

2 Timothy 4:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

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

Paul's famous testimony uses three metaphors summarizing his life. First, "I have fought a good fight" (ton agōna ton kalon ēgōnismai, τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλὸν ἥγωνισμαι). Agōn (ἀγών) means contest, struggle, fight—from which we get "agony." Agōnizomai (ἀγωνίζομαι) means compete, struggle intensely, fight. Perfect tense indicates completed action with lasting results. Christian life is warfare requiring aggressive engagement, not passive existence. Kalos (καλός) means good, noble, excellent—Paul fought well, honorably, successfully.

Second, "I have finished my course" (ton dromon teteleka, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα). Dromos (δρόμος) means race, course—athletic metaphor. Teleō (τελέω) means finish, complete, accomplish. Perfect tense again—completed with lasting significance. Paul didn't quit midway but finished the race God assigned (Acts 20:24). Completion matters more than speed or style. Many start well but few finish faithfully. Paul crossed the finish line.

Third, "I have kept the faith" (tēn pistin tetērēka, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα). Tērēo (τηρέω) means guard, protect, preserve. "The faith" (tēn pistin, τὴν πίστιν) with definite article refers to objective body of Christian doctrine, not merely subjective trust. Paul guarded apostolic truth, refusing compromise despite pressure. Perfect tense—he has guarded and continues guarding even to death. These three accomplishments—fighting well, finishing fully, guarding truth—define successful Christian life regardless of worldly measures.

Historical Context

Paul's testimony became model for Christian martyrs. Ignatius, Polycarp, and countless others echoed similar sentiments facing death. The three metaphors (warfare, athletics, stewardship) were common in ancient moral discourse but Paul Christianizes them. Greek athletes trained for perishable wreaths; Paul fought for imperishable crown. Roman soldiers fought for earthly emperors; Paul battled for heavenly King. Philosophers guarded intellectual traditions; Paul protected divine revelation. The testimony isn't boasting but sober assessment of grace-empowered faithfulness. Paul could have compromised, recanted, or quit—he didn't.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. When you reach life's end, will you honestly say you fought well, finished fully, and guarded truth faithfully?
2. What course has God assigned you, and are you faithfully running it or have you been distracted, discouraged, or diverted?
3. How vigilantly are you guarding 'the faith'—sound doctrine—against contemporary compromise and cultural accommodation?

Interlinear Text

τὸν	ἀγῶνα	τὸν	καλὸν	ἡγώνισμαι	τὸν	δρόμον	τετέλεκα
G3588	fight	G3588	a good	I have fought	G3588	my course	I have finished
	G73		G2570		G75		G5055

τὴν	πίστιν	τετήρηκα·
G3588	the faith	I have kept
	G4102	G5083

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 6:12 (Faith): Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

Acts 20:24 (Parallel theme): But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

John 4:34 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Luke 11:28 (Parallel theme): But he said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Revelation 3:8 (Parallel theme): I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Luke 8:15 (Good): But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Revelation 3:10 (Parallel theme): Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

1 Timothy 6:20 (Faith): O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

1 Timothy 1:18 (Good): This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Proverbs 23:23 (Parallel theme): Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.