

“FINISHING THE COURSE”

II TIMOTHY 4:6-8

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INTRODUCTION

In this sublime passage Paul brings his apostolic writings to a majestic climax—probably unsurpassed in any of his writings. His life and ministry are now almost concluded, and he awaits his reward.

Notice the transition between 4:1-5 and 6-8:

- But you—v. 5 [review the commands to Timothy in vv. 1-5]
- For I—v. 6: Paul’s work is done and Timothy must now carry on in his place.

It is not how you start the race, but how you finish it that makes all of the difference.

In this text Paul shows us something important about his present, his past, and his future:

If Your Present Life Is The Continuation And Fulfillment Of A Godly Past, You Will Have A Glorious Future!

DON’T QUIT UNTIL YOU GET TO THE FINISH LINE!

I. THE PRESENT LIVING SACRIFICE (4:6)

A. The Drink-Offering

- Not, “I am now ready”, but “I am already being poured out...”
 - Paul does not say that he is the sacrifice, but the accompanying libation.
 - Compare Phil. 2:17—at the conclusion of his first imprisonment—they are the sacrifice he offers to God—he the accompanying libation. What humility!
 - There hypothetical; here reality. He is even now being poured out.
 - See vv. 16-17—he already had his first defense; the 2nd and final comes soon.
1. The drink offering was gradually poured out—so Paul’s life had gradually ebbed away.
 2. It was an offering—so was Paul’s ultimate act of self-sacrifice—he was likely beheaded, thus the appropriate picture of a libation.
 3. It was the final act of the ceremony.

B. The Departure

1. The season—the whole process of the trial now culminating.
2. The “Loosing” or the release—euphemism for “death.”
 - Used for a ship weighing anchor.
 - Used for “striking a tent”. Paul, a tentmaker; referred to the body as a “tent” in II Cor. 5.
 - “Death” is not the end for a believer—merely a moving on to a new location: see this same verb in Phil. 1:23, and cf. Phil. 1:21; II Cor. 5:8.
3. The Arrival of the season of departure: “it has come, and continues to be present.” Cf. this same verb in v. 2—“Be instant, ready, prepared at all times.”
 - Soon the winds will blow into the sails and the ship will be off and promptly reach its destination! Paul’s departure in death is an act of **faith**. Paul’s work was not cut short; it was God’s plan and timing that he now depart. As Wuest notes, “the servant of the Lord is immortal until his work is done” (160). If his work were not completed Nero could not have taken his life.

II. THE FULFILLED AND TRIUMPHANT PAST (7)

A. Fought the Good Fight—wrestling match?

- “Agonize the agony” in literal English words; in Greek applied to preparation and participation in athletic contests. A favorite figure often used by Paul—cf. Phil. 1:30.
- “The” fight is the specific one given him by God
- All three nouns are put first for emphasis—“fight,” “course,” “faith.” The emphasis is not on the person—“I”; no separate pronoun used.
- Paul does not brag here; merely an objective evaluation at the end of his journey.

- Compare Jesus' similar statement in Jn. 17:4—"I have glorified You on earth"
- B. Finished the Course
- "Course" (from the verb "run") used only here, of John the Baptist in Acts 13:25, and of Paul in Acts 20:24—Paul's desire to "finish his course" without giving up or being defeated.
 - His lifelong desire expressed there to the Ephesian elders is now accomplished—cf. Phil. 2:16, did not want to "run" in vain (Gal. 2:2).
 - On running this race of life, see Heb. 12:1-2 and for Paul, esp. I Cor. 9:24-27 [Read]
- C. Kept the Faith
- "Kept" likely here in the sense of protecting a deposit like I Tim. 6:20; II Tim. 1:12, 14—diff. verb. See I Tim. 6:14 for same verb and idea and I Pet. 1:4 inheritance "kept" in Heaven.
 - Paul had stood up against all opponents, false teachers, apostates; he is now ready to be discharged from his duty.

Now, Paul looks to the future with anticipation.

III. THE GLORIOUS FUTURE FOR THE RIGHTEOUS SERVANT OF GOD (8)

- A. That which is "left"—remaining—in the future.
- B. That which is "being—present tense—stored up, on lay away!"—cf. Col. 1:5
- Verb often used for rewards given to loyal subjects by rulers for faithful service rendered.
 - "For me"—for Paul's benefit and advantage
- C. That which will be given—a "Crown of righteousness"
1. The victor's wreath and reward—not a diadem.
 2. Righteousness shows either the source of the wreath or the rightful possessor of the wreath. The one who lived righteously, according to divine standards, is rightly rewarded "according to his works" (see Rom. 2:6-8).
 3. Of course, even crowns are given as the result of grace—Tit. 3:5-7.
- D. The One who will give the crown—"The Lord, the righteous Judge"
1. "Lord" is Jesus—as in 4:1.
 2. He is the "righteous" Judge—who acts according to divine standards, and always makes the right decisions, **unlike many earthly rulers such as Nero himself.**
 3. Note reference to Him as Judge in 4:1—of living and dead believers.
 4. He "gives" or pays back, rewards, those who deserve it.
- E. The one who receives the crown—Paul ("to me").
- F. The time when the crown is given Paul—"on that day."
- Not immediately upon death.
 - At the day of His Second coming—v. 1.
- G. Others who will share in the Crown—"not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing."
1. Paul is not selfish—he thinks of all other faithful believers and is concerned that they, like Timothy, remain faithful and receive their reward in that day.
 2. The qualification is that they "have loved His appearing."
 - Perfect tense—loved in the past with continuing results so that they still love.
 - An unselfish love that is more concerned for God's glory and good than their own.
 - "Appearing", as in v. 1, is the glorious manifestation of Christ at His 2nd Advent.
 - In this sense "loved" has the idea of "eagerly await, anticipate, look forward to."
 - Then, those who so anticipate take proper means to prepare for it.

CONCLUSION

Certainly, all this applies to the minister, but also to all believers.

What is your past? What about your present, what do you expect in the future via reward?

Do you "love His appearing?" Will you hear his "well done, good and faithful servant"?

You may be tempted by the world, the flesh, and the Devil. But don't quit; don't give in or give up!

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