

Weekly Devotions: THE REFINING FIRE OF TRIALS 20

Fight the Good Fight, Finish the Race and Keep the Faith

When I was fighting my first cancer, there was a time I came close to death. I was not afraid of death but was anxious whether I would be able to go through the process of dying of cancer which can be very painful and debilitating. I remember asking God once that when that time comes how I should die. God said these words to me almost immediately: "My child, die like a soldier. A soldier dies fighting. A soldier dies standing. My soldier dies lifting My Name up high!"

God said this to me almost 32 years ago. In teaching me how I should die, He was also teaching me how I should live. All these years, I have learned to fight life's battles like a soldier, determined to remain faithful to God and not to give up. God has taught me what it means to trust and stand on His word and promises. Most of all, no matter how difficult the situation, I always prayed that God would enable me to bring honor and glory to His holy Name. In life, we will face all kinds of problems. We need to set our mind, our heart and our will to live as over-comers and always to bring glory and honor to God's Name.

Read 2 Tim 4: 5-8

2 Timothy is the last of Paul's epistles; he had come to the end of his life and ministry and wrote the letter while in prison in Rome awaiting execution. He needed to encourage Timothy to continue the work of spreading the gospel.

Paul told Timothy to endure the sufferings for the gospel as this is the lot of God's faithful servants. He shared that he himself was ready to die for the gospel as he waited for execution in prison. As he came to the end of his life and ministry, Paul could say confidently that he had given his best, fought the good fight like a soldier and now like an athlete about to cross the finishing line, he had kept the faith to the end. He looked forward to the time of Jesus' return when he and other believers would be given the crown of righteousness.

Questions to ponder

1. What are the 4 things Paul encouraged Timothy to do in (5) and which of these do you personally need to pay attention to? Why?
2. Who will receive the crown of righteousness when Jesus returns and for what do you think it is given (8)?
3. As Paul came to the end of his life and ministry what did he proclaim with a sense of satisfaction? If you, like Paul, are standing at death's door, what would you say about the life you have lived? In your time of difficulty what would it mean for you to 'fight the good fight', 'finish the race' and 'keep the faith'?