

8. Learning How to Finish Well

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to become men of God. We saw that will happen as we help them to become familiar with the whole Word of God, provide an example for them to follow and show them how to develop ministry skills. However, we still have one more goal even after they become a man or woman of God. We also want to show them how to finish well by being faithful to the Lord as long as the Lord leaves them on this earth. Finishing well will be the focus of our topic today.

In 2 Timothy 4:1-2 we read, “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” The word that is translated “charge” means *to give solemn testimony*. Paul gave this solemn testimony in the presence of the Father and Christ so it was similar to a command. Christ is the One who will judge the living and the dead. “The living” is talking about those who have spiritual life, as the judgment of Christians is for rewards for faithful ministry. The judgment of “the dead” is talking those who lack spiritual life and they will experience eternal judgment for sin.

Since Paul wanted Timothy to receive great rewards for faithful service, Paul encouraged him to focus on the ministries to which Christ had called him. The first thing that Timothy was told to do was preach the Word. The word translated “preach” means *to proclaim openly as a messenger*. However, Timothy was not to give just any message. He was to share the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 says, “For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Then Isaiah 55:8-9 adds, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” The Word of God is living and powerful while our thoughts and ideas are not. God’s thoughts and ways are much greater than ours so we want to share His Word and not our thoughts.

In the same way, we want to help our children learn to share the Word of God instead of their own thoughts or ideas. Like Timothy, we and our children are to be ready to share the Word of God at any time. “In season” means *when the opportunity occurs* and “out of season” means *we are to share the Word of God even when people do not want to hear the Word*. 1 Peter 3:15-16 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.” To be effective in sharing the Word of God at all times, we are to have actions that agree with our words.

As Timothy shared the Word, he was to convince. The word that is translated “convince” means *to convict or refute*. While talking about the Holy Spirit, Christ said in John 16:8-11 says, “‘And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see

Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Here, we see that as we work with the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit convinces the world of the sin of unbelief, of the fact that Christ is the Righteous One and of the fact that the prince of this world has already been judged and that those who continue to follow him will share in that judgment. Timothy was also to rebuke. Christ rebuked both the waves of the sea and the demons and told them to stop. At the same time, Timothy was to exhort (encourage). Timothy was to do these things with patience and by teaching the Word of God.

We see why Paul told Timothy both to warn and to encourage. 2 Timothy 4:3-5 says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*” Paul told Timothy that the time was coming when people would not want to hear sound doctrine. Instead, Paul said that such individuals would want to hear teaching that agreed with their sinful desires. As a result, Paul warned that such people would want teachers who would tell them pleasant things that would make them feel good.

In fact, Paul warned that such people would certainly turn away from the truth. Instead, they would turn aside to fables. The word that is translated “fables” means *ideas and philosophies that are the ideas of man instead of the Word of God*. Titus 1:14-15 says, “Not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” Here, we see that people who turn away from the truth would much rather hear worldly ideas, philosophies and commandments of men than hear the Word of God. This is due to the fact that they have defiled their minds and their consciences.

Even when people turn away from the truth, Timothy was to keep teaching the Word of God. The word that is translated “be watchful” means *to be calm in spirit*. Timothy was also told to be ready to suffer. Even if Timothy suffered, Paul encouraged Timothy to keep doing the work to which God had called him. Here, we see that God had called him to do the work of an evangelist. Ephesians 4:11-13 says, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here, we see that evangelists are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. Timothy was to be faithful in sharing the Gospel and equipping others to share the Gospel even if those who rejected the Gospel persecuted him and made him suffer. Timothy was to fulfill every part of the ministry to which the Lord had called him.

Paul then reminded Timothy of his own example of faithful service. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 says, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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,

and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul was at that very moment of time waiting for the day when he would be put to death for his faith and his ministry.

In the Old Testament, the drink offering was the final offering that the priest offered after he finished offering the burnt offering and the grain offering. Paul was making it clear that he would soon give his own life for his faithful ministry of proclaiming the Gospel. Here, we see that Paul did not fear death. He had said earlier in Philippians 1:21-24, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.” Paul knew at this earlier period that Christ would protect him and allow him to live because his work was not yet complete. Now, he recognized that his work was almost complete.

Paul had three summary comments about his ministry. First, Paul said that he had fought the good fight. The word that is translated “fought” means *to strive, to enter a contest or to fight*. The word is translated “striving” in Colossians 1:28-29 where we read, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this *end* I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.” Paul had been involved in a spiritual battle for many years. He had faithfully served the Lord throughout those years and he could now say that he had fought a good fight.

Second, Paul said that he had finished the race. The word that is translated “finish” means *to bring to a close or to end*. This is the same word that Christ used in John 19:30 when he said, “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.” Just as Christ knew that He had finished the work of paying for our salvation, Paul knew that he had finished the ministry that Christ had given him to do. We can certainly say that Paul finished well.

Third, Paul said that he had kept the faith. 1 John 2:5 says, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” Paul was obedient to the Lord right up to the point of his death. As a result, Paul knew that he could look forward to the crown of righteousness as his reward. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Paul knew that he would have the righteousness of Christ for all eternity. We can help our physical and spiritual children know that they will also have the righteousness of Christ for all eternity. That is the reward for all who have placed their faith in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to finish well, as they look forward to the crown of righteousness.