FAChurch 12.07.22 Devotional **Keep the Faith**

***“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.”  2 Timothy 4:7-8***

Most of us do not like to think about death. But Psalm 90:12 says, *“Teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom.”* To number our days means to remember that life is short. If we fail to do so, we can become arrogant, living as if we are in control of our lives. Setting aside time periodically to contemplate the brevity of life helps us not to forget that every breath we take is granted to us by the sovereign will of God.

In 2 Timothy 4, Paul was contemplating his own impending death. He knew that the end of his earthly life was drawing near. As he reflected on the days God had given him, he made a bold statement in verse 7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Because of this, he went on to say, a glorious reward awaited him on the other side of eternity.

Isn’t it interesting that Paul’s criteria for a successful life, one pleasing to God and worthy of a crown, was that he kept the faith? ***It all boiled down to steadfast faith.*** As he “numbered his days,” he didn’t list personal achievements like how many people he led to Christ, how many churches he planted, the number of days he spent imprisoned for the gospel, or any other of his life’s greatest works. “I am getting a crown,” he said, “because I kept the faith.” What does it mean to “keep the faith”?

Paul used two illustrations in this letter to describe keeping the faith…a fight and a race. “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race.” These two illustrations tell us two things about keeping the faith. **First,** it must be hard. If he fought to continue in the faith, he must have struggled.

Jesus described it this way in Matthew 7:14, “Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” If few find it, it cannot be easy. It is the sinful flesh that makes it hard, which continually battles against God’s Spirit inside of us. **Second,** the illustration of a race shows us that keeping the faith means enduring to the end. In any race, running doesn’t earn an award, finishing does. Jesus said in Matthew 10:22 and 24:13 that whoever stands firm until the end will be saved.

Have you contemplated your life lately? Doing so humbles and moves us to yield more fully to God, for whose sake we have been saved.

**Personal Prayer:** *LORD, I want to live the rest of my days on this earth fully surrendered to You. I cannot do this if I don’t purposefully remember that life is short and that You control the length of my life. Please help me to keep the faith, to remain steadfast, fighting hard against my flesh and this world and continuing to the end. In Jesus’ name, amen.*

**Time to Share:**

1) If you desire, briefly share what this means to you.

2) On your own, write down one thing you are going to do this week to humbly yield to God.

**Time to Pray:**

If you desire, you can pray as the Spirit leads you. We encourage each of you to pray. If you have prayer requests and want the group leader to pray over them, share those requests after our devotion time.