

(41)

Copy 1

Chapel

Nov. 10, 1976

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2 Timothy 4:6-8

Turn to 2 Tim. 4 reading vv. 7 and 8, The Apostle Paul says, 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 be only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

As Paul looked back on his life, he had much to be thankful for. God had used him in a marvellous way. He had worked very very hard. He had travelled widely and been in all sorts of dangers. In the Corinthian epistles where he defends his apostleship he tells of the difficulties and trials he had been through in his determination to spread the gospel as widely as possible. He led countless souls to Christ. He carried the gospel from Israel to Rome which would be as great as distance today perhaps as if you were to go to Indonesia, even further than that, perhaps as far as around the world when you consider the length of time and effort that it takes.

Last fall I came across a book by Patricia St. John called Twice Freed. As I read this book I was thrilled by it. It is an imaginary account of the events described in Philemon but it draws together a great many statements made in Scripture and gives a clear picture of conditions at that time. Through it all we see a marvelous picture of the activities of Paul as he had influence on those with whom he came in contact. I liked the book so well I tried to get another copy and found it was out of print and I found I could get it from England in paperback and I ordered 70 copies, and I put them on the table and even before I'd turned around my wife had given them all away. (Laughter) She phoned me from Bedford asking me to send her six more and when I looked for them there was only one left, and I'm going to keep that one for ourselves. I wrote Moody Press and told them how sorry I was that they let it go out of print, and they told me they are reprinting it as a mass paperback which will be available in January, and I think you will find it well worth getting and reading. I hope they have a better picture on the cover than this one, which I think very unattractive. The one I got from England had a very attractive cover.

The picture of Paul as you read it there of his great accomplishments, as Paul thought of it you might almost think he had fulfilled the command our Lord gave just before his ascension where he said, You shall receive power and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Yet at Paul's death there was a great area that had never yet been reached with the gospel. I wonder if Paul was disappointed. I wonder if he was somewhat discouraged at the end of his life. I wonder if he thought as he carried the message of salvation that one person after another would receive it and receive it gladly as of course many did, but that it would be so received that by the end of his life there would be a change in the condition of the world. And that the marvelous prophecies of the OT of that time when peace would reign everywhere and when there would be no further violence, when all would love one another would all come to pass. I'm sure when he wrote these words he realized he could not say I have conquered the world for Christ. He could not say that everyone who has heard the gospel and most have accepted it.