

Week Ten: 2 Timothy 4:6-22

“The Last Requests”

2Ti 4:6-22 (ESV) 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.

From the opening greeting of this letter Paul has focused on Timothy. The first line begins with a prayer of gratitude for his memories of their past relationship, going back to when he first met him in Lystra. But now there is a shift, not only in focus but in tone. Paul says *For I am already being poured out...* In the Greek text the emphasis is on the first word, *EGO*. As in, “Let’s talk about *ME* now. *I AM* coming to the end.” I am not saying that I think Paul is *egotistical*. I think he is being realistic about his situation. We will see it is Paul’s plea to Timothy, the person he holds most dear, to come to him. He wants to see him before he dies.

Looking at this from our perspective, however, we can ask, “Is this the same plea to us?” I don’t think so. I think it is really meant to encourage us, or exhort us, because I think Paul is telling anyone who reads this letter that he is finishing well. He is coming to the end of a life he would have never imagined for himself as a young Rabbi serving the Lord as a zealous defender of Torah and Temple. Everything changed one day near Damascus. Jesus appeared to him in the blinding Glory of Heaven, and spoke to him in a way that Paul understood that this is the Jesus he was trying to eliminate as he pursued and tormented His followers. And that this Jesus was the fulfillment of everything the Torah and the Temple said about *JHWH*. The LORD God Paul had prayed to all of his life. Paul realized his life was no longer going to be the life of his choice, but a life for which he was chosen. That is why the only time he has talked about himself in this letter is when he said *I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. (1:11)* I was appointed. Did Paul take this appointment seriously? Of course he did. He has been willing to suffer, and he is still

suffering in this hell-hole called Maritime prison. And he is being poured out as a sacrificial drink offering... He is appointed for this suffering. Jesus knew this from the very beginning. He told Ananias, who was the first Christian to minister to Saul in Damascus while he was still blinded by Glory: *The Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* (Act 9:15-16) Jesus knew it and Paul accepted it. He was suffering for a person he loved deeply and there was no sacrifice too great, no debt too large.

Compare the impact of Paul's life with any of the other person who lived in his time. We have 13 letters he wrote while traveling and working and preaching, and even while bound in chains. Think of the letters to the Romans and Galatians. It is those letters that lit the fires of the Reformation; Romans in the life of Martin Luther and Galatians in the life of John Wesley. Of course we could say the same of the Gospel writers, especially Luke, who traveled with Paul as he wrote the book of Acts. But look how much more we know about Paul because of Acts! Then Timothy and Titus, both are faithful workers. And there is Demas. Demas? Who's Demas?

Maybe you simply forgot that name, or overlooked it. Paul names him. He's the guy who gave up and quit the race. See, these other guys never gave up. They finished! Demas didn't. Paul said in these *last days men will be lovers of self and lovers of pleasure but not lovers of God, but they will hold to a form of godliness but deny its power.* (3:1-5) And Demas, Paul says, is *in love with this present world, has deserted me...*(4:11). He is in love with the world. He might still be religious and he will tell people he still believes in Jesus, but he doesn't want to pay the price. He has not only deserted Paul he has deserted Jesus and as a result, there is no power in his life any longer. He is on his own.

Deserters have been part of Paul's ministry since the beginning. He said to the Galatians, *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel!* (Gal 1:6). For Paul, even Mark was a deserter. Mark abandoned the team in Perga and ran home to Jerusalem when things got tough. Paul was angry and refused to give Mark another chance when Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them on the second missionary journey. How is Mark so different from Demas? Today we know Mark from his Gospel, and from what Paul says here, *Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.* (4:11) Bible teacher Gary Demarest says, *"Mark stands as the patron saint of all who recover from previous failures. Today's defeats can be forgiven and overcome."*¹ Mark repented and was restored. But who's Demas?

I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. Think about that statement. Try to imagine Paul's situation and put ourselves in it. He is in a dark, smelly, probably cold and overcrowded pit. Is he singing hymns as the was in the Philippian jail? Is he depressed and near despair as he was in Corinth? Is he angry? Afraid? Does he suffer bouts of self-pity? Would you? I would. I see hints that Paul feels all of these things. But I also see how he uses his mind, how he combats his feelings with expressions of gratitude and faith in the Lord Jesus, who He is certain loves him beyond even his comprehension. I can easily imagine Paul is at war not only with the Romans who have jailed him but with his own heart. But Paul describes his death in terms of a Levitical sacrifice. The drink offering is the last portion of the burnt offering, where the lamb is burned whole as an offering to God. For Paul this is really a grand conclusion to his life, especially after telling the Romans to *offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable*

service” (Rom 12:1) Paul can say this to us because this is the way he lived. As a burnt offering, wholly dedicated to God, but now it is time to pour out the drink offering. And what an analogy! Paul knows as a Roman citizen he will be beheaded and his blood will pour out onto the ground. A drink offering poured out onto the fire, the zeal, of a life lived for his Lord and not one drop is wasted because Paul can think of God telling the priests *[He] shall be a burnt offering to the LORD, with [his] grain offering and [his] drink offerings, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD. (Lev 23:18)* A pleasing aroma to the Lord—that is Paul’s life as he sees it. And thanks to Luke we can elevate our minds to even higher glory. Luke tells us in that final moment on the cross we can see Jesus as the final perfect drink offering: *...one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. (John 19:34)* And it was a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

I notice that Paul doesn’t tell Timothy he is going to die. He uses another metaphor. *The time of my departure has come*, he says. He is a soldier who is packing up his tent and carrying it away to the ship that will take him home. This is a new journey to a new home, unlike any Paul had ever known, but he has caught the glimpse of the glory of it because he knows Jesus. Paul told the Philippians, also at a time when he was bound in chains, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. (Phil 1:21,23)* As much as Paul loved Timothy, as well as Titus and Luke, the courageous Onesiphorus, and all the others he names at the end of this letter, he wants to go home! These are the men and woman who have *fought the good fight* with him. They have suffered the *agōn*, the agony of the battle and the race. I think of my dad who was in the Navy during World War II in the South Pacific. He was on a landing craft that supported the Marine Corps landings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, two of the bloodiest battles of the war. He told me once that after the war was over it was hard to leave the friends he had made on his ship. I am sure they had seen horrible things, but he never talked about them. When they got to Honolulu they celebrated their last night there. They were surprised to still be alive. And, as sailors and soldiers do, they drank and they cried and they vowed to always keep in touch. I can imagine the more they drank the more sincere and maudlin the vows became. But what did they and care about most? They were going home! They had their medals and souvenirs and trophies of war, some with wounds and scars, but the fight was over. And we had won.

Paul had done his very best, and even as we read about him 20 centuries later we know he is remarkable. He certainly had done a lot he could be proud of, not to mention the thousands of books about him that have followed in his wake. But Paul does not boast in himself, or even seek the praise of others. For Paul only one person matters, the one he serves, his Lord, who is also his Judge. And *there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day... (4:8)* This righteous, perfectly informed judge will reward Paul for the work he has done and for the way he has done it. Paul followed the rules, *he kept the faith*. He had done what he charged Timothy to do: *preach the message...endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (4:1,5)* The award Paul anticipated is not for winning, it is for finishing. *“The Christian life and ministry is not a competition to run better than others. It’s a commitment to run all the way to the finish.”*² Please notice this, Paul is speaking of the future final judgment on the Day of the Lord. Paul told the Corinthian Church *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil (2Cor 5:10)* Paul is clear in Romans and Galatians that our justification is

not by our works but by faith in Christ's work. We are declared righteous and have a permanent place in God's family. Tom Wright writes about this in *The NT For Everyone*, in both 2 Timothy and 2 Corinthians:

"Paul always speaks of this judgment related not just to our faith, but to the total substance of our lives. Paul would say that this total life was the result, not of his own unaided efforts, but of the hard work he had accomplished through the Holy Spirit at work within him. God retains the initiative, and remains the ultimate source of energy, but the Christian is called and required to work hard with that energy.³ Paul always assumes ...the reality of a future judgment which will be according to works. But he also insists that when someone believes the gospel, ...the future verdict is brought forward into the present. Justification by faith does not mean that God has decided that moral behavior doesn't matter, and that the only thing that matters is something called "faith", and as long as I have this "faith" it doesn't matter what I do. ... it would be quite wrong to suggest that the idea of a last judgment according to present behavior is ruled out by the gospel itself. God doesn't tolerate evil. He hates it. He will not allow it into his new creation. If he did, he would be an evil, foolish and unjust God. Paul believed, with the whole Jewish tradition behind him and the death and resurrection of Jesus before his gaze, that God was and is good, wise and just, and that one day the whole world will know it.⁴

Paul assures Timothy, and us, that this Crown of Righteousness is not just for himself but it is for *all who have loved his appearing (1:8)* All Christians, who since the beginning of the Church, have looked forward to this Second *Ephiphaneia*, this glorious Appearing when Jesus will judge and bring perfect justice and righteousness to the earth. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam asks Gandalf, *"Is everything sad going to become untrue?" "A great Shadow has departed," said Gandalf, and then he laughed and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land."*

Paul looks forward to the righteousness represented by the crown Christ will award to him. Everything will be made right, all debts will be paid, all accounts squared. Paul said Demas deserted because he loved this present world and he lost his vision for the future righteous world. Alexander harmed me because he opposed the message of righteousness. At my first trial everyone deserted me. Paul sounds angry. I think he was. But Paul puts into practice what he preaches and he told us in Ephesians, *Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. (4:26-27)* What did Paul do with his anger? He did two things: he didn't hang on to it so it formed a hateful, soul-eating grudge, and he turned it over to God where he will store the payment for that future *DAY*. In the case of Alexander? *The Lord will repay him according to his deeds.(4:14)* This fit what he told the Christians in Rome: *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* (Rom 12:19) He places Alexander in God's hands for justice. Jesus will make it right.

What about those Christian friends, all of them, who deserted him at his first trial before Caesar? Paul says, *May it not be charged against them! (4:16)* This is forgiveness. The first step in detoxifying the heart from anger is to decide to forgive the debt, the trespass. Besides, Paul says, Jesus Himself came and stood with me. Jesus knew exactly what Paul was feeling. On the night of his arrest Jesus was in mortal

anguish in the garden of Gethsemane. He wanted His disciples to pray with him. They fell asleep. Three times. Then Judas came with the Roman guard and they took him and bound him. And both Matthew and Mark say quite simply *Then all the disciples left him and fled. (Mat 26:55)* And what did Jesus say the next day after being nailed to the cross, hanging between two criminals? *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. (Luke 23:33)* Paul's desire for his friends not judgment. Certainly not vengeance. I think his hope is for restoration. Even for a deserter like Demas.

Paul has no illusions about the outcome of this trial. He was delivered and set free *from the lion's mouth* before. But now Nero is killing Christians. Paul is not exempt. But listen to his words: *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. (4:18)* Amen! This is true! I am safe and I am going home. And every born again Christian can say that with the same conviction. This is praise and gratitude without fear. Paul knows those he loves will miss him. And though he might wish they could all go together on this journey, he will see them again. He does have one longing, one desire, to see his beloved Timothy once more. *Do your best to come before winter...*

Our dear Father, Jesus taught us to pray, "forgive us our trespasses in the same way we forgive those who trespass against us." Jesus wants us to really be like that! He is like that. Paul was like that. It is part of the character of the family with You as our Father. Make us willing to be the same, create that character in us, and give us that burning hope that longs to be safe with You, in our New Home, where Jesus is. Amen.

Resources:

Tom Wright's *New Testament For Everyone. The Pastoral Epistles.*
Westminster John Knox Press 2011

Tom Wright's *New Testament For Everyone. 2 Corinthians.* Westminster
John Knox Press 2011

Kruger, Michael, Ed. *A Biblical Theological Introduction to the N.T.*
Barclay, William, Contrib. *2 Timothy* Crossway Press. Wheaton. 2016

Ogilvie, Lloyd, Ed. *The Preacher's Commentary Vol 32.*

Demarest, Gary, Contrib. *1,2 Thessalonians and Titus.* Thomas
Nelson 2002

Notes:

¹ Ogilvie, Lloyd, Ed. *The Preacher's Commentary Vol 32.*

Demarest, Gary, Contrib. *1,2 Thessalonians and Titus.* Thomas
Nelson 2002 p.295

² Ibid., p.296

³ Tom Wright's *New Testament For Everyone. The Pastoral Epistles.*
Westminster John Knox Press 2011 p.129

⁴ Ibid., *2 Corinthians.* pp.58-59