

Faithful to the End

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[0 : 00] I want to begin my message this morning with a question. If you knew how many days you had left to live, and that number was about, let's say, six months, how would you spend those days? What would you do with those last six months of your life? What would be most worth your time, your attention, your effort?

This morning, as we look to the Word of God, we've now come to the end of Paul's second letter to Timothy, and we're about to see how Paul intends to spend the last months of his life.

And for Paul, his choices are somewhat limited, because he's in a Roman prison.

So that really narrows the options down a lot for him. But how will the Apostle use up what's left of his life? Let me read the closing of this letter to you.

[1 : 17] the last words that we have in our Bibles from the Apostle Paul as he writes to Timothy saying, this is chapter 4, verse 9. He says, Do your best to come to me quickly.

For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he's helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments. Alexander, the metal worker, did me a great deal of harm.

The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

[2 : 20] At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me, the message might be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles might hear it.

And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brothers and sisters. The Lord be with your spirit.

Grace be with you all. The first thing that Paul does as he closes his letter is this.

[3 : 34] He urges Timothy to come to him quickly. Paul knows that his days are numbered, but he wants to see Timothy one more time. And so he tells Timothy to make the journey all the way to Rome, where Paul is right now in jail, and come quickly.

At the end of verse 21, Paul says, do your best to get here before winter. So think back over all that Paul has charged Timothy to do in this letter with the church, in the church, for the church.

And the first thing that he's to do, though, before any of that is to pack his bag and book passage on a ship to Rome to meet with Paul. Now, why does Paul want to see Timothy?

Is it just because he knows that he is soon to die and wants to see a familiar face one last time? Far from it. As we're about to see, Paul has a purpose in summoning Timothy.

He has a purpose that goes way beyond his own comfort at the end of his life. He says, Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.

[4 : 58] Crescens has gone to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you because he's helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas and my scrolls, especially the parchments. So why does Paul want Timothy to come?

For or because Demas has deserted him and the rest of his co-workers in the cause of the gospel have been sent out to all these different places so that the only person with Paul at the moment right now is Luke.

What is Paul doing as he sits in this jail cell? As he awaits execution in Rome?

Amazingly, he's not sitting there feeling sorry for himself in a dejected stupor just waiting to die.

Rather, he is actively coordinating the spread of the gospel, building up of the churches all over the Mediterranean world from his jail cell.

[6 : 19] He is continuing to proclaim the words of Jesus as an apostle. He is continuing to shepherd the churches all over the Gentile world from his prison cell.

And how is he doing this? He's doing this through other people and through parchments. Let's talk about these people.

The sense that we get here is that people are going back and forth to and from Paul from all over the place to the region of Galatia.

That's up here, central Turkey. Crescens has gone there. To the region of Dalmatia, that's kind of over here across the Adriatic Sea. Titus has gone there.

Titus was previously stationed on the island of Crete right here. Paul says, I sent Tychicus to Ephesus over here.

[7 : 24] And that's where he's also calling Timothy to come from to where he is in Rome. Paul's also keeping track of some of the men that he left in different places on the way to Rome.

He talks about Trophimus in Miletus, which is kind of around there. And he also talks a little down further in verse 20 about how he left Erastus in Corinth, which is on the Greek peninsula here.

So Paul is actively coordinating the spread of the gospel. He's actively working to build up churches all around the Mediterranean world through other people, through men such as these who are listed here.

Who are some of these people? We might wonder. Who's Demas?

Demas is mentioned in two of Paul's other letters. One of them is Colossians 4.14. And Demas, we see there, was with Paul when Paul wrote the letter to the church at Colossae.

[8 : 41] And he's mentioned right alongside Luke, Luke, the dear friend and doctor Luke, the guy who wrote the gospel of Luke. Demas is also mentioned in Paul's letter to Philemon.

And there he's mentioned right alongside a bunch of other guys. Luke is there again and Mark as a co-laborer, a co-worker of Paul's. So Demas has been working at Paul's side with him in the cause of Christ, spreading the gospel, strengthening the churches.

But now, what does Paul say about Demas here? Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me. This must have been painful for Paul.

A dear friend, a co-worker in the cause of Christ has abandoned me. And Paul says the reason is because he loved this world. Right now, Paul's being looked at, treated as a criminal.

He's suffering persecution and it seems, it would seem, Demas is not willing to suffer with Paul and begins to distance himself from Paul. And Paul identifies the problem here.

[9 : 54] He says that it's a heart issue. He loves this world. And Paul doesn't really flesh that out anymore, but it seems clear the way he says it, that this is a bad thing.

This is perhaps a misplaced love. Perhaps it's a desire to be approved by the people around him. A love for their approval.

Or perhaps it's a love just for the life that he could have in the world so long as he's not locked up in a jail cell with Paul. Whatever the case, it seems that it's a matter of where his allegiance and his loyalty lies.

Paul says, he's abandoned me because it lies in the wrong place. He has loved this world. How painful it must have been to just watch Demas turn and walk away.

So Timothy, come quickly, for he has abandoned me. I was counting on him, this is maybe implied, I was counting on Demas for some important work in this stuff that we've got going in the cause of Christ, but since he's left and no one else is with me but Luke, I need you to come.

[11 : 12] Now we may wonder at this point, does this mean that Demas has lost his salvation? Or does this mean that he was just a pretender all along?

What's going to be the end of the story for Demas? Is he a Christian that just blew it here and gave into fear? Or is he one of those who fall away when persecution comes because the gospel never took root deeply in his heart?

But it doesn't say here or anywhere else in the Bible how Demas' story ends. Is he like Judas who walked with Jesus three years and then betrayed Jesus at the moment of greatest persecution? Or is he like Peter and the other eleven who walked with Jesus and then fled in the garden and in Peter's case denied the Lord when things got tough but then was later restored?

We don't know. All we know is that a dear friend and co-worker of Paul's has deserted him and there's a deep spiritual problem of the heart at the root.

[12 : 26] But all is not despair and betrayal here. Demas is one who has deserted Paul but there's another man mentioned here who stands in stark contrast to Demas.

Mark. Paul says get Mark and bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

This is a beautiful statement because who was Mark? Mark was the guy who years earlier was one of Paul's co-workers on one of his missionary journeys but then deserted Paul and did not finish the trip.

This is what we read about Mark in the book of Acts. Chapter 15 verse 36 Paul said to Barnabas let's go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preach the word of the Lord and see how they're doing.

Barnabas wanted to take John also called Mark with them but Paul did not think it wise to take him because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

[13 : 32] They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus but Paul chose Silas and left commended by the believers to the grace of the Lord.

This was back years before this letter was written. Mark for whatever reason it doesn't say he just deserted Paul just left in the middle of the trip and because of that Paul was unwilling to take him on another one.

Just no not going to do it and Barnabas reasoned with him but Paul would not he wouldn't have it.

The trust it seems had been broken and the disagreement was so significant that Paul and Barnabas decided not even to go together on a trip at this point but to go their separate ways.

But now look at what Paul says about Mark here at the end of his life years later. Get Mark bring him with you because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

this is awesome. Demas has deserted yes but Mark who was once a deserter has since become dependable and helpful working faithfully in the cause of Christ.

[14 : 46] And so Timothy get him bring him with you when you come I've worked for him to do too. So it's not all despair and pain and betrayal. Mark and others listed here are living courageously and are loving Christ more than the world more than their own lives and they're continuing to serve him all over the place.

Men like Crescens and Titus and Luke and Tychicus this is probably an encouraging reminder to Timothy that as hard as it seems right now in Ephesus he's not alone.

Others are risking their lives right now in the cause of the gospel. Think about Crescens he's in Galatia right now.

There's all kinds of stuff going on there. This is the only place Crescens is even mentioned in the Bible but it's an honorable mention. Timothy know that Titus he's in Dalmatia right now he's serving the Lord there.

He was on Crete before and that was a tough assignment there we heard about that when we went through the book of Titus but now he's in Dalmatia. Luke is with me the guy who wrote the book of Luke the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts Tychicus and it just goes on.

[16 : 14] All of these are continuing to serve and proclaim the name of Jesus Timothy despite the opposition that's arising. I love this.

Paul he just goes right on. He's actively coordinating the spread of the gospel. He's building up the churches all over the Mediterranean world through these other people and he wants to continue doing this good work through Timothy.

So Timothy come come I have an assignment for you. Oh and when you come bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas and my scrolls especially the parchments.

I love this. It would be nice to have my cloak here in jail but never mind that make sure to bring the parchments especially the parchments.

Even in jail Paul is continuing to work he's continuing to study and a huge part of his work is writing letters like this to people like Timothy and to churches bring my parchments especially the

parchments.

[17 : 35] In verse 14 and 15 Paul warns Timothy about a certain Alexander the metal worker. It's not certain exactly whether this is the same Alexander from the riot that took place in Ephesus that we read about in the book of Acts.

Probably more likely though it is the same Alexander that we heard about in Paul's first letter to Timothy. Back in that first letter 1 Timothy 1 19 and 20 he referred to a man named Alexander who had shipwrecked his faith getting into false teaching and blaspheming Paul says he did me a great deal of harm.

He doesn't say what it was just said it was a great deal of it and you know we almost might expect the next words of Paul to be may the Lord repay him for what he has done to me.

But if we read this carefully we notice that this is not a vindictive statement. This is not a curse. He's not saying I hope God makes him pay. Rather it's a statement of the sober reality that God will deal with Alexander.

The Lord will repay him for what he has done. I think it's a tone of sadness as Paul remembers the great evil that was done to him by this man.

[19 : 06] Paul says watch out for Alexander. He strongly opposed our message. He strongly opposed the message of Christ Jesus.

Next Paul tells us a little bit about his situation. We read in verse 16. He says at my first defense no one came to my support but everyone deserted me.

May it not be held against them. So Paul has already had one trial, one appearance before the court and no one, not a single person says Paul came to support me or to stand with me.

We don't know if Luke was in Rome during his first defense or only just arrived now to help him write this letter and care for his needs but this must have felt so hard for Paul.

He knew of believers in the area. There was a church in Rome. There were dear friends and brothers and co-workers all over who were keeping tabs on Paul and what was happening with him in Rome but no one came to stand with me at my trial.

[20 : 20] everyone deserted me. It would seem that those claiming the name of Christ around Paul and the church in Rome abandoned him in this moment but is Paul bitter about this?

Not in the least. He says may it not be held against them. He recognizes the weakness and the failure that we are all prone to and some of them may not have been true believers in the first place and this is just exposing that and others of them are but have given in to fear and cowardice just like Peter did on the night when Jesus was tried.

May it not be held against them. Sounds like Jesus' words on the cross. Father, forgive them. yet even though no one came and everyone deserted him Paul says I was not alone at the trial.

Look at verse 17. He says but the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.

I love this. Make no mistake I wasn't alone at my defense somebody was there somebody stood with me the Lord Jesus himself stood at my side he supported me he gave me strength strength to do what strength to make a clever defense so that I could win the favor of the court and get off the hook and be released from jail no he gave me strength so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it so that the proclamation with fullness might be heard by all the Gentiles what was Paul's aim at the trial that could decide whether he would live or die his aim was to fully proclaim the gospel of Christ Jesus so that the nations would hear it this is amazing and

[22 : 49] Paul tells of the outcome of this first trial he says I was delivered from the lion's mouth probably an allusion to the prophet Daniel who was cast into the lion's den centuries earlier Daniel was told to stop praying to the Lord a command was issued a decree was issued that's now illegal this is kind of a similar situation Paul is being told all over the place stop preaching the message of Jesus and he's just continuing on with it well now he's in the thick of the moment in the lion's den and this first trial could have been it many probably thought it would have been and yet he says I was delivered from the lion's mouth God saved me he spared me he rescued me from almost certain death yet again and then Paul goes on to declare with such confidence he says the

Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom this is amazing Paul's basically saying no matter who tries to hurt me no matter who tries to get me killed they will never succeed yeah they might kill me yeah they might hurt me but in the end this is what

I'm looking forward to I will die at some point yes he's already said that in the letter Paul looks that certain future reality in the face and he says this the Lord's going to rescue me from every evil attack and bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom even death itself he's going to rescue me from that and take me into his kingdom his heavenly kingdom I love this ch■■ amazingican kingdom he is the steel king andwehr side to his heavenly kingdom. I love this. I mean, this is so inspiring. This is so encouraging.

Here's a man on death row, his crime, proclaiming Jesus Christ and what happened with him and what he said and did all over the world. He has traded every comfort, every pleasure, everything this world has to offer in order to proclaim Jesus Christ. And he's ready to trade his life itself for this because he is that sure that Jesus will deliver him from all of it and bring him safely into the coming kingdom of heaven. Wow.

After calling for the Lord Jesus to be glorified forever and ever, Paul ends the letter in this way. Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. These were dear friends and co-workers of Paul in the cause of the gospel and they're mentioned elsewhere and commended for things done in the service of Christ. Erastus stayed in Corinth and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. You hear this? Paul just goes right on back to coordinating and keeping tabs on the men who are out in the field serving Jesus. Do your best to get here before winter, Timothy.

[26 : 46] Eubulus greets you and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers and sisters. None of these names are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible but the names seem to fit where Paul is.

They're Roman names. Even though no one came to Paul's defense, there is a church here in Rome who Paul is connected with and perhaps has renewed their connection after the trial ended. Those people say hi, Timothy.

And then he ends in this way. He says, the Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you all. It might be tempting to just kind of skip over this final blessing. Wow, that sounds nice. That's good.

But consider what Paul has said in this letter up until now to Timothy. Back in chapter 1, he urged Timothy not to give in to a spirit of fear, but to allow the spirit of God inside of him to give him power and love and self-discipline.

Perhaps the greatest plea of this whole letter is for Timothy himself to be faithful and to serve Christ to the end, no matter how difficult it gets, no matter who turns away or abandons him.

[28 : 05] And then we just heard Paul tell the story of how at his first trial, no one showed up to stand with him, but the Lord Jesus was with him. And now he says to Timothy, may the Lord be with your spirit.

We can't do it. We can't do this life for Jesus alone. We can't do it in our own strength, in our own resources.

But with the Lord Jesus in us and with us, with his spirit in us, with our spirit, we can. We can fight the good fight.

We can get back up and keep running the race. to the end. We can hold on to the faith. Even if everyone around us seems to be drifting or turning away.

The Lord be with your spirit, Timothy. And grace be with you all. In the background of this letter to Timothy is the church.

[29 : 13] Are the Christians of the churches in Timothy's region, and it's Christians plural, you all. We all need God's generous favor to live in this world as followers of Jesus.

May the Lord Jesus supply what all of you need from him. What an end to this letter. What an end to Paul's earthly life.

What would you do with the last, say, six months of your life? That was the question I asked at the beginning. We know what Paul did. Even from his jail cell, he kept serving Jesus with everything he had.

He kept calling men to come and sending them out. And he kept proclaiming the gospel. He kept seeking to shepherd the churches. He kept writing letters like this one to people like Timothy and to churches wherever he could.

Even at his trial, he took it as an opportunity to proclaim Jesus Christ, to go on record to the whole empire. This is who Jesus is. This is why I'm on trial.

[30 : 25] I want all the nations to know about him. He cared more about that than whether his trial would seal his death. It's a breathtaking example of what it looks like to run the race of life for Jesus well, all the way to the end.

To be faithful to the end. And so we should let Paul encourage us with these words to do the same. That's why he's writing this letter to Timothy.

It's about encouraging Timothy and the Christians around him to follow his example and fight the good fight and run the race to the end and keep the faith no matter what.

We too have a heavenly kingdom to look forward to, the kingdom of Jesus. We too have the crown of righteousness to look forward to, which the Lord will award to all who have loved his appearing, to all who are longing for him to return.

So let's fight. Let's run this race. Let's keep the faith right to the end. In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.

[31 : 48] Let's pray. Let's pray. Father in heaven, thank you for the deep encouragement of these words, and I pray that they would sink right into our souls.

Lord, you know all the tough stuff that we face day in and day out, week after week, and I pray that all of the feeling of overwhelm and anxiety or fear or whatever would just melt away because you will carry us through.

You give us, you are with us. You are with us, deep inside of us, leading us. And I pray that we would bring great glory to your name, each one of us individually and as a church together in this community.

May we bring glory to your name for how we lived, for how we fought and ran and held on to this precious hope and truth that you have revealed to us.

Thank you for Jesus. We look forward to your kingdom. In his name we pray. Amen.