

FAITHFUL TO THE END

(2 Timothy 4:6-8)

God calls us to faithfully live and die for Christ so that we may receive His eternal reward.

That is the core message of Paul's final words to Timothy and to all of us who believe in and belong to Christ. Paul's dying words recorded in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 provide us with three enduring marks of a faithful life in Christ.

1. A faithful life affirms a _____.

In his final days before he died, the Apostle Paul was consigned as a criminal charged with treason against the emperor. He was regarded as a religious fraud for proclaiming Christ and His gospel. He was deprived of the presence of faithful friends. He was languishing in one of the darkest, filthiest and most hideous prison in ancient Rome. (2 Timothy 1:8; 4:9-16). In the eyes of the unbelieving world, there was nothing glorious about the last days of the Apostle Paul. But in the eyes of God, the death of a Christian is absolutely glorious. Paul does not view his death as a tragic or a dreadful event. On the contrary, he considers his death as a glorious act of offering himself to God and a glorious departure to be with Christ forever (2 Timothy 4:6; Luke 23:46; Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Corinthians 5:8).

2. A faithful life accomplishes its _____.

There is no greater accomplishment in life than to completely fulfill the purpose that God has given us. The overarching purpose of every believer's life is summed up in the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7: "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*" The Christian life is an agonizing battle. It is not a pleasant picnic or an entertaining ride. All true Christians are vigorously engaged every day in this noble war and good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12; Luke 13:24). The Christian life is also a race or course uniquely laid out, personally designed and specifically mapped out for us by God Himself (Hebrews 12:1). There is no greater fulfillment in life than finishing the course and ministry that we receive from our Lord Jesus (Acts 20:24). Furthermore, the purpose of the Christian life is keeping the faith. The secret to living a faithful life is being grounded in God's Word, established in the Christian faith and rooted in the gospel of Christ (2 Timothy 1:13,14; 4:7).

3. A faithful life anticipates _____.

The Christian on his deathbed has a blessed hope and a promising future. As Paul has testified, there is an imperishable crown reserved for all believers in eternity future (2 Timothy 4:8). It is the greatest quality of a crown for it is the eternal crown of perfect and permanent righteousness which will be awarded to us by our Lord Jesus Himself on the glorious day of His return (Philippians 3:20-21).
