

# A Final Farewell

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this evening, for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read. 2 Timothy chapter 4.

2 Timothy chapter 4. And I want us to look at the last section of Paul's last letter. But if we just read again his last words, where he wrote to Timothy in verse 21.

Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. The Lord be with your spirit.

Grace be with you. Do you know, when it comes to speaking or saying hard things, saying sorry is often thought to be one of the hardest words to say.

Because, as you know, it's not easy to admit, especially for men, it's not easy to admit and apologise when we're wrong. But for every broken and bereaved home in our community, sorry isn't the hardest word to say.

[ 1 : 19 ] The hardest word to say is goodbye. Especially when it's the last goodbye. The last goodbye. And you know, you come to a chapter like this one.

And that's what we're seeing in the closing words of Paul's letter here. This is Paul's last goodbye. This is his final farewell. Because, as you know, Paul was in Rome.

He had been sent to prison and sentenced to death for having preached and proclaimed the gospel of Jesus. He was writing this final farewell letter in a dark and damp and dismal dungeon while on death row.

And you know, Timothy, you know, Timothy for a pastor, he must have considered it such a privilege. Such a privilege to receive the last letter from the Apostle Paul prior to his execution. Because throughout his 30 years in ministry, Paul had written many letters to many churches in many different places and to many different people. But as we learn from this final farewell letter of Timothy, Paul wrote a very personal and a very passionate, and you could also say a very pastoral letter to Timothy as he described him as his son in the faith.

[ 2 : 40 ] Because back in chapter 1, we saw that Paul exhorted and encouraged Timothy to fan into flame his God-given gift as a pastor and preacher of the gospel. Why? Because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Then in chapter 2, Paul reminded and reassured Timothy that his ministry will be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus. So that with the devotion of a soldier and the discipline of an athlete and the diligence of a farmer, he will be an approved worker of God, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Then in chapter 3, Paul warned Timothy. He warned him to be wise. To be wise because in the last days there will be times of difficulty.

In the last days, he says, there will be difficult days and dangerous days and dark days for the church. But as Paul assured Timothy at the end of chapter 3, the Bible remains the inspired, inerrant and infallible word of God.

Therefore, as Paul began chapter 4, he issues this solemn charge. Preach the word. And Timothy, preach the word powerfully.

[ 3 : 55 ] Preach the word persistently. Preach the word pastorally. Preach the word patiently. Timothy, you must not drop the baton. You must preach the word.

Why? Verse 6. I am already being poured out as a drink offering. The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing. And now as we come to the last section, Paul is giving his last goodbye.

He's giving his final farewell. And he affirms and assures Timothy that he's not on his own. He's not on his own in the work of the gospel.

[ 4 : 51 ] Because there are other workers in the vineyard. But sadly, as Paul highlights to Timothy, sadly some are deserting the gospel. Some are distorting the gospel.

But Timothy, you must remain devoted to the gospel. And there are two headings this evening. Deserting the gospel and devoted to the gospel. Deserting the gospel and devoted to the gospel.

So first of all, we see deserting the gospel. Deserting the gospel. Look at verse 9. Paul says, Do your best to come to me soon. Paul says, Paul's final farewell to Timothy.

It is bookended by the phrase, Do your best. Do your best. We read there in verse 9. He says, Do your best to come to me soon.

And then we read down in verse 21. He says, Do your best to come before winter. Paul's final farewell to Timothy. It's bookended by the phrase, Do your best.

[ 6 : 05 ] And although it's three words in English, it's actually only one word in Greek. A word which means, not only means do your best, but also be diligent.

Be devoted. Be dedicated. Be disciplined. As a gospel worker. And of course, Paul isn't exhorting and encouraging Timothy to be devoted to him.

He's telling him to be devoted to the gospel. Be devoted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But you know, the reason we see this in this final farewell, the reason Paul reminds and reassures Timothy to be devoted to the gospel is because in the last days, there will be others.

There will be others who distort and others who desert the gospel all together. Even as we said in the previous chapter, Paul, he alerted and made Timothy aware of all these dangers and all these deceptions that will be powerful and present and prevalent in the church of Jesus Christ.

He said there in chapter 3, the beginning at verse 1, he said, Timothy, understand this. In the last days, there will come times of difficulty. People will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having an appearance of godliness, but denying its power.

[ 7 : 45 ] Timothy, avoid such people. And you know, Paul was saying to Timothy that in the last days, this will be a problem. In the last days, between the cross of Christ and the crown of Christ, between the first advent and the second advent, between the first coming of Christ and the second coming, Timothy, there will be difficult days.

There will be dangerous days. There will be dark days for the church because worldliness and ungodliness will creep in. There will be many, many who remain, who fail to remain faithful and fail to remain focused upon Jesus.

They will be led astray by dishonesty and deception and even the depravity of false teachers.

Timothy, in the last days, and you can almost hear Paul saying this in prison, Timothy, in the last days, the devil will be powerful.

He will be present. And he will be prevalent throughout the church of Jesus Christ. And so you can see why in this final farewell, Paul is reminding and reassuring Timothy to be a devoted worker of the gospel.

Be devoted, Timothy, because sadly, Timothy, there will be some workers who have not only distorted the gospel, but they will desert the gospel altogether.

[ 9 : 11 ] And one such gospel worker, says Paul, is Demas. He says in verse 10, Demas, in love with his present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

You know, the story of Demas, it's a very sad story, but it's also a very strong warning. You know, Demas is mentioned in Paul's letter.

She's mentioned in the letter to the Colossians and Paul's letter to Philemon. And in those letters, Demas, he's depicted and described as a diligent and disciplined and dedicated and devoted gospel worker.

Demas, just like Timothy has been encouraged here, Demas was doing his best. He was doing his best as a servant of Jesus Christ in the kingdom of God. But something has happened because between the time of writing to the Colossians and now writing here to Timothy in his final farewell,

Paul's closing comment on this gospel worker, Demas, is that he's no longer diligent. He's no longer disciplined. He's no longer dedicated. He's no longer a devoted gospel worker doing his best for Jesus. Instead, he has distorted the gospel and he's deserted the gospel.

[ 10 : 35 ] He's deserted his role and responsibility as a gospel worker in the kingdom. And you know what's so solemn and so serious about Demas' decision to distort and desert the gospel is that when Paul says there, when Paul says that Demas has deserted me, he says that in verse 10, when Demas has deserted me, the word deserted literally means forsaken.

Forsaken. It's a very serious and very solemn word because the word forsaken is only ever used in the New Testament in relation to forsaking God and forsaking God's people.

The word forsaken is only used in the New Testament in relation to forsaking God and forsaking God's people. And we know that it's such a solemn and serious word because it was used of Jesus on the cross.

Jesus was bearing our sin and shame. He became sin for us at Calvary when Calvary was shrouded in darkness and we all remember the cry we were looking at the other night on Saturday evening, the cry from the cross, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And it's a solemn and a serious word because it relates to being relates to forsaking God but also it relates to forsaking God's people because in Hebrews chapter 10 the word is used again where the church is encouraged and exhorted not to forsake the gathering together of God's people as is the habit of some.

[ 12 : 27 ] And sadly for Demas, forsaking God and forsaking God's people had become his habit. Demas forsook God and forsook the people of God because as Paul says, he fell in love with the world.

Demas forsook God and forsook the people of God because he fell in love with the world. It's such a solemn and serious word of warning to us because we're not to forsake God and we're not to forsake the people of God.

We're not to forsake the gathering together of the Lord's people. We're to continue and I know it's difficult especially midweek when we're all tired. I know it's difficult to continue to seek and strive to remain faithful and to press on towards the mark.

But Demas is a warning because Paul says, Demas having loved this present world has deserted me. He has forsaken me. He's gone to the idolatrous city of Thessalonica.

But you know Demas, he wasn't the only worker who distorted and deserted the gospel of Jesus us. Because we read there in verse 14, we read that Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm.

[ 13 : 50 ] The Lord will repay him, says Paul, according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself for he strongly opposed our message. At my first defence, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me, may not be charged against them.

Now this Alexander the coppersmith, I think we can safely assume that it's the same Alexander, the same Alexander who is mentioned in Paul's first letter to Timothy, where Paul wrote, as we studied back in January, as we were saying, in chapter one, that along with Hymenaeus, Alexander made shipwreck of his faith by deserting the gospel.

My friend, Alexander the coppersmith was an alarming apostate. He was what you would call an alarming apostate. He was a professing Christian who was wounded by worldliness.

He was someone who succumbed to Satan. He was lured into lies and he turned away from the truth and he fell from his faith. He made shipwreck, as Paul says, he made shipwreck of his soul because he became a false teacher.

He became soft on sin and loose on the law and he glossed over the gospel. What's worse is that Alexander the coppersmith, he was not only an alarming apostate who stood in opposition and as an obstacle to the gospel, but Alexander the coppersmith were told he did great harm.

[ 15 : 27 ] He did great harm by causing many other Christian casualties. He took people with him. He misled other people.

He led other people astray, which, you know, it ought to emphasize to us the importance of our integrity as Christians and the importance of our influence as Christians.

And, you know, I always emphasize this because I think it's so important. Our walk, our witness, and our worship is being watched by the world. And you might not think it, but it's true.

Our walk, our witness, and our worship is being watched by the world. Therefore, we need to be alert. We need to be aware of the dangers of deserting the gospel.

We need to seek and to strive to remain devoted to the gospel. We need to press on, as Paul says to the Philippians, press on towards the mark.

[16:30] So we need to remain devoted to the gospel, which is what we see secondly. So Paul highlights that there are some deserting the gospel, but Timothy, you must remain devoted to the gospel.

That's what he says. Look at verse 17. He says, The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. Now we mentioned earlier that Paul's final farewell to Timothy, it's bookended by this phrase, do your best. Do your best.

Verse 9, do your best to come to me soon. And verse 21, do your best to come before winter. So it's the final farewell is bookended by the phrase, do your best, which means be diligent, be disciplined, be dedicated, and be devoted to the gospel.

[17:38] But what I love about Paul's final farewell is that he exhorts and encourages Timothy to be a diligent, disciplined, dedicated, and devoted gospel worker.

And he encourages him by reminding him that there are also others who are working alongside Timothy in the work of the gospel.

They may be in different places, they may be with different people, but Timothy, they're still serving the same saviour in the kingdom of God. And you know, Paul's reminder and reassurance to Timothy, it's so important because sometimes we can lose sight of the bigger picture.

We can lose sight of the bigger picture, and I'm speaking to myself when I say this, because sometimes we can become very narrow with our missionary vision. We can become very narrow in our missionary vision and only focus upon our field and our furrow.

And by focusing only on our field and our furrow, we can forget that there's a whole field out there, a whole mission field out there. But as Jesus said, the fields are white, they're ready for harvest.

[18:55] The labourers are few, so we're to keep praying to the Lord of the harvest, that he would send out labourers into the harvest field. And yet the truth is, when you're a gospel worker in the harvest field, when you're ploughing your own furrow, that gospel work can sometimes be quite lonely, and it can sometimes be quite isolating.

Paul knew that in his own experience. He had spent a number of years in prison, even as he wrote this final farewell, he did so from the loneliness and the isolation of a prison cell.

It would have been very easy for Paul, this great apostle, it would have been very easy for him to lose sight of the bigger picture, to lose sight of the whole field.

It would have been easy for Paul to have a narrow focus upon his field and his furrow, people.

Because that's what happened to other men who preached the gospel.

That's what happened to Elijah, the great prophet of Israel. We all remember Elijah's mountaintop experience. He had that great moment on Mount Carmel where he called down fire from heaven.

[20:13] And when he called down fire from heaven, he denounced all the false prophets of Baal and he declared that the Lord, he is God. But then after his mountaintop experience, Elijah lost sight of his devotion.

And we see that he became depressed. Elijah entered into a deep valley because he lost sight of the bigger picture. He lost sight of the whole field.

He got lost in his lonely furrow. And Elijah was consumed by the thought that it was a dark day and it was a day of small things and nothing was happening and the Lord wasn't doing anything.

And he got so consumed by it to the point that you read in 1 Kings chapter 19. Elijah came and sat under the juniper tree and he prays to the Lord, take away my life for I am no better than my father. Elijah asks the Lord, I want to die. He says to the Lord, I want to die. But the Lord doesn't grant his request. The Lord strengthens Elijah, the Lord sustains him.

[21:20] Where does he sustain him and strengthen him? At his table. He says to Elijah, arise and eat because the journey is too great for you. And then after that the Lord speaks to Elijah, not in the wind or the fire or the earthquake, but with a still small voice.

And the Lord reminds and reassures Elijah that he's not on his own. He reminds Elijah that there are thousands of others who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

And you know, Elijah reached a low point because he lost sight of the whole field. He lost sight of the bigger picture. He had a narrow focus upon his field and his furrow.

But like us all, he needed to lift his eyes heavenward. He needed to lift his eyes to the Lord of the field and to the Lord of all the furrows.

He needed to lift his eyes to the Lord of the harvest and see as we were singing in Psalm 121, see that his help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

[ 22 : 28 ] That's what Paul is reminding and reassuring Timothy and us here. Paul is exhorting and encouraging us to be diligent, to be devoted, to be dedicated, to be disciplined in our gospel work as we plough our furrow, but always having the vision of the whole field.

We're in our furrow here in Barvis, but like Timothy, we're not on our own. There are others who are serving alongside us in the work of the gospel.

They're in their furrow, but we're all ploughing together, longing for the harvest. They may be in different places, they are different people, but they're still serving the same saviour in the kingdom of God.

And you know, we see that because Paul mentions all these people and all these places in this final farewell. Paul tells Timothy that Crescens, he says there in verse 10, Crescens has gone to Galatia. We know nothing about Crescens apart from what's written here in verse 10. He's this unknown and unsung hero working in the furrow.

[ 23 : 40 ] He's working in the harvest field. Nobody knows anything about him, but there was Crescens. He's gone to the furrow of Galatia and he's continuing the work of the Lord that was started among the Galatians there.

And Titus, Titus, Timothy, he's a young pastor like you. I've written my letter to him as well. He was once serving on the Greek island of Crete. He was in that furrow for a while, but he's now moved northwest.

He's gone to Dalmatia. He's in a furrow there. Dalmatia is modern-day Croatia. And he's serving the Lord in that furrow now. Tuchikos, whom Paul describes elsewhere as a beloved brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant.

Paul says that he's sending Tuchikos into your furrow. He's going to Ephesus. He's going to work alongside you, Timothy. He's going to work in your field and your furrow.

Paul says, he also says there, bring Mark with you. Bring him to Ephesus because he's very useful for ministry. Now, Mark is very interesting because Paul had obviously had a change of heart about young Mark.

[ 24 : 54 ] Because earlier in Paul's ministry, I think it's Acts chapter 15, earlier in Paul's ministry, Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas who was the son of encouragement, that's what his name means.

Paul and Barnabas, they fell out. They fell out over young Mark. Paul thought that Mark was too passive to be a pastor.

But Barnabas saw his potential as a pastor. And Barnabas, the son of encouragement, he took Mark to Cyprus, another island. He took him to Cyprus to encourage him and to enable him to serve the Lord in his furrow there.

And in the end, looking at these verses, in the end Barnabas was right and Paul was wrong.

Because Mark grew to become a faithful and fervent pastor and preacher of the gospel.

And Paul acknowledges here that he's wrong. That's what he acknowledges when he says to Timothy, get Mark and bring him with you, for he's useful to me for ministry. So Paul also knew that Timothy, he wouldn't be alone in his field.

[ 26 : 01 ] He wouldn't be alone in his furrow because there were others. There were others already ploughing alongside him in Ephesus. Which is why he writes there in verse 19, he says, greet Prisca and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus.

Onesiphorus, he's mentioned in Paul's previous letter, he's a devoted and diligent elder serving in the church in Ephesus. Then in verse 20, we see Erastus.

Erastus, he remained in Greece. He's in the pharaoh in Greece. He's at the city of Corinth. He's continuing his work of the Lord there. Trophimus, he's still serving the Lord at Miletus.

Miletus was just a few miles south of the city of Ephesus. So Trophimus, Timothy, he's just, he's not far from you. And where he is, he's ploughing his pharaoh.

And Dr. Luke, Dr. Luke's mentioned, he's verse 11, he's been with me since the beginning. He's a faithful friend, he's still with me, he's part of the church here in Rome, along with all these others

that I mentioned in verse 21.

[ 27 : 14 ] There's Eubulus, and Pudence, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brothers, they're all still here, and they're all serving the Lord. They're all in their pharaoh.

they're all ploughing the field. So, Timothy, my departure is at hand, but the work of the gospel is still going on, and it will continue to go on, Timothy, because as you know, Timothy, it's not my work.

It's not your work. It's not even their work. It's the Lord's work. And whatever generation we're part of, Timothy, whether we're in the first century or we're in the 21st century, we're all building on the work of one another.

We're all ploughing in the same field. We just need to keep our eyes upon the whole field, not just the pharaoh. And as I said before, Timothy, Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but it's God who gives the increase.

And the Lord has promised that he will build his church, and he will build it in such a way that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But the Lord has also commissioned his church so that the gospel will continue to spread to different places and to different people and into different furrows.

[ 28 : 35 ] And it will go from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Timothy, this is my last goodbye.

This is my final farewell. Therefore, do your best to serve the Lord. Do your best to serve the Lord. Be diligent, Timothy. Be disciplined, Timothy. Be dedicated.

Be devoted to the gospel, because as you know, this gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Timothy, remain faithful to the end. And the Lord be with your spirit.

Grace be with you. For to him, for to him, as he says there in verse 18, to him be the glory forever and ever.

Amen. May the Lord bless our study and bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for that wonderful reminder that the gospel work continues despite the passing of time, despite different places and different people, that the Lord is still working, that it is his harvest field, that he has placed us in different furrows to plough along.

[ 30 : 00 ] And Lord, help us, we pray, to remember that Paul may plant and Apollos may water, but it is God alone who gives the increase. Help us then, we pray, to pray to the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out more labourers into this great harvest field, that more would go, that more would tell it to the generation following, that this God is our God and that he will be our guide, even unto death.

We thank thee, O Lord, for being able to study this letter, the letter and the last words of the Apostle Paul, the one whom thou didst call from darkness unto thine own marvellous light.

And as he was used mightily, Lord, we pray, that in only a small manner we might be used in a similar way, that we might be used for the glory of God and the furtherance of thy kingdom and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Jesus, that more and more would know him, that more and more would follow him and confess him, that he is the Lord our shepherd.

O bless us, we pray, bless thy truth to us, lead us and guide us day by day, that we would keep in step with the spirit, ever looking to Jesus, knowing him and loving him as the author and the finisher of our faith.

Cleanse us then we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Now we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

[ 31 : 35 ] We're singing in Psalm 126. Psalm 126 in the Scottish Psalter, page 419 of the Blue Psalm book.

Psalm 126 A psalm for the furrow.

That's what it is. When Zion's bondage God turned back, as men that dreamed were we, then filled with laughter was our mouth, our tongue with melody.

They among the heathens said, the Lord, great things for them hath wrought. The Lord hath done great things for us, whence joy to us is brought. As streams of water in the south, our bondage Lord recall, who sow in tears shall reap in time, of joy and joy they shall.

That man who bearing precious seed in going forth doth mourn, he doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return.

[ 32 : 46 ] So we'll sing these verses of Psalm 126 to God's praise. Psalm 126 Psalm 126

Psalm 126 of joy of joy and joy they shall.

The man who bearing precious seed and going forth doth mourn, in doubtless bringing back his sheaves rejoicing shall return.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forever more. Amen. into the eyes of the Lord, thebol