

Introduction:

America was shocked when it woke up on July 27th to find out its star athlete, four-time gold medalist Simone Biles had withdrawn from the Olympic Games competition indefinitely. She did well but many were disappointed she did not finish. The 2021 Olympic Games earned the United States a total of 113 medals, 39 of which are gold, 41 silver and 33 bronze. Finishing the race is important because it is not just about how well you start but how you finish. Overcoming adversity is what makes the champion. Glenn Cunningham popularly known as the Iron Man of Kansas, broke several world records in the 1930s. He represented USA at two Olympics and clinched a silver medal at the 1936 edition. The reason why he is so well known until this day and respected is because he never quit in the face of extreme adversity.

Imagine being told as a child you may never be able to walk again and that you may have to spend the rest of your life as an amputee. Imagine going from there to winning a medal at the Olympic Games. When Glenn Cunningham was eight years old he saw his world come crashing down he nearly lost his legs after a fire accident in his hometown of Kansas. He saw his brother Floyd die as a result of that incident and when Cunningham was admitted to the hospital, doctors suggested amputation because the burns were severe and spread of infection was feared. Overcoming adversity and all odds, Cunningham went on to become one of the greatest middle-distance runners of the 20th century. He started with many odds against him. From being almost crippled as a child to creating world records and going on to win a medal at the Olympics, Cunningham's career remains an inspiration for athletes.

Paul is our example to a strong finish. In this passage, Paul is alone in a damp, cold Roman dungeon. He is awaiting execution in these last written words we sense Paul's loneliness and the agony of desertion. We who would minister for Christ cannot do so alone. We need each other we are workers together (2Co 6:1) and we are not islands.

I. Paul's Final Testimony (4:6-8)

1. Paul had known plenty of discouragement during his ministry and had every reason to be discouraged as he writes this letter he writes: **For I am now ready to be offered (4:6).**

The word *offered* translates a Greek word (*spendoe*), referring to the Jewish custom of pouring wine at the base of the brazen altar where animals were offered (Exodus 29:40). He describes it as being poured out as a drink offering. That's Jewish language taken from the Old Testament. When you think of something being poured out, you think of it at times being wasted, but Paul's life was being invested as an offering in the cause of Christ.

2. Paul continues, **and the time of my departure is at hand (4:6b).** He knew he would not leave prison alive but he states it is a time of Departure.” The use of the word departure simply means you're leaving here and going somewhere. Well, that's exactly the way he meant the word. In fact, that word *analysis* in the Greek is used for unyoking an animal from the shafts of the plow. Paul is ready to die because he writes: **I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course (Timothy 4:7).** Like an Olympic marathon runner, Paul has finished his lifelong race. Marathon

runners know the elation of finishing the grueling miles of their race and are thankful when finally they see the finish line. Paul finished the course set out for him by God at the beginning of his Christian life (Acts 9:15-16). Everything God set before him has been completed. Therefore, Paul can honestly say: **I have kept the faith** (2 Timothy 4:7c). He kept it, preached it, lived it, and died by it. He was attacked he endured hunger and thirst (**2 Cor. 11:23-28**).

3. Paul looked at the present and the past, and now he looks to the future by writing: **Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness** (4:8a). It means it is safely stored and carefully guarded awaiting him from God. Jesus depicts this truth in **Matthew 6:20-21**. Paul's crown of righteousness was in safe storage, awaiting his arrival in heaven.

4. The word translated "crown" (*stef-an-os*) refers to a victor's crown. It is the crown placed upon winners of Greek athletic events, like the Olympic gold medal is given today, as a sign of great accomplishment and honor. Paul soon would be beheaded by Nero but he knew he would be vindicated and rewarded by the righteous judge, God Himself. Paul writes that this crown will be given not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (4:8c).

All Christians who truly love Jesus long for His appearing, or Second Coming, live righteously and will receive this crown. There are 4 other crowns mentioned in scriptures that a Christian can receive: **the crown of rejoicing, crown of life, crown of glory, and the incorruptible crown**. Which crowns will you receive? Regardless of the adversity you are experiencing, don't be discouraged hang in there. We all must battle to the finish...Galatian 6:9.

II The Agony of Desertion 4:9-10

1. Paul writes: **For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica** (2 Timothy 4:10a). We don't know much about Demas. The first time he is mentioned is in Colossians 4:14 he is mentioned as one of the esteemed and intimate companions of Paul. While Paul was writing the Colossian epistle from prison in Rome, Demas was there. So he was intimately acquainted with Paul, he had been for some years.

Demas was there during that time of Pauls' first imprisonment in Rome. He must have had some kind of outward ministry of importance and by the way...in Philemon he is called a fellow worker of Paul. Anyone who has face desertion knows the hurt. Demas fell in love with the world and apparently never genuinely had a love for Christ and the cause of Christ. On the outside he ministered, as Judas did, too he, like Judas, deserted Paul.

2. Jesus had a deserter, Paul had a deserter. In a sense, it's kind of reassuring to know that there will be those who will labor alongside us until the time when they decide they've had enough and they are gone. Having loved the present age, it says he left and went to Thessalonica. Demas liked the dazzling lights in the world! His love for the world got bigger than his love for God! I've seen people get so involved in other things that they lose sight of spiritual things! This is what Paul saw in Demas, he loved this present world.

Application:

Last week Pastor Jay mentioned not all who claim to be Christians are really born again

If you ever get to the point that you rather be somewhere else than church with God's people then something is wrong in your heart!

For a day in thy courts [is] better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. Ps. 84:10

III The Requisite of Provisions (4: 11 -13).

1. Paul writes to Timothy: **Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me ... Only Luke is with me.** Loneliness occurs when we are separated from family and friends because of school, a job change, the military, or the last child leaving home. Paul was a man of God but he was not superhuman. He needed and wanted companionship. Paul was lonely. One of the most difficult kinds of separation is the one that comes from the death of a spouse. When we know someone is going through a time of separation, we need to as 1 Thessalonians 5:11 gives' us admonition. **Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.**

2. Paul says to Timothy; **Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.** This is evidence of a restoration of trust in Mark from Paul. Paul had wanted nothing to do with him in Acts 15:36-40. **Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas:** In prison, in the winter, if he survives through the next year before his execution, it's going to be cold it's going to be very cold, and he doesn't have his cloak. He left the cloak with a man named Troas.

3. This tells us that it is likely that Paul was arrested at Troas, resulting in this second imprisonment at Rome. In those days the arresting soldiers had claim to any extra garments in the possession of the one arrested. It may be that Paul was forewarned of the arrest and therefore committed his few books and this cloak that was an outer garment; a cape which fell down below the knees, with an opening for the head in the center. Paul gave put the clock in the care of an honest man named Carpus.

4. Paul asks Timothy to bring, and the books, especially the parchments: Paul stayed a scholar to the end and wanted his books. He especially wanted the parchments, which were precious to him because they were portions of the Old Testament but he won't have anything to read, and that's really hard. So, he says, "Bring the parchments.

Conclusion:

Paul suffered loneliest and desertion but he did not quit. The loneliest people in the world are those who think only of themselves. Paul isn't selfish, and that's why through his trial and imprisonment he prays that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear. As members of the family of God we need each other and need to support and pray for one another. His life was an example of the believe to the end.