

How To Leave This World With No Regrets

2 Timothy 4:6-22

Introduction:

Paul writes, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. ⁹ Be diligent to come to me quickly; ¹⁰ for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. ¹² And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. ¹⁵ You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. ¹⁶ At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸ And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen! ¹⁹ Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰ Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. ²¹ Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. ²² The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.”

Imagine that you had just a few weeks to live. You’ve been charged with a crime, unjustly I might add, and you have been convicted and a date for your execution has been set. What would you do? How would you respond? To what would you give your attention during those final days, those final weeks, maybe a couple of months before you face your execution? Well, we know how to answer that question when it comes to the Apostle Paul because what he did, at least in part, is he sat down in a dungeon, and he wrote for us the letter of Second Timothy. Furthermore, as he got to the end of that letter, he reflects both upon his own life and ministry, but also he recalls in rather minute and precise detail, the different people in his life that have been both a blessing to him and also a disappointment to him, and you know, I can imagine that my response might not be a whole lot different. If I were to sit down and pen some words that I knew would probably be my swan song, the last words that I would write, I would probably think about what has happened in my life. Have I been faithful to the Lord to the best of my ability? Furthermore, those relationships of life that were both very meaningful as well as very hurtful would probably flash before my mind’s eye and like Paul perhaps I would just sit down and jot out a few thoughts about those individuals. Furthermore, if I am in a cold, dark dungeon and I am freezing, it might be that I would think about some personal things like, “Oh, and by the way, please stop by and get my coat and bring it with you and try your best to get here before winter.”

I think there were two reasons why he said that: #1) because he needed that cloak to stay warm, but #2) if you get here after winter has past and the shipping lanes are opened back up and the seaports are available, the odds are I will not be here because I am already preparing myself to depart from this life and enter into the presence of the Lord.

How is it that you and I can leave life with no regrets? How is it that we can look back on our life as we anticipate stepping into the presence of Jesus and say, “Though my life has not been perfect, though I did not do everything as I ought, the fact is overall as I leave this world and move into the next, I leave with no regrets.”? Three ideas I share with you from these final verses this evening. #1...

I. Remember There Is A Life Worth Living and A Death Worth Having. 4:6-8

Paul says in verse in verse 6, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Paul notes first of all that a life worth living is a life that. . .

1) It involves sacrifice. 4:6

He notes there in the opening phrase there, “I am being poured out like a drink offering. I am a sacrifice. My life has been a sacrifice, so there is in my life there is that which I have given up and that which I have sacrificed for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, in sacrificing my life I am now ready to make the ultimate sacrifice for the time of my departure is at hand.” A number of commentators pointed out that that phrase “time of my departure” is sometimes used to talk about a ship that is ready to set sail. In another context it is used about taking down a tent because it is not a permanent thing and you are going to move on to a new location so you take down the tent for departure. Others have noted that it is sometimes used in the context of a prisoner being loosed or set free or released so that he now escapes his captivity and moves on. And then others have noted that it sometimes is used to speak of the unyoking of an ox, a beast of burden, a beast of service, and so Paul perhaps is thinking, “I am ready to set sail; it’s time to fold this tent and receive that body or that spiritual reality that I will experience in the presence of the Lord; a prisoner to this sinful world, I’m about to be set free; and like an ox who has been faithfully serving his master, the time for my unyoking has now come upon me. So Paul says, “A life worth living and a death worth having first of all involves sacrifice, but secondly. . .

2) It is characterized by service. 4:7

Notice the very striking phrases. There are three of them in verse seven: “I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith.” The three verbs there: fought, finished, and kept are all in the perfect tense. They speak of a completed action and yet there are some abiding results to that action that Paul is speaking of. “I have fought the fight, and the fight that I have fought will have some abiding effects, as well as, the race that I have finished and the faith that I have kept. And so he uses two metaphors that refer to athletics and then one that speaks more of a steward who has been entrusted with something valuable. “I have fought the fight” either as a wrestler, either as a boxer, I have been involved in the fight and fought a good one. “I have finished the race. Yes, I began when God saved me on the Damascus Road. I have continued throughout the years, and by God’s amazing grace, I have finished the race.” Again, brothers and sisters, and especially those of you called to ministry, it is not enough that you start well. It is not even enough that you run well for a while. It is imperative that all of us have for the goal of our lives that we will finish well, and Paul could say, “I have finished the race.” But thirdly, “I have kept the faith.” Of course, Jude reminds us that there is a faith that has once and for all been delivered to the saints and I think that is exactly what Paul has in mind. “I have been faithful to the gospel. I have been faithful to the body of Christian truth. I have been faithful to the Lord Jesus and that which is taught about him. I have kept the faith. Others have gone the way of heresy; others have gone

the way of false teaching, but I have stayed true to the faith.” And therefore, Paul says, “My life has been characterized by service, but thirdly it will...

3) It results in satisfaction.

4:8

“Finally, therefore, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness [some say it could be translated ‘the crown which consists of righteousness’ but I really like the way the study of the NKJV], which the Lord, [most likely a reference to Jesus] the righteous Judge, [by the way, only God can be called the righteous judge and so here there is at least an intimation once more of the Son, the Lord, Jesus the righteous judge, he] will give to me on that Day, [the day of judgment, but] not to me only, but also [the crown of righteousness will be given] to all who have loved His appearing.” And even though it’s stated somewhat in the past tense, it sounds like it, I think it is referring to the second coming and Paul is speaking of it in a way that affirms that I know that this too is most certainly going to come to pass.

It is interesting the word crown there, there are two words in the Greek language for crown: there is the word *stephanos* and the word *diadema*. The word *diadema* is a word used for the crown of a king. The word *stephanos* is the word for a victor who wins an athletic contest, and here it is that word that Paul uses, “I will receive the victor’s crown, the *stephanos* crown, the crown of righteousness which the righteous judge, the Lord himself, will give to me on that day.” And so you want to have a life worth living? You want to have a death worth having then you live of sacrifice, you live a life characterized by faithful, hard service, and it will indeed result in a wonderful satisfaction when you stand before the Lord with no regrets. Secondly, . . .

II. Remember That It Is Important To Always Keep Things In Proper Perspective. 4:9-15

You see some of us if we are not careful can develop unrealistic expectations for life. We can even develop unrealistic expectations for our brothers and sisters in Christ, and then when they fail us, and we are all going to fail someone on some level, but when they fail us in a rather gargantuan kind of way, we’re just devastated. We’re just wiped out. We can hardly move on. Again, I have shared before that the pastor who married Charlotte and me, the Sunday before he married us announced that he and his wife were separating and getting a divorce. The youth minister that God used to turn my life around, two years into Bible College, he’s left his wife; he’s left his girls; he divorced his wife. He married this woman he was having an adulterous affair with, and ministry gone! This is my pastor. This is my youth pastor, and since that time there have been more that have come down the road I thought so highly of, I believed in so much, only for them not to finish well. And you see, the fact of the matter is we need to have a balanced perspective about life. We don’t really need to idolize or deify or place any believer on a higher pedestal that is warranted. There is a high pedestal, but it is reserved only for Jesus. He will not fail you. He will not let you down, so you’ve got to be always keeping things in proper perspective, so for example. . .

1) Some persons will give you hope.

4:9-13

He notes this very clearly for us in verses 9 through 13. “⁹ Be diligent to come to me quickly; [so we could note off the bat that Timothy is one that has been a blessing to him. Timothy is one that has given him hope. Yes, he’s had prod Timothy and encourage Timothy and chastise Timothy and fuss at Timothy, stay in there Timothy, keep going Timothy, don’t get discouraged Timothy, stir up that gift within you Timothy, but Timothy was still his young son in the ministry. He had turned the church of

Ephesus over to him and at the end of his life, when he could have written letters to virtually anyone, he writes the letter to Timothy, so Timothy, you be diligent to come quickly, but then in verse 10, you notice he begins to mention others] ¹⁰ for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. ¹² And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³ Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.

Now, you saw, “Well, who were these guys?” Well, we don’t know a lot about all of them. Crescens, as we see, was sent by Paul to Galatia, but other than that we know nothing. We can simply conclude that he was a faithful laborer who helped Paul in his time of need, and Paul held him in high regard. Titus, I’ve often said playfully was Paul’s hit man. In *Godfather* terminology, he was spiritual Luca Brasi. If he had people who needed to have a strong word or maybe a strong arm, he would not send “Timid” Timmy. Timmy couldn’t handle it. He sent Titus. Titus would roll up his sleeves and he would come in, and when Titus had finished his work, things were almost always in order. Warren Wiersbe calls Titus, “Paul’s trusted troubleshooter.” And he had left in Crete to straighten out problems; he had sent him to Corinth to straighten out problems. If Paul had problems and he couldn’t get there, he knew he could send Titus.

He mentions Luke. Of course, Luke is the “beloved physician” who Colossians 4:14 informs us traveled with Paul. He is the one who writes the gospel who bears his name. He is the one who wrote the book of Acts. He hooks up with Paul somewhere around Acts 15 or 16, and you’ll see that he remains with him. In fact, he says very clearly there in verse 11, “Only Luke is with me.”

And then he mentions Mark, and what a wonderful story it is to hear what Paul says about John Mark in verse 11. “Mark, bring him with you for he is useful to me for ministry.” Of course, if you go back to the Book of Acts, you discover that Mark was the cousin of Barnabus. He went with Paul on his first missionary journey in Acts 13. His mother was a prominent Christian in the city of Jerusalem, but unfortunately, Mark was not ready for the task and assignment of a missionary. About halfway through the first missionary journey Mark packs his bags and goes home. And so, they come back after the first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14); they come to the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15, and at the end of that conference, Paul and Barnabus get together and they say, “Well, it’s time to go on a missionary journey again.” Barnabus says, “And we’ll take John Mark with us.” Paul says, “Absolutely not! That boy is not going. That boy is unreliable. That boy is not trustworthy.” To use a Danny Akin phrase, “He is a scum-sucking dog and a wimp, and he is not going.” And the text says that the contention was so sharp between Paul and Barnabus they split. But what the evil one probably meant for evil, God meant for good. Now you don’t have one missionary team going out. You have two missionary teams going out. Paul takes Silas. Barnabus goes with John Mark, and evidently on this particular occasion was right, and Paul was wrong because now at the end of his life Paul can say to Timothy, “When you come to see me in Rome, get Mark for he is useful to me for the ministry.”

He then refers in verse 12 to a man named Tychicus. Tychicus was a believer from the province of Asia based on Acts 20:4. It seems that he ministered as a personal assistant to the apostle. He was, for example, with Paul during first Roman imprisonment based upon Colossians 4 and Ephesians 6. We know from Titus 3:12 Paul sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus. Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy, and so Tychicus also was a man of some ability, someone who Paul had great confidence in who could go into difficult place and do good work.

And then the final person he mentions that would give you hope is a man by the name of Carpus. He lived at Troas. Evidently, he had given Paul hospitality there. There is some supposition (I think there is good reason to think this) that it was at Troas that the Roman officials who sought to arrest Paul

came after him. Perhaps Paul had to leave in a hurry. That's why, maybe, he left his cloak and his books and parchments behind. He knew that he could at least trust Carpus with those things and now that he is incarcerated again in Rome, he is going to go through a cold winter and asks that those things he left with Carpus would be brought with Timothy and John Mark.

All that to say, and we'll note some additional names in 19-21, you spend enough time in ministry and interact with enough people, when you get to the end of your life, you'll look back and see many people who gave you great hope. Some of them may at some time in life disappointed you, but over time they grew in the Lord, they matured in Christ, and at the end of your life you look upon them and you know though I will be leaving the ministry, the gospel, it is in good hands. You will feel good about the investment you have made in the lives of those who will carry on when you are gone. So some persons will give you hope, but tragically . . .

2) Some persons will cause you heartbreak. 4:10

Back in 4:10, we're introduced to a person who is mentioned three times in the New Testament, a man by the name of Demas. In Philemon 24, Paul says of Demas that "he is a fellow laborer." He speaks very highly of him in Philemon 24. If you turn over to Colossians 4:14, you will see him mentioned again, but there he simply says, "And Demas greets you." Now, for the third and final time, at least in terms of chronology, he mentions this man, and this time he does so with great heartbrokenness. Verse 10: "Demas has forsaken me [why Paul?] he loves this present world." In other words, Paul does not say he was an unbeliever. There is some question there. In fact, most of the commentators I read are of the mind that Demas probably was a believer but Demas had become a coward. Demas had wimped out. Demas was fine when he was on the mountaintop, but now that things seem to be unraveling: Paul has been arrested; Paul is in prison; Paul has been condemned; Paul is going to be executed. . . . Demas says, "No, no, no. I did not sign on for this. I did not buy into this." Or maybe he was just had a weak disposition and said, "I can't handle this." So he headed back to what is most likely his hometown, the town of Thessalonica, and Paul just simply says, "He loved the present world." In other words, the comforts and conveniences of this world mattered more to Demas than the gospel. Whereas Paul was willing to make sacrifice. Demas was willing to make no sacrifice, and so I suspect that Paul had poured his life into Demas. Obviously Demas had been with him on a number of occasions and now when Paul is at the point where he needs his friends the most, he looks around as we're going to see in just a moment and there is nobody there except Luke, but perhaps someone who he thought would have been with him, now is nowhere to be found.

And again, I'll tell you this. The longer you live, the more you'll discover that the persons who will guard your back in the foxhole are few. Now, that may say something about me, but as I grow older, I realize the number is not as large as I thought it would be, but I've also learned this: sometimes when you do have your back against the wall and you do have yourself in the foxhole and you look behind you, you might be really surprised both who is not there as well as who is there. And there will be people there, you'll say, "You know I would have never thought they would have stood with in a situation like this. I would have never thought that they would have hung in there with me like this." But there they are willing to take a bullet for you because they believed in you and they believe what God is doing in and through your ministry." You will also look around as Paul did and expect some people to be there and they will be no where in sight and what you simply have to realize is that's the way life is. That's simply the way life is. If you invest, and listen to me (especially you guys in ministry), if you invest your life in people some of them will absolutely bless you to no end, and some of them are going to break your heart. They are going to disappoint you. They are going to cause you great sorrow, and

you are just going to have to realize in this fallen, sinful world that's just the way it is. And so, some give you hope; some cause you heartbreak, but . . .

3) Some persons will bring you harm. 4:14-15

Look at what he says there in verses 14-15, “¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. ¹⁵ You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.” Now we were introduced to a man named Alexander in 1 Tim 1:20 and though dogmatism is not warranted, I actually think that there are the same guy because they have a similar description. Back in 1 Timothy he says, there are these two guys “who have made shipwreck of the faith, Hymaneus and Alexander, who I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Well, now he says here in 2 Tim 4, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm.” Some have even speculated that he had betrayed Paul and that he was responsible for informing the Roman political power and political structure and officials where Paul was, so he may have even had a hand in Paul's arrest. He may have even himself gone to Rome and testified against Paul, lying about Paul or certainly misrepresenting the facts about Paul, and so Paul says, “He did me much harm.” So, Paul, would you like to get him, would you like to shoot him, would you like to cut him up into pieces, would you like to send Jack Bauer after him to take care of him? Paul simply says, “May the Lord repay him according to his works.” If you are a note taker, you ought to write beside that particular verse, Romans 12:19 where Paul says, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine. I will repay,’ says the Lord.” So Paul says, “He did me much harm. He caused me great grief, but when everything is said and done I want to just leave it in the Lord's hands, but recognize that some people will not only cause you will not only cause you heartbreak.

Some people will actually work to destroy you. Some people will actually work very hard to call into question your ministry and your integrity, and amazingly, amazingly, amazingly sometimes they may even be people in the church, people on the roll, people who show up Sunday morning, Sunday night, and yes, even Wednesday night, sometimes they will be the very ones who seek to cause you heartache and harm. You have to understand that you have to keep things in proper perspective. And then finally...

III. Remember If Everyone Else Forsakes You God Will Not. 4:16-22

1) We have His presence to strengthen us. 4:16-17

2) We have His purpose to sustain us. 4:17

He says there in verse 16, “At my first defense [what that is evidently talking about is his initial arraignment] no one stood with me, in fact, all forsook me [now, we need to be careful here. Some have accused Paul of getting confused in his old age because they point out well, Luke's there with him, but he says at my first defense . . . It may be that Luke had not yet gotten there. All I know is that Paul says, at that particular moment when I looked around for someone to stand with me, I looked and there was nobody there, but like the Lord Jesus, in fact, Andreas Kostenberger in his very good commentary on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus points out there are a number of interesting parallels between the trial and execution of the Lord Jesus and of Paul. Here is one of them: just as the Lord Jesus was forsaken by everybody, Paul was forsaken by everybody. Just as the Lord Jesus prayed on the cross, “Do not lay this to their account.” By the way, that's the same prayer that Stephen prayed when he was stoned so the Apostle Paul can pray, “Lord, they weren't there. They abandoned me. They forsook me, but may it not

be charged against them.” But then Paul says, “But the Lord [number one] stood with me, [number two] the Lord strengthened me [for what purpose?] that the message might be fully preached through me and that all the Gentiles that they might hear and so God was faithful to be with Paul. God was faithful to empower Paul. And even at this time of his life, Paul was still faithful to the end of proclaiming and preaching the gospel. In fact, he can even say at the end of verse 17, “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lions at Ephesus.” A literal lion? Most certainly not. It may be an image of a very trying or perilous time quite possibly, but I do note that in 1 Peter 5:8 the Bible speaks of our great adversary as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Some have even noted, and I actually like the idea though dogmatism is not certainly not warranted, is that he is saying that God even in this particular time delivered him from Satan, he delivered him from the evil one. So he says, “I had his presence to strengthen me.” We have his presence to strengthen us, but also. . .

3) We have His promises to save us. 4:18

Again, what was the purpose? “That he might preach fully through me that all the Gentiles might hear.” Even at his moment of death, Paul sees the hand of God involved in all of that is happening. He had a purpose in my trial, in my conviction, and yes, he will get glory in my execution. In fact, verse 18, you need to read the whole verse in context because it then takes on a much more wonderful significance: “And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work . . .” Now, if you were to stop right there, you would have to say, “Paul, you missed that one big fella, because I would submit that having your head cut off is an evil work, and I would submit, therefore, that you have a Pollyannaish kind of theology that has no relationship to reality.” And Paul would say, “You need to read the rest of what I wrote.”

Because Paul says, “He will [the Lord] deliver me from every evil work and [what?] preserve me for his heavenly kingdom.” In other words, Paul recognizes that perhaps the means whereby God will deliver him from every evil work is by taking him to glory. Which is better: to remain here in this sinful world or to make an exit at the loss of your head and be in the presence of Jesus? I would say the latter is far better than the former, and so Paul is confident in the deliverance of his Lord recognizing that deliverance may be by bringing me into his heavenly kingdom when I think about that, I just break out into a short doxology of praise: “To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.” And so we have his promise to save us, but then finally . . .

4) We have His people to support us. 4:19-21

He ends by just having a final closing word where he notes *nine* people, most of whom we have absolutely no knowledge of. ¹⁹ Greet Prisca [That’s a shortened form of Priscilla] and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus [whom we met earlier in 2 Tim 1:16]. ²⁰ Erastus [who was the treasurer at Corinth based on Rom 16:23, a man who also ministered alongside of Timothy in Macedonia perhaps in Acts 19] in stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus [whom we know very little about other than he was a friend of Tychicus] I have left in Miletus sick [quick footnote here: Even though Paul could raise a man named Eutychus from the dead, he could not raise the dead at will nor could he heal at will. Because I assure you had he been able to do so, he would have brought healing to his friend Trophimus.]. ²¹ Do your utmost to come before winter [because if you come after winter, the odds are I won’t be here]. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren [Evidently Paul does have some people who have gathered around him now. And then in a very typical Pauline conclusion, he simply says . . .]. ²² The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.” [And when

you read that “Amen,” you read the last word ever written by the Apostle Paul that we have recorded in the Bible.]

Tradition has it that a short time after writing Second Timothy he was beheaded on the third milestone marker on the Ostian Way. Therefore, he left without his head just like John the Baptist, but he also left with no regrets. If I have to choose between leaving with my head and with regrets or leaving without my head and no regrets, I think I'll take the latter every single time. That's how Paul lived, and that's how Paul died. May it be that we can follow faithfully in the footsteps of this wonderful and marvelous man of God.