

Famous Last Words

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, 2 Timothy chapter 4.
- 2 Timothy chapter 4, and if we read again in verse 6. 2 Timothy 4 and verse 6, where Paul writes, For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and 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 me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.
- I'm sure we're all familiar with the phrase, famous last words. Famous last words.
- If you were to Google the phrase, famous last words, you'd actually read many of the famous last words of famous people, such as Winston Churchill, our former Prime Minister during the Second World War.
- [1 : 2 1] His famous last words were, I'm bored with it all. Jane Austen, the author of Pride and Prejudice, her famous last words were, I want nothing but death.
- A billionaire inventor, Steve Jobs, who invented Apple and the iPhone and all these things, he died at the age of 56, and his famous last words were, Oh, whoa, oh, whoa, oh, whoa.
- Bob Marley, who died at 36, his famous last words were, Money can't buy life. Money can't buy life. But it was the German philosopher Karl Marx who said that his, said with his famous last words, he said, Do you know, we're all familiar with the phrase famous last words, and tonight we're considering the famous last words of the Apostle Paul.
- As you know, Paul, he made many memorable statements throughout his letters. They're written and recorded for us throughout the many letters that he's written in the New Testament. And we're familiar with many things that Paul said, But out of them all, these words here in 2 Timothy 4, they stand out as Paul's famous last words.
- He says, I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.
- [2 : 5 6] 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.
- They're famous last words. And I want us to think about these verses under three headings. Paul's present, Paul's past, and Paul's promise.
- Paul's present, Paul's past, and Paul's promise. So first of all, Paul's present. Paul's present. He says there in verse 6, I am already, I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.
- Now, as you know from our study of Paul's final farewell letter, this very personal and pastoral letter, it was written, as it says, to Timothy. And it was written, while Paul was in prison, he had been sent to prison and sentenced to death for preaching and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, when he's writing this letter, Paul is in a damp, dark, dismal dungeon. He's on death row, and he's weeks away from death. Undoubtedly, we could say that Paul's ministry was drawing to a close, which is why he sought to safely pass on the gospel baton to Timothy.

[4 : 19] He exhorts and he encourages Timothy to fan into flame his God-given gifts as a pastor and preacher of the gospel. And we've seen that throughout his letter.

But you know, as we saw last time at the beginning of chapter 4, Paul was handing over the gospel baton to Timothy, and he's issuing to him this sovereign and solemn charge.

He says to him, Timothy, Timothy, you must not drop this baton, because you must preach the word. And you must preach the word, Timothy, you must preach it powerfully.

You must preach the word persistently. You must preach the word pastorally. And you must preach the word patiently. Timothy, do not drop the baton. Timothy, preach the word.

But then as Paul moves on, he moves on to talk about his own personal circumstances and his present situation, because he says in verse 6, I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

[5 : 28] And you know, Paul's language there in verse 6, it's fascinating language, because it's an Old Testament illustration that he's using. And it's a very vivid Old Testament illustration, because he says that he's being poured out as a drink offering.

He's being poured out as a drink offering. Now, as you know, the Old Testament sacrificial system, it not only included burnt offerings of animal sacrifices, and also grain offerings of the first fruits of the crop, but the sacrificial system also included drink offerings.

Drink offerings of wine, and drink offerings of oil. Because what would happen was that when a burnt offering was made to the Lord, the animal sacrifice, whether it was a lamb, or a goat, or a bull, it would be prepared, and cut, and presented to the Lord on the brazen altar.

And it would be presented with the sprinkling of blood that was required according to the sacrificial laws. But then after that, after the offering had been made, a drink offering of wine, or oil, depending upon the offering that was being made, it was to be poured over the burnt offering.

And by pouring the drink offering over the burnt offering, it would create, as the Bible describes, a sweet aroma to the Lord. It was a pleasing sacrifice.

[6 : 59] The same was also true with the grain offering, where the first fruits of the crop, so the first fruits of the harvest, they would be offered to the Lord on the altar. And what followed, as the grain offering was made, was the drink offering, a drink offering of wine or oil, depending upon the type of offering.

And again, this would create this sweet aroma, this pleasing sacrifice. to the Lord. And so you could say that the main offering was the burnt offering, or the grain offering.

But what was often associated with it, and what it was often accompanied by, was a drink offering, being poured over the sacrifice. And you know, it's a very vivid illustration that Paul is giving to us here.

And in fact, I think it's a very beautiful illustration, because Paul is reminding us, first and foremost, that Jesus is the main offering. Jesus is the main offering.

Jesus is our burnt offering. He's the Lamb of God, who offered himself as an atoning sacrifice upon the altar of Calvary in order to take away the sins of the world.

[8 : 05] But Jesus, he's not only our burnt offering, he's also our grain offering. He's the firstfruits. He's the firstfruits of the dead, who rose triumphant over the grave on the third day.

And you know, what Paul is reminding Timothy is that he's saying, Jesus is the main offering. Jesus is the main offering. He's our atoning sacrifice. But as a servant of the Saviour, he says, Paul says that he sees his life and he also sees his death as a drink offering being poured out to the Lord.

Paul is saying, I'm not the main offering. That was offered and accepted at Calvary. But Paul is saying, my mission to the Gentiles, as it draws to a close, Paul is seeing that his ministry and now his martyrdom that is a drink offering being poured out to the Lord as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

He's not the main offering, but he's accompanying and being associated with the main offering as this drink offering that's been poured out.

But you know, sadly, at the time, there were many Christians who looked at Paul's ministry and they looked at Paul's martyrdom as he sat in this dark and dismal dungeon in Rome and they thought that his ministry and his martyrdom was an awful waste.

[9 : 36] Where after spending and being spent in the service of the Lord, they thought it was a waste for Paul to end his days in a dungeon on death row.

And some Christians thought that Paul's drink offering of ministry and martyrdom and being poured out to the Lord. It was just an awful waste. But you know, you look at the life of Jesus and it's not what the disciples thought about the main offering.

You remember when the woman who was the woman at Bethany, she came to Jesus in Simon the leper's house and she came to Jesus with that alabaster box of precious ointment and what did she do?

She broke it and she poured it over the main offering. She anointed the head of Jesus with her expensive ointment. But what did the other Christians say?

What did the disciples say? What a waste. What a waste. And yet it wasn't a waste because Jesus says she was doing a beautiful thing.

[10 : 45] She was pouring out her fragrant offering to the Lord in preparation for his burnt offering and for his burial. And you know, many thought the same of Paul.

They were saying, well, why this waste, Paul? You've spent your life preaching and teaching the gospel. You've had a full ministry and now it's just going to end in martyrdom.

But Paul saw it all as a drink offering. He saw his life and his ministry as a drink offering being poured out in worship to the Lord.

And you know, Paul was saying to young Timothy, he's saying, Timothy, my work is coming to an end. But you're part of that great work too.

And every Christian to whom this gospel baton will be passed on to, every Christian down throughout the centuries, they will be part of this great work.

[11 : 42] And one day, Timothy, you will also be poured out and they will be poured out too. And we'll all be poured out as a sweet smelling drink offering of worship to the Lord.

we're not the main offering, but we're the drink offering. But at this present time, says Paul, this is my appointed time because the time of my departure is at hand.

I am already being poured out as a drink offering. The time of my departure has come. So we see Paul's present. But then secondly, we see Paul's past.

Paul's present and Paul's past. He says in verse 7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith.

Now in these verses, Paul not only writes about his personal circumstances and his present situation, but he also writes about his past service. He writes about his past service and what he has done in his ministry and his mission prior to his now martyrdom.

[13 : 00] And of course, Paul, he doesn't say this in order to be big-headed or bragging or to be boastful in any way. Because Paul, as you know, he has claimed and confessed throughout his many letters and even in this final farewell, Paul has said that his service to his Saviour, it is all of grace.

It's all of grace. He said that in chapter 2 where Paul exhorted and encouraged Timothy to be strengthened, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And you know, if anyone knew that salvation is all of grace, it was Paul. Because Paul knew that grace, G-R-A-C-E, Paul knew that grace was all of God's riches at Christ's expense.

Which is why he reminded and reassured Timothy in this letter that he's saved by the grace of Christ Jesus and he's also to serve by the grace of Christ Jesus.

But what Paul writes here about his past service in verse 7, what he writes here isn't something new. In fact, it's something he's already written in his letters to Timothy.

[14 : 16] Because the thing is, Paul is repeating himself. You know, sometimes it's important for ministers to repeat themselves. And Paul is repeating himself here.

But he's repeating himself in order to emphasize and express the importance of fervently and faithfully serving Jesus Christ. Because in this verse, verse 7, Paul gives to us the familiar illustrations of a soldier, a sprinter, and a shepherd.

A soldier, a sprinter, and a shepherd. He says, I have fought the good fight. Soldier, I have finished the race. Sprinter, I have kept the faith. Shepherd.

So he says, like a soldier, I have fought a good fight. Like a soldier, I have fought a good fight. And if you remember towards the end of Paul's first letter to Timothy, Paul brought that letter to a conclusion by teaching Timothy that men and women of God are to be known by not only what they flee from and what they follow after, but also by what they fight for.

Men and women of God are to be known by what they fight for. Which is why Paul exhorted and encouraged Timothy to fight the good fight of faith. Fight the good fight of faith.

[15 : 40] And it's the same word that Paul uses here. This word, fight. I have fought the good fight. It's interesting that the word fight comes from the Greek word agonizomai.

Agonizomai, which is where we get the English word agony. Agonizomai. So, what Paul is emphasizing is that fighting the good fight of faith, it's not easy.

And it's not effortless. In fact, it's difficult and it's dangerous. It's painful and it's personal. It brings agony and anguish.

It's heart breaking and heart aching. Especially when there's pushback and when there's persecution. But here's the thing, fighting the good fight of faith is a fight to the finish.

Fighting the good fight of faith, as you see it in Paul's life, it's a fight to the finish. And Paul knew that from his own experience. Which is why he confesses here, I have fought.

[16 : 44] I have fought a good fight. I have fought a good fight. And you know, you listen to the words and you think, well, you know, there was a day in Paul's life when he wasn't fighting the good fight.

There was a day in Paul's life when he was fighting an evil fight. He was persecuting and punishing the church of Jesus Christ. There was a day in Paul's life when he was known as Saul and he was going from house to house putting Christians in prison or putting them to death.

And yet, the wonder of wonders is that when Paul met with Jesus, his life was transformed and instead of trying to stop the gospel, he began to spread the gospel.

And you know, you look at yourselves and myself. There was a day in my life when I wasn't fighting the good fight. There was a day in your life when you weren't fighting the good fight.

But tonight, you can see the wonder of wonders is that you have met with Jesus and you are fighting the good fight of faith. And for Paul here, after 30 years of mission and 30 years of ministry, Paul is confessing here at the end of it all, I have fought a good fight.

[18 : 05] I have fought a good fight. And you know, my friend, although it's a hard fight and although it's a fight to the finish, I think we would all confess tonight it's a good fight.

There's no better fight to be in than the good fight of faith. There's no better side to be on than on the Lord's side. There's no better army to be in than in the Lord's army.

There's no better armour to have on than the whole armour of God because the wonder is our Saviour has supplied us with full armour.

Full armour for the fight. That's why Paul said to the Ephesians, he said, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand firm as a Christian soldier against against all the schemes and the scams and the seductions of the devil.

Put on your armour. My Christian friend, put on your armour every day that you will be able to confess with Paul at the end of the day, I have fought a good fight and I have finished the race.

[19 : 21] I have finished the race. That's the second illustration he uses. He used the illustration of a sprinter. So there's the soldier, I have fought the good fight. Then there's the sprinter, I have finished the race.

And as we said, Paul, he's repeating himself. He's repeating himself for emphasis. He's emphasising what he said back in chapter 2 because back in chapter 2 he was talking about what we call 3D discipleship where it involves the devotion of a soldier and the discipline of an athlete and the diligence of a farmer.

And when explaining about the discipline of an athlete, Paul used the illustration of a sprinter in a race. A sprinter who focuses and fixes their eyes on the finish line.

They are focused upon where they are going. And you know, as I've mentioned to you before, I believe that Paul was someone who either enjoyed exercise himself or he admired athletes.

He must have watched them. Because when you read through Paul's letters, he's always using the sprinter as an illustration of discipleship. In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul writes, he says, Do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one receives the prize?

[20 : 40] So Paul says, Run. Run that you may obtain the prize. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul says, Forget what lies behind.

Forget about that. Strain forward to what lies ahead. Press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. And in those well-known words of Hebrews 12, we're exhorted and encouraged just like the sprinter, lay aside every sin and every weight which so easily besets us and run the race that is set before us.

And who are we looking to? We're looking to Jesus. Why? He's the author and he's the finisher of our faith. And you know, having faithfully and fervently served Jesus for 30 years, Paul can now see the finish line.

He can see the finish line. You might be thinking in your Christian life, I don't know where the finish line is. But Paul is seeing the finish line. It's in his sights. And he's now confessing.

He's saying, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race and I have kept the faith. I have kept the faith.

[21 : 57] That's the third illustration. The soldier, I have fought the good fight. The sprinter, I have finished the race. And the shepherd, I have kept the faith.

And you know, they're familiar illustrations because Paul, as we said, he's repeating himself. He's emphasizing what he said in a previous chapter. And when he speaks about the shepherd, he's talking about what he said in chapter 1.

He said back in chapter 1 that he exhorted and he encouraged Timothy to guard the gospel. Guard the gospel with your life, he said.

Because, we said before that the word guard, it means to keep or to watch. It has a threefold meaning. Guard, keep, and watch. It's the illustration of the shepherd.

The shepherd who guards his sheep. The shepherd who watches over his sheep. The shepherd who keeps his sheep safe. It's the illustration that we were singing about in Psalm 121.

[22 : 59] We're reminded and reassured that in that great psalm, the Lord is our shepherd because he's the one who keeps us. We cannot keep ourselves, but he promises to be our keeper.

That's why we sang, The Lord shall keep thy soul, he shall preserve thee from all ill, henceforth thy going out and in. God keep forever will.

He's our keeper. But you know, as an under-shepherd of the good shepherd, Paul knew that he was someone who had been entrusted to keep and guard and watch not only over the people of God, but also the proclamation of the gospel.

He was to keep guard and watch the people of God, but he was also to keep guard and watch the proclamation of the gospel. To make sure it was the truth that he was proclaiming.

And that's why he can confess here. He can say, as a soldier, I have fought a good fight. As a sprinter, I have finished the race. And as a shepherd, I have kept the faith.

[24 : 09] I have kept the faith. And so we see Paul's present, verse 6. Paul's past, verse 7. And lastly and briefly, Paul's promise in verse 8.

Paul's promise. We'll read again from verse 6. He says, I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and 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.

You all know who my good friend is. My good friend is J.C. Ryle. And it was J.C. Ryle who said, if we will not carry the cross, we shall never wear the crown.

If we will not carry the cross, we shall never wear the crown. And if anyone knew that to be true, it was the Apostle Paul. Because by God's grace, Paul had taken up his cross and he had followed Jesus.

[25 : 24] He had followed Jesus wherever he was led. But now as Paul's life and ministry draws to a close, he looks to the future. He looks to beyond the finishing line.

And he looks ahead to the time and to the promise of putting down his cross and picking up his crown. He looks ahead to the promise of putting down his cross and picking up his crown.

That's what he says. 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 you can see even from that verse that Paul hasn't lost sight of the fact that Jesus is Lord. He hasn't lost sight of the fact that Jesus is the righteous judge. The righteous judge who will judge Paul for his fervency and for his faithfulness in ministry.

That's why Paul actually issued that sovereign and solemn charge to Timothy in verse 1 where he said, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead by his appearing and his kingdom.

[26 : 40] Paul said, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season. Paul sought to remind and reaffirm to Timothy that one day when he reaches the finish line he will have to stand before Jesus as the judge and give an account of his ministry in this world.

But here Paul says, not just you Timothy, me also. Jesus the righteous judge says Paul, Jesus will judge me.

He will judge me for my fervency and my faithfulness in ministry. And on that day, says Paul in verse 8, he will award me. He will award me a crown of righteousness.

A crown of righteousness. But not only me, Timothy, you will get one too. Because you'll be there too when you finish your race.

And you know, Peter will be there too. And James and John, they'll be there. Matthew and Mark and Luke, they'll be there too. Barnabas, he was with me.

[27 : 52] And Apollos and Onesiphorus, they'll all be there. They'll all receive the crown at the end at the finish line. All the disciples of Jesus, they'll all be there.

We'll all be there, Timothy. We'll all be there. And we'll be there with people we've never met before, Timothy. People who are yet to come, people in Barvis, they'll be there too when they reach their finish line, when they receive the crown.

They'll be there. We'll be there with a multitude that no one can number. But we'll be there because why, he says there at verse 8, we love the Lord and we love his appearing.

We'll be there because we love the Lord and we love his appearing. But, Timothy, do you know what we'll do when we are awarded our crown of righteousness from the king of righteousness?

Timothy, do you know what we'll do? We'll cast our crowns before his throne and we will sing with the multitude. We will sing, worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.

[29 : 13] Timothy, to him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Timothy, I am already being poured out as a drink offering.

The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight as a soldier. I have finished the race as a sprinter. I have kept the faith as a shepherd.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge who will award me on that day. And not only to me, I love that part, not only to me but also to all who love his appearing.

Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy word and we thank thee, Lord, for the encouragement that it gives us to keep fighting as a soldier, to keep running like the sprinter, to remain faithful even like a shepherd.

And Lord, we pray that we would look to the great shepherd of the sheep, the one who laid down his life for his flock, that we would keep our eyes firmly upon him and know that he is one who loved us and gave himself for us.

[30 : 42] O Lord, give to us the strength to keep going, that when we feel weak, when we feel frail and when we feel so downcast, help us, Lord, to look up and to realise that this race that is set before us, it has a wonderful promise attached to it, that he who has begun that good work will bring it on to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Encourage us, Lord, we pray, that we might continue to bear the cross, that we might receive the crown, and that even when we receive the crown, O Lord, help us to cast it before thy footstool, to know that worthy is the Lamb who was slain.

Bless us, Lord, as a people, help us to keep going, to keep pressing on towards the mark of the high call of God that is in Christ Jesus.

Do us good and we pray, go before us, cleanse us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing the words of Psalm 84. Psalm 84 in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 339 of the Blue Psalm book.

[32 : 04] Psalm 84. Psalm 84. Psalm 84. If I was to ask you whose favourite psalm is this, I hope you would be able to tell me.

It's Ian Murray's favourite psalm. So remember Ian, he's in hospital again. He got home, well he was in hospital then he got home then he's back into hospital again.

So please remember Ian and Ishmael. This is his psalm. We're going to sing his verse. And you know, I was thinking, I was thinking, you know, trying to imagine Paul in prison.

What would Paul be singing in prison? He always sang in prison. We know that from Acts chapter 16. What would he sing? And thinking about those famous last words, I was thinking, well, maybe he was singing Psalm 84.

How it says there in verse 7, So they from strength unwearied go, still forward unto strength, until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length.

[33 : 10] Lord God of hosts my prayer here, O Jacob's God give ear, see God our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear. So we'll sing Psalm 84, verse 7, down to the end of the psalm, to God's praise.

Amen. Psalm 84, verse 7, before the Lord at length.

Lord God of hosts my prayer here, O Jacob's God give ear, sing God our shield, look on the face of thine anointed dear.

For in thy court one day excels a thousand brother in, my God's house will I keep adore, that dwell in death of sin.

For God the Lord is our sun and shield, in grace and glory give, and dwell with hope no good from them, that uprightly to him.

[35 : 55] O thou that are the Lord of hosts, that mind is truly blessed, who by assured confidence on thee alone doth rest.

Amen. 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 forevermore. Amen.