

Paul's Tombstone

2 Timothy 4:6-22

Introduction

- A. Paul knows he is near the end of his life
He is imprisoned in Rome, and though he had been released from his previous incarceration, he is sure the emperor is going to decide against him this time and execute him.
- B. So these words he writes to Timothy are his final words (as far as we know)
 - 1. He urges Timothy to be faithful to the truth he had been taught
 - 2. He warns him about the trouble of the last days
 - 3. He charges Timothy to keep on preaching the Word despite opposition

I. Paul's present experience (4:6)

He describes his coming death with two figures of speech

- 1. He is being poured out like a drink offering
 - a. Numbers 15:1-10 describes this drink offering
It was the final part of a sacrificial ceremony. The animal would be offered first on the altar then when that ritual was finished a prescribed amount of wine would be poured out at the side of the altar.
 - b. Paul saw his life as a sacrificial offering to God
He lived what he wrote in Romans 12:1—"offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." He had sacrificed personal pleasure and safety for the cause of the gospel. Now, just as a drink offering was gradually poured out at the side of the altar, so Paul's life is now being gradually poured out through this imprisonment and execution. So even this final act is an act of worshiping Jesus through sacrifice.
 - c. Application
While few of us are called on to endure what Paul did, we still offer ourselves for the cause of Christ and his kingdom. We sacrifice our time by serving; our money by giving; our friendships by witnessing. Remember the words of David in 2 Samuel 24:24, "I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing."
- 2. His death is a departure
 - a. The Greek word translated "departure" literally means "to loosen." It was used of untying a ship from the dock so it could set sail and eventually was used to speak of death. What a picturesque image! Death is a cutting loose of the lines that hold us to earth so the wind of God can catch us and carry us to a place of everlasting joy and rest.
 - b. Paul often mentioned his "departure"
 - 1) Philippians 1:21—"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (ESV)
 - 2) Philippians 1:22-23—"If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, that that is far better" (ESV)
 - 3) 2 Corinthians 5:8—"we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (ESV)
 - c. Only faith can look at a situation like Paul is in and be filled with so much hope

II. His past endurance (4:7)

- A. "I have fought the good fight"
Since his conversion on the road to Damascus he has been "boxing" for Jesus. The devil has been against him, his own people the Jews have been against him, the Roman government has been against him, sometimes churches have been against him, but he kept

on fighting.

B. "I have finished the race"

He accomplished all the Lord asked him to do. He kept his eye on the finish line. He saw as his goal the glory of God by means of the salvation of sinners and he was willing to do whatever was necessary to achieve it (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Acts 20:24—"But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." (ESV)

C. "I have kept the faith"

1. There were many times when Paul could have thrown in the towel because of all he suffered, but he has never betrayed the commission the Lord gave him
2. All these claims could sound a little arrogant and here the Greek helps us. The emphasis in each statement is not on the "I" but on the fight, the race, the faith. Paul is not boasting here, but saying "this is what God's grace has achieved through the life of the 'chief of sinners.'"

D. Application

We all want to leave a legacy. What will our spiritual legacy be? We may not be a type A personality like Paul, braving all the dangers of this world for the gospel. But will our love for Jesus be something talked about long after we are gone? Sitting around the table at a family gathering a decade after we have died and our kids, grandkids, maybe even great-grandkids start reminiscing about us, what will be the most outstanding thing they remember? Will it be our good cooking? Will it be how we could fix anything mechanical? Will it be how we enjoyed Lake Michigan? While all those might be precious memories, will it eventually come around to "Yes, but remember how they love the Lord and his church."

III. His future expectation (4:8)

- A. Throughout all the difficulties of doing the work Christ gave him, Paul has kept his eye on the prize he knew was coming
- B. The "crown of righteousness"
 1. This is our justification, being declared righteous in the sight of God
 2. It is what Jesus has earned for us (Titus 3:5-7)
- C. Nero, the unrighteous, evil judge, is about to condemn Paul to death for sedition (preaching the gospel), but Jesus, the righteous judge, will declare him "not guilty" in the courtroom of God (Revelation 2:10)
- D. This reward is not only for Paul, but for all how long for Jesus appearing

Conclusion/Application

A. God buries His workmen, but carries on His work

The torch of the gospel is handed down generation to generation. As the older generation passes off the scene, the younger generation must step into their shoes and carry on the work. That day had come for Timothy and eventually comes for all of us. This means that when we are younger we must be learning from the older ones, and when we are older we must be building into the life of the younger people.

- B. All of us are called to be faithful. We are not called to be a success in the world's eyes, but we are called to be faithful following the Lord. "May all who come behind us find us faithful" (Steve Green). Remember, the crown of righteousness awaits us!