

Rise Up And Build

"So They said, 'Let us rise up and build,' Then they set their hands to do this good work," Neh. 2:18

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"I Have Kept The Faith"

By Everett Hardin

As the apostle Paul penned his second letter to Timothy he said, *"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 to all them also that love His appearing,"* 2 Tim. 4:6-8. Paul was a captive in chains condemned to die for the gospel's sake. His work was nearly over and he was soon to die for the Lord. He identified *"keeping the faith"* with *"fighting the good fight."* He knew how to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and admonished Timothy, *"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called,"* 1 Tim. 6:12.

Man is required not only to believe but also to manifest his faith to the world. Faith is like a city set on a hill, *"It cannot be hid."* When a genuine faith takes hold of our heart it will not suffer us to be idle. A man may not say much about what he believes, but the words of his lips and the works of his hands will declare his faith.

Some seem to think that heaven can be gained by wishful thinking on their part, but no soldier of Christ who fails to do his duty will receive the crown of victory, no matter how well he may look in a dress parade. The promise is, *"be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,"* Rev. 2:10. Christianity is a system of intense and determined combat against evil and error. So if you are taking your ease instead of waging war, if you are on terms of peace with Satan, your profession of faith and fidelity to Christ is but in vain.

"I have kept the faith," the apostle says. What faith? The faith of his fathers? No, this had been willingly cast aside when Christianity was revealed to him. While speaking of the law of Moses Paul stated that no man (whether Jew or Gentile) could be justified or saved by the works of the law (Gal. 2:16). He further stated, *"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law,"* Rom. 3:28. But nowhere in

his writings did Paul infer that we are saved without obedience to the gospel (Rom. 6:17).

Paul's faith was not the product of inheritance nor imagination; it was from God through the avenue of His word. "So then **faith** cometh by **hearing** and hearing by the **word** of God," Rom. 10:17. He was more concerned with being right than in being consistent, with pleasing God than in pleasing men. He said, "Do I yet please men? For if I yet please men I should not be the servant of Christ," Gal. 1:10. We might well ponder the question today, Is my faith resting on anything solid? Does it rest in the wisdom of men or in the power of God? Our faith "*should not stand in the wisdom of this world, but in the power of God,*" I Cor. 2:5. The Bible is the infallibly inspired revelation of God to man, and the only foundation for acceptable faith.

The faith the apostle kept was not a half-hearted one that would allow him to serve Satan through the week and then be in the assembly on Sunday morning. Many who think they are serving the Lord will be sadly disappointed when they stand before the righteous Judge. Paul had diligently labored to save men from sin and its fearful consequences. The struggle had been bravely sustained in the past, and was now being equally, bravely sustained to the end. Here was a man with convictions so strong that he considered it a privilege to die for them. He says, "*But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God,*" Acts 20:24-27.

When Paul said, he had kept the faith, he means he had kept it alive through obedience. He had been true to the faith through difficulties, conflicts, dangers, and temptations. He had not failed to declare it when death looked him in the face; he had not corrupted it to please the Jews or Gentiles. With courage and perseverance he had remained true to the end. Only a living faith caused him to go back into a city from which he had been dragged out as dead, to be delivered to the enemies at Jerusalem, and to make his defense before Caesar at Rome. This faith sustained him in unparalleled suffering for the advancement of the cause of Christ. "*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice I was beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger, and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches,*" 2 Cor. 11:24-28.

There are works of righteousness, commanded by God, which we must do to demonstrate our faith (Acts 10:34-35). The works may be classified as works of obedience (Heb. 5:8-9). Genuine faith in Christ compels faithfulness to His teaching. It acknowledges that he is both Lord and Christ and thus invested with all authority (Matt. 28:18) and must be obeyed in all things Acts 3:22-23).

Today such a faith is needed to sustain us. It is faith which enables men to resist temptation, to avoid entanglements of the world, to reject false teachers and the doctrines of men. Chapter eleven in the Book of Hebrews speaks of worthy patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings who through faithfulness and courage, overcame the world by their faith. The life of a Christian is a warfare and a race. The cause is good and the victory is sure, if we continue faithful and courageous. We must fight the good fight and finish our course; we must not give up till we are "*more than conquerors through him that loved us,*" Rom. 8:17.

Paul did not fear death. Observe, with what pleasure he speaks of dying. He calls it his "*departure;*" though it is probable that he foresaw that he must die a violent death, yet he called it his "*departure,*" or release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world; he does not cease to be, but only is removed from one world to another. Paul did not fear death because he had "*kept the faith*" and "*fought a good fight.*" He had rendered faithful service, gone through difficulties of his warfare, and had been instrumental in carrying on the glorious victories of the exalted Redeemer over the powers of darkness.

When Moses had received instructions to build the tabernacle, God said, "*See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount,*" Heb. 8:5. It was therefore, as clearly his duty to make it according to the pattern as it was to make it at all. Faith asks for the divine mode, and having found, it clings to it. One may search the Bible through, but he will not find any other principle upon which man may be saved. Each must believe God, and then do that which God tells him to do in the way God says do it.

It is a great comfort to a dying saint, when he can look back upon his past life and say with Paul, "*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*" To be faithful to God to the end is to succeed. Let it then be our constant endeavor to acquire that faith in God, and keep it alive for true happiness here and hereafter. There is a crown of life before us, the glory and joy of which will abundantly compensate for all the trials and toils of our present warfare. Paul said, "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal,*" 2 Cor. 4:17-18. These words reflect a proper outlook on our life. All would do well to share Paul's perspective.