

A RACE WORTH WINNING

2 Timothy 4

In the midst of the race of life, it's easy to get discouraged and drop out.

The price becomes too high and it's easier to abandon the race.

Knute Larson: "Most lopsided football game ever: mighty Georgia Tech beat tiny Cumberland College 222-0! ... Cumberland quarterback tossed a short, errant lateral to the halfback. Quarterback yelled, '*Pick it up, pick it up!*' Halfback had other ideas. '*You pick it up,*' he shouted. '*You dropped it!*'"

In a race like that, it's easy to drop out and pursue more profitable goals.

Paul concludes his 2nd letter to Timothy with an **exhortation to hang in there; to faithfully finish the race.**

EXHORTATIONS REGARDING MINISTRY 4:1-8

Aware that his ministry is about to conclude, Paul urges Timothy to follow his example of faithfulness.

Charge to faithful ministry 4:1-2 *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:² Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

Paul issues a solemn charge:

In light of God's coming judgment ...

In light of Christ's coming and His kingdom ...

Jesus issues warnings for followers who aren't prepared for His return.

WE prepare for His coming by fulfilling our charge:

Preach the Word faithfully.

Paul doesn't tell us to preach politics, social justice, nor some other topic of public interest.

We aren't to proclaim what *PEOPLE* want to hear!

Too many preachers proclaim whatever the latest fad dictates.

We're to preach what *GOD* says!

How do we know what God says?

By preaching the Word. God has spoken.

McGee: "Paul doesn't say to preach *from* the Word, He doesn't say lift a verse from the Bible and weave a sermon around it... We're not to preach *about* the Word of God or *from* the Word of God; preach the Word of God itself!"

We should be prepared to preach God's Word any time, –not only when it's convenient, but even when it's inconvenient for us!

Apply the Word in all kinds of teaching and ministry.

"Correct, rebuke, encourage people with patience, careful instruction."

"Correct" => "convince" John 16:8 => "Cause them to see the light"

"Rebuke" => put a stop to wrong belief or behavior.

"Encourage" => to come along side to assist.

These functions should be carried out gently and patiently,

Instruct people from God's Word to do what pleases Him.

Cause for faithful ministry 4:3-5

This choice is especially important in light of alternative most have chosen.

People turn from the truth 4:3-4 *"The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they'll gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They'll turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

A day's coming when people will act this way.

Vincent: "In periods of unsettled faith, skepticism, and curious speculation, teachers of all kinds swarm like flies in Egypt. Demand creates the supply. Hearers invite and shape their own preachers. If people desire to worship a calf, a ministerial calf-maker is readily found."

Seneca: "Some come to *hear*, not to *learn*, just as we go to the theatre, for pleasure, to delight our ears with the speaking or the voice or the plays."

They were coming to church to be entertained—*not* to hear a word from God!

People reject the truth and turn to teachers who tell them what they want to hear.

They don't want to hear the truth!

Wiersbe: "They want religious entertainment from performers who tickle their ears. We love novelty in churches today: movies, pageants, foot-tapping music, colored lights, etc. The man who simply opens the Bible is rejected while a shallow entertainer becomes a celebrity. Itching ears soon become deaf ears as

people turn away from the truth and believe man-made fables.”

They don't want preachers to trouble their conscience;

They want them to tickle their fancy!—tell them what they want to hear.

“We don't come to church to be *challenged*; we want to be comforted.”

Ironsides: “I never worry when people write, ‘I resent your attack last Sunday.’ It always comes from people I don't know. I receive letters saying, ‘I don't like your preaching; I don't think you had a right to expose me. I don't know who's talking to you about me.’ They always end up saying, ‘It isn't true.’”

McGee: “People tell me that, when they first start listening to me... they don't like what I say. They accuse me of stepping on their toes. I didn't even know them—I didn't step on their toes; the Word of God did. As they continue to listen, they find out the Word of God is good for them. Many folks tune me out—because they don't want to hear God's Word; they prefer to be entertained.”

Sam Jones: “If you throw a stone into a pack of dogs and one yelps, you know who got hit.”

Need for contrast 4:5 “*Keep your head in all situations, endure hard-ship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*”

In contrast to such teachers, ***Timothy should be faithful to fulfill the ministry God has entrusted to him.***

We should “***keep our head in all situations***”; Don't lose perspective.

Even if we suffer for remaining faithful, we should remain faithful;

Endure hardship. Hang in there! Don't abandon the race.

Do the work of an evangelist—even if you aren't one!

Proclaim good news to people around you!

Faithfully carry out the duties of ministry.

Alistair Begg: This is the anchor point for all my days. I wake up on a Monday and ask, 'What will I do now? I'll try to keep my head, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist and discharge the duties of my ministry.' When lifted by a little encouragement... When the waves beat on me and I feel like running away... **what should I do? Just keep your head, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge the duties of my ministry."**

Example of faithful ministry 4:6-8 *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.*

Paul presents his example as a model to imitate.

His ministry is concluding.

Expecting to die soon, you might excuse Paul for feeling discouraged by his situation and the abandonment of his friends.

Paul *isn't* discouraged; he's *not* lamenting.

He's *ready* to be "poured out" as a drink offering for Christ's sake.

He has fought well.

Ironside: “How many have fought a good fight for years; then in old age, when we think we should be free from temptation, they’ve broken down. They get their eyes off the Lord. Some who made a good record for many years have had a dishonorable old age. I used to be amazed to hear an old preacher pray, ‘Lord, keep my eyes on Jesus. Don’t let me become a wicked old man.’ I used to wonder why he prayed like that. I have since seen many break down and become wicked old men because they got their eyes off Christ.”

Desire to finish well! –Ivan French –“St. Nick”–Kurtaneck
He’s confident he’ll receive the reward of the faithful.

The crown Paul refers to is like that of victors in the Olympics.
 In our day winners receive a gold medal.

In their day they wore a wreath—a symbol of victory.

People win the crown after much discipline and a hard struggle.

Paul has run a hard race; he has fought a difficult fight.

He has triumphed. Therefore he has won the prize.

And what is that prize? *“Righteousness”*

Paul uses the metaphor of a crown to refer to the righteousness all true believers receive when Christ returns.

At the end of the race we all receive His righteousness.

Not by earning it, but by God’s grace.

It’s given to all—to everyone looking forward to His return.

Only true believers look forward to that hope.

This truth motivated Paul to stay in the race to the end
—even in times of persecution, loneliness, discouragement.

How significant is price we pay for faithfulness in light of eternity?!!

This isn't just true for Paul, but for Timothy,
and for all who look forward to His coming.

PERSONAL NOTES 4:9-22

Having completed exhortations to Timothy, Paul turns to personal matters.

These notes point to **price Paul paid for faithful ministry**:

He suffered **loneliness** and **abandonment**. His friends left him.

He gave up **conveniences of home**—didn't have his coat or books.

He suffered **opposition**. Some are out to get him.

Yet he remains faithful. He doesn't give up!

Request for companionship 4:9-12 *Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. ¹²I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.*

His companions left him.

Some abandon him, seeking a better life.

Demas had been a close associate with Paul.

He probably didn't turn heretic—He seems to abandon the race

He pursues a “higher” priority that keeps him from paying the price.

Demas wants to enjoy benefits of the “better life” the world offers, so he drops out of the race.

Like many others, Demas began well.

Zealous service doesn't guarantee that we'll finish well.

We can't rest on our past!

Demas fails to finish well. Will we?

Others called to serve God elsewhere.—Faithful co-workers—PVBC

He wants Timothy to come with Mark.

He longs to see these two beloved colleagues in ministry.

Request for personal items 4:13 *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.*

Warning about opposition from Alexander 4:14-15

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

Report about trial 4:16-18 Legal case against him doesn't look good.

Everyone abandoned him, but God remains faithful.

Unfaithfulness of men 4:16 *At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.*

Faithfulness of God 4:17-18 *But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might*

be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

***While all men abandoned him,
GOD will never leave him nor forsake him!
In the end, the Lord will deliver him
and take him safely into His presence.***

In the end Paul wins.

Closing Greetings 4:19-21

Benediction 4:22 *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

Paul expresses his desire for God's presence to be with Timothy.

HOW ABOUT US?

Are we going to run the race? Will we FINISH well?

Knute Larson: Story of Bill Broadhurst.

At 18 he suffered a brain aneurism. Left side was partially paralyzed.

At 28 he could walk without cane, with stiff-legged limp—He was able to pursue interest in running. He decided to run in the Omaha 10,000 marathon.

The gun sounded; the race began. Quickly leaders became apparent—Bill Rogers was among front-runners.

At first, Broadhurst was among the throng. Then he began to lag behind. Rogers ran the race in less than 30 minutes—Other runners not far behind. Joggers and weekend marathoners clocked in at an hour or more.

The stragglers and weary finished after about two hours.

Broadhurst's body screamed with pain.

A child seeing him struggle yelled, 'Hey mister, you missed the race!'

After 2 hours & 30 minutes, sky was darkening. Police gone. No crowds along the street to catch glimpses of runners; tables with water cups were gone.

His limp worsened, his left leg dragging as he pressed on.

He began to wonder if it was worth it.

Finally he saw the end point. The finish banner was packed up.

Place was deserted. On the dark street, with no one watching, what difference would it make if he crossed an imaginary finish line?

But he did. Out of the alley stepped Bill Rogers with small group of people.

Stumbling across the finish line, Broadhurst was welcomed by outstretched arms of the champion, his hero.

Taking medal from his neck, Rogers put it on Broadhurst, declaring him winner.

Victory was more electric than 2 hours earlier when Rogers was cheered across the line.

Soon, after the struggles of this life, we will cross finish line to meet our Hero and Savior, Jesus Christ. He'll give us gold—crown of His righteousness." He'll announce "*Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

Will we finish the race faithfully? Will WE finish well?