

## WALKING WITH INTEGRITY IN TIMES OF ADVERSITY STUDY TWELVE

### The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

*The apostle Paul looked back on his life and said, “The good struggle, I have struggled. The race, I have run. The faith, I have kept.”*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PAUL spent his final days in the dreaded Mamertine Prison in Rome awaiting his appointment with the executioner’s blade. The only light into his underground cell came from a hole above him, covered by a rusty grate. People could stroll by on the street level not even realizing there were ragged souls languishing in darkness below them. In this cramped, dingy, filthy, stone chamber, Paul lived his last days and wrote his final words—which, thankfully, we have preserved in his second letter to Timothy.

It doesn’t seem right for faithful Paul to finish his days in this musty, rat-infested dungeon, shivering and abandoned by all but Luke. Yet, we sense no self-pity or bitterness in Paul’s final words to Timothy. Instead, Paul expresses gratitude for his past accomplishments and anticipation of his future reward. Facing imminent death, Paul could write:

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on the day of his return.” (2 Timothy 4:7–8)*

Paul finished his life well, and in this *Searching the Scriptures* study we’ll learn from his hopeful words in 2 Timothy 4 how we can also finish well.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

All those who suffer physical pain or feel the barbs of a friend's betrayal or the pangs of hunger, deprivation, and isolation can find hope in the apostle Paul's words in 2 Timothy. Consider his letter as an older pastor's wise counsel to you. Pause to pray, inviting the Lord into your dungeon of disappointment to encourage you through Paul's example.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For most prisoners, hope flickered and died the day they crossed the threshold of their dungeon cell and heard the iron gate clang shut. *But not for Paul.*

Read [2 Timothy 4:1–18](#). Notice how Paul described his hardships and how he interlaced his deep hope in Christ. Write down your initial impressions of these final words from the pen of the great apostle.



### Observation: Looking Back and Looking Forward

According to the *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, a crucial first step is observation, which involves examining the text by asking questions such as where, who, what, when, how. We know where Paul was: in a Roman prison. And when: the end of life, perhaps around AD 67. We know to whom he was writing: his apprentice Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus.



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Next comes the “what.” After encouraging and advising Timothy in the first three chapters of the letter, Paul seemed to reach through the page and grab young Timothy by the shoulders: “I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 4:1). What exactly did Paul solemnly charge Timothy to do, according to 2 Timothy 4:2?

What reasons for his urgent charge did Paul list in 4:3–5? And what specific commands did Paul give?

*Second Timothy 4 is becoming my favorite chapter in all the Scriptures. It drips with emotion. Paul was at the end, finishing his life well, and he left these words for Timothy to ponder. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Looking Back without Regret—2 Timothy 4:6–7

Paul acknowledged the reality of his present situation: “The time of my death is near” (2 Timothy 4:6). In his final days, vivid memories must have flooded Paul’s mind—His rigorous education as a Pharisee, his blinding-light conversion en route to Damascus, his missionary travels to the far corners of the known world, to Rome, and to the emperor himself.



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2 Timothy 4:5–18

Through sickness, death threats, and dangers, Paul had faithfully followed his calling to bear the message of Christ to the Gentiles. Now his sixty-year-old body, crippled from past tortures and scarred from beatings, was a broken shell. But his soul was as alive as the day he met Jesus.

What metaphors did Paul use to describe his life, his struggles, and his accomplishments, according to 2 Timothy 4:6–7?

*Paul wasn't parading his pride but stating the facts on record. He was describing his life in a few words. This was Paul's honest appraisal of the struggles of life. Suffering means we're on the right track. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*

### Looking Forward with Anticipation—2 Timothy 4:8

Observe Paul's hopeful anticipation in 2 Timothy 4:8 regarding his . . .

Confirmation of future reward: \_\_\_\_\_

Celebration of victory: \_\_\_\_\_

Encouragement for all believers: \_\_\_\_\_

### Expressing Real Needs and Honest Warnings—2 Timothy 4:9–18

In 2 Timothy 4:9–18, Paul wrote about *real needs* and *honest warnings*. Write down the lines in this passage in which you observe Paul expressing . . .



## The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

*Loneliness*

*Abandonment by trusted friends*

*Physical needs*

*Hunger for God's Word*



## The Integrity of Finishing Well

2 Timothy 4:5–18

What implicit warnings for Timothy did Paul weave through this passage?

*When a man of God dies, his enemies are still around, doing mischief. Paul told Timothy, “Guard against them.” Part of finishing well is to pass along warnings.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Toward the end of his life, Paul passed on priceless treasures of wisdom to his younger friend, Timothy, which still have value for us today. Let’s zero in on Paul’s main ideas at the heart of his final words to Timothy.



### Interpretation: The Treasures Hidden in Paul’s Metaphors

Use your interpretation skills to explore the meaning of Paul’s metaphors in 2 Timothy 4:6–8. Hidden in these metaphors are the secrets to finishing well!

### Offering Our Lives to God

What did Paul mean when he stated that his life “has already been poured out as an offering to God” (2 Timothy 4:6)? Consider the temple practice of the priests pouring a “liquid offering” on the altar to accompany the main offering (*Exodus 29:40–41; Leviticus 23:13*). In what ways did Paul pour out his life to God?



## The Integrity of Finishing Well

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Write down your explanation of what it means to give our lives as an offering (*Romans 12:1–2*)?

### Fighting the Good Fight

The Greek word for “fight” (2 Timothy 4:7) refers to any athletic struggle or contest, not just boxing or wrestling. Paul often used athletic metaphors to describe his spiritual self-discipline:

*“I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.”* (1 Corinthians 9:27)

What did Paul mean when he wrote, “I have fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7)?

### Finishing the Race

In his earlier letter to the Philippians, Paul still saw the finish line far ahead: “I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize” (Philippians 3:14). But in 2 Timothy, his future perspective switched to past: “I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful” (2 Timothy 4:7).



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2 Timothy 4:5–18

What “race” was Paul referring to, and how had he been faithful in running it? A hint is in the context, in which Paul had just commanded Timothy, “fulfill your ministry” (2 Timothy 4:5 NASB). What was Paul’s ministry calling (*Acts 9:15–16*; *2 Timothy 1:10–11*), and how did he fulfill it?

Reflect on how Paul’s metaphors picture what it means to follow Jesus. Write your thoughts into a principle on how we can finish our Christian life well based on Paul’s example.

Paul mentioned a prize awaiting him when Jesus returned. To decipher Paul’s meaning, let’s correlate what he wrote to Timothy with his other letters.



### Correlation: The Prize That Awaits

In ancient times, athletes trained for years hoping to win a garland or laurel crown that the king would place on their heads. All that pain, sweat, and sacrifice for a withering wreath! How much better the “eternal prize” that Jesus awards than this temporal “prize that will fade away” (1 Corinthians 9:25)!

Paul anticipated receiving “the crown of righteousness” which His King will award “all who eagerly look forward to his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). While the glory of heaven is reward enough for those who have trusted in Christ as their Savior, He promises to heap on us specific rewards—special recognition for work done in His name.



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2 Timothy 4:5–18

Paul taught how believers earn rewards in *1 Corinthians 3:11–15*. What is the basis of receiving a reward?

Remember, reward is the subject of these verses, not salvation. Paul was saying that works of quality done for Christ's sake will endure, while works done in the flesh to glorify self will fade. When will we receive Christ's rewards, according to *2 Corinthians 5:9–10*?

Through the darkness of his dungeon cell, Paul saw the light of Jesus—the King who would soon welcome the weary apostle to his eternal home and reward his faithfulness. Paul endured his suffering by keeping his eyes fixed on that moment of heavenly bliss. How about you? Are you also eagerly looking forward to Christ's appearing and the prize that awaits? Yes, indeed! What a joy that will be! Let's conclude our study by anticipating Christ's reward for finishing well.



### Application: On the Way to Finishing Well

Paul's godly character emerged as gold from the fire of his suffering. Reflecting on the final days of Paul's life, what principle stands out as a central truth that can help you finish your race well?



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What obstacles in your current circumstances stand in the way of living by this principle?

What do you need from Christ to help you stay focused on your eternal prize?

Imagine yourself standing alongside Paul at the judgment of Christ receiving the “crown of righteousness”—the reward He will give all those who eagerly look forward to His appearing. What will that moment be like for you?

Being in Christ’s presence and hearing His affirmation echo in your ears for eternity—what better reward could there be? Certainly, nothing in this world compares to the glory that awaits! The hope of seeing the Savior face-to-face is the best inspiration to help us walk with integrity in times of adversity.



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2 Timothy 4:5–18



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, thank You for the accounts of Scriptures' ordinary people who followed You faithfully. They are my models of faith. I seek Your help as, together, we write my story of faithful devotion in a wicked world. May I praise You with my life which I pour out daily as an offering to You. In Jesus' name, amen.*

