

The Bride – Chapter 8, “Staying Ready Till Quitting Time”

1 Thes. 4:16-18 - **16** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The Scripture says our Lord will descend from heaven with “an outcry”, and with the “voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God ...” Are we “staying ready till quitting time”? While our Lord was still on earth, He gave numerous predictions about His coming back.

Predictions From Jesus’ Life

We look at Christ’s prediction of His return from each of the four Gospels:

Matthew 24:42-44 - ⁴² “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour **when you do not expect him**”

– emphasizing Christ’s coming will be like a thief in the night, when we least expected.

Mark 13:33-37 - ³³ Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. ³⁵ “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—**whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.** ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

The point in this passage is that He may come anytime, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.

Luke 21:34 - ³⁴ “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly **like a trap.** ³⁵ For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

Watch and pray lest we be trapped in an embarrassing setting, full of worries, or in a drunken state or a wasted lifestyle, not ready for quitting time.

John 14:1-3 – ¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am

going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The night before Jesus was betrayed; He abruptly unveiled the truth of His impending death. It caught the disciples off guard. To those anxious disciples He gave an unconditional promise, “I am going to prepare a place for you . . . I will return . . . I will receive you . . . you will be with Me.”

The disciples wondered what to expect before His return, Jesus said to His disciples. . .

John 16:33 - ³³“I have told you these things, so that in me you may **have peace**. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! **I have overcome the world.**”

Jesus will come again at God’s appointed time, but meantime, Jesus alerted them to “stay ready till quitting time. While waiting for Christ’s return, they were sure to face affliction and tribulation.

Specific Principles from Paul

How can we stay ready for the finale? How can we be sure that the curtain’s closing will not take us by surprise or find us finishing poorly? What are we to do? As mentioned in the last session, in 2 Tim 3 and 4, there are 4 principles to follow:

1) Follow the Model of the Faithful

“But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and suffering . . . ” (2 Tim. 3:10).

There is nothing more encouraging or more motivating than a model to keep us going. How do we face the hard times of persecutions and suffering in the last days? By remembering that others have done it before us, so we can surely do it as well. By following the model of those who have gone before us, like Timothy’s faithful mother and grandmother . . . and Paul’s own example, we can do more than just survive.

2) Return to the Truth of your Past

Go back to those truths that stabilized us when we put down our spiritual roots. ² Timothy 3:15–4: 2 - 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and **profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness**, ¹⁷ that the **man of God** may be **complete, equipped for every good work**. ⁴ ¹ I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² **preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**

God has given each of us the sacred writings, the Bible, with the promise that it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for training in righteousness. Each one of us has the

potential to become the man of God who is adequate, mature, equipped for every good work.

As in Chap 4:1,2, we are also charged before Christ's return to preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. This leads us to the third "survival" principle.

3) Proclaim the Message of Christ

This instruction is not for preacher alone, we all have the responsibility to proclaim the message of Christ. Three ingredients were found in Paul's instruction – to "preach the word."

- i. Be ready - to stay ready, with the right message at all times.
- ii. Consistency – Be ready in season and out of season:
Convenient or not; open or not; feeling good or not; young or old; early or late; whatever weather; wherever you are, appreciated or not; being asked or not? We are to consistently live out the truth and share it.
- iii. Simplicity – There is nothing sophisticated about Paul's instruction. No theories, no complexities. Just declare the truth. God's Word contains sufficient comfort, hope, and encouragement to help the lonely and the hurting. All we need in proclaiming the message is to keep it simple.

4) Maintain an Exemplary Life

2 Tim 4:3-5 – ³For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their **itching ears want to hear**. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, **keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.**"

During the last days, people will not put up with sound doctrine, turning to what they want to hear rather than what they ought to hear, and turning away from the truth. How are we to counteract that? We are given four sharp commands to maintain an exemplary life:

- Be sober in all things.
As people are unstable and forever on a search for what they want and desire to hear, we are to steer away from these, and stay calm and steady.
- Endure hardship.
When the going gets rougher, "endure hardship". Endurance produces Perseverance. As in Jas. 1:4 – Perseverance will complete its work, for us to be mature and complete, not lacking in anything. Hang on there.
- Do the work of an evangelist.
Keep presenting Christ. Realizing that the fake gospel and the falsehood will be on the increase, live the truth and walk your talk.

- Fulfill your ministry.
Serve the Lord fullest in whatever ministry God has designed for us, by standing firm against false teachings, enduring hardship, and proclaiming His message always.

Timeless Facts that Maintain Our Readiness

How can we stay ready till quitting time? How can we keep from being caught short? Paul has a few more words of advice.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 -⁶For I am already being poured out like a **drink offering**, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** ⁸Now 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.”

Three suggestions emerge from Paul’s words above:

- Consider our life as **an offering to God**, rather than a monument to men. Don’t work on our images, work on our offering to God. Consider our life as little more than an offering poured out to God, rather than a polished monument for men to admire.
- Remember that **finishing well** is the final proof that the truth works. Plan now to finish well what God has entrusted us, and be able to say on the last days, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”. It will help when the race seems extra long.
- Fix our eyes on the **rewards of heaven** rather than the allurements of earth. There is a crown coming. We are able to see with our eyes, but we need our mind to see through things. As we use our eyes to focus on the heavenly rewards, keep our minds alert to see through this earth’s deceptions.

If we are committed to “staying ready till quitting time”, the plan isn’t that complicated:

1. Follow the model of the faithful.
2. Return to the truth of the past.
3. Proclaim the message of Christ, and
4. Maintain an exemplary life.

Christ has pledged Himself to His Bride forever. Do we have the same commitment waiting for His return?