

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
August 26, 2021

“NOT AGAIN!”

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7)

Since you're reading this it's fairly obvious that I am back off the road and, in the saddle again here at the church. We just returned from our third jaunt up to Wisconsin and back since Easter. That's about 3500–4000-mile drive all told, depending on your route and specific destination. With all this motoring our “new car” now has nearly 200,000 miles on it (our new car is a 2004 model) with the “old car” (2003) right behind at 195,000 miles. With nearly 400,000 miles on two vehicles, it should also be pretty obvious that we've had this pattern of insanity in our lives...lonnnngggg road trips...for quite some time. I can honestly say that it's not gonna happen again anytime soon! At least, that's my plan. About 2000 years ago there was another guy who was known for taking a series of 3 lonnnngggg road trips, and he didn't have the benefit of automotive technology. His tours were propelled mainly by foot power, with periodic boat rides thrown in. I'm speaking (writing) of the Apostle Paul. In 47AD, about 17 years after the crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, Paul and his traveling mates Barnabas and John Mark set out from Antioch, about 300 miles north of Jerusalem, for the Island of Cyprus and then into what is today known as central Turkey. John Mark left them and went home once they reached the southern shores of Asia Minor (Turkey). The purpose of their journey was to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the places that they visited and to establish churches. God blessed their efforts in nearly all the places they went, although it was never easy. The Jews were none too happy about Paul's evangelism and they stirred up the residents of the city of Lystra in Galatia to stone Paul nearly to death, dragging him out of the city, presumed to indeed be dead. When those who believed his Gospel message gathered around him Paul got back up and went right back into the city before leaving the next day. (Acts 14:19-20) This was the general pattern of Paul's three missionary journeys; boldly preaching the Gospel, with the Holy Spirit working faith and salvation in the hearts of many who heard it and suffering greatly for the cause of Christ. Luke joins Paul on the second missionary journey and is with him for the third and in Rome for the beginning of Paul's time of imprisonment there. Luke was not only the writer of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, but he was a meticulous historian and a doctor, a physician. If ever there was a man that needed a doctor to be a member of his traveling party, it was Paul. Paul even refers to Luke as “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) as he nursed the apostle back to health after countless beatings, stonings, illnesses, and accidents. As Paul writes his final letter to his protégé Timothy, 2nd Timothy, he encourages him to carry on the work of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world after Paul enters into the eternal glory of heaven. Paul refers to his life's calling, and his faithfulness to that call with the words, *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”* (2 Timothy 4:7) For Paul his work was indeed a fight, one that was against Satan himself. The devil tried every trick and scheme that he had to derail Paul and his mission, but Paul, empowered by the Spirit of Christ, kept on going. He continued and ultimately finished the work that the Lord had set before him, with the most important part being remaining in the faith. Faith is the open and empty hand with which receive all the promises of God, with the ultimate promise being salvation and eternal life given as the free gift of God's grace in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul knew that everything that he did of his own power was of no eternal value. *“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”* (Philippians 3:8-9) I believe, although only God knows, that I am not at the end of my race of life in this world. So far, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I have kept the faith, and I pray that I can continue to fight the good fight against my one true enemy, the devil. In the near term though I hope and pray that these races back and forth to Wisconsin are finished for quite some time. Right now I don't have the energy to even think about doing that again!