

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy Ch 4:6-8

“The Apostle’s Epitaph”

Vs6-8

It’s been well said, and you’ve heard me say it before, “God’s workers may *pass* on, but His work *continues* on.” The workers may die, but the work lives on, continues on, that’s why I believe it’s so important to always be investing the priceless truths of the Word of God into the lives of the next generation. Because I’m not always going to be here, you’re not always going to be here, and if there’s never anytime spent discipling, teaching, and/or giving practical opportunities of service to those who are coming up underneath us to carry on the baton, then it’s going to get dropped along the way. But God has a plan that He’s still fulfilling, and He’s given us the *opportunity* to be apart of it, and the *responsibility* to pass His vision on to those proceeding generations.

You recall that God raised up Moses to do a great work in the land, to deliver the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt and teach them the statutes, and the precepts and principals of God, to deliver His Word to His people that they might be instructed in His ways and learn of Him. But Moses wasn’t going to live forever, and so God brought general Joshua to his side that he might begin to glean from Moses’ heart, the way he dealt with things, to pick up on the nuances of his personal relationship with God. To see the kind of life he lived, how it was he served the Lord, and the priority that God took in his life.

So we read in Josh 1:1-2 “*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them.”* You see God’s worker was dead, but God’s work still needed to be done, and so the baton was passed from Moses to Joshua, from one generation to the next. Elijah had Elisha, Peter, John Mark.

In the portion of the book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy, we have much the same thing happening before us, Paul is writing to Timothy from death row, and soon he’ll be with the Lord. But God has raised up Timothy to be by the apostle’s side, that he might glean from Paul’s heart, the way *he* dealt with things, to pick up on the nuances of *his* personal relationship with God. To see the kind of life *he* lived, how it was *he* served the Lord, and the priority that God took in *his* life.

You see; if there were to be a single sentence that summed up your life, what would it be? There’s an epitaph of a certain dentist which reads, “Stranger, tread this ground with gravity: Dentist Brown is filling his last cavity.” and Though that’s cute, and certainly true in one sense, and gives us the insight that he was no doubt a light hearted fella, I’m not sure that I would want to be summed up in that way.

You know as you've heard me say before, the final words of a dying man are often the most stripped down, and sincere, what lies in the pit of his heart often surfaces in those final days, those final moments of life. Gandhi (the famous Hindu religious leader) not long before he died confessed, "My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long—perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in fifty years I find myself in a slough of despond. All about me is darkness. I am praying for light."

A certain 19<sup>th</sup> century French Statesman (whose name I couldn't pronounce) wrote these words on a piece of paper and laid it on a nightstand near his bed, "Behold, eighty-three years passed away! What cares! What agitation! What anxieties! What ill-will! What sad complications! And all without other results, except great fatigue of mind and body, and a profound sentiment of discouragement with regard to the future, and of disquiet with regard to the past!" (Talleyrand).

I wonder how many people's lives are summed up in words not unlike the words of these men? Words of desperation, agitation, fear and anxiety as they face what for them is the uncertainty of what happens next with a sense of vanity about what's happened up to that point, with regard to their lives.

But what radical opposition in the words of Paul the apostle as he comes to the end of *his* life on this earth, what separated Paul's final words from the words of the previous men who seemed so hopeless? It was his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. You see, the bible teaches that apart from Jesus Christ people in this world are with out hope being with out God in the world. But, "*I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*" Jer 29:11 Jesus said, "*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*" John 14:1-3

It's the Christ confidence that Paul had, the trust that he placed in the Word of God, that gave him the serenity, and these words of hope and motivation for every believer to lead a life of faithful service to Jesus Christ. We don't have to be with out hope, and full of uncertainty as we approach the end of our days, or as we lay our head on the pillow at night. We can be assured in our hearts that come what may, when I draw my last breath on this earth and close my eyes for the final time, I'll open them to see Jesus, and spend all of eternity just loving on Him, worshiping Him, being the very presence of God Himself.

As Paul approaches that hour, these are the instructions he leaves with his young protégé, and the wealth of information found in these 1<sup>st</sup> 5 vs is just staggering. After all the years that Paul has walked faithfully with Jesus Christ, his summation of a biblical ministry is found in this brief passage. “Timothy, preach the Word, be ready for any opportunity that may present itself whereby you *can* preach the word. Know the Word, study it, convince, correct, and comfort through patience and teaching. Don’t be distracted by the flow of the world, or those in the religious circle who only want to hear what they want to hear, but be sober about the truth, watchful in all things. Don’t be ignorant of your enemies devices, the ministry comes with hard times.” Paul is saying, “I’ve been down this road ahead of you by about 20yrs and you’ve seen the hardship that’s visited my life, but endure, hang in there, the Lord is faithful, He’ll never leave nor forsake you, He’ll see you through. and Don’t lose your burden for the lost, do the work of an evangelist, don’t forget that that’s the heart of God, that’s why Jesus came, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. and Be faithful to the end, occupy until your time here is finished, redeem the time, don’t waste time, redeem the time.” Why, why are you telling us this Paul?

Vs6

Even as the “But you” in vs 5 is emphatic, so is the “For I” in vs 6. These are Paul’s dying words, Timothy you’re going to have to run with the ball, because it’s time for me to leave the field. You can just sense the segue as Paul passes the baton on into Timothy’s hand.

Paul says, “I’m already being poured out as a drink offering.” Maybe your bible says, “I am now ready to be offered” the word “offered” speaks of the drink offering. The drink offering was a type of offering or sacrifice that would be poured out over the burnt offering, and it was to be emptied completely. and Of course it would hit that hot brazen altar and just go up in steam as unto the Lord.

The idea here is that Paul is saying that his life has up to this point been given to God as a living sacrifice (as he mentioned to the Romans). and Now he’s ready to complete the process by pouring out his life completely to the Lord even in his death.

His life was being poured out before the Lord; he was offering himself up to the Lord through martyrdom. All he had to do was denounce Christ and he could walk out of that prison a free man, but even as he’d lived to the glory of God, he was will to die to the glory of God. So many people think, “Well if it came right down to it, I’d die for God.” But I got news for you, if you’re not willing to live for God, you’re sure not going to be willing to die for God.

Paul was at this point before in his life, at that time he wasn't sure if he would be released or not, and so he said in writing to the Philippians, "*If I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.*" Phil 2:17 Of course he was released from that imprisonment, but the point is that he was ready to die. The question is, are you ready to die? Am I ready to die? Paul was ready, didn't need to accomplish anything else, didn't feel like he needed to see more, or do more, he was right with Jesus Christ and ready to meet Him face to face.

He said, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering." Now this could also be a reference to his manner of execution, as a Roman citizen he couldn't be crucified, he would more than likely be beheaded. and As his head would be severed from his body, his life would literally be poured out before the Lord. and He could be saying that though my head isn't on the chopping block, my heart is already there, and I'm ready to be offered. I'm prepared to lay down my life for the Lord.

He says here, "The time of my departure is at hand." It could be that his date for execution had already been set, but either way he somehow knew that this imprisonment would be his last; the time of his departure was at hand. Of course when we read this word "departure" we think of sitting in a terminal somewhere preparing to board a plane, our departure time is set and we're waiting for the row of our boarding pass to be called. and That's not altogether a bad understanding of what Paul's saying here, he's given Timothy the *exhortation* as unto biblical ministry. Because of the *inclination* of man to drift toward worldliness, but he's to continue in his *duration*, because Paul is about to lift off to the place of his final *destination*.

The time of his departure is at hand, and I find that my attitude towards various departures in no small way has to do with my final destination. If I'm headed somewhere I want to go, the time of my departure is sort of exciting, I'm a bit nervous, but overall I'm pumped. If it's somewhere I don't really want to go, I kind of loathe the whole experience. It's so important to be assured of your final destination, Paul knew in whom he believed. and He told Timothy, "*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*" 2 Tim 1:12 and Of the many things that Paul had committed to Jesus, one of those things was his heart, his life, and he was at ease regarding his final destination because he knew that Jesus would keep that which he had committed to Him, even his very soul.

This word "Departure" is an interesting one; it carries several implications, one of which was used for the "Unyoking of an ox." You remember how Jesus promised all who were heavy laden, if they would but come to Him, He would give them rest. and He said, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*" Matt 11:29-30

Paul is saying, “I’ve been plowing the fields of humanity all this time, and I’m about to be unyoked.” It’s also a word that was used in the nautical sense; it spoke of a ship that had been tied up and anchored down in the harbor being unloosed and finally setting sail out to sea. Paul had been tied to this earth long enough, and it was time to set sail on into the presence of God. This word spoke of the loosing of a prisoner; Paul was about to be set free from the bondage of this life.

Exchanging a Roman prison for the courts of Heaven, finally it spoke of the folding up of a tent in order to move on from your present dwelling. We know that Paul was a tentmaker by trade. and So he’s saying here, it’s time to pull up the stakes, and fold up the tent; it’s time to move on. and Paul would often refer to this shell that we live in as a tent, and we know that a tent is just a temporary dwelling, it’s not a permanent fixture. and Even so these bodies are but temporary habitations, they’re not our permanent fixture. Look at 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Ch 5 (Vs 1-8)

Of course this parallels that which Jesus had to say about inheriting that mansion, or literally the “dwelling place” when He receives us to Himself. and The point is that by comparison to your Heavenly body, this body is just a tent, and the longer you dwell in the rattier it gets, starts leaking, the stitches start unraveling. and There comes a point when it’s time to pull up the stakes, fold up the tent and get to the house, and Paul is saying it’s time for me to do just that.

Vs7

Of course this is the apostle’s epitaph. This is that which according to the Holy Spirit; capsulizes his life. and Even as vs 6,7, and 8 deal with 3 things in Paul’s life, the present, the past, and the future; this vs breaks down into 3 segments; you see them I’m sure. Paul says, I “Have fought”, I “Have finished” and, I “Have kept.” and Would to God that this would be the estimation of each of our lives when the time of *our* departure is at hand. As we reach those final days, (as I turn 31) may this be my testimony.

Obviously we could spend a lot of time here but you can rest easy I won’t. But we need to see some of the details. 1<sup>st</sup> of all I want to draw your attention to the fact that Paul says here I have, “fought.” Again, the Christian life is not a cakewalk, it’s in many ways a struggle, it’s a conflict, we wrestle and fight against the flesh, against the world, and against the devil. and Of course each of those facets break down in various dimensions, but you have enemies in this life. Things that want to pull you down and destroy your life, and even the with the great apostle Paul there was conflict. He says, “I fought”, it’s the word from which we get our English word to “Agonize” he’s speaking of striving or laboring fervently. In his 1<sup>st</sup> letter he told Timothy to. “*Fight the good fight of faith*” 1 Tim 6:12, and here he tells Timothy that *he’s* done just that. He’s fought the good fight, he didn’t grow weary while doing good, and now having not lost heart, it’s due season to reap.

Now some commentators see this a bit different. They say that's he's not saying that's he's done a good job, fought a good fight in the sense of his own effort. But rather he's exuding confidence in the fact that the fight that *he* fought was the good one. Or to understand that another way, he was on the side of good. He fought *the good* fight, so as to say that our performance may not always be up to par, but that on that day we'll be able to say that we were on the right side of the conflict, having waged the war against iniquity and unrighteousness. and If you want to understand it that way that's fine with me to.

So #1 I have fought, #2 I have finished, he finished the course that God had laid out for him, he finished the race. Not only is this life a conflict of sorts, but it's a race that we need to cross the finish line on lest we disqualify ourselves. Jesus said, "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.*" John 4:34 In other words, "My very life is made up of the will of the Father, and finishing that which He has called Me to do." Which for Jesus was to lay down His life for the sin of the World, making atonement through the shedding of His blood, and redemption available for all who would call upon His name. and As He hung there on the cross that day suspended between Heaven and earth what was the cry would ring through all eternity to the glory of the Father who sent Him? "*It is finished!*" John 19:30

He had finished His course. In the book of Acts, Paul, making his way to Jerusalem was running into opposition everywhere he went. Everyone was pleading with him not to go because the Spirit was testifying that if he went, chains and tribulations would await him. and He said those around him, "*But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*" Acts 20:24 and Now as he faces his final days, reflecting back he can say that he's done just that, he's finished the race, he's completed his course, God's plan for his life. He's laid hold of that for which God laid hold of him. and God has a plan for your life, He has a course that's mapped out for me, and so "*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*" Heb 12:1-2

Finally #3 I have kept the faith, or, I've competed according to the rules, he's guarded that which has been committed to his trust, that being the truth of the word of God, and the ministry which God had entrusted to him. God has invested the treasure of His word, the truth of Jesus Christ into his earthen vessel, and he has been a good steward of it, he's kept it well. Like the man who went on a journey and so he called his servants to him, gave them each an allotment of money and told them to occupy until he returned, to do business and make a good return on his investment. Paul is saying God has invested His Word into my life and I've brought Him a good return on it, not by his own effort, he was very aware of that, but as he said to the Colossians, "*To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*" Col 1:29

At the end of his life he could say he had finished well. Time hadn't worn into him a sense of apathy, or some sort of tolerance or acceptance of sin having been callused through the course of life. We see so many that start so strong, but over time sin/compromise takes its toll, they don't keep the faith. In vs 5 Paul tells Timothy to fulfill his ministry, and here he gives himself as the example, "I have kept the faith."

Vs8

Paul here is keeping with the athletic picture he's drawn, regarding the fight, the race, the finishing of his course. To the Corinthians he wrote, "*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*" 1 Cor 9:24-27

Here now, having competed according to the standards of the word of God, and having finished his course he speaks of the reward that awaits him. "The crown of righteousness" and as you know the word that's used for "crown" here is not the "diadema" that will crown the brow of Jesus, that crown of royalty, but rather the "stephanos", the victor's crown. Now there's a certain amount of treasure we lay up for ourselves Jesus said, but this has the idea of that which has been laid up *for* you, being safely stored and carefully guarded.

The bible speaks of the rewards of the believer. We read, "*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*" 2 Cor 5:10 (Which brings up a interesting side note.) Often the question is posed about what happens after we die and as our influence ripples on will we be rewarded for people who turn to Christ because of some work of ours even after we're dead? But the bible doesn't mention any rewards for things that happen *after* we're out of the body. That's why it's so important that we're careful about what we do while we're in the body. Some people are able to store up radical fortunes for themselves in this life, and then in their will they will it to some charitable organization. and That's neat and all, but there's no guarantee for giving to God what you're finished with, so do what's right while you're *in the body*.

Then your reward is certain and along with those rewards there are various crowns mentioned in the bible that we have the propensity to be rewarded with. This is one of them, the crown of righteousness, when we believe on Jesus His righteousness is imputed to us, but it's only positional, on that day it will become practical, not in part, but in whole. Jesus promised that those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness would be filled, and our reward will be the very thing we hunger for, righteousness.

Here Paul calls the Lord, “The righteous Judge” as opposed to the unrighteous judges of Rome that he’s been sentenced under. These judges refuse to do what’s right, but Jesus will judge righteously, now that can work for you or against you depending on the position you’ve taken regarding Jesus Christ and That’s why there’s such urgency to demonstrate the need for repentance. Because (God), *“He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”* Acts 17:31

If you’re covered the righteous robe given to you by faith in Jesus Christ then you can stand with this same assurance and readiness as Paul the apostle. But if you’ve never received Christ into your heart and into your life, then far from being rewarded you’ll hear, *“I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”* Matt 7:23

This crown isn’t just for Paul, or the spiritual giants, I believe it’s one that every believer will have on. I just can’t imagine someone in love with Jesus Christ who wouldn’t love to see Him face to face. The apostle’s epitaph, may it define us all.

You see Paul didn’t die with that sense of futility, and anxiety, worrying about what was coming next, or what awaited him across the threshold of death. He didn’t have that sense of hopelessness and desperation as did Gandhi, as did that French Statesman, and so many others, he was prepared for his departure. We all have an appointment with death, it’s appointed unto man once to die, and then the judgment. and As for me, this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."  
 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" You see the sting of death in sin, but your sin can be forgiven. You don’t have to hear depart from Me I never knew you, you can hear Well, done good and faithful servant, you’ve been faithful over a few things, I’ll make you ruler over many. Enter into the joy of your Lord, the kingdom that’s been prepared for you from the foundations of the earth. But that’s up to you, if Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, let me encourage you not to resist His call, but open the door, let Him in, God loves you so much, and He’ll take that sin that’s like scarlet, and wash you white like snow if you’ll only let Him, but it’s up to you.