

End of the Road - Ready & Waiting

We have come to the end of Paul's second letter to Timothy, a young man he met in south-central Turkey at the start of his missionary journeys. We started his first letter on 3rd April, a week after the *Feast of the Hollow Chocolate Bunny who lays solid chocolate eggs!* The focus of Paul's first letter to Timothy was in reality, a message to the Church at Ephesus. The focus of Paul's second letter is more personal. Timothy needs encouragement, inspiration and morale boosting. It is difficult being a pastor in a church where false teachers, confuse people with conflicting and inconsistent messages. In their confusion over whom to believe, the congregation sadly, end up taking the pastor to task, instead of the false teachers.

Chapter 4, the final chapter of Paul's second letter to Timothy, is Paul's farewell; Paul is signing off! *I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure from this world has arrived, and I will soon go free.*

As we bring this study to a close, let's take a look at a man who knows the end of his life is very near. The evidence from history tells us, Paul was likely beheaded by the Romans, under Emperor Nero, sometime around May or June of 68 A.D. Nero himself died by suicide on June 9th of the same year.

Paul does four things in preparation for the end of his life on earth.

1. He **passes on the baton** like in a relay race. *I solemnly charge you, he says to Timothy, in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, not to give up preaching (broadcasting and teaching) the Word.* Paul repeats

his earlier advice on the value of God's Word, reminding Timothy, *people will not have an appetite for the truth, and will not listen to sound teaching, because they will not apply themselves to study God's word; but don't be discouraged. You continue to the work of an evangelist which God has entrusted to you, and do it faithfully and joyfully.*

You don't have to be an evangelist to have something to pass on to the next generation. A friend of ours spent his retirement writing children's stories using some of the thousands of slides he had collected during his travels; another couple gathered the humorous incidents in their lives to write children's stories, each with a Christian message. These people did not publish their compositions, but they wrote to read to their grand-children, nieces and nephews.

Wouldn't it be nice to pass on our life's work, to someone who might enjoy and value it?

2. The second thing Paul does preparing for the end of his life, is to **convey his deep assurance, he has not lived his life in vain hope**; the crown of righteousness awaits him.

Paul is not bragging of any personal achievement; he is expressing his confidence in God's promise. Paul is also saying to Timothy, *you too will receive a crown of righteousness, kept ready for you, if in your heart you are overjoyed, Jesus came first as Saviour, and is coming soon as King!* (8b)

Anyone who lives their life rejoicing in the work of Christ, can be assured of the crown of righteousness.

3. One of the most difficult things Paul does as he prepares for the end of his life is to **set the record straight on relationships** entrusted to him.

Several have deserted him, and turned their back on his teaching. To them Paul has nothing to say; they are accountable to God for their decision.

Others did not stand by him during his hour of need, his trial in Rome; Paul does not hold this against them.

Alexander the coppersmith did Paul much harm by *actively* opposing his message of the gospel; Paul does not want revenge, instead, *the Lord will repay him according to his deeds*. We might have had people who opposed our work and did us great harm. It is best to leave them in God's hands and pray for His mercy on them.

4. Finally, Paul is human as we all are. Paul longs to **see one last time, his dear friends**, those who stood by him, prayed for him, journeyed with him, and suffered with him. He also wants to be brought to him, books and documents, perhaps unfinished letters, and reports of events.

Whether we are young or not-so-young, it is worthwhile trying to gather our thoughts how we will be remembered, after our time on earth has finished.

- Every life has value; how will we pass on this "value"?

- Do we have a deep assurance, that **real** life comes after death?
- How and when will we settle difficult relationships in our lives, before we lose the opportunity to do so?
- Finally, whose companionship and friendship do we treasure, to have and to enjoy during our final years, be they few or many?

May the blessing of life-giving God, so enrich our lives, that each one of us will receive “the crown of righteousness” on that day when Christ returns as King!

AMEN