

II TIMOTHY 4:6-8
PAUL'S HOPE!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Timothy chapter 4 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's second letter to his son in the faith, Timothy!

As we have seen in our study in II Timothy, Paul is in the Mamertine prison in Rome waiting to be martyred for his faith in Christ.

And this second letter to Timothy is the last letter we have from Paul.

Why I am saying that is that Paul knows his life is coming to an end. That he is going to be martyred for his faith in Jesus by Ceaser Nero and that is going to happen very shortly.

So these words from Paul are important to us. But keep in mind that not all last words are important.

Listen carefully. We are told,

On his deathbed, Napoleon said, ***“I die before the fate which so soon awaits the great Napoleon.”***

Not long before he died, Gandhi, the world-renowned Hindu religious leader, confessed, ***“My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long – perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years I find myself in a slough of despond. All about me is darkness. I am praying for light.”***

The nineteenth century French statesman Talleyrand wrote the following words on a piece of paper and laid it on a nightstand near his bed: *“Behold, eighty three years passed away! What cares! What agitation! What anxieties! What ill-will! What sad complications! And all without other results, except great fatigue of mind and body, and a profound sentiment of discouragement with regard to the future, and of disquiet with regard to the past!”*

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.

- John MacArthur, II Timothy 4

My prayer as we go through this study is that you would be encouraged to fulfill your ministry. That is what Paul is doing here with Timothy, encouraging him to fulfill his ministry as Paul was passing off the scene.

In fact, remember what Paul said back in II Timothy 4:5, which will lead us into our study this morning. He wrote, **“But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”**

I like the way The Amplified Bible puts this verse. It says, **“As for you, be calm and cool and steady, accept and suffer unflinchingly every hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fully perform all the duties of your ministry.”**

Now you read that, and you may be thinking, “*Are you kidding me! Suffering, hardship, not a lot of encouragement there. And in the midst of all that suffering and hardship you want me to be cool and steady and to accept these things? Are you serious about this? You want me to fulfill THIS ministry!*”

Yes, that may seem overwhelming, but Paul is going to put things into perspective for Timothy and for us, to encourage him and us in the work that God has called us to do.

That is why I have called our study – ***PAUL’S HOPE!***

It is important to have hope and a hope that is based in truth or based in the truths of God found in the Word of God.

People have all kinds of false hope today and in the end, they are left with nothing.

But when we put our hope in Christ, we will not be disappointed. I am not saying the Christian life is easy. If it was easy we would not need Jesus. But in spite of the difficulty, as Paul is going to show us, we must continue on and fulfill the ministry that God has given to us.

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

COMING HOME – II TIMOTHY 4:6

LIFE IN REVIEW – II TIMOTHY 4:7

COMING GLORY – II TIMOTHY 4:8

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in II Timothy chapter 4 beginning in verse 6 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word, and we look at this topic –

PAUL’S HOPE!

II TIMTOHY 4**VERSE 6**

Remember what I have called this verse – ***COMING HOME!***

Now we read that, and we may be thinking, ***“Oh, that is awesome. Paul is going to be released from prison. He is going to be able to come home and be with his family in Christ!”***

Well, yes and no. What I mean by that is that Paul, in speaking of his departure, wasn't saying he was going to be freed from his Roman imprisonment, but that he was going to be freed from this earthly body you might say, he was going to die.

Yes, he was going home to be with the Lord and Paul knew that. There was no escaping this and I don't think Paul wanted to escape, I think he was ready to go home and be with the Lord.

Remember during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome he wrote this to the Philippians, **“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. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”** Philippians 1:21-26.

He wasn't sure then, he thought he would be released. And Paul was released from prison for a period of time but now he has been re-arrested, and he knows his time is short, he knows he is going to be put to death for his faith in Christ this time!

And look at how Paul looked at what was happening to him. Paul saw his life ending like a drink offering to the Lord. (Numbers 15:1-10)

You see, first there was the burnt offering to the Lord, then the grain offering, and the last offering was the drink offering.

It is as Hiebert said, *“His whole life has been presented to God as a living sacrifice; now his death, comparable to the pouring out of the wine as the last act of the sacrificial ceremony, will complete the sacrifice.”*

And think about this for a minute. Yes, Rome was going to put Paul to death, but in Paul’s mind Rome wasn’t going to take his life, he was laying it down as the final offering of a life that had always been a living sacrifice to his Lord!

Please understand that Paul’s life could never be taken from him, for it had already been given to God and poured out on others! That is the perspective we need to have. That our lives are a living sacrifice, given to God! (Romans 12:1)

In other words, you can’t take away what I no longer possess.

Remember what we are told in Matthew 16:24-27, **“Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.’”**

That was Paul. He left it all on the field. He had nothing left to give. He gave all of his life to Jesus. He was about to pass into eternity with no regrets. He had held nothing back.

Not only that but think of the battle scares that Paul had endured for the Lord. The pain he endured. The friendships that he lost. The persecution he faced and is facing presently.

And Paul said that in the end, it was worth it, my life is in the Lord's hands, and I have given everything to the one I love and the one that I am going to see shortly!

And Paul paints for us a beautiful picture here of his departure.

You see, when Paul says, "**my departure is at hand**" the word "**departure,**" ANALUSIS (an-al'-oo-sis) in the Greek, carries with it a few different ideas. And like I have said, it truly paints for us a beautiful picture of what Paul saw was coming for him.

And the reality is, there is coming a day for all of us where our departure is at hand.

Let me show you the picture that Paul is painting for us as he speaks of his departure, what this word "**departure**" means.

This word can speak of the unloosing of a ship from its moors, as Paul is ready to set sail home to heaven.

I like that. I have been on cruise ships before and when it is time to set sail, the ropes are removed from the dock, and we are off. That was Paul, he was heading home on this voyage!

This word also speaks of the unyoking of a weary team of animals after a hard day's work, and Paul has finished the work that God has called him to do, he is going to enter that rest.

Again, look at all that Paul endured, all the roads that he traveled upon to bring the Gospel message to the lost.

I think you can see the picture here, that of an animal that has worked hard all day out in the field and now it is time to be unyoked and able to rest and that was Paul. It was time for him to enter that eternal rest with the Lord!

And this word also speaks of the striking of a tent, taking it down so you can move on, and Paul was going to leave this earthly tent for a mansion!

My family and I camped a lot when our children were young, and it was fun. Yes, it was a lot of work, but we saw some beautiful parts of this country.

But, make no mistake about it, when it was time to take the tent down and head home, I could not wait to get into my own bed, into my house, a mansion compared to a tent!

And Paul was going to leave this earthly tent to enter into a heavenly mansion, a new body that will not get old, will not get sick, will not fade away!

That is what Paul spoke about in II Corinthians 5:1-8, **“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”**

Paul taught this, he believed this and now Paul was going to enter into that eternal state with the Lord, he was moving from a tent into a mansion you might say!

Make no mistake about it, Paul knew he was going to die, and he was passing the mantle of ministry to Timothy, his son in the faith.

As we can see here, Paul is – ***COMING HOME!***

As we read on, we will see Paul's – *LIFE IN REVIEW!*

VERSE 7

Here we are looking at Paul's – *LIFE IN REVIEW!*

But what made Paul qualified for service?

What makes us qualified for service?

In fact, was Paul even qualified to serve?

Make no mistake about it, the Lord empowered Paul to do the work just as the Lord empowers us to do the work that He has called us to do. We tend to think of all kinds of qualifications, all kinds of degrees or classes that we need to take, but that is not the case. God is looking for those who will fulfill the work that they are called to today, faithful men and women!

Now I will let you in on a little secret. I have received a very confidential report on several candidates who were being considered for the pastorate, and I think you will see why they came up short. The report goes as follows:

ADAM: Good man but problems with his wife.

NOAH: Former pastorate for 120 years with not even one convert. Prone to unrealistic building projects.

ABRAHAM: Though the references reported wife-swapping, the facts seem to show he never slept with another man's wife but did offer to share his own wife with another man.

JOSEPH: A big thinker, but a braggart, believes in dream-interpreting, and has a prison record.

MOSES: A modest and meek man, but poor communicator, even stuttering at times. Sometimes blows his stack and acts rashly. Some say he left an earlier church over a murder charge.

DAVID: The most promising leader of all until we discovered the affair he had with his neighbor's wife and had her husband murdered!

SOLOMON: Great preacher but our parsonage would never hold all those wives.

ELIJAH: Prone to depression. Collapses under pressure.

ELISHA: Reported to have lived with a single widow while at his former church.

HOSEA: A tender and loving pastor but our people could never handle his wife's occupation.

DEBORAH: Strong leader and seems to be anointed, but she is female.

JEREMIAH: Emotionally unstable, alarmist, negative, always lamenting things, reported to have taken a long trip to bury his underwear on the bank of a foreign river.

ISAIAH: On the fringe? Claims to have seen angels in church. Has trouble with his language.

JONAH: Refused God's call into ministry until he was forced to obey by getting swallowed up by a great fish. He told us the fish later spit him out on the shore near here. We hung up.

AMOS: Too backward and unpolished. With some seminary training he might have promise but has a hang-up against wealthy people – might fit in better in a poor congregation.

MELCHIZEDEK: Great credentials at current workplace, but where does this guy come from? No information on his resume about former work records. Every line about parents was left blank and he refused to supply a birth date.

JOHN: Says he is a Baptist, but definitely doesn't dress like one. Has slept in the outdoors for months on end, has a weird diet, and provokes denominational leaders.

PETER: Too blue collar. Has a bad temper – even has been known to curse. Had a big run-in with Paul in Antioch. Aggressive, but a loose cannon.

PAUL: Powerful CEO type leader and fascinating preacher. However, short on tact, unforgiving with younger ministers, harsh and has been known to preach all night.

JAMES & JOHN: Package deal preacher & associate seemed good at first but found out they have an ego problem regarding other fellow workers and seating positions. Threatened an entire town after an insult. Also known to try to discourage workers who didn't follow along with them.

TIMOTHY: Too young!

METHUSELAH: Too old . . . WAY too old!

JESUS: Had popular times, but once his church grew to 5000, he managed to offend them all, and then this church dwindled down to twelve people. Seldom stays in one place very long. And, of course, he's single.

JUDAS: His references are solid. A steady plodder. Conservative. Good connections. Knows how to handle money. We're inviting him to preach this Sunday. Possibilities here.

- getfed.com

That obviously is a little tongue in cheek, but it is how the world, and some Christians view not only pastors but also fellow servants, and that is wrong.

If God were looking for perfect people, He would still be looking.

God is looking for available people, faithful people whose hearts are in love with Him and that was Paul and his ministry, and like any ministry, it was a calling by God!

Thus, as we look at the life of Paul, please understand that these lessons are here for us, to admonish us to finish strong.

As Paul looks back, he sees himself as a boxer or wrestler who has fought Satan in order to spread the Gospel message. It was a good fight, a battle, but Paul did well.

You see, the fight I think Paul is speaking of here is the fight against the flesh nature that tries to rise up from time-to-time and disqualify us from service just as that boxer was disqualified because his mom got into the ring and was fighting with him.

What do I mean by that?

Listen carefully.

I saw a boxing match once where a guy was not fighting a good fight. He was getting creamed as his opponent had him boxed in a corner and he was like a punching bag.

Then, all of a sudden, out of nowhere came this man's mom to help him fight, and she started hitting this guy with her purse!

It is not a good fight when you have to have your mother come in and help you like that!
And, of course, he was disqualified!

The idea here is don't let things box you in so Satan can beat up on you!

I think Paul makes that point in I Corinthians 9:24-27 as he said, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”**

God used Paul mightily and in that the flesh loves to rise up, pride can grow and before you know it you are doing something or are getting involved with something that will put you on the shelf for God, a vessel of dishonor you might say.

Remember what Paul said in II Corinthians 12:7, **“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.”**

This thorn in the flesh was given to Paul to keep him humble, so that he would not exalt himself but the Lord!

Stan Mikita was a professional hockey player with the Chicago Black Hawks, and he would get in a lot of fights during the games.

He stopped when his eight-year-old daughter asked him a very grown-up question: ***“How can you score goals when you're always in the penalty box, Daddy?”***

And we can't serve the Lord if we are on the shelf!

God is calling us to fight the good fight, don't give up, don't give in but discipline your body, set it apart to be used by God, be open to the Holy Spirit's direction and don't quench or hinder what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life!

Paul, in Romans chapter 7 gives us a glimpse into his own life's struggles and he tells us starting in verse 15, **“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”** Romans 7:15-24.

You see, we can't do it on our own, but who can deliver us from this?

Only Jesus as we submit our lives to His Spirit, give our lives to Him as a living sacrifice, that is how we can fight the good fight of faith!

Not only that, but Paul says that he finished the race!

As Christians we need to remember that the Christian faith, our life is not a sprint but a long-distance race you must endure!

In distance races there are those runners who are called “*rabbits*.” Their function is to start out fast, to try to get the other runners to follow them, to keep up with them. They are not going to finish the race that fast, if they finish at all, but in doing this they are paving the way for their teammates to win the race! There are those that are rabbits to set the pace for the faster runners, to keep them on track for their time, but I see this more as trying to wear us out so we don’t finish strong!

Many Christians are like that. They are so busy, doing all these things, and in a few months, you will never see them again.

They might have gone out in a blaze of glory, but they went out! They didn’t finish the race!

Over the Fourth of July we see some awesome fireworks that light up the sky and yet, they only last for a few seconds and then they are gone, burned up!

As a distance runner, especially if I am just getting in shape again, I keep putting one foot in front of the other because I know, as tired as I am, that if I stop, I won’t get started again.

Paul was a man on the move, he was in the race for the long haul, he was in to finish!

And maybe Paul had in mind here a race in the Olympic Games.

You see, the winner was not the one who finished first, as you would think.

No, the winner was the runner who finished with his torch still lit!

Paul finished the race burning bright for Jesus, may we do the same!

Maybe he was thinking of a Marathon.

How did this Marathon race even get started in the first place?

In 490 B. C. the Athenians won a crucial and decisive battle over the forces of King Darius I of Persia on a plain near the small Greek coastal village of Marathon.

One of the Greek soldiers ran nonstop from the battlefield to Athens to carry the news of victory.

But he ran with such unreserved effort that he fell dead at the feet of those to whom he delivered the message.

The marathon races that are so popular today are named for that battlefield.

They also are a tribute to that soldier; the length of the run being based on the approximate distance (just over 26 miles) he ran with maximum effort for his country. He had completed his course, and there is no nobler way for a man to die.

Paul ran that way; he is encouraging Timothy and us to do no less, to finish the race!

In Hebrews 12:1-2 we are told, **“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

The point is simple. We are to run the race we are in with endurance, not letting the things of this world entangle us or weigh us down. Our eyes are to be focused on Jesus who is not only the author of our faith, but the finisher of our faith.

So we are to run with ***ENDURANCE!***

In Galatians 5:7 Paul tells us, **“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”**

In other words, we are to run with steadfastness, we are to obey the Lord and not let things keep us from finishing the work, finishing the race we are in.

God shows us the course we are to run one step at a time and the Devil, using man as his instruments, shows us a detour.

It is our choice, but one leads to God and the other away from God!

We are to be **STEADFAST** in this race!

And, as we have read in I Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul tells us that we must run the race focused, you have to know where you are going, who you are fighting, and you need to know who you are following!

You see, we must be **FOCUSED** on the race we are in!

Paul was a man who started out right, and that of course is important. He not only started out well, but he also ended well and that is just as important.

A great example of a man who finished well, he had endurance, a steadfastness, he was focused, was the protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

We are told of this man of God,

At the height of WWII, Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned for taking a stand against Hitler.

Yet he continued to urge fellow believers to resist Nazi tyranny.

A group of Christians, believing that Hitler was the Antichrist, asked Bonhoeffer, ***“Why do you expose yourself to all this danger? Jesus will return any day, and all your work and suffering will be for nothing.”***

Bonhoeffer replied, ***“If Jesus returns tomorrow, then tomorrow I’ll rest from my labor. But today I have work to do. I must continue the struggle until it’s finished.”***

Amen to that. You see, we can finish the race we are in if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus and keep walking forward, keep moving as Paul did and is encouraging Timothy to do the same, to finish the race!

And lastly, we see that Paul kept the faith!

What does that mean?

Faith is trusting in God, resting your whole weight upon Him. And here is the thing about faith, it doesn't operate in the realm of the possible, if it did, it truly would not be faith.

You see, if I can accomplish something all on my own, by my own efforts, then I wouldn't need God.

Faith truly begins when man's power ends!

Faith is trusting an unknown outcome to a knowing God.

It is believing that what God has promised He is more than able to bring to pass!

And folks, it is not faith in our faith, or faith in anything or anyone as long as you are sincere, but faith in the true and living God.

Let me explain it this way, with this true story. We are told,

In April 1988 the evening news reported on a photographer who was a skydiver. He had jumped from a plane along with numerous other skydivers and filmed the group as they fell and opened their parachutes.

On the film shown on the telecast, as the final skydiver opened his chute, the picture went berserk.

The announcer reported that the cameraman had fallen to his death, having jumped out of the plane without his parachute.

It wasn't until he reached for the absent ripcord that he realized he was freefalling without a parachute.

Until that point, the jump probably seemed exciting and fun. But tragically, he had acted with thoughtless haste and deadly foolishness.

Nothing could save him, for his faith was in a parachute never buckled on.

Faith in anything but an all-sufficient God can be just as tragic spiritually.

Only with faith in Jesus Christ dare we step into the dangerous excitement of life.

- Unknown Source

Let me add this. Only with faith in Jesus Christ dare we step into the afterlife!

Now, a good definition of faith is given to us in Hebrews 11:1, which says, **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].”**

Faith is to believe in something that you cannot see, but you trust in the promises of God!

In Romans 10:17 Paul tells us, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

You see, faith comes as we read and apply God's Word to our lives, trusting in His promises to us.

Faith is derived from the Word of God!

In Hebrews 11:6 we are told, **“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

You see, salvation is based totally on faith in what God has promised to us. We can't see it.

We believe that His atoning work on the cross of Calvary for our sins can save us because God's Word has told us. Thus, we are saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in Christ alone!

Faith demands that we believe God and His Word!

Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:7, **“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”**

In other words, our walk is not based upon what we can see outwardly, which can be deceiving, but upon God's Word, trusting in His Spirit to guide us.

In a sense, it is faith's design – to walk by faith!

In Hebrews 4:2 we are told, **“For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”**

You see, it is not only hearing God's Word but believing it, applying it to our lives.

If you only hear it that is an empty faith, but if you hear it and believe it that is saving faith.

The dualism of faith – hearing and believing!

Lastly, in Romans 1:17 Paul tells us, **“For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’”**

In other words, we are to live by faith on a daily basis, trusting in God and His Word. Faith's duty in our lives is to live by it!

Now let me give you an example of faith that is lived out in a person's life.

It is the story of Shammah, one of David's mighty men and in II Samuel 23:11-12 we are told, **“And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. The Philistines had gathered together into a troop where there was a piece of ground full of lentils. So the people fled from the Philistines. But he stationed himself in the middle of the field, defended it, and killed the Philistines. So the LORD brought about a great victory.”**

The archenemy of Israel were the Philistines, and they came against a small group of Jews, who upon seeing the Philistines all fled except for one man, Shammah who stood his ground.

He was not going to let the enemy get this piece of land from him.

Now, what was so important about this piece of land that made this man risk his life to protect it? What riches did this land possess? What value did it have? It must have been very valuable, very important for him to stand while all the others fled.

Folks, it was a hill of beans, no really a hill of beans, it was filled with lentils or beans!

Then why did he risk his life for it?

Because God entrusted it to him, and he had faith that either with 100 men or just 1 God would give him the victory and He did!

Be faithful even for a hill of beans because in God's economy, it is that important!

Paul kept the faith, even to the very end as he sat in this Roman prison, the Mamertine prison there in Rome that was just a cold, damp, dark, filthy dungeon.

You see, none of those things were going to move him from the faith, and what a lesson for us to follow.

So, as we have seen, Paul fought – He ran – and He kept the faith!

Maybe you heard this story of a little boy who received a yellow parakeet as a birthday gift.

He was painting its cage with a coat of varnish, when he reached inside to remove the bird.

But what happened next is unbelievable. The parakeet fell into the varnish and drowned.

What a tragic story. The little boy was obviously upset and crying and crying.

Well, his older brother heard his cries and found him. He tried to comfort his little brother as only a big brother can.

He said to his little brother, ***“Cheer up little buddy at least your bird had a good finish!”***

Sorry, but as you look over the life of Paul, as you look at his – ***LIFE IN REVIEW***, Paul finished this race of faith well and as he was admonishing Timothy, the Holy Spirit is also admonishing us to finish well!

But how could Paul finish so well, with all that he went through in life, with all who were coming against him!

Because of our last point – ***COMING GLORY!***

VERSE 8

Notice what Paul is doing here. He is using his life as an example to Timothy.

Remember what we just looked at. Paul said that he fought the good fight, he finished the race, he kept the faith and now, here in II Timothy 4:8 we see that he is waiting to receive his rewards for faithful service when the Lord returns, which tells me he expected the Lord to come soon.

Are you fighting the good fight, finishing the race, keeping the faith, awaiting the Lord's return?

Paul is encouraging you to do so and receive the rewards that you will one day present at the feet of Jesus for He is the one who has enabled all of us to do these things!

Again, listen to his conclusion here in II Timothy 4:8 and this is from The Amplified Bible, and we are told, "**[As to what remains] henceforth there is laid up for me the [victor's] crown of righteousness [for being right with God and doing right], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me and recompense me on that [great] day - and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved and yearned for and welcomed His appearing (His return).**"

Paul realized that he would be rewarded for his faithful service to God, not so he could then boast of all the rewards he has obtained, not at all.

You see, I truly believe that we will place all our rewards, our crowns at the feet of Jesus because He is the one who has enabled us to accomplish them in the first place.

Thus, He alone deserves glory and honor, not us!

In Revelation 4:9-11, as John is in heaven we are told, and this is from the King James Version, "**And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**"

I believe the twenty-four elders represent all believers and as we worship Him, we place our crowns or our rewards at His feet!

And what we see here is that Paul is saying to Timothy, *“Timothy, fight the good fight, finish the race, keep the faith because what God is going to reward me with, what He is going to reward you with, He is also going to reward all those who are looking forward to His coming again!”*

You see, Paul was leaving a fragrance of Jesus behind for Timothy and others to smell and even today we can smell that fragrance of Jesus from Paul!

Paul, in II Corinthians 2:14-16 tells us this very thing. He says, **“Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”**

Folks, in our lives and even in our death, may we leave the fragrance of Jesus behind wherever we go!

Now what are these crowns and what is this crown of righteousness that Paul is speaking of here?

In the Scriptures we see two types of crowns that are mentioned. They are the **DIADEMA** and the **STEPHANOS**.

The diadema was the Kings crown. I guess you can say that this crown was inherited rather than earned.

On the other hand, the stephanos was the victor’s crown or wreath. It was given to the winners at the Olympic Games and also worn by conquering generals.

That is the reward that Paul expected, the stephanos of righteousness.

And this crown, as well as others will be passed out at the Judgment Seat of Christ as the Lord Jesus will reward believers who remain faithful to Him in their life and in their service.

Let me share with you the crowns we see in the Bible; I believe that there are six of them and they are all different. There may be more, but this is what I have found.

First of all, we read of the *IMPERISHABLE CROWN* spoken of by Paul and we see this in I Corinthians 9:24-27, **“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”**

This crown is given to believers who are disciplined!

In I Thessalonians 2:19-20 we see Paul mention a *CROWN OF REJOICING*. He wrote, **“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”**

This crown is given to those who win souls for Jesus!

We see in James 1:12 that there is a *CROWN OF LIFE*. James tells us, **“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”**

This crown is for those who resist temptation!

And there is a crown spoken of in I Peter 5:4, the *CROWN OF GLORY*, as Peter tells us, **“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”**

And this crown is awarded to faithful leaders in the church.

Lastly, and what we read here in II Timothy 4:8, this *CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS*, **“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.”**

And here in II Timothy, this crown is for those who *LOVED HIS APPEARING*, the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I think that is interesting because there are many today who are not excited, not looking forward to the blessed appearing of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ. And they will miss out on this reward!

Let me share with you this story to show you not to give up. To finish the race strong.

This is a true story, and we are told,

John Baker was too short and too slight to be a runner for his high school track team, but he loved to run.

His best friend was tall and lanky and had the perfect build to be a runner but wanted nothing to do with the sport.

So John went to the track coach to convince him to let John on the team under the premise that his best friend would follow.

John Baker became a runner.

The team's first race was a 1.7-mile cross country run through the hills of Albuquerque. The reigning state champ Lloyd Goff was running the race and so all eyes were on him. Lloyd led the pack as they disappeared over the hills.

The spectators waited and then they saw a lone silhouette of a figure running toward them and assumed it was Lloyd Goff.

Instead it was John Baker who blew away the field of runners and set a new meet record.

When asked how he was able to win, John said he asked himself a simple question, "***Am I doing my best?***"

Still unsure if he was, he fixed his eyes on the runner ahead of him until he passed him and then the next and the next until there was no one left. He committed that nothing was going to distract him from giving his best- not pain, fatigue or anything.

As the season progressed John proved that the first race was no fluke. The fun-loving teenager became a fierce and relentless competitor who refused to lose.

By his junior year, John had broken six meet records and was considered the best miler in the state. His senior season he ran track and cross country, winning state in both. John entered the University of New Mexico in 1962 and he took his training to the next level running 10 miles a day.

In 1965, John and his track team faced the most feared team in the country, the USC Trojans. When John's race came, he purposely led the pack the first lap and then intentionally fell back to fourth.

On the turn of the third lap, John collided with another runner vying for position and stumbled, losing valuable time. When he hit the last lap, John dug deep and lived up to his reputation, blowing past the leader to win by 3 seconds.

After graduating, John turned his sights to the 1972 Olympics. In order to have time to train and make a living, he took a job as a track coach at Aspen Elementary in Albuquerque where he had the opportunity to do what he had always wanted - work with kids.

Within a few months, he became known as the coach who cared as he invested a great deal of time and effort in working with the kids individually. Not critical but always demanding the best, the kids responded and learned from John.

In May of 1969 just before his 25th birthday, John noticed he was tiring prematurely in his workouts. Two weeks later, he developed chest pains and then awoke one morning with a swollen groin. A doctor's visit revealed that John had an advanced form of testicular cancer. The only chance was to undergo surgery which revealed the worst, that the cancer had spread. The doctors gave him six months to live, and a second surgery was required.

Just before the second operation, John drove to the mountains and intended to end his life by driving off a cliff. He didn't want his family to have to endure his pain and suffering. But just before he did, he recalled the faces of his students and wondered if they would think that this was the best he could do. That was not the legacy he wanted to live behind.

At that moment, he dedicated his life to his kids and decided to give his very best effort in the days which lay ahead.

After a summer of surgery and treatments, he returned to school and started a program for handicapped kids to be the equipment managers and coach's timekeeper. Everyone that wanted to was included. John created a whole list of awards for students he felt deserved recognition, using his own trophies by re-plating them and purchasing fabric with his own money and created blue ribbons at night to give as rewards.

All the while John refused pain medication because he feared it would impair his ability to work with the kids. John was asked to work with a small track club called the Duke City Dashers. Several months later, they were a team to contend with. John predicted they would make it to the AAU Finals.

By now John was undergoing chemo and he struggled to keep any food down, his health deteriorated and it became increasingly difficult to make it to practices.

Then one day, one of the runners came to John to share the good news: they were going to make it to the AAU Finals. John's last wish was to be there for it.

Unfortunately, it was not to be. A few weeks later on Thanksgiving Day at the age of 26, John died - 18 months after his first doctor's visit. He had beaten the odds. Two days later, the Duke City Dashers won the AAU Championship.

A few days after his funeral, students at Aspen Elementary began calling their school, John Baker. A movement began and a name change request was sent to the school board.

520 families in the District voted unanimously for the name change. Today John Baker Elementary stands as a testimony to a courageous young man who believed in giving his best effort right down to the very end.

Five years before he was diagnosed with cancer, John wrote this poem:

*Many thoughts race through my mind
As I step up to the starting line*

*Butterflies thru my stomach fly
As I free that last deep sigh*

*I feel that death is drawing near
But the end of the race I do not fear*

*For when the string comes across my breast
I know it's time for eternal rest*

*The gun goes off, the race is run
Only God knows if I've won*

*My family and friends and many more
Can't understand what it is was for*

*But this race to death is a final test
And I am not afraid, for I've done my very best*

- Source Unknown

That was Paul. He did his very best. He finished the race strong.

As I close this morning may I admonish you to fight the good fight, to finish the race, to keep the faith as Paul did and one day we will hear those glorious words from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “**. . . ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’**”

Matthew 25:23.

May we fight the good fight, finish the race and keep the faith that God has entrusted to us!