

2nd Timothy 4:1-8

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: 2 proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. 5 As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. 6 As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The letter is pastoral advice to Timothy to fulfill his ministry as a leader of the new church. Within the instructions on strong leadership emphasis is placed on sound teaching and godliness. The main theme of the letter is endurance and encouragement especially in the face of hardship. Timothy is charged to keep on witnessing faithfully to Christ and hold to true teaching. The duty of the teacher and evangelist in the face of suffering and opposition is to guard against danger and false doctrine. Timothy's role is to teach the gospel in good times and bad, to make sure the message is properly understood, continue the good work, and not be put off by apostasy.

The title *Disciplined Christians* is for our installation and leadership recognition service for today. I encourage you to consider your own spiritual discipline to that of the biblical heroes. The Old Testament prophets and the apostle Paul never looked at their leadership roles as a duty. Leadership in ministry is not a chore with dull drudgery; it is a team of fellowship and a blessing. We take pride in continuing the legacy of Jesus. We are motivated to work for the good of the Lord. We invest our energy in spiritual growth. The main pillars of faith formation are Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and mission. The Bible is our best guide for defense against apostasy and corruption. Ever since Old Testament times people have wanted to hear only good things, attribute their own will to God's will, and reject the truth of sound doctrine.

It takes discipline to stay true to doctrine when the world goes astray. I think probably the best example I have of discipline is my experience with the Marines. I was not always motivated. My attitude was both good and bad. My biggest complaint was the authoritarian rule. Eventually I wised up and made the best of it and adjusted to the authoritarianism and began to focus more on my performance. In the spiritual realm, God is the ultimate authority. We must have obedience to the will of God. Christ is the head of the church. He is our leader. The Bible is our guide. Joy, peace, and satisfaction are found in following the teaching and living example of Jesus the Christ.

The author of the Scripture is on his way of achieving a crown of righteousness. This is his goal. The crown is not made up of righteousness. The crown is the reward for righteousness. The crown is the goal. The commitment, discipline, motivation, and focus of our lives are for the achievement of the goal. The power of commitment comes from our willingness to put God's will above our own. We could make a long list of the things that we want to do. However, we are called to do what God wants us to do. My personal goal is wear a crown of righteousness, to

make it through the narrow gate and hear the words “well done good and faithful servant.” My desire to reach the goal is what creates the motivation to achieve the goal and the discipline to stick with it in good times and bad.

Timothy is not a lone spokesman that is accountable only to himself, he is in the presence of God. He has to combat a superficial view that puts me first, with my will, my needs, my wants, and my own conscious coming first in my life. Whereas, the Christian lives in the sight of God, the most important thing is to live by the gospel of Jesus. You are to build up team work to help you achieve your goals for God’s kingdom here on earth. We are to have a solid game plan because God’s business of salvation is extremely important. The main point of today’s text is the necessity of sound doctrine. People often look for church by activities, programs, and amenities that appeal to them. However, few people look for the most important thing - sound doctrine that focuses on Jesus. All lay leaders have the duty to accept the truth and follow Christ as our high calling to God.

The Christian life is a struggle against evil. The race is not won until you cross the finish line. There is no so slacking off along the way. We have pledged ourselves to Christ. We owe faithful allegiance to the Lord. Today’s installation service is a time of commitment to excellence for God’s glory here on earth. Excellence does not come from the most talented, it comes from the ones with determination and focus, that refuse to be beaten, and are committed to succeed. Turn your life over to God, stay true to the doctrine of Jesus. Study the Bible, worship God, devote quality time to prayer, and join with others in the Christian mission. Reach out to others and check yourself to make sure you have totally surrendered your life for a life of love with Jesus. We all serve in the presence of God and Christ. We are all ministers and stand under the responsibility outlined in this letter to Timothy. Disciplined Christians focuses their lives on the pillars of faith; Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and mission.