

THREE THINGS THAT QUALIFY YOU TO BE READY TO MEET THE LORD

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FIGHT THE FIGHT RUN THE COURSE KEEP THE FAITH

1-5-13

II Timothy 4:1 I charge [thee] therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

II Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

II Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

II Timothy 4:4 And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

II Timothy 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

II Timothy 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

II Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith:

II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Introduction:

We now have entered a new year, 2014. We certainly are in the end times, and the Apostle Paul gave some advice to Timothy. Paul knew that the Lord was going to take him home really soon. Now I would think that knowing his end was near, Paul would have wanted to share the most important things necessary for Timothy to hear; and I would assume that his advice to Timothy, and the urgency of that advice should ring clear in our hearts and spiritual lives as well.

Paul uses his life as an example to follow. I wonder how many of us—as our life nears its end—will be able to be as confident as Paul was. Here his words should challenge us to search our own hearts and lives. Note what he says:

II Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith:

II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

If the Lord returns in 2014, or if the Lord takes us home in 2014, will we be able to say as Paul did:

I. HE SAID I FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT....

Oh that when the Lord comes—Oh that if we find ourselves on our death bed,
CAN WE—WILL WE—BE ABLE TO SAY, “I FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT.”

What is it to fight the good fight? THE GREEK WORD SOUNDS SOMEWHAT FAMILIAR TO A SIMILAR WORD IN ENGLISH:

AGONIZOMAI...

agonizomai, ag-o-nid'-zom-ahee; from 73; to struggle, lit. (to compete for a prize), fig. (to contend with an adversary), or gen. (to endeavor to accomplish something):-fight, labor fervently, strive.

Definition: To enter a contest: contend in the gymnastic games, to contend with adversaries, fight. Metaph. to contend, struggle, with difficulties and dangers, to endeavour with strenuous zeal, strive: to obtain something ...

Issac Watts wrote that great hymn, "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" in 1721 while preparing a sermon regarding spiritual warfare, based on the passage "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

I Corinthians 16:13), Watts wrote "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" to accompany his text:

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

The problem we face today is that most Christians are looking for a Utopia on earth. As long as Jesus is not here, there will be battles to fight. Many stop fighting. Many stop struggling with sin. Many give up and get tired. PAUL FOUGHT TO THE VERY END. WILL YOU?

I hear people say, "I'm burned out serving the Lord."

Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

I've heard people say, "I'm tired of fighting." Is there a choice in a war ? You either fight or surrender. Will we surrender to evil?

To "fight the good fight" is to keep serving the Lord till he takes you home. WILL YOU FIGHT? WILL YOU KEEP FIGHTING?

Paul fought the good fight until he was taken home in martyrdom. Instead of fighting the good fight we see:

People wanting to be entertained.
People wanting to be lulled to sleep.
People wanting to have their ears tickled.

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord.
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
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Why is our nation given over to debauchery? Immorality? Obsurdities?

IT IS BECAUSE MOST CHRISTIANS ARE NOT FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT. CHRISTIANS HAVE GIVEN UP THE FIGHT.

II. PAUL SAID HE FINISHED HIS COURSE. ARE WE GOING TO FINISH OUR COURSE?

II Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith.

God has given each of us a course to run, a job to do, a fight to fight, a race to endure. Some people just plain quit on God before they are finished. There is no way to fail for God except to quit!!!

Isaiah 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to [them that have] no might he increaseth strength.

Isaiah 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint.

Some people never stick to anything long enough to accomplish anything.
God wants us to finish what he told us to do.

God has a course for us to run, and we need to run it to the finish line.

In Matt. 25 we read about a fellow who was condemned—he didn't finish well. He made all kinds of excuses, and none of them will hold up in that day of Judgment!

Matthew 25:24 Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:

Matthew 25:25 And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, [there] thou hast [that is] thine.

Matthew 25:26 His lord answered and said unto him, [Thou] wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

Matthew 25:27 Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and [then] at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Matthew 25:28 Take therefore the talent from him, and give [it] unto him which hath ten talents.

Matthew 25:29 For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he

Matthew 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Illustration: I've been at Elkdale Baptist for over 30 years.. still more work to do ... We don't finish till we cross the finish line.. THE FINISH LINE IS OVER THERE OR IN THE AIR.

III. PAUL SAID HE HAS KEPT THE FAITH.

The faith involves a set of beliefs—and doctrines.

These doctrines should not change; they are the same that have been handed down to us from the Apostles who received them from the Lord Himself.

Today we are seeing a change in what we would define as the faith: Social upheaval—and a grand experiment in morality.

FRONT PAGES. There is a dilemma we see all around us.

What is the faith? It is the Scriptural teachings of Christ and the Apostles as set forth in the Word of God.

PAUL WARNS..

II Timothy 4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

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II Timothy 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

The faith involves preaching the Word of God -

- When it is in season to do so.
- When it is out of season to do so.

We are living in a day when preaching is considered out of season ... out of date. People say the Bible was written for a different culture. Things are different now.

This is what Paul meant when he said PREACH THE WORD, KEEP THE FAITH—

- WHEN IT IS IN SEASON OR OUT.
- When it is convenient and easy to do so.
- When it is in convenient and difficult to do so.

PREACH THE WORD ...

Paul at times made tents so he could support those who traveled with him. In other places there was support from the Christians and churches.

YET PAUL PREACHED THE WORD.

NOTE HOW PAUL SAYS:

By the word of the Lord - this was a prophecy given that in the end times there would be a falling away from the faith..

II Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

Paul said:

Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Acts 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Acts 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.

Acts 20:31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

II Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

I Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

I Timothy 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

The Holy Spirit has predicted this falling away, and we are seeing it even today.

In the midst of this falling away, the Lord commands us to keep the faith:

- Stick to the stuff
- Don't move
- Don't be swayed

A REDEFINING OF EVERYTHING:

II Timothy 4:4 And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Illustration:

- Redefine male and female
- Redefine marriage
- Redefine God's creation

IV. CONCLUSION

II Timothy 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

II Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith:

II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The time of departure is near.

Illustration: I received a Birthday card when I turned 40 it read YOU ARE HOW OLD.. it showed a grey headed man pulling his hair out. Through the years I have scratched out the 40 then put 41 then 42 40 through 61 have been scratched out and It won't be long.. our departure is at hand..

This reminds me that the Bible says we need to learn to number our days.. Either we will meet there or in the air. It will not be long.

When I first came to the church I would hear the preaching of men of God in their 60's. They were always talking about how they know it will not be long before they meet the Lord. Now I am in my 60's.

Note what Paul says about meeting the Lord:

II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

ISAAC WATTS' SONG SAYS IT.

LET US FIGHT THE FIGHT AND FINISH OUR COURSE.. AND KEEP THE FAITH FOR THE LORD.

If we do, some day we will be able to say, "I am ready to meet the Lord."