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.