

Final Words Bring Eternal Perspective

Series: Fan the Flame (2 Timothy)

Brad Bailey – February 18, 2024

Intro

We are continuing in a series... allowing God to speak to us from the Biblical Book called 2 Timothy... chapter 4... verses 1-8.

Coming to the **final words** in the **final letter** of the **Apostle Paul**.

There is **something profound** about such **final words**.

When one comes to the end of their earthly life... they **see what really matters**.

All the **pretense is stripped away**. To the degree that life has been a show...the show is over.

It provides clarity about **what really matters**.

For those who **grasp the sacred...** the **sacred shines**. [1]

Here...the Apostle Paul... writing to younger Timothy...who was **like a spiritual son**.

While there is something unique about Timothy's role... **there is a shared communal responsibility...** and Paul intended these words to be read widely... as they now fall to us in this room. He begins...

2 Timothy 4:1-2

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead,

> He is bringing forth what we need to realize is always true.

God is present... and perhaps more accurately.... We are present before God. God is not brought before us...but rather we are brought before his presence.

We tend to live our lives ...without being fully conscious of that.

Most of us would admit that **if God were right here...**if Christ appeared in the center of this room... **we would sit up...**we would **realize the seriousness** of what our lives are about. When we grasp that we exist **before the one** who gave us life... to whom such life is accountable.... We begin to grasp our responsibility. Paul is simply evoking that reality...

Paul adds..... **"in view of his appearing and his kingdom"**

There is **only one Kingdom...** **all other claims to rule will come and go..**

> **When you see that we are present before the one everlasting King...**you are ready to see your earthly life more clearly... **to grasp the charge at hand....**

I give you this charge: ² Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

This charge to Timothy to preach the Word... may seem specific to his unique role and calling. He was being entrusted as the pastor-teacher... but there is a word for all.

> The general call to share the Gospel...was given to all.

God's plan never emphasized anything other than every life bearing this message. It's very true that Paul would speak of some being uniquely gifted and called...with distinct roles ...but those roles were to equip others. They were not the only lives called to share the word,

Jesus shared his life with all...to be **shared by all...**

And it all launched out when the whole of the community was forced to scatter...

Acts 8:1-4

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. ⁴ Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Some guy came to kill one of the leaders of the group in Jerusalem... and then came for the rest... and if not familiar... that Saul is now known as Paul... transformed... The very one who had sought to destroy the church...is now the one who is sees what God is doing.

He had once **tried to silence** God... and **God scattered the people...**

all except the apostles were scattered ...and Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

So everyone became preachers of the Word.

That may conjure up the idea that they stood on street corners and shouted at everyone who passed by.

That wouldn't have been very well received then...nor today.

The word used for "preach" means to be a herald of the news...the one who comes to town ...into whatever space they are a part of...with news of something that changes everything.

> They didn't shout at people...but they did share the news of what had changed their lives.

The first point imparted to us...

1. Embrace a life that bears one message above all...and share it well.

The central message is this....Jesus was divine ... as the one God had said would be sent to save, Jesus was quite clear: he understood this ... claimed this...and demonstrated this. And he rose to reveal eternal life... and in the sending of the spirit... has come to dwell with us.

> That is the message that we should bear above all else.

We can have robust conversations about **politics** and **vaccines** and **Taylor Swift**. But they are not the Gospel... not the news God is calling us to declare.

I understand that there are a **lot of issues in the world that may seem vital**... but our opinion about them is not the central news we are to herald.

It is **easier today to be a critic than a witness**.... A challenge I must face even in myself. **What do my FB posts reflect about the central message** my life declares.

- Paul was now in Jerusalem at the time of the reign of Nero... and he didn't presume that bemoaning Nero was the ultimate news...Nero would come and go...and go he did.
- But we are to bear and be known for one central message...
- ***"Amazing grace...how sweet the sound...that saved a wretch like me...I once was lost but now I'm found...I was blind but now I see."***

Now because Timothy was to be the primary equipper of that news...and the handling of the whole of God's Word...Paul wanted to expand that charge...to

be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage— and it included doing so with ...patience and careful instruction.

Be prepared ... for seasons when all the elements are flourishing...and season when they aren't... you will face both.

A coach knows there will be games when the game is going well...some it's off...and at halftime... in that locker room... there will need to be what? **Correction... rebuke...and encouragement.**

Hard stuff... but it's accepted by the team? They know they need it.

And it includes encouragement.

Mark Twain said "I can live a whole year on a good compliment."

It's a process... and patience implies a willingness to suffer with the process.

Careful in instructions.... Applications.

Such patience and carefulness will be vital...why?

2 Timothy 4:3-5

³For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from

the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵ But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

They gather teachers who tell them **what they want to hear.**

When I was a kid I remember that **if Mom said, “No.” I would sometimes run to Dad** to see if I could get a more acceptable answer. Any of your kids ever do that?

Paul sees how it looks as adults...as everyone will be prone this way.

We are wise not to be too quick to presume this speaks only about what others turn from.

We like to hear what affirms and encourages ...but turn away from that which creates tension with our desires... our popularity. [2]

This Word... it offers a **compass for human life...** to guide life because **there is a true north...**

So these final words speak a charge...

Embrace a life that bears one message above all...and share it well.

He continues...

2 Timothy 4:6-7

⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

He knows that it's hard for Timothy to lose the one who has raised him up.

Paul is saying to Timothy...*I am good...it is my time...*

He is **describing what it means to be ready to go on.**

the time for my departure is near.

The word “departure” makes one think of a ship ready to set sail.

Paul was saying that the end of his life was near...and his ship was ready to set sail.

We all know that **feeling of “oh no...I am not ready for a trip”** And the peace of being ready... he is **communicating that peace.**

He was ready to depart this life and go to the next. [3]

Paul is saying: “Timothy...I am ready.”

How?

> **“I am being poured out like a drink offering.”**

The drink offering was a small cup of wine poured over the fire... where it would be consumed,

Poured out... not spilled...but poured as an offering. It means I have given myself to this. I have chosen to **pour my life...**

Paul had poured himself into that which was eternal...lasting...and beyond his earthly life... beyond this current age.

The second thing imparted to us...

2. Give your earthly life to the eternal reality that everything leads to

It's been noted, that "Only when you live a meaningful life.... can you die a meaningful death."

Clearly...living a meaningful life **does not mean** that a person **will not suffer** from any illness, or experience any problem. [4] It's not comfort that gives meaning... it's a purpose you fulfill.

He is saying...I have **fulfilled** *my* ministry, **finished** *my* course, **fought** the good fight; and I want you to know that, as you face yours, finishing well is worth it. [5]

We will all have some regrets.... but if we have given ourselves to the cause of God...he is telling us... he is...

The ship arriving after a long journey.

The athlete crossing the finish line.

I believe there is a word here to those younger...

It's your time to take the lead...

There is a point at which **those who are younger** need to let others finish well...*by embracing the call... joining the case... joining the fight...taking the lead.*

> Paul is saying.... I'm good... and you can be to... take hold of this charge.

Never forget my own father's final words... I could sense this was a sacred responsibility... but also a reflection of my father.

And it speak to those who may be older...

Death is something ...**we tend to avoid**...human life tries to **find sentimental ways** of referring to it...**often vague** but Paul holds something very different.

He holds Christ...and **in Christ he has union with unending life.**

In a sense **Christ has revealed** that we have **reality backwards**; we are **already dead**....and **it's eternity we long for.**

"God has set eternity in our hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

As someone said: "Death is only the end if you assume the story is about you." (From Welcome to Night Vale)

Paul grasped that he was part of the **eternal story**... the one we were created to be a part of... the one which God has come bring us back into.

Thus is why C.S Lewis referred to this world as the **Shadowlands. Only a shadow of life.**

As Henry Ward Beecher stated so well....

Living is death; dying is life.

On this side of the grave we are exiles, on that side, citizens;

on this side, orphans; on that side, children;

on this side, captives; on that side, freemen;

on this side disguised, unknown; on that side, disclosed and proclaimed as the sons of God.

- Henry Ward Beecher

What awaits?

Paul concludes this portion...

2 Timothy 4:8

⁸ Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing.

3. Know that when you are rooted in eternal reality...you will receive eternal rewards.

It is not some weird trophy time...it is all honor rightfully honored.

Crown represents honor..... all the honor that was not recognized on earth will be recognized in heaven...When I get to Heaven, God will bless the efforts of our lives. In this verse, crowns are mentioned. It will be glory just to be in Heaven. But all of the things that we have done for God's honor and glory, we will receive rewards for in Heaven.

It is **not that of comparative rewards...but of honor that all will know to be right.** [6]

For all....A crown of righteousness awaits us.

He wants Timothy to hear this... **you to hear this...**this crown...honor... crown awaits all who have loved the appearing of the Lord. That includes you.

All will be rewarded... gain more than you can imagine...and **honor will flow as it should...**not as it may have been here on earth. [7]

Jesus said... all who lost anything to honor Christ...will gain a hundred times more...AND that **those who may have been deemed least... may be first.**

Jesus explained...“Your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you” (Matt 6:16).

Paul lived for that honor. He calls us to live for that honor.... To know that when you are rooted in eternal reality...you will receive eternal rewards.

This is a great invitation into LENT – We can join Paul as one who poured his life out into the work of God.

Lent is a season to bring ourselves before God's presence... choosing something that may typically have our attention... allow ourselves enjoy what only He can satisfy.

These 40 days of choosing forms of prayer and fasting... as a shift in attachments... not from bad to good...but from temporal to eternal... from gifts of God to God.

Today begins with asking...

Does your life have a primary message?

Have you given your life to the eternal reality that everything is leading to?

Do you grasp the rewards that are to come?

CLOSING PRAYER

Possible additional closing story

William Borden

In 1904, a man named **William Borden**, who was a member of the Borden dairy family, ever heard of Borden dairy products? William Borden finished high school and was given as a graduation gift, a world cruise.

So he traveled around the world and while travelling through the Far East, he became burdened by **the sight of people who had idolatrous worship systems** and who did not know Jesus and he committed himself, on that boat to be a missionary. Upon returning home he spent four years at **Yale**, and then three years at **Princeton seminary** preparing for that life, that missionary service. And while he was in school, he turned to the back of his Bible and wrote on the last page of the Bible. These words, **"No reserves."**

That means ***he would hold nothing back, for God.*** He would give everything to God. No reserves. Well as his ministry... Or as his preparation for ministry ended and it was time for him to go, he started selling all of his possessions, started giving away his incredible resources and the family was saying, ***"We need you to run the dairy, business"***. And he said, "No, I can't. I'm called to be a missionary." And so he gave away millions of dollars, emptied himself of those things and below the words no reserves, **he wrote the words, "no retreat.** No retreat." He was never going to turn back, he was going ahead with his plans to be a missionary. On his way to China to witness to Muslims there, he contracted cerebral meningitis and died within a month. The world grieved and said it was a tragic loss and said, "What a waste? If he had stayed in America, he could have done so much good here."

A friend found his personal effects, found his Bible, and opened up to the back of the Bible, saw the words, **"no reserves"** and below it written, **"no retreat."** But below that was **the final entry. "No regrets."** William Borden died at age 25, with no regrets, because he gave everything for Jesus Christ.

It's my desire that when I reach the end of my race, when I reach the end of my struggle I'll have no regrets. It's my desire that we can say, ***"I have fought the good fight, I've finished the race, I've kept the faith. Now there is in-store for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord himself will award to me on that day."***

Notes:

1. When I explore how we engage death. I find many writers have made some positive ways to look at death... but when we look at what some who are actually dying state...they reflect amore honest despair.

Napoleon right before he died said this, "I die before my time, and my body will be given back to the Earth to become the food of worms, such is the fate which so soon awaits the great Napoleon."

Mahatma Gandhi, who is a world renowned Hindu leader, not long before he died, he said this, "My days are numbered. I'm not likely to live very long perhaps a year or a little more. For the first time in 50 years I find myself in a slew of despond. All about Me is darkness, I'm praying for light."

19th century French statesman, Talleyrand wrote these words on a scrap of paper, and put them on his night stand right before he died, "Behold 83 years passed away. What cares, what agitation, what anxieties, what ill will, what sad complications and all without 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."

Alexander the Great explained his three wished for his funeral:

Alexander said, "I want the world to know the three lessons I have just learned." The king interpreted his wishes and continued, "I want my physicians to carry my coffin because people should realize that no doctor can cure anybody. They are helpless in front of death."

The king described his second Wish: "I spent all my life earning riches but cannot take anything with me. Let people know that wealth is nothing but dust." Thirdly, I wish all to know that I came empty-handed into this world, and I will go empty-handed."

2. Similarly, in Isaiah 30:10 it is talking about Israel. They are rebellious people, deceitful children, children listen to this, unwilling to listen to the Lord's instruction. They don't want to listen. *"They say to the seers, 'see no more visions' and to the prophets, 'give us no more visions of what is right. Tell us pleasant things. Prophecy illusions. Leave this way. Get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel.'"*

3. The word "depart" also pictures the taking down of a tent. There is an interesting parallel here for the word of God describes this body of ours as a tent. I think that every one understands that tents were never intended to be permanent dwelling place. "For we know that if our earthly house, this (tent) tabernacle, were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1 KJ21)

4. The word of God says in 2 Tim, 2:12, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him"...Paul said in Phil. 3:10, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;"

5. John Chrysostom, a 4th century preacher and pastor, said of these verses, "*Often, when I have taken the Apostle into my hands, and have considered this passage, I have been at a loss to understand why Paul here speaks so loftily: 'I have fought the good fight.' But now by the grace of God I seem to have found it out...He is desirous to console the despondency of his disciple, and therefore bids him be of good cheer, since he was going to his crown, having finished all his work, and obtained a glorious end.*"

6. Rewards at a time of judgement or heaven...is noted many times by Jesus. It can cause one to think of competition and envy in heaven. To this it can be helpful understand that what Jesus is describing is honor that all will know to be right. For a short reference to such rewards, see: You Asked: What Are the Rewards in Heaven Jesus Talks About? - John Starke - [here](#)

7. When the disciples once pointed out to Jesus all they had given up in order to follow him, he described that which all would receive but with honor for what was seen by God...not by earth. In Matthew 19:27-30 (NLT) we read:

Peter said to him, "We've given up everything to follow you. What will we get?"

²⁸ Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new ...everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.