

Responsibility/Accountability - Paul

a study for the College and Career Class at Gulf Coast Baptist Church

by Steve Thomas 11/7/21

2Ti 4:6-8 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Introduction

Paul, nearing the end of his life, gives some last words to Timothy. In these words can be seen the mindset that he had through his ministry. He referred to the fight, the race that was nearing completion, and the keeping of the charge that he had admonished others to keep.

Fought a good fight

1 Tim 6:12

In his earlier letter to son Timothy, Paul admonishes him to lay hold on eternal life. He is asking Timothy to live the Christian life to its fullest, realizing the quality of life that has been given him. Most believers live for themselves, neglecting his miraculous gift that has been made available to them. It is a struggle, though, not given to the default that a Christian would settle to. Daily, moment by moment framing of the mind is necessary to grasp this quality of life. The enemies of the believer are constantly seeking to derail this journey.

Finished my course

Acts 20:24, 1 Cor 9:24-27, Phil 3:13-14, Heb 12:1-2,4

Paul uses this analogy several times in recorded text. The preparation for the contest, the determination needed for the struggle, and the challenges facing the athlete make this picture so apt for believers to understand what is ahead of them in the Christian life. The fights going on in the world system and the fights that the flesh would have the believer fight are for the wrong things. These fights will not yield peace, or fulfillment, but only more strife and discord.

Kept the faith

1 Tim 6:20, 2 Tim 1:14, 2 Tim 2:2

Keeping a committed charge is not something new that Paul is bringing up at the end of his ministry. He had referred to this concept before and is emphasizing in this final letter no less than three times. The Christian life is a sacred charge to be kept, not a hobby or a part time job to occupy spare time. The next generation of believers will need to be taught "the faith". The sheer volume of influence in the world today is staggering. At every turn our young people are being taught things that will undermine the truth that Paul was seeking to pass on to Timothy. It is a sacred charge that we have been given, and it needs to be passed on to the younger believer.

The reward

a crown: 2Ti 2:5; 1Co 9:25; Jas 1:12; 1Pe 5:4; Rev 2:10, Rev 4:4, Rev 4:10

Paul references the crown of righteousness. There are other references to crowns being given as rewards. Whether these are literal accessories that will be worn, or cast at the feet of Christ, is not the point. The

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fact remains that God is holding the believer accountable for the authority given him. The power (ability, strength, force) to accomplish the works set aside for the believer is provided by the Godhead (Col 1:29). Paul referred to this power when he spoke of the gospel (Rom 1:16, 1 Thess 1:5-6, 2:13). Paul never claimed to have the strength to accomplish these things on his own. The separating out of the works belongs to God, the power to accomplish them is also His, and the reward should be given to Him as well.

A study of the defenses that Paul gave to the three rulers at the end of Acts (Felix, Festus, and Agrippa) will show what Paul holds to be important. He gives an account of the gospel/his conversion in each defense, including the words of Christ in the passages. Paul's focus was never far from the gospel for initial salvation, and the good news for present tense and future tense salvation as well.

Conclusion

A study of Paul's life yields value for the believer today. When we look at the authority given to the grace believer, the responsibility he should feel, and how God will hold him accountable, we will see some overlap with how Paul viewed these topics. This is understandable since Paul is the steward of the grace given to us.