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Campbell Chapel Free
Will Baptist Church

Bob Bradley

Fought the Good Fight

CAMPBELL CHAPEL FWBC - SERMON

Have you fought the good fight?

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Bob Bradley

I was thinking today, I know you listen to me a lot. I know you do. I appreciate the fact that you keep on coming, that shows that you are good people. I know feel sorry, no doubt, but it really shows you're good people. That's wonderful and I know that we talk a lot. Many times we may be boring or different things.

It is great to be saved. It is great to have a God as we have and to have the church that we have here. We are blessed today.

II Timothy 4:1-8

- 1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;*
- 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;*
- 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*
- 5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*
- 6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
- 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
- 8 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 unto all them also that love his appearing.*

It is amazing what you can learn about people who are dying. Do you know that? When people understand that they are dying; they know that they are dying. They know that they just have but a short time to live. Do you know what people do? They speak from their heart. There is no joking. There is no sarcasm. It is all serious business when people know that they are about ready to die.

I have been beside of people who were dying that were unsaved. They were very serious, but they died unsaved. Also, I have been beside of many saints over the years that have died and they were very serious, but they had some great things to say. Some of the very last words that they said—well, it was just a great time to be there.

Paul writes to Timothy

Paul here is writing to Timothy, who was a young man. Timothy, a young preacher, is someone who was going to have the responsibility of all the churches and being able to carry on the gospel. Timothy was

the fellow that Paul was going to pass the torch over to. Paul knew that he was getting ready to die. Paul knew that his ministry here on earth was over. Paul knew that and he was getting ready to pass the torch over to Timothy. Timothy was a young fellow that got saved under the preaching and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Paul looks at Timothy as being his own son. Therefore, he was going to give him some instruction here about some things prior to him leaving here.

When you read history, when you read the Bible; Paul has already appeared before Nero once. Now he is in prison. He is in a dungeon in Rome waiting the final sentence; waiting for the time that he is going to hear the soldiers come. They are going to get him and take him out and cut his head off.

If you were a captive in Rome and the death sentence was passed upon you; they did not stone you. They did not crucify you. They took you out and cut your head off.

That is what the Apostle Paul knew was coming very soon. Therefore, he was very serious. In the first verse he said...

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

The word “charge” is solemn. If you will look at that word in the original manuscripts, it will tell you that when Paul is talking to Timothy, writing to Timothy, he is using some very solemn words. We are not going to talk about all this, but we are going to get down to verse six here.

1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

Do you know what he was doing here? Paul is calling the Lord Jesus Christ as his witness. He says, “I charge thee therefore before God...Heaven is listening to what I am saying. Heaven is listening to the charge, to the solemn oath that I am proclaiming; heaven is listening. He goes on and says, “...preach the word...”

I thought about today as I was looking at that; just those three words, “...preach the word...” in so many of our churches today in this area, across America and across the world there is not enough preaching to save a gnat. We hear things about spiritual philosophy. We hear spiritual pep rallies. We hear a lot of different things. Do you know what Paul wanted Timothy to know? It took the preaching of the Word of God. It’s great to teach. I love to teach. I love to talk about the Word of God but do you know what we need today more than anything else? We need to hear the preaching of the Word of God. The proclaiming of the Word of God is what we need today.

Instant in season and out of season

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

Do you know what that means? In good times, in favorable times, when times are good, when times are bad, when times are favorable, when times are not favorable; he said to simply preach the Word. Simply preach the Word of God. Do you know what he did not say? He did not say that we need to write down and make out an outline and take a few words to form a sermon around that. He did not say that. He said to preach the Word of God and every opportunity that you have in favorable times and in non-favorable times. Do you know what we need to do today? We need to still yet be doing that today. In every opportunity that a man has today who has been called to preach; we need to preach the Word of God. We need to proclaim the message of Almighty God. If we will do that, do you know what the Apostle Paul knew? The Apostle Paul knew that it took the Word of God to change men's lives.

Do you know what we can do? We can have all kinds of pep rallies and get people feeling good. We can get people shouting and doing all kinds of the things.

However, do you know what the Apostle Paul knew? It took the Word of God to convict people of their sin. Not only that, but the Apostle Paul also knew it took the Word of God to convince men that they need to turn to Jesus Christ. That has not changed not one bit since the time the Apostle Paul was here.

It takes the Word of God to convince men that they need to get saved. Not only that, but after we get saved, it is the Word of God that will nourish us. It is the Word of God that will feed us. It is the Word of God that will give you and me the strength that we need to carry on in this evil world that we are living in. We need it. We need to hear it. We need to hear it with our ears every day that we can. Every opportunity that we can, we need to be in God's house, hearing God's Word preached.

Reprove, Rebuke, and Exhort

2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

He is telling Timothy how that he is to do and what the Word of God will do. We know that it will reprove. We know that it rebukes. It does all these things; the Word of God does that. That is why it is so important.

Sound Doctrine not Endured

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

Do you know what the Apostle Paul knew? The Apostle Paul knew that there was going to come a time that people will not endure sound doctrine. Do you know what "sound doctrine" means? It means wholesome, healthy, or something that will nourish you and give you spiritual strength. Do you know what the Apostle Paul said? There is going to come a time that men will not want to hear sound healthy doctrine.

We have been there in America for a long, long time. People don't want to hear preaching today. They don't want to hear the unadulterated Word of God. They want to hear portions. They want to hear

John 3:16 that God loves them. That is all good, great and fine. Do you know what they want to hear? They want to hear about everybody going to heaven. They want you to turn over to Revelation 21 and read some things there about all the things that heaven is going to be. However, there is more in the Bible than John 3:16. We know that God is a loving God and He cares about you and me. Listen, if we don't live right for Him and if we don't repent of our sins, God is also going to judge men for their sin. We don't want to hear that.

We have people that used to sit in these seats and the reason they don't come today is that they don't want to hear that. They want to hear that God is good. They want to hear about all that, but they do not want to hear that if they don't straighten up God is going to judge them. They don't want to hear that. Therefore, they don't come. That's okay. I can't make people come.

Do you think that I am going to change the message of God to get people to come here? No. If I do, you need to get rid of me. Truth? Listen, we don't need that; we need the whole book, to preach the Word; the whole thing. We need to preach the whole thing, the whole Book.

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

They will not listen to sound, healthy doctrine. We have arrived there. We have arrived there a long time ago. People do not want to hear the preaching and the teaching of the Word of God.

Tickled Ears

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;

Do you know what people want to hear today? They want somebody that will tickle their ears. They want somebody that will make them feel good and tell them how good that they are. They don't want to hear about a lake of fire. They don't want to hear about going there to spend eternity burning in a lake of fire. They don't want to hear about that. Do you know what they want to say about that? That is old-fashioned. However, we are serving an old-fashioned God tonight. He is the same One that died at Calvary 2000 years ago and arose from the dead. He has not changed one bit. He is the same God. When He looked at sin, and how He dealt with sin 2000 years ago and 2000 years from today; He will deal with it the same way. You can say He is old-fashioned if you want to; that's okay. However, He is still yet God. He is the One calling the shots. Truth? Do you know what you are not going to do? You are not going to slip past Him and slip into heaven with sin in your life; it is not going to happen. People think that. People think they are smarter than God. You are not.

Fables

4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Do you know what fables mean? It means myths. It means old wives-tales.

In many churches, you can take a Sears and Roebuck and get up holler, scream, and slobber talking out of a Sears and Roebuck catalog and most people would not know any difference. Do you know why? It is because they have never been taught anything. They have been taught what grandma believed and what grandpa believed and all the traditions that they had. They have had them changed and handed down for years and years. They have got to the place that they believe and hold to their fables, myths, and traditions more than to the Word of God.

Believe the Truth

Do you know what we need to do friend? We need to put those things aside. I don't care what grandma believed. If she believed the truth, that's all good, great and fine and I hope she did.

Do you know what friend? If she did not believe the truth, then we need to put that aside because we need to be believe the truth today. We need to be practicing the truth today. Do you know what we don't need to be doing? We don't need to be following myths and wives-tales that people are trying to get people to follow today. Do you know why? It is because you are going to end up in hell.

A lot of people are going to end up lost today because of following the wrong thing. People say, "Hey, I'm serious. My religion is as good as yours." Do you know what? That is not true. Many folks follow a lot of the things today and they are dedicated at it. Many folks are very serious about what they are doing. However, they are following the wrong master. It is very serious. They will fight over what they believe. They will do all kinds of things. However they are following something that is false and they are going to end up lost. That is sad.

There are people who have gone to church all their lives that are going to end up lost. It is because of one reason. They have never been born again. That is the reason. They believed in baptism to save them. They believed in church membership to save them. I know people who belong to all kinds of different lodges and they think that is going to save them. Many folks are going to end up in a lake of fire who have went to church all their lives simply because they believed a myth or lie. They believed something that is not truth and they are going to end up lost. That is sad. Isn't it?

Paul is soon to die

5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Paul is saying all these things to Timothy. Now he is going to get down here in telling Timothy why he is saying these things.

Offered

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Paul is writing here and telling Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered." When you look at that and read that; when it says "I am now ready to be offered, the word offered means "a drink offering." When

you look at the Old Testament in different places if you wanted to bring an offering to God you could put wine in a glass, bottle or something and you could pour it out as a drink offering unto Almighty God.

Do you know what Paul is saying here? He is saying that my life is going to be poured out. Paul is here about ready to die. He knew he was going to die. However, he was not looking at his death here as being something horrible or bad; but he was looking at his life as being an offering unto Almighty God.

That is what we need to be doing today. We need to live our lives here today; everyday knowing that if we should leave here today that it is just another offering that we are going to make unto Almighty God. The Apostle Paul was giving his life, sacrificing his life because of what he believed. He would not compromise what he knew as truth. That was going to get him killed. He was laying his life on the altar. They were going to kill him. He was pouring out his whole life. However that did not bother him at all.

Departure

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

He says, "I'm getting ready to leave here." The word "departure" means a lot of different things. It talks about a yoke that was put upon a beast such as an ox; they would put a yoke upon this ox so that he could pull plows and different things. Sometimes they would hook the ox and yoke to what we would call a grindstone where they would grind corn and grain. The yoke held the beast of burden to the mill stone. The beast would walk around; it would labor day in and day out. Paul is saying here, "I'm about ready to lay the yoke aside. I've labored in this life. I've worked. Now I'm about ready to lay the yoke aside."

That would be a great testimony to know that you were going to die just in a few moments. To know that, but you are looking at it as a departure, like you are laying down a work here in this life. Friend, I hope we can do that.

Paul understood that. Paul understood his departure was like un-yoking an animal.

He also knew that when you look at the word "departure" it brings out the idea of a ship that had been tied up to a port. It came into a port and has been there for a long time. The sails are down. The anchor is down on the bottom. The ship is tied up by big huge ropes, but it means now that it is time to raise anchor. It is time to un-tie the ropes. It is time to run up the sails and it is time to set sail for a different country. Do you know what Paul was saying here? "I've been anchored in this life but now it is time for me to move on. It is time for me to raise the anchor. It is time for me to untie the ropes of this life. It is time for me to raise the sail. It is time for me to start sailing towards heaven."

Do you know what I am glad of tonight? I'm on my way there. I don't know when I'm going to depart. I don't know when that is going to happen. I do know one thing. There is going to be a day that we are going to take a ride. There is going to be a day that we are going to step from this life unto a brand new dimension. That is going to happen. It is going to be a great day when we are going to be able raise the anchor in this life to raise the spiritual sails and start sailing towards that land that God has prepared for

us. I say “Glory to His name.” We may be going tonight. Do you know that? We are on our way. We may arrive tonight.

Years ago, we used to go camping. We would load all of our stuff in a truck or car then take it down to the creek bank and drag it all out. We would set up a tent. We would build a fire, get our beds and cook. We would stay there for however long it was, but there came a time that we had to depart.

He uses the word “depart.” It also means in Greek, “my time of breaking camp here is at hand.” I’ve had my tent set up here. I’ve lived here on planet earth. I’ve been here. I’ve lived here. Now it is time to tear down the tent, put out the fire and gather up all the stuff. It is time to break camp and move on.

Paul knew that. Paul knew that it was his departure. Paul knew that it was time for him to sail on. Paul knew that the yoke that had held him here and was so burdensome here that he was going get ready to lay that off. He says, “...the time of my departure is at hand.”

Even though he was going to die, even though they were going to cut off his head; he was not worried about it. He is saying, “I’m getting ready to leave here. I’m getting ready to sail on. All my burdens are over.”

Fought a Good Fight

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

When you look at this here, Paul probably had in his mind the many wrestling matches that he had watched when he had been Rome in the Coliseums. Do you know what they would do? They would wrestle. The Olympians would wrestle. They were good. Paul says here, “I have fought a good fight...” When he says the word “good” here do you know what it means? It means “I have kept the rules.” I have obeyed the rules. I have fought a good fight. I did not play dirty. I did not disobey the rules. I fought a good fight.

Can we say that tonight? **If we were leaving here tonight, can we say, “Lord, I’ve played by your rules?”** The Bible, the Word of God, is the rules; not free will Baptist doctrine, or church covenants. This here is the rules; the Bible, the Holy Word. Can we say “I’ve fought a good fight.”

Kept the Faith

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Not only is he talking about a wrestler, but he is also talking about a runner. The runners that would run in the arenas would line up shoulder to shoulder. They had paths that were made out of cinders. They would run in this big arena. Do you know what they had to do? They had to stay in their own lane. Again, they had to obey the rules. They had to stay in their own lane. They could not do anything that would hinder somebody else.

Paul says here, “I have finished my course. I have run the race. I’ve fought the good fight.” The Bible says here that he has finished his course. Then he says this.

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

“...I have kept the faith.”

Do you know what Paul is saying? Not only have I fought a good fight, not only have I run my race, but I have kept the faith.

The word “kept” means “to guard.” “Faith” means this truth that is in here. Paul is saying here, “...not only have I fought a good fight, not only have I run the race; but I have kept the faith.” Just like a soldier would guard something. Paul has guarded the truth. Sometimes we don’t understand that.

Sometimes, we don’t understand why we don’t get this preacher or that singer. It is your responsibility and my responsibility to guard the truth; to make sure that these little guys that are coming up, when they get up to our age—if there is that much time—that they will know what truth is. That is our responsibility. As leaders and members of this church that is our responsibility to guard the truth, to keep the truth, to preserve it, to make sure that it is not watered down, to make sure that it is not diluted. That is what happens a lot.

You can take something that is pure, whatever it is, anti-freeze, you can take that and start adding stuff to it and if you keep adding enough stuff to it after a while it is not worth nothing. That is what many folks are doing today. They start diluting the Word of God, and then it doesn’t mean anything. It is my responsibility and your responsibility to guard this.

Crown of Righteousness

8 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 unto all them also that love his appearing.

When the wrestlers would wrestle and they would win and the runners when they would run and they would win; do you know what they did? They would go over to a certain place in the arena and they would sit there and wait until they were rewarded. Do you know what they would win? They would win a crown. The crown was either ivy or some kind of oak leaves that they wove into a crown that they put upon their head. It would look real pretty for a few days, but after a while it would fade away. They would sit there and wait. Do you know why? They would sit there because they knew they had won. They knew that they had obeyed the rules. They knew that they did all that so they were sitting there waiting until the time that the umpire or judge that was sitting up there on the seat would give them their reward.

8 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 unto all them also that love his appearing.

Do you know what Paul knew? Paul knew he had kept the rules. He knew that he had run the race, he had guarded the faith. “I’ve won. Now I’m waiting and going to be rewarded. I’m going to receive a

crown. I'm going to receive my prize." Do you know what one of them was? It was a crown of righteousness. Isn't that awesome?

We don't think much about rewards. We don't talk much about rewards, but they are real and we are going to be rewarded one day.

Righteous Judge

8 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 unto all them also that love his appearing.

The righteous judge here when you look at this; he is not talking about a judge that is sitting upon a judicial bench. He is looking at the umpire that is going to be giving the crowns to the winners.

When you and I stand before the judgment seat of Christ; we are not going to be standing there to be judged on whether we are saved or lost, but we will be there saved and to receive the rewards that we have earned here in this life.

Isn't it wonderful to think about? God is a righteous judge. He cannot be manipulated by flattery or by money like the judges of this world can. If you have enough money in this world today you can get away with anything. If you know the right people you can get away with anything. However, on that day there is going to be a righteous judge that is going to be passing out the rewards and you are not going to be able to manipulate Him.

8 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 unto all them also that love his appearing.

A crown of righteousness just like the athletes would win a crown made out of oak leaves or ivy; something that was very valuable to them and cherished by them. They had won. There is going to be a day that all those who love Him and are looking for His appearing is going to receive the same type of crown that the Apostle Paul received—a crown of righteousness.

Do you really believe that? I know that don't you? The book says that.

The question is this:

Are you saved? That is the first question I want to ask you. If you are not saved, then you don't have to worry about a crown of righteousness because you are not going to be there when they are passed out. Only saved people are going to be there. Only saved people are going receive them. If you are not saved tonight, you need to get saved.

Just as all saved people are going to stand before a righteous judge to be rewarded, so will all lost people are going to be standing before the same judge at the white throne judgment and the only reward that is going to be passed out then is eternal death. You are going to be doomed. There is not

going to be no hope for you then. It is going to be too late for you to repent. You are not going to have time to say “Lord, I’m sorry. I had good intentions. Lord, I was too busy.” That excuse is not going to hold water when we stand before Almighty God. You can be busy if you want to. However, if you are going to go to heaven you have to purpose to go. You are not going to slide your way into heaven.

Will you come?—