

2 Timothy 4:6-22 - So that all may hear

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is taken from the book of 2 Timothy 4, verses 6-22, and that would be found in page 1197 on your Blue Bibles.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought a good fight and have finished the race. I have kept the faith.

Now, there is in store for me that the crown of righteousness, which is the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Do your best to come to me quickly. For Demas, because he loved this world, he 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 is helpful to me in my ministry, I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

[1 : 08] 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. 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 watched 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.

Great Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus, Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus ill in Miletus.

[2 : 17] Do your best to get here before winter. Yubilus 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks, Mayor Chu. Let me say hello again. Again, I'm David. I'm one of the leaders, and I'm really pleased to get to be teaching this morning, because Steve is still away, getting a much-needed, much-deserved holiday with his family.

So we'll get to do this together. But before I get started, let me just pray once again for the Lord to lead us in. Father, we thank you for gathering us today.

Thank you for the beautiful day that it is, for the kindness that you have given us in just blessing us with sunshine and things that lift our spirits.

Lord, we want to look to the word today, the words that you have for us, to see something of you, to know you better, to change our lives such that we can live for you and with you in a way that would be beneficial to us but glorifying to you.

[3 : 33] Lord, help us to read it carefully, to understand it clearly, and may the words that are said this morning be your words, not mine. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've been looking at 2 Timothy, and we've been here for a number of weeks, and so we'll continue on, but what we have here is the very last bit.

And so I'm kind of wrapping up, closing what has been this series, this moment, looking at 2 Timothy, this letter from Paul. And so there'll be a little bit of like kind of summary and conclusion here, but really grounded in those final verses that Meritju just read for us.

I don't know about you. I don't know what you're dealing with when you came in today, what your week has been like, but sometimes it feels like life is incredibly, almost impossibly hard.

Maybe you've felt that recently. I feel like I have had a week where as soon as I felt that I had my feet under me, that something else came, another email, another phone call would knock me back down.

[4 : 44] And it couldn't seem, I just felt like I couldn't make any ground, right? It's like I would go two steps forward and then three steps backwards, right? It was this constant challenge, and I would avert one crisis, and there was something else waiting in the wings for me in its place, right?

In the world that we live in, there's so many things that could come and sort of attack us, right? Whether it's physical health, mental health, navigating relationships, financial pressures, loneliness, work-related stress, grief, trauma, the impact from our own poor choices or negative habits, right?

Whatever it is, probably, if you're like me, it's several of those dragging us down, right? And somehow it feels like we just can't catch a break, right? And we've been studying this letter for the past weeks, right?

It's a letter addressed to a guy called Timothy, and it's written by his mentor, Paul. And Paul seems to be having this sort of week, doesn't he? Maybe longer than a week, actually.

We know it's been a good while for Paul, much more, right? It's been a tough go. He's endured all sorts of hardships, hardships that maybe we have experienced or maybe are way beyond what we have experienced, but they were physical and emotional, and he's been beaten and stoned.

[6 : 13] He's been shipwrecked and imprisoned, faced opposition from the religious leaders and from the government leaders, financial challenges, and he's even named some sort of thorn in his side without giving any more description.

And at one point, he was even bitten by a snake, right? So he's been deserted and abandoned by those he thought were friends, right?

We read that even in the verses today. And we know that Paul is even writing this letter from inside a Roman prison, and he believes that he's nearing the end, right?

Either by execution or that he'd just be left to rot in this prison for the rest of his days. And so his message in this letter to Timothy, he has the message for him, and so he writes this letter.

And for Timothy, what he has for him is probably not what Timothy expects, right? It's not what he would hope for, I don't think, right? But it is the one that Timothy needs, and I think it's the one that we need in our walk with Christ, right?

[7 : 25] The letter to Timothy stands as sort of a stark reminder that Paul's life and ministry, even though incredibly influential, and his impact on the rest of history are largely unmatched for a human, right?

They were marked by persistent challenge, suffering, and struggle. And it reminds Timothy and us that following Jesus involves risk and sacrifice, and means inviting a certain level of tension and discomfort into our lives, right?

But it also reminds us that these things are not a sign of Jesus' absence in our lives. What far be it, right? It's rather that Paul has discovered, along with all the generations of those following Jesus after him, that it's precisely in those dark moments, and it's precisely in those difficult times, that Jesus' love and faithfulness become most tangible to us, right?

And so, as we look at it, let's remind that. That's sort of the thesis in here, but let's look at specifically. As I said, the recipient of this letter is Timothy.

He was the direct subject of Paul's encouragement. And Timothy was trained by Paul and left to lead the church in Ephesus. We know that from the first letter to Timothy.

[8 : 49] So he was left there. Paul chose him directly. And, you know, in the way that we would talk about it now, Timothy is effectively a full-time pastor of the church there, right?

That's his job. It's his day job, right? And so, funnily enough, as I look out at most of you, you're not employed by the church to be ministers, right?

Lucky for you, neither am I. And so we're all in the same boat here today, right? But what I think is helpful for us to understand that while Paul is giving this specific instruction to someone who is employed to do ministry as their full-time job, that instruction and that encouragement, they apply to all of us who claim to follow Jesus, right?

And as it happens, history would seem to show that the idea of this salaried full-time pastor didn't even come into play, didn't really come about until about the time of the Reformation.

So, you know, thousand plus years after this time. Paul himself makes clear in his letter to the Ephesians, if you look over there, right?

[9 : 56] He says, Christ himself gave the apostles, prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers to equip his people for the works of service so that the body of Christ might be built up until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God to become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, right?

To equip his people for the works of service. Maybe put more clearly, the New King James says, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, right?

So it's our job, those of us who get to stand up here, it's our job, those who do get paid to do ministry, not to go and be the ones that are on the front lines doing the ministry.

No, it's we're the trainers and the helpers so that you all, the regular people of Jesus, do the ministry that's called for, right? And so as we look at a word here, the saints, all who have trusted Christ, are the recipients of these words from Paul, right?

And one of the strongest messages from this letter from Paul is that life is hard, right? There's no promise of an easy life with Christ, right?

[11 : 09] In fact, what he did promise very clearly is that if the world hated him, it would certainly hate those who claim him and identify with him, right? Nowhere is that more clear than looking at the life of Paul, right?

We already went through it. Just in this chapter of this letter, we see that Paul is in prison. At the end of his rope, he says, for I'm already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near, right?

He's in prison, nearing death. He's apparently freezing cold. He says, when you come, bring the cloak that I left with Karpus at Troas, right? He's in this cell, and it's cold, and he wishes that he had a coat just to keep him warm.

And he has been completely abandoned, right? He says, at my first offense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. That was in verse 16, right? So Paul has had a difficult go.

So really, many of the disciples that we see also came to incredibly difficult ends, right? Vastly different than what they may have anticipated, what may they have hoped for when they met Jesus for the first time, right?

[12 : 17] When he was walking on earth, right? They didn't expect the way things to go the way they did. And what Paul is doing in this letter to Timothy, he's commending this life to him.

He says, do you remember, he said in chapter 2, he says, join with me in suffering. Join with me in this suffering. He's not saying avoid suffering. He's not saying, oh wait, don't mess up here and here, and avoid this fate that I found myself in.

He says, no, join me. This is the way, right? And so it's not just circumstances that are hard, but relationships are hard, and people fail us, right?

But in verse 10, we saw Paul say that Demas, this guy that was with him, he says, Demas has deserted me. Life is relationally hard.

And Paul wants Timothy to see this because he says it so many times. He must want him to know something about this. Right in verse 10, he says, for Demas, in love with the present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

[13 : 21] Evidently, Demas had been a faithful partner at one point, because in another letter, Colossians, it says, Luke, the beloved physician, greets you as does Demas.

Right? So Demas wasn't just a fly-by-night guy that came and then went, but no, he was a trusted partner, and now he has gone his own way. Right? Paul, forsaken by his friend Demas.

Look in the middle of the same verse. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia, and Luke alone is with me. Right? So you've got these other names. At one point, there was a team. There was a whole group of people that were with Paul.

And now it's down to Paul and just Luke. Right? And he's pleading for help. Keep looking. Verse 14 and 15 says, Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm, for he strongly opposed our message.

See, Paul didn't just have loneliness and abandonment, but on the inside, he also got opposition from people on the outside, looking and saying, no, that's the wrong thing, and slandering him and pushing him down and saying, stop talking, opposing his message.

[14 : 29] And then verse 16, one of the saddest sentences in the letter, he says, At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. Right? No one showed up.

Not one friend. Can you imagine, like, standing at court or in front of the thing that could determine your fate, and none of your friends turn up to that?

No one comes to support you. No one comes to say, this guy's okay. Like, be a character witness for him. You know, I'll stand beside him. They didn't come. And then in verse 20, we see him say, Erastus remained in Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.

He says, do your best to come before winter. Sometimes sickness interrupts partnership. Sometimes seasonal changes mean that people we used to care about are now in some other part of the world or some other part of the city.

It makes that loneliness more difficult. Sometimes good reasons, right? Reasons that we would agree to mean that people we care about find their way to somewhere else, and they're no longer with us.

[15 : 35] Right? And so, but it still hurts. Right? Just because it's a good reason and we believe in it doesn't mean that we don't mourn the loss of a friend and their relationship in the way that it once was.

Right? So, what we see is that life is hard. For Paul, for Timothy, and for all of us. Right? There's no mistaking it. Relationships are hard.

Sometimes people leave us. Sometimes people oppose us. Sometimes people go, even if we want them to. And it's still hard to deal with. So, life is hard. Relationships are hard. And one more thing that Paul shows here is that keeping the faith can be hard at times.

Look again at this guy, Demas, in verse 10. It says, Demas, because he loved this world, has gone away and abandoned me. Right? I think Paul is looking to Timothy, and he wants him to see something specific.

He wants him to feel the force of this. This guy, Demas, who was one of the trusted. He was one of those that they were carrying on with, has fallen in love with the world, and has deserted me.

[16 : 41] Right? When we were studying Mark earlier in this year, we saw the parable of the sower. And what happens is sometimes thorns grow up and choke the plants. Right?

Sometimes the worries and pleasures of life and the deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things come in, and they choke us out before we can get to it.

Right? Paul says we can't let it. Demas did, but he doesn't want it to happen to Timothy, and he doesn't want it to happen to us. Right? Life is hard work.

We can see it clearly in Paul. We can see it in Timothy and in most of the other disciples. The thing is, the hard work, right? We know that we are made right with God by grace, not by works.

Right? So, there's no question of that. Grace tells us there's nothing we can do to make ourselves more loved or accepted by God than we already are. What happens after that?

[17 : 40] What happens after we've been made right with God through faith in Jesus? How do we grow? How do we, what does it mean to truly follow Jesus? Right? Coming to God, trusting in God, that's the easy part in some ways, because Jesus has done all of the heavy lifting for us.

He's done everything on our behalf, and we can't add anything to it, even if we wanted to. But growing in Christ, being transformed into his likeness, becoming who we were made to be, stepping into rich and full lives, that takes some grit.

It takes some work, because it is hard. Dallas Willard, in his book, *The Great Omission*, says this, Grace is opposed to earning, not to effort.

In fact, nothing inspires and enhances effort like the experience of grace. Becoming Christ-like never occurs without intense and well-informed action on our part.

Right? Grace is opposed to earning, not opposed to effort. Right? If you're a Christian, if you're in here and you're a Christian, you didn't sign up for an easy life.

[18 : 50] You did sign up for a good life. And if you're not yet a follower of Jesus, and you were hoping that life would get easier, or if you're a new follower of Jesus, and it feels like life has just gotten harder since you came to faith, and you're wondering if you missed something, I wish, in some ways, that that was the case.

But that's not the gospel of Jesus. That's not the good news that he gives us. The gospel is so much better than that. That while it sounds good, an easy life would be wholly unsatisfying.

Or as Scott Fitzgerald once said, nothing any good isn't hard. Right? Of course, following Jesus is not going to be easy. Why? Why would we expect it to be?

The greatest treasures in life we know are often the ones that we work and sweat and bleed for. Right? This is a common thing. Right? Look at everything. If you make music, the songs that you create have value because the work that you put into them, not because of any success or money that's gained from them.

If you're an athlete, the hours of sweat, blood, and tears that you invest in your sport are what make it valuable to you. That's what makes winning and competing worth it and fun.

[20 : 08] Right? If you're a parent, the home you create has value because of the relentless love that you pour into that relationship. Right? Good kids that follow Jesus, if you didn't have to do anything, doesn't really give you much.

Right? I mean, you would be thankful for it, but it wouldn't be the same without the struggle, without understanding how sinful your kids could be and how sinful you could be. Right? The struggle is what makes that sweet.

We inherently attach value to things that we've worked hardest to accomplish. And on the other side of all that effort, on the other side of perseverance and pain, we can expect it to all be worth it.

Because it is worth it. Jesus is worth it. Right? And this is what Paul says. This is, he builds up all of this, like, look at how hard things are. And then he gets to this point in verse 17 and 18, and he says, But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and the Gentiles might hear it.

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

[21 : 18] Right? Paul, he's in this cell. His body is tired and broken. His mind is weary and exhausted. And most of his friends have left or abandoned him. And yet his words here are filled with joy and kindness that the Lord has stood by me.

The Lord has given me strength. Paul is joyful and content with the path that his life has taken such that he even commends it to Timothy and says, No, this is what you want.

This is where we're going. This is the good stuff. Because it's been with Jesus. Because it's been in service to Jesus. Jesus was tempted in all the ways that we are, right?

We know that. He truly knows what we go through. Look at his life. He faced physical struggles. He dealt with aging parents. He had friends that died much too soon.

He was under an incredible amount of stress. He faced undue and inaccurate accusation from the authorities. And he saw nearly all of his friends leave him at his time of need.

[22 : 21] Right? He persisted, was faithful, faithful even to the cross, so that you and I could be with him in his kingdom and like Paul, stand and say, this was worth it. Jesus is worth it.

He kept the faith in a way that no one else could. In fact, Jesus is the only truly reliable friend. He's the only flawless friend.

He's the only all-satisfying friend. Right? As much as you may love your earthly friends and your earthly family, they cannot do this for you. They cannot do 2 Timothy 4, 18 and rescue you from every evil deed and bring you safely into the heavenly kingdom.

Only one friend can do that. And when your friends on earth do inevitably fail you, when there's a moment that they don't show up at your trial, whatever that looks like, they don't show up at the funeral of your loved one, you don't see them at your stay at the hospital, don't turn on the friend who will be there.

Right? Don't let their failure trick you into mistrusting Jesus. Right? There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother and he is faithful to the end because even if we are faithless, he remains faithful.

[23 : 40] And we get to be with him forever. Right? By choosing to follow the real Jesus, right, choosing to go this direction, you choose a path that will be difficult.

In fact, there's no bait and switch. Jesus is clear, the Bible is clear, it's going to be difficult and demanding and trying at times. But you've chosen it with belief and the faith that in the end this way of life is both good and best.

And on the basis of faith you move forward putting one obedient foot in front of the other. Right? And after you've done that again and again and again you find yourself living in ways that you never imagined that you would, giving gifts that you never thought you'd give, forgiving people who don't deserve it, haven't asked for it, and you're becoming the person that you never thought you could become.

Because Jesus is by your side. Life is hard, Jesus is worth it, and that should result, oh, I did this before, that should result in sharing it with everyone.

See, the final thing that Paul gives us here is that in that verse in 17 he says, the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength so that the message might be proclaimed and all might hear it.

[25 : 00] See, our suffering and our struggles in life, they certainly aren't for us to sit back and say, woe is me. They're not even for us to just grow in our own personal faith and trust. Right? It does that, but it's not just for that.

Christ doesn't stand with us in the midst of suffering only to bring us through it alone. He gives us strength so that the message might be proclaimed and all might hear it.

The good news of Jesus isn't just for us. We get to bring a friend. We get to bring multiple friends, hopefully. And so, why do we go through this life?

Why do we go through things that feel like struggle? Even in the midst of all the difficulty, it's to be with Jesus and to proclaim his message to everyone so that they can feel it too.

Right? So that they might hear. And this is Paul's message to Timothy. And it could easily be the message to us at West Kilburn here this morning. He says, protect the gospel.

[26 : 02] Right? Paul's message is, don't water this down. The truth of what this true gospel is, is what's worth it. He says, preach sound doctrine.

Right? Don't let other people preaching things that have gone off to the side, don't let them sway you. Preach the things that you heard me teach. Preach the things that you heard Jesus teach. And pass it on to the next generation.

Pass it on. Don't let it die with us. If all of the history of this church building going back to the mid-1800s and the people who kept it alive for years and years and years so that you and I could sit in these seats and it only got this far because we didn't tell anyone else about it, it would all be for naught and it would be sad.

He says, persevere through hardship. He looks at Timothy, he says, not only is this hardship, is this going to be hard, this life with Jesus, this life of ministry is going to be hard, but it's going to be worth it. Persevere.

Point your eyes at the kingdom and Jesus, right? If you keep your eyes on that, you can move through because this is what we're looking to and proclaim that good news to all who will hear.

[27 : 13] Because Jesus is worth it. Because he's the king, because he stands with us through everything, and because he will bring us safely into his kingdom, just as Paul says.

To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Let me pray. Father, thank you for standing by us.

Lord, thank you for proclaiming a message that we have heard, that has infected our lives such that we changed everything, that even looking into the teeth of pain and challenge and trial, Lord, we can persevere because we know who we are with.

God, you have persevered through all the things to bring us with you. Lord, might we persevere to stay with you. Lord, we are thankful that you are the friend that won't leave us, that you'll never forsake us, that you'll stick by us closer than even our own flesh and blood, because you love us, and you want us with you, and you've done everything that it takes so that we can.

Lord, help us to see it, Lord, and to power through the hardness and the challenges of this life, not out of sheer will and determination, but because we love you and who you are.

[28 : 38] Lord, would you stick with us, stand by us, hold us fast, so that we might be with you in the end, and that you might welcome us into your kingdom. It is yours as the glory, forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.