

2 Timothy 4:6-7 — Finishing Well — Part 1

June 6, 2021

We are studying our way through 2 Timothy. We are just about finished with the book. We have two more weeks after this morning. If you could get your Bibles out and turn to 2 Timothy 4:6, we will study that verse this week. We will study verses 7-8 next week. The following week we will finish the book by studying verses 9-22.

I don't care if you open your phone Bible or your paper Bible. It is all the same to me. Find a copy of 2 Timothy 4:6-8. I also ask you to take out your sermon notes. If you are new to CrossWinds, we use sermon notes. You will get much more from the message if you fill in the blanks and follow along with your sermon outline.

In verses six to eight of this final chapter, Paul is essentially writing a brief commentary on his life. He is summing up the present, past, and future of his life. In spite of the many challenges he had and the churches he planted, he did not face the end of his life despondently. He faced it triumphantly. We can learn a lot from him about what it takes to finish life well and to be triumphant in the face of death so we can die without regrets.

Let's read verses six to eight then focus our study on verse six.

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. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 (ESV)

What does the Bible say about finishing well?

Let's begin by realizing this was not an easy time for Paul to die. Paul spent 30 years planting churches around the world and reaching people with Jesus. Things were not going well on many fronts. As Paul came to the end of his life he found the gospel message was being undermined in the churches he planted. He preached the message that the only way to be made right with God was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus alone. There were false teachers slipping into these young churches teaching people a different message. They taught that people were saved by Jesus plus their good works. They said people were saved by Jesus plus being circumcised and following Jewish laws. The problem is anytime you are now trusting in your good works instead of Jesus, you are no longer being saved by Jesus. With these types of false teachers infiltrating the churches, it was not a good time for Paul to die.

The gospel in Paul's churches was being undermined by an ancient version of the health-wealth-and-prosperity gospel. Paul taught that this is not the good life. The good life is when we die. When we die, we are with Jesus, which is better by far. We are not in the lake of fire, which is what we deserve. The good life is the next life. That is not what false teachers who slipped into the church were saying. They were teaching that if you followed them, you would automatically have complete healing now, wealth now, success now. The false teachers' version of the gospel didn't involve any suffering like Jesus now. It involved all health, wealth, and prosperity now. The gospel was being perverted. This was not a good time for Paul to die.

To show you what I mean, take the church of Ephesus, where Timothy was pastoring, as an example. This was one of Paul's favorite churches. He spent at least one-tenth of his ministry career in Ephesus telling people about Jesus and planting the church. At one point, it was a literal mega church by modern standards. In Acts 19, we learn so many people turned to Jesus and from the worship of Artemis, the famous goddess of the city, that a silversmith named Demetrius started a riot in the city against the Christians because sales of Artemis souvenirs were down so much that he wasn't able to make it financially. When workers in the temple of Artemis, which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, were going out of business because so many people in the city became Christians, you know that is a large church.

Some of you may remember from our study of the book of Ephesians that the city of Ephesus was the largest publisher of books on magic and the occult in the ancient world. It was the epicenter of magic in the ancient world. So many people in the city became Christians and left their occult background that we read about the church in Ephesus having a book burning. It was a burning of the books people had from their past --- books on magic, casting spells, and the occult. Acts 19 tells us the value of the books they burned was worth 50,000 pieces of silver. In today's money, that is more than \$6 million dollars in books. At one time, Ephesus was the original mega church. After Paul left, it lost its way.

Many false teachers came into the church and started pulling people away, even pulling elders away from the truth. The church was a wreck. Paul knew this was going to happen. He warned people this was going to happen.

Look what Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus when he left them.

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. Acts 20:29–31 (ESV)

That is exactly what happened. The massive church split. It divided. False teachers came into the church to distort the gospel. This once massive church was a complete train wreck. That is why Paul sent Timothy to the church of Ephesus, to try and get it back on track. As you remember from two weeks ago, this was not going well. Many in the church did not want to hear young pastor Timothy's solid Bible teaching. Instead they wanted their itching ears scratched by people who would give them feel-good preaching instead of truthful preaching. The once-mega church in Ephesus was in trouble. Paul wrote Timothy the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy to help guide him in setting that once-great church back in the right direction.

Ephesus was not the only church in trouble. In fact, almost all of the church's Paul planted were in trouble. Look at the letters Paul wrote to these churches in our Bible. The church in Galatia was in trouble. The church in Corinth was in trouble. Many of them left the gospel of being saved by faith alone, grace alone, by Jesus alone. As I said, this was not a good time for Paul to die when the churches he worked so hard to plant were in serious trouble.

While it was not a good time for Paul to die, in these verses we find Paul facing death triumphantly and without fear. How did Paul do it? In verse six, Paul

made three points about how to finish well so we can die without fear even when everything we worked for in our lives looks like it is falling apart.

Finishing well means I have passed the baton.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 2 Timothy 4:6 (ESV)

The first two words of this verse are important. They are “For I.” They are intended to contrast with the verse right before it where Paul used the terms, “As for you.” If we put them together here is how it reads:

As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. [Why be this way?] For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 2 Timothy 4:5–6

In other words, "I am leaving. Timothy, now is the time for you to run your race. Endure suffering. Share the gospel. Fulfill your ministry. Do all you can to further the gospel because I am stepping off the scene. Timothy, I am done with my lap. It is time for you to run your lap. Here is the baton. You need to run!"

Some of you were following my daughter in the paper. She and Lindsey Grau, who is also from CrossWinds, were two members of the girls 4x400 team from Spirit Lake. God gave them great success. They took third at the state finals in 3A. One thing I learned this year from watching the girls 4x400 run was the importance of the handoff. You can run your lap well but if you are not able to successfully pass the baton into the hands of the next runner, your team will not win.

By the way, who do you think has the primary responsibility for a successful passing of the baton? The person blindly grabbing the baton about to

run their race or the runner finishing the race placing the baton in the next person's hands?

It is the primary responsibility of the runner finishing the race to successfully pass the baton into the next runner's hands.

Paul understood this truth. His great desire was to hand off the baton of the gospel to Timothy and for Timothy to run his race in his generation. Paul took the initiative to make sure this handoff happened well. This is why Paul took the time to write the letters of 1 and 2 Timothy to Timothy. These are leadership training documents for Timothy and for us. Paul was not just focused on sharing the gospel. He was very focused on training leaders for the next generation so when he was gone, the churches he planted would continue to be strong. This is why Paul spent so much time working on the handoff of leadership from himself to Timothy, so when he was dead and buried, Timothy would still be running strong in his place.

Paul did not just focus on mentoring Timothy and handing the gospel baton to Timothy. If you look through Paul's letters, you find there are other young men Paul invested in to pass the baton of leadership to the next generation. Paul referred to some of them a little later in this chapter.

For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry. Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 2 Timothy 4:10–12 (ESV)

Demas was a young man who flaked out under pressure. The opposition became too tough for him so he left town. The handoff didn't work for him.

Crescens was another leader in training. Titus was another leader Paul was

training. Paul wrote the letter of Titus that is in our Bible to him. Luke was the veteran leader. Mark is the young John Mark. We studied him when we studied the Gospel of Mark. He traveled with Paul and Barnabas but initially freaked out under pressure and went home. Later, Barnabas took him under his wing and developed him. Now we see Paul considered Mark a great asset, a man who successfully took the baton of the gospel and was running well. In addition, there was Tychicus. He was another of the young men Paul trained.

Even though things were not going well in the churches Paul planted, the good news was that when Paul died, he had successfully raised a second generation of healthy church leaders who could step into his place when he was gone. This is one reason Paul could die triumphantly. There were many young and capable church leaders in place to take Paul's place when he was gone. Paul passed the baton.

Let's talk about this for us at CrossWinds. When we think about following Jesus, most of us think about following Jesus personally. We think about our private lives, our devotional lives. Many of us have forgotten that following Jesus well means we are mentoring and encouraging leaders for Jesus in the next generation. We are passing the baton.

Every single one of us had someone who told us about Jesus. Many of us had people mentor us, believe in us, and pour into us. Are we doing the same? Are we subconsciously thinking we will always hold the baton? Are we subconsciously thinking we are the only one capable of holding the baton? If we are not working on developing the next generation of leaders and reaching the

next generation of Christians, we are setting our life's work up for extinction. When we die, if we don't have a next generation of leaders prepared and ready to take our places, it will not go well.

Who are you mentoring? Each of us is to not just to be reaching people with Jesus, but we are to mentor other younger Christians, giving them real responsibility in the church and passing the baton leadership into their hands at the church.

Finishing well means my life is a lived as a thank offering for Jesus.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering... 2 Timothy 4:6 (ESV)

Paul said he was already being poured out as a drink offering. What does that mean? To understand that language, we need to go back to the root of Paul's thinking, which is the Old Testament. A good place for us to a drink offering is Numbers 15.

Remember the setting. The Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. They were under the judgment of God until an entire generation died off because of its sin, idolatry, and unbelief. So we have an old generation dying off as the Israelites walked in circles in the desert while a new generation was growing up in the desert. Imagine if you were the last guy in the old generation to die. Everyone in the new generation was waiting for you to die so they could go into the Promised Land because they were tired of walking circles in the desert. No pressure!

While the new generation of Israelites was waiting for the old generation to die, the new generation needed hope. They needed to look forward to the

Promised Land. They needed a vision for the future. In Numbers 15, God told them about the sacrifices they would offer when they got to the Promised Land.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving you, and you offer to the LORD from the herd or from the flock a food offering or a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or at your appointed feasts, to make a pleasing aroma to the LORD... Numbers 15:1-3 (ESV)

"When you get to the land, you will make offerings. You will make different kinds of offerings. You will make whole burnt offerings, vow offerings, and freewill offerings; all in their appointed season." Then God went on to describe these offerings in greater detail.

...then he who brings his offering shall offer to the LORD a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil... Numbers 15:4 (ESV)

"When you bring an animal offering, you will also bring a grain offering with it. The grain offering should be mixed with oil so you have a type of oily porridge that burns when you put it on top of your animal offering. How much porridge are we talking about at this point? About a gallon."

Now there is more than just the animal offering followed by the grain offering mixed with oil when we get to the next verse.

...and you shall offer with the burnt offering, or for the sacrifice, a quarter of a hin of wine for the drink offering for each lamb. Numbers 15:5 (ESV)

"Over top of the burned animal and burned grain porridge, you pour red wine on the hot coals as the last part of your offering."

So here was the typical sacrifice. You gave a lamb. If it was a whole burnt offering, that means the entire thing was consumed and burned up on the altar. None of it was taken by the priest. It symbolized total commitment, total

dedication, total sacrifice. On top of the completely burned up animal you put your porridge of fine flour mixed with oil. The last thing you did when the animal and flour and oil were burned up is you poured a drink offering of red wine on top of the remaining hot coals. If you have poured water on a campfire, you know what happens. Everything goes up in steam. This vaporized the wine. That finished your sacrifice.

What happens in the next five verses was simple. It is essentially a recipe card. As the animal offered on the altar got larger, God prescribed a larger amount of flour, oil, and wine to go with it. If a ram was to be offered on the altar, you used twice the amount of flour and oil and wine that you were using for a lamb. If an entire bull was offered on the altar --- that is a lot of hamburger on the grill. Imagine what it would mean to burn an entire cow on the grill. Now you have three times the amount of flour, oil, and wine offered after the animal was burned.

So the basic instruction in the Old Testament is when you give an animal offering, you also give a grain offering mixed with flour and oil. After the first two parts were burned up, and there was only hot coals, you poured the wine on the hot coals which instantly turned to steam, making a pleasing aroma to the Lord. That finished the sacrifice. That is the background we need. Now let's go back to 2 Timothy.

When Paul said, "I am already being poured out as a drink offering," we must remember the drink offering was the final part of a lengthier sacrifice. The main part of the sacrifice was the animal. That took a while to burn up. The grain

and oil also took a while to burn up. The drink offering was last and was vaporized almost instantly.

Paul said, "I have already given the last 30 years of my life in sacrifice to the kingdom of Jesus. I was beaten with rods; I was stoned; I was jailed; my life was in danger every day for Jesus. All of my life was lived as a sacrifice to Jesus. I have lived all of my life as a sacrifice to Jesus. All that is now left is the quick process of dying for Jesus, which will complete my sacrifice. I just need to be poured out as a drink offering to Jesus. In fact, I am already in the process of doing that."

The idea is that if we want to finish well, if we want to finish triumphantly, we need to view all of life as a sacrificial offering of our lives to Jesus. That way, if we are called to die for Jesus, it is just a natural extension of what we have been doing all along with our lives. Look how Paul said this to the Romans.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.
Romans 12:1 (ESV)

Following Jesus is about sacrificing your life as a thank offering to Jesus. It involves sacrificing your time to worship Jesus. You don't have to be here. You could be at the beach. It involves sacrificing your money. You don't need to give an offering to Jesus. You could purchase a second or third home. We sacrifice our freedom. There are some things the Bible tells us are sinful so we don't do them. We sacrifice our freedom and don't explore them, like Adam and Eve should have done when it came to the fruit from the forbidden tree. The only way to finish well is to think about our lives as a living sacrifice to Jesus. This is not a bad thing. This is a good thing.

If you are joining your church family in the Take Up and Read Bible reading, you know that this past week we began reading the book of Romans. I highlighted this verse in my Bible from Romans 2 when I read it this week.

...on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. Romans 2:16 (ESV)

There is coming a day when every one of us will stand before Jesus. We will not just be saved by Jesus but every Christian will be judged by Jesus for how we lived our lives so we can be rewarded by Jesus. Many times people live life thinking this life is all there is. They think they need to have the most fun now. Make sure you party now. Now is what matters. That is not true! The day we stand before Jesus to be judged and rewarded by him is what matters! Paul said, "My life was not about having a party now. I gladly sacrificed my life now to tell more people about Jesus because on the day I stand before Jesus the more I lived my life sacrificially to tell people about Jesus, the better my reward will be."

It is much better to die because you were telling people about Jesus and they killed you for it than to die of cirrhosis of the liver because you drank too much. On the day we stand before Jesus, one way of life will be richly rewarded, the other will not.

The idea that Paul would one day lose his life for talking about Jesus was nothing new for Paul. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he told them he knew it was a possibility he would lose his life for boldly telling people about Jesus.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Philippians 2:17 (ESV)

When Paul wrote to the Philippians it was a possibility that he might lose his life for speaking about Jesus and his blood would be spilled out like a drink offering. At this time in 2 Timothy, it was not a possibility, it was a certainty.

Finishing well means having a right view of death.

...and the time of my departure has come. 2 Timothy 4:6 (ESV)

Paul also said, "The time of my departure has come." I want to focus on two key words in the final parts of this verse. The first is the word for time. It is the Greek word *kairos*. We have talked about it a few times in this series. It deals with seasons, not with hours. Paul was not saying he would die at any moment. He said this was the season of his death, not the hour of his death. Paul knew he would not be released from prison. He was essentially on death row. Just as someone on death row does not know the very hour of his or her execution, Paul did not know the hour he would die. At this point, he did know it would take place and it would take place soon. It may have been weeks ahead of him or months ahead of him, but either way, his death was coming.

To show you that Paul didn't expect to die immediately, look at some of the comments he made in the following verses.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. 2 Timothy 4:13 (ESV)

"It is cold in this dungeon. While I am waiting to die, can someone bring my jacket? I don't want to be cold while waiting to die. Also bring my books and parchments. I could use some reading materials to help me pass the time while I am waiting for them to get around to killing me."

Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers. 2 Timothy 4:21 (ESV)

Paul probably wrote this letter to Timothy in summer. Ships didn't sail in the winter because the storms were too fierce. Paul wanted Timothy to come to him in the next few months. Paul expected to live a little while longer in the Mamertine prison before he died.

The second important word in the last portion of this verse is the word departure. Paul described his death as a departure. What does that mean? The Greek word is *analsis*. It is a vivid word in Greek used for many things.

First, the Greek word for departure was used to describe the unyoking of an animal from a cart or plow. Paul looked at his death as an unyoking. He saw death as a release from his burdens and his labor. Death for him was that feeling you get at the YMCA after you finish a tough workout. It is a feeling of rest for your labor and burdens.

Second, the Greek for departure was also used to describe the removing of a prisoner's chains. Death for Paul was a form of liberation. It was a form of freedom. Paul finally lost the physical chains that were around his wrists and his ankles in a Roman prison. He would be out of the dungeon and in the freedom of heaven once and for all.

Third, it was also used for slipping the ropes of a ship as the boat sailed from the harbor. A ship tied to the dock would be held fast, but when the ropes were released, the ship was free for its departure. Paul said he was ready to launch out from the harbor of earth, disappear on the horizon and arrive at the harbor of heaven, which would be his new home.

This means death for Paul was a departure in every sense of the word. His yoke of the burdens he carried in this life was coming off. His chains were broken. He would be set free from the Roman prison. Death was the leaving of the harbor of earth to set sail for the harbor of heaven.

The same is true not just for Paul but for all Christians. Death for us is the laying down of our burdens in this life in order to finally rest. It is the setting aside of the chains in life that have bound us. We may not be chained to a prison wall but for many people the weakness and sickness of their bodies has become a prison. Death is also the setting sail, casting off the ropes of the world to end up in the harbor of heaven in the presence of God the Father who loves us and of Jesus who died for us. Who would fear death if this is what death looks like for a Christian?

For a Christian, death is not death. Death is not a terror. It is simply a departure from this life to be with Jesus in the next life. It is a voyage away from the burdens and chains of this world to the great freedom of being in heaven with the God who loves us and died for us. Look how other parts of the Bible talk about a Christian's death.

I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. Philippians 1:23 (ESV)

Here Paul was using the same word depart. Paul said being with Christ in our death is far better than being separated from him while we are on earth. Death for a Christian is better than living for a Christian. This is why Paul said these words in Thessalonians:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 (ESV)

We are not to grieve at the death of those we love. If those we love have died with faith in Christ, the grief we have is for ourselves. It is for our loss. It is not for their loss because if they have trusted in Jesus, they are with him which is better by far. It is their gain. For a Christian, death is far better than life.

In other verses, Paul reminded us that how we live in this life will have great impact on how we are rewarded by Jesus in the next life.

For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison... 2 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

We have hard times in life now. Jesus is joyfully looking forward to rewarding us in eternity for living for him now. It will be much better than anything we can conceive.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:18 (ESV)

If you are having a bad day, the way to think about it is that the horrors of this life will only be a faint memory in eternity when we have the joy of experiencing the rest of our days with Jesus and the glory he has that will be revealed to us.

Conclusion.

What will it take for you and me to finish life well?

1. **To finish well, I must not just live for Jesus but I must also pass the baton of faith to the next generation of Christian leaders.** We must be training, developing, and mentoring the leaders who will walk in our footsteps when we are gone. Just as Paul prepared a group of next generation leaders

for his absence, at CrossWinds we must too. We do not want to be a church that is just comfortable for older and retiring people. We are committed to being a church that reaches the next generation and trains them plus deploys them in leadership so the baton is passed.

- 2. To finish well, I must see the benefit of sacrificing my life for Jesus.** For us to finish well, we need to look at life as not about pleasing ourselves but as being a living sacrifice for Jesus and telling others about Jesus. One day when we stand before Jesus, it will not matter if we focused on having a party now. It will only matter if we lived our lives to make the name of Jesus famous. We will be rewarded by Jesus based on what we sacrificed in our lives to honor Jesus.
- 3. To finish well, I need to have a right view of death.** While death is always considered the last enemy, and we were made for living, not for dying, the good news is that for Christians, Jesus has transformed the worst moment of our lives to the best moment of our lives. Instead of death being the bitter end for us as Christians, it is the better end. It is being with Jesus, which is better by far.



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