

Running the Race of Faith
2 Timothy 4:6-8 (Week 11) 07/05/2026
Paul's Final Testimony

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth 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. 2 (Timothy 4:6-8)

Introduction & Review

- We're almost to the end of the **Apostle Paul's 2nd Letter to Timothy**.
- And **as** the end approaches, he writes **his final testimony**.
- I say it's final because **as far as we know** this is the last letter that **Paul** wrote,
- And even though **some personal matters follow**, **verses 6-8** are **his** final words about himself.
- This is what Paul wanted Timothy **to remember** about his father in the faith.
- And to better understand this final testimony, **we need to review the previous verses**.
- Looking back at **verses 1-5 of chapter 4**, Paul gives this **charge** to **Timothy**...

² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Timothy 4:2)

- Paul then gave the reason for **the charge**...

³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

- Timothy must keep preaching the truth of God's word **because** people are **prone to follow their own delusions and desires**.
- They will even seek **out teachers who'll say what they want to hear**.
- And this will result in **their wandering off into myths (fiction)**.
- So, **preach the word**.
- Paul then finished this **charge** by **exhorting** Timothy to...

⁵ ...always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:5)

- Now this charge is connected to what follows by the first word of **verse 6**...

For...

- This word (gar in the Greek) could also be translated **because**.
- It's a word that connects what's gone before with what follows.
- So, in summary **Paul has charged Timothy to preach the word, to fulfil his ministry**.
- And he's given him **one reason already**, because people are prone to wander from the truth.
- Then in **verses 6-8** he turns to another more **personal reason** which is tied to his current circumstances.
- And what are his current circumstances?
- Well, if you remember Paul is **writing this letter from a Roman Prison**.
- In **2 Timothy 2:8-9** he wrote...

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, ⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. (2 Timothy 2:8-9)

- Paul is suffering in prison, facing execution,
- **condemned by Rome** as a criminal for preaching the word, the gospel.
- And he's just **charged Timothy** to follow in his footsteps, **to continue preaching the word**.
- You can imagine what Timothy is thinking...
- preaching the word might get me imprisoned **or even killed**.
- So, Paul writes this final, memorable testimony in an effort to encourage Timothy to continue fulfilling his ministry by preaching the word.
- **Even if like Paul it meant suffering, imprisonment and death.**
- And you might be thinking, I'm sure glad this doesn't apply to me,
- I'm glad I'm not the kind of Christian that God calls to such **difficult, dangerous tasks**.
- But I am here to tell you, if you're a child of God it does apply to you.
- God may call you to **a difficult and/or dangerous ministry**.
- Our problem is **that we often think** that there are two **kinds of Christians**.
- There are the **regular Christians**, which includes **vast majority of us**.
- And then there are the **special Christians** like the Apostles, Evangelists, Pastors, Ministers, Missionaries...
- But this is **a false dichotomy** not **supported by the word of God**.
- And one way to see this is the fact that the man **who most people** believe to be the greatest Christian of all, the man who again and again faced **difficulty and danger** called **all Christians to follow his example**.
- And who was that man? **The Apostle Paul himself**.
- To the **whole Corinthian Church** he wrote...

¹ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

- And likewise, to **the Philippian Church** he wrote...

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. (Philippians 3:1)

- **And this call to imitate Paul** applies to all **Christians**,
- In the **New Testament** God has given us **two great examples** to follow.
- Of course we are to **be imitators of Christ**, but right or wrong we can say...
- I can't be like Christ, **he was the Son of God**, and I am not.
- And so, I believe God has also given us **the example of the Apostle Paul**.
- A self-admitted sinner, **who gave his life to Jesus Christ** and was radically transformed.
- **So, today**, as we examine **Paul's Final Testimony**.
- I pray that what we learn will help us **be imitators of Paul, as he was of Christ**.
- That we will be radically transformed.
- That we will be encouraged in **our faith and ministry**.
- That we will be strengthened to continue **preaching (proclaiming) the word**,
- fulfill the **ministries God has given us**.
- Even if it means ridicule, mockery, loss of friendships or worse.
- **And that brings us to Paul Final Testimony which he begins by addressing...**

1. Paul's Expected Death

- Paul has charged Timothy to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ,
- knowing this could lead to Timothy's death,
- so, he begins his testimony with encouraging words about his own expected DEATH.
- In **verse 6** Paul writes...

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

- This image of "***being poured out as drink offering***" comes from the **Jewish custom** of pouring out wine at the base of the altar as part of **the ritual sacrifice (DEATH) of a lamb**.
- And Paul uses the image of red wine splashing down upon the altar as a **metaphor** for how he regarded his own death.
- Some five years earlier, writing to the Philippians, he'd used similar words...

17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith... (Philippians 2:17)

- Then death was only a possibility (**Even if**).
- But now, as he writes to Timothy, **it's expected**, it's a **surety in his mind**.
- He is (present tense) **being poured out as a drink offering**, he approaching death.
- And even though he's got some time before his actual physical death,
- in a very real sense Paul understood that the **last drops of his blood** were beginning to fall.
- **His death was imminent and sure!**

- And yet, **this image of being poured out as a drink offering** is meant to encourage Timothy,
- Paul is not in despair, he didn't think of himself as about to **be executed by Rome**,
- But rather as **offering himself to God**.
- From the time of his conversion on the **Damascus Road**, Paul gave (offered) everything to God.
- He offered his **wealth**, his **body**, his **brilliant mind**, his **passions**, his **position**, his **reputation**,
- his **relationships**, his **dreams**.
- For years he'd poured out **everything about his life** as a sacrificial offering to Christ,
- And so, it's only natural that he pictures his death as **pouring the last drops of his blood on onto the altar**.
- And what this says, is that for the one who, in this life, gives himself completely to Christ,
- The one who lives not for himself but for Christ, **their death is not a tragedy to be mourned...**
- But a victorious **final offering to God** to be celebrated.
- And this is further seen by that fact that Paul refers to his death, not as an end, but as a departure.

and the time of my departure has come

- Paul had faith that even though he was going to die physically,
- **his actual life (his spirit if you will) would merely depart from this world**.
- The word translated "**departure**" is used in Greek literature to describe ***the loosing of a ship from its moorings***.
- It pictures a ship lifting anchor, tossing off the ropes, and rising on the tide so the winds can carry her to sea.
- This word **departure** speaks not of **an end**, but a **continuation of the journey**.
- **C. S. Lewis** had it right in his final book of **the Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle**.
- To children who had died, **death is explained as follows...**

They were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before. (C. S. Lewis, The Last Battle)

- This notion of "death, departure" being better, was Paul's understanding as well...
- Earlier, in his letter to the Philippians, again speaking of his death, he wrote...

²³ ...My desire is to depart (to cast off the ropes) and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Philippians 1:23)

- Paul believed with all his heart that his **departure from this world was "better by far."**
- He knew that all who depart to be with **Christ are far better off**.
- And so, he faced imminent death, not only without fear, but with anticipation of being with **Jesus**.
- And this is what he wanted Timothy to understand,
- **preach the word, fulfill your ministry** even if it means your death,
- because death is only a departure (a loosing of the chains that bind us to this world) ...
- For the Christians **DEATH** is better by far.

- And so, I ask, what about you?
- Are you like Paul, is death just a departure for this earth to a far better place to be with a far better person, Jesus Christ.
- **Or is death a cause for great fear.** Fear of leaving behind loved ones.
- Fear of the unknown, maybe you're unsure of what comes after death.
- Or maybe you believe **death is followed by either Heaven or Hell,**
- but you're unsure of which destination you're departing for.
- Well, if that's the case, then I believe what follows, **if understood and applied,**
- will not only help you overcome your fear of death but **will encourage you in your life of faith.**
- Because that's what Paul addresses next...

2. Paul's Enduring Faith

- In **verse 7**, Paul uses **three short phrases** to describe **his life of faith.**
- As death approaches, he can say...

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

- I think all three statements relate to Paul's life of faith and faith in general.
- **Fighting the good fight and finishing the race** are **simply pictures** that Paul uses to describe what's involved in **keeping the faith.**
- We see this in **1 Timothy 6:12** where Paul wrote...

¹² Fight the good fight of the faith... (1 Timothy 6:12)

- The **good fight is a fight of the faith,**
- And **finishing the race refers** to coming to the end of **his life of faith.**
- As Paul wrote **to the Corinthians...**

⁷ for we walk (or in this case run) by faith, not by sight. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

- The **two pictures of fighting and racing** are meant to help us understand what's involved in keeping the faith.
- So, let's begin with the main point, the fact that...

A. Faith Must be Kept

- And then we'll **add to that with the pictures of fighting and racing.**
- So, when Paul says **he has kept the faith** what's he talking about?
- Well first, faith must have an object, we put our faith in something,
- We can have (in a limited way) faith in our spouse, in our friends, or in ourselves.
- **So, what (or who) is the object of Paul's faith?**
- Well, it wasn't faith in himself, or in any mere man, **he's talking about faith in Christ Jesus.**

- To the **Galatians** he summarizes **his life** by saying...

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

- Paul's life is guided and directed by his faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- So, what does it mean to **have or keep faith in Jesus**.
- Well, when you have faith in someone, **it means you trust them**,
- **You take them at their word**, you count **on them** to live up to what they say,
- You trust their **counsel**; **you have confidence in their promises**.
- So, when Paul said, "**I have kept the faith**," he meant,
- I've kept on taking Christ at his word, I've kept on **counting** on what he said,
- I've kept on trusting **his counsel, and his promises**."
- And **where do we find Christ's word**, his counsel and promises?
- In **our Bibles**, the inspired word of God, **the God breathed Scripture**.
- **In fact**, a few verses prior to this, in **2 Timothy 3:15**, Paul wrote that the Scriptures...

15 ...are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

- The Scriptures, the word of God, **is crucial to our faith**,
- for they give us understanding, wisdom about the way of salvation,
- about who God is and what requires and desires from US.
- Therefore, faith in Christ Jesus, is best understood and applied **as faith (trusting) in his word**.
- And this certainly includes trusting that through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross he purchased forgiveness for our sins and therefore **provides for our eternal salvation**.
- **We see Christ speaking** of this **throughout the gospels**...
- For example, in **Mark 10:45**, Jesus said

45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45)

- Jesus says he gave his life (he died) to ransom to pay the debt that we owed because of our sins.
- And in **Matthew 26:28**, when Jesus instituted the sacrament of communion, he said...

28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

- Jesus says, it is through His blood that he established the new covenant in which our sins are forgiven.
- And my point is, **keeping the faith includes** believing these (and other scripture) that proclaim forgiveness and salvation through Christ's death on the cross.

- But keeping the faith (in Jesus Christ), is more than **believing this or any other truth about him.**
- It involves giving ourselves to, joining ourselves to Christ **as one who is wholly trustworthy,**
- one who has **infinite integrity** (trusting that his word is always right and true)
- and one who has **infinite power** (trusting that he can and will do whatever he says)
- So, if we say that we trust in **Jesus' death on the cross for our salvation,** that is GOOD!
- but if we **continually live** as though much of what he said is **not relevant,**
- That what he **commanded is only optional,**
- That what **he promised is unreliable,**
- Then we don't truly **have faith in Jesus Christ.**
- Therefore, we are **not keeping the faith.**
- **Let me give an example,** Jesus promised that if we...

33 ...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

- And so, if we continual seek other things, like **wealth, comfort, security, entertainment** first and not the **kingdom of God and his righteousness,**
- If we are living for other things, other people, instead of living for Christ and His Kingdom,
- Then no matter what truths we say we believe, **we are not trusting Christ.**
- We don't truly believe what he has said, therefore **we are not keeping the faith.**
- And unfortunately, this how many **professing Christians live their lives.**
- They may really believe that Christ died that they might receive forgiveness, salvation and eternal life.
- While at the same time they prove their lack of faith by living **in disobedience to his word,**
- Because ultimately, they don't believe **his commands,** his **counsel** is best and **wise.**
- They don't believe that **his promises are reliable,**
- or they don't even **care to find out what he said at all,** which amounts to the same thing.
- **That is not keeping the faith.**
- Faith in Christ is kept, it is lived out, and it must include faith in **all of his Word,**
- because it is faith in **him, in who he is, the divine Son of God,**
- **It is faith in his infinite integrity and power.**
- So, when Paul said he has **kept the faith,** he meant he has kept on taking Christ at his word.
- He had continued to live, not only trusting Christ to provide him with salvation and eternal life.
- But trusting that **Christ's commands and counsel are what is best and must be followed.**
- And living based on the fact that Christ would fulfill **every promise.**

- And he's saying to Timothy and all Christians, **you must keep the faith as well.**
- You must not merely believe in truths about Christ.
- You must trust in and live based on all his word, his commands, his counsel and his promises.
- That's what it means to **KEEP THE FAITH!**
- And so, are you keeping the faith? are you living a life that reflects trust in who Christ is, in what he has done and everything he's said in His Word?
- And to be clear, this doesn't mean you are perfect, we all fail we all fall, we all sin.
- The question when you fall, do confess and repent, get back up and continuing trusting in Christ.
- That's what it means to keep the faith.
- And this is further seen in the two illustrations of fighting and racing.
- What do fighting and racing teach us about **keeping the faith?**
- Well, the first thing we learn is that...

B. Faith is Hard

- When Paul says...

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

- He's certainly **not painting a picture of easy breezy faith keeping.**
- Because boxers get hit in the face, and runners push themselves to the limit of tolerance,
- and both **must train for long difficult hours.**
- Therefore, keeping faith must involve some sort of difficulty, stress and discomfort.
- It must be **hard to keep the faith. Jesus put it like this...**

¹³ "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14)

- Now we know that faith is **the way that leads to life (eternal life)...**

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith... (Ephesians 2:8)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes (has faith) in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

- So, **faith is** the way to eternal life, and in **2 Timothy Paul** compares a life of faith to fighting and racing.
- And in Matthew Jesus says that the way of faith is hard,
- It's hard like a marathon in the **Himalayas,**
- or fifteen rounds with a **heavyweight champion.**

- Now follow my logic here,
- if faith is believing some facts about Jesus' Death and Resurrection then that's not hard.
- But if faith, keeping the faith, means trusting and living based on in **every word** from Christ.
- **Then, read the gospel and discover how hard that is...**
- Jesus commands among other things we must, repent of our sins, deny ourselves,
- forgive again and again, make disciples, be servants, rejoice when persecuted,
- turn the other cheek, don't worry about tomorrow, give generously,
- do unto others as you would have them do unto you, love others, love God and love our enemies.
- I don't know about you but for me doing (or trying to do) these things is **often Hard**.
- It takes **faith** that Jesus knows exactly what he's talking about to deny myself, to love my enemies, to turn the other cheek and so on...
- It's like a fight, it's like a marathon, and unfortunately many people are unwilling to enter or continue because it's hard, it's a sacrifice.
- This is illustrated by **the story of the rich young man**.
- He had lived a **life in obedience to God's commandments**.
- But **Jesus said to him...**

²¹ ...“You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” (Mark 10:21)

- And just so we understand, this was not a way for him to earn salvation.
- It was a way for him to **demonstrate whether he truly had faith in Christ or not**.
- Will you (because I Jesus said so) give everything in this life to **gain treasure in heaven**.
- But it was too hard for him, **because he trusted in his wealth more than Jesus**.
- And so...

²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:21-22)

- So, when Paul says that keeping the faith is like **a fight and a race**,
- he reminds us that there **will be times that we will struggle to trust in Christ**.
- There will be times of difficulty, there will be challenges, there will be commands that are hard for us to follow, **promises that will be hard to believe**.
- And yet we must fight the good fight, we must finish the race.

- So, first, keeping the faith, continuing to take Christ at his word, trusting his **promises is hard.**
- Then **the second thing** implied especially in the image of the **race is that...**

C. Faith Endures to the End

- Verse 7...

7 ...I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

- The word “kept” implies endurance to the end but finishing the race makes it clear.
- You can run a 5K, 10K, or a 26-mile marathon,
- but if you don't cross the finish line, **you don't get the prize**, the medal, the crown.
- This is taught in many places in **the New Testament.**
- In **Matthew 10:22**, Jesus warns that his disciples will be threatened by persecution and says,

22 ...But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:22)

- Then John, writing to the churches in the **beginning of Revelation**, repeated this several times:
- Just one example, to the church in **Smyrna**, he wrote...

10 ...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)

- The writer to the Hebrews stresses more than anyone that in order to be saved, we must endure to the end of the race of faith.
- In **Chapter 3** he writes...

14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. (Hebrews 3:14)

- And then, Paul himself teaches the necessity **of enduring faith** .
- He says in **Colossians 1:21–23**,

21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, 23 if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard... (Colossians 1:21-23)

- And in **2 Timothy 2:12** Paul simply says...

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him; (2 Timothy 2:12)

- So, the **second thing** implied in the pictures of **the fight and the race**:
- Is that keeping the faith **is a lifelong task.**
- You can't give up at **the halfway mark** and expect **the crown of righteousness.**

- Then the third and final thing illustrated especially by the image of a **fight** is that...

D. Faith will be Opposed

- There are **opponents** who **fight against your faith**, and they must be dealt with.
- The Christian life is a fight, and if you sense no struggle in your life to trust Christ more,
- then it means either that **you are perfect** or that you have **surrendered to the enemy**.

- So, who is the enemy, or enemies we must fight against?
- Well, the Bible teaches that **there are two main enemies of our faith**,
- but they can **use many neutral forces** for their purposes.

- The two enemies are **our flesh** and the **Devil**.
- And they can and do use the things and people of this **world** to attack our faith.
- Concerning the devil and our conflict with him Paul says,

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand (fight) in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:12-13)

- Satan and all his hosts have **one main target**, our faith in Christ.
- Because as John says,

⁴ ...this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:4)

- If Satan can destroy our faith, **he has won, he has everything he wants**.
- And so, you must, stand firm, you must...

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

- We can only resist, **fight against the devil** in the power God provides, submitting to him in faith.
- Now what about our other enemy, **namely, ourselves**,
- our old nature or our flesh as Paul often calls it, how are we do deal with this opponent.
- Well, To the Romans Paul wrote...

¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Romans 6:11)

- We must consider or reckon or live as though **we are dead to sin and alive to God**.
- And so, whenever our **flesh rears its ugly head**, we must chop it off with the sword of the Spirit.
- For Paul goes on to say in **Romans 8:13**

¹³ ...if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

- So, there are two opponents of our faith.
- But **fortunately**, we have two **great weapons** with which to **resist and attack our enemies**.
- Our weapons are the **Spirit of God** and the **Word of God**.
- And these always fight together, **for the Spirit uses the Word to do his mighty work**.
- Paul says in **Ephesians 6:17**,

17 ...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, (Ephesians 6:17)

- The Spirit wields the Word.
- The fight of faith is fought **with the Word of God**.
- And so, we come to the **same application from the last two weeks**.
- To fight the fight of faith, to oppose our enemies, we must know the word of God.
- As **John Piper** put it...

Happy is the man who has a promise of God ready to counter every satanic suggestion that life would be better if we stopped trusting Christ. (John Piper)

- As Jesus, when tempted by Satan in the wilderness, used the weapon of God's word to defeat him.
- We to can defeat the enemy, we can keep the faith with the power of God's word.
- So, we've seen that faith is more than believing in truths about Jesus Death for our sins,
- it is keeping the faith, continuing to believe that Jesus Christ is wholly trustworthy and all powerful.
- Which results I a life lived in obedience to him and trust in his promises.
- And this has been reinforced by the illustrations of faith as a fight and a race.
- Showing that faith is hard, it endurances to the end and it will be opposed.
- So, we must ask ourselves, **can we say with Paul**,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

- If your answer is yes, then keep fighting, keep running and keep keeping the faith.
- But if your answer is no, then know this:
- **by the grace and mercy of God**, you can begin today.
- You can repent of what or who you have been putting your faith in.
- And you can come to Jesus in genuine faith,
- Trusting completely in him, trusting in and therefore living by his word.
- For he alone is trustworthy, **he alone is always true**, he alone is all powerful...
- And he alone provides everything we need for this life and the life to come.
- As Peter said to Jesus...

68 ...You have the words of eternal life, (John 6:68)

- Okay so Paul has testified to his **expected death and his enduring faith**.
- And then he concludes with...

3. Paul's Eternal Reward

- Paul has fought the good fight, he's finished the race, he's kept the faith.
- And because of this...Therefore... or...

⁸ Henceforth 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. (2 Timothy 4:8)

- Notice that the crown that awaits Paul is not a **crown of glory** or a **crown of peace** or a **crown of joy**, but **"the crown of righteousness."**
- **And this crown will be given by the righteous judge, Jesus himself.**
- Paul is confident that he will receive the crown of righteousness.
- Why? because he has kept the faith and because Jesus had already given Paul (and all who have genuine faith) his righteousness...
- As **Paul wrote to the Romans**, they would receive...

²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. (Romans 3:22)

- So, Paul, through faith, had already received the rightness of God.
- And this would be confirmed on that day (the day of his death) when he would receive from Christ the **"crown of righteousness,"**
- the ultimate permanent perfect state of righteousness.
- As Gordon Fee aptly remarks,

One receives the final crown of righteousness precisely because one has already received the righteousness of Christ. (Gordon Fee)

- Why does Paul focus on the

crown of righteousness

- instead of, say, **a crown of glory, or crown of life?**
- Because his testimony is about faith.
- And righteousness is received by faith alone.
- Righteousness is the greatest **need we sinful humans have**.
- And because of our sin, we can never achieve our own righteousness.
- But what we cannot achieve by works, we **can receive by faith**.
- By faith, Paul was given Christ's righteousness.
- And because he kept the faith he would receive **"the crown of righteousness"**.

- So, Paul knew that as his death approached so did **his eternal reward**,
- **His crown of righteousness**.
- **But this eternal reward is not for Paul alone...**

but also to all who have loved his appearing.

- Christians are people **who love Jesus Christ**.
- And because we love him, we **long for his appearing**.
- **Yesterday, I enjoyed celebrating the 250th Anniversary of our great country.**
- But the reality is, for Christians our true country is Heaven,

²⁰ ...our citizenship is in heaven, (Philippians 3:20)

- and so, we are...

³ waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (Titus 2:13)

- We pray to Maranatha! - "Come, O Lord!"
- So, the final question is, **do you love his appearing?**
- Do you long for his return, when you will see him face to face and you will be changed.
- Do you? Do you truly?
- If so, like Paul **"the crown of righteousness"** is reserved for you on that day.
- And this maybe more than anything explains **why Paul didn't fear death**.
- This is how **he knew it was a departure**. This is why he could say...

²³ ...My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Philippians 1:23)

- Paul's **physical death** was imminent, but he knew he had kept the faith.
- He had trusted in and lived for Jesus Christ.
- And so, he knew that departing this earth and seeing Jesus face to face being welcomed into his kingdom with **a crown of righteousness was FAR BETTER!**
- **AND that's his final testimony to Timothy and to each one of us.**
- **As we** are changed to proclaim the truth of God's word,
- as we are **charged to fulfill our ministries**.
- Let us, like Paul, keep the faith.
- Let us endure hardship and continue to trust in Christ completely,
- living in obedience to his commands.
- Trusting in his promises, **knowing his ways are better than our ways**.
- Knowing that one day we will **all depart from this world to a far better place**.
- A place where, if we keep the faith, Jesus Christ will meet us and welcome us **with a crown of righteousness**.