

**Letters From My Father**  
**Week 12**  
**1 Timothy 4:11-16**  
**“Finish Strong”**

**Introduction**

***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. There is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved His appearing.***  
**2 Timothy 4:7-8**

I once heard a pastor say, “The measure of your Christian faith will be based not upon how well you start, but upon how well you finish.” I agree wholeheartedly with this sentiment. When Christ speaks of those who will inherit a crown of righteousness, He speaks of those who finish well, not necessarily those who begin at a fast pace. The Christian walk is a marathon, not a sprint. A truth we would do well to remember. Endurance, is the proof positive that a person’s salvation is genuine.

***“In the same way, the one who conquers will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name before my Father and before his angels.***  
**Revelation 3:5**

Remember that just a few weeks ago we spoke about those who leave the faith as apostates? These are people who do not commit themselves to Christ with their whole heart, and therefore, at the first sign of difficulty they abandon the faith. I listened to the message of an evangelist just this week, and he pointed out something that I thought was very interesting. He said that over the past century, the message of the gospel has been changed in order to make it more palatable, and therefore, it actually encourages people to fall away from the faith. For you see, up until the last fifty years or so, the message of the gospel was that all men were sinners in the sight of a Holy and Righteous God. And as such, we have been condemned to perish by His wrath.

***For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our LORD.***  
**Romans 6:23**

But somewhere along the way, someone (a false teacher) decided that this message was too offensive, so it was changed in order to compel more people to “profess Christ”. They went from telling the truth about needing to be saved from the hell we so richly deserve, to telling people that God loves them just as they are, and by simply saying they believe in Jesus, they will have a prosperous and easy life filled with nothing but blessings and love.

Is it any wonder that when persecutions come, so many abandon their half-hearted commitment to Christ? These modern day doctrines of demons are being fed to the masses. And they will not lead to salvation. Genuine salvation will spring from the belief that Christ is God, and the subsequent longing to follow Him and obey Him as God, as a result of this belief. This means that we turn away from the things that Christ says are sinful, and we wholeheartedly obey His teaching in spite of hardship.

When Paul wrote his letters to Timothy in Ephesus, he wanted to encourage the young man to finish what he had begun in the faith. We can discern by reading their correspondence, that Timothy was not a very strong man. In fact, he seems rather frail, and if he did not rely upon The Spirit, to guide him in Ephesus, he was destined to fail. Paul wanted to remind and exhort the young pastor of the calling that God had placed upon his life at such an early age. He wanted Timothy, his son in the faith, to “finish strong”. And as we read his words of encouragement, we are able to glean for ourselves the means to do the same. All Believers should long to hear the words of Christ say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” So today, let us finish this two-part list of things that we need do in order to finish strong. Timothy charged Paul to *Be a Pattern* for others, to *Be Passionate* in his work for Christ and to *Persevere* in the faith.

**Be a Pattern (vs. 11-12)**

**Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.**

**1 Timothy 4:11-12**

For the sake of more sufficient study, our modern day printed *Bibles* are broken down by chapter and verse, and in some cases even further broken down into subsections. This is the case in the CSB for this passage. It is set apart under a new heading as if it is the beginning of a new section of thought to be distinguished from what has been read prior. However, this is not the case, and therefore, **verse eleven** is simply a continuation of all that Paul has said previously. In short, he is charging Timothy to preach and teach all the things that he has mentioned up to this point. Admonishing the people to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of their calling and to avoid any false teaching that asserts otherwise.

There is a shift in tone with this verse however. For earlier in **verse six**, Paul instructed Timothy to “set these truths out before the congregation”. It was as if he was comparing the teaching of sound doctrine to setting a table filled with choice foods. In **verse eleven**, the command is more forceful as he compels his young protegee to “**command and teach**” these things. To be a preacher is not only to speak truth, but also to instruct those who follow Christ that he has commanded us to obey. *The road will not always be easy, but the true servants of The Master are expected to be obedient nonetheless.*

Paul also understands that for Timothy to be forceful in his presentation of God's Word, he will need to be respected by his congregants. This would certainly not be an easy task for a young man such as he was. At the time, Timothy was in his mid thirties, and there would be plenty of older men in the congregation who would resent this young man giving commands from the pulpit. So Paul gave Timothy the perfect formula for earning the respect of those who may look down upon him. And what was this formula exactly? To live in such a way that he proved in practice what he preached.

Paul instructs young Timothy to be an “example” for the Believers in Ephesus. The word that he used for “*example*” is a word that he has used in his other writings. *Typos*” (pronounced too'-pos) in the Greek is a word used for an indelible mark or stamp. It is the same word that Thomas used when he said that he would never believe in the resurrection, until he had seen for himself the “*typos*” marks in Jesus' hands and side.

Paul also used this same word to describe the faith of the Christians at Thessalonica, telling them that they had become a “*typos*” to all the Believers in Macedonia, meaning that they were living examples of Christ-likeness for all to observe. Here we see him giving Timothy this same advice, to become a living example of Christ, so that all could see the genuine marks of Christianity in his every day life. This, and this alone, would win the respect of those who were his elders within the body. If you want someone to take your faith seriously, then ***you*** have to take your faith seriously.

Paul lists five things that Timothy must do in order to live out his faith to become a pattern (example) for Believers to follow. First, in his speech (*logos* Gk. meaning *godly speech*). A person of genuine faith must allow the character of Christ to be evident in the things that he says. A slanderer, or someone who has a dirty mouth, or an uncontrollable tongue will never be able to convince others that he is being led by The Spirit.

Secondly, Timothy's walk must match his talk, as it were. Paul uses the Greek *anastrophe* (pronounced an-as-trof-ay') which means “*manner of living*” to emphasize that if a Believer does not live out the things that he says, then no one will ever respect him. We are to practice what we preach. Christianity is not a “do as I say and not as I do” kind of faith. If we have been changed, we will live a changed life.

Thirdly, Paul commends Timothy to be a man of love (*agape* in the Greek), which simply means that the love of Christ must be ever present in his words and deeds. The genuine Believer warns others of the dangers of sin, not for some self-righteous gratification, but rather, out of a genuine desire to see those that we love to find grace and be reconciled to God. We are to warn them of danger, as a parent warns a child, because we only want the best for them.

Fourthly Paul speaks of faith (*pistis* in the Greek). Meaning that Timothy's genuine faith in Christ must be evident for all to see. For the double-minded man is unstable in all that he does (**James 1:5-7**). To be a man of faith is the only way to lead others to be like-minded. The actions of Timothy's life must bear out that he was walking by faith and not by sight.

**Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him.**  
**Hebrews 11:6**

And finally, Paul commands Timothy to live in purity (*hagneia* in the Greek), which is a reference to his personal holiness. Ephesus was a sexually immoral city, and Timothy was a young man. And there would be plenty of sexual temptations that would have been intended by the enemy to lure him astray. Today, we see so many Christian leaders who have themselves fallen into sexual immorality.

I personally was on staff at a very large church where the senior pastor allowed himself to be lured into sin in such a way. And I witness firsthand the damage that was done to the congregation as a result. I was the associate pastor, who had remained in the church in order to "pick up the pieces", as it were, and I learned a valuable spiritual lesson. When a person falls into sin, it isn't just he who is affected. The faith of many can be injured by a leader's moral failure. I saw this firsthand, and I never want to bring such pain upon any congregation that I have been given the privilege to lead. As Believers, we are called to live in moral purity. For we represent a Holy God and are called "Christian" after His Holy Son. If you desire to earn the respect of others, then you must be a "typos" for them. They must see in you, the marks of Christ

**From now on, let no one cause me trouble, because I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.**  
**Galatians 6:17**

### **Be Passionate (vs. 13-15)**

**Until I come, give your attention to public reading, exhortation, and teaching. Don't neglect the gift that is in you; it was given to you through prophecy, with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Practice these things; be committed to them, so that your progress may be evident to all.**  
**1 Timothy 4:13-15**

We do not know if Paul ever made it back to Ephesus, but of one thing we can be certain. He wanted the Word to be preached to those people. And the reason he had sent Timothy there in his stead was because the young man had been given the gift of teaching by The Holy Spirit upon his conversion. This gift had been evident not only to Paul, but to all of the elders who participated in the young man's ordination into the ministry.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Timothy was not a very tough guy. God often uses the weak things of this world for His glory (**1 Corinthians 1:27-30**). And Timothy most definitely qualified in this regard. We can discern from Paul's letters that he had some physical ailments (**1 Timothy 5:23**). And we may discern from the wording of these verses that the young pastor was considering abandoning the ministry and neglecting his spiritual giftings. Paul admonished the him to continue in the manner in which he had begun. Paul wanted Timothy to finish strong.

He commanded Timothy to practice and be committed to the calling he had received from the beginning. The words he uses are "*meletao*", which means ponder or meditate upon, and "*isthi*", which carries with it the meaning of being wholly devoted to something. In other words, Paul was commanding that his son in the faith be ever consumed with a passion for his calling. It is not enough to be a "casual" minister of the gospel. The calling of Christ is to be a passion that consumes us. We are to exemplify the fire of The Spirit in our zeal to represent Christ and His truth. A pastor who displays a divided heart will

never accomplish anything. Far too many so-called Believers these days seem to possess a part-time faith, when it suits them. The child of God is to be passionate for the One Who loved them and gave Himself for them (**Ephesians 5:2**). Or as Paul would say:

**I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.** **Galatians 2:20**

Now *that*... is passion!

### **And Persevere (vs. 16)**

**Pay close attention to your life and your teaching; persevere in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.** **1 Timothy 4:16**

No one could have a better grasp of Paul's doctrine than Timothy, for he had been with Paul in Corinth, when the great apostle had composed his epistle to the Romans. The book of *Romans* is "Christianity 101", and we know that Timothy was alongside Paul when he penned this great declaration of the faith, for Paul himself tells us that he was (**Romans 16:21**). Therefore, Timothy knew what he had believed, and as such, he was immensely qualified to share his faith with others. But in order for him to effectively share this great faith, he must not only live it, but persevere in it, as well. By doing so, others could witness his own personal journey of faith so that his "**progress may be evident to all**" (**vs 15**).

For you see, the Christian journey through this life is not a sprint, but rather, a marathon. And it matters far more how one finishes the race, than how they begin. If Timothy desired to have a lasting impact on those whom he had been chosen to lead, then he would need to finish strong. I am told that if one endeavors to climb Mount Everest, as he gets closer to the summit, he will see firsthand strewn alongside the narrow trail, the frozen bodies of those who failed in their endeavors to reach the top of the mountain. The same is sadly true for many who start out in Christian ministry. When hard times come, they abandon their calling and fall by the wayside.

If we fail to finish strong, we become a stumbling block for those who follow our lead. We must remain faithful, not only for our own benefit, but for theirs as well. This is what Paul means when he speaks of Timothy's perseverance, in order to save himself, as well as others. He isn't speaking necessarily of the salvation of his soul, but rather, being saved from falling by the way side or being led astray either by lust, false teaching, or simply just personal discouragement. The path we have been called to walk is strewn with pitfalls and snares. We must pay careful attention, so that we are not pulled away from this our noble calling.

I once heard a pastor tell his congregation, "Your life may very well be the only *Bible* that someone will ever read. So make sure you walk in the power and grace of The LORD Jesus Christ." Compelling... is it not? For you see, it isn't just you whose life is affected by sin and disobedience, it is those around you who were looking to you as an example to follow. So *be a pattern, be passionate* about your walk *and persevere*. Live in a way that shows others the way. Or as Paul would say:

**Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.** **1 Corinthians 11:1**

**TRUTH!!!**