

November 6, 2011 by Steve Brandon



Fight the Fight

2 Timothy 4:6-8

1. The Fight is Hard (verse 6).
2. The Fight is Doable (verse 7).
3. The Fight is Worth It (verses 8).

As many of you know, my daughter is thinking about attending nursing school when she is finished with junior college. And so, yesterday, we visited Saint Anthony's College of Nursing (where she might go). It was good to tour the facility and meet some students and teachers. My favorite part was where they showed us what they use to train the students. You walk into the room, and it feels like you are in a hospital room. It's all decked out with computers and monitors and I.V. racks and Hill-rom hospital beds. They even have a patient lying in the bed. But, when you look at the patient, you realize that it's not alive. It's just a life-like mannequin. These mannequins are such that you can give them shots and start I.V.'s (and they won't ever complain if you did it poorly). They have some mannequins that are connected to a computer, which can drive the vital signs, like heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. The training nurse can then monitor these signs. It can even cough and vomit and die! They even have one mannequin that can give birth, complete with placenta and an umbilical cord! It was really amazing. I'm sure that my daughter would greatly enjoy her time learning there.

Anyway, over the course of the morning, we heard several repeated messages from the students and the teachers at the school. In fact three of them stand out to me. First is how *difficult* the course of study is. It's hard. The course work and clinical work require much time. They require much study. They require much practice. Students were strongly warned not to attempt to go to school full-time, while working. You just don't have time for this. One teacher outlined the amount of time that you are in class and the expected study time out of class, which turned out to be something in excess of 60 hours a week. It's not easy.

But, another message that we heard was that it's *doable*. Yes, the course of study is hard, but you can do it. Those who are dedicated and actually put the work into the program will have a high likelihood of finishing. At one point, we heard a teacher say that 92% of the students who take their very first class at the school end up graduating. On top of that, we heard that 100% of the recent graduating class (in May 2011) passed the National Council Licensure Examination, which is a key step in getting licensed.

A final message that we heard is that it's *worth it*. Some teachers talked of how they love being nurses. We heard several people speak about the reputation of Saint Anthony's College of Nursing in the medical community. We heard of one graduate who was able to get a job in a very demanding medical environment straight from graduation, because those who graduate from Saint Anthony's are well-known to be prepared to work in the nursing world.

It struck me that this is Paul's message to Timothy, as recorded in 2 Timothy. "Timothy, the life of a Christian leader is hard. But, by God's grace, it's doable. And, it's definitely worth it."

For the past three months at Rock Valley Bible Church, we have worked our way through the marvelous letter of 2 Timothy, verse by verse. Today, we come to chapter 4, verses 6-8, which, (in many ways) is the climax of the book. For three chapters, Paul has been telling Timothy how *difficult* the ministry (and the Christian life) is. He told Timothy to "join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God" (1:8). He told Timothy to "suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2:3). He said that "in the last days difficult times will come" (3:1).

And yet, as hard as it is, it's *doable*. Paul told Timothy that God has enabled us for the task. "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (1:7). We endure the suffering, not on our own strength, but "according to the power of God" (1:8). God has a plan and a purpose for our lives (1:9), and "He is able to guard what [we entrust] to Him until that day" (1:12).

And, in the end, it will be *worth it* all. In chapter 2, verse 11, Paul gives the grand promise, "If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; If we endure, we will also reign with Him" (2:11-12). Endurance in the Christian life will bring us to the "salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory" (2:10). What more do you want after your life on earth? Is it to live and reign with Jesus Christ in eternal glory?

Sure, the Christian life is hard. But, it's doable. And, it will be worth it all. That's the reason why Paul tells Timothy in chapter 1, verse 6, "For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (1:6). Or, as some translations say, "fan into flame the gift of God within you" (NIV, ESV). Timothy is like a second-year nursing student at Saint Anthony's, who is ready to quit, because the school is too hard. Paul is like one of the administrators who has seen other students go through these same things. He says, "I know that things are hard. But, I also know that you can do it. So, keep going. Fulfill your ministry." Or, as I have summarized it, "Fan the Flame. Fight the Fight."

The first phrase comes from chapter 1, and verse 6. The second phrase comes from our text, chapter 4, and verse 7. Listen as I read our text, ...

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing.

Each of these verses looks at Paul's life from a different perspective. Verse 6 looks at his present condition. Verse 7 looks at his past life. Verse 8 looks at his future prospects. In verse 6, Paul puts forth his present situation. "I am soon to die." In verse 7, Paul reflects upon his past life. "I did it. I have finished well." In verse 8, Paul anticipates his future glory. "I'm expecting my crown. It has been worth it all." J. C. Ryle says it this way. In verse 6, Paul looks downward (to the grave) In verse 7, Paul looks backward (to his life) In verse 8, Paul looks forward (to his reward). [\[1\]](#)

By way of outline this morning, I want to start with point #1, ...

1. The Fight is Hard (verse 6).

I get this from verse 6, "For (1) I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and (2) the time of my departure has come." This verse describes the crisis, which caused Paul to write to Timothy in the first place. Paul describes himself at the end of his life. He wanted to counsel Timothy on his task as a pastor in Ephesus.

Now, when Paul describes his death, it's not on his deathbed in the hospital, dying of old age, surrounded by his friends who are singing hymns into his ears. No, he is in a dirty, germ-infested prison, bound with shackles around his hands and feet (1:16). And at any moment, the door may open and he may be carried away to his death as a criminal (2:9). The end could hardly be more bleak. Yet, he was spared the cross -- the common form of execution for criminals -- because he was a Roman citizen. Crucifixions were considered to be too barbaric for any Roman citizen. According to tradition, we know that Paul was beheaded in Rome. But, Paul is soon to die the death of a criminal. His crime? Preaching the gospel. Soon, He is about to be martyred for the sake of the gospel.

That's what verse 6 is talking about. It contains two pictures describing his impending death. The first picture illustrates an event that will take place. Paul writes, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering," which is taken from the sacrificial terminology of the Old Testament. As you know, God commanded many animals to be sacrificed on a regular basis. Right along-side many of those sacrifices, God frequently commanded a drink offering to be offered as well. Take, for instance, the morning and evening sacrifice.

In the morning, the priest was to take two lambs (each being a year old). Both lambs were to be slaughtered and be burned up upon the altar "for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD" (Ex. 29:41). The one lamb was to be offered up in the morning. The other lamb was to be offered up in the evening. This was done every day throughout the history of Israel. Now, as a part of the ceremony, the priest was to take a large container of wine (about a gallon in size, which is a fourth of a "hin"). As the morning sacrifice was offered up, he would pour out half of the container on top of the lamb, just before it would be burned with fire. This cup would then be set aside until the evening. As the evening sacrifice was offered up, he would pour out the other half of the container on top of the lamb, just before it was sacrificed (See Exodus 29:38-41).

So close is death to Paul that he saw himself being poured out upon the sacrificial lamb, ready to be burned in fire before the Lord. Paul spoke of this concept before in Phil. 2:17, where he wrote, Phil. 2:17 - "Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all." He was telling the Philippians that even if his life would be sacrificed for their faith, he would rejoice in it. What was a possibility when he wrote to the Philippians was now a reality. He was now soon to die. Death was upon him.

This first picture illustrates an *event* that will take place. Paul's second picture illustrates the *time* when this will take place.

He writes, "The time of my departure has come." The picture is of one loosing the restraints of an object so as to let it go. The picture is one of people at the water-front were unwrapping the ropes which held the ship close to the dock, so the ship could sail away. The picture is also one of soldiers pulling up their tent-stakes, so that they were free to pack up their tents and leave.

Paul says, "I am about to be killed. I am being loosed and let free." In some ways, Paul is getting his desire. Remember in Philippians? In Philippians 1:21, Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." And then, "I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better" (Phil. 1:23). "To depart" is the same verb as used in 2 Timothy - "to loose for departure." And now, Paul is finally getting his desire.

But, it was never easy for Paul. He was to die a hard death after a hard life. When Paul described his life to the Corinthians, he said that he was, "beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern of all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?" (2 Cor. 11:23-29).

Don't think that Paul (because he was an apostle) merely breezed through all of these things. No. They were extremely stretching and difficult for him. And death was no exception. The Fight is Hard (verse 6). Paul knew this. But, Paul said, ...

2. The Fight is Doable (verse 7).

This is my second outline point. Look at his words in verse 7, ...

2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;

Notice that Paul is at the end of his life, looking back upon it. Three times, he says, "I have, ...". "I have, ... I have ... I have ..." Past actions with present results. This is like the Saint Anthony College of Nursing students' testimonials that my daughter and I heard. He stands today in a place of victory, because of how he lived his life. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith."

Back in verse 5, Paul had said to Timothy, "Fulfill your ministry." In verse 7, Paul is looking back on his life and saying, "I have fulfilled my ministry." The thrust of these verses here is that Paul says, "It's doable. I did it! Timothy, by God's grace, you can do it also." "Timothy, you can fight the good fight." "Timothy, you can finish the course." "Timothy, you can keep the faith."

Let's look at each of these phrases, one by one. In many ways, they all say the same thing.

1. I have fought the good fight.

In this statement, Paul is looking at life (and ministry) as a fight to be fought. He looks at it as a struggle. Life is not easy. It is hard. Let me read this as the original sounds: "I have agonized the good agony." He describes the Christian life as an agony. This is the same word used to describe Jesus when He was praying in the garden of Gethsemane and sweating drops of blood. It says in Luke 22:44 that he was "in agony" at that time.

Elsewhere in the New Testament, this word is translated using the following words: "conflict, fight, opposition, running race, struggle, agony." When used as a verb, it is translated, "compete, fight, labor earnestly, strive."

Paul knew that his life would be like this. At his conversion, the Lord told Ananias to go to find Paul, "for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15,16). And it turned out to be agony.

For the apostle Paul, the Christian life was not the proverbial "cake walk." And what was true of Paul is true of every Christian: life is a fight.

J. C. Ryle once wrote, ...

The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity. They eat, they drink, they dress, they work, they amuse themselves, they get money, they spend money, they go through a scanty round of formal religious services once or twice every week. But of the great spiritual warfare -- its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests -- of all this they appear to know nothing at all.

Let us take care that this case is not our own. [\[2\]](#)

I ask you church family, what characterizes your Christianity? Are you fighting? Are you cruising (like high-school kids at night)? Of what does your Christianity consist? Do you know anything of the struggle and fight which Paul mentions here?

Jesus taught us to "Strive [agonize, struggle, fight] to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able" (Luke 13:24). Are you fighting your flesh? Are you fighting the world's influence upon your life? Are you fighting the devil? (1 John 2:15-16).

Are you fighting for truth with your neighbor? You will get some resistance. Just bring up Jesus Christ in conversation. You will get some resistance.

How about praying? There are battles in prayer also. In Kent Hughes' book, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, he spoke about the battle of prayer. "Prayer is work. ... It is not something that you do if you like it, or devote your spare time to, or do only if you are good at it. Prayer is the proper work of the soul which loves Christ. ... The context of Paul's charge in Ephesians 6 is spiritual warfare -- and that is what prayer is!" [\[3\]](#)

Prayer is a war. Prayer is a fight! I love the way that Paul described the prayer life of Epaphras, "[He is] always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers" (Col. 4:12).

Now, there is a question here as to what sort of fight Paul is talking about. Some say that Paul was using a military metaphor (i.e. that of a soldier, who is fighting for his country). Others think that Paul is using an athletic metaphor (i.e. that of a boxer or a wrestler). The Greek word that is used here is used in both of these settings. When before Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." In other words, "fighting and warring for the kingdom of God". It can mean nothing other than soldiers fighting.

Yet, on the other hand, listen to how this same word is used in 1 Cor. 9:25-26, "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way as not beating the air." This is like running, boxing, or any athletic event with a prize at the end. Paul was familiar with both of these metaphors (2 Tim. 2:3-5).

So, we don't know what exactly was in Paul's mind as he wrote. But, we do know that Paul was referring to the intense struggle that he faced throughout his life. And that's the point. It was beyond anything that Timothy would ever face. And as Paul did it, you can do it as well Timothy.

Let's look at the second phrase, ...

2. I have finished the course.

While in the previous phrase, it was difficult to understand whether Paul was using the picture of athletics or of military, there is no mistaking the picture Paul is using here. Here, Paul is using an athletic metaphor. In other words, he uses a description from athletics to describe an aspect of our Christian life. The word here for "course" is often translated, "race" because it comes from the word meaning to "run." Paul was saying, "I have finished running the course that was set before me." Paul says, "I didn't quit. I kept running to the end. I crossed the finish line."

Paul looks with finality upon his life. He said that he finished the course. Years earlier, he had set his heart upon this very thing. To the Ephesian elders he says, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." (Acts 20:24) And this wasn't merely a one-time thought for Paul. He dwelt on his life like a race often. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul used the athletic imagery to bring to mind the importance of running to win.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we [using the implied words, exercise self-control in all things to receive] an imperishable [wreath]. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

In this passage, Paul compares the Christian life to a race. The race Paul was talking about would have been very familiar to the Corinthians (and to Timothy, who spent 18 months with Paul in Corinth). Every three years, the city of Corinth would play host to the Isthmian games which were just like our Olympic games. That is why he asks the rhetorical question, "do you not know?" in verse 24. They knew full well what he was talking about. Many in the Corinthian congregation had gone to the stadium and watched these events. The particular event that he was talking about here was the stadio -- a race of 625 feet -- equivalent to our 200 Meter race today.

He says that though there be many people in a race. Only one wins! Then he says, "run in such a way that you may win." I don't think there is a soul in this room, who hasn't seen a race similar to what he is describing. The contestants all warm up by jogging a little bit. They take off their warm-ups. They keep their legs loose. They line up in their starting blocks. When the gun sounds, they are off for the finish line. When they are running, all of their attention and effort are focused on one thing -- to be the first to cross the tape!

They, "run in such a way that they may win." So it is with our lives, we need to be running in such a way that we may win. Are you running? Do you know how ridiculous it would appear for the runners to get in their blocks, ready to run. They, as the gun sounds, one runner, gets out of the blocks and starts walking like one does who is window shopping in the Cherryvale Mall? Perhaps there are some of you this morning, who are walking. Perhaps some of you are merely doing the slow jog. This verse speaks to us about putting forth the effort similar to the runner, who is trying like crazy to be the first in the race.

Do you realize that the purpose of this illustration is to show to you how the athlete works hard at what he does, so that he might win? Look at verse 25, "everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things." This is talking about the training regiment for the athlete. Paul points out the discipline of the athlete. Think about how many choices the athlete makes so that he might compete to the best of his ability:

Diet - He eats the best foods for him.

Sleep - He gets the proper rest necessary.

Training - He allocates several-to-many hours in the day to it.

Thoughts - He thinks through how he might win.

The athlete regulates his life by facts concerning his future accomplishment, not by urges and wants. The Christian equivalent of the athlete's Diet, Sleep, and Training, are the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, meditation, prayer. But there is a difference between the athlete and the Christian, "They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we [using the implied words, exercise self-control in all things to receive] an imperishable [wreath]" (verse 25). The athlete runs to receive a perishable prize. Today, they run to get the gold medal, the honor, the prestige.

I have news for you. These things will perish. But our reward is imperishable. Peter tells us that "(18) you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, (19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Peter 1:18,19). It ought to be the eternal prize that we long for that dictates our effort. Paul put forth great effort, "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified" (verses 26-27).

Paul finished the race. "Timothy, ... if Paul did it, ... you can do it also."

Let's look at the third phrase, ...

3. I have kept the faith.

When Paul says that he kept the faith, there are really two aspects to this. First of all, this must have reference to Paul's *profession* of faith. He maintained his belief and trust in Christ pure until the end of his life. And for all of his working and striving and toiling and agonizing, he

never once thought for a moment that he was justified by his works. Rather, the way that it works out is that these sorts of things demonstrate the authenticity of your faith. They don't supplement your faith. They don't add to your faith. They prove your faith. In John 15:8, Jesus says, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." And the mere fact that Paul had (1) fought the good fight and (2) finished the course, was a proof of his faith.

Paul believed the pure gospel: "that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, ... and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:16). In 1 Timothy 1:15, he said, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

Paul knew that he needed saving. Paul knew that he couldn't save Himself. Paul knew that there was a Savior to whom he could turn and who would wash all of his sin away! And he believed and trusted in Jesus with his whole heart for his whole life. That's the idea here, "I have kept the faith. I haven't fallen away. I have stayed true to the pure gospel." Let us never add anything to the gospel! Let us rejoice that He saves us by the sheer power of His grace.

Back in chapter 1, Paul described the gospel that he believed.

2 Timothy 1:8-10

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

We are saved from our sins by His grace and His purpose! It is not from our own works or efforts. And Paul believed this to the end of his life.

2 Timothy 1:11-12

for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

He knew that God would be his help until the day that he died. "I have kept the faith."

Not only was this a reference to Paul's profession of faith, it was also a reference to Paul's *protection* of the faith -- that is, the doctrine of faith. The doctrine of Christianity. The doctrine of the gospel. Paul spent his life fighting for the truth of the gospel. He argued with the Jews that "Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 9:22). He traveled the world, preaching salvation in Jesus (Acts 13). He was at the council in Jerusalem, when some were saying, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). And had Peter and James not got it right, I'm sure that Paul would have stood and said, "You cannot add a single work to our salvation. To add a work is to destroy it all!!! (Acts 15). You do not need to be circumcised to be saved. You merely need to 'confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, [and] you will be saved'" (Rom. 10:9). Paul never gave in to the ear-tickling fancies of some in the church (4:3).

So important was the purity of the gospel that he told the Galatian believers, "If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). But, that never needed to be applied to Paul. He kept the faith until the end. He kept it personally. He kept it protected. And 2 Timothy is the handing over of the baton.

2 Timothy 1:13-14

Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.

And so, here is Paul at the end of his life, saying, ...

1. I have fought the good fight.
2. I have finished the course.
3. I have kept the faith.

What a good thing to be able to say at the end of your life. It would make a good tombstone, wouldn't it? One of my favorite authors, J. C. Ryle, has it on his tombstone (in the churchyard of All Saints Childwall, Liverpool, England)

In loving memory
of

JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.

Eldest son of the late JOHN RYLE Esq, M. P.

of Macclesfield,

Born May 10th, 1815

Consecrated First Bishop of Liverpool June 11, 1880

Resigned March 1st 1900

Died at Lowestoft June 10th

And buried here June 14th 1900

"I have fought a good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith." 2 Tim. 4:7

"By grace are ye saved through faith." Eph. 2:8

Walter Hendrichsen, commenting on the importance of these statements, said this, "When you come to die, will you be able to look God Almighty in the eye and say, 'O Father, all that You had on Your heart for my life, I have accomplished. I finished the work You gave me to do'? If you cannot in integrity of heart answer yes, then whatever the price, I would strongly urge you to bring your life into alignment so that you can". [\[4\]](#)

This is great application for us today. If you are headed down a different path, I call you to repent! You can do it! When Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," he didn't do it on his own strength. He accomplished these things by the grace of God. And if your life is headed in the wrong direction, seek the Lord's help to turn it right.

Too often, people don't think about this until it is too late. My wife was gone at a conference this weekend, and she got back late last night. We were lying in bed almost asleep, and all of a sudden, she yelled, "UGGHHH! I forgot my pillow at the hotel!" For some reason, while lying in bed, the events of the day sorted through her mind and she realized what she had left back at the hotel. I fear that a lot of people will do that when it comes to dying. They will say, "UGGGHHH! I forgot that I'm going to die!" They have not lived in the way that they wish that they would have. And so, as if surprised by the revelation, they say, "UGGHHH!"

May today be a reminder that all of us will one day look over our lives and realize that we will have something to say. Your heart will be strengthened in your final days if you can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." Don't realize this too late! We need to fight the good fight; we need to finish the course; we need to keep the faith. When Robert Murray M'Cheyne preached this text, he entitled his sermon, "The secret of a joyful deathbed." He writes,

How blessed it is to stand by the death-bed of God's children! How different from that of the wicked! The wicked sometimes die in anguish. Some have been known to cry out: 'Lost, lost, lost! O eternity! O for half an hour, to pray!' Some die in blasphemy, cursing God for their pains and their sores. The greatest number die like a beast, without any thought or care, except for the body. ... How sweet, compared with these, is the departure of God's children. They fall asleep in Jesus: 'I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ... In these words we have the secret of a joyful death-bed: Firstly, he looks back upon the life of pain; Secondly, he looks forward to the crown of glory. [\[5\]](#)

This leads us nicely into our final point this morning, which is directed toward the reward after a life well-lived. Paul is excited about his coming death because he knows what he has done and he knows what he is expecting. His message to Timothy (and to us) is that ...
3. The Fight is Worth It (verses 8).

2 Timothy 4:8

In the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing.

Having reflected upon his life, past and present, Paul now turns to the future. He's like the nursing student, in her last week of her last semester, just about to finish and dreaming of her first job and her first paycheck. This is Paul. He's at the end of his race. He knows that he won the race. He is anticipating the prize. In this case, it's "the crown of righteousness." He has an eye on the reward! It keeps him going!

Paul hasn't endured in his life and his faith for nothing. No, he has endured for the joy that awaits him and His Savior in heaven. You say, "What is the crown?" This crown here is what Paul is awaiting after his death. It is called a righteous crown because it expresses the perfect holiness and righteousness of the heavenly state. Only those made righteous through the blood of Jesus Christ will be there. It will be a state that is entirely without sin -- all purchased through the precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.

This is the crown of eternal life. 1 Peter 5:4 calls it, "The unfading crown of glory." Throughout 2 Timothy, Paul had his eye on this day. 2 Timothy 1:12 says, "He is able to keep ... against that day." And 2 Timothy 1:18 says, "May the Lord grant mercy to Onesiphorus on that day." "That day" is as ambiguous here as it often is. In this passage, "that day" describes the day of the judgment of Christ. On that day, he will Judge the wicked and redeem the righteous. That is the day when Christ will receive all glory to Himself.

Who is the judge? None other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. "Not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). "God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). M'Cheyne says, "How sweet it will be, when Christ puts on the crown on a sinner's brow! ... He will finish our redemption."

So, who gets the crown? Not only Paul. "But also to all who have loved His appearing." Us! That is, all who want nothing more than to be in the presence of Jesus. These are those who loved it when He came the first time -- his birth, crucifixion, and resurrection. These are those who are looking forward to His coming the second time -- when he will judge the world.

Do you long for His appearing? Do you love His appearing? Have you treasured Christ above all? I guarantee you, if you live your life for him and endure until the end, you will never be disappointed "in that day."

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 6, 2011 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] J. C. Ryle, "Holiness," pp. 98-99.

[2] J.C. Ryle. "Holiness", p. 55

[3] Kent Hughes. "Disciplines of a Godly Man", p. 104

[4] Walter Hendrichsen, "Disciples Are Made Not Born", p. 145

[5] Robert Murray M'Cheyne, "From the Preacher's Heart", pp. 409-410