

## COMFORT FOR US IN PAUL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

If I were to ask, 'How many of you like to learn new things,' what would your response be? My guess is that very few (if any) of you would say "no;"—I don't **ever** want to learn **anything** new the rest of my life! Although we might not say "no," there still might be some hesitation about saying "yes." Why? Because there are some things that we have no *interest* in learning. For example, I can't imagine....

- Certain men wanting to learn ballet;
- Or my wife wanting to learn how to paint water-towers;
- Or a tiny, elderly woman wanting to learn cage fighting!

Some things we don't want to learn because we aren't interested; other things we *are* interested in, but might not want to put in the work required to learn it. And then there are things that we don't necessarily *want* to learn, but are forced upon us.

An example for me would be this—being with someone when they **die**. I can't remember where I came upon it, but not too long ago I read "much instruction can come from the deathbed." To be perfectly honest with you, it would be fine with me if I "missed out" on that instruction! But then I have to ask myself, 'why; why do I think it would be difficult to be with someone when they passed into eternity?'

The answer: it **wouldn't be** if the person I was sitting with had assurance in their heart and a smile on their face because they knew they were on their way to see Jesus! Can a person have that kind of confidence? They certainly can! On June 9<sup>th</sup> I received the following email from someone whose mother was on the verge of passing away: *"Our Mom is in her final days with us. We have hospice helping us through these days. She is very clear that she is **ready to be with Jesus & see Dad again. She's closer to heaven every day & pleads with us to pray Jesus takes her home. I ask you to join us in "praying Mom home to heaven"***.

Let that sink in for a moment—a daughter asking Pastors and churches in Wisconsin to pray for God to take her Mom home to heaven! That's confidence, isn't it? In II Timothy 4 we see that same kind of confidence in the Apostle Paul as he bids farewell to Timothy. Let's turn there—to II Timothy 4. Please follow along as I read verses 1-8. Title: "Comfort for **Us** in Paul's Farewell Address"

How are Paul's words comforting to us? I see 3 reasons for comfort in verses 6-8. First, Paul had...

### **1. A Confident Readiness**

Notice verse 6—"For I am **now ready** to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Let's consider first, A. Why Paul was ready. How could he say with such confidence that "I am now ready?"

In a nutshell—because he knew where he was going after he died!

**II Corinthians 5:6-8** "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: <sup>7</sup> (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) <sup>8</sup> We are **confident**, I say, and **willing rather to be absent from the body**, and to be **present with the Lord**."

**Philippians 1:21-24** "For to me to live is Christ, and to **die is gain**. <sup>22</sup> But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. <sup>23</sup> For I am in a strait betwixt two, **having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better**: <sup>24</sup> Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."

Paul was confident and ready to leave this world because he knew that when he did so, he would be with Jesus! Even the word "departure" in verse 6 reminds us that death is not final—it is a **relocation** from one place to another. MacArthur points out that "departure" comes from the Greek word *anulusis* and is used a number of different ways.

- it is used for unyoking an animal from the plow
- it is used for the loosening of chains, fetters, or bonds that hold a prisoner

--it is used for loosening tent ropes in order to take it down

--and it is used for loosening the ropes on a ship

And then **MacArthur** recaps it like this:

“For the Christian, death is laying down all your burden, all your toil, all your labor in order to rest forever. Death is laying aside all that binds and holds of sin and difficulty. Death is striking camp, as it were, to take up residence in a permanent place in an eternal home. And death is casting off the ropes which bind us to this world to sail into God’s world, where we live in His presence forever.”

Do you have that kind of assurance—that confidence—that to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord? We have a “know-so” salvation—not a “hope-so” one—and **anyone** can have the same kind of assurance that Paul had. How?

## B. How we can be ready

### **i. We need to reject the belief that we can “make up” for our sin**

So many get stuck here. They will admit that they are a sinner, yet think somehow, someday they can satisfactorily **offset** the penalty of their sin by their own efforts. God’s Word says the exact **opposite**:

**Romans 3:20** “Therefore by the **deeds of the law** there shall **no flesh** be justified in His sight...”

**Romans 3:28** “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith **without the deeds** of the law.”

**Ephesians 2:9** “**Not of works**, lest any man should boast.”

**Titus 3:5** “**Not by works** of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”

### **ii. We need to receive God’s Son as the payment for our sin**

**John 1:12** “But as many as **received Him**, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:”

**Ephesians 2:8** “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift of God**:”

**I John 5:11-12** “And this is the record, that God hath **given to us** eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

<sup>12</sup> He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”

The first thing we see in Paul’s farewell address was that he had a confident readiness to meet the Lord. Those words can be a comfort to us because we can have that same kind of assurance and confidence.

There is a second reason Paul’s parting words can be a comfort to us and that is found in verse 7. I call it:

## **2. A content reflection** (v 7)

Notice verse 7: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Imagine getting to the end of your life and reflecting back on it and being able to say to others—‘I have no regrets, I have no unfinished business, I have done what I was asked to do.’

**How** could Paul say that? Was he suggesting that he was perfect and always got it right, all the time? No; he was simply stating that he was **faithful** and that he kept at it and that he didn’t quit.

**Why** would Paul say that? Was he being a self-righteous bragger? Was he trying to make Timothy feel bad? No; he was saying it to *encourage* Timothy. In essence he was saying, ‘Come on, Timothy. I was faithful to the end; you can be too!’ Notice the word pictures Paul uses in this verse.

First, “I have fought a good fight.” Commentators—and the Greek word order—point out that it doesn’t mean Paul fought **good**—it means the fight itself is a good fight. We see that in I Timothy 6:12 “Fight the good fight of faith.” The word order in the Greek is “the good fight I have fought; the course (race) I have finished; the faith I have kept.”

Living for God is a battle, isn't it? It involves fighting the devil, our own sinful nature, and the world. And the battle is **intense**! It is noteworthy that Paul uses the Greek word *agon-i-zomi* to describe the effort involved in this battle—which sounds a lot like our word “agonize.”

He also uses the picture of a race and the race is obviously **not** a sprint—it is a marathon! In Hebrews 12:1-2 we are reminded to “run with patience”—meaning perseverance—“the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

Lastly, he **kept** the faith—he preserved that which was entrusted to him. He “earnestly contended for the faith” as mentioned in the book of Jude. He preserved sound doctrine by living it and teaching it and exposing error. Is that important? It certainly is—especially for those of us that **preach**! Paul warned Timothy in verse 3, a verse I read earlier, that “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” and “they shall turn away their ears from the truth” (vs 4). Paul didn't change his message—even after getting released from prison or run out of towns by mobs. He stayed true to God's Word—regardless of how it was received!

What about us? When we get to the end of life's journey and are knocking on the door of eternity, what will your assessment of your life be when you reflect back on it? It's not easy to be faithful—but it is not **impossible**, either! Many of you have been faithful to the Lord for decades; others of you have just started on your journey of faithfulness.

But maybe some of you **have not been** faithful; you **are not** being faithful right now. Am I being mean to bring that up? Not according to the middle of verse 2 where Paul tells Timothy—and me—to “reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” We can only have a **content reflection** of our life if we start being faithful and stay faithful and end faithful. God calls each of us to do different things, but calls all of us to be **faithful**. If you have not been, you can start today!

How can Paul's farewell address comfort us?

--First, just as he was confident that he was ready to die and meet Jesus, we can have that confidence, too!

--Second, like Paul, we can have a content reflection of our life if we remain faithful to the Lord.

Lastly, we can be comforted—like Paul was—because there awaits for us....

### **3. A crown of righteousness (v 8)**

Notice verse 8 “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness [there's our word], which the Lord, the righteous judge [there's our word again], shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.”

A. What is the crown of righteousness? The honest answer? I don't know! I don't want to leave you with ‘I don't know,’ though, so here are some thoughts:

#### **i. It is the prize of righteousness instead of a literal crown**

In other words, instead of something being placed upon our heads, it is a prize we are given and the prize is righteousness—it is being declared blameless—in God's sight. We are declared right with God when we accept Christ as our Savior; we will experience “sinlessness” in the future when we stand before God. Jude 24 gives us the picture—“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to **present you faultless** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” Being presented faultless before God is the prize—the crown—of righteousness. Stated yet another way, righteousness will be its own reward.

I tend to disagree with that meaning for this simple reason—every child of God will stand blameless in God's sight, but Paul does not say everyone will get this crown. It was waiting for Paul because he was faithful, but not just for him—it would also be given to those “that love His [Jesus'] appearing.”

## ii. It is a prize—a reward—for faithful service

Time does not allow us to turn there, but in I Corinthians 3 we read of how our works—that which we do after we saved—will be tried by fire. There are those whose works will be as gold, silver, and precious stones which will **pass through** the fire. There are others whose works will be like wood, hay, and stubble—they will be **consumed by** the fire—but they themselves will still be saved. Is it a **literal crown** like the twenty-four elders referred to in Revelation 4 wore and cast down before the throne? I'm not sure, but I am sure of this—we will **be rewarded** for that which we do for the Lord after we are saved.

**Hebrews 6:10** “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

### B. Who is the crown from?

Middle of verse 8 “...which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day...”

God is the **righteous** judge; the all-knowing perfect judge; and the only one who **always** knows “who” did “what” and “when” and “why.” I’m guessing my wife and I aren’t the only parents who had “unsolved mysteries” in our homes when our children were young. We were fairly certain that the lamp did not break itself—and that color crayon marks didn’t just magically appear on the wall with no help from the little people in the house!

The crown was in the safe-keeping of the Lord—Paul said it is “laid up for me”—and he was certain he would receive it. “The Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me...”

### C. Who gets this crown?

Paul was going to get this crown—he was certain of it—but he was not the only one. Towards the end of verse 8 we read: “...and not to me only, but unto **all** them also that **love His appearing.**”

Let’s think about what it means to “love His appearing.” “His appearing” refers to the **return of Jesus** to earth. In John 14:2-3, Jesus says He was going to prepare a place for them and that He would come back for them some day. In **Acts 1:11**, angels said to the disciples: “...why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, **shall so come in like manner** as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

**I Thessalonians 4:17** “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, **to meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

So, who are those **who love Jesus’** appearing; who are those that are looking forward to His return?

Are you ready for the answer? This will bring “profoundness” to a new level. Here it is—those that love His appearing are those that love **Him!** Not rocket science, is it?

If you love Him, you will want to be with Him, but in order to be with Him, He needs to return. And because you want Him to return, you want to be ready. So you read His Word to find out His will—and you obey His word because you love Him—and you wait and watch and work so that day does not come upon you “unawares.” Is that you?

Sadly, not every believer loves Jesus’ appearing. Why? Look at verse 10 “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” Would Demas, at this moment, have loved it if Jesus returned? Not hardly!

**I John 2:28** captures well how Demas would have felt: “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Demas would have been ashamed, wouldn’t he?

How about you? Do you love Jesus and look forward to His return—or do you love the world and would be ashamed if Jesus came today?

***CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:***

1. First, are you saved? You are not ready to die—or for Jesus to return—if you have not trusted Christ.

2. For those of us that are saved, what about your faithfulness? Do you love Jesus and look forward to His return, or will you be ashamed like Demas? To be faithful to the end, you have to start at some point—then keep going. Start today!