

J.J.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT
2 Timothy 4:6-8

(Pray for tithes and love offering)

INTRODUCTION

Two incidents have prompted me to preach this sermon again by God's grace.

First, the attack on Ukraine where there are also many Christians there.

Trivia :

1. Ukraine is called the "Bible Belt" of Eastern Europe.
2. Evangelical Hub

"hub of evangelical church life, education and missions." -

3. Key Supplier of Missionaries, Center of Evangelical Training and Press Printing for all the countries in the former U.S.S.R. (Soviet Union)

Source : Eastern Europe's Evangelical Hub, Christianity Today Magazine, January 2008

Here are some of the message from pastors there :

"I and all ministers stay in Kyiv," "We continue our intercessory prayers, talk to people to reduce panic, and help those in need." - Yuriy Kulakevych, foreign affairs director of the Ukrainian Pentecostal Church.

"Please pray for disciple-making in the country, safety for our people, and generosity in the midst of war," Vadym Kulynchenko of Our Legacy Ukraine Church

From Kyiv Theological Seminary

"Generating panic through the spread of manipulative false information is exactly what the enemy seeks," a communications professor wrote on Tuesday. "This war is not as much for our territories, as it is for our soul and our mind."

On Thurs, KTS cited Isaiah 41:10 as it urged its Facebook audience "not to panic, but to remember how many times God in His Word says 'don't be afraid.'" The seminary noted that fear equals paralysis, while prayer, trust in God, and love of neighbor all give strength.

*Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Second :

My wife and I with Mica visited Riverview Bible Camp yesterday. By God's grace, the owners of Allen and Marie was there. They were just picking up the last of their equipment.

You have to remember, that is their ministry. They weren't charging market prices in their camp so that churches will have a place for retreats and summer camps. A lot of people were saved there. Some of you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour there. Melanie even mentioned that God used that place for her to love and know Jesus Christ more. Some of you were even baptized there and finally declared you belong to Jesus.

They kept on operating that even if Allen had a stroke and it was only his wife with the help of his son who ran the place.

Our last activity there was the winter retreat in February Family Day 2020 and then the pandemic hit in March 2020. It was a huge financial constraint for them, plus the deteriorating health of Allan.

Here's the email that they sent in March 15, 2021 a year after the pandemic hit.

Greetings,

We trust that you all are keeping well and that you have seen God working in your ministries even during these challenging times. We are sending this letter to those of you that have come to the camp in the last couple of years to let you know what is happening.

Early in 2020, we were looking forward to a full year at the camp with the camp booked up for the year. We had recently borrowed a large sum of money to do some renovations to the kitchen which included a commercial dishwasher. Some groups used it in January, February and March and it worked very well. No one has been at the camp now for a year when we had to stop because of Covid.

In the past year a lot has happened in our personal lives. Allan has not been well, with respiratory problems, and for the last few months he has been dealing with stomach problems. We had been trying to deal with mold issues in our old farm house for some time with no success. We decided to move out of the house in the spring. We lived in an RV trailer for the summer and have been living at the camp in trailer #17 for the last four months.

Last summer we emptied out the house. We threw out much of our furniture, clothes, books, etc. and salvaged what we could. We also sold all the animals in December.

For some time now we have been praying for God's direction as to what we should do with the camp and our own personal lives. We need to do something about housing. Allan is not well enough to take care of the farm and the camp, so we will not be rebuilding on the farm.

Since housing prices have gone up so much in the past year, we have decided to buy a lot and build a house. We will be hiring the trades people for the project.

We have decided that we will no longer be operating Riverview Bible Camp and will be selling the farm and camp. It wasn't an easy decision to make after hearing many testimonies of how God has changed many lives after coming to the camp. It has been a privilege working with many of you over the years. The only way it was possible to run programs at the camp was with the dedication and hard work of many people.

May God bless you and your ministries,

Allan and Mairie

Now the reason why I gave these two examples is because, the people in Ukraine are fighting the good fight of faith.

Allan and Marie fought the good fight of faith.

And I want to encourage you that whatever is happening in your life right now, to fight the good fight of faith.

2 Timothy 4: 6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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.

Pray

Background :

It is said that this is the last letter of Paul. He was writing this inside a dungeon. He knew he was about to go home to the Lord. He was writing his last instructions to Timothy (huling habilin). After writing his last instructions, he was telling Timothy, he knew he has finished well.

The reason why he knew he finished well because when our Lord called him, he lived his life for God.

2 Timothy 4: 6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near.

What is a drink offering? In the Old Testament, there will be a morning and evening sacrifice where they will sacrifice a lamb at the altar, what happens is the priest will pour wine into the altar fire while they're doing the sacrifice. The mixture of the fire, the animal being sacrificed and the wine poured into the fire, provides a soothing aroma to the Lord. (Ex 29:40; Num 15:4-5)

Paul knew that the life he lived was a pleasing aroma to God.

This is the reason why Paul was ready to depart.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near

Did you notice that Paul didn't say "my death is near" but said "my departure is near"?

Etymology : analuses (setting sail) or used as "unyoking"

Illustration : Most of us have been to an airport and have seen people in the departure area. You will see people hugging and saying goodbye and crying. You will see people anticipating their flight. You will see people excited about their flight.

Paul is excited simply because he knows he lived a life for Jesus here.

He will be hearing those sweet words from our Lord,

Matthew 24:23 'Well done, good and faithful servant!'

Now how do we finish strong? The Word of God has given us the outline

1. FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

I have fought the good fight

I like Paul because he is a sports fan. Some of his analogies are related to boxing, racing and wrestling.

The question is what is the good fight ?

As Christians, what is worth fighting for?

The Bible says in

1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith.

Etymology : pistis "set of belief"

Remember we have an enemy who would always try to either destroy or distort THE TRUTH

This is why the our Lord Jesus calls Satan, the father of lies. And it's going to be a fight.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

2 Corinthians 10:4 We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.

What is the weapon that Bible is telling us here?

THE TRUTH!!!

Illustration : Fill your mind with the Word of God.

One time while travelling to Montreal, I was explaining to my daughter Rebecca, that our mind is like a muscle, the default of this muscle is to worry, to think negative thoughts, to get angry, to be malicious and etc. That's default. It's like our default setting is it's just easier for us to sit down on the couch, get the remote and do Netflix all day and it takes discipline to dress up and exercise.

Now in order for the lies to get out of our brains, we need to replace it with the truth.

How? It's like a glass of full of dirty water and the only way to replace is to fill it with lots of clean water on it.

What is the truth?

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

The Word of God is the Truth. JESUS IS THE TRUTH.

And when you know the truth and believe the truth, Jesus said,

John 8:32 And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

And what is the most important truth, that we should fight for?

1 Corinthians 15: 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

The reason why I'm telling this, is because sometimes Christian fight for a lot of things but let's not forget the main thing that we should be telling people about THE FIRST IMPORTANCE— Christ died for our sins and He freed us from this sin and the proof that He freed us from sin is he rose again from the dead and one of these days, He will come back again to judge the living and the dead.

NOW IF WE DO THIS, IF WE SHARE THIS – THAT'S A GOOD FIGHT.

IT'S SOMETHING WORTH FIGHTING FOR...IT'S SOMETHING WORTH DYING FOR.

That's the reason, it's easy to invite people to a club than to go to church. I understand. Fight that good fight. It's easy to gossip to people about other people than to tell people about Christ. Fight that good fight. It's easy to comfort people by saying, "Good luck" instead of telling them "God bless you and I will pray for you." - Fight the good fight and you will finish strong.

2. FINISH THE RACE

I have finished the race,

This is common sense. We cannot finish strong or well if we don't finish the race.

And there will be lots of times that the enemy will throw everything at us so that we won't finish the race.

In the preceding verses Paul shows us some of the things that happen in our lives that the enemy can utilize to not finish well OR sometimes not even finish the race.

- **Deception**

He will deceive you with worldly pleasures instead of waiting for eternal pleasures.

2 Timothy 4: 10 for Demas, because he loved this world,

- **Disappointment**

This disappointment will surely come from people around you and sometimes from the one who is supposed to be a fellow believer.

2 Timothy 4:10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me

14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message

- **Discouragement – the one tool that people think is not coming from the devil.**

It's either discouragement because people disappointed you or because of trials.

16 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them.

But look at what the Lord did? He gave Paul the strength to continue with the race.

*17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me **the message might be fully proclaimed** and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth.*

***How to finish the race?**

Focus on the prize

Philippians 4: 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Illustration : Horses are easily distracted and easily scared. That's the reason why in a race, horses wear blinders.

As Christians we should be focused on Jesus Christ.

If we focus on Jesus Christ, we will finish the race. The encouragement of our Lord...

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

FLORENCE CHADWICK STORY WHO GAVE UP ON FIRST TRY

It was a fog-shrouded morning, July 4, 1952, when a young woman named Florence Chadwick waded into the water off Catalina Island. She intended to swim the channel from the island to the California coast. Long-distance swimming was not new to her; she had been the first woman to swim the English Channel in both directions.

The water was numbing cold that day. The fog was so thick she could hardly see the boats in her party. Several times sharks had to be driven away with rifle fire. She swam more than 15 hours before she asked to be taken out of the water. Her trainer tried to encourage her to swim on since they were so close to land, but when Florence looked, all she saw was fog. So she quit. . . only one-mile from her goal.

Later she said, "I'm not excusing myself, but if I could have seen the land I might have made it." It wasn't the cold or fear or exhaustion that caused Florence Chadwick to fail. It was the fog.

Two months after her failure, Florence Chadwick walked off the same beach into the same channel and swam the distance, setting a new speed record, because she could focused on the land.

Which now brings us to the last principle of finishing well.

3. KEEP THE FAITH

I have kept the faith

This is definitely connected with finishing the race.

This means continue to believe in what God has revealed in your life. Continue to trust our Lord Jesus Christ is alive and that the Holy Spirit is guiding you.

You need to only stay in the race. We need to focus on Jesus Christ...

*Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And **let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.***

The Word of God is saying that if we follow Christ and focus on Christ, He will make sure we will get the prize.

Illustration : BEN HUR

In the movie Ben-Hur, there is a chariot race. Charlton Heston, representing the Christian community, is the driver of a team of three horses. Driving three horses is a difficult task. He finally catches on and tells the director, William Wyler, I can drive these horses now, but I might not be able to win the race.

Wyler responds. "Just stay in the race, I will make sure you win."

That's what the director of the Universe is telling us right now, stay in the race and He'll make sure you get the prize.

What is the prize?

Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me

Now I won't attempt to explain what this crown is but I know from what the Bible tells, this is a crown given to those who have trusted and kept their faith in in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Romans 1:17 "The righteous shall live by faith."

This is the reason, Paul said, "Fight the good fight of the faith, finish the race, keep the faith." FAITH IS THE REASON WHY YOU WILL FINISH STRONG. Faith is the fuel THAT WILL KEEP YOU IN FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT. But what is the motivation?

Now, let me show the grand motivation of Paul for finishing strong. I CALL THIS THE GRAND MOTIVATION. It means, this should be our motivation in everything that we do.

OUR GREATEST PURPOSE IS TO GLORIFY GOD BUT THIS IS OUR GRAND MOTIVATION

and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Etymology : Longed "agapao" love,

That's why other versions translated this for those who "loved his appearing."

The grand motivation in everything we do should be our "Love for Christ" That one of these days, we will see Him again.

Remember, what I told you earlier, that Paul was excited to "depart" from this world. It's because finally he knows that he will see the One who loves him so much – that is Jesus Christ.

Illustration : I remember the time that I was travelling so much, 3 or 4 days a week, I will be in a different city in the States. I love the travelling. The new sights, the food but I always said, "The best part of travelling is coming home." It's because that when I'll see my wife again.

For us Christians, we enjoy this world, we work for His kingdom, but the best part for us is one of these days, we know that we will be seeing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ again – that in itself is the biggest motivation we can ever have.

Now, let me go back again to Allan and Marie.

For years, they have invested their life and their money in building the kingdom of God.

One of the last words I said to Marie, *"God has used you to bless a lot of people."*

While on our way home, while everyone was crying in the car, my wife and I then talked and said something in this context , “Wow, imagine their reward in heaven.... dami nilang points...” Yes, specially when they meet our Lord Jesus Christ face to face.

That’s why to my brother or sister, I encourage, you to fight the good fight of faith.

I was hearing Dr. Charles Stanley and he was talking about faith and he said, *“The sin is not that a person has little faith...the sin is when he gives up.”*

Fight the good fight of faith. Continue to live for Jesus Christ. Continue to put your faith in Him. Continue to share Him to others. Continue to give back to the Kingdom of God.

Imagine the rewards in heaven. Imagine the joy in our Lord’s face when we meet Him that you fought the good fight of faith.

I love the lyrics and I hope we sing that in our end song :

*And I would give the world to tell Your story
Cause I know that You've called me
I know that You've called me*

*I've lost myself for good within Your promise
I won't hide it
I won't hide it*

*Jesus, I believe in You
And I would go to the ends of the earth
To the ends of the earth*

*For You alone are the Son of God
And all the world will see
That You are God
You are God*

This is worth fighting for.

Ask them to sing...make it your prayer.

BENEDICTION

S.G.D.