

# Adult Teaching Resources

October 23, 2016



## An Apostle's Apprentice – Lessons from Timothy (Sept. 11-Oct 23)

2 Timothy 1:1-14 – “Keep the Faith”

2 Timothy 2:8-15 – “Don't Be Ashamed”

2 Timothy 3:14-4:5 – “Read the Instructions”

**2 Timothy 4:6-18 (RCL 4:6-8, 16-18) – “Finish the Race”**

Luke 19:1-10 – “Little Big Man”

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# Finish the Race

## 2 Timothy 4:6-18

### FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Before the Lesson:** Make five copies of the handout, “II Timothy 4:6”, one for each reader. These will be used in the Information session. Have the a/v equipment needed to show the video in the Information session. Make copies of the handout, “After you have ‘fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith’..” for each class member to be used in the Transformational Exercise.

### Fellowship Question

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(Use *one* of these to break the ice, to begin some discussion and lead into the study):

Which do you fear most: heights/falling, a creature (such as spiders or snakes), or public speaking?

What is a project you completed and how did you feel on completing it?

### Information

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A friend told me recently that she fears death. She fears the process. She fears the passing. She fears what may come next. She is a believer and has been following and serving Christ for most of her adult life. She claims her salvation through Jesus. She believes in life after death because of God’s grace. She has known the Holy Spirit’s presence through good times and bad. Still, she is anxious. Even with four decades of faith, death can be a fearful prospect.

In today’s lesson, a person is facing death. Paul (or someone representing Paul as an author) sees that his time is nearly over. He sits in a prison cell. Winter approaches. He takes up his pen to write letters of encouragement and correction to churches and to ministers that he has influenced. His words will live on long after he is gone. The gospel will live on long after he is gone. But soon, a government threatened by that gospel will take his life.

Today, we read the words of a man who hears the footsteps of the executioner to a man he considers to be as close as a son.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 4:6-8.]

We do not have a record of how Paul died. Tradition says he was beheaded by the Roman government under Nero.

## Information *continued*

“The earliest extant references connecting Paul’s death to the penalty of decapitation occur in the *Martyrium Pauli*, the final segment of the *Acta Pauli* (c. 160 A.D.) and in Tertullian’s *de Praescriptione Haereticorum* 36, 1-3 (c. 200 A.D.). There are no rival claims which would witness to the Apostle’s having been slain in another way. Tradition uniformly cites decapitation as the mode of Paul’s martyrdom.” [Harry W. Tjara. The Martyrdom of St. Paul. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. 1994. p. 23.]

Of course, Paul did not know exactly how he would die – just as we do not know how we will die. He did think his death was coming soon. But his attitude was not what we might expect.

In a 1963 interview, C.S. Lewis was asked,

“Sherwood Wirt: What do you think is going to happen in the next few years of history, Mr. Lewis?”

C.S. Lewis: I have no way of knowing. My primary field is the past. I travel with my back to the engine, and that makes it difficult when you try to steer. The world might stop in ten minutes; meanwhile, we are to go on doing our duty. The great thing is to be found at one’s post as a child of God, living each day a though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years. We have, of course, the assurance of the New Testament regarding events to come (Matthew 24:4-44; Mark 13:5-27; Luke 21:8-33). I find it difficult to keep from laughing when I find people worrying about future destruction of some kind or other. Didn’t they know they were going to die anyway? Apparently not. My wife once asked a young woman friend whether she had ever thought of death, and she replied, ‘By the time I reach that age science will have done something about it!’ [C.S. Lewis. “Cross-Examination”. God in the Dock. Eerdmans.1970. p. 266.]

Science has extended life in many ways. But, it has not conquered death.

[If your class members have a Bible app, you might ask them to look up and read from the J.B. Phillips translation, verses 6-7.]

Listen to this passage in the Phillips translation:

“As for me, I feel that the last drops of my life are being poured out for God. The glorious fight that God gave me I have fought. The course that I was set I have finished, and I have kept the faith.”

How would you describe his emotional state?

How could you describe his spiritual condition?

The words are used here relate to a “drink offering” or libation. When we think of sacrifices, we might think of lambs or other animals’ slaughters on altars. But in the Jewish faith, there were also these drink offerings.

[Have a class member read Numbers 15:1-5.]

## Information *continued*

The drink offering was part of the normal offering that was to take place once the Jews entered “the Promised Land.” A gallon of wine was to be poured out as part of the worship ceremony. Blood and wine intermingled and were burned, making “a pleasing odor for the Lord.”

Paul refers to this drink offering or libation in verse 6. This verse gives us an interesting perspective on the role of the translator. Some translations are very literal. Others are more “dynamic”, where the sense is as important as the literal words. The translator may try to empathize with the original author’s emotions and thoughts. Listen to this verse in several different translations. As you listen, consider, “what is Paul’s attitude toward his impending death according to this translation?”

[Distribute the handout to five class members with the translations of II Timothy 4:6, which include:

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. (New Revised Standard Version)

As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. (Good News Translation)

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. (New International Version)

As for me, I feel that the last drops of my life are being poured out for God. (J.B. Phillips)

I say this because I won’t be around to help you very much longer. My time has almost run out. Very soon now I will be on my way to heaven. (The Living Bible)

What was Paul’s attitude toward his impending death in the different translations?

If we recall that the drink offering was wine offered to God as a symbolic beverage and as an act of gratitude for the gift of the Promised Land, the drink offering was not so much a sacrifice as it was, as we say, “icing on the cake.”

So, although Paul is to die soon, it may be that he seems to actually look forward to the culmination of his life. He dies at the peak of his life and his efforts to spread the gospel.

Let’s hear some similar words of Paul in another letter.

[Have a class member read Philippians 2:16-18.]

How would you describe Paul’s perspective on life and death here?

If Paul is looking forward to death, is this a suicidal wish? Why or why not?

We might wonder what regrets will we have when we face our deaths. This writer has no regrets, it seems.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 4:7-8.]

## Information *continued*

A racer wants to finish the race. Even if you cannot win or place, you want to cross the finish line. Remember what happened at the recent Olympics?

[Show the video and or share the story from this article: US and New Zealand Olympic runners help each other finish race after ugly fall during women's 5,000 meters: <http://www.businessinsider.com/american-new-zealand-runners-sportsmanship-2016-8> ]

How does that story relate to our spiritual life?

Some in Paul's company did not finish the race. Other persons intentionally worked to impede Paul's race.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 4:9-14.]

Although we may infer from this paragraph that Paul was alone in staying the course, he actually names many persons in this letter who are being faithful.

“The letter's crisis tone nearly makes one assume that no one around Paul was able to remain faithful to God and Paul's gospel -- except for Paul himself. No wonder such importance hovers over the question of Timothy's faithfulness. But when we look more closely, reading from the very beginning through the end of the letter, we see that maybe others were faithful, too: Lois, Eunice, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, Carpus, Prisca, Aquila, Onesiphorus and his household, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and other brothers and sisters. That's a church right there, probably enough to field two teams in the community softball league.” [Matt Skinner. [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1837](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1837)]

Now, the author again considers the trials – literally – he has undergone. Listen for hope in these verses.

[Have a class member read II Timothy 4:16-18.]

Where do you sense hope in these verses?

“Paul's vision is directed to what is often called an eschatological hope. An eschatological hope, however, is not a hope directed towards some future justification (even if Paul refers to his final vindication before the Throne). Eschatological hope is a present hope. It is hope in the present moment that forms, that transforms the ‘now’ in which we live. Eschatological hope is the knowledge that Christ is present today. It ‘sees’ the world with different eyes, with eyes that are not confined by the restrictions of self-interest.” [Dirk G. Lange. [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=740](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=740)]

## Transformational Exercise

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[Distribute the handout, “After you have ‘fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith’..”]

Let us conclude with a reflection exercise.

Imagine a setting, such as your 100th birthday party. Some people have been invited to “say a few words” about you and your faith. What would you hope to hear?

Here are some suggested speakers. Beside the role, put in a person’s name and what you hope they would be able to say.

A family member \_\_\_\_\_:

A friend \_\_\_\_\_:

A minister \_\_\_\_\_:

Someone who has walked with you in a difficult time \_\_\_\_\_:

Someone who has “run the race” of faith with you \_\_\_\_\_:

[Invite class members to share some of their “speeches” with a neighbor or in the large group, as there is time. Then, conclude with a prayer something like this:

*Dear God, We thank you for persons through history who have been faithful to you in good times and bad. We thank you for persons we have in our personal histories who have also “fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith.” We pray that when we come to end our lives, we will have no regrets, but we have peace as we prepare to be in your presence fully. Amen.]*

**Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan?** You may send comments to the lesson plan author at [rjordan@cbfnc.org](mailto:rjordan@cbfnc.org). Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Filling in the gaps** — The lectionary text encompasses only 2 Timothy 4-6 and 16-18, but we will include vv. 7-15 as well so that we get a fuller sense of Paul’s closing concerns.

In chapters three and four, Paul switched back and forth between his personal concerns and his directives for Timothy. After speaking of himself as a suffering example in 3:14-15, he turned to instructing Timothy in 3:14-4:5. With 4:6, he returned to reflecting on his own life.

**Finishing the race** — Paul said he had “finished the race” (NRSV, NIV11, NET, HCSB) or “finished the course” (KJV, NASB). He employed similar metaphors in 1 Cor. 9:24-27 and Phil. 3:12-14. The word Paul used, *dromon*, could refer either to a race or the course on which it was run. Stadiums designed for horse and chariot racing were common in Roman cities, and were called



“hippodromes,” from *hippos* (horse) and *dromos* (course or race). The word “stadium” comes from the Roman *stadia*, indicating a length of about 200 yards, the length of the course in a typical stadium. As in current running events, different races could involve multiple laps. Pictured below are the remains of the hippodrome in Caesarea Maritima. The spectator stands that would have been on the left side have washed into the sea.

**Leafy crowns** — The famed Olympic games were not the only competitions held in the ancient world. While the Olympic games were held every four years, others were held in intervening years, and each awarded a distinctive crown-like wreath (*stephanos*) to the victors. Paul used that same word in 1 Cor. 9:24-27, where he spoke of striving to win a race, not “to receive a perishable wreath,” but “an imperishable one.” It is also the word used in 2 Tim. 4:8.

A circlet made from olive branches was awarded the victor in the Olympic games at Olympia, while laurel was used in the Pythian games at Delphi, a type of parsley in the games at Nemea, and pine in the Isthmian games held at Corinth. The use of the laurel wreath as an award in the Pythian games gave rise to the metaphor of laurels as an award for excellence, most commonly used in the admonition that one who has achieved something should not “rest on his or her laurels.”

## Digging Deeper *continued*

**Starry crowns** — An old bluegrass gospel hymn by J. W. Sweeney (1897) asks “Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?” This assumes that when we get to heaven, we’ll be honored to different degrees based on the good works we have done or the burdens we have borne on earth. It is common to compliment those who put forth extra effort in doing good or who have put up with onerous burdens by saying they’ve earned extra stars in their crown. Do you think we’ll really wear crowns in heaven? If so, will one “crown” will be distinguishable from another among those who enjoy eternal life?

Follow this link for a YouTube video version of “Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRJN3JSGSMw>.

**Tychicus** — Tychicus, one of Paul’s faithful companions and supporters, is also mentioned in Acts 20:4, Eph. 6:21, Col. 4:7, and Titus 3:12. Since Paul said he had sent Tychicus to Ephesus, presumably to take Timothy’s place, it is likely that he would have carried the letter.

**Scrolls and parchments** — Paul’s request in v. 13 is a bit ambiguous. The NRSV translates it as “also the books, and above all the parchments.” NET has “the scrolls, and especially the parchments.” Some scholars argue that Paul was not referring to two different groups of documents, but a particular collection. Gordon D. Fee cites T. C. Skeat as arguing that the phrase is one of definition: “the books – I mean by that the parchment notebooks.” Fee leans toward that understanding of the phrase. (*1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series. [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011], 295).

**Naming names** — While encouraging Timothy to be on guard against those who opposed the faith, Paul named names (1 Tim. 1:20, 2 Tim. 4:10, 14). If we know of people who actively oppose the Christian faith or intentionally bring harm to Christians, what should be our response to them?

**Protection from danger** — Paul was grateful when God preserved him in the face of danger, but did not expect God to protect him from all hurt. Do you ever pray for God to keep you and your family safe from harm? Do you think God is obligated to do so? If something should happen, do you think that is an indication that God failed? In what sense can we realistically count on God to deliver us?

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

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## Who was Alexander the coppersmith?

The presence and purpose of 2 Tim. 4:14-15 has long been debated. In v. 14, Paul spoke of “Alexander the coppersmith, who did me great harm.” Who was Alexander, and how he had harmed Paul? The short answer is that we don’t know – but we can make some educated guesses.

The word for “coppersmith,” *chalkeus*, could also refer to any metalworker in general. Acts 19:23-41 recounts Paul’s first visit to Ephesus, where there was a great temple to a goddess called Diana by the Romans, and Artemis by the Greeks. The massive temple was known as one of the wonders of the ancient world, but after its destruction its component parts were used for other construction projects, so that only one column of it remains.

Paul’s preaching was naturally detrimental to the idol selling business, so a crowd of metalworkers who made their living from crafting images of the goddess sparked a riot against Paul, so large that it spilled into the city’s 25,000 seat theater. A man named Demetrius reportedly sparked the riot. At some point the Jews put forward a man named Alexander (Acts 19:33-34) to “make a defense,” though it is not clear whether he would have been defending Paul or defending the craftsmen, because he was drowned out by the crowd before a local official brought an end to the demonstration.

A man named Alexander is also mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:19-20, where Paul spoke of Hymenaeus and Alexander, “whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.” This suggests that Paul had ceremonially condemned the two men, expecting them to receive divine punishment. Hymenaeus, along with one Philetus, is also named in 2 Tim. 2:17 as false teachers whose dangerous words “spread like gangrene.”

Some scholars speculate that the two Alexanders are the same man. Perhaps the Alexander put forward “by the Jews” in Acts 19:33-34 was a Jewish believer who later adopted divergent beliefs and turned against Paul. If Paul’s ceremonial act amounted to an “excommunication” of sorts, it is possible that he left Ephesus, but later reported Paul to the Romans as a troublemaker, leading to his arrest.

Though we cannot identify Alexander with precision, we can learn from his actions: whether he was an apostate believer or one who opposed the gospel from the beginning, Paul believed his future was bleak: “the Lord will pay him back for his deeds.”

Though we do not know who Alexander was, or even where he was located, Timothy did – and Paul warned his young colleague to be on guard against him. Perhaps we can also identify people who oppose the gospel or whose teachings are dangerous to the church. Like Timothy, we would be wise to watch out for such persons and warn against them, lest we – and others – fall under their sway.

Handout: II Timothy 4:6

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. (New Revised Standard Version)

As for me, the hour has come for me to be sacrificed; the time is here for me to leave this life. (Good News Translation)

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A family member \_\_\_\_\_:

A friend \_\_\_\_\_:

A minister \_\_\_\_\_:

Someone who has walked with you in a difficult time  
\_\_\_\_\_:

Someone who has “run the race” of faith with you  
\_\_\_\_\_: