

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Dying Well

2 Timothy 4:6-8

Keywords: Death, Dying, Sacrifice, Hope, Perseverance

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In three short verses Paul makes it clear that his time on earth is rapidly coming to an end. But his words do not reflect hopelessness; rather they ring with much hope. His eyes are fixed on what is to come and it is all due to the faithfulness of God.

- I. Introduction.
 - A. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8.
 - B. A powerful charge to Timothy for a very important reason—Paul’s death is imminent.
 1. There was no more time, Timothy had to take up the whole load on his own.
 - a. Preach the Word.
 - b. Do it whether you want to or not.
 - c. Do the hard and unpopular parts of pastoral ministry.
 - d. Don’t be shocked with what is to come.
 2. When others turn away YOU stay sober and faithful.
 - C. Why?
 1. Both the ‘you’ and the ‘I’ are in what is known as the emphatic position.
 2. You be sober, because I am dying.
 3. Every time I read these words I find myself quite emotional. In a sense I find myself in Timothy’s place. I can imagine the reaction in his soul as these final words come out.
 4. In one sense you could almost say that they are on two different paths. Timothy’s was one of ongoing ministry while Paul’s was death. But really they are one the same path, just in different spots.

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- D. But regardless of the emotion built into this message there is also a massive, soul-encouraging lesson on how to face death.
 - E. And my desire is to help us all prepare to die well.
- II. You die well when you learn to see it as worship (6a).
- A. Death is the believer's last act of faith and greatest act of worship.
 - 1. For a Christian there should be the anticipation of presence with Christ (cf. Philippians 1:19-23).
 - a. Notice here that Paul is confident that he would be released.
 - b. So in Philippians he was full of faith to be released, but now he was full of faith for death.
 - 2. When a believer looks at death it is an enemy, but it is an enemy that is rendered impotent through the resurrection of Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51ff.)
 - 3. One may not look forward to the process of dying. Jesus teaches us this.
 - 4. But a Christian must train his mind to look at it as like everything else in his life, a offering to the Lord.
 - 5. Faith says that I believe God's Word and the promise of being in His presence for eternity.
 - 6. Faith says I believe that Jesus rose and therefore I too shall rise.
 - 7. And when I exercise faith like this I then worship. I can shed tears, I can tremble in fear, and I can even grow faint, but still I worship.
 - B. A drink offering.
 - 1. There are various ways you can think about this.
 - a. Old Testament usually has it with wine. This leads some to see it as an image of blood and that Paul's blood would soon flow.
 - b. However, Paul's life had been one continual sacrifice.

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- (1) Think Romans 12:1.
 - (2) The drink offering was done at the end of the entire sacrificial ceremony.
 - (3) It would not be dumped, but gradually poured by the priest. The life of sacrifice is coming to the end, and now he sees his life ebbing away into eternity.
- III. You die well when you see it as a departure (6b).
- A. Not much to add here that hasn't already been noted.
 - B. The term "departure" is a term of breaking camp by soldiers or the releasing of mooring lines of a ship so that it could go on its journey.
 - C. Often just before the journey in pagan worship ceremonies they would pour out a libation, a drink offering, especially before a ship would go on its journey.
 - D. Even this gives us a beautiful imagery as it is not the end; rather for the Christian is the actually the real beginning. From that moment on the faithful has their back fully turned away from this age and only the new age is before them.
 - E. What keeps Christians from dying well is when they cling too much to here and now without the anticipation of the not yet of eternity.
- IV. You die well when you rightly understand this life (7).
- A. Note the confidence Paul has as he observes his life history as a Christian. He uses three metaphors to reflect his confidence that ultimately he remained faithful to Jesus to the end. His eyes are turning away from this world and to the next with great hope and anticipation. Tears to joy.
 - B. The terms: "fight," "course" and "the faith."
 1. These are not actions, these are things. And they are not his, they are things given to him by God. And every Christian has the same things. It is their life.
 2. One commentator translated it this way: "the good fight I have fought, the race I have completed, the faith I have kept." I like

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this as it focuses on what is most important—the fight, race and faith and not on Paul.

3. And if you understand this then life makes a lot more sense and how you make decisions become easier.
4. Up in vs 5 Paul tells Timothy to “fulfill your ministry” and in this verse what you see is Paul saying that he has fulfilled his ministry.

C. The fight.

1. First, notice he is not claiming to have won the fight, merely that he fought it.
2. Second, notice what kind of fight it is. . . .
 - a. “Good” as in honorable, fitting.
 - b. When he speaks of the fight he is speaking of his life as a servant and follower of Jesus Christ.
3. Third, notice it doesn’t say how well he fought it, merely that he fought the good fight.
 - a. Think D-Day—not everyone made it to the beach but they are fought the “good” fight.
 - b. Think of a young man or woman who simply lives under the Lordship of Jesus.

D. The race.

1. "finished the course" is something Paul used: Acts 13:25 and Acts 20:24.
2. Note that the meeting with the Ephesian elders were something Timothy likely was present for (Acts 20:4; 13-17).
3. "Finished" is the same word Jesus uttered on the Cross "It is finished."
4. When you came to faith in Jesus you were placed on a course that God laid out for you.
 - a. You have no say in how that course is laid out.

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- b. Your responsibility is simply to run it until you finish it. And the way you do that is by keeping your focus on Jesus.
 - c. For some the course may be relatively easy while for others it will come with twists, turns, mountains and valleys.
 - d. Your task is not to look the course of another, but fix your eyes on Jesus and run.
 - e. Paul's course involved beatings, starvations, imprisonments and even stoning. And now, the end is in view.
- E. The faith.
- 1. There are various ways to see this but it seems best to see it as Paul's assessment that he was faithful to watch over and teach the gospel and sound doctrine.
 - 2. In other words it is not "believing" but rather the content of what he believed.
 - 3. Like to many he knew who let "the faith" slip through their fingers, he had refused that temptation and guarded it and he never wandered from it.
 - 4. The proof that he had kept the faith was in the expression of faith in it, willing even to die.
- F. Do you see these three concepts as true for you?
- 1. As I said earlier, the better you see life properly the better you live it and the better you will die.
 - 2. Dying for a Christian is completing the fight, the race and holding fast to the faith to the end.
 - 3. And prior to death it means that you consider your choices and values based on how well they will help you fight, run and keep the faith.
- V. You die well when you realize what is waiting for you (8).

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- A. Paul is certain that there is the crown of righteousness waiting for him.
1. Paul uses this term “laid up” only here and Colossians 1:5 where he speaks of the hope that is laid up in heaven for us.
 2. It means that it is reserved. Think 1 Peter 1:3-6.
 3. Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 9:25ff.
 4. This speaks to the idea of rewards. He receives righteousness. In other words, what awaits him is the fulfillment of what has been declared of him, that he is righteous before God.
 5. In death he finally comes into full ownership of what he longs, the righteousness of God.
 6. And why is he so confident? Because he knows who shall judge him—Jesus, the Lord of Righteousness.
 - a. Here is where the hope of the gospel becomes so critical to remember.
 - b. The thought of Jesus judging you can be quite intimidating if you forget the gospel.
 - c. But remembering it changes everything.
 - (1) He is the one who bore your sin.
 - (2) He is the one who died your death.
 - (3) He is the one who brings you safely through death.
 - (4) He is your elder brother who welcomes you into eternity.
 7. Death for the Christian is the time where sin is stripped away from us. Never again shall we battle it. Never again will it weigh us down, trip us up, or cause us to be filled with shame.
- B. This promise is not for only Paul, but for all who long for the coming of Jesus.
1. Understand that though Paul was confident in what was waiting for him in death, it was not what he preferred. He preferred the return of Jesus.

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2. 1 Corinthians 5:1ff.
 - a. Walk them through the sense of vss 1-4 explaining the metaphors and that he mixes them up.
 - b. For Paul, this life is filled with groanings, but not in the way that you might think (2).
 - (1) His groaning is that the body is not yet redeemed from the presence of sin. It is dying. It belongs to this age, this realm of sin and death.
 - (2) His groaning is not due to suffering, not due to hardship, and not due to persecutions. Those things only drive him to look beyond them to the glory to come.
 - (3) But as he gazes and that vision grows before him a different groaning comes, a pure, holy groaning. This is seen in vs 5, it is what God has given us.
 - (4) A holy discontentment builds in his heart and my prayer is that the same would be true for you and me.
 - (5) The groaning is NOT that he isn't in heaven. It is to have the new, redeemed body (Romans 8:23).
 - c. However, if the Lord does not come before he dies, then he takes the next best thing—to die.
 - (1) Why? (8b)
 - (2) To die is to be then in the presence of His Lord.
 - (3) But great as it is, it is not the best, that is yet to come. At the point of death your soul is with Christ, but it is, as Paul says, naked.
 - (4) Your body is in the ground, it returns to the soil it came from and you wait until that great day when Christ returns and the great resurrection comes.
3. Paul essentially has an order of preference. First, that Jesus would come, if not that, then that he would die, if not that, then

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that he would live in such a manner that he anticipates the resurrection.

VI. Conclusion.

- A. Beloved, unless the Lord comes you will die. My desire is that you die well.

Final Song

Small Group Questions

- How do non-Christians view death? Don't be quick here, there are many different ways. Think back to before you believed in Jesus, how did you think of death?
- Consider your choices and values based on how well they will help you fight, run and keep the faith. Are there things that perhaps you need to rethink? Are you willing to share?
- How does Jesus' statement "It is finished!" enable us to come to the end of our lives and say "I have finished?"