

Fulfill Your Ministry

Introduction

- If you have your Bibles...
- This last year I had the privilege of visiting Rome. To this day it is a place of beauty and history. We saw the coliseum, we saw the sistine chapel, and we saw the roman forum. We saw the exact spot that all roads in the ancient world led to. But there was one notable spot in the roman forum that was mostly overlooked. It was called the Mamertine Prison. This prison had originally been used as a place to gather water, a cistern carved out of solid rock. It was a chamber about fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet deep, and eight feet high. The cavern was cold, dark, and dank. This was where the Apostle Paul was held captive while awaiting execution.
 - From the steps of that prison you could look across the street and see the ruins of the forum where the Romans legislated their law. As a man in prison would have looked out the window of his cell he would have seen the scaffold being erected for his execution. This is where the Apostle Paul waited his last moments
 - No one knows how long Paul was held prisoner in that cistern. Whether several months or several weeks, we just do not know. But we could imagine how Paul felt in that dank, desperate place writing his final letter to Timothy. This is where Paul recorded his final words to his beloved disciple Timothy.

2nd Timothy 4:6-22

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 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.

9 Do your best to come to me soon. 10 For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. 16 At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17 But 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. 18 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.

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus. 21 Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.

22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

Context

Unlike his first Roman imprisonment, which is described in Acts 28 as a form of house arrest, Paul's final confinement was far more severe. The available evidence suggests that this imprisonment took place after a fourth missionary journey, which is not recorded in the book of Acts. This time, Paul was no longer a well-treated prisoner, but a common criminal who was awaiting his execution.

The letter to Timothy is generally dated to A.D. 64–67, placing it within the period of Nero's gruesome persecution of Christians following the Great Fire of Rome.

The winds of culture had shifted away from the free exercise of religion and toward heavy persecution of it.

Our Lives Are Offerings To God

- He writes, "I am already being poured out like a drink offering"....What is that? That is Old Testament sacrificial language. Paul isn't being executed by the state; he's offering his life as a sacrifice to God. He is willingly giving his life for the sake of the gospel.
 - Remember back in Acts 21:13? Paul's friends were begging him not to go to Jerusalem because they knew he would suffer... But Paul said, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus".
- This language links his martyrdom directly to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, where a drink offering was poured out as an act of worship to God.
 - We like to place ourselves in the stories of scripture... we want to be like David and slay our giants, we want to be like Daniel and overcome the lion's den. We want to be like Moses, and part the red sea... who wants to volunteer for this one?
 - Who wants to be beheaded for Jesus? Who wants to be crucified upside down as Peter was? Who wants to lay down their lives for Christ?
- Prove
 - Romans 12:1 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers,[a] by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
- Apply
 - Over the past three months we have lost three faithful Christian leaders.
 - First it was John Macarthur, Then it was Charlie Kirk, and this week we learn of the passing of Voddie Baucham. All men who devoted their whole lives to sharing Jesus.
 - But as one pastor put it, "they left us in the land of the dying and entered into the land of the living."
 - You see if you could bring them all back today, they wouldn't want to. They are with their savior. And that is true of all who call Jesus Lord. None would want to return to this life.
 - If you asked them today, they would say don't worry about me, I am better than ever, Follow Jesus.
 - But one day, if we know Christ, we will join them. And truly live.

Finish Your Race

- Vs 7-8
- Fought the Fight - He Won
- Finished the Race - Marathon - Completion
- Kept the Faith - Earned a prize for Victory.
 - Paul's motivation was not earthly glory but an eternal reward. He looked forward to a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day". The "crown" in this context is not a kingly coronet but a victor's laurel wreath, symbolizing the reward for a life of righteousness. This eternal hope is what enabled Paul to "endure suffering". This is a promise not only for Paul but also for "all who have longed for his appearing"
 - That means that same prize that Paul got is offered to us as well. A victory crown.
 - I used to play football, we won state. We got championship rings made, it was a big deal. I wore that ring for the rest of the year. Every day.
 - But fast forward 18 years. I don't even know where it is. Lost... Stolen... Destroyed... No idea. Even if I had it though, it is a crown that would not last forever. The crown I strive for now is far superior to that one.
 - We all need to soberly assess where we're at and think about what the conclusion will be for the path we're currently on. It's not too late for you to make some changes and pivots. It's not too late to go up instead of down. To choose right instead of wrong.
 - Think about the path you're currently on, will you be finishing well?
- We really only have 3 options for the rest of our lives...
 - Coast — No new challenges. No risk. No discomfort. This option hardly seems like a good one, but it's probably our default.
 - It is what we aim for in retirement. The easy life. Do nothing, just live. Its like once we retire from our job, we also retire from our faith.
 - I've seen older saints with much life experience who, rather than investing it in discipling the next generation, are right now preoccupied with playing the slots at the casino. Such people need to retire from retirement and they need to steward their final days better.
 - You older saints, we need you in the fights. **Die with your boots on 2x.**
 - Crash — I see this far too often. Commit a serious sin against God, one that brings dishonor to his glory, and that harms others. We're all closer to this than we think. The more we think we're not in danger, the greater the danger.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:12 - Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

- Example (Samson)
 - Judges 16 - Samson's story is a terrifying example of not finishing well. In summary, he's betrayed by Delilah, blinded, and imprisoned by the Philistines. He finds himself in the temple of Dagon, a demonic pagan temple. Here, he decides to commit suicide by pushing the pillars of the temple down so that the entire building falls, killing himself and all of his enemies. The last day of his life is committing suicide to harm those that he has vengeance against.
 - The end of his life is tragic and, unlike what our culture says about stories ending with "happily ever after," a lot of people's lives just don't end well. The last day of your life can be the worst day of your life. This should be a sober warning for all of us.
 - Now remember, Samson was a believer...and this was his ending, it should be a reminder that it's not guaranteed that just because you are a believer, that you will finish well. We have the possibility of self-destructing our own lives. But God doesn't want that for you.
- Finish well — What does finishing well mean?
 - Finishing well simply means that we keep doing these two things — killing sin and treasuring God — for a long time
 - Killing Sin - It means that we take John Owen's words seriously: "Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you."
 - Treasuring God —
- Are you fighting? Or are you just hanging out? Are you running with discipline, or are you just jogging? What weights are you carrying that are slowing you down? Paul shows us that if we want to finish strong, we have to start now

Leave a Legacy

- The final section of 2 Timothy contains a list of personal updates and greetings, and at first glance you might think, "these don't matter, we don't know these people" but if you remember through the book of Acts, many of them we do know...
 - **Demas:** The Cost of Loving the World
 - The story of Demas is a tragic narrative of apostasy. During Paul's first Roman imprisonment, Demas was mentioned as a "fellow worker" alongside Luke and Mark (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24). But in Paul's final letter, he writes with sadness, "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica". This desertion was particularly painful because it happened at a time of Paul's greatest need, when he was in prison and facing execution.
 - This is juxtaposed to Paul's declaration that he had "kept the faith." It exposes the tension between the eternal reward of a life lived for Christ and the temporary allurements of the world. The

story of Demas is a solemn warning that not everyone who starts the race finishes well.

- **Luke:** The Faithful Witness
 - the author of Acts, Luke, is present in the final scene of Paul's life. Paul writes, "Only Luke is with me". Luke's unwavering companionship is documented throughout the "we" sections of Acts, which begin in Acts 16 and continue through the perilous journey to Rome (Acts 27-28).
 - Luke's faithfulness stands as a testament to the value of enduring companionship in ministry, especially during times of immense suffering and isolation.
- **Mark:** The Narrative of Restoration
 - The book of Acts records a "sharp disagreement" that arose between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark in Acts 15:39. Paul did not want to take Mark on the second missionary journey because he had deserted them on the first. This conflict led to the dissolution of the missionary team. The fact that Paul now requests Mark to come and deems him "useful" demonstrates a powerful narrative of grace and restoration. It shows that the man once deemed unfit for ministry is now a valued co-laborer.
- Many Others:
 - **Tychicus:** A companion on the return journey from Greece to Asia in Acts 20.
 - **Alexander the Coppersmith:** an enemy of the gospel that started a riot in Ephesus.
 - **Erastus:** a city official in Corinth that got saved and became a disciple of Paul.
 - **Priscilla, and Aquila:** Christians who discipled Titus.
 - **Trophimus:** A Gentile companion from Ephesus who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21)
- Paul left a legacy wherever he went.
 - Every person who met him was better for having known him. Every word he uttered helped others to grow in Jesus. Paul was one of those men who impacted the world. What is your impact?
- Apply
 - Robertson McQuilkin - It's sundown, Lord ... I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last, thrusting me forever into life: life with you, unsoiled and free. But I do fear ... That I should end before I finish or finish, but not well. That I should stain your honor, shame your name, grieve your loving heart. Few, they tell me, finish well. . . Lord, let me get home before dark.
 - Look at your own life. Are you a Demas, running back to the comfort of the world when the heat gets turned up? Or are you Luke, sticking with the mission when everyone else deserts? Or are you Mark, the person who screwed up but got back in the fight?

Fulfill Your Ministry (Conclusion)

When life goes sideways and everyone you thought you could count on disappears, who is left? Is your faith in a crowd, or is it in the Lord? He's the one who stood by Paul, and He's the one who'll stand by you. Paul looked forward not to an earthly reward, but to a "crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day". That's what fueled him. Chase the approval of God, because He's the only one who matters on that final day. Do not chase the applause of men.