

I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

2 Timothy 4:1-22

Key Verses: 4:6,7

"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

In Second Timothy chapter 3 we learned that ungodly people are lovers of themselves and lovers of money and they ruin weak-minded people and finally the world. We also learned that godly people live a holy life. The godly people are men of mission. Godly people believe that the word of God is the word of life. When we read chapter 4 Paul is very serious about their faith in Jesus Christ. Paul began to instruct Timothy with the phrase, "I give you this charge..." (1b). In this part, we learn the godly man's supreme duty and St. Paul's personal testimony, which appeals to those who are trying to live a

godly life. May God bless us to have a right attitude as a servant of God through this study.

I. Preach the word (1-5)

First, basic knowledge concerning Jesus Christ (1). When Paul wanted to instruct Timothy about the supreme duty as a servant of God, he did not speak as a superior speaks to an inferior. Paul speaks to Timothy in the presence of God. Even if he speaks to his son in Jesus Christ, he speaks in the presence of God and of Jesus Christ. Paul's attitude toward his junior coworker was very humble because of his awareness of God's presence. In short, Paul spoke as if he were speaking the word of God to one of his coworkers. Here in verse 1 Paul introduces who Jesus is. Look at verse 1. "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...." In this verse we learn two basic facts about Jesus Christ.

In the first place, Jesus is the Judge. At that time, the worldly people remembered Jesus' death on the cross as a criminal. But to Paul, Jesus is the

Son of God and he is the promised Messiah. While on earth, Jesus healed the sick and preached the good news of the kingdom of God. But evil men unconditionally did not like Jesus, because Jesus is the Son of God and they were the children of the devil. They killed Jesus out of their envy, for the crowd of people followed Jesus frenziedly. But through his death, Jesus gave us eternal salvation and the kingdom of God as our inheritance.

In the second place, Jesus is coming again with his angels in glory, to judge the living and the dead. God did not abandon Jesus in the grave. God raised him on the third day from the dead and made him the Judge over all mankind. In the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, Paul proclaims that Jesus comes again as the Judge.

Second, preach the Word (2). Look at verse 2. "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction." How can we preach the Word? In the first place, we must preach the Word in season and out of season. What does it mean that we must preach the Word "in season and out of season"? It does not

necessarily mean to prepare Bible study according to the weather forecast. It means that we must prepare to preach the Word persistently. In the second place, when we are going to preach the Word, we must prepare our spiritual condition to be ready to teach the Bible to God's flock of sheep. In the third place, when we are going to preach the Word, we must have the word of God in our hearts instead of having the things of the world. When our hearts are filled with many things of the world God cannot bless our Bible teaching. Therefore, we must be always ready spiritually to teach. We must also know why we are teaching the Word. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...." We must prepare Bible studies thoroughly to teach sheep through much prayer and Bible study. The Bible is like an ocean. Nobody can finish Bible study. Therefore, when we prepare a Bible study we must prepare the part we have to teach prayerfully so that we can teach them the basic promises of God. In the fourth place, we must let our sheep talk. Usually, sheep want to talk; they don't want to listen. So we must let them talk until they are tired of their own stories. It takes several months. Later they are

ready to study the Bible passage. Don't preach to them. Help them try to understand the spiritual meaning of the passage. Wait until they apply the Bible teachings to their personal lives. This is the principle that God and Christ adopted in one-to-one Bible study. One-sided preaching is a great failure in preaching the Word. There is a saying which goes, "One man can lead 10 horses to water, but 10 men cannot make one horse drink the water."

Third, Paul charges Timothy to "correct" when he teaches the Bible (2). "Correct" does not necessarily mean that we try to fix up our Bible student as a saint, with our strength. It means that we must help him understand the Bible teachings so that the Holy Spirit works in his heart slowly and steadily, sometimes mightily. Then he will correct his own value system from that of a worldly value system to a spiritual value system. He will correct himself by the help of the Holy Spirit from being a selfish man to being a servant of God.

Fourth, Paul charges Timothy to "rebuke" (2). Rebuking is not offending sheep's feelings. Spiritual rebuking means to influence sheep in Jesus so that sheep may be rebuked by their shepherd's example. Proverbs 19:18 says,

"Discipline your son, for in that there is hope...." There is a saying which goes, "A father who whips and rebukes his son to raise him as an upright man is better than one who gives him one million dollars when he grows up." But there are many who never learn. These kinds of people, we must rebuke severely with the word of God. But rebuking is impossible in American society. We are sorry that rebuking is almost impossible in this country. One minister rebuked an adulterous woman to stop her indecent life. Then she sued the minister and the church. The church declared bankruptcy and closed its doors. But the Bible says, "rebuke." John the Baptist could rebuke people because he did not spare his life for the sake of the spiritual well-being of God's flock of sheep (Lk 3:7b,8a).

Fifth, keep your head (3-5). In order to preach the Word we must keep our head in all situations. Even if we deduce and induce the passage it is very difficult to know the meaning of "keep your head." But according to the flow of this passage, to "keep your head" is to be alert in all circumstances. Then we can do the work of an evangelist and we can discharge all the duties of our ministry. If we are scatterbrains we cannot discharge the

duties of our ministry.

II. I have kept the faith (6-22)

First, Paul wants to be poured out like a drink offering (6). The drink offering has a background of the times (Num 15:1-12; 28:7,14,31). It symbolizes the last drop of blood. At that time, Paul had nothing to give to God anymore. Humanly speaking, Paul had nothing to offer to God. But Paul had something. Yes, it was his drink offering. Paul wanted to offer his last drop of blood to God. Paul not only wanted to give his life, but also he wanted to give the last drop of his blood as a drink offering. May God give us this kind of love for God.

Second, Paul's faith in Jesus Christ (6). In this section, Paul gives an impromptu speech, which was his elegant testimony. Here he praises Jesus in a poetic way. Look at verses 6-8. "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing." Usually, when people sense their death, they are overwhelmed with a sorrowful mind. They are also paralyzed by fear of death. The people of the world think death is the most tragic thing. Death leads all human beings; even kings and nobles cannot but become gourmet food for the earthworm (Isa 14:11). But Paul's departure is not a terrestrial departure. It is a celestial departure. He is looking forward to seeing Jesus face to face. He is looking forward to the time when he will bear the likeness of Jesus (1Co 15:49). Paul's departure is not a departure to an unknown place, but meeting the Father God again. His departure is the time of restoration of his glory, honor and power of the kingdom. And he will be appointed as a judge. To have faith in Jesus' death for men's sins and his resurrection to give us his kingdom is very important. It is most important for us to have faith that we go back to his house, the kingdom of God. We must hold this faith in our hearts. May God help us to have faith that there is eternal salvation and the kingdom of God in Jesus.

Third, Paul's testimony (7-8). In his testimony Paul expressed his life of faith

in four different ways. But what he said has one point--that he has been a loyal soldier of Christ.

In the first place, Paul said, "I have fought the good fight." Look at verse 7. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." To the worldly people, deceiving and being deceived is fighting. But to Paul, fighting is to engage in the remaining suffering of Jesus. For example, Jesus is the true light. The world is full of darkness. Therefore, the children of the light constantly fight the good fight against the power of the darkness. We expect that when we become Christians we will be happier. Contrary to our wishes, many persecutions follow. It is because darkness does not like the light. Paul's fighting against the darkness together with Jesus was always intensive. In the course of fighting against the power of darkness, he was put in the den of the lion, but God graciously rescued him. To fight the good fight we Christians must be sure that we are all soldiers of Christ. Soldiers of Christ have no time to spend for fun. Soldiers of Christ must fight and win the victory and render glory to our commander Jesus. If we escape this fighting we are not on the side of God.

In the second place, Paul said, "I have finished the race." Human life is like a race. I will tell you an interesting story. There were two men in a limousine. One was president and the other a chauffeur. They both started out the same, but the former one finished the race and obtained the top position. On the other hand, the latter could do his homework tomorrow. As a result, he became a chauffeur. We know there is a great difference between the president and his chauffeur. Paul ran the race of faith. It is an easy thing to start. But it is the hardest thing to finish. But Paul finished his race and he was ready to receive the crown of righteousness. In the ancient time, the marathon was the peak of the Olympic Games. One who won the first place was greatly honored and the king crowned him with a laurel wreath. But it dries up after several hours. The crown of righteousness is forever. In addition, it is our Lord Jesus Christ's admiration, "Well done. My faithful servant is the most honorable" (Mt 25:21). May God help us to run the race of faith.

In the third place, Paul said, "I have kept the faith." At that time, sophists tempted people and they satisfied the itching ears of those who wanted to hear. As a result, many turned away from their faith. There is no

mention that Paul had a wife. He was lonely. He was old. But Paul kept the faith; he believed God gives eternal salvation and the kingdom of God as our inheritance through his Son's death and resurrection. In his testimony we learn that Paul believed that God will save men from their sins and forgiven sinners would change the course of history until God's kingdom comes.

In the fourth place, is the crown of righteousness. Look at verse 8. "Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing." Usually people say, "I don't need any reward." That's a white lie. We need rewards. But the final worldly reward is the reminiscences of one's hard life and six pieces of wood. Paul's reward was the crown of righteousness. When Paul kept the faith, he received the crown of righteousness from God. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." Those who believe in Jesus must believe God rewards us with the crown of righteousness.

Fourth, Paul's affectionate greetings (9-22). In verses 9-22 there are 17 names. We would like to see about them one by one. But we want to think about two persons: Luke the physician and Timothy. When we read Acts 27, Luke the physician went to Rome with Paul. He wrote Luke's gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. When we read the Bible we learn that his influence as a man of service has been indeed great. Finally Paul went to Rome for the trial and verdict. He could take only two friends. For sure, Luke was one of them and the other was Timothy. They were coworkers to Paul because they were very loyal to Jesus. This reminds us of Jesus' words in John 15:13. It says, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

In this passage we learn that servants of God must be godly people. Servants of God must be ready to give their lives to preach the Word. May God help us to fight the good fight.