

Living & Dying Well

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now to 2nd Timothy and chapter 4 and we can read at verse 6. 2nd Timothy 4 and at verse 6.

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 to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing. And so on. Dr. Sinclair Ferguson tells a story about his experience in one of the seminaries in the United States of America.

And he tells a story of the professor of pastoral theology. And his class gathered on the first day of the semester. They gathered in his class. And they waited in anticipation for him.

[1 : 09] And he came in. And to their surprise, he presented them all with a blank sheet of paper. And he told them to go and to write their own obituary.

That he would lead them to do that and then come back and see how they could on. It was a surprising request on their first day. But his purpose in doing that is clear.

He wanted them to realize that they had to live well for Christ. And so that they might die well to be with Christ. And everything that they did from that day forward in their life and in their ministry was going to determine what was going to be in their obituary.

And we have these words tonight. And they say something to us about Paul. And he was writing these words in order to encourage Timothy.

Timothy who was perhaps faltering as we may see in chapter 1. Timothy who was timid. Timothy who feared everything that was happening around him.

[2 : 16] Paul wanted to encourage him. And he wanted to encourage him because Timothy was now going to take over from Paul. And he was going to follow in Paul's footsteps.

And Paul wants to encourage him by drawing attention to the very things that are important. So that when Timothy himself comes to the end of his life.

His obituary will be written and they will speak of the grace and of the power of Christ in his life. And I want us to look at these words tonight and to think about that.

Paul is in prison in Rome in AD 65. Within two years he is going to be martyred for the gospel. And then Timothy is going to take over from us.

So what he is saying is critical. It is crucial for Timothy. But it is also critical and crucial because of the timing of what God is doing.

[3 : 16] And perhaps tonight these words are crucial for you and for me because of what God is doing with you, for you and to you and also for me.

What is it then that we see in these words that will help Timothy? What do they tell us about Paul as he gives his final testimony to Timothy?

Well it is first of all to see that there is a realization. It is remarkable that we can be in places and situations and we do not realize what is happening to us.

We do not realize what is going on around us. We are oblivious to everything that is happening around us. And it is remarkable how we can be sucked into situations like that, carried through them and emerged from them completely unaware of what is happening.

Paul was very different. At every stage of his life he could see what was happening around him. He understood all of these things in the light of his relationship with the Lord Jesus.

[4 : 27] And therefore able to assess what to do. And here in these words we realize that he realizes that he is coming to the end of his life.

It is not something that is common to us. It is rare that we hear of that. It is more common for us to hear of sudden death.

And of people departing from this world to their own surprise and to the surprise of others. It is unique. It is unique. It is a special relationship when those who pass from this world, when they know that their passing is imminent.

And here is Paul in prison and he is writing to Timothy saying, I am already being poured out as a drink offering. This whole life has been given in the service of Christ.

His whole life has been given in devotion to Christ. His whole life has been a sacrifice for Christ as he says in Romans 12. Everything that he has done, he has done for Christ.

[5 : 45] But now he is at the stage where he sees his life being poured out as a drink offering. He sees his life already slipping away.

And when we think of the idea of a drink offering, we are reminded of the same idea in the book of Numbers. And the way in which, in chapter 15, the drink offering was given to accompany a burnt offering.

And here is Paul and he sees his own death as accompanying another death. He sees his own departure as accompanying another departure.

In other words, as he saw his life being lived for Christ. And to say for me to live is Christ. So for me to die is gain. Christ has died for him.

And now he is going to die in order to be with Christ. And so his death itself is part of the process of completing the very work of Christ.

[6 : 53] But the Christ who died with him. Who died for him, sorry. The Christ who died for him. By dying for his sins. It is now the Christ to which he is going as he passes through death.

And goes on to be with Christ. And along with that sense of being ready to be poured out, he sees himself also as unmooring and detaching himself from the very place in which he is found.

The time of my departure has come. The moment is here. He is ready to leave the world.

There are two images that are connected with this idea of the time of departure. The first one is of soldiers folding up their tents.

After the battle is over. Putting away their weapons. Loading their carriages. And moving on under the instruction of their commander.

[8 : 03] The battle is over. The victory is won. It is time to move on. And Paul sees himself like that in his prison house in Rome.

He does not see his freedom in this world. He does not see himself getting out of prison to continue the service of Christ. But what he sees is the hand of his Savior.

Instructing him. Directing him. And even doing it for him. Folding up his tent. And he says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

That he is sure that when the earthly house of this tent is dissolved. We have a house not made with hands. A house with God in the heavens.

And here he senses that the moment is there. And the other image that goes alongside of that. Is the ship that is unmoored.

[9 : 07] And that is detached from the harbor. And is ready to go on to the next destination. And again we have the hand of his Savior. In his prison house in Rome.

In this symbolic way. Untying the ship. Throwing in the ropes. Lifting up the anchor. And allowing the ship.

To set sail. For the next destination. He realizes. That his time. In this world.

Is over. He realizes that he is departing now. To be with Christ. Which is far better. And the way in which.

He speaks here. And the terms that he uses. Suggests to us. That this process. Has already begun.

[10 : 06] He knows. That he is already dying. A remarkable confession. A remarkable realization. That he sees himself.

Already detached. From this world. And in this new way. Attached. To his Savior. In glory. He is ready.

To sail on. To that heavenly. Destination. We have heard. Sometimes.

On rare occasions. Of Christian believers. Who know that they are dying. Who summon their families. Around them.

And are able to speak. Of the grace of Christ. And are able to speak. Of the glory. Which is to follow. And are able to do so. With confidence.

[11:04] That they are going. To be with Jesus. And tonight. It is a pressing question. For you. And for me. When this moment.

Arries. When we are in this. Situation. What will it. Be for us. Are we sensitive. Tonight. To the movement. And to the activity. Of our Savior. Are we sensitive. To the way. In which. He is working. In our own experience. Drawing us to himself.

Are we sensitive. That we are a journey. With him. Through which he is. Bringing us closer. And closer. To himself. Are we so sensitive. To his movements.

That when the time comes. We will be waiting. And ready. To depart. And to be with him. And the answer.

[12:05] To that question. Depends. Entirely. In the first place. And on my faith. In the Lord Jesus. And secondly.

On my commitment. And my life. Devoted to him. That life. Brings about. The sensitivity. That it is so necessary.

For you. And for me. As we journey on. In this uncertain life. Towards our certain. Departure from it. And our entrance in.

To the eternity. That goes before. D.L. Moody. The famous. American evangelist. Said.

On his deathbed. The earth. Recedes. Heaven. Opens. I have been through. The gates. Don't.

[13:01] Call me back. If this is death. It is sweet. Dwight. Irene. I see. The children's faces. There were his.

Grandchildren. That had been lost. That died before him. And his very image. Of life was. He was already. In glory. He was already. Around the throne.

Of God. And he could see. Those who had gone. Before him. What a realization. Does it not. Fill our hearts. With a.

A sense. Of longing. To. To know something. Of this. When the time comes. And to have. Our hearts. Excited. In the very center.

Of. Of these. Final moments. Of life. Excited. So much. That we are able. To say. If this is death. It is sweet. Don't call me back.

[13:58] Let me. Carry on. Through the gates. That. God. That Christ. Has already. Opened. For me. The realization.

Secondly. There is. Reflection. He tells us. About his own life.

He tells us. About the kind of life. That he lived. Over 30 years. Of serving the Lord. He reflects. Upon life. And as he does.

So. First of all. He was no. Stranger. To struggles. Is that not. Like yourselves. What is. Our faith. Yes. It does. Moments. Of triumph. But so often. We are more conscious. Of the struggles. Of faith. Of the afflictions. That come with faith.

[14:59] And of our need. To persevere. Through difficulties. And why should we. Why should that. Cause us. To raise questions. Tonight. When we see.

In the word of God. That Paul. The servant. The apostle. Of Jesus Christ. That as he reflects. Upon his life. These are the very things. That he looks.

Back upon. I have fought. The good fight. He knows. The arena.

Of the games. In Rome. He knows. Everything about. The conflict. That takes place there. The contests. And. The picture. That brings before us. It speaks to us.

Not only of. Of. Running a race. It speaks to us. Also of. Of. Boxing. And of wrestling. And of all of these. Intense activities.

[15:53] That were part of the Roman. Contests. And having that he was going through life. He sees himself. As being like that. And when we see.

And read across. Paul's own life. In Acts chapter 9. He is. Running for his life. He is sent away. For his own safety. In Ephesians chapter 6. He is. Wrestling. In that close. Contest. As if. Something wants to try.

And overcome him. Overpower him. Even strangle the life. Of God. Out of his heart. And strangle. His life of faith. In 1 Corinthians 9.

He is. In that boxing match. He is. He is challenging. What's. What's taking place. Around him. So in. In every area. Of his life. We follow his life.

[16:49] Through. And we see the way. In which. He is engaged. In that kind of conflict. And the conflict. He describes as. The good fight.

How could. Any fight. Be good. Would it not be better. If we weren't fighting. At all. Would it not be better. If we. If we had. A life of peace.

And no struggles. No. Paul is saying. This is. A good fight. And not good. Because it is morally good. But good. Because.

It is purposed. By God. The God. Who said. In the first creation. When he saw everything. That he had made. It was all very good. There is no saying. About you. Life unto mine.

As the child of God. Living by faith. It is good for you. And my purpose is for you. It is good for you. To have the conflict. And to have the struggle. In your faith. It is good for you.

[17:48] To go. Through these wrestling matches. In your own heart. Perhaps. It is simply. Good. Because. What God does.

Is good. In order. For what he has designed. To be fulfilled. And Paul. In so many ways. That everything. That he had gone through.

That it was necessary. For bringing him to this point. And in so many ways. Having.

Completed the fight. That these things. Were the very things. That gave him such a clear vision. That gave him such a clear view.

Of what was before him. They were the very ingredients. That cleansed. That washed away. That removed the grit. From his eyes. That gave him that.

[18:46] Twenty twenty vision. Through which he saw the glory. Of Christ. Christ. It was. A good fight. And tonight.

We do have to see. As the people of God. That what we. Think we will be. Far better without. Is the very thing.

That we cannot be better. Without it. God has designed. For you. And for me. The very thing. Which is going to refine us. Which is going to perfect us.

Which is going to. Enable us to. To grow. And to mature. Into the likeness of Christ. And so. We will come at last. To say with Paul.

I have fought. The good fight. He didn't quit. When the going got tough. When the going got tough. The tough got going.

[19:44] And he was strong. And determined. And he was strong. And the grace. That there was in Christ. God tonight. You will demonstrate. Give evidence. Of the genuineness.

Of your own faith. As you do exactly. The same thing. That when. You are confronted. With challenges. And. Satan is saying to you.

You cannot believe. You cannot go forward. You cannot live this life. Then you have to. Box with him. You have to wrestle with him. You are not going to run from him.

But you are going to bring to him. The word of God. And you are going to continue. In that good fight. As you go on. In life. In your devotion. To the Lord Jesus.

In the service. It was. A life. Of conflict. But it was also. A life. In which she knew direction.

[20:41] I have fought the good fight. I have finished. The race. It was. It was that sense of. Completing a life.

Lived in the service. Of the Lord Jesus. And coming now. To the very end. Of that life. And it is interesting. That the same word is used.

That Jesus used. On the cross. When he had suffered. For the sins of the people of God. When the darkness had been lifted. And he cried out.

Finally with a loud voice. And said. It is finished. And he gave up. The spirit. The same word. The same grammar. The same expression.

Paul is. So close to Christ. That he can use the words of Christ. That when he comes to. To the end of his life. That he can see. That he has finished.

[21:39] The work. That God. Has given him. To do. In everyday life. We recognize people.

Who are so committed. In their work. That they go the extra mile. For their employer. We also know of others. And they will do. Anything and everything.

To get out of their duties. And they are known. Not for their commitment. But for. The way in which. They will avoid. The tasks given to them. If they can.

And there is no space. For you. Or for me. Tonight. To be that kind of person. The person. That is saying no. To the servants of Christ. The person.

That is saying no. To the work of Christ. And to following Christ. You are not going to be. The person. The person. Who will use any excuse.

[22 : 37] Not to do. And not to go. And not to be. What God wants you to be. You are to be. As Paul wanted Timothy. You are to be. The person.

Who in every duty. In every work. In every calling. In every task. You are going to complete it. By the grace of God. God. And then.

When you come to this point. Of realization. You will have the right. To say. The words of Jesus. And the words of Paul. I have finished.

The race. And Paul. In Philippians chapter 3. He gives us that picture. I don't say. That I have already reached.

But one thing. I do. Forgetting. What is behind me. I press on. Towards the mark. To the. High. High. The calling. Of the.

[23 : 33] High. The prize. Of the high calling. Of God. In Jesus Christ. There is a finishing line. And that is. Where he is focused. And that is. Where he is going. And now.

He is just. About there. The direction. The work. The service. And he did so. With. A wholehearted. Devotion. I have. Kept. The faith. He has. Guarded. He has. Watched over. He has. Preserved. The faith.

Certainly. It is. His own faith. His faith. In the Lord Jesus. But more especially. It is. Faith. In the sense. Of the word of God.

And the truth. Of God. At the beginning. Of this chapter. We see the way. In which. There is. The word of God. Being undermined. And filtered down. And being rejected.

[24 : 31] And being replaced. By what. Pleases. Those who want to hear. Things that don't challenge. In the same way. But Paul. Was. Fearless. In his life.

He didn't water. Anything down. He kept. The faith. The package. The doctrines of faith. The doctrines of.

Salvation. The doctrines of. The passion of Jesus. Of the work of Jesus. Of everything to do with. With the grace of God. Through which we are saved. He kept. The faith.

The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. The faith. And so often. Part of. Their own. Great failing. And their own. Great weakness. Is that the word of God. Becomes. Secondary. And we find reasons. And we reason out. Other arguments. So that we. We can justify.

[25 : 27] What we're doing. At the expense. Of the word of God. And we can justify. Things like that. When it comes to. Our believing. In the first place. And we can do so.

As we. Journey on. In the life of faith. Substituting. Giving priority to. Other things. Over the word of God. And. Thereby.

Filtering down. The word of God. So it no longer means. What it does mean. In our lives. And so that. It fails. To change. And to transform.

And how shameful. It will be for us. At the end. If instead of saying. By the grace of God. That we have kept the faith. How shameful.

For us to. Come face to face. With the fact. That we have rejected the faith. Or that we have abandoned the faith. Or that we have watered down the faith.

[26 : 31] So that it is no longer the faith. The word of God. Thought of that shameful encounter. With the God who is our maker. As we leave the shore of this world.

May God help us to. To be able to reflect upon life. And to make a determined effort. Even tonight. In remembering the story.

Of writing our obituary. To make a determined effort. So that when we do come to the end. We may be able to say. I have fought.

The good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept. The faith. The reflection. On a good life. What will your reflection be? What will other people's reflection be? Of your life? As you depart from this world. Whenever that may.

[27 : 28] Take place. And thirdly. There is. A reward. Paul sees.

The past. Clearly. He is able to analyze. The past. Clearly. But he also. Sees. The future. Henceforth.

There is laid up for me. The crown of righteousness. Which the Lord. The righteous judge. Will award to me. On that day. Not only to me. But also. To all.

Who have loved. His. Appearing. There is. As. Paul. Departs.
This world. As he sees. His ship sailing. He sees. That. In the glory of God. There is. Set aside for him. Kept in store for him.

[28 : 23] Waiting on the table for him. Waiting. For the table for him. In. That award ceremony. Which is. Awaiting the people of God. And.

And. And. It is remarkable. That he is. He is using. The very idea of. A word. Because. A word. Suggests to us. That. Somebody. Is receiving something.
Because of what they have achieved. It is an idea. That perhaps. Goes against. The very idea. Of the grace of God. But. But here. We see Paul.

Following the Lord Jesus. Who was. Awarded. And rewarded. For the work. That he had accomplished. And was crowned. With glory and honor. Here we see Paul. Looking forward. And waiting. And. Looking to the crown. Of. Righteousness. And the crown was. Nothing really.
[29 : 19] In the Roman games setting. In appearance. It was made up of. Twigs. And of leaves. There was no value. In the crown itself.

But it was. What brought honor. To the athlete. And when. The athlete. Was given the crown. Having succeeded. At the games. It was the emblem. Of victory. And his hometown. And his home city. Would open the gates. And wait. For the athlete. To arrive. And they would honor him.

Because of what he had achieved. And here is. Is Paul. Looking to go through. The gates of heaven. And looking to receive. This. This crown. Of righteousness. That God is going to give to him. And by. The very receipt. Of this crown. He sees the image. Of. Of entering into the.

[30 : 16] The great celestial city. Of the glory of God. And going through. The streets of that city. Up to the house. Of the king itself. Open to me. The gates of righteousness. He sees himself.

Entering in. To that glory. And he sees. Him being awarded. And rewarded. For the work. That he has done.

And he knows. And we know. That the work. That he has done. Will be all. To the glory of Christ. But nevertheless. It is.

An award. That's given to him. That he sees. Laid upon him. And it is. The crown of. Righteousness. And whatever.

We're going to make of that. It means. At least. That the righteousness. Is. A status. And an experience. Of perfection.

[31 : 11] And of glory. It's an escape. From everything. That spoiled life. In this world. God. It's. The clothing. With which.

The people of God. Stand before. The throne of God. They are there. In white garments. Who are these. With white robes. And. Pantries.

In their hands. They are those. Who. Came out of the great tribulation. And they have washed their robes. And made them white. In the blood of the lamb. And here is Paul.

Seeing himself. In that great gathering. With that crown. Of righteousness. The crown. Which is. Righteousness. The perfect.

State. Of the people. Of God. Tonight. What do you. Anticipate. What are you.

[32 : 05] Looking forward. To. This crown. Is not. Exclusively. For Paul. It is. Not only. To me. But also.

To all. Who love his. Appearing. It is about. Our love. For the Lord Jesus. He loved us. And gave himself.

For us. He chose us. He pulled himself. Into his relationship. With us. He sacrificed. Himself. No cost. Was too great.

In order. For us. To. Experience. His goodness. His goodness. And his well-being. And to be transformed. By that. And tonight.

What is. There in your heart. With regard to. The Lord Jesus. Are you saying. That. You love him. Because.

[33 : 02] He first loved you. You. And because. He first loved you. That your life. Is already devoted. To him. And that. However much.

You may see. Failings. Along the way. That nevertheless. Because. Because. Of the grace. Of Christ. That you proceed. That you persevere.

And that you look forward. To the day. When you also. Will be crowned. In glory. With him. What is your. Anticipation. What is your.

Expectation. What a great blessing. It would be. For all of us. Tonight. As we. Think of. Of our departure. From this world. That we would.

Approach it. With this. Kind of experience. Realizing. That we're drawing. Closer to it. Reflecting on life. And.

[33 : 58] Making necessary. Adjustments. In the light of. The things that we have. Done wrong. And. Looking forward. To. This. Great. Reward.

Provided for us. That follow his. Example. May God. Bless his word. To us. And may. Enable us. To. Prepare ourselves. And to be ready.

To depart. When the time comes. To be with Christ. Which is better. By far. May God bless his word. Let's bow. Our heads in prayer. Gracious God. We do rejoice.

In you. For. The grace. That. Brings your people. At last. To glory. We do your thanks. To you. For. The great example. Of. Your servant. Paul.

We do thanks. To you. That he was. An imitator. Of the Lord Jesus. And we pray. That we may be imitators. Of him. And. Of the Lord Jesus. In our lives.

[34 : 52] And walk in these paths. And follow in their footsteps. And know their. Experiences. And share in their joys. As well as their sorrows. And so that ultimately.

And at last. We may go to glory. To be with you. Where all of. Our pains and sorrows. Will be left behind. And where we find rest. On. When we arrive on.

The shores of. The great eternity. And then enter in. At last. To the place. And the haven. That we desire to see. As all of the people.

Of God do. So here. As we pray. And bless your word to us. For Jesus sake. Amen. So we're going to conclude. By singing. Psalm 107.

In the Scottish Psalter. These words. Familiar to us. That speak of. The goodness of God. And of us. Arriving in that place. Of rest. Into which the people of God.

[35 : 47] Enter. Psalm 107. At verse number 26. On page. 384. They mount to heaven.

Then to the depths. They do go down again. Their soul doth faint. And melt away. With trouble. And with pain. They really unstagger. Like one drunk. At their wits. End they be.

Then they to God. In trouble cry. Who them. From straits. Doth free. From verse 26. To verse Mark 30. To God's praise. They mount to heaven.

Then to the depths. They do but on again.

Their soul doth faint. And melt away. With trouble.

[36 : 52] And with pain. They real unstagger.

Like one drunk. At their wits. End they be. Then they do God.

And trouble cry. Who them. From straits. To free.

The storm. Has changed. Into account. Have his.

How quiet. Are. and still. Then are they got the ghosts at rest and quiet now they be.

[38 : 20] So to the heaven he them brings which they start to see.

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.