

Sermon Notes

Practical Lessons for Understanding the Word of God



The Courage to Face Danger and Death

KEY PASSAGE: 2 Timothy 4:6-8 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: Acts 9:1-6, 18-20 | 1 Corinthians 3:11-17
2 Corinthians 11:23-27 | 2 Timothy 1:7; 4:5, 9-17 | Hebrews 9:27

SUMMARY

At some point in our lives, we will probably encounter dangerous situations, and eventually we'll all face death.

Therefore, it's important that we be prepared to respond with confidence and trust in God. As Christians we have a basis for courage that other people don't have. No matter what happens, we know the Lord is always with us, He's the source of our strength, and our ultimate destiny is heaven.

SERMON POINTS

The apostle Paul experienced many dangers during his lifetime, and as he wrote his last letter to Timothy, he was soon going to face death. Knowing that Timothy would experience similar challenges, Paul encouraged him with these words: "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Paul's life was an amazing example of perseverance through dangers, suffering, and threats of death. According to 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, he experienced imprisonments, beatings, scourgings, shipwrecks, and dangers from travel, weather, robbers, the Jews, the Gentiles, and false brethren. Having courageously lived through all these hardships, Paul had a platform of authority for his message to Timothy.

Descriptions of Courage

- Courage is a quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to meet danger and death or face opposition or the challenges of life with fearlessness, calmness, and firmness.

- Courage is doing what we are afraid to do.
- Courage is fear that has said its prayers.
- Courage is fear that holds on one more minute.

This is the type of courage Paul had, and the kind God wants all of us to possess. As His people we have no reason to be afraid because He lives within us and will bring us through every situation—even death.

The Reasons for Paul's Courage

At the end of this letter to Timothy, Paul gave his personal testimony, which reveals why he was willing to face suffering, danger, and death.

- **His Redemptive Experience on the Damascus Road.** Earlier in his life, Paul, who was then called Saul, was a zealous persecutor of the church. Having received permission from the Jewish leaders to go to Damascus to imprison more believers, he was on his way when a light from heaven suddenly flashed around him. As he fell to the ground, he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). Saul asked, "Who are You, Lord?" and the voice answered, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (v. 5). This was the turning point in Paul's life. He was converted from a vicious persecutor of the church to Christ's appointed messenger of the gospel. Since he knew Jesus, Paul was now willing to suffer persecution and death in order to obey Him.
- **The Race He'd Run As a Follower of Jesus.** After his conversion, Paul's goal was to spread the gospel, knowing that it had eternal consequences. That's why he was willing to face suffering, rejection, and persecution as he walked obediently with Jesus. Even when he was close to death, he faced it

courageously, knowing that he had successfully run the race Christ had given him (2 Tim. 4:7).

- **“I have fought the good fight.”** Paul continually met opposition from those who refused to believe his message about Christ. But even though they stoned, imprisoned, and beat him, he kept declaring the gospel that saved him on the Damascus road.
- **“I have finished the course.”** Paul likened the Christian life to a race and knew that he had accomplished all that the Lord had called him to do. Despite all the hardships, he never gave up, but continued to follow Jesus obediently until the day of his death.

Like Paul, we too have a course to run that has been individually chosen for us by God. Since He doesn't call all of us to accomplish the same things, we can't compare our lives with someone else's. Our aim should be to stay faithful and obedient to Him in whatever He's planned for us and to run the race with endurance until the last day of our lives.

- **“I have kept the faith.”** The truths that Paul learned from the Lord he faithfully passed on to everyone who would listen. This was the treasure he entrusted to Timothy so that he could carry it forward into the coming generation. And this same gospel message is still being proclaimed today. We each have the responsibility to keep the faith, defend it, and pass it on to the next generation.

The Reward Awaiting Him After Death

“In the future there is laid up 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 loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Since Paul had lived an obedient life, faithfully carrying out the ministry Christ had given him, he was confident that his death would not result in loss but in reward.

And the same is true for each of us who follow his example by fighting the good fight, finishing our

course, and keeping the faith. In heaven, our works will be evaluated by God for the purpose of rewards. Since He is perfect and knows everything about us, we can trust that He will judge righteously. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11-17, our works will be tested by fire to reveal their true value. Those that burn up like wood, hay, and straw will not be worthy of a reward. However, those that are truly valuable will be like gold, silver, and precious stones that can withstand the fire. For these deeds we will be rewarded.

The Remembrance That God Was With Him

As Paul closed his last letter to Timothy, he recounted the hardships, mistreatments, and abandonment he'd endured as he neared the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:9-16). However, he concluded with these words: “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth” (v. 17). Paul knew that God was always with him no matter how people treated him or what dangerous situations he experienced. He courageously faced death knowing that the Lord would bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom. And as believers, we have this same promise to give us hope and courage until the day we take our last breath.

RESPONSE

- How prepared do you feel to face danger or death? What promises from God's Word would silence your fears and give you the courage you need?
- Like Paul, do you feel confident that you are fighting the good fight, finishing your course, and keeping the faith? How does his example motivate you to live more faithfully for the Lord?

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