

**THE QUADATHLON!**  
**4 EVENTS!**  
**2 TIMOTHY CH4:1-8**

***"We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God"* John Stott.**

**Remember** we talked about the “context” meaning the circumstances that formed the setting, where we ask the “What, Who, Where, Why, When and How.” In order to help us, we will continue to go over every week the following:

The key to understanding 2 Timothy lies in recognizing Paul’s altered circumstances. He is no longer free to pursue his task of proclaiming the gospel to the gentiles. Arrested (probably in Troas Ch4:13) and now a prisoner in Rome (Ch1:16-17; 2:9). Having already undergone a preliminary hearing (Ch4:16-18) and awaiting his final trial, from which he has little hope of anything except death (Ch4:6-8). Some have ministered to his needs (Ch1:16-18), others have gone out on ministries (Ch4:10,12) and at least one has abandoned him (Ch4:10). Meanwhile the situation in Ephesus has worsened with some deserting the gospel (Ch1:15) and despite his previous excommunication (1 Timothy Ch1:20) of Hymenaeus, he is still at work overthrowing the faith of many (Ch2:17-18). In the midst of these circumstances Paul sends his second letter to Timothy.

Timothy meanwhile is facing pressures from within the church Ch1:8 – distance and shame of the Gospel and its servants, Ch1:15 – desertion, Ch2:17-18 - wandering from the truth, Ch3:8 – men who are opposing the truth.

Running alongside this, Timothy is facing pressures from outside the church – Ch3:11-12 + Ch4:14-15 in the form of persecution. It is these circumstances that form the setting for Timothy, and because of these circumstances, he may not complete what God has asked him to do (Ch4:5)!

**ILLUSTRATION**

In the decathlon the first day consists of: 100m, long jump, shot put, high jump and 400m. The second day's events are 110m hurdles, discus, pole vault, javelin and 1500m. The Christian faces a similar race, as they walk with Christ!

**THE PRESENT EVENT! V6**

Just like a decathlon, Paul has in mind a “quadathlon”, 4 events, in view of Christ's coming v1, the world's dislike of preaching v3-4, Paul's imminent death v6 and the crown of righteousness v8, and says to Timothy - **PREACH THE WORD!**

“For I am already .....” Paul, knowing that his death is imminent looks back over the past 30 years of his life! Departure – meaning the untying of an animal, the releasing of a prisoner, the packing up of a tent, and the untying of a boat from its moorings so that it can sail off towards another adventure! So he draws open the “curtains” of his past 30 years as a Christian!

Paul lifts the curtain on his own life and ministry and suffering! He does this in verses 6–8. But, just as we would expect, this experience of Paul's is not the main point of the text.

It's an argument for the main point. We can see that because verse 6 begins with "for" or "because." "For (because) I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." My death is at hand, Timothy, my course is finished, my reward awaits me just over the hill.

Verse 5: "As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry." *Because*, Timothy, I have done what I am telling you to do: I have fulfilled *my* ministry, finished *my* course, fought the good fight; and I want you to know that, as you face yours, finishing well is worth it. A crown of righteousness awaits us. Not just me, Timothy (verse 8), the crown awaits all who have loved the appearing of the Lord. That includes you. So don't give up. Fulfil your ministry (verse 5).

So we can see the structure of verses 5–8. Verse 5 is the big main imperative, "DISCHARGE all the duties of your ministry (including being sober-minded, and enduring suffering, and doing the work of an evangelist) — complete your ministry. Paul's experience is that: I have fulfilled my ministry, and as I stand at death's door, I want you to know: It's worth it. The reward I am about to receive is incomparable. The victor's wreath that is about to be put on my head at the end of this race (1<sup>st</sup> Cor Ch9:24-25), is worth all the discipline, all the "training in righteousness," all the suffering and all the pain!

***So, Timothy, endure suffering, and complete the ministry Christ has given you. That's the flow of thought in verses 5–8.***

### **THE PAST EVENT! V7**

Three times Paul uses "I have" as he looks back over his 30 year life as a Christian.

Paul clearly understood his calling, ***Acts Ch20:24 – finish the race + Acts Ch23:11 – Witness in Rome***, and saw the task as a race to be run and completed. This race is a life race! It is walking with Christ through life on earth, living for Christ and using all of one's talents from Christ for Christ!

In chapter 3, verse 15, he said to Timothy that the Scriptures "are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." And when you have faith in somebody, it means you take them at their word, you count on them to live up to what they say, you trust their counsel, you have confidence in their promises.

When Paul said, "I have kept the faith," he meant, therefore, "I have kept on taking Christ at His Word, I have kept on counting on what He said, I have kept on trusting His counsel, I have kept on having confidence in His Promises."

Faith in Christ Jesus, therefore, is most fully explained as faith in His Word. Of course, this will include confidence that through His death He purchased the forgiveness for our sins, because he said, "The Son of Man came to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark Ch10:45). And, of course, faith in His Word will include confidence that

His resurrection gives us eternal hope, because He said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John Ch11:25). And, of course, faith in His Word includes confidence in His present power to work for us, because he said, "My grace is sufficient for you; my power is made perfect in weakness" (2nd Cor Ch12:9). If we were to focus on any of these—Christ's death, His resurrection, His power—and say, "This is what you must have confidence in, in order to be saved," we would be saying something true, but incomplete.

Saving faith is a joining of ourselves to Christ as one who is wholly trustworthy, One who has infinite integrity and infinite power and who therefore will do all that He said. If we say that we have confidence in His death for the forgiveness of our sins but we continually act as though much of what He promised is untrue (e.g., the promise that if you seek the kingdom first, all other necessities will be added to you), then we are not trusting Christ.

***Now we can ask what these pictures of the race and the fight illustrate.***

What is involved in keeping the faith, if it is like a race and a fight? The first thing we can say is that keeping the faith must be hard. There must be some sort of stress and strain and discomfort involved. Boxers get hit in the face, and runners push themselves to the limit of tolerance, and both train for long, monotonous hours. Therefore, keeping the faith must involve some sort of stress and discomfort like this.

The way that leads to life, or to the crown of righteousness as Paul put it here in our text, is like a marathon in the Himalayas, or twelve rounds with a heavyweight champion. It is hard!

But how do we square this with Matthew Ch11:28-30, where Jesus says,

"Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is *light*."

So, if you yoke up with Jesus, it is easy. How can it be easy *and* hard?

The answer is that the thing required by God is intrinsically easy, but the contrary condition of the human heart makes it hard.

What could be easier than faith? What could be easier than to stop trying to work our way to heaven and simply rest in the free grace of God and the power of Jesus Christ?

What could be easier than trusting God to make us secure and happy, rather than rising early and going late to bed, eating the bread of anxious toil? And yet, all that assumes that our hearts are willing. But they are not.

***So when Paul says that keeping the faith is like a fight and a race, he reminds us that there remains in all of us enough of the old nature to make faith a struggle. It is not always easy to trust the Word of Christ because there remains in us that old tendency to trust ourselves, to lean on our own understanding, and to seek our own glory. That is the first thing implied in the pictures of the fight and the***

*race: keeping the faith, keeping on taking Christ at His Word and trusting His Promises is hard as long as our old self-reliant nature rears its ugly head.*

The second thing implied especially in the image of the race is that we must endure to the end in faith, or we will not gain the crown. "I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up a crown of righteousness for me." You can run five miles, ten miles, or twenty miles in a marathon, but if you don't cross the finish line, you don't get the crown. This is taught in many places in the New Testament. In Matthew Ch10:22 + Ch24:13, Jesus warns that his disciples will be threatened by persecution and says,

"But he who endures to the end will be saved."

***Then John, when he wrote the Revelation, repeated this again and again: 2:7, "To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." 2:10, "Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life." 2:11, "He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death." 3:5, "He who conquers shall be clad in white garments and I will not blot his name out of the book of life."***

So, the work of an apostle, and to a lesser extent of every preacher and teacher, is pictured as fighting the good fight, running the race and keeping the faith (guarding a treasure!)

### **THE FUTURE PRIZE EVENT! V8**

A day will come, when the next generation of leaders has to step into the shoes of the current generation of leaders for the Gospel to be safeguarded!

But what else can motivate Timothy and the future preachers and teachers?

Paul keeps his eyes focused on the prize to come. Paul calls it "the crown of righteousness" whereas James (Ch1:12) calls it the "crown of life" and Peter refers to it as (1 Peter Ch5:4) the crown of glory.

The righteous judge, JESUS CHRIST, not the unrighteous judge Nero, will award the crown to Paul in Glory! We are not entirely sure what the crown will consist of, but can be sure it is awarded by the righteous judge **JESUS CHRIST, TO ALL WHO HAVE LONGED FOR HIS APPEARING.** We can be sure that we will be like Christ and have everlasting life, and no longer be affected, touched or drawn to sin!

### **APPLICATION**

What does Christ want you to do?

How are you competing?

How do you prioritise living for Christ?

Are you living in light of the prize to come?