

Theme: Christians are motivated to finish well, even if it requires suffering, by remembering the eternal reward Christ will give to them when He returns.

I. Intro - Nero, the Olympics, and Cheating

- A. Nero moved games up two years so he could compete
- B. He had a 10-horse chariot in a 4-horse chariot race!
- C. He still did not finish - but was declared champion!
- D. This was later removed from Olympic records!
- E. Nero also wrongly judged many, including Paul
- F. How reward from the Righteous Judge can motivate us

II. Paul's Present Circumstances

- A. Paul is being poured out like a drink offering

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 2 Timothy 4:6

 - 1. For I - shifts to himself to reinforce Timothy's call
 - 2. Poured out like a drink offering - OT allusion
 - a. Drink offerings of wine given with animal sacrifices
 - b. See Numbers 15 for a description
 - c. Paul used the same idea when facing trial before

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. Philippians 2:17

 - 1. This is the only other time used in the NT
 - 2. The same idea in both passages - poured out like a drink offering as a reference to potential martyrdom

- B. Paul is about to be put to death for the Gospel

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 2 Timothy 4:6

 - 1. My departure - a common term for death in Greek
 - 2. When he wrote the Philippians he was released - but that will not happen this time.
 - 3. We do not know if Nero had already pronounced judgment, if Paul just sensed what it would be, or if the Lord had revealed it to him, but he knew he was going to die in the not distant future.
 - 4. Paul does not shrink from this prospect, for he knows that suffering is the lot of faithful Christians in this age, and his hope lies in the age to come rather than this present evil age.
 - 5. This idea of being outpoured like wine was captured by Watchman Nee who died while imprisoned

Not by gain our life is measured,
But by what we've lost 'tis scored;
'Tis not how much wine is drunken,
But how much has been outpoured.
For the strength of love e'er standeth
In the sacrifice we bear;
He who has the greatest suffering
Ever has the most to share.
- Watchman Nee, Hymn 635

III. Paul's Past Life and Ministry

- A. A three-fold metaphor for Paul's past life and ministry

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

 - 1. All three parts use a metaphor showing the need for faithfulness and willingness to suffer.

2. All three use the perfect tense to show that this is already completed for Paul

B. Paul's completed life and ministry - finishing well

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

1. τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἡγωνίσαι - I have fought the good fight/I have contested in the good contest

- a. The metaphor could be for a race, a fight, or any hard struggle (ἀγωνίζομαι)
- b. The key idea is that it required a long struggle, and Paul has now completed the struggle
- c. The contest was 'good' - it is a noble contest that is worth all of the suffering required

2. ὃν δρόμον τετέλεκα - I have finished the race

- a. The metaphor here is clearly a race
- b. Paul has finished the race marked out for him by Christ.
- c. Paul's race (his life and ministry) are done - he has crossed the finish line and simply awaits the Judge's verdict

d. This had always been his goal

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, **if only I may finish the race** and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me — the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Acts 20:24

1. Paul told the Ephesian elders he desired was to finish the race well
2. He now tells Timothy (in Ephesus) that he has finished the race - and he has finished well!

e. Paul can look back on a race well run.

3. τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα - I have kept the faith/been loyal to the trust

- a. It could mean Paul continued to believe - and he did
- b. It could mean Paul guarded the deposit of the true faith - and he did
- c. It could mean Paul was loyal to the trust Christ had given him - and he was
- d. Ultimately it refers to the fact that Paul had faced many temptations and struggles, but had not renounced his faith, had guarded the deposit of the gospel, and had been a loyal servant to Christ.

C. At the end of his life, Paul is able to look back and see that despite his sins and failures he has finished the race marked out for him well - thus setting an example for Timothy to follow in his own life.

IV. Paul's Future Reward

A. The crown of righteousness is ready for Paul

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8

1. Now there is in store for me - all that remains is the reward ready for me

2. The crown of righteousness - ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος

- a. A metaphor for the laurel wreath given to the winner of athletic competitions
- b. The crown is a favorite metaphor of biblical authors

3. Awarded by the Lord, the Righteous Judge

- a. This crown will be bestowed on Paul by Jesus Himself
- b. Jesus is the Righteous Judge - so He can give the crown of righteousness
- c. Perhaps a contrast with Nero, who judged unrighteously and condemned Paul for what should have been praised.
- d. It is good news to know that the One Who will judge the living and the dead is the Righteous Judge!

4. On that Day - the Day of Christ's return

- a. This does happen in this life, or even at our death, but on the Day when Christ "appears" - His return.
- b. On that Day, Paul will be rewarded for all of his labors in this life.

B. This is the inheritance of all believers

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — **and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.** 2 Timothy 4:8

1. In this race, we can all get the prize!
2. All who have longed for Jesus' return and thus have served Him in this age will be rewarded for their service by Jesus Himself.
3. This promised reward at the time of Christ's appearing, His return, is a consistent NT theme
And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.
1 Peter 5:4

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:20–21

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 1 John 3:2

- a. On that Day, faith will be sight, the dead will be raised, all will stand before Christ, sin will be put away forever, and believers will receive their reward.
- b. On that day life will swallow up death, glory will swallow up sin and shame, and our bodies will be transformed from frail bodies subject to sin to powerful bodies radiating the glory of God as we become as much like Jesus as a created being can be!
- c. This is the reward of everyone who is a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ!

V. Applying the Word

A. The Gospel call

1. Don't misunderstand - this is not salvation by works!
2. Paul has already spoken the Gospel over and over in this letter and through the years to Timothy
3. The eternal rewards here are for those who have been justified by grace through faith, not works

4. Christ will return and will judge the living and the dead - will I be ready?

5. Look to Christ in faith today!!!

B. Is my eternal reward motivating me to finish well?

1. Paul's point in this passage is not how well he has done, but rather motivation for Timothy to finish well.

2. He also wants to remind all of us of the reward that awaits us.

3. The motivation to endure and serve well in this age is the eternal reward we will receive from Christ Himself.

4. Eschatology is not about arguing over supposed signs before the return of Jesus, but rather a motivation for us to endure and be willing to suffer now for the glory to be revealed in eternity.

5. Does the brokenness of this world and the glory of the world to come make me long for Jesus' return?

6. Does the recognition of eternal reward for believers motivate me to faithful service now?

7. When I look back at my life thus far, how would I characterize it? Where have I served God well and faithfully? Where have I fallen short? Where should I make changes for the remainder of my race?

C. The Lord's Table

1. This Table not only looks back - but also forward!

2. On that final Day we will eat the Great Feast together - and this points us to that Feast!

Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:6-8

May 8, 2022

Communion

1 Corinthians 15:58

Teaching keywords: Eschatology; Christian life; integrity, honesty, and faithfulness; second coming; heaven, hell, and eternity

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:6–8