, the Lord, will recompense me on that Day—and not only me but all who have their hearts set on his revelation.

pp. 773-4

Lange, speaking about the words “FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY,” says:

. . . so exercise it that thou duly give attention to all its parts. The full measure of an efficiency is signified to which not the least thing should be wanting. The Dutch translation less correct: Work that one may be *fully assured* of thy ministry.

p. 113

MacArthur says:

Finally, Timothy was to **fulfill** the unique **ministry** given to him by the Lord. . . . [This] is the ninth and final imperative and carries the basic idea of giving full measure or bringing to completion. In relation to a person’s work, it also carries the ideas of eagerness and wholeheartedness.

p. 186

Knight says:

In this concluding verse of the subsection, Paul returns to his direct charge to Timothy (which marked the first two verses) with a series of four imperatives. He contrasts Timothy with those described in the preceding verse with $\sigma\upsilon \delta\epsilon$, “but you” . . .

p. 456

Knight, commenting further on the word “FULFILL,” says:

. . . fully and completely accomplish and carry out the duties of his ministry . . .

p. 457

He then says finally:

This charge gathers up the concerns expressed throughout the letter and crystallizes them in nine memorable imperatives that begin with “preach the word” and end with “fulfill your ministry.” With these imperatives Paul calls on Timothy to proclaim and apply God’s word with much patience and careful instruction, to be clearheaded in every situation, to bear whatever difficulties such a ministry may involve him in, to evangelize, and to do whatever is necessary to accomplish the ministry to which Christ has called him.

p. 458

D. L. MOODY

When **Dwight L. Moody** was in London during one of his famous evangelistic tours, several British clergymen visited him. They wanted to know how and why this poorly educated American was so effective in winning throngs of people to Christ. Moody took the three men to the window of his hotel room and asked each in turn what he saw. One by one, the men described the people in the park below. Then Moody looked out the window with tears rolling down his cheeks. “What do you see, Mr. Moody?” asked one of the men.

“I see countless thousands of souls that will one day spend eternity in hell if they do not find the Savior.”

Obviously, D. L. Moody saw people differently than the average observer does. And because he saw eternal souls where others saw only people strolling in a park, Moody approached life with a different agenda.

—**Today in the Word**, February 1, 1997, p. 6

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY

But watch thou . . . , endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. 2 Timothy 4:5

Sometimes we are not satisfied with the responsibilities God has given us, thinking we are fitted for a larger ministry. Looking enviously at the size or scope of a fellow believer’s calling, we think less of our own work and begin to neglect it. In his book *Be Faithful*, Warren W. Wiersbe illustrates how one Christian leader handled that problem. “A young preacher once complained to C. H. Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher, that he did not have as big a church as he deserved. ‘How many do you preach to?’ Spurgeon asked. ‘Oh, about a hundred,’ the man replied. Solemnly, Spurgeon said, ‘That will be enough to give account for on the day of judgment.’”

The truth of Spurgeon’s statement is borne out in Paul’s reminder to “make full proof of thy ministry,” which means, “fulfill your ministry.” The apostle is telling his young friend in the faith to do all that God had called him to do. But this did not mean that Timothy was required to do the same things Paul was called to do. Nor did it mean that he would accomplish as much as the apostle would. Rather, it meant that whether Timothy’s task was large or small, in the limelight or behind the scenes, he was to fulfill his ministry in a diligent and commendable manner.

The same is true of us. Whether we are teaching three unruly boys in a Sunday school class, directing a girls club of hundreds, or preaching to thousands, we’re to do the job faithfully. That’s what God expects. And as we do, we will be fulfilling our ministry. —D.C.E.

*Yours is a mission you alone can fill,
Whether it be to build or teach or till;
Your goal may still be hidden from your view,
But somehow God has urgent need of you. —Thayer*

**Do what you can, where you are,
with what you have.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Sunday, January 13, year unknown)

CANDLELIGHT WISDOM

While traveling in Finland, I appreciated the Finns' lavish use of candles. They never treat them as mere ornaments. Candles bring warmth and light into their homes during short winter days. The Finns know that a candle's purpose is missed unless it is burned. But candles should burn at one end only—a lesson I needed to learn.

When my husband and I began our missionary work, I longed to burn out for God. Within several years I had burned out all right, but not for God. Mine was a classic case of useless burnout, brought on by many self-caused stresses.

One night I hit rock bottom and discovered that the rock was Christ. As He began teaching me dependence on Him for all things, the candle of my life was relighted for His use.

I now see a difference between so-called “Christian burnout” and “burning out for God.” Burnout stems from wastefully burning the candle of our lives at both ends—hardly wise for candles or Christians. Burning out for God means our lives are spent wisely in His service—an echo of Paul's testimony in 2 Corinthians 12:15. Once used up for God, we'll be raised up for heavenly service (Rev. 22:3). It is for this purpose we were made! —JEY

THINKING IT OVER

What are you doing to serve God?

Do you rely on His strength or your own?

Ask God to help you depend on Him in everything.

**WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS NOT HOW MUCH WE DO FOR GOD,
BUT HOW MUCH GOD DOES THROUGH US.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Wednesday, January 7, 1998)

NO REGRETS

**No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking
back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Luke 9:62**

In 1904 William Borden, heir to the Borden Dairy Estate, graduated from a Chicago high school a millionaire. His parents gave him a trip around the world. Traveling through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe gave Borden a burden for the world's hurting people. Writing home, he said, "I'm going to give my life to prepare for the mission field."

When he made his decision, he wrote in the back of his Bible two words: *No Reserves*. Turning down high-paying job offers after graduating from Yale University, he entered two more words in his Bible: *No Retreats*.

Completing studies at Princeton Seminary, Borden sailed to China to work with Muslims, stopping first at Egypt for some preparation. While there he was stricken with cerebral meningitis and died within a month. A waste, you say! Not in God's plan. In his Bible underneath the words *No Reserves* and *No Retreats*, he had written the words *No Regrets*.

Jesus' words about not looking back apply to any age of life, no matter what kind of work we do. Ask yourself, what am I living for right now? What is the primary passion of my heart? Do I want the rest of my life to fit into God's plan of telling a lost world of His love?

As we enter 1989, let's commit ourselves to obeying Christ with no reserves and no retreat. Then, whether we face suffering or success, we too will be able to say whenever God calls us home, "No Regrets." —D.J.D.

Just live your life before your Lord,

It matters not what others do—

Your actions will be weighed by Him

Who metes out judgment just and true. —Rae

**What counts is not how long you live
but how well you live.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Saturday, December 31, 1988)

EVANGELISM

(Josh McDowell)

An executive hired, a “head-hunter” who goes out and hires corporation executives for other firms, once told me, “When I get an executive that I’m trying to hire for someone else, I like to disarm him. I offer him a drink, take my coat off, then my vest, undo my tie, throw up my feet and talk about baseball, football, family, whatever, until he’s all relaxed. Then, when I think I’ve got him relaxed, I lean over, look him square in the eye and say, “What’s your purpose in life?” It’s amazing how top executives fall apart at that question. “Well, I was interviewing this fellow the other day, had him all disarmed, with my feet up on his desk, talking about football. Then I leaned up and said, ‘What’s your purpose in life, Bob?’ And he said, without blinking an eye, ‘To go to heaven and take as many people with me as I can.’ For the first time in my career I was speechless.”

(Received via e-mail from Mark Skorheim, July 10, 2001)

(How Now Shall We Live? by Charles Colson & Nancy Pearcey) Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright – Charles Colson, 1999.

Don’t get me wrong. We need prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, and witnessing. But if we focus exclusively on these disciplines—and if in the process we ignore our responsibility to redeem the surrounding culture—our Christianity will remain privatized and marginalized.

p. x

(Fénelon: Meditations on the Heart of God by François Fénelon) Brewster, Massachusetts: Paraclete Press. Copyright - Robert J. Edmonson, 1997.

I resolve not to become keenly excited about anything, because it is dangerous to want to appropriate God's work to ourselves. If we do that, then we do God's work in our own strength; we turn good into bad and we allow pride to take over. And then we become flushed with the pursuit of success. We conceal our illusion by using the pretext of seeking God's glory.

O God, give me the grace to be faithful in my actions, but indifferent to success. The only thing I ought to be concerned with is to desire your will and to quietly meditate on you—even in the midst of busy times. It is up to you to crown my feeble actions with such fruit as is pleasing to you—and none at all, if that is what you find best for me.

p. 40

(Payne Stewart by Tracey Stewart with Ken Abraham) Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman. Copyright – Anastasia T. Stewart, 2000.

The reporters listened respectfully as Payne talked about his faith in the Lord. "I'm proud of the fact that my faith in God is so much stronger, and I'm so much more at peace with myself than I've ever been in my life," Payne said. "And that's the reason that I was able to gather myself and conduct myself. And where I was with my faith last year and where I am now is leaps and bounds. And that gave me the strength to stand up there and believe in myself and get the job done."

Payne continued to answer questions for nearly an hour, and at the close of the press conference he said, "I'm a lot more mentally prepared to deal with these situations than I have been in the past. I'm going back to the fact that my faith is strong. And the Lord's given me the ability that he wants me to use so I can stand up here and give him the praise."

p. 273

In my book Ecclesiastes, The Mid-Life Crisis, I quote the song:

“Through It All,” that beautiful song recorded a few years ago by Andrae Crouch, tells it better than I ever could:

I've had many tears and sorrows;
 I've had questions for tomorrow;
 There've been times I didn't know right from wrong;
 But in ev'ry situation God gave blessed consolation
 That my trials come to only make me strong.

I've been to lots of places;
 And I've seen a lot of faces;
 There've been times I felt so all alone;
 But in my lonely hours, yes, those precious lonely hours,
 Jesus let me know that I was His own.

I thank God for the mountains,
 And I thank Him for the valleys;
 I thank Him for the storms He brought me through;
 For if I'd never had a problem,
 I wouldn't know that He could solve them,
 I'd never know what faith in God could do.

Through it all,
 Through it all,
 Oh I've learned to trust in Jesus,
 I've learned to trust in God.
 Through it all,
 Through it all,
 Oh I've learned to depend upon His Word.

(Words and music by Andrae Crouch. Copyright 1971 by Manna Music, Inc. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

p. 115

v. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

Now we have the real **REASON** for the **CHARGE** and also the **URGENCY**. Paul is getting ready to step off of life's stage.

Paul has just said to Timothy, "fulfill your ministry" and he could go on and say:

"I AM FINISHING MINE!"

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

What had overshadowed the entire epistle is now stated explicitly: Paul was about to die. The apostle's strong charge in the previous verses takes on added weight with this reminder. The "But you" of verse 5 must therefore be seen in contrast not only with the false teachers of verses 3-4 but also with the **For I** of verse 6. Paul viewed his **death** now as certain; he was **already being poured out like a drink offering . . . departure . . .** [is] a traveler's term commonly used as a euphemism for death).
p. 758

Philippians 2:17

But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

Philippians 1:23

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

A. T. Robertson, speaking on the phrase “I am already being offered,” says:

[It is a] Present (progressive) passive indicative of *spendō*, old verb, to pour out a libation or drink offering. In N.T. only here and Phil. 2:17. “What was then a possibility is now a certainty” (Parry). The sacrifice of Paul’s life-blood has begun.

p. 630

Barnes says:

This conviction of the apostle that he was about to die, is urged as a reason why Timothy should be laborious and faithful in the performance of his office. His own work was nearly done. He was soon to be withdrawn from the earth, and whatever benefit the world might have derived from his experience or active exertions, it was now to be deprived of it. He was about to leave a work which he much loved, and to which he had devoted the vigour of his life, and he was anxious that they who were to succeed him should carry on the work with all the energy and zeal in their power.

p. 246

He says further:

The idea of the apostle then is, that he was in the condition of the victim on whose head the wine and oil had been already poured, and which was just about to be put to death; that is, he was about to die. Every preparation had been made, and he only awaited the blow which was to strike him down.

p. 246

He says finally:

It is applied to the act of unloosing or casting off the fastenings of a ship, preparatory to a departure. The proper idea in the use of the word would be, that he had been bound to the present world, like a ship to its moorings, and that death would be a release. He would now spread his sails on the broad ocean of eternity. The true idea of death is that of loosening the bands that confine us to the present world; of setting us free, and permitting the soul to go forth, as with expanded sails, on its eternal voyage.

p. 247

Calvin says:

Paul now says why he gave such a solemn charge. It is as if he meant to say, “As long as I was alive, I could stretch out my hand and help you; you have never been without my constant exhortations; my advice has greatly assisted you and my example has been a great source of strength. Now the time is coming when you will have to teach and encourage yourself and begin to swim without support. Take care that nothing in you may be seen to be changed by my death.”

p. 161

He says further:

By calling death a **departure**, Paul is declaring that people do not perish, but their souls are only separated from their bodies. For the same reason Paul fearlessly declares that **the time has come**, for he could not do that unless he despised death. It is part of our nature to dread and shrink from death, and we can never completely free ourselves from this; but faith must overcome that fear and refuse to let it keep us from leaving the world obediently whenever God calls us.

p. 162

Barclay says:

When Erasmus was growing old, he said: “I am a veteran, and have earned my discharge, and must leave the fighting to younger men.” Paul, the aged warrior, is laying down his arms that Timothy may take them up.

p. 239

He says further:

Paul did not think of himself as going to be executed; he thought of himself as going to offer his life to God. His life was not being taken from him; he was laying it down. Ever since his conversion Paul had offered everything to God—his money, his scholarship, his strength, his time, the vigour of his body, the acuteness of his mind, the devotion of his passionate heart. Only life itself was left to offer, and gladly Paul was going to lay life down.

p. 240

Barclay then says finally:

So then, for the Christian, death is laying down the burden in order to rest. Death is laying aside the shackles in order to be free. Death is striking camp to take up residence in the heavenly places. Death is casting off the ropes which bind us to this world to set sail on the voyage which ends in the presence of God. Who then shall fear this death?
pp. 240-1

Towner says:

Is such an offering sensible? Consider the more recent words written by Jim Elliot, the missionary to the Auca Indians who gave his life for the Lord: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose" (Elliot 1957:247).
p. 206

Hughes titles these remaining three verses:**Paul's Terminal Perspectives**

p. 249

He then says:

Paul's perspectives at the end of his life, his dying perspectives, covering every conceivable span of Paul's existence, are awesome. They tell us how to live and how to die.
p. 250

Hughes then says:

The word radiates sweet, triumphant continuance. Lewis had it right in *The Last Battle* where it is explained to the deceased children that “they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”⁴
p. 251

Demarest titles these final three verses:

HANGING UP THE SPIKES

p. 289

He says further:

One of the most poignant moments in the history of baseball was the final farewell of Lou Gehrig in Yankee Stadium. Suffering from an incurable disease, the great and revered first baseman stood at the plate and tearfully said farewell to the fans who had cheered him on for many years. Sooner or later, the time comes when each of us must “hang up the spikes.” That time had come for Paul. What a farewell speech!
p. 289

J. Vernon McGee raises the question:

What was the drink offering? There were no specific instructions given by God to the Israelites concerning the drink offering. However, it is mentioned again and again in Exodus and Leviticus. The wine was taken and poured over the sacrifice, which, of course, was really hot because it was on a brazen altar with fire underneath it. You know exactly what would happen. The drink offering would go up in steam. It would just evaporate and disappear. That is exactly what Paul is saying here. “I have just poured out my life as a drink offering on the sacrifice of Christ. It has been nothing for me but everything for Him.” Paul’s life would soon disappear, and all that could be seen was Christ. This is one of the most wonderful figures of speech he has used. So many Christians try to be remembered by having their names chiseled in stone or by having a building named in their memory. Paul was not interested in that type of thing. He says, “My life is a drink offering poured out; Christ—not Paul—is the One who is to be exalted.” p. 477

Philippians 1:20

according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Gaebelein says:

The martyr’s death now looms up, and he pens the never-to-be-forgotten words of his faithfulness and assurance of the crown of righteousness. p. 198

Joseph Parker says:

There was something in him which he did not create and which he cultivated and studied to express on the largest lines with the most graphic definiteness. Perhaps Paul could not write like an old man, because he was writing to a comparative child. It is wonderful how he loved the young. Because of his love of the young he himself was never old, except in years: never in feeling. The man who knows that he is going to be born into heaven at any moment cannot be old. This is the spirit of the New Testament.
p. 151

King titles these remaining verses and then says:

AT THE END OF THE ROAD

Here is one of the most familiar passages in the New Testament, and one of the most exhilarating. As he dictates it to his amanuensis, Paul is, in very truth, at the end of the road. He began on the Damascus Road over thirty years ago: that time when, in all his pride and prejudice, he was suddenly, even dramatically, arrested, and humbled to the very dust, and converted, and commissioned. What a day that was! He could never forget it; he never tired of telling the story—three times over we have it, within the brief compass of the Acts. How he would have sung our hymn, “O happy day that fixed my choice”.
p. 117

King then says further on the word “departure”:

. . . the “unloosing”, as the word literally means. This is a most interesting word, and most illuminating. It may be said to have at least five connotations, each of them throwing a flood-light on death. (i) It is a prisoner’s word—meaning his “release”. What especial comfort that would bring to Paul, shut up as he is in that foul Roman dungeon: he is about to be let loose. It carries that thought also to us who are imprisoned within this mortal body, and who that day will be set free from all its restrictions and disabilities. (ii) It is a farmer’s word—and would signify the “unyoking” of an ox, when its long hard day’s work was done. Paul had ploughed a toilsome furrow all through his life’s long day, and now comes rest. A thing that we too shall greatly esteem if our life has been strenuously occupied in God’s service. (iii) It is a warrior’s word—the encampment has been pitched here, and a fierce battle joined; now that is victoriously over, he strikes his tent, “unloosing” its cords and stakes, and is on the march again to the last great conquest of the campaign. How true of the battle-scarred old veteran who pens the words, and of all who follow in his steps. (iv) It is a seaman’s word—and would be used for the “unmooring” of a ship that has been tide up to the quayside, and which must now put to sea again. In Paul’s case, and in ours, it is the setting sail upon the ocean of our last voyage, our vessel Homeward Bound. (v) It is a philosopher’s word—suggesting the “unravelling” of a knotty problem. How many puzzles have agitated our minds, and disturbed our hearts, while we have pondered upon our life here, and its mysteries; “but then shall I know even as also I am known”, as Paul himself said in I Corinthians [13] xiii. 12. How utterly grand to have all our questions satisfyingly answered. Well now, our “departure” implies all this—and more, much more, besides.

pp. 118-9

Spurgeon says:

The time of our departure, though unknown to us, is fixed by God, unalterably fixed; so rightly, wisely, lovingly settled, and prepared for, that no chance or haphazard can break the spell of destiny. The wisdom of divine love shall be proven by the carefulness of its provision.
p. 889

He then says:

“The time of my departure is at hand.”

In a certain sense, every Christian here may say this; for whatever interval may interpose between us and death, how very short it is! Have you not all a sense that time flows faster than it did?
p. 889

Matthew Henry says:

Observe,

[1] With what pleasure he speaks of dying. He calls it his departure, or his release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world and his departure to the enjoyments of another world; he does not cease to be, but is only removed from one world to another.
p. 1898

Knight says:

γὰρ in v. 6 links the words that immediately follow with this subsection. Those words give further urgency to the charge here by indicating that Paul will no longer be present and give further encouragement by his own example and by the reward the Lord will give to his own (vv. 6-8). From this point on no other overall charge relating to the ministry is given to Timothy.
p. 457

MacArthur says:

How different are the words of Paul as he neared the end of his earthly life. They are a triumphant epitaph. Some thirty years after his encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road, in every regard that matters he was without regret or remorse. With an economy of words known only to a Holy-Spirit—inspired writer, he not only affirms his own spiritual triumph but also offers forceful motivation for every believer to live a life of faithful service to Christ.

p. 188

Quinn & Wacker say:

That time is here specified as . . . a noun that occurs only here in the NT, though the cognate verb occurred in Phil 1:23 of Paul's "desire to depart . . . and to be with Christ" in death . . . The only other NT use of the verb is in Luke 12:36 in the parable of the master "coming home . . . from the marriage feast" . . . posits a "special sense" here of "return," though that seems unnecessary; the believer's "citizenship is in heaven" [Phil 3:20], and Paul conceives of his death as going home to the city to which he had really belonged

p. 776

They say further:

The time set for my embarkation has come. As at 4:3 above, the "appointed time" is from a human point of view a frightening moment, a threatening occasion, that of death. Because it has been appointed by God as a rubric in the lifeblood of his witnesses, it is a time that has been planned, a marked festival in the calendar of their lives.

p. 785

Quinn & Wacker continue:

The basic sense of the verb *analyein*, here translated “embarkation,” is “to loosen up,” i.e. to undo ropes or thongs, such as those that hold a ship to its wharf and so “to leave”
p. 785

They say finally:

The nautical imagery seems most appropriate at this point in Second Timothy, as Paul indicates that the ineluctable time for his last voyage has come . . .
p. 785

Hawthorne & Martin say:

The destructive power of death is never downplayed in Paul . . . although it is occasionally presented as the doorway of departure to another existence . . .
p. 258

Milne says:

Having sounded his final alarm to Timothy about carrying on the work of the gospel ministry, Paul now reflects out loud on his own condition and future. These are very moving words for they are the testimony of a great servant of God facing imminent death.
p. 177

Milne says further:

The Christian's death never happens by chance, for Paul declares his confidence in the 'time' of his departure. This is a nuanced New Testament word which indicates a moment planned and brought about by God in his eternal purpose, even although it might have been fixed by Caesar's judicial bureaucracy. The time and circumstances of the Christian's death are appointed by God, and the believer can rest comfortably in this knowledge, as Paul does here. The Christian's times are in the Lord's hands both in living and in dying.

p. 179

Wiersbe says:

However, he did not tremble at the prospect of death! The two words "offered" and "departure" (4:6) tell us of his faith and confidence. "Offered" means "poured out on an altar as a drink-offering." He used the same picture in Philippians 2:7-8. In effect Paul was saying, "Caesar is not going to kill me. I am going to give my life as a sacrifice to Jesus Christ. I have been a living sacrifice, serving Him since the day I was saved. Now I will complete that sacrifice by laying down my life for Him."

The word *departure* (2 Tim. 4:6) is a beautiful word that has many meanings. It means "to hoist anchor and set sail." Paul looked on death as a release from the world, an opportunity to "set sail" into eternity. The word also means "to take down a tent." This parallels 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, where Paul compared the death of believers to the taking down of a tent (tabernacle), in order to receive a permanent glorified body ("house not made with hands"—glorified body, not a "mansion" in heaven).

"Departure" also has the meaning of "loosing a prisoner." Paul was facing release, not execution! "The unyoking of an ox" is another meaning of this word. Paul had been in hard service for many years. Now his Master would unyoke him and promote him to higher service.

pp. 157-8

Wilson says:

In drawing attention to the beauty of Paul's 'swan-song' [vv 6-8], Findlay says that no passage in his Epistles is more finely touched with the apostle's genius. 'These verses have an ideal fitness as the apostle's final record and pronouncement upon his own career . . . Nor has Christian faith since found any higher expression of its sense of victory in the presence of death'. 'As for me' (NEB) does more justice to Paul's emphatic 'for I', since the phrase tacitly reminds Timothy of the urgent need to redouble his efforts now that Paul has reached the end of his ministry.

p. 162

Stott says:

Paul's argument runs like this: 'But as for *you*, Timothy, *you* must fulfil *your* ministry, for *I* am already on the point of death.' It is all the more vital for Timothy to continue and complete his ministry because the apostle's life-work has reached completion and is about to close.

p. 113

He then says:

The two images then to some extent correspond,⁴ for the end of this life (outpoured as a libation) is the beginning of another (putting out to sea). Already the anchor is weighed, the ropes are slipped, and the boat is about to set sail for another shore. Now, before the great adventure of his new voyage begins, he looks back over his ministry of about 30 years.

p. 113

Guthrie says:

What might seem the end to Timothy appears to the apostle as a glorious new era when he will be released from all his present restrictions. The noun is used nowhere else in the New Testament, but the cognate verb is used by Paul in the same sense in Phil. i. 23.

p. 169

Lea & Griffin say:

Paul outlined the sacrifice he had made (v. 6), the service he had rendered (v. 7), and the reward he anticipated (v. 8).
p. 247

They go on to say:

“As for you, keep your head . . . because as for me I am going to depart” (author’s translation). The apostle used two metaphors to describe his anticipated death.
p. 247

They say finally:

Second, he described his “departure” or death with a verb that pictures the departure of a ship by lifting its anchor or the breaking up of camp by a group of soldiers. Both the ship and the soldiers were going home, and the idea of going home was an accepted euphemism for death. Paul used the verbal form of the noun “departure” in Phil 1:23 (“depart”) to picture the possibility of his death. By faith Paul gave a marvelous appraisal of the grim prospects of his death.
p. 247

Hendriksen says:

When the older man is called to higher spheres, the younger man must fill the breach. He must take the torch and carry it onward. This second thought explains the conjunction “for” at the beginning of verse 6.
p. 313

Hendriksen then says:

Even now *the season* is already here. The weighing of the anchors and the loosening of the ropes has begun. Soon the blast of the wind will be in the sails, and then, almost immediately, the haven of everlasting bliss will have been reached.

p. 314

Lenski says:

Noble words! The sun is setting blood-red but is shot through with golden glory. Indeed, so should this great life close! These words have left an indelible impression upon all future ages.

p. 857

He says further:

It is written in the face of death. The facts it states are facts, and Paul writes them for Timothy's sake in order to inspire him by the grace of God to duplicate them in his life with the same courage, assurance, and joy.

p. 858

He then says finally:

That is why Paul writes to Timothy as he does. He is engaged in the preliminaries of departing. If you wish to retain the old figure: Paul is busy taking down his tent; he is casting off his ship's moorings. Or to employ another figure: he is writing his last will and testament for Timothy who, when he reads these words, may well do so through a film of tears.

p. 859

Fee titles these final three verses:

Paul's Final Testimony (2 Tim. 4:6-8)

p. 288

He then says:

Here we learn for the first time that Paul expects his present imprisonment to result in death (v. 6); he is aware that his own ministry is now over (v. 7) and that the eschatological prize awaits him (v. 8).

p. 288

In my book, Drawing Closer Growing Stronger, I tell this story:

People who have loved ones over on the other side find great comfort in knowing they will soon be reunited with their loved ones. Jim and Fran Sandin experienced the heartbreaking sorrow of losing their seventeen-month-old son, Jeffrey. In her book, *See You Later, Jeffrey*, Fran writes:

One day while reflecting upon the rich lessons I'd learned since Jeffrey's departure, I remembered a note I'd written soon after he left us. When I found it and read it over again, the words still brought comfort and hope.

Dear Jeffrey,

There was something very special about you from the beginning. I could not explain it. Perhaps it was the twinkle in your bright blue eyes or your zest for life. You were with us for such a short time, but Daddy and I loved you very much. We enjoyed every minute. Steve and Angie loved you, too. We all miss you and wish you were with us, but the Good Shepherd gathered you into His gentle arms and took you to a better place. As I walk with the Lord each day, I know I am close to you. We'll see you later, Jeffrey. Then, we'll be together forever.

I love you dearly, Mom⁵

Since the beginning of time, death has caused separation. When we know Christ, our separation is only temporary. How good to know we will have a reunion in eternity!

pp. 141-2

Oh, the Deep, Deep Love

I pray that you . . . may have power, together with all the saints
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.
—Ephesians 3:17-18

The hymn that pictures God’s love “rolling as a mighty ocean” was on my heart a few months ago when Ken and I went sailing. Because my wheelchair was too big to bring on board, Ken sat me on a cushion and wedged me up against the side of the boat. Then he wrapped a line of rope around me five or six times—I looked as though I were about to be marched off the gangplank.

Once we set our sails, the boat began to pitch and roll. If we had encountered an emergency, I risked going down with the ship (Ken kept handy a sharp knife to cut the rope, just in case). Any lingering fears were allayed by the first mate, Sara Lewis. her husband, Monty, piloted the boat, and Sara shared with me the following adaptation she wrote of Psalm 23.

Twenty-third Psalm for Sailors

The Lord is my captain; I shall not be in want.
He makes me anchor in calm harbors,
He leads me beside quiet waters; He restores my soul.
He guides me on a course of righteousness for his name’s sake.
Even thou I sail through the troughs of the storms of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
Your sun and moon they comfort me.
You provide food from the sea in the presence
of sharks and barracuda.
You rinse me with sparkling rain; my tank overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will sail in the ship of the Lord forever.
From “Walking on the Waterways”

Do you ever feel that life is swamping your deck? Know that God’s love is deeper than any weights you may have aboard.

Thank you, Lord, that even when the wind has left my sails limp, I can count on your love to bring a fresh breeze.

(Joni Eareckson Tada, source unknown)

Age

Years steal
Fire from the mind as vigour from the limb,
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

Lord Byron (1788-1824), English poet.
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (1816).

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“WHAT WILL REALLY HAPPEN?”

**. . . thee is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,
which the Lord . . . will give to me. 2 Timothy 4:8**

In his book *Spirit Life*, D. Stuart Briscoe writes, “When I moved to the United States, I was impressed with the number of total strangers who visited my home to wish me well . . . they all sold insurance! One day my visitor was talking about the necessity to be prudent in the preparation for all possibilities. ‘If something should happen to you, Mr. Briscoe—’ he started to say, but I interrupted with, ‘Please don’t say that. It upsets me.’ He was a little startled, but tried again, ‘But with all due respects, sir, we must be ready if something should happen to us.’ ‘Don’t say that,’ I insisted. He looked totally bewildered and said, ‘I don’t understand what I said to upset you.’ ‘Then I’ll tell you,’ I replied. ‘It upsets me that you talk about [life’s] only certainty as if it’s a possibility. Death isn’t a possibility, it’s a certainty. You don’t say “If,” you say “When,” whenever death is the subject.’ Then I added, ‘By the way, when something happens to you, what will really happen?’”

The apostle Paul was very open about his departure from this life (2 Tim. 4:6). While there was much he didn’t know about this new experience, he was sure about some things. The sting of death, sin, had been removed because Christ paid its penalty on the cross (Rom. 15:55-57). Death would give way to victory (Rom. 15:54); he would experience Christ’s righteousness more fully than ever; and he would actually be with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8).

As Christians, we know what really happens at death. —D.J.D.

*In life’s eventide, at twilight,
At His door I’ll knock and wait;
By the precious love of Jesus
I shall enter heaven’s gate. —Blom*

**Death guarantees the sinner’s penalty
and the saint’s promotion.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, August 20, year unknown)

DOING YOUR BEST?

**I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling
of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14**

For the apostle Paul, each day was the continuation of an exciting and challenging race. He wasn't striving to gain entrance into Heaven; he was confident of being welcomed there through his faith in Christ's atoning work on the cross. The apostle's concern was to be at his best for the Savior—to grow in His likeness and to realize in daily experience “the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10). This meant forgetting what was behind, letting neither success nor failure hinder his growth. It meant pressing on till the day he would hear his Master say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Mt. 25:23).

John Baker, a high school junior, surprised everyone by winning his first cross-country race. He outran the state champion and set a new record. Later he said that as he was running he asked himself, “Am I doing my best?” This question motivated him to try just a little harder. Rather than being discouraged by the runner in front of him, he would determine to pass him—somehow! When he did, he set another goal of passing the next runner, and the next. By giving his all and letting nothing distract him, he found an unexpected reserve of power that ultimately brought him to victory.

Something of that same determination must keep us moving forward as believers. Victory does not come to those who are easily turned aside, or who are less than wholehearted in their commitment and service. Let's ask ourselves, “Am I doing my best for Christ?” This will help us “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” —D.J.D.

I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining every day—
Still praying as I'm onward bound,
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.” —Oatman

THOT: Give your all to Christ; He gave His all for you.

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Thursday, March 27, year unknown)

A WORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENT

**I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7**

Did you read about the “lawn chair astronaut? A 31-year-old truck driver attached 40 large, helium-filled balloons to a lawn chair. Then, with CB radios, an altimeter, a parachute, and a life jacket, he began his ascent into the “wild blue yonder.” Oh, yes, he also took along a pellet gun. That was included in his baggage so that when the time came for his descent, he could shoot as many of the balloons as necessary to bring him back to earth safely. When he reached an altitude of 3 miles, he decided it was time to come down, so he started popping balloons with his gun. Back home after his successful flight, he said, “My family used to think I was crazy. Now they want me to write a book, and my sister wants to get me an agent.”

I certainly would never encourage anyone to try a stunt like that. To my way of thinking, I would be most unwise because of the great risks involved. But I assume that the very thing that made the experience so challenging was the fact that it was dangerous. And perhaps he had always wanted to do something nobody else had tried.

Now, there’s far more to life than completing a hazardous feat that gets your name in the paper. As Christians, we must set out to do things that are worthy of the effort and risks. The apostle Paul set an example. He wrote: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection” (Phil. 3:10). Striving to attain spiritual goals brings personal satisfaction, imparts blessing to others, and offers an eternal reward. That’s a worthwhile accomplishment! —R.W.D.

*O Thou who died on Calvary
To save my soul and make me free,
I’ll consecrate my life to Thee,
My Savior and my God! —Hudson*

THOT: Is what you’re living for worth dying for?

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, August 16, year unknown)

“READY TO GO”

**. . . the time of my departure is at hand.
I have finished the race. 2 Timothy 4:6, 7**

The apostle Paul could face his departure from this life with confidence because he was ready to meet the Lord.

Another man by the name of Paul, a friend of mine for many years who is now Home with the Lord, had that same confidence. In a letter to me, his wife Ethel wrote: “When Paul and I moved to this area, we were given the name of a good doctor. The first time we went to him, Paul said, ‘Doctor, you have asked us many questions. I want to ask you just one. Are you sure that you are saved?’ After trying to sidestep the issue, the doctor admitted that he wasn’t. So Paul asked, ‘How about letting me show you from the Bible how you can be sure?’ The doctor replied, ‘I’ll have to think about that.’ We then left his office, but each time we went back Paul talked to him about his salvation. Two years later the doctor finally said, ‘Okay, show me how I can know I will go to heaven.’ He really meant business. The last time I saw the doctor, he said, ‘Paul is the only man who cared for my soul.’”

It’s no wonder that when Ethel’s beloved husband died, that same doctor wrote these words on Paul’s death certificate: “READY TO GO.” My friend Paul had placed his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ—that guaranteed his salvation. He was a faithful servant of God—that assured him of an abundant entrance into glory.

Yes, he was ready to go. Are you? —R.W.D.

We do not know how long we have

Till time for us is past,

So let us live as if this day

May be for us the last.

—D.J.D.

**Don’t wait until the 11th hour to put your house in order—
you may die at 10:30!**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, September 19, year unknown)

“HERE THEY COME!”

**. . . the time of my departure is at hand.
—2 Timothy 4:6**

How comforting it is to realize that when Christians die, their departure from earth means their arrival in heaven. In his book *When Loved Ones Are Taken in Death*, Lehman Strauss told this personal experience. While pastoring a church in the eastern United States, he and other members of his congregation would go to New York to bid farewell to missionaries leaving for their fields of service. Pastor Strauss and those with him often lingered on the dock until the ship was out of sight. As they turned to go back to their cars, someone would comment, “There they go!”

Lehman Strauss made this application: “Now, no one would question that their departure from New York meant that they would be arriving at some other place at some time. When we are absent from one place, we are present at another. Somewhere, sometime, someone will be heard saying, ‘Here they come.’ Likewise, when God calls our believing loved ones from our midst, we say that they’ve departed. In heaven they say, ‘Here they come.’ The dead are absent from their bodies (and from us), but they are present with the Lord.”

When Christian loved ones are taken, with grieving hearts we must bid them farewell. But remember that saints in heaven rejoice as they arrive. Departure time is also arrival time. Oh, what a comfort! —R.W.D.

Oh, how blessed is the promise

When our spirit is set free:

To be absent from the body

Means to live, O Lord, with Thee! —H.G.B.

**SEPARATION IS THE LAW OF EARTH;
REUNION IS THE LAW OF HEAVEN.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Thursday, June 8, year unknown)

READY TO GO HOME

Because I have traveled widely in my ministry, I've had to spend a lot of time away from home. Although some hotels promise to make me "feel at home," few of them achieve it. In fact, some make me wish fervently that I *was* at home!

During his final days on earth, the apostle Paul had a deep longing for his heavenly home. His thoughts turned toward the warm welcome he would receive from the Lord, "the righteous Judge" (2 Timothy 4:8). Although he was facing death, thoughts of heaven kept his spirit hopeful.

This reminds me of an old man and his grandson who were sitting on a dock late one afternoon. The two chattered about everything, it seemed—why water is wet, why seasons change, why girls hate worms, what life is like. Finally the boy looked up and asked, "Grandpa, does anybody ever see God?" "Son," said the old man as he looked across the still waters of the lake, "it's getting so now I hardly see anything else."

Aging should be like that. Praying should come more easily. Communion with the Father in heaven should be as natural as breathing. Thoughts of seeing Jesus and going home should increasingly occupy our minds. That's how we'll know we're ready to go home. —HWR

*When, by the gift of His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and to look on His face
Will through the ages be glory for me. —Gabriel*

**AS LIFE'S SHADOWS LENGTHEN,
THOUGHTS OF GOD SHOULD DEEPEN.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, November 20, 2000)

(The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories by Charles R. Swindoll) Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. Copyright - Word Publishing, Inc., 1998.

“I like to think of our Lord’s ascension in this simple but sublime manner. I might have been terrified if I had been Elisha walking with Elijah when the horses of fire and the chariots of fire came to take him away, but there was nothing terrible about this ascension of Christ. He was not a prophet of fire; He was gentle, meek, and lowly, and there was nothing to inspire terror in the way He ascended to heaven. It is, to my mind, very beautiful to think of there being no medium employed in connection with His ascension, no angels’ wings to bear Him upward, no visible arm of omnipresence to lift Him gently from the earth,—no eagle of Jupiter to steal away this choice and chosen One. No; but He rises by His own power and majesty; He needs no one to help. Glad would the angels have been to come once more to the earth as they had come at His birth, as they had come to the wilderness, as they had come to the tomb—gladly would they have come and ministered to Him; but He needed not their ministry. He proved the innate power of His Deity, by which He could depart out of the world just when He willed, breaking the law of gravitation. And “A cloud received Him out of their sight,” for I suppose they had then seen all that they ought to see; and, perhaps, behind that cloud there were scenes of glory which it was not possible for human eyes to gaze upon, and words which it was not lawful for human beings to hear. I do not know about that. But I like the thought of our hymn-writer concerning the angels, after the cloud had hidden Him from mortal view:

They brought His chariot from above,
 To bear Him to His throne.
 Clapp’d their triumphant wings and cried,
 The glorious work is done.

—Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of the Bible*

p. 318

(He's Gonna Toot and I'm Gonna Scoot: Waiting for Gabriel's Horn by Barbara Johnson) Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. Copyright - Barbara Johnson, 1999.

This is a book that, I hope, will reaffirm for every Christian the words to that beautiful chorus:

I'm going higher, yes, higher some day,
 I'm going higher to stay;
 Over the clouds and beyond the blue sky,
 Going where none ever sicken or die—
 Loved ones to meet in that “Sweet by and by,”
 I'm going higher some day.²

2. Herbert Buffum, “I'm Going Higher Someday,” arr. Alfred B. Smith. Copyright © 1981 by Alfred B. Smith. All rights reserved. Used by permission.
 p. 4

**(Will God Heal Me? by Ron Dunn) Sisters OR: Multnomah Books.
 Copyright - Ron Dunn, 1997,**

And so the absurd dance begins. We know she is dying, she knows she is dying, she knows that we know she's dying, we know that she knows we know, and we all pretend nobody knows. I'm not so sure but that our refusal to tell is to protect our own feelings as much as the patient's. By not telling her what she suspects or already knows we do her a disservice and deprive ourselves and her of the opportunity of ministry.
 p. 191

(Jesus' Final Warning: Hearing Christ's Voice in the Midst of Chaos by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Word Publishing. Copyright - David Jeremiah, 1999.

Wendy Murray Zoba, associate editor of *Christianity Today* wrote about an occasion when her middle son, Benjamin, was very young. Benjamin had heard more than one sermon about receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. And the little guy certainly seemed well tuned to the heart of God. He was a kind, unselfish little boy and old enough to grasp the meaning of giving his heart to Christ. But when asked about it, he kept repeating that he just wasn't ready.

All of this troubled Benjamin's father. Why did his son resist talking about this crucial matter? And then came a morning when the family sat around the kitchen table eating their cereal and little Ben announced he was ready to give his life to Christ. He got up from the table and went upstairs. Benjamin's mom and dad looked at each other and decided they'd better follow. As they opened the door to his room, they expected to find their boy on his knees in prayer. Instead, they found him folding his Star Wars pajamas in his little Sesame Street suitcase.

"Benjamin," his dad said, "what are you doing?"

"I'm packing," he replied.

"Why are you packing?"

"Because I'm going to heaven."

And then that mother and father understood the reason why their child had hesitated to give his life to Christ, Benjamin thought that the moment he made that decision, he would have to leave his parents and literally move to heaven with the Lord.

The writer concluded that story by saying, it would be wonderful if we could all possess the faith of little Benjamin.⁸

8. Wendy Murray Zoba, "Future Tenses," *Christianity Today*, 2 October 1995, 22. pp. 76-77

(The 776 Stupidest Things Ever Said by Ross & Kathryn Petras) New York, NY: Doubleday. Copyright – Ross & Kathryn Petras, 1993.

On Death:

My friends, I desire that you will make a post-mortem examination of me, and find out what ails me; for really I am dying to know what my disease is myself.

James Smithson,

benefactor of the Smithsonian Institution,
on his deathbed

p. 41

On Epitaphs, Great:

Here lies Captain Ernest Bloomfield. Accidentally shot by his orderly, March 2nd 1879. Well done, good and faithful servant.

grave inscription of British soldier,
in Northwest Frontier of modern-day Pakistan

p. 56

(The Darkness and the Dawn: Empowered by the Tragedy and Triumph of the Cross by Charles Swindoll) Nashville, TN: Word. Copyright – Charles R. Swindoll, Inc., 2001.

A lonely widow wrote this epitaph, which appears on an old headstone in a Vermont cemetery:

Sacred to the memory of my husband,
John Barnes, who died Jan. 3, 1803.
His comely young widow, aged 23, has
Many qualifications of a good wife
And yearns to be comforted.

In a silver City, Nevada, cemetery:

Here lies Butch—we planted him raw—
He was quick on the trigger
But slow on the draw.

In a cemetery near the church I used to pastor, this brief warning appears on a granite marker:

You can't win!

Some epitaphs make us smile. That one makes us wish we knew more, doesn't it? And there are those that remind us of the spiritual dimension of life, like this one that appears on James Russell Lowell's grave:

Here lies that part of James Russell Lowell,
Which hindered him from doing well.

One of my favorites is the epitaph that Benjamin Franklin requested they etch on his stone:

Like the cover of an old book,
Its contents torn out,
And stripped of its lettering and gilding,
Lies here food for worms.
But the work shall not be lost
For it will (as he believes)
Appear once more,
In a new and more elegant edition,
Revised and corrected by the Author.

pp. 306-7

(The Darkness and the Dawn: Empowered by the Tragedy and Triumph of the Cross by Charles Swindoll) Nashville, TN: Word. Copyright – Charles R. Swindoll, Inc., 2001.

With her inimitable bravado, the aging actress Katherine Hepburn offered the following comment to an interviewer: “I think we’re finally to a point where we’ve learned to see death with a sense of humor. I have to. When you’re my age, it’s as if you’re a car. First a tire blows, and you go and get that fixed. And a headlight goes out, and you go and get that fixed. And then one day, you drive into the shop, and the man frowns and says, ‘Sorry, Miss, they don’t have this make anymore.’”

That’s what happens when we get older. We realize that death is near, and so some of us joke about it.
pp. 313-14

(The Sins We Love: Embracing Brokenness, Hoping for Wholeness by Randy Rowland) New York, NY: Doubleday. Copyright – Randy L. Rowland, 2000.

Isn’t it wonderful to know that God is in charge and that in the end, it will be okay? George Washington’s—the first President of the United States—last two words before dying from a serious case of strep throat were, “‘Tis all right.” We can live in the confession of faith that “‘tis all right.” Take great comfort in this truth.

p. 31

(The Most Brilliant Thoughts of All Time: In Two Lines or Less edited by John M. Shanahan) New York, NY: HarperCollins. Copyright – John M. Shanahan, 1999.

The graveyards are full of indispensable men.

Charles de Gaulle, 1890-1970

p. 2

When the well's dry, we know the worth of water.

Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790

p. 11

Old and young, we are all on our last cruise.

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850-1894

p. 208

(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 1993.

The other night before I went into the house, I stopped to listen to my neighbor's whistling pines and enjoy the thin slice of moon making a smile on the horizon. The night was a starry dome that took my breath away, and before the cold drove me indoors, my heart broke with joy and I whispered to the sky, "Jesus, wait for me, I'm coming home, I belong up there." Stars do that to me.

(November 11)

**“FOR I AM ALREADY BEING POURED OUT AS A DRINK OFFERING,
AND THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE HAS COME.”**

“DEPARTURE” is:

Philippians 1:23 (version unknown)

I have the desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better.

It is the:

UNLOOSING OF THE PRISONER,

BREAKING OF ENCAMPMENT, and

UNLOOSING OF THE SHIP.

He is in the terminal, at the departure gate. His flight is loaded and ready for immediate departure.

(Grace for the Moment: Inspirational Thoughts for Each Day of the Year by Max Lucado) Nashville, TN: J. Countryman / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Max Lucado, 2000.

He Kept the Faith

Continue to have faith and do what you know is right. Some people have rejected this, and their faith has been shipwrecked.

1 TIMOTHY 1:19

I sit a few feet from a man on death row. Jewish by birth. Tentmaker by trade. Apostle by calling. His days are marked. I'm curious about what bolsters this man as he nears his execution. So I ask some questions.

Do you have family, Paul? *I have none.*

What about your health? *My body is beaten and tired. . . .*

Any awards? *Not on earth.*

Then what do you have, Paul? No belongings. No family. . . . What do you have that matters?

I have my faith. It's all I have. But it's all I need. I have kept the faith.

Paul leans back against the wall of his cell and smiles.

When God Whispers Your Name

p. 213

(Great Souls at Prayer: Fourteen Centuries of Prayer, Praise and Aspiration by Mary W. Tileston) New Canaan, CT: Keats Publishing, Inc. Copyright – unknown, 1983. 366 pp.

. . . Direct, O Lord, in peace, the close of our life; trustfully, fearlessly, and, if it be Thy will, painlessly. Gather us when Thou wilt, into the abodes of Thy chosen; without shame, or stain, or sin—Amen.

Rowland Williams.

p. 327

v. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.

These final words from the Apostle Paul remind me of **DAVID'S FINAL WORDS TO SOLOMON**, his son, in:

1 Kings 2:2, 3

“I am about to go the way of all the earth,” he said. “So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go,

Whereas,

Paul looks at the **PRESENT** in verse 6 and is ready to face impending death,

he looks at the **PAST** in verse 7 as everyone does when they are ready to die.

Paul says **THREE WONDERFUL THINGS** here:

1. **“I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.”**

Paul likens the Christian life to a **“FIGHT”**. It truly is a warfare throughout our entire lives on **THREE FRONTS**:

1. **SIN**,
2. **SATAN**, and
3. **THE SYSTEM**.

1 Corinthians 9:26

Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

When he says he **“FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT”** he is referring to the **CHARACTER** of that battle.

This statement also reminds us of:

2 Timothy 2:3, 4

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

2. **“I HAVE FINISHED THE COURSE.”**

Paul over and over again likens life to a **RACE**.

Philippians 3:14

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:7

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

1 Corinthians 9:24

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

Hebrews 12:1

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,

3. **"I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH."**

Jude 3

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

The apostle has done what he has asked Timothy to do in:

2 Timothy 1:14 (DAV)

Guard the precious deposit which has been entrusted to you through the Holy Spirit who is dwelling in us.

He has not "turned away" and has not forsaken the Lord Jesus, but he has:

"KEPT THE FAITH" unto the end.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Looking back over his life, the apostle offered a remarkable description few could honestly echo. He had **fought the good fight . . . finished the race . . . and kept the faith . . .** The first two are common Pauline athletic images . . . while the third draws again on the image of faithfulness in one's stewardship of Christian truth . . .

p. 758

With the first phrase “**FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**,” we are reminded of:

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

When we think of **FINISHING THE RACE**, we think of:

Acts 20:24

“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order 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.

When we think of the phrase **“KEPT THE FAITH”** we think of:

1 Timothy 6:20

O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge”—

Fee says:

I have fought the good fight (lit., “I have contested the noble contest”). As in 1 Timothy 6:12, this is an athletic, not a military, metaphor. The “contest” is probably a metaphor for a race . . . not wrestling or boxing (as Kelly). The word *kalon* (**good**, “noble”) does not imply that Paul’s running was **good** but that he, as he also had urged Timothy . . . has been running in the noblest, grandest run of them all—the ministry of the gospel. This, after all, is what Paul’s life is all about.

p. 289

Hendriksen says:

When the apostle summarizes his life as a Christian under the symbolism of “the grand fight,” the underlying figure is probably a wrestling-match, boxing-bout, or similar contest . . . The third of comparison is prodigious exertion of energy against a very powerful foe.

It had been a fight against Satan; against the principalities and powers, the world-rulers of this darkness in the heavenlies; against Jewish and pagan vice and violence; against Judaism among the Galatians; against fanaticism among the Thessalonians; against contention, fornication, and litigation among the Corinthians; against incipient Gnosticism among the Ephesians and Colossians; against fightings without and fears within; and last but not least, against the law of sin and death operating within his own heart.

But triumphantly Paul is able to say, “the grand fight *I have fought*.”
p. 315

He also says:

. . . “I have retained my personal trust in God, my confidence in all his Christ-centered promises. In the spiritual arena of life I have not only *fought hard* and *run well*, but I have also been sustained to the end by the deeply rooted *conviction* that I shall receive the prize, the glorious reward” . . .

p. 316

Lea & Griffin say:

Paul found three metaphors to reflect the struggles of his ministry, not merely the difficulties of his life. His use of three Greek perfect tenses suggests that something was completed with consequences that still abide. The fight and the race were over, but the victory still abides.

p. 248

Lea & Griffin say finally:

To keep the “faith” may have involved either maintaining the sound doctrine of Christianity intact or keeping a loyalty to the trust the Father had given him. In light of the fact that the phrase “kept the faith” seems to be a fixed formula for maintaining a personal trust, the latter option seems more likely.⁷² Certainly Paul did hold to the Christian faith, but he emphasized here his fidelity to his commission.
p. 248

Hawthorne & Martin say:

At the point of death Paul could affirm that he had successfully completed (or actualized) his assignment as a Christian apostle . . .
p. 700

John 17:4

I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.

John 19:30

When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

Quinn & Wacker say:

I have kept faith. The third phrase . . . if it had occurred in a context like this in a pagan inscription, would surely have been taken to refer to the contestant’s having kept the oath/pledge linked to competition in the Greek games
p. 787

Quinn & Wacker say further:

However, in both secular and Jewish Greek texts . . . [this] refers to remaining faithful to one's word, loyal and completely committed. Thus almost certainly in this passage of the PE [Pastoral epistles] . . . does not stress the creed, . . . but rather . . . the subjective and enduring loyalty of the apostle . . .
p. 787

MacArthur says:

Perhaps Theodore Roosevelt had that verse in mind when he wrote,

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually try to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.

Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checked by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in a gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat. (From speech on the strenuous life, Hamilton Club, Chicago, April 10, 1899)

pp. 191-2

He says further:

The faithful Christian constantly battles his own flesh, his own sin, his own ignorance and laziness. He even has to battle temptation to do things that are perfectly good in themselves in place of other things that are immeasurably more important. Every day there are new fronts on which the struggle continues.

Second, Paul recognized that the cause he pursued was noble. He had a tremendously elevated sense of dedication to the divine cause in which he was engaged. He was fighting **the good fight**. . . . refers to that which is intrinsically good, good in itself, without any qualification.

p. 193

Matthew Henry says:

He had fought a good fight. His life was a course, and he had now finished it; as his warfare was accomplished, so his race was run.
p. 1898

He says further:

“I have kept the faith.” We must fight this good fight; we must fight it out, and finish our course. Towards the end of our days to be able to speak in this manner, what comfort, unspeakable comfort, will it afford!
p. 1898

Stott says:

. . . ‘I have kept the faith’. This may conceivably mean ‘I have kept faith with my Master’.³ But in the context of this letter, which emphasizes so strongly the importance of guarding the deposit of revealed truth, it is more likely that Paul is affirming his faithfulness in this respect. ‘I have safely preserved, as a guardian or steward, the gospel treasure committed to my trust.’

So the work of the apostle, and to a lesser extent of every gospel preacher and teacher, is pictured as fighting a fight, running a race, guarding a treasure. Each involves labour, sacrifice and even danger. In all three Paul has been faithful to the end.
p. 114

Wilson says:

With the final member of this triad Paul drops the metaphor and states the literal fact: ‘I have kept the faith’. He has guarded and transmitted intact the sacred deposit of the gospel [1.14]. ‘Through all trial, and mockery, and persecution, and suffering, he had held fast by the saving truths which he received by special revelation from above, and which as a chosen vessel he was sent forth to declare to a perishing world’ . . .
p. 163

King says:

Here, once again, the heart of the old sportsman peeps out: he turns to the field of athletics, as he has so often done, for illustrations of his life.
p. 119

He continues by saying:

. . . “I have kept the faith”. It is as if some valuable thing had been entrusted to your care for delivery to someone on the other side of the world. You had it carefully wrapped, and secretly strapped about your person; you met professional thieves on the ship going across, you encountered fierce robbers upon the roads; but you managed to keep your treasure intact and at last, with utmost relief and joy, you arrived at your destination, and handed the thing over to the one to whom it belonged.
p. 121

J. Vernon McGee says:

Paul sums up his life in three different ways: “I have fought a good fight.” He has been a soldier, a good soldier. There had been a battle to be fought and a victory to be won. Here at the end of his life he says, “I have been a soldier of my Savior.” My friend, all believers should take that position. There is a battle to be fought, and every Christian should be a defender of the Word of God and stand for the great truths of the Bible.
p. 477

McGee continues:

“I have finished my course.” Life is not only a battle, life is a race. Paul was a disciplined athlete who was striving to win the prize. During the race Paul was keeping his body under subjection. He was attempting to live the Christian life in such a way that he would not be disapproved. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” Paul also wrote in Hebrews 12:1-2 (I consider him the author of that book): “. . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. . . .” Now at the end of his life he could say, “I have finished my course”—he had touched all the bases; he had completed all that God had planned for Him.
p. 477

He says finally:

“I have kept the faith.” Life has been a trust from God, and he had been a good steward. He had kept the faith. He had never veered from the great truths and doctrines in the Word of God.
p. 477

Demarest says:

In the context of this metaphor, when Paul says he has “*kept the faith*,” he is saying that he has competed according to the rules. Apparently, the Greek athletes took a solemn oath before the games that they would compete honorably and honestly. Here is Paul, at the end of the race, affirming that his vows had been kept. The keeping of vows has come on hard times. Long-range commitment is often replaced by short-range gratification.
pp. 290-1

Calvin says:

Since it is normal to judge something by its result, Paul's fight could be condemned, since it had an unhappy ending. So Paul boasts here that, no matter what the world thinks, it has been a **good fight**. This is evidence of his exceptional faith, for not only did everyone think that Paul was in an extremely wretched situation but that his death would also be shameful. So who would not say that he had struggled without success? But he himself does not depend on man's twisted judgments, but in his great courage rises above every calamity so that nothing can interfere with his happiness and glory. So Paul states that the **fight** he has **fought** has been a good and honorable one, and he can even rejoice at the prospect of death, as this has been the goal he has been striving for.

p. 162

Kelly says:

Finally he sums up his achievement, **I have been loyal to my trust**. These words are often translated, 'I have kept the faith', i.e. the apostolic gospel. This fits in well with the stress in these letters on preserving the apostolic faith intact . . . and may be correct. The present context, however, is general rather than particular, and a reference to one specific aspect of Paul's duty (however important) as a Christian leader comes in awkwardly between clauses heavily charged with metaphor. The formula employed . . . is also a stock expression meaning 'keep faith', 'be loyal to one's oath', etc. It therefore seems preferable to understand Paul as protesting his consistent loyalty throughout his ministry to his divine mandate. There is possibly a passing allusion to the pledges by which athletes competing in public games abound themselves to observe the rules . . .

p. 209

Lock says:

The stress is mainly on the perfect tenses: “my fight is over, my task ended.” . . . but secondly on his own achievement, “I chose the right contest, I have kept on running, I have kept the faith.” There is here a true pride in true achievement, in the power given by Christ. . . . stressed here in order to encourage Timothy.

p. 114

He says further:

. . . “I have carefully guarded the faith,” . . . or “I have kept faith with my master,” “I have been true to my promises”

p. 114-5

Griffiths says:

The phrase ‘Fight the good fight’ is often mistaken for a military metaphor, but it is better to translate it, ‘I have wrestled a good match’ or ‘contended a noble contest’. It is followed by another athletic metaphor, ‘I have finished the race’. Addressing the Ephesian elders years earlier Paul had said: ‘consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me’ (Acts 20:24). Then it was still in the future: now he has finished and his work is done. *Kept the faith* means to be loyal to one’s trust.

p. 212

Liefeld calls it:

Passing the baton. Behind all these exhortations is the figure of the great apostle, ready now to commit the immense tasks he has been passing on to a younger man. This must have required a great deal of trust on his part.

p. 295

Patrick & Lowth say:

*(But be it so, this is my comfort, that), I have fought a good fight
(suffering hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ), I have finished (or run)
my course, I have kept the faith: . . .*
p. 865

Age

I am ashes where once I was fire.

Lord Byron (1788-1824), English poet. “To the Countess of Blessington”
(1823).

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A GOOD FINISHER

**I have finished the race.
—2 Timothy 4:7**

The name Mickey Thompson used to be one of the most recognized names in auto racing. His team built the fastest cars on the track. They could fly! But not one of those cars ever brought Thompson a checkered flag. That's right—although his cars took the lead in the first 29 races they entered, they never won a race. Why? Because they did not finish.

Thompson could make the fastest cars, but he couldn't build them to last. They all broke down during the race. Engines blew. Gearboxes broke. Carburetors failed. His cars were good starters and fast runners, but they were not good finishers.

As we run the race of the Christian life, we need to end well. The apostle Paul is an example of a good finisher. He received Christ on the Damascus Road. He attended "seminary" in the Arabian desert (Gal. 1:17, 18). He served Christ in spite of hardship and persecution. He opened Europe to the gospel. And at the close of his life, he could say with confidence, "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

What about you? Has something stalled you in your Christian growth? Have you had a "breakdown"? Confess your sins, make the necessary repairs, and get back into the race. If you don't give up, Jesus will help you be a good finisher! —D.C.E.

*We run with patience day by day
By drawing strength from Christ our Lord;
And if we falter on the way,
He will renew us by His Word. —D.J.D.*

IN THE RACE OF LIFE, IT'S ALWAYS TOO SOON TO QUIT.

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, July 8, year unknown)

FINISHING THE RACE

It's easy to live a long life, at least in America. Look at the statistics: Out of every 100,000 persons, 88,361 reach 50 years of age, more than 70,000 make it to 70, and almost 17,000 get to 85 or more. Staying around a long time, however, should not be our primary goal. Rather, we should be concerned with giving significance and value to all our years and not letting them end in shame and disgrace.

How to finish the race depends to a great extent on the pace we set along the way. Joseph Wittig remarked that when we write people's biographies we should start with their death, not their birth. After all, we have nothing to do with the way our life began, but we have a lot to do with the way it ends.

When Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he was in a Roman dungeon awaiting execution. He said, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (4:6). At that moment he could testify, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (v. 7).

We too can end the Christian race well, even if we began late, started slow, or faltered along the way. The secret is to stay true to Christ to the last moment.

—HWR

Just live your life before your Lord,

Rise to that higher, nobler plane—

With single eye His glory seek,

And you shall His approval gain. —Rae

**HE WHO PUTS GOD FIRST
WILL HAVE HAPPINESS THAT LASTS.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Friday, February 24, 1995)

FINISHING THE RACE

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. —2 Timothy 4:7**

One of the most grueling of all bicycle races is the Tour de France. A contestant in that event, Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle, describes it in a *National Geographic* article titled, “An Annual Madness.” The race covers about 2,000 miles, including some of France’s most difficult, mountainous terrain. Eating and drinking is done on the run. And there are extremes of heat and cold. To train for the event, Lassalle rides his bicycle 22,000 miles a year.

What kind of prize makes people endure so much hardship and pain? \$10,000? \$100,000? No. It’s just a special winner’s jersey. What then motivates the contestants? Lassalle sums it up: “Why, to sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day. To be able to say you finished the Tour de France.”

The apostle Paul, expecting his soon departure to be with Christ, declared, “I have finished the race.” He had completed the work God had given him. As a reward, he was anticipating not a mere jersey, but “the crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8).

If those cyclists are willing to make a total commitment to a bicycle race, how much more should we as followers of Christ be willing to run the race before us!

May we, like Paul, be able to say, “I have finished the race!”—R.W.D.

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ. —Rusthoi*

**WE ARE REWARDED NOT FOR RUNNING THE RACE
BUT FOR FINISHING THE RACE.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Friday, October 5, year unknown)

HAIL TO THE FINISHERS!

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (v. 7).

Does anyone doubt that Timothy would not make Paul's victorious words his life's motto and prayer? Hail to the finisher!

The Venerable Bede, eighth century British historian, was translating the four Gospels when his last day came. In a race with death, he dictated his translation at a feverish speed. After concluding the 20th chapter of John, his voice broke. An assistant whispered, "Dearest master, there is yet one chapter wanting. Will the trouble be to severe?"

The question roused a dying servant of God. "Trouble? There is none," he slowly replied. "Take your pen, prepare your parchment, and write speedily!" With amazing strength his spirit mastered his weakness.

But once more, overcome by exertion, he fell back exhausted. Again the assistant whispered, "Yet one sentence unwritten." He gasped, "Write quickly." The verse was completed. "It is finished!" he exclaimed. In a few moments he was dead. Hail to the finisher!

O God, keep me alive until my work is finished. Then take me home; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(From Our Daily Bread, Saturday, November 9, year unknown)

LIVING FOR ETERNITY

In a letter to his brother, agnostic Robert G. Ingersoll reflected on his life. He wrote, “I feel that we have passed the crown of the hill, and that the milestones are getting nearer and nearer each other, and now and then I catch glimpses of the great wall where the road ends. A little while ago, I pressed forward; now I hold back. In youth we woo the future and clasp her like a bride; in age we denounce her as a fair and beautiful liar and wonder at the ease with which we were duped. Pursuing that which eludes, gazing at that which fades, hoping for the impossible, regretting that which is, fearing that which must be, and with [nothing] worth having save the bliss of love. And in the red heart of this white flower there is this pang: ‘It cannot last.’”

Compare those depressing words with the statement of Paul, who looked to the close of life with confidence because he knew Christ: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? Are you living for Him? Then you can anticipate a glorious future! —RWD

*God leads us in the path of righteousness
For His name's sake, and as we walk that way
We know it leads at last to heaven above,
To which our souls will rise one glorious day. —Hess*

**WHAT WE GO AFTER HERE
DETERMINES WHERE WE GO HEREAFTER.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Friday, October 18, 1996)

(Shipwreck at the Bottom of the World: The Extraordinary True Story of Shackleton and the Endurance by Jennifer Armstrong) New York, NY: Crown. Copyright – Jennifer M. Armstrong, 1998.

“It was a moment hard to describe,” Shackleton wrote later. “Pain and aches, boat journeys, marches, hunger and fatigue seemed to belong to the limbo of forgotten things, and there remained only the perfect contentment that comes of work accomplished.”
p. 113

(The Most Brilliant Thoughts of All Time: In Two Lines or Less edited by John M. Shanahan) New York, NY: HarperCollins. Copyright – John M. Shanahan, 1999.

Footprints on the sands of time are not made by sitting down.

Anonymous

p. 76

Those that have done nothing in life, are not qualified to judge of those that have done little.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784

p. 77

(Quote Unquote compiled by Lloyd Cory) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books / SP Publications, Inc. Copyright – SP Publications, Inc., 1977.

The trouble is—before you can be a “former great” you have to be a “great.”

(CHARLIE BROWN)

p. 140

v. 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.

Paul looks forward to the future with great anticipation and joy, knowing that he is going to be rewarded for his faithfulness in service to the Lord. This reward that he is talking about, of course, will be given out at the **JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**, which we have made reference to earlier in our studies:

“WHICH THE LORD . . . WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY.”

“THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE” is the **JUST UMPIRE**.

It does not matter how men may judge, the most important thing is what the Lord, the just umpire, is going to say. Paul’s desire is to hear from the lips of the Lord:

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

As a result of his faithfulness to duty Paul had no fear of facing **the Lord, the righteous Judge**, but only anticipation of reward in the form of a **crown . . . the laurel wreath of the athletic games) of righteousness which** was already waiting **in store for** him. “Crown of righteousness” can mean either that righteousness itself is the crown or reward, or that this crown is the reward *for* righteousness . . . In favor of the first view is the fact that James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10 seem to say that the “crown of life” means that life *is* the crown, not that a crown is given because one has life. In either case Paul expected to receive his reward **on that day** (a reference to Christ’s return, not Paul’s death), side by side with the rest of the faithful **who have longed for His appearing . . .**

p. 758

Lock sights these words by Box:

“They shall rejoice with boldness,
 be confident without confusion,
 be glad without fear:
 for they are hastening to behold the face of him
 whom in life they served and from whom they are
 destined to receive their reward in glory” (Box).

p. 115

Kelly says:

Paul seems anxious to avoid the impression of claiming any special privilege for himself. His chief object is to encourage Timothy with the reminder that anyone who sincerely yearns for (**have loved** here means ‘have longed for’) Christ’s coming again will be eligible for the same prize. Christians are people whose true country is heaven, and whose distinctive mark is that they are always looking forward to the Lord’s return in glory . . .

p. 210

Calvin says:

As Paul has glorified in his good fight, the course finished, and the faith kept, so now he claims that his labors have not been in vain. It is possible to make a great effort and still fail to reach one’s goal. But Paul says that he was certain of his reward. He derives this certainty from turning his eyes to the day of resurrection, and we should do the same.

pp. 162-3

McGee says:

The question is: Do you *love* His appearing? To love His appearing means that you will have to love *Him*. Oh, my friend, do you have a close relationship with Him? Have you ever told Him that you love Him? (I have a notion that Paul told the Lord every day that he loved Him, because he had hated and persecuted Him before.) There is a crown for those who love His appearing. I would like to have that crown. I believe it will shine brighter than all the others.
p. 478

King says:

But I want to finish on another note. Do you remember those lines of the old hymn—

“The bride eyes not her garment,
But her dear bridegroom’s face.
I will not gaze at glory,
But on my King of grace.
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand:
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel’s land.”

After all, [nothing] will utterly satisfy in “that day”, however beautiful, and however wonderful It may be—no, no It; but only He. So our last word from the passage is not of the Prize and its arrival, but of the Person and “His appearing”. I don’t think I can write any more about that: I just want to put down my pen—and think, and pray. Will you join me?
p. 124

Matthew Henry says:

With what pleasure he looks forward to the life he was to live hereafter (v. 8). Let this encourage Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ that there is a crown of life before us. It is called *a crown of righteousness*, because our holiness and righteousness will there be perfected, and will be our crown.
p. 1898

Matthew Henry says finally:

It is the character of all the saints that they love the appearing of Jesus Christ: they love his second appearing at the great day; love it, and long for it. This crown, which believers shall wear, is laid up for them; they have it not at present, for here they are but heirs; they have it not in possession, and yet it is sure.

p. 1898

MacArthur says:

Laid up carries the idea of being safely stored and carefully guarded. A certain part of their heavenly treasure is stored up in advance by believers themselves. “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,” Jesus commands, “where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal” (Matt. 6:20).

p. 198

Wiersbe says:

The crown of righteousness is God’s reward for a faithful and righteous life; and our incentive for faithfulness and holiness is the promise of the Lord’s appearing. Because Paul loved His appearing and looked for it, he lived righteously and served faithfully. This is why Paul used the return of Jesus Christ as a basis for his admonitions in this chapter (see 4:1).

We are not called to be apostles; yet we can win the same crown that Paul won. If we love Christ’s appearing, live in obedience to His will, and do the work He has called us to do, we will be crowned.

p. 159

Barnes says:

It is one of the characteristics of a true Christian that he sincerely *desires* the return of his Saviour, and would *welcome* his appearing in the clouds of heaven.

p. 248

A. T. Robertson has this to say about “loving His appearing”:

Dative case of the perfect active participle of *agapaō*, to love, who have loved and still love his second coming.
p. 631

Lange says:

The apostle had begun with a steadfast gaze upon his death; he now concludes, looking beyond death and the grave.
p. 113

Larson says:

As Paul awaited death, he stood on the threshold of a more glorious life to come. He knew what was ahead: **the crown of righteousness**. He knew who would confer it: **the Lord, the righteous Judge**. He knew when he would receive it: **on that day**.
p. 322

May of Thee Be Plenteously Rewarded

“The Lord, the righteous judge.” *2 Timothy 4:8*.

From the Book of Common Prayer we gather the petition that God’s faithful people may be found “plenteously bringing forth the fruits of good works, and may of Thee be plenteously rewarded.” Through all his arduous service for the Master, Paul kept before him the judgment seat and its rewards. The smile and benediction of the judge at the end of the day was the apostle’s constant incentive. One look from this righteous adjudicator, and the sound of his voice saying, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” spurred on the apostle, enabling him to be indifferent to his sufferings for Christ’s sake. This was the prize of his high calling he strove to attain.

Paul knew that because the Lord is the *righteous* judge he would assist his labors and longings for what they were worth and reward him accordingly. Being the judge he is, the Lord cannot deny any servant of his any earned reward. Ours is the assurance that if we are faithful to him unto death the judge of all the earth will do right. If we have plenteously brought forth the fruits of good works, ours will be a plenteous reward. There is, of course, a great difference between gifts and rewards. A gift is bestowed, gratis. It would cease to be a gift if we had to work for it. But a reward has to be earned. Alas, many at the judgment seat will be saved because of their reception of the gift of God’s salvation but will be rewardless because of a lost life.

Do we share Paul’s confidence that an unfading crown is laid up for us? By God’s grace and power are we pressing toward a full reward? May we be spared the sorrow of standing before the judge with a saved soul but a lost life. May ours be a full reward.

(source unknown)

WHAT MATTERS MOST

In the mid-1970s, Ed Roberts created the world's first commercially successful personal computer (PC). He hired a 19-year-old named Bill Gates to write software for him.

Roberts sold his computer business in 1977 and bought a farm. Seven years later, at the age of 41, he entered medical school. Today Bill Gates is the head of the largest software company in the world. Ed Roberts is a physician in a small Georgia town.

Roberts says, "The implication is that the PC is the most important thing I've ever done, and I don't think that's true. Every day I deal with things that are equally if not more important here with my patients."

How can we evaluate the significance of our lives? Something deep inside tells us that such a thing cannot be measured by wealth and fame.

As we look at the apostle Paul's turbulent life, it seems noteworthy that he approached the end with a peaceful sense of successful completion. He wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul looked confidently not to the world but to "the Lord, the righteous Judge," for approval and reward (v. 8).

How do you measure the significance of your life? Only God can tell you what matters most.

—DCM

*Since sooner than later we'll face our Creator,
Whose gaze pierces through to the heart,
Let's make sure our dreams, our goals, and grand schemes
Have Christ in our plans from the start.* —Gustafson

**THE MEASURE OF A LIFE IS DETERMINED BY
THE RULER OF THE UNIVERSE.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, July 19, 1999)

THE PROMISED PRIZE

Recently I received a magazine sweepstakes letter that addressed me by name and repeatedly mentioned a \$500,000 prize. It spoke of instant wealth and a lifetime of leisure. Finally, at the bottom of page 2, in very small print, I found the part I was looking for. As required by law, the letter told me that the approximate numerical odds of my winning the prize were 1 in 80 million. Now that's remote!

Contrast that with Paul's anticipation of what awaited him in heaven: "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" (2 Tim. 4:8). Note his assurance: "There is laid up for me." Not "there might be" or "there's a slight chance"—"there is."

J. Oswald Sanders writes, "This crown is awarded to those who have completed the Christian race with integrity, with eyes fixed on the coming Lord. It is the reward for fulfilling the ministry entrusted to one."

If you have welcomed Christ into your life, long for His appearing, and are faithfully running your race, then the same prize awaits you. Count on it, plan on it, anticipate it! It's a promise from God. —DCM

Run the straight race through God's good grace,

Lift up your eyes and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,

Christ is the path, and Christ the prize. —Monsell

**OUR PRESENT CHOICES
DETERMINE OUR FUTURE REWARDS.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Friday, January 8, year unknown)

(Taking Flight: Wisdom for Your Journey by Elisabeth Elliot) Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books. Copyright – Elisabeth Elliot, 1999.

I have been told that in one of the China Inland Mission homes in China there was a motto on the wall that said, “The sun stood still. The iron did swim. This God is our God for ever and ever. He will be our guide even unto death.” This God, the One who, in answer to the prayer of an ordinary man, stopped the sun in its course, the God who suspended His own law of gravity and made an ax head float, this is the God to whom I come. This is the God whose will and direction I am asking. This God is the One whose promises I am counting on.

p. 77

Faith stands in the midst of suffering and sees glory.

p. 85

(Shattered Dreams: God’s Unexpected Pathway to Joy by Larry Crabb) Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press. Copyright – Lawrence J. Crabb, Jr., 2001.

Her dream of growing old with her husband and enjoying her sons as adults was gone, but God created within Naomi an appetite for a better dream. The writer intends us to see Naomi at the end of the story as a deeply content old woman, aware of a higher purpose than for things to go well in her life, experiencing a joy that more than replaced the happiness she had lost.

p. 62

We have been considering in this study:

Step #10—Passion: Pleasing You is My Ruling Passion.

Our **KEY VERSE** has been verse 2:

“Preach the word, hold yourself in readiness when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with unlimited patience and teaching.”

Let us remember well the words we considered earlier:

ONLY PASSIONS, GREAT PASSIONS, CAN ELEVATE THE SOUL TO GREAT THINGS!

Hanging in my office is the statement by a runner:

THE RUNNER WHO PUTS THE LAST OUNCE OF EFFORT INTO THE RACE FEELS THE GLORIOUS SATISFACTION OF HAVING GIVEN EVERYTHING TO THE MOMENT.

CONCLUSION:

What lessons did you learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Can you say to the Lord right now, “Lord, pleasing You is my ruling passion”?

LESSON #2: Only passions, great passions, can elevate the soul to great things.

LESSON #3: The runner who puts the last ounce of effort into the race feels the glorious satisfaction of having given everything to the moment.

LESSON #4: Are you carrying out Paul’s five-fold charge to Timothy in your life today? “Preach the word, hold yourself in readiness when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, reprove, rebuke, exhort with unlimited patience and teaching” (verse 2).

LESSON #5: Are you endeavoring to be obedient to the four things Paul says to Timothy in verse 5? “But you be self-possessed under all circumstances, bear hardship patiently, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

LESSON #6: In view of your impending departure in death, are you living by the words of the Psalmist in “numbering your days and applying your heart to wisdom”? (Psalm 90:12).

LESSON #7: How concerned are you for the lost and doing “the work of an evangelist”? (verse 5).

LESSON #8: What are you doing presently to reach out and touch the lives of others?

LESSON #9: Are you consistent in your walk with God?

LESSON #10: If you died right now, could you say, “I fought, I finished, I kept”? (verse 7).

LESSON #11: Are you looking forward to His coming?

LESSON #12: Your departure gate and flight time have already been scheduled on the great computers in the sky.

Lea & Griffin say:

The knowledge that God rewards and recognizes faithful Christian service is an incentive to godly living. A confidence in God's bestowal of rewards is encouraged by a knowledge of his faithfulness. God is faithful to believers; he will not ignore their works; he will justly evaluate all of them. This knowledge is a prod to devoted obedience to God. An expectation of reward is also a recognition of God's grace. Those who anticipate reward will not be able to boast, "Look at my accomplishments." They should be able to offer praise to God by saying, "Thank you, Lord, for what you have produced in me." The very expectation of reward is an acknowledgment of God's grace. p. 249

Spurgeon says it beautifully:

I only wish these words about departure were applicable to all here. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." But, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways, and live." O unconverted man, the time for letting loose your cable draws nigh; it is even at the door. You must shortly set sail for a far country. Alas! then yours is not the voyage of a passenger, with a sweeter clime, a happier home, a brighter prospect in view. Your departure is the banishment of a convict, with a penal settlement looming in the distance; fear all rife, and hope all blank, for the term of your banishment is interminable. I fear there are some of you who may depart ere long full of gloom with a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation. I seem to see the angel of death hovering over my audience. He may, perhaps, select for his victim an unconverted soul. If so, behind that death-angel attends there something far more grim. Hell follows death to souls that love not Christ. Oh, make haste, make haste! Seek Christ. Lay hold on eternal life; and may infinite mercy save you, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen and Amen. p. 891

Commitment without reflection is fanaticism in action. But reflection without commitment is the paralysis of all action.

—JOHN MACKAY

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

—JIM ELLIOT (1927-1956)

He who lightly assents will seldom keep his word.

—CHINESE PROVERB

Jesus did not say, “Come to me and get it over with.” He said, “If any man would come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me.” *Daily* is the key word. Our commitment to Christ, however genuine and wholehearted it may be today, must be renewed tomorrow . . . and the day after that . . . and the day after that . . . until the path comes at last to the river.

—LOUIS CASSELS (1922-1974)

Say, “Yes,” Son. I need your yes as I needed Mary’s yes to come to earth, For it is I who must do your work, it is I who must live in your family, it is I who must be in your neighborhood, and not you. For it is my look that penetrates, and not yours; my words that carry weight, and not yours; my life that transforms, and not yours. Give all to me, abandon all to me. I need your yes to be united with you and to come down to earth, I need your yes to continue saving the world.

—MICHEL QUOIST (1921-)

Sometimes a man imagines that he will lose himself if he gives himself, and keep himself if he hides himself. But the contrary takes place with terrible exactitude.

—ERNEST HELLO (1828-1885)

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

Thine am I, I was born for thee,
 What wouldst thou, Master, make of me?
 Give me death or give me life
 Give health or give infirmity
 Give honor or give obloquy
 Give peace profound or daily strife,
 Weakness or strength add to my life;
 Yes, Lord, my answer still shall be
 What wilt thou, Master, have of me?

—SAINT TERESA OF AVIAL (1515-1582)

Tomorrow I keep for God. Today I give to God.

—FRANCES J. ROBERTS

What does God require? Everything!

—ERWIN W. LUTZER (1941-)

(From Quick Verse 6.0)

BOMBING IN BEIRUT

One of the most tragic events during the Reagan Presidency was the Sunday morning terrorist bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, in which hundreds of Americans were killed or wounded as they slept. Many of us can still recall the terrible scenes as the dazed survivors worked to dig out their trapped brothers from beneath the rubble.

A few days after the tragedy, I recall coming across an extraordinary story. Marine Corps Commandant Paul X Kelly, visited some of the wounded survivors then in a Frankfurt, Germany, hospital. Among them was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton, severely wounded in the incident. Nashton had so many tubes running in and out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man; yet he survived.

As Kelly neared him, Nashton, struggling to move and racked with pain, motioned for a piece of paper and a pen. He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the Commandant. On the slip of paper were but two words—"Semper Fi" the Latin motto of the Marines meaning "forever faithful."

With those two simple words Nashton spoke for the millions of Americans who have sacrificed body and limb and their lives for their country—those who have remained faithful.

Children at Risk, **J. Dobson & Gary Bauer**,
Word, 1990, pp. 187-188.

Multiple, 10,000 Sermon Illustrations, (Dallas, Texas Biblical Studies Press) 2000.

(Logos Library System)

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck) Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel. Copyright - Kregel Publications, 1990.

There is nothing more tragic, however, than to see a professing Christian become disgruntled and self-centered in later years. It is true that we simply bring into full bloom the traits that were begun in our early years. If we wish to have positive and productive attitudes in our senior years, we must begin to develop these traits while we are still young.

Author and composer Mrs. Lelia Morris was an active worker in the Methodist church. She continued to write gospel songs during the last 15 years of her life, even after going blind in her early fifties. “Sweeter as the Years Go By” was written during the early years of her blindness. It is said that during this difficult time in her life, Mrs. Morris used a 28-foot long blackboard with music lines on it to help her hymn writing. In all, Lelia Morris wrote more than 1,000 hymn texts, as well as many of the tunes. Her handicap never deterred her from being effective and productive for God. Even in blindness she found her Lord sweeter as the years went by.

Of Jesus’ love that sought me, when I was lost in sin; of wondrous grace that brought me back to His fold again; of heights and depths of mercy, far deeper than the sea, and higher than the heavens, my theme shall ever be.

He trod in old Judea life’s pathway long ago; the people thronged about Him His saving grace to know; He healed the broken hearted, and caused the blind to see, and still His great heart yearneth in love for even me.

‘Twas wondrous love which led Him for us to suffer loss—to bear without a murmur the anguish of the cross; with saints redeemed in glory let us our voices raise, till heaven and earth re-echo with our Redeemer’s praise.

Refrain: Sweeter as the years go by, sweeter as the years go by; richer, fuller, deeper, Jesus’ love is sweeter, sweeter as the years go by.

p. 69

**(Diamonds in the Dust: 366 Sparkling Devotions by Joni Eareckson Tada)
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – Joni Eareckson Tada, 1993.**

So what's your gift? Before you give me a theological list or a shrug of the shoulder, let me share a story with you about a six-year-old little girl. Her daddy serves as a pastor in the United States. Daddy was busy studying at the dining-room table for a sermon the next morning on the chapter from which today's verse is taken [1 Peter 4:10]. He looked up to see Bethany watching him with a smile.

“What are you doing, Daddy?”

“I'm studying for tomorrow's sermon.”

“Well, when you get done, I'll give you a big hug.”

With that, Bethany wrapped her arms around her father and squeezed the biggest hug she could muster. “Why did you do that?” my friend responded, “I'm not finished yet.” “I know,” said Bethany, “I just wanted you to know what it would feel like when you do get done.”

(February 9)

Dear Don and Pearl,

Having been asked about reasons for my long tenure at Dallas Seminary, I found myself rattling the cage. To explain myself to myself, I have to admit that early on I questioned my assumptions about the Christian life. Discarding my fantasies, I faced the hard truth that Christ commissioned me for battle. I had to develop an eternal perspective that would keep me in the trenches.

“If you go against the grain of the universe, you get splinters,” said H. H. Farmer. He was right, but much better to keep getting and removing earthly splinters than to ignore the chafing weight of His eternal cross. For many students, the first experience in my classroom causes severe intellectual tremors, if not agitation. But my most exciting moments have come when a student’s eyes light up and he or she exclaims, “Oh, I see.”

Seminary—even ministry—looks positively do-able when reduced to simple paragraphs in the catalog. Job offers sound promising and apartment leases look friendly. Students bound into the first semester with high hopes. But assignments often smother outside activities. Health, finances and family may distract from the real purpose of being there. That’s when the perceptive instructor makes a critical difference. He keeps their eyes on the prize. And their dependence on the One who called them.

Christians who win accept unvarnished reality. Winning comes with discernment, anticipatory thinking, walking with the wise (Proverbs 13:20), and thoughtful assessment. The content of the Book must be absorbed into the core of the learner to energize his complete lifestyle. He must strip down to durable essence.

Above all else, I want students to feel the friction of true education. Weddings are easy, delightful celebrations; but marriages, the long-term fusion of two into one, are difficult. We must grapple with the grandeur of God’s Word and the contrition it demands of its disciples. No one who is whole is self-sufficient.

Your fellow learner,
Howard G. Hendricks

(From March 2001 letter from Howard G. Hendricks)

Find Us Faithful

We're pilgrims on the journey of the narrow road.
 And those who've gone before us line the way.
 Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary.
 Their lives a stirring testament
 To God's sustaining grace.

Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
 Let us run the race not only for the prize.
 But as those who've gone before us
 Let us leave to those behind us
 A heritage of faithfulness passed on through Godly light.

Chorus

O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.
 May the fire of our devotion light their way.
 May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe.
 And the lives we live inspire them to obey.
 O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.

After all our hopes and dreams have come and gone.
 And our children sift through all we've left behind.
 May the clues that they discover
 And the memories they uncover
 Become the light that leads them to the road we each must find.

Chorus

O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.
 May the fire of our devotion light their way.
 May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe.
 And the lives we live inspire them to obey.

O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.
 May the fire of our devotion light their way.
 May the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe.
 And the lives we live inspire them to obey.
 O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.

O May all who come behind us, find us faithful.

"Find Us Faithful" by Russell W. Newport. From Compact Disk *"Find Us Faithful."*