

Finishing by Faith

2 Timothy 4: 9-22

Today has been set aside to honor the seniors within our church. This is a group that is dear to me, a people that I have much love and admiration for. Their lives are marked by a genuine faithfulness to the Lord, commitment to the church, and a willingness to give of themselves for the good of others. The younger generations would do well to look to their example and seek to follow the same path. We have lost much that this generation holds dear.

Our text this morning is a fitting passage for a day such as this. Some may view it as insignificant, simply the closing thoughts of Paul as he wraps up his second letter to Timothy. These are passages that I love, those that seem to get little fanfare. If we take the time to study them, we can discover precious truth and guidance for our lives.

At this point in the Apostle Paul's life, he too would have been in his senior years. He had enjoyed a powerful ministry in the Lord, but he was now confined to a Roman prison, near the end of life. Time will not allow an in depth discussion of the events that led us to this point, but we know that Paul had faced great adversity and pain. Some likely thought they had silenced the great preacher and rendered his ministry ineffective. Those around him may have believed that to be true, but Paul would not relinquish his faith. He was determined to remain committed to the Lord and his calling as long as he lived. Paul intended to finish well.

I want to examine the [blessings](#) revealed in the text as we consider the challenge of: [Finishing by Faith](#). Regardless of age, every believer ought to desire to finish strong and finish well by faith in the Lord. The life of Paul provides a good example.

I. The Influence of Paul – It is impossible to study the life of Paul and miss his influence on others. This passage is no exception. In it we discover:

A. His Presence (13a) – [The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee](#). This may seem a minor detail in the text. It is certainly a reasonable request. Paul is confined to a dark, damp prison and it stands to reason that he would enjoy having his cloke to keep him warm. But as we take a moment to consider the depth of this, it reveals a great truth. Paul had left his cloke at Troas; he had actually been there with the people. He likely forgot it as he gathered his belongings to leave, but it was physical evidence of Paul's presence among them. I can imagine those who saw the cloke on occasion being reminded of Paul's presence among them, maybe stirring a memory in their mind of his love and care for them. Paul cared for his people and his presence was known among them.

- Circumstances of life have a way of robbing our joy. Seasons of life change, and during those times we often question our significance in life. For me, one of the greatest attributes of a child of God is simple faithfulness, just being present in the services, among God's people. You have no way of knowing how your presence influences others. It shows you care, that you are concerned for the church and the lives of others. We need each other, and your presence is important to the church and the work that we are collectively engaged in!

B. His Passion (13b) – *The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.* Paul desired his cloke, but he also earnestly desired the books, especially the parchments. The **books** were literally “*rolls or volumes, likely copies of the Scriptures, and maybe even copies of the Epistles.*” The **parchments** were “*vellum materials on which to write.*” Keep in mind that Paul was bound in prison, unable to minister freely among the people, but he still had a passion for the Word of God. Even though he was unable to fellowship with the church as he desired, he wanted to have the written Word near him.

- Many of you share that passion for the Word of God. I sense that as we study the Word together. A genuine passion for the Word is to be admired in our day. We need God's Word. We need to make time each day to study from its pages, glean from its treasures, and feed from its abundance! Nothing will replace your personal study of God's Word. I would like to challenge each of you to make that a priority each day!

C. His Perspective (13b, 11) – *bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.* [11] *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.* Do you see the significance in the text? Paul is in prison, awaiting execution, and yet he has not resigned to defeat. He has not abandoned the work of the Lord. He desired the parchments, wanting to be prepared to write another letter if directed of the Spirit to do so. He desired Mark to be near him because he was profitable for the ministry. Paul fully expected to continue in the ministry as long as he lived upon this earth. There was no place to quit, no reason to even entertain the thought of his work being finished!

- Oh how we need that perspective in our day! We need those who are not looking to retire from their labor for the Lord, but seeking new opportunities each day. There is no place to sit down or quit when it comes to the work of the Lord. Our responsibilities may change, but we all have something valuable to contribute in service to Christ! *On his eighty-fourth birthday, Dr. Robert G. Lee, pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee, said, “A friend asked, me, “Are you going to keep on preaching?” I said, “Why not? I am physically able, mentally sound, spiritually desirous and in love with Jesus. Why not keep on preaching as I have done for sixty-two years?”*¹

I. The Influence of Paul

II. The Investment of Paul – As Paul shares his heart with young Timothy; we catch a glimpse of the investment this man of God made in others and in ministry. Notice:

A. His Regret (10a) – [For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica](#). Demas had been a fellow-laborer with Paul; he had shared in the work of the Lord. As Paul suffered in prison, Demas had forsaken Paul, seeking the way of the world. This is a man Paul had made an investment in. He is burdened over Demas' decision to abandon the faith. Paul was concerned for the spiritual well being of those of the faith. Surely Paul could have benefited from Demas being near to him, but he was burdened over his departure from the faith.

- We need to develop that type of concern for others. In situations like that we feel betrayed, and maybe even a bit selfish. We often miss the physical or financial contributions of those who leave the church, but our genuine concern ought to be for their spiritual well being.
- It should burden our hearts when folks walk away from serving the Lord. I am sure we all know those who once were faithful, but now are no longer in church or serving the Lord. Rather than being critical, we need to pray for them, reach out to them, and seek to encourage them.

B. His Resolve (14, 17) – [Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: \[17\] Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion](#). This is just one example of the adversity and opposition Paul faced. There are many accounts recorded in Scripture. We don't know the details of this encounter, but it must have been especially difficult. Many would have given up long before, but Paul refused to allow the difficulties of life to hinder his commitment to the Lord. He resolved to serve the Lord as long as he was able.

- What a challenge that presents to us today. I admire the resolve of our seniors. I know that you have faced adversity and many difficulties during your walk with the Lord. There may have been times when you considered walking away, questioning if it was really worth it, but you persevered and remained committed. God will honor your faithfulness.
- Serving the Lord will never be without opposition. You can count on difficulty and strife from time to time. Many allow it to defeat them, but I am determined to press on. It will all be worth it when life is through! Resolve to serve the Lord regardless of circumstances!

C. His Reward (10b-12, 19-20) – ...Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. [11] Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. [12] And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. [19] Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. [20] Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. To us this appears to be just a list of names, many of whom we know nothing about, but Paul and Timothy knew them well. These were people who had received Christ as their Savior, born again of him. These were people among the church that were dear to the heart of Paul. Some he had led to the Lord and others he had influenced greatly in the faith. In essence, these represent what Paul had to show for his life and ministry. He was committed to the cause of Christ, willing to invest in people, and their lives were changed because of that.

- I have to believe this is what kept Paul going in his difficult seasons. Although life had been hard, God had been good and folks had been saved. That is what it was all about anyway! Never underestimate your ability to impact the lives of others. You may not even be aware of your influence, but I am certain if you are living for Christ, revealing your faith, you are making a difference! There is nothing greater than seeing lives changed through a relationship with Christ and each of us have the potential to point people to Jesus.

I. The Influence of Paul

II. The Investment of Paul

III. The Inspiration of Paul – As we consider the context of this passage, you might wonder what motivated Paul, what sustained him or inspired him in the face of such adversity. We find the answer in the text. He was aware of:

A. His Companion (17a) – *Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;* Demas had forsaken him; he had stood before his accusers alone, and yet the Lord had never left him. When it seemed as if he was forced to stand by himself, there was always One who was near. Paul was able to endure all he faced because of His constant Companion.

- Life we have seasons of difficulty. There will be times when we feel forsaken and alone. There will be occasions when it seems as if we are the only one willing to stand for truth. It may appear that we are alone, but if you are saved, Jesus is always near! He will never leave us nor forsake us. Our trials may be intense, but we have the assurance of a Friend who is ever near! Some of you have lost loved ones recently, but even in your grief and despair, Jesus is in the midst.

B. His Calling (17a) – [that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion](#). Even though he was confined to prison, Paul never lost sight of his calling. He knew that Christ had called him to preach the gospel. He was threatened for his preaching, but he would not ignore his calling. Paul was determined to share the gospel as long as God allowed him to live. He had forsaken the old life to answer the gospel call. When all seemed lost, he reminded himself of the call of God to preach Jesus!

- All have not received the call that Paul did, but all are called to be witnesses of the gospel. We are all called to be servants of the Lord. When times get hard, and you are contemplating giving up, consider the call. Consider all that Christ endured upon the cross for our redemption. Consider all who have not yet been saved. Consider the urgency of our day for someone to share their faith. If we don't tell others, who will? If we don't reach them, they will never hear.

C. His Comfort (18) – [And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen](#). Paul knew the end of life was near for him. He knew it wouldn't be too much longer before he was martyred for his faith, but he didn't let that defeat him. Paul knew his death would only hasten glory. He wasn't trusting in the philosophies of men. He was not trusting in the Roman legal system. He was trusting Christ the Lord. He knew that he had been saved by grace and he would inherit heaven when he died. Paul was comforted through his hope and assurance for the future.

- I rejoice in that comfort this morning as well. We have no way of knowing what a day will bring forth. We cannot possibly know what our future holds, but we can know who holds the future. Regardless of what I face in this life, I am secure in Jesus. I have been saved by His marvelous grace, adopted into the family of God, and there is a home reserved for me in heaven. This world is not my home; I'm just passing through!

Conclusion: Paul was a great influence on others for Christ. What kind of influence are you? Each of us will influence others in some way. I pray that we make a difference for Christ. Are you making an eternal investment in the lives of others, or are you content to let them continue as they are? Surely we all could do more to invest in others. Do you have the comfort and assurance that Paul had regarding the end of life? Death is coming for all of us. We are somebody going somewhere. Do you know for certain you are going to heaven when you die? If not you can.

¹Tan, P. L. (1996, c1979). *Encyclopedia of 7700 illustrations : A treasury of illustrations, anecdotes, facts and quotations for pastors, teachers and Christian workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications.