

Introduction:

1. Years ago, there was a man who put his trust in God.
 - a. He did what he could to live by God's word.
 - b. He told others about God's Son and the benefits that come from becoming a Christian.
 - c. He encouraged young preachers to keep on keeping on.
 2. But this man's life wasn't easy.
 - a. His work took him all over the place in a time before there were cars or trains.
 - b. When he'd go to new places, he would do what he could to teach others about Jesus and His sacrifice.
 - c. Unfortunately, he experienced resistance from the religious groups that were already established in these cities and towns.
 - d. Some made fun of him, but others went even further.
 - i. They found him, beat him up, and then left him outside for dead.
 - ii. This happened on more than one occasion.
 - e. Eventually, some of the religious bigwigs in one city brought some trumped-up charges against him and got him arrested.
 - i. He spent years imprisoned awaiting trial.
 - ii. Ultimately, this man was found guilty and put to death.
 - iii. He knew that he was going to die, but still he held to his trust in God.
 - iv. Shortly before he was executed, he sent a letter to a young Christian to encourage him to not give up.
 3. In that letter, this old man was actually looking forward to being killed.
 - a. He was looking joyfully to getting to be with Jesus Christ in heaven.
 - b. He was also looking forward to that joyful glad reunion with all of his friends who had gone on before him.
 - c. This man knew, beyond any doubt, that he was going to heaven.
 4. Hopefully by now, you realize that old man was the apostle Paul.
 - a. Let us look today at some of the things in his life and use them as an encouragement so that we can go about our daily lives happy, knowing that we will absolutely go to heaven.
 - b. Let us look to his life and eliminate any shred of doubt from our lives about our eternal home.
- I. Paul could have confidence in heaven because he became a Christian (Acts 22:16).
- a. Sin is what separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2).
 - i. Sin is the cause of spiritual death (Romans 6:23).
 - ii. So long as you still have sin in your life, you are apart from God.
 - iii. Paul admitted that he "died" spiritually when he became aware of sin (Romans 7:7-9).
 - b. In order to be made right with God, those sins have to be forgiven by Him.
 - i. The apostle Paul was told to be baptized, washing away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).
 - ii. Not only was he told to do it, but he followed through with that command (Acts 9:18).

- iii. The apostle Peter commanded the gathered group of Jews on the Day of Pentecost to “repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission [forgiveness] of sins” (Acts 2:38).
- iv. In baptism, we put to death the old man of sin and raise to walk a new life (Romans 6:1-4).
 - 1. This means that the sins which had separated us from God have been removed.
 - 2. The wall between us and God is gone!
- v. In baptism, God performs spiritual circumcision on us, removing the sin (Colossians 2:11-12).
- vi. All of these verses say the same thing: when we obey God in submitting to baptism, he forgives, removes all the sin that separated us from Him.
- vii. In baptism, we have a joyful reunion with God.
 - 1. In baptism, we are like the prodigal son who has come home.
 - 2. The Father is extraordinarily excited and will run to meet us when we come to Him.
- c. Baptism is what puts us “into Christ” (Galatians 3:27) and “adds” us to the church (Acts 2:41, 47).
 - i. The church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:24).
 - ii. Therefore baptism is what makes us Christians!
- II. Paul could have confidence in heaven because he endured hardships (Matthew 10:22).
 - a. Jesus Christ stated “and ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matthew 10:22).
 - i. The book of Acts bears record of some of the difficulties that Paul endured for the cause of Christ.
 - 1. Shortly after becoming a Christian, the Jews plotted to murder him (Acts 9:22-24).
 - 2. Faithful Christians initially wanted nothing to do with him (Acts 9:26).
 - 3. One of his fellow-workers quit on him (Acts 15:37-38).
 - 4. Jews followed Paul around, seeking to kill him, and later seeking to overthrow the faith of the ones he converted (Acts 1:1-5).
 - 5. An entire city tried to glorify him and Barnabas instead of God (Acts 14:11-18).
 - ii. II Corinthians 11 testifies to many of the things Paul endured for the cause of Christ.
 - 1. He was beaten.
 - 2. He was shipwrecked.
 - 3. He was stoned.
 - 4. He was left for dead.
 - iii. We can be positive that there was much more that could have been listed but wasn’t.
 - b. We can have confidence of heaven if we endure hardships as well.
 - i. We must face verbal barbs from people, tauntings.
 - ii. We must endure the hardships which result from people who just do not want to hear God’s word.
 - iii. Not all of our hardships are caused by other people.
 - 1. If you learned nothing else from the book of Job, please remember this: sometimes our hardships are the direct result of Satan.
 - 2. God allows us to suffer because He has faith in us that we can endure through it.
 - 3. Satan was allowed to strike Job with a physical disease because God knew Job could go through it without turning on God.

4. Perhaps the same things happens to some of us today.
 - a. Perhaps some people get diseases because God is proud of them and is using them to again prove Satan to be a liar.
 - b. Regardless as to the source of the disease, God has faith in you that you can stay faithful throughout the whole ordeal.
 - iv. Not all of our hardships are directly caused because of the name of Christ.
 1. Satan may or may not be behind some of the diseases we may have.
 2. But you can bet he will use those diseases as a way to get Christians to lose faith in God.
 3. Every difficult time you endure has Satan behind it in some way.
 - v. If we will endure those hardships, we can have confidence that our reward will be heaven.
- III. Paul could have confidence in heaven because he fought the good fight (II Timothy 4:7).
- a. Paul often used sports analogies for the Christian life.
 - i. Paul talked about running the race, all the while looking ahead of him at the prize that awaited (Philippians 3:13-14).
 - ii. Paul talked about striving for masteries (the victory), but having to strive by the rules, otherwise there was no victory crown (II Timothy 2:5).
 - iii. Paul talked about the training necessary for getting the prize (I Corinthians 9:24-27).
 - b. In II Timothy 4:7, Paul uses another analogy to say that he has fought the good fight.
 - i. You've heard people say, "well he put up a good fight."
 1. This means that even though the outcome wasn't what they might have wanted, they still tried hard.
 2. This is what Paul did.
 - ii. Did Paul always do his best?
 1. No.
 2. In fact, Paul chastised himself for doing those things that he knew he shouldn't have done and also for leaving undone things which he knew he should be doing (Romans 7:19).
 - iii. So how could Paul say that he "fought the good fight"?
 1. The point is that he never gave up.
 2. The point is not that he defeat the enemy (sin) completely.
 3. The point is that he kept trying.
 4. The point is that he kept fighting.
 - a. We have immense respect for people who keep trying, even though theirs seems like a lost cause.
 - b. The keep at it because they believe in it, it is important to them.
 5. John says "if we walk in the light as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7).
 - a. If we were truly doing the best we could do, there would be no sin that would need cleansing.
 - b. Walking in the light means that we get back up and keep trying, never giving up.

- c. When we realize we've sinned, we plead with God for forgiveness and we keep trying.
 - c. We can know we have heaven awaiting us if we "fight the good fight."
 - i. We can't ever give up.
 - ii. We have to keep trying, and get back up when we stumble and fall.
 - iii. Some people have been led to believe that unless you live a perfectly sinless life, you can't get to heaven.
 - iv. Some people have been led to believe that if they have spiritual struggles, they are lost.
 - v. Brethren, fighting the good fight just means you keep fighting against sin in your life, never letting it beat you to the point where you quit fighting.
- IV. Paul could have confidence in heaven because he "kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).
 - a. The faith is the instructions of God on what to do and how to live in order to get to heaven.
 - i. There were priests who were "obedient to THE FAITH" (Acts 6:7).
 - ii. We are commanded to contend earnestly for THE FAITH which was once for all delivered to us (Jude 3).
 - b. Paul did not give in to the pressures of some to compromise the faith and make it some amalgam of Christianity and Judaism.
 - i. Some were demanding that in order to become a Christian, you had to become a Jew first.
 - ii. Those were adding a step which God never commanded to the plan of salvation.
 - iii. The faith, as delivered by God, cannot be changed.
 - 1. Anyone who attempts to change the faith which God delivered is casting their soul straight to hell.
 - 2. We cannot add to it nor take away from it if we want to be with Him in the end.
 - c. We can have confidence in heaven as well if we "keep the faith."
 - i. We must hold firmly to the word of God as our standard.
 - ii. We must not allow anyone to shipwreck our faith by their false teaching (I Timothy 1:19-20).
 - iii. Keeping the faith means following God's word.
 - 1. We will not do it perfectly.
 - 2. But we must be able to say, at the end of the day, I am still looking to God's words for my answers on how to live.
 - 3. We must be able to say, at the end of the day, I will not forsake my God for man's false teachings.
- V. Paul could have confidence in heaven because he was ready to die.
 - a. Perhaps this sounds morbid, but it shouldn't.
 - i. A little boy was once asked, "what do you have to do to go to heaven?"
 - ii. His answer was, "you gotta die."
 - iii. You cannot go to heaven while you are still tied to this earth.
 - b. So many people today fear death and will spend untold amounts of money trying to stave it off as long as possible.
 - i. Instead, we should be ready and willing to die at any time.
 - ii. After all, if we can say that we have fought the good fight and kept the faith, things only get better after we die!

- iii. At funerals of faithful Christians, it is a time of sadness for us that remain because we don't get to be with them anymore.
 1. But it should be a day of celebration, because our faithful brother or sister is now overjoyed, no longer having to worry about the things of this world.
 2. That for which they worked their whole life, they have now received!
 3. When I die, as a faithful Christian, I would rather people be excited that I am going to be with my Savior for eternity!
 4. The only funerals which should be sad are those for people who are lost.
- c. Are you ready to die?

Conclusion:

1. Because Paul had become a Christian, he could have confidence in heaven.
2. Because Paul endured hardships, he could have confidence in heaven.
3. Because Paul fought the good fight, he could have confidence in heaven.
4. Because Paul kept the faith, he could have confidence in heaven.
5. Because Paul was prepared to die, he could have confidence in heaven.
 - a. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).
 - b. In heaven, we are reunited with all the faithful loved ones who have gone on before us, as well as those who will go after us.
 - c. There are so many Christians who I look forward to seeing again in heaven, and some I look forward to meeting for the first time.
 - i. The apostles, the Ethiopian Eunuch, Timothy.
 - ii. Jabbo.
6. Are you a Christian?
 - a. Invitation.
7. Are you fighting the good fight and keeping the faith?
8. Are you enduring the hardships by faith in God? Or are you giving in to Satan's attempt to make you give up on God?
9. Are you now ready to die, knowing that you will be in heaven?
 - a. The Bible says that we can know that we have eternal life.
 - b. It is something we can be absolutely sure of, with not one shred of doubt.