

Sermon Notes for July 17, 2016

**Sermon Series on Questioning
God In Our Trials
“Is It Right To Serve God All Of Your
Life And Still Die For The Faith?”
II Timothy 4:6-8**

Introduction

A. We Continue Our Sermon Series on “Questioning God In Our Trials.”

1. Many Christians wonder why these “strange trials” occur in their lives
 - a. “I thought that Jesus promised us an abundant life.”
 - b. “I thought that Jesus said that His burden was light.”
2. What all Christians **must** know is that trials are a vital part of our spiritual growth and sanctification
 - a. **Romans 5:3-4** – “Not only so, but we also **rejoice in our sufferings**, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**”
 - b. **James 1:2-4** – “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, **whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”
 - c. **I Peter 4:12-13** – “**Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.** But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.”
3. What we must realize as Christians is that our trials “cause” us to depend more on Jesus
 - a. trust me, if our lives are always happy and well, we will never run to Jesus
 - b. the fact of the matter is that our trials “**PROVE**” that God is doing a work in our lives!
 - c. Christians actually should “worry” if all is well in your life and you never have trials!

B. Today, We Look At Christians Who Have Given Their Life To Jesus’ Service And Still Suffer

1. You would think that God’s “best;” His PASTORS, MISSIONARIES AND CHRISTIAN WORKERS, would “get a pass” and not go through struggles and trials
 - a. after all, why “burden” His workers who are working for Him?
 - b. ministry is hard enough as it is
2. And yet, that does not seem to be the case
 - a. our subject today is the Apostle Paul

- b. have you ever heard of Paul's thorn in his side?
 - 1. what was it?
 - a. was it a physical struggle?
 - b. many believe that this thorn was partial blindness
 - c. if it was a physical blindness, can you imagine Paul's struggle as a Christian worker?
 - 2. whatever it was, Paul asked God **THREE TIMES** to deliver him from it and God did not
- c. look at "how" the Apostle suffered in his ministry

II Corinthians 11:24-28 – "Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."
- 3. Today, we will look at the life of one of God's greatest servants WHO STILL DIED FOR HIS FAITH!
 - a. **BUT**, despite Paul's most difficult trials
 - b. we learn from this man of God how we, as believers, should deal with our own trials in this life, even if they cause our death!

I. The Reality Of Paul's Present

A. Paul's Life Is Ebbing Away

Vs. 6a– "For I am already being poured out"

- 1. Please note Paul's situation as he wrote this letter to his dear friend Timothy
 - a. Paul was imprisoned in the Mamertine Prison in the bowels of Rome
 - 1. it is said of the Mamertine Prison that it was constructed in the 7th Century B.C. and consisted of a vast network of dungeons **under the city's main sewer**
 - 2. Paul would remain there for at least a year
 - 3. where he would be chained to two Roman guards during his entire time in prison
 - 4. this was a prison that most prisoners never left
 - b. you have to wonder what had Paul done to be thrown into this prison
 - 1. most historians believe that, Emperor Nero blamed the fire in Rome on the Christians
 - 2. and, since Paul was a leader of the Christians in Rome, he was thrown into prison

2. DO YOU REALIZE WHO THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS AND WHAT HE DID FOR THE LORD JESUS?

- a. Paul was saved around **33 A.D.** and immediately began to serve Jesus
 - b. Paul would travel to as many as **50 cities** during his 3-4 missionary journeys (slide)
 - c. some believe that Paul traveled some 7000 miles during his ministry, spreading the gospel to the known world
 - d. of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul wrote 13 and possibly 14 (Hebrews) of them
 - e. Paul served Jesus and His church for some 35 years before his execution by the Romans
 - f. the Apostle Paul
 1. was without a doubt, the greatest missionary the world has ever seen
 2. the ministry of the Apostle Paul changed the entire world
3. and, at this writing, Paul fully realized that his days were numbered on this earth
- a. in fact, Paul said that his life is “already being poured out”
 1. **first**, Paul uses an emphatic pronoun “**I**;”
 2. **second**, he uses a present tense verb to say, “**I am already**”
 3. **third**, he uses a word that suggests that his life will be “poured out” like a drink offering
 - a. in the Old Testament sacrifices, before the sacrifice was made, a red wine was poured on the hot coals and steam would rise for a sweet smell to God before the sacrifice was made
 - b. so, in Paul’s view, his life was to be a sweet smelling sacrifice that was “about” to be placed on the altar for execution
 - b. it is clearly seen from this text that Paul **FULLY** knew that his life was about to be taken from him

B. Paul Is Ready To Depart

Vs. 6 – “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and **the time has come for my departure.**”

1. **HOWEVER, DESPITE PAUL’S BELIEF** that his life is ebbing away, he is “ready for the journey.”
2. in referring to his “departure,” Paul uses the greek word; **analousis**; which has three possible meanings:
 - a. **first**, this word speaks of an army breaking camp to leave the battlefield and head for home

- b. **second**, this word represents a ship hoisting its anchor, raising the sails and leaving the harbor and setting sail to another port
- c. **third**, this word speaks of a man, who is carrying a very heavy burden, who is called to lay his burden down
- 3. whatever Paul meant by this greek word for departure
 - a. he knew that his time to depart from this physical life had come
 - b. and, that he was about to go on another journey
 - c. **and, he was fully ready for the journey**
- 4. **HOWEVER; PLEASE NOTICE WHY PAUL COULD SAY THAT HE WAS READY FOR THIS JOURNEY**
 - a. Paul was ready for the stage of his “second” journey. . .
 - b. **BECAUSE OF THE LIFE THAT HE HAD LIVED IN HIS “FIRST JOURNEY!”**
 - 1. while Paul was on this earth, he had lived a “sold out” life for Jesus
 - 2. Paul would not look back on how he lived his life on this earth with any regret
 - 3. so, let us look at how Paul lived his life on this earth.

II. The Remembrance Of Paul’s Past

A. Paul Had Fought The Good Fight

Vs. 7a – “I have fought the good fight,”

- 1. please notice that the Apostle Paul considered his life on this earth as being in “a fight”
 - a. for most of us, we would not consider that we are fighting our way through it
 - b. our lives may be hard, but it would not be a fight.
 - c. Paul **DID** consider his life on this earth to be a fight and he used these words to reveal that fight:
 - 1. **agonizomai**
 - a. to enter a contest
 - b. to **labor fervently**
 - c. to contend in a sport
 - d. to struggle with difficulties and dangers
 - e. to **agonize**
 - 2. **kalos**
 - a. beautiful, handsome
 - b. choice, useful, suitable
 - c. **magnificent**
 - d. **praiseworthy, noble**
 - 3. **agon**
 - a. **conflict**, fight, contention
 - b. fighting in an arena or stadium

- d. these three greek words go together: “**agonizomai kalos \ agon.**”
 1. **John MacArthur** says the greek should actually read: **“I have agonized the agony.”**
 2. for Paul, his ministry for Jesus and his life as a Christian was indeed “a fight”
2. this was a battle that Paul had been waging since he was first saved
 - a. Paul had a fight **against his own sinful flesh**
 1. a flesh that wants to give in to fleshly desires
 2. **Romans 7:15** – “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”
 - b. Paul had a fight **in the ministry with other Christians**
 1. please do not think that ministry is “all fun and games”
 2. inasmuch as every Pastor has a sinful nature, every Christian has a sinful nature and many Christians are very difficult to deal with
 3. books written about this struggle with Pastors with their people:
 - a. Well Intentioned Dragons
 - b. Antagonists In The Church
 - c. Pastor Abuse: When Sheep Attack Their Shepherd
 - c. Paul had a fight **against Satan** as he served in ministry
 1. Satan’s goal on this earth is to destroy, kill and confuse the church in any way that he can
 2. Satan will attack EVERYONE, especially those in full-time ministry
3. now, let me ask you a very deep question about your life on this earth; what are **you** fighting for?
 - a. it is my belief that people are fighting “something” on this earth
 1. is your “fight” a fight to be successful, popular, comfortable and well-respected?
 2. are you “fighting” to be financially secure?
 3. **OR**, does your “fight” involve the gospel of Jesus Christ and are you “fighting” for Jesus every day of your life?
 4. as Paul faced his death, he could look back on his life and feel good about his time on this earth because he had fought the “good fight”; the **fight of the gospel of Jesus Christ**
 - b. one of these days, each of us will face death: will you be able to look back on your life and say with Paul that you had fought “the good fight” or just “your fight?”

B. Paul Had Finished The Real Race

Vs. 7 – “I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the race.**”

1. Paul not only saw the Christian life as a fight, he also saw it as a race
 - a. Paul apparently was a real sports fan, for he often used illustrations in his teaching of fights and races
 - b. and, while I do believe that there were often short races or sprints in Paul’s day, I do not believe that Paul was referring to a short sprint but a marathon
 - c. after all, the Greeks were the ones who created the marathon: “In 490 B.C., the Athenians won a crucial and decisive battle over the forces of King Darius I of Persia on a plain near the small Greek coastal village of Marathon. One of the Greek soldiers ran nonstop from the battlefield to Athens to carry the news of victory. But he ran with such unreserved effort that he fell dead at the feet of those to whom he delivered the message. The marathon races that are so popular today are named for that same battlefield. They also are a tribute to the soldier, the length of the run being based on the approximately distance (just over 26 miles) that he ran in his last maximum effort for his country.”
2. I am not a runner and have never been a runner
 - a. but, I have talked to those who have run marathons of 26.2 miles
 1. my neighbor has run the Boston Marathon as well as other marathons
 2. there is apparently a part of a marathon where you have to just grin and bear it until you get your “second wind”
 3. likewise, there are times in the Christian life where you will have “let downs” and must get your “second wind.”
 - b. folks, trust me, the Christian life is a marathon and not a sprint
 1. some of you are wondering when things are going to get easier in your Christian life, for you are ready for the trials and hardness to be over
 2. let me ask you; what part of a 26.2 miles marathon would you **enjoy?**
 - a. I cannot imagine training for a marathon
 - b. I cannot imagine running a marathon
 - c. the two words that I would use to describe running a marathon would be “**long and hard**”
3. AND, PLEASE NOTICE, that Paul said that he had “**finished the race**”
 - a. Paul did not just compete in the race, **HE FINISHED THE RACE!**

- b. the greek word for finish is **telos**
 - 1. the meaning, to:
 - a. finish, fulfill
 - b. accomplish
 - c. perform
 - 2. it is the same word that Jesus Christ screamed as He was dying on the cross: **TETELSTAI!**
 - a. IT IS FINISHED!
 - b. IT IS OVER, PAID, FULFILLED!
- 4. **it is my belief that only true, born again believers will finish the Christian race**
 - a. yes, many will “start” the race, and then realize that the race:
 - 1. is not a sprint, but a marathon
 - 2. and, it is hard
 - b. while the true believer will settle in and walk with Jesus through this Christian life that will be a hard, long marathon
 - c. if you, as a Christian, have been through many trials and are still walking with Jesus, you are a saved individual.

C. Paul Had Kept The Faith

Vs. 7 – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

- 1. the last thing that Paul said that he had finished was that he had “kept the faith”
- 2. it is most interesting to see the meaning of the greek word for kept
 - a. it is the greek word; **tereo**
 - 1. to keep, **preserve**, watch
 - 2. to **hold fast**
 - 3. to **attend to carefully**
 - 4. to **observe**
 - b. **DO YOU SEE WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING BY USING THIS PARTICULAR GREEK WORD?**
 - 1. our Biblical faith is something that we must:
 - a. watch
 - b. preserve
 - c. and, attend to carefully
 - 2. you will never endure as a Christian if you do not “take care of your faith”
 - a. what does Paul himself say **MUST BE DONE** if Christians are to “**keep the FAITH?**”
Romans 10:17 – “So, then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”
 - b. look how Paul prayed for the continued faith of the Ephesian church:

Ephesians 1:15-17 – “For this reason, ever since **I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus** and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.**”

3. according to the Apostle Paul, how did **he** keep the faith?
 - a. did God just give Paul “a greater amount of faith” than he gave to other Christians?
 - b. no, the Apostle “got his faith” from the same place that other Christians “get their faith;”
FROM THE WORD OF GOD!
 1. I can continue my walk with Jesus because of one thing: staying in the Word of God
 - 2, I can continue my preaching ministry because of one thing: I stay in the Word of God
 3. I can continue to “want to serve” His church and His people because of one thing: because I stay in the Word of God
4. **IF YOU DO NOT MAKE A DAILY PRACTICE OF SPENDING CONSISTENT TIME IN GOD’S WORD, YOU WILL NOT “KEEP YOUR FAITH”**
 - a. because the Word of God is where you get your faith
 - b. that was true for the Apostle Paul, that is true for me, and that is true for all believers.

III. The Readiness Of Paul’s Future

A. Paul Would Get His Reward

Vs. 8a – “**Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

1. what excited the Apostle Paul the most, despite his impending death, was that; after a life of ministry and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul would receive his crown
 - a. please note that Paul does **not** use the greek word diadem for the crown that he would receive
 1. the greek word **diadem** was the crown of a King; a King who ruled over his people

2. this is the word used in Revelation 19:12 of the many crowns that Jesus will wear in heaven
Revelation 19:12 – “His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns (diadem). He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself.”
 - b. no, this crown that Paul would receive is the greek word; **stephanos**
 1. seen as a laurel wreath that would be given to the winner of a race
 2. a wreath that would be conferred on the winner by the one who had the right to confer that crown
 - c. so, this was a crown that Paul would be “given” at the end of “his race”
2. **PLEASE NOTICE ALSO THAT PAUL CALLED HIS CROWN A “CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!”**
- a. in Greek, Paul calls the crown that he will receive a “**stephanos of dikaiosune**”
 1. “**a crown of righteousness**”
 2. please notice “where else” this greek word, dikaiosune, is used in Scripture; as written by Paul:
 - a. **Romans 3:21-24** – “But now a **righteousness from God**, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **and are justified** freely by His grace **through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**”
 - b. **II Corinthians 5 :21** – “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so **that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.**”
 - c. EE illustration
Isaiah 53:6 – “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; **and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**”
 3. according to the Apostle Paul, this “stephanos of dikaiosune” is **A CROWN FROM GOD!**
 - a. this was **NOT** a crown of Paul’s own righteousness
 - b. because, despite all of his life of ministry, Paul was still a sinner who needed Jesus.

b. **PAUL ALSO SAYS THAT THIS CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE PLACED ON PAUL BY JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!**

Vs. 8b – “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

1. the greek word for **award** is very, very interesting:
 - a. to deliver
 - b. to **pay off**
 - c. to **discharge what is due**
 - d. to **render an account**
2. there are two beautiful conclusions about this word: **award:**
 - a. **first**, this “award,” this crown of righteousness, is Jesus’ own payment for our sins
 - b. **second, AND, JESUS THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL BE THE ONE WHO PLACES THIS CROWN ON PAUL’S HEAD!**
 - c. so, Jesus, who **made** the payment for Paul’s sins, is **THE JUDGE** who places this crown of righteousness on Paul! **HOW SECURE SHOULD PAUL FEEL?**

B. Christians Will Get Their Reward

Vs. 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.”

1. now, inasmuch as the Apostle Paul was awarded his crown of righteousness by Jesus Himself
 - a. **SO WILL THE BELIEVER! ! !**
 - b. please notice the word **NOT** in verse 8
 1. Paul is saying, “I will **NOT** be the only one who gets a crown of righteousness, for Paul uses the greek, **ABSOLUTE NEGATIVE – NOT JUST ME**
 2. no, Paul says; **EVERY BELIEVER IN JESUS WILL RECEIVE HIS VERY OWN CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AS WELL!**
 - a. please, please realize that this is **not** the crown of “your righteousness”
 - b. no, it is the crown of Christ’s righteousness
2. and, just as Jesus Christ placed the crown of righteousness on Paul’s head, so will Jesus Christ place His crown of righteousness on your head when **you** get to heaven

Conclusion

1. Let me ask you a question: was the Apostle Paul a wonderful, faithful servant of Jesus Christ?
 - a. did Paul faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ by taking the gospel of Jesus all over the world?
 - b. so, did the Apostle Paul “deserve” to be treated so harshly, especially the way that he spent his last days in the bowels of Rome in the Mamertine Prison?
 1. shackled to Roman soldiers 24 hours a day
 2. languishing in that prison for at least a year
 3. and eventually beheaded, with his body being thrown out the back door of the prison into the Tiber River just like a piece of dead fish?

2. **WHY DID THE APOSTLE PAUL, WHO HAD SERVED GO SO WELL AND SO FAITHFULLY, SUFFER THE WAY THAT HE DID?**
 - a. whatever the reason, we know that some of God’s most faithful servants are not spared from times of trial
 - b. even, an ignominious death

3. **HOWEVER, HOW DID THE APOSTLE PAUL ADDRESS HIS IMPENDING DEATH?**
 - a. according to Paul, he was “moving on”; going to a better place
 - b. maybe Paul was remembering the “first time” that he went to heaven
II Corinthians 12:2-4 – “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know - God knows. And I know that this man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows - was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”
 - c. perhaps, Paul was saying, “I can’t wait to go back to heaven

4. Christian, from today’s text, the Apostle Paul teaches us how to live our lives on this earth, even during some of our greatest, most difficult trials:
 - a. **first**, Paul fought the “**right fight**”
 1. he did not fight to for himself, to fight for his rights,
 2. no, he fought the “good fight”; for the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. **second**, Paul ran the “**right race**”
 1. he did not run the “rat race”
 - a. the race for success
 - b. the race to be the winner in life
 - c. the race for money, fame or self
 2. no, Paul ran the race that **REALLY MATTERED**, the race of the gospel, the race to represent Jesus at every opportunity that he had while he was on this earth
 - c. **third**, Paul kept the “**right faith**”
 1. he did not live to build faith in himself or work so that others would

have faith in him

2. no, Paul constantly strived to be filled with Godly, Biblical, faith so that he could live in the power of the Holy Spirit for Jesus
5. And, now, the Apostle Paul, because he had run “such a good race:”
 - a. is spending a glorious eternity in heaven
 - b. with a crown of righteousness on his head; placed on his head by the final judge and jury; Jesus Christ
6. “After forty years of faithful service to the Lord as a missionary to Africa, **Henry Morrison** and his wife were returning to New York. As the ship headed to the dock, Henry said to his wife, “**Look at that crowd. They haven’t forgotten about us.**” However, unknown to Henry, the ship also carried President Teddy Roosevelt, returning from a big game hunting trip in Africa. Roosevelt stepped from the boat, with great fanfare. People were cheering, flags were waving, bands were playing and reporters waited eagerly for his comment. **Henry and his wife slowly walked away, unnoticed.** The couple hailed a cab, which took them to the one bedroom apartment which had been provided by the mission board.

Over the next few weeks, Henry tried, but failed to put the incident behind him. He was sinking deeper into depression when one evening, he said to his wife, “**This is all wrong. This man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody throws him a big party. We give our lives in faithful service to God for all these many years, but no one seems to care.**”

His wife cautioned him that he should not feel this way. Henry replied, “**I know you’re right, but I just can’t help it. It just isn’t right.**”

His wife then said, “Henry, you know God doesn’t mind if we honestly question Him. You need to tell this to the Lord and get this settled now. You’ll be useless in His ministry until you do.”

Henry Morrison then went to his bedroom, got down on his knees and, he began pouring out his heart to the Lord. “**Lord you know our situation and what’s troubling me. We gladly served you faithfully for years without complaining. But no God, I just can’t get this incident out of my mind. . . .**”

After about ten minutes of fervent prayer, Henry returned to the living room with a peaceful look on his face. His wife said “It looks like you’ve resolved the matter. What happened?”

Henry replied, “The Lord settled it for me. I told Him how bitter I was that the President received this tremendous homecoming, but no one even met us as we returned home. When I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said, “**But Henry, you are not home yet!**”

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1. Many Christians wonder why these “strange trials” occur in their lives
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 - b. “I thought that Jesus said that His burden was light.”
2. What all Christians **must** know is that trials are a vital part of our spiritual growth and sanctification
 - a. **Romans 5:3-4** – “Not only so, but we also **rejoice in our sufferings**, because we know that **suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.**”
 - b. **James 1:2-4** – “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, **whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.** Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”
 - c. **I Peter 4:12-13** – “**Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.** But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed.”
3. What we must realize as Christians is that our trials “cause” us to depend more on Jesus
 - a. trust me, if our lives are always happy and well, we will never run to Jesus
 - b. the fact of the matter is that our trials “**PROVE**” that God is doing a work in our lives!
 - c. Christians actually should “worry” if all is well in your life and you never have trials!

B. Today, We Look At Christians Who Have Given Their Life To Jesus’ Service And Still Suffer

1. You would think that God’s “best;” His PASTORS, MISSIONARIES AND CHRISTIAN WORKERS, would “get a pass” and not go through struggles and trials
 - a. after all, why “burden” His workers who are working for Him?
 - b. ministry is hard enough as it is
2. And yet, that does not seem to be the case
 - a. our subject today is the Apostle Paul

- b. have you ever heard of Paul's thorn in his side?
 - 1. what was it?
 - a. was it a physical struggle?
 - b. many believe that this thorn was partial blindness
 - c. if it was a physical blindness, can you imagine Paul's struggle as a Christian worker?
 - 2. whatever it was, Paul asked God **THREE TIMES** to deliver him from it and God did not
- c. look at "how" the Apostle suffered in his ministry

II Corinthians 11:24-28 – "Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches."
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 - a. **BUT**, despite Paul's most difficult trials
 - b. we learn from this man of God how we, as believers, should deal with our own trials in this life, even if they cause our death!

I. The Reality Of Paul's Present

A. Paul's Life Is Ebbing Away

Vs. 6a– "For I am already being poured out"

- 1. Please note Paul's situation as he wrote this letter to his dear friend Timothy
 - a. Paul was imprisoned in the Mamertine Prison in the bowels of Rome
 - 1. it is said of the Mamertine Prison that it was constructed in the 7th Century B.C. and consisted of a vast network of dungeons **under the city's main sewer**
 - 2. Paul would remain there for at least a year
 - 3. where he would be chained to two Roman guards during his entire time in prison
 - 4. this was a prison that most prisoners never left
 - b. you have to wonder what had Paul done to be thrown into this prison
 - 1. most historians believe that, Emperor Nero blamed the fire in Rome on the Christians
 - 2. and, since Paul was a leader of the Christians in Rome, he was thrown into prison

2. DO YOU REALIZE WHO THE APOSTLE PAUL WAS AND WHAT HE DID FOR THE LORD JESUS?

- a. Paul was saved around **33 A.D.** and immediately began to serve Jesus
 - b. Paul would travel to as many as **50 cities** during his 3-4 missionary journeys (slide)
 - c. some believe that Paul traveled some 7000 miles during his ministry, spreading the gospel to the known world
 - d. of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul wrote 13 and possibly 14 (Hebrews) of them
 - e. Paul served Jesus and His church for some 35 years before his execution by the Romans
 - f. the Apostle Paul
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 2. the ministry of the Apostle Paul changed the entire world
3. and, at this writing, Paul fully realized that his days were numbered on this earth
- a. in fact, Paul said that his life is “already being poured out”
 1. **first**, Paul uses an emphatic pronoun “**I**;”
 2. **second**, he uses a present tense verb to say, “**I am already**”
 3. **third**, he uses a word that suggests that his life will be “poured out” like a drink offering
 - a. in the Old Testament sacrifices, before the sacrifice was made, a red wine was poured on the hot coals and steam would rise for a sweet smell to God before the sacrifice was made
 - b. so, in Paul’s view, his life was to be a sweet smelling sacrifice that was “about” to be placed on the altar for execution
 - b. it is clearly seen from this text that Paul **FULLY** knew that his life was about to be taken from him

B. Paul Is Ready To Depart

Vs. 6 – “For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and **the time has come for my departure.**”

1. **HOWEVER, DESPITE PAUL’S BELIEF** that his life is ebbing away, he is “ready for the journey.”
2. in referring to his “departure,” Paul uses the greek word; **analousis**; which has three possible meanings:
 - a. **first**, this word speaks of an army breaking camp to leave the battlefield and head for home

- b. **second**, this word represents a ship hoisting its anchor, raising the sails and leaving the harbor and setting sail to another port
- c. **third**, this word speaks of a man, who is carrying a very heavy burden, who is called to lay his burden down
- 3. whatever Paul meant by this greek word for departure
 - a. he knew that his time to depart from this physical life had come
 - b. and, that he was about to go on another journey
 - c. **and, he was fully ready for the journey**
- 4. **HOWEVER; PLEASE NOTICE WHY PAUL COULD SAY THAT HE WAS READY FOR THIS JOURNEY**
 - a. Paul was ready for the stage of his “second” journey. . .
 - b. **BECAUSE OF THE LIFE THAT HE HAD LIVED IN HIS “FIRST JOURNEY!”**
 - 1. while Paul was on this earth, he had lived a “sold out” life for Jesus
 - 2. Paul would not look back on how he lived his life on this earth with any regret
 - 3. so, let us look at how Paul lived his life on this earth.

II. The Remembrance Of Paul’s Past

A. Paul Had Fought The Good Fight

Vs. 7a – “I have fought the good fight,”

- 1. please notice that the Apostle Paul considered his life on this earth as being in “a fight”
 - a. for most of us, we would not consider that we are fighting our way through it
 - b. our lives may be hard, but it would not be a fight.
 - c. Paul **DID** consider his life on this earth to be a fight and he used these words to reveal that fight:
 - 1. **agonizomai**
 - a. to enter a contest
 - b. to **labor fervently**
 - c. to contend in a sport
 - d. to struggle with difficulties and dangers
 - e. to **agonize**
 - 2. **kalos**
 - a. beautiful, handsome
 - b. choice, useful, suitable
 - c. **magnificent**
 - d. **praiseworthy, noble**
 - 3. **agon**
 - a. **conflict**, fight, contention
 - b. fighting in an arena or stadium

- d. these three greek words go together: “**agonizomai kalos \ agon.**”
 1. **John MacArthur** says the greek should actually read: **“I have agonized the agony.”**
 2. for Paul, his ministry for Jesus and his life as a Christian was indeed “a fight”
2. this was a battle that Paul had been waging since he was first saved
 - a. Paul had a fight **against his own sinful flesh**
 1. a flesh that wants to give in to fleshly desires
 2. **Romans 7:15** – “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”
 - b. Paul had a fight **in the ministry with other Christians**
 1. please do not think that ministry is “all fun and games”
 2. inasmuch as every Pastor has a sinful nature, every Christian has a sinful nature and many Christians are very difficult to deal with
 3. books written about this struggle with Pastors with their people:
 - a. Well Intentioned Dragons
 - b. Antagonists In The Church
 - c. Pastor Abuse: When Sheep Attack Their Shepherd
 - c. Paul had a fight **against Satan** as he served in ministry
 1. Satan’s goal on this earth is to destroy, kill and confuse the church in any way that he can
 2. Satan will attack EVERYONE, especially those in full-time ministry
3. now, let me ask you a very deep question about your life on this earth; what are **you** fighting for?
 - a. it is my belief that people are fighting “something” on this earth
 1. is your “fight” a fight to be successful, popular, comfortable and well-respected?
 2. are you “fighting” to be financially secure?
 3. **OR**, does your “fight” involve the gospel of Jesus Christ and are you “fighting” for Jesus every day of your life?
 4. as Paul faced his death, he could look back on his life and feel good about his time on this earth because he had fought the “good fight”; the **fight of the gospel of Jesus Christ**
 - b. one of these days, each of us will face death: will you be able to look back on your life and say with Paul that you had fought “the good fight” or just “your fight?”

B. Paul Had Finished The Real Race

Vs. 7 – “I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the race.**”

1. Paul not only saw the Christian life as a fight, he also saw it as a race
 - a. Paul apparently was a real sports fan, for he often used illustrations in his teaching of fights and races
 - b. and, while I do believe that there were often short races or sprints in Paul’s day, I do not believe that Paul was referring to a short sprint but a marathon
 - c. after all, the Greeks were the ones who created the marathon: “In 490 B.C., the Athenians won a crucial and decisive battle over the forces of King Darius I of Persia on a plain near the small Greek costal village of Marathon. One of the Greek soldiers ran nonstop from the battlefield to Athens to carry the news of victory. But he ran with such unreserved effort that he fell dead at the feet of those to whom he delivered the message. The marathon races that are so popular today are named for that same battlefield. They also are a tribute to the soldier, the length of the run being based on the approximately distance (just over 26 miles) that he ran in his last maximum effort for his country.”
2. I am not a runner and have never been a runner
 - a. but, I have talked to those who have run marathons of 26.2 miles
 1. my neighbor has run the Boston Marathon as well as other marathons
 2. there is apparently a part of a marathon where you have to just grin and bear it until you get your “second wind”
 3. likewise, there are times in the Christian life where you will have “let downs” and must get your “second wind.”
 - b. folks, trust me, the Christian life is a marathon and not a sprint
 1. some of you are wondering when things are going to get easier in your Christian life, for you are ready for the trials and hardness to be over
 2. let me ask you; what part of a 26.2 miles marathon would you **enjoy?**
 - a. I cannot imagine training for a marathon
 - b. I cannot imagine running a marathon
 - c. the two words that I would use to describe running a marathon would be “**long and hard**”
3. AND, PLEASE NOTICE, that Paul said that he had “**finished the race**”
 - a. Paul did not just compete in the race, **HE FINISHED THE RACE!**

- b. the greek word for finish is **telos**
 - 1. the meaning, to:
 - a. finish, fulfill
 - b. accomplish
 - c. perform
 - 2. it is the same word that Jesus Christ screamed as He was dying on the cross: **TETELSTAI!**
 - a. IT IS FINISHED!
 - b. IT IS OVER, PAID, FULFILLED!
- 4. **it is my belief that only true, born again believers will finish the Christian race**
 - a. yes, many will “start” the race, and then realize that the race:
 - 1. is not a sprint, but a marathon
 - 2. and, it is hard
 - b. while the true believer will settle in and walk with Jesus through this Christian life that will be a hard, long marathon
 - c. if you, as a Christian, have been through many trials and are still walking with Jesus, you are a saved individual.

C. Paul Had Kept The Faith

Vs. 7 – “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

- 1. the last thing that Paul said that he had finished was that he had “kept the faith”
- 2. it is most interesting to see the meaning of the greek word for kept
 - a. it is the greek word; **tereo**
 - 1. to keep, **preserve**, watch
 - 2. to **hold fast**
 - 3. to **attend to carefully**
 - 4. to **observe**
 - b. **DO YOU SEE WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING BY USING THIS PARTICULAR GREEK WORD?**
 - 1. our Biblical faith is something that we must:
 - a. watch
 - b. preserve
 - c. and, attend to carefully
 - 2. you will never endure as a Christian if you do not “take care of your faith”
 - a. what does Paul himself say **MUST BE DONE** if Christians are to “**keep the FAITH?**”
Romans 10:17 – “So, then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”
 - b. look how Paul prayed for the continued faith of the Ephesian church:

Ephesians 1:15-17 – “For this reason, ever since **I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus** and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. **I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better.**”

3. according to the Apostle Paul, how did **he** keep the faith?
 - a. did God just give Paul “a greater amount of faith” than he gave to other Christians?
 - b. no, the Apostle “got his faith” from the same place that other Christians “get their faith;”
FROM THE WORD OF GOD!
 1. I can continue my walk with Jesus because of one thing: staying in the Word of God
 - 2, I can continue my preaching ministry because of one thing: I stay in the Word of God
 3. I can continue to “want to serve” His church and His people because of one thing: because I stay in the Word of God
4. **IF YOU DO NOT MAKE A DAILY PRACTICE OF SPENDING CONSISTENT TIME IN GOD’S WORD, YOU WILL NOT “KEEP YOUR FAITH”**
 - a. because the Word of God is where you get your faith
 - b. that was true for the Apostle Paul, that is true for me, and that is true for all believers.

III. The Readiness Of Paul’s Future

A. Paul Would Get His Reward

Vs. 8a – “**Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

1. what excited the Apostle Paul the most, despite his impending death, was that; after a life of ministry and serving the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul would receive his crown
 - a. please note that Paul does **not** use the greek word diadem for the crown that he would receive
 1. the greek word **diadem** was the crown of a King; a King who ruled over his people

2. this is the word used in Revelation 19:12 of the many crowns that Jesus will wear in heaven
Revelation 19:12 – “His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns (diadem). He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself.”
 - b. no, this crown that Paul would receive is the greek word; **stephanos**
 1. seen as a laurel wreath that would be given to the winner of a race
 2. a wreath that would be conferred on the winner by the one who had the right to confer that crown
 - c. so, this was a crown that Paul would be “given” at the end of “his race”
2. **PLEASE NOTICE ALSO THAT PAUL CALLED HIS CROWN A “CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!”**
- a. in Greek, Paul calls the crown that he will receive a “**stephanos of dikaiosune**”
 1. “**a crown of righteousness**”
 2. please notice “where else” this greek word, dikaiosune, is used in Scripture; as written by Paul:
 - a. **Romans 3:21-24** – “But now a **righteousness from God**, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **and are justified** freely by His grace **through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.**”
 - b. **II Corinthians 5 :21** – “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so **that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.**”
 - c. EE illustration
Isaiah 53:6 – “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; **and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**”
 3. according to the Apostle Paul, this “stephanos of dikaiosune” is **A CROWN FROM GOD!**
 - a. this was **NOT** a crown of Paul’s own righteousness
 - b. because, despite all of his life of ministry, Paul was still a sinner who needed Jesus.

b. **PAUL ALSO SAYS THAT THIS CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE PLACED ON PAUL BY JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!**

Vs. 8b – “which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

1. the greek word for **award** is very, very interesting:
 - a. to deliver
 - b. to **pay off**
 - c. to **discharge what is due**
 - d. to **render an account**
2. there are two beautiful conclusions about this word: **award:**
 - a. **first**, this “award,” this crown of righteousness, is Jesus’ own payment for our sins
 - b. **second, AND, JESUS THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL BE THE ONE WHO PLACES THIS CROWN ON PAUL’S HEAD!**
 - c. so, Jesus, who **made** the payment for Paul’s sins, is **THE JUDGE** who places this crown of righteousness on Paul! **HOW SECURE SHOULD PAUL FEEL?**

B. Christians Will Get Their Reward

Vs. 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.”

1. now, inasmuch as the Apostle Paul was awarded his crown of righteousness by Jesus Himself
 - a. **SO WILL THE BELIEVER! ! !**
 - b. please notice the word **NOT** in verse 8
 1. Paul is saying, “I will **NOT** be the only one who gets a crown of righteousness, for Paul uses the greek, **ABSOLUTE NEGATIVE – NOT JUST ME**
 2. no, Paul says; **EVERY BELIEVER IN JESUS WILL RECEIVE HIS VERY OWN CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AS WELL!**
 - a. please, please realize that this is **not** the crown of “your righteousness”
 - b. no, it is the crown of Christ’s righteousness
2. and, just as Jesus Christ placed the crown of righteousness on Paul’s head, so will Jesus Christ place His crown of righteousness on your head when **you** get to heaven

Conclusion

1. Let me ask you a question: was the Apostle Paul a wonderful, faithful servant of Jesus Christ?
 - a. did Paul faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ by taking the gospel of Jesus all over the world?
 - b. so, did the Apostle Paul “deserve” to be treated so harshly, especially the way that he spent his last days in the bowels of Rome in the Mamertine Prison?
 1. shackled to Roman soldiers 24 hours a day
 2. languishing in that prison for at least a year
 3. and eventually beheaded, with his body being thrown out the back door of the prison into the Tiber River just like a piece of dead fish?

2. **WHY DID THE APOSTLE PAUL, WHO HAD SERVED GO SO WELL AND SO FAITHFULLY, SUFFER THE WAY THAT HE DID?**
 - a. whatever the reason, we know that some of God’s most faithful servants are not spared from times of trial
 - b. even, an ignominious death

3. **HOWEVER, HOW DID THE APOSTLE PAUL ADDRESS HIS IMPENDING DEATH?**
 - a. according to Paul, he was “moving on”; going to a better place
 - b. maybe Paul was remembering the “first time” that he went to heaven
II Corinthians 12:2-4 – “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know - God knows. And I know that this man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows - was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.”
 - c. perhaps, Paul was saying, “I can’t wait to go back to heaven

4. Christian, from today’s text, the Apostle Paul teaches us how to live our lives on this earth, even during some of our greatest, most difficult trials:
 - a. **first**, Paul fought the **“right fight”**
 1. he did not fight to for himself, to fight for his rights,
 2. no, he fought the “good fight”; for the gospel of Jesus Christ
 - b. **second**, Paul ran the **“right race”**
 1. he did not run the “rat race”
 - a. the race for success
 - b. the race to be the winner in life
 - c. the race for money, fame or self
 2. no, Paul ran the race that **REALLY MATTERED**, the race of the gospel, the race to represent Jesus at every opportunity that he had while he was on this earth
 - c. **third**, Paul kept the **“right faith”**
 1. he did not live to build faith in himself or work so that others would

have faith in him

2. no, Paul constantly strived to be filled with Godly, Biblical, faith so that he could live in the power of the Holy Spirit for Jesus
5. And, now, the Apostle Paul, because he had run “such a good race:”
 - a. is spending a glorious eternity in heaven
 - b. with a crown of righteousness on his head; placed on his head by the final judge and jury; Jesus Christ
6. “After forty years of faithful service to the Lord as a missionary to Africa, **Henry Morrison** and his wife were returning to New York. As the ship headed to the dock, Henry said to his wife, “**Look at that crowd. They haven’t forgotten about us.**” However, unknown to Henry, the ship also carried President Teddy Roosevelt, returning from a big game hunting trip in Africa. Roosevelt stepped from the boat, with great fanfare. People were cheering, flags were waving, bands were playing and reporters waited eagerly for his comment. **Henry and his wife slowly walked away, unnoticed.** The couple hailed a cab, which took them to the one bedroom apartment which had been provided by the mission board.

Over the next few weeks, Henry tried, but failed to put the incident behind him. He was sinking deeper into depression when one evening, he said to his wife, “**This is all wrong. This man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody throws him a big party. We give our lives in faithful service to God for all these many years, but no one seems to care.**”

His wife cautioned him that he should not feel this way. Henry replied, “**I know you’re right, but I just can’t help it. It just isn’t right.**”

His wife then said, “Henry, you know God doesn’t mind if we honestly question Him. You need to tell this to the Lord and get this settled now. You’ll be useless in His ministry until you do.”

Henry Morrison then went to his bedroom, got down on his knees and, he began pouring out his heart to the Lord. “**Lord you know our situation and what’s troubling me. We gladly served you faithfully for years without complaining. But no God, I just can’t get this incident out of my mind. . . .**”

After about ten minutes of fervent prayer, Henry returned to the living room with a peaceful look on his face. His wife said “It looks like you’ve resolved the matter. What happened?”

Henry replied, “The Lord settled it for me. I told Him how bitter I was that the President received this tremendous homecoming, but no one even met us as we returned home. When I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put His hand on my shoulder and simply said, “**But Henry, you are not home yet!**”