

Dear Friend,

The apostle Paul knew he was about to be martyred when he wrote his final letter to Timothy. Paul said something that I would love to have as my final testimony:

2Ti 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

Recently I was doing a word study on the original Greek language in that verse, and I discovered something incredible. When Paul says he has “kept” the faith, he used a Greek word that is very similar to the Hebrew word God used when He told Adam to “keep” the garden of Eden. Both words mean: “to watch, to guard from loss.” The Hebrew word is even more descriptive because it carries the image of a “hedge of thorns” to keep out thieves and predators.

What did Paul say he was guarding and protecting from loss? “The faith.” What does he mean by “the faith?” Keeping everything in context, take a look at the verses leading up to verse seven:

2Ti 4:1-6 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; (2) Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (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; (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (5) But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. (6) For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

“The faith” is “the truth” contained in the Word of God. Paul “kept” the faith by holding fast to the “sound doctrine” contained in the Word of God. He guarded it. He protected it. He did not allow false teachers to come into the churches and change the sound doctrine that he preached. Paul knew his time on earth was coming to an end and he was passing the torch to his protégé Timothy.

Timothy had spent years learning the truth by traveling with Paul and listening diligently to him as he preached. He came to the place he knew the truth, the sound doctrine, “the faith” of the gospel as well as the apostle Paul himself.

2Ti 3:10 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

The doctrine Paul taught was “fully known” by Timothy. Now it was Timothy’s turn to fight the good fight, to finish his course, and to keep (guard and protect from loss) the sound doctrine of the faith. It takes courage to do that. Many people oppose the truth of the gospel. They will come against you in every way possible to get you to compromise the truth. It is in this same, final letter to Timothy that Paul writes:

2Ti 1:7 For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Timothy would have to stand up against false teachers the same way Paul had to stand against them. In Paul’s first letter to Timothy, he specifically instructed Timothy that “no other doctrine” was to be taught in the church other than that which Paul had fought so hard to guard and protect.

1Ti 1:3-4 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, (4) Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

Did you catch that? “No other doctrine” was to be taught. Paul was saying to Timothy, “Fight to keep sound doctrine. Keep it. Guard it. Protect it. Don’t allow anybody to change it.” Paul goes so far as to say that people who change the pure doctrine of “the faith” are blasphemers who should be turned over to Satan, so they learn not to blaspheme:

1Ti 1:18-20 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; (19) Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: (20) Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

We are living in a day when false teachers abound in the body of Christ. It is as though “the faith” no longer exists. Good is called evil. Evil is called good. People are so confused they don’t even know if they are male or female. Does not this passage perfectly describe the age we are living in?

2Ti 3:1-9 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (3) Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, (4) Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; (5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (6) For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, (7) Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (8) Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. (9) But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

Paul was beheaded by the government of his day because of his unrelenting stand for preaching the sound doctrine of the faith. He warns his protégé Timothy to not be intimidated by fear, but rather to do the same thing Paul did ... Fight the good fight, finish your course, and keep the faith. Guard it. Protect it with your life if need be.

Now it is our turn. Will we surrender to the peer pressure of the day? Will we compromise the pure doctrine of “the faith” in order to escape persecution? God forbid! Let us hold fast to the teachings of Him Who suffered and died for us. Let us press toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus the same way the early believers did. Keep the faith. Fight for it. Guard it. Protect it from loss, even if it costs you your earthly life. There is a crown of righteousness laid up for those who do.

2Ti 4:7-8 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (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.

Your Friend and co-laborer,

Gary