

Sunday 13th September 2020 10 am

A life well lived!

Welcome and new coronavirus instructions.

Opening Scripture	Ps 100:1-3
Hymn	mp 109 Crown Him with many crowns
Scripture Reading	Ps 16
Prayer / testimony	
Reading	2 Tim 4:6-8
Hymn	mp 67 Breathe on me breath of God
Sermon	A life well lived!
Hymn	mp 143 Fight the good fight
Closing prayer/Dox.	
Close	-----

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org.

The audio file is [20_09_13.mp3](#)

Welcome, pray

- What will they say about you? - When you are gone what will they say about you? Don't worry I'm sure at your funeral they will find some nice things to say about you – though with some people it's not always easy! – But after that? When your life is summed up how will it look? – those who knew you – what will with they say to others? – And God, who knows all things - what will he think?
- Elizabeth McClune "a life well lived" show card.

Paul is coming to the end of his life and he says: **“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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.”** 2Ti 4:6-8

This morning we are looking at Life, and in Paul a life well lived. The question to ask is: “Is your life well lived?” x2

Four sections, Paul: Fought the Fight, Finished the Race, Kept the Faith, and received the Final Reward. x2

Background –His departure

Paul is about to be martyred. He is soon to die a martyr's death, he knows it is imminent. His life work is done; he has been true to his trust. He can look forward to the goal of his salvation; fullness of Joy in the presence of God.

What was once a far off possibility it is about to happen. He writes this last letter from prison in Rome. God's spirit intimates to him that there he will soon seal the truth with his blood; **the time has come for my departure.**

my departure; the Greek word means to loosen, to undo, as in the act of unloosing or casting off the fastenings of a ship prior to departure.

In other words, he had been bound to this present world like a ship to its moorings, and now death will be the release setting him free and permitting the soul to go forth, as with expanded sails, on its eternal voyage.

With such a view of death, why should a Christian fear to die?

Note that the word death is not used, Paul calls it his **departure**; even though it is probable that he could see he would die a violent bloody death, yet he calls it his departure, or his release. It's not death, Christians don't/can't die.

Our bodies do share in the judgments common to man, but we our souls, are transferred from one theatre to another. Eternal life is given the moment

of conversion, the moment God's Spirit enters a saved sinner and that person is adopted into the family of God. Eternal life continues - without a break, - so when the time comes for me to be **away from the body** – I am **together with the Lord**.

This perishable corrupt body is exchanged for a new perfect one: **Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.** 2Co 5: 1

so for someone who belongs to Christ it is a wonderful release from the sin and trouble here - to the freedom and Joy of perfection there.

This is not the case for the many that don't - won't follow Christ. Those who leave this world without having taken care of their sins - will stand guilty before a Holy God. It will be a day of dread with no way out, the prospect of unrelentless pain and the misery of knowing that something could have been done while in this world – but now it is too late – destinies are now fixed - forever. So for some Joy – for others a raging storm. ...

For a Christian, however, there is a tension. Paul would rather be there – and so should we – that's a sign of a true Christian - my true home is in Heaven; which Paul describes as **better by far**. But there is fruitful work to be done here for the Lord, and good of others. As you are still here and not yet there – Of course – then he has work for you to do, when that work is over you will go. You are completely safe until your work is over – then you will be taken to a better place. Its win win.

Paul, who is soon to depart is already living like a martyr. He says: “**I am already being poured out like a drink offering**”.

This word ‘**offering**’ occurs here and at one other place Phil. 2: 17 - **But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.**”

In OT sacrifice the blood was poured out at the base of the altar to signify the giving up of the life. Listen to Dt. 12:27 **The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God.** (or wine Nu 28:7)

Now the final sacrifice has been made. Christ has died on the cross, for all who will turn from sin he is our substitute, he has bought us forgiveness from our guilt as a lawbreaker. It's all done. So when Paul speaks of the shedding of his own blood it was not a sacrifice of atonement, but a believer's response in gratitude to Christ in giving up his life for me. - As I

2a

have received Christ's amazing grace - I will now give up all for him. **Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.** Ro 12:1

Let's see how Paul did as he recalls his life. Paul says looking back: **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

We might well say “It's OK for you super Christians, but when I look back at my life it's full of regrets, wasted time, embarrassing sins & failures, etc.”

Quite - Who can't say that. But for a Christian it is different, for there are two lives to look back at. The first is the life before you came to know the Lord and enter the Kingdom of God, yes it is indeed full of regret. And I am sure if Paul had dwelt on his – with all his hostility to God - he would have felt it acutely. But that is not what Paul, or you and I should be looking at. It is the second new life. There should be no regrets here. Paul says **7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

(Fought the good fight)

7 I have fought the good fight, What is the fight all about? Who are we fighting? Not people, never people; **1Ti 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith.**

And at the beginning of his first letter he says **Timothy, my son, fight the good fight**, ^{1Ti 1:18}, and what comes next? “**holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.**” ^{1Ti 1:19}

So faith like the tiller on the ship is something to hold on to or you could end on the rocks – and certainly a number have.

A life of faith is a life of battle. There is a very active enemy who wants nothing more than to destroy your profession of faith so he will continually be tempting you off course. Paul says: **7 I have fought the good fight**,

Yet I can hear you say “*I'm not Paul*” *I'm not a fighter*” *I don't have his gifting, I don't have his energy*”. Quite, I understand.....

■ **Mission Impossible series – non stop action, why don't they stop for breath, or a cup of tea, always on the go**

Paul's life seems like that. Luke who travelled with Paul records the main points, he doesn't waste expensive scroll space on those long journeys, the days of waiting, meeting families, eating socializing etc.

2b

You say: “His situation is not my situation”, Sure, the Lord knows. “I have to be at work all day,” Yes He knows. Although it’s true “if you want a job doing give it to someone who is busy”. “I have to a house to run”, Yes He knows, some of the most active Christians are those with young families and busy homes, - while some of the most inactive are young Christians with oodles of time. I feel like saying to them “now you can – but you won’t, - one day you’ll want to - but then you won’t be able to!”

✚ It is all about having a ready heart. - That’s the bottom line!

We live in a very comfortable easygoing age where trouble and conflict are avoided, principles are not stood up for, evil is seen increasing everywhere, largely because there are few [Mary Whitehouse’s](#) around, those who are willing to stand for what is right. The enemy is active and he is fighting for what is wrong, if God’s people do little or nothing we and all that is good will be overrun.

I believe the Lord is looking for those who will stand for righteousness

■ Well done [Josh Williamson](#) standing firm in the battles against hatred and vitriol directed towards him, returning hatred with love.

So **fight the good fight**, it is a fight - but is a good fight. Keep your zeal, your focus on the Lord whose is up ahead - and be obedient to his calling.

Watch out for the world’s spirit of apathy.....

■ Many seem to do nothing, idling time away, aimless, fetch the paper, walk the dog, some gardening, nothing wrong with that in itself, and watch TV. We are surrounded by people who do little all day - as if sitting in a station waiting room bidding time - just waiting to die.

As a Christian we have been called away from that empty way of life and put to work in the master’s vineyard, we are called up as a soldier – to fight.

Yes, if you profess faith in Christ - then you are a soldier – and how do you know? He’s given you armour and weapons. God hasn’t give you onesies, or fashion clothing with the latest labels but armour.

■ I have a book at home recalling the Italian campaign in 1943 it’s called “*on active service*” *On and on fighting a hard campaign*

Read Paul’s life it reads like a series of campaigns and the Lord saw him through all the hardships because ultimately it is the Lord’s battle.

So Paul recalls his service: **in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless**

nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.” ^{2Co 6:4-10} Tiring eh?

Old soldiers talk of their campaigns so Paul does his. Here’s the seasoned soldier addressing Timothy the new recruit. **I have fought the good fight** he says. So let us learn from the old soldier and make our lives count.

■ The spirit of the soldiers at the battle of Waterloo was “Die in my bed? No way! I will die on the battle field! That was their attitude.

Paul said: I have finished the race,

I have finished the race so life is like a race. “It doesn’t feel like a race to me”, You say “I’ve never raced anywhere!” OK, you live life in the slow lane. Life can feel like that, like hard work, yes for some it’s a crawl.

The AV translates the word **race** as 'My course', which better expresses the idea. A ‘course’, as in the course of life. The same word is used in Acts 13:25 **As John (the Baptist) was completing his work. His course**

Paul uses this idea of ‘course’ in ^{Ac 20:24} **However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race - ‘my course’ and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.** (AV that I might finish my course with joy)

Christians are called according to the master’s purpose. “**For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep;** ^{Ac 13:36}

Don’t say to nonbelievers: “God has a wonderful plan for your life” – How do you know that God will call them? However, for the follower of Christ He has a course laid out for us and so we should. “follow the paint” the course set, like Top gear someone comes on with the instructions. So to be called of God is to be called away from that empty self-serving life of before - and serve the wonderful purposes of your new master the Great King, the one who has graciously granted you a place in His eternal kingdom.

Some Christians try to live with one foot in the world and the other in the Kingdom - don’t try to live two lives - you can’t – you will be miserable in both. Paul said: **I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish**

the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace. Ac 20:24

Testifying to God’s grace, Paul was clear, very clear, as to what he should do. “Christian you do not have to wonder if you should be speaking out for the Lord? it’s very clear we should!”

A Gideon team went to work in Lima, Peru. Based at a church, on Sunday morning the pastor introduced the team from Canada and the UK. He said they would be going out into the park in the afternoon to hand out papers to people, who will join them? Out of a church of 100, many said yes Ill be there, ... and 51 joined them that afternoon.

That would never happen here, not now, maybe years ago, there are too many other things that fill our time, fill our heart and steal away zeal for the Lord. Many, would just frankly say: “Sorry, I’m not available”.

That’s not usually true for people new to the Lord, they’ll be there. Sadly, gradually as time goes on we let other things get in the way of the main thing.

How pleasing to the Lord it must have been that they were there in the park, and what an encouragement it must have been to be together with each other

- Elizabeth McClune, this quiet, an unassuming elderly lady, was a good runner. At her funeral we were amazed to hear of all the things she did – the amazing array of her varied ministries – People stood up and said who she had helped them, surely it was “a life well lived”

No-one knew the sum of it, - nor did she - she didn’t keep records she did not let her left hand know what her right was doing - it was done for the Lord and he knows what is done in secret and would reward her Matt 6

Heb 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.**

Paul said: **I have finished my race, my “course”**, the race of life set before him, his days here were over, the grave was ready for him, and he for it.

Paul ran well because his eyes were on the finishing line and his mind on the prize, that’s a good spur: **Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.** 1Co 9:24
Yes we must!

That’s what it is all about - which is why he says: *I have kept the faith* - **I have kept the faith.** This is not so much the grace or gift of personal faith, that is given by Christ who as high priest sustains and keeps us for eternity.

✚ He, keeps us - not us ourselves! He does it!

What is meant here is keeping the truth of the faith intact. As he said to Timothy **“What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”** 2Ti 1:13-14

- Have you made your will? What is the most precious possession you have? Gold watch? Whatever it is you’ll make sure it is passed on in good shape.

So as a Christian you have been given something very precious, The word of God - the means of faith - the way to heaven - the key to the kingdom - the gospel of salvation. Hold on to it carefully, don’t drop it.

- Candid Camera – a passerby is told to hold this lever, hold it tight, don’t let it go, if you don’t the crane jib with drop and the wall collapse – and of course she did – and it did.

So Timothy then - and every Christian since - is to guard the doctrines of faith. Many have done so with their own blood. It’s a committed trust to be faithfully borne - and passed on untainted, pure and uncorrupted to the next generation. Many are now in heaven as a result of their faithfulness.

- Like the solid Rugby No.8 who has the ball and holds it tightly to himself as everyone tries to pull it off him, he plows forward relentlessly.

There are always those trying to stop you in your tracks

Paul said: **I have kept** held onto **the faith.** The gospel, the doctrine, entrusted to him. This he has successfully guarded. He had kept on the straight and narrow, he had not been drawn away by false ideas, distractions, or those who say “take a softer line, people don’t want to hear that these days”.

So in conclusion

You must keep the Faith, so that the younger generation may know. They will know because they have seen your wrestling with sin and overcoming. They see you ahead of them avoiding temptations and distractions keeping the blinkers on as you head to the finish line. - There is then the Final Reward.

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.” ^{2Ti 4:6-8}

Paul has it, he has followed Jesus to Heaven, so do many others, now it is you and I, everyone still following Jesus while still here on earth.

The Christian life is like both a fight - and a race, perhaps a running battle would be a good description. Is a short sprint or a Marathon? Yes a marathon or maybe more a pentathlon with all the different types of challenge, hurdles etc.

Paul knew the end was close, for all of us the end is always closer than we think! Life is short on this earth and you only have one go.

✚ Everything else you can trade in and replace with life you have one go. x2

So everything we do is important.....,

- Vanessa has a black box fitted on her car. Every move is monitored, the speed, breaking, accelerating, time of day, location etc. It is all added together. She even has an App that gives her a score - a running total of how she is doing.

So all you are doing is ‘added up’. And when it is

✚ May it be said of you – “you ran well, your life was lived well.”

“Is your life well lived?” are you fighting the good fight? Are you still on track and pressing on to finish the race? let us cheer each other on, well done, good work, yes you can do it, Then when you lie on your deathbed, - or however the Lord will use your death for his Glory – you can say with a clear conscience. **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

Then you will receive the crown – and a rich welcome into God’s presence

end