

Final Words Bring Eternal Perspective

2 Timothy 4:1-8, Acts 8:1-4

Slide 1

Today, we come to the final words of Paul. So the question begs, *“Did you ever think that there’s something profound in final words?”*

When a person comes to the end of their earthly life, they tend to see what really matters. All pretense is stripped away providing clarity about what’s really important.

Here, in Paul’s last letter to Timothy, his spiritual son, he’s telling Timothy what needs to be heard. Yet, his words were not only for Timothy; Paul intended these words to be read widely.

Slide 2

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.”*

Paul’s bringing forth what we need to realize is always true. God is always present or more accurately, we’re always present before God.

God’s not brought before us but rather we’re brought before His presence. Unfortunately, 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’d sit up and realize the seriousness of what our lives are about.

When we grasp that we exist before the One Who gave us life and to whom such life is accountable, we begin to grasp our responsibility. Paul’s evoking that reality.

When we realize that we're present before the one everlasting King, we're ready to see our earthly life more clearly. Then Paul gives Timothy a charge.

2 Timothy 4:2a, *"Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season."*

This charge to Timothy to preach the Word may seem specific to his unique role and calling since he had been entrusted as the pastor-teacher, but this charge isn't just for Timothy it's a general call given to all to share the Gospel.

God's plan never emphasized anything other than sharing this message. It's 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 everyone so His message could be shared by all. His message spread when the whole community was forced to scatter.

Slide 3

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. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

Remember Saul, who came to kill one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and then went after the rest.

That Saul is now known as Paul, transformed. The very one who had sought to destroy the church is now the one who sees what God is doing.

He had once tried to silence God by scattering the people. All except the apostles were scattered and those who had been scattered preached the Word wherever they went. 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 received well then anymore as it is today.

The Greek word used for "preach" means to be a "herald." A herald was one who came to town with important news.

Those scattered Christians didn't shout at people; they shared the news of what had changed their lives.

Paul's telling Timothy, and us, to embrace a life that bears one central message above all and share it well.

That central message was: Jesus was divine, as God had said He would be, and was sent to save the lost.

Jesus understood this, claimed this and demonstrated this. He rose to reveal eternal life and sent the Spirit to dwell with us.

That's the message we should bear above all else. We can have robust conversations about politics, vaccines or Taylor Swift, but they're not the Gospel. That's not the news God's calling us to declare.

I understand that there are a lot of issues in the world today that may seem important but our opinion about them isn't the central news we're to herald.

When Nero began his reign and persecutions, Paul didn't presume that bemoaning Nero was the ultimate news. Emperors like Nero would come and go.

We're 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."*

Because Timothy was to be the primary equipper of that news and the handling of the whole of God's Word, Paul expanded his charge telling Timothy to *"correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction"* while preaching the Word.

We must herald the Good News with patience and careful instruction. That's why we must be prepared *"in season and out of season."*

In other words, not just in the good times, but any season regardless if it's bad times or good. We'll face both.

Just like a coach knows there will be games when everything will go well, and games when things will go wrong.

So, during a bad game, at halftime in that locker room there'll need to be what? Correction and rebuke.

Hard stuff but it's accepted by the team. They know they need it, but it also includes encouragement.

Mark Twain said, *"I can live a whole year on a good compliment."* So, why is such patience and carefulness vital?

2 Timothy 4:3-5, *“For 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. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”*

People tend to gather around teachers who tell them what they want to hear. Paul understood as adults everyone is prone this way.

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

The Word offers a compass to guide life because in the Bible there's a true north. So, these final words charges Timothy to embrace a life that bears one message above all and share it well.

Slide 4

2 Timothy 4:6-7, *“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”*

Paul knows that it's hard for Timothy to lose the one who raised him in the faith. So he tells Timothy, *“the time for my departure is near.”* In other words, *“It's okay, Timothy. It's my time.”*

He's describing what it means to be ready to die. 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'm not ready for this trip,”* so, being ready, Paul's communicating that peace.

Paul was ready to depart this life and go to the next. He's telling Timothy, "I'm ready." How? By saying, *"I am being poured out like a drink offering."*

The drink offering was a small cup of wine poured over a fire where it would be consumed. Not spilled out but poured out on purpose as an offering. It means, *"I have given myself to this. I have chosen to pour out my life."*

Paul had poured himself into that which was eternal, lasting and beyond this current age. This is why we must give our earthly life to the eternal reality to which everything leads.

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

Clearly, living a meaningful life doesn't mean that a person won't suffer from any illness or experience any problem. It's not comfort that gives meaning; it's a purpose you fulfill.

Paul's saying, I have fulfilled my ministry, finished my course, fought the good fight; and Timothy, I want you to know that, as you face yours, finishing well is worth it.

All of us will have some regrets, but if we have given ourselves to the cause of God, it's worth it.

Now I admit, death is something we tend to avoid. Human life tries to find sentimental ways of referring to it, but Paul holds something very different.

Paul holds Christ and in Christ he has union with unending life. In a sense Christ has revealed that we have reality backwards; it's eternity for which we long. Ecclesiastes 3:11, *"God has set eternity in our hearts."*

As someone once said, *"Death is only the end if you assume the story is about you."*

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 to bring us back into.

This is why C.S Lewis referred to this world as the Shadowlands; it's only a shadow of life.

Henry Ward Beecher wrote:

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.*

So what awaits for us?

Slide 5

Conclusion

2 Timothy 4:8, *"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."*

Know that when you're rooted in eternal reality, you'll receive eternal rewards. It's not some weird trophy time; it's about honor rightfully deserved.

A crown represents honor. All the honor that was not recognized on earth will be recognized in heaven. When we get to Heaven, God will bless the efforts of our lives.

Not only will it be glorious just to be in Heaven, but for all of the things that we've done for God's honor and glory, we'll receive rewards in Heaven. Not comparative rewards, but a crown, an honor of righteousness.

Paul wants Timothy, and us, to hear this. This crown of honor awaits all who have loved the appearing of the Lord. All will be rewarded and gain more than we can imagine.

Matthew 6:16, *"Your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you."*

Honor will flow as it should, not as it may have been here on earth. Jesus said all who lost anything to honor Christ will gain a hundred times more. Those who may have been deemed least will be first.

Paul lived for that honor. He calls us to live for that honor. Know that when we're rooted in eternal reality we'll receive eternal rewards.

Does your life have a primary message? Have you given your life to the eternal reality to which everything is leading? Are you looking forward to *"the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award [us] on that day?"*