A Battle, A Race, And A Faith

Joe Slater

 I have no idea how many times I’ve read 2 Tim. 4:7 and blown right past a profound nugget nestled there. Of course now that I’ve seen it, I neglected to write down who pointed it out! Nevertheless, here are some points about it, with apologies to whoever enlightened me.

 Paul wrote, *“I have fought the good fight.”* That’s a Roman term. *“I have finished the race (course).”* That’s a Greek term. *“I have kept the faith.”* That’s a Hebrew term.

 Paul was a Roman citizen with more than a passing familiarity with the Roman military. In Acts 23 a large contingent of Roman soldiers and spearmen safeguarded his life as he was sent from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Yet Paul knew that the Christian’s battle is *“not against flesh and blood, but against . . . spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 6:12). The next several verses itemize the spiritual armor needed in that battle. Paul wore that armor and utilized it well. He fought the good fight of faith.

 Paul also appears to have loved athletics, as did the Greeks (think of the Olympics). In 1 Corinthians 9:24 & 26 he likened the Christian life to a race, stressing that we need to run confidently and run to win! As he sat in a dungeon in Rome awaiting execution, Paul knew his race was over; he had finished successfully!

 Finally, he had *“kept the faith.”* That is, he had held fast to the gospel and guarded it from being perverted. “The faith” is that system of religion established by Jesus, and *“once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jude 3).

 Will you fight the good fight? Finish the race? Keep the faith?

Caged

 A boy with a rusty birdcage walked by a preacher. “What are you going to do with that bird?” asked the preacher. “Oh, I’m just going to poke sticks at it, shake the cage, throw water on it, fun things like that.”

 “What are you going to do after that?”

 “I don’t know; probably just feed it to the cats.”

 “How much do you want for it?” asked the preacher.

 “Aw, you don’t want it. It’s just an old field bird. It doesn’t sing or nothin’.”

 “How much?"

 The boy thought awhile, and then said, “Two dollars.” The preacher paid it. The boy grinned and pocketed his money. Then he watched to see what the preacher would do with the bird. The preacher just opened the cage and turned it loose. The boy walked away, shaking his head over the craziness of some people.

 The minister had something else in mind. Sin has “caged” each one of us and Satan has mankind in his grasp. Jesus asks, “What are you going to do with them?”

 “I’m just going to have fun with them. I’m going to tease them. I’m going to bring heartache and pain into their lives.”

 “And after that?”

 “Well, when I get tired, I will take them to eternal destruction.”

 “I will buy them,” says Jesus.

 “You couldn’t possibly want them! They will despise You, use your name in vain and reject You. Then they will kill You.”

 “I will give my life.”

 Jesus paid the price and set us free (Ephesians 1:7). Won’t you accept His offer on His terms?

--Author Unknown (via *Bulletin Gold*)

Can We Live Forever And Not Become Bored?

 The title of this article may sound a little strange to some, but I have actually had this question posed to me on more than one occasion. To man’s way of thinking, it would be next to impossible to live “forever” and not experience some sort of boredom. It is, of course, imperative that we understand that live on the other side of physical death will be dramatically different than our lives here on earth.

 To begin with, there are two main words used for “life” in the New Testament. One is bios, from which we get our word biology. It simply means “alive” as opposed to dead. It is mainly a technical term used to designate something that has not experienced physical death.

 Jesus once said, *“And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”* (John 17:3). The word John used to record that statement is not bios, but zoe. Scholars tell us that this word is the nobler of the two, and is used to express the highest and best of living. Obviously, eternal “zoe” will be exciting, abundant, and thrilling for all those who experience it.

 Eternal life is not related to physical time. For example, God is eternal. He has always been. Consequently, there is no sense of time from God’s perspective. Are we to believe that God could ever say, “I’m bored with my own existence”?

 The life we will experience on the other side will be a quality of existence that we have never known in this temporary, earthly walk. While we are here, we may never understand some things about eternal life. But rest assured that “boredom” will never play a role in that abundant, never-ending life that awaits the faithful in Heaven.

--Milton Smith (adapted; via *Old Paths*)