

SPREAD OUT THINK BIG

Week Six | March 25, 2018 | Leaving a Legacy by Pastor Ray

PREPARATION

GETTING READY:

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through 2 Tim. 4:6-7. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

THIS WEEK

KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

A powerful spiritual legacy is possible for all of us if we will live according to God's plan and are obedient and faithful to His calling in our life.

THEOLOGY APPLIED

God provides the necessary tools so that my life glorifies Him and is a blessing to others.

MEDITATE

"How do I want my life to be remembered by my family?...by my church family?"

GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

Following the death of my father in 1986, I went to pick out a family marker where my mom and other siblings in the years to come would be laid to rest. While reflecting on my father and my mother and their impact on the life of our family I was drawn to the verse in the text of our lesson, 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith". Thinking of this verse reminded me of what I had seen in my parents and

what I knew to be a legacy of obedience and faithfulness that would live on from generation to generation. So, I had the verse engraved in stone on our family marker to remind me and everyone in our family that this is the spiritual legacy, the inheritance that was left to us.

This statement from Scripture is made at the close of Paul's life. In fact, if you read the entire chapter you will see that it is written by a guy who knows that the end is near. He is asking people to come and visit him and to bring certain items that will give comfort to a dying man. He is also giving his colleagues a warning to beware of certain people who have wronged him along the way and are a danger to them as well. But what I notice most of all is that there doesn't appear to be a level of fear or regret involved.

As Paul stares death in the face he doesn't express words that are uncertain about the events unfolding or how he wished he had done this or that. They seem to be calm words that communicate a flow of his life, that was being poured out for God's glory. Paul had replaced fear and regret with trust and confidence, knowing he was in God's hands and that he had invested his life in the kingdom of God. In Acts 22:10 he had asked Jesus, "What do You want me to do?" Jesus told him and he did it.

Paul will leave behind a model of a well-lived life of a man who was flesh and blood just like us. If we will follow this model, through the power of the same Spirit that empowered Paul, we can leave a spiritual legacy that glorifies God and blesses the lives of others.

So today, let's consider this profound question: What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind for your family? It's one of those interesting questions that will be answered whether we want it to be or not. A legacy will be passed on—whether good, bad or indifferent; it will happen. Most of us if not all would desire to leave a positive spiritual legacy behind. I am assuming this because you are reading this lesson in a small group Bible study so there is some level of commitment to learning the better way in Christ.

In 2 Timothy 4:6 we read, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." Here, Paul states the subject that has overshadowed everything in this epistle and now, it is plainly stated. Paul was about to die. As one ancient saint said, "I am a veteran, and have earned my discharge, and must leave the fighting to younger men." Paul has given an example for Timothy and others who would carry on the work, but for him it is time to go. Notice he doesn't say he's going to be executed. He sees his death as a sacrifice before God for the gospel. There is no trembling at the thought of the death penalty that awaits him. The words he uses tell of his faith and confidence.

Paul uses these words "poured out" or some translations say "offered" and "departure". The word *offering* means "poured out on the altar as a drink offering." To paraphrase, Paul is saying, "Caesar is not in power over my life, but that I'm going to offer myself up as a sacrifice for my Lord." The word *departure* means "to hoist anchor and set sail". Again, to paraphrase Paul, he is saying, "I'm picking up my tent (see 2 Corinthians 5:1-8), and I'm released

from this world to ‘set sail’ to my Lord.” Think of how many times this tentmaker in all of his travels had picked up his stuff and moved to the next location. This is the final move to his heavenly home. I think this calm confidence is not delusionary, but rather, it is a faith and life of a man that had completed his task and left behind a legacy of obedience and faithfulness.

■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

If you want to leave a legacy that has glorified God and will impact others from generation to generation; if you want to leave something that will be remembered in a pleasant way, then there are three inspiring statements or patterns from Paul’s life that we need to understand and live out. These patterns are found in 2 Timothy 4:7.

1. I FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT
2. I FINISHED THE RACE
3. I KEPT THE FAITH

GOING DEEPER

*+This next section will help show what God’s Word says about this week’s particular focus.
Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week’s biblical truth.*

I FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

■ 2 TIMOTHY 4:7A

“I have fought the good fight.” This word “fight” in the Greek is *agon* which means to have a contest in the arena. Like a boxer in the ring who fought the good fight or a runner who has run the race and battled fatigue and pain but finished well and was victorious. He followed the rules and now deserves the prize (Acts 20:24, Philippians 3:13-14).

It must be recognized every day that the Christian life is a battle. That is why Paul in Ephesians 6:10-20 talked about “putting on the whole armor of God” to be able to stand in the evil days and having done all, to stand. He lists all the equipment that is needed for the good fight, so from head to toe we are prepared for the battle.

Eph. 6:10-20 *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 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. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”

God has provided all of these pieces of equipment for us to fight the fight of living in a dark world. He says in verse 12 that the battle is not with flesh and blood but with rulers, authorities, and the cosmic powers over this present darkness. That is why in Romans 12:1-2 he said we are to resist being conformed to the image of this world. Let's be honest, living the full Christian life is not for sissies. It is a battle to practice the spiritual disciplines of faith, prayer, Bible study, worship, giving, and serving. It is a battle daily to live out of humility and not out of pride. It is a battle to give our mouths to praise and not to unwholesome talk. It is a battle to keep our actions and thoughts pure before God. Don't think it's a battle? Then you've never tried it!

Paul acknowledged that he was not able to be perfect. There is only One who is perfect (Jesus). Nevertheless, in his own words recorded in Philippians 3:12, Paul writes, “not that I have attained perfection” but that he “keeps pressing on” to be more shaped and made into the image of Jesus Christ. You see, Paul won the battle through the Holy Spirit not to be passive or indifferent; not to become weary of the struggle but to fight the good fight.

Do you know someone (maybe it's you) whose struggle was so great they just gave in? They stopped even trying to live for Christ and became convinced that doing the Sunday morning church thing would be sufficient; that God would be fine with some commitment.

Q: *What is the greatest struggle for you in staying focused on living the Christian life?*

Q: *If you have been pulled away by passivity and/or indifference, what will it take for you to get back in the fight?*

I FINISHED THE RACE

2 TIMOTHY 4:7B

Paul was not considered AWOL in the Christian life. He had received a commission from Jesus, and no matter what, he was going to complete the race and finish the assignment. Paul asked the Galatians this, “You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7). What Paul was asking is so easy to experience because Satan is always trying to use one or more of the 4 D’s on us, that is, Distractions, Discouragement, Division, or Deception.

Paul refused to be distracted along the path of his life. The Holy Spirit charted a journey, and then Paul traveled on that journey from place to place as recorded in the book of Acts, starting new churches and encountering great difficulty. He refused to be discouraged even though he tells us all the many difficulties he went through in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 *“...with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.”*

Yet, in spite of these difficulties, he continued to set his sight on the work of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and says he was renewed day after day in spite of all he endured. What helps us to have that kind of grit to stay with it and finish?

Have you ever found yourself active and involved in the Kingdom’s work and then you find yourself far away from where you once had been? Was it the gradual drift? Was it discouragement? Was it a division that happened with someone or with the church when your feelings were hurt? Was it a deception that you started believing that being faithful to Him didn’t matter?

Over the years as a pastor, I have seen many going in the direction that Christ was leading them, serving Him, and fulfilling their purpose but at some point, they stopped running the race. Paul finished the race and he finished strong. I think most of us would desire to leave this life having walked with Christ to the end, but I want to not just finish but to finish strong! I want to be like Caleb in the Old Testament (Joshua 14:6-15) who as an old man was seeking a challenge and not allowing his faith to limp to the finish line but to run all the way through the tape.

Q: *Has one or more of the 4 D’s (distractions, discouragement, division, or deception) caused you to stop running the course?*

Q: *If you are a follower of Christ, is your energy to finish the course growing stronger each year or diminishing?*

I KEPT THE FAITH

❏ 2 TIMOTHY 4:7C

Keeping the faith draws a picture of faithfulness in the area of stewardship. Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:14 “By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.” Paul was not always popular, nor was he always comfortable, but he remained faithful. For him that is what counts. The challenge over the years is keeping that faith growing and strong. Faith leaks! If we don’t exercise our faith and continue to do the things that make it strong, we will find ourselves in low supply of faith. That’s when things get dangerous and doubts get bigger. In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

This verse is not saying that our salvation is earned by our working for it. But once we are saved, our faith life must be worked out like a long mathematics problem, like a physical workout, stretched and built up to be stronger.

What is the result of this faithfulness? In 2 Timothy 4:8 Paul tells us. “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.” There is no fear of facing the righteous Judge, but rather there is a great anticipation of receiving a reward that is most certainly waiting for him. And not just for Paul, but for all those who follow the same path of faithfulness.

Q: *Can I say that my faith in God is stronger than last year, that I trust Him more?*

Q: *Have I allowed my faith to leak? What is the cause?*

Q: *Are my eyes set on the reward to come from the righteous Judge?*

NEXT STEPS

+Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.

Will you be leaving a legacy of obedience and faithfulness for your family? For your church family? For the next generation of the Oakwood family?

I ask you and your family to make a commitment to "Spread Out and Think Big" for Phase 1, which is paying for the additional land. I see it as investing in a legacy of faith in the Lord's church and for the many who will follow us and worship at Oakwood until the Lord comes back. What we do today, just like the Oakwood congregation did for us 35 years ago, will have an impact on future generations and this community. May God see in us what He saw in them!

PRAY

+Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.

- God, help me fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith.
- God, help me leave a legacy of obedience and faithfulness for my family and my church family.
- God, help Oakwood continue to be a church that makes a difference in this community as we use this new land to further Your kingdom.
- God, show me clearly what you would have me give to Phase 1, a legacy of land for the future Oakwood family.

