

2Timothy 25-03-02a

Good morning fellow members of Grace and Truth Bible Church and all the rest of y'all throngs and masses and crowds. This is Sunday morning, the 2nd of March 2025. We're continuing our study in the book or letter of 2nd Timothy, which has been a study in the concluding message of three in the pastoral epistles.

We saw 1st Timothy, we saw Titus, and in chronological order, this is the last, the ultimate, one of the last communications that Paul made that is preserved for us. We're in chapter 4. We've seen the powerful charge to preach the word. We have seen Paul's valedictory benediction in verses 6 through 8. And we're going to be moving forward from that point this morning.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and worship and we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for this time of gathering together around the wonderful blessing and enablement that comes from your word, the fellowship and the receiving of the benefit of spiritual gifts that comes when we are in contact with each other. We thank you for each one and for the blessings that you bring to us through them.

And we pray that the Holy Spirit will be with us this morning as we look at your word. Help us to see what it means and how it affects the way we think and speak and live in the days ahead. We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified.

We ask it in his name, amen. The passage before us is a unit. Even though it has these subsections, it flows naturally beginning with the charge to Timothy that we've seen in great detail.

We realize that Paul is looking at the situation. This is such a good thing for us to do. We can get schedule driven, task driven, relationship driven.

Necessity impels us and propels us forward. And it's important that we do as Paul does here and take stock of the larger situation. Look at the bigger picture.

And Paul realizes that his time is approaching. He says in verse 6, the time of my departure is at hand. We know that departure is a reference to leaving the realm of the earth and moving forward in God's purpose to the time of the rapture and the judgment seat of Christ.

And then our participation with the Lord Jesus as his brothers and sisters when he comes and implements his kingdom under the overarching and overall authority of God the Father and then moving forward into the time of the eternal kingdom of the Father. But to step back and realize that it isn't just the pressures of today or the opportunities of the hour or the situations, the conversations, the requirements that press upon us. But to step back as Paul does here and realize that he's not going to be around much longer.

There are some things that he is in a position to do. And one is to give Timothy's boat a final

push, to give him some way, give him some momentum. And so he gives this powerful charge in the first four verses, noting also in his assessment of the times that there is an increasing resistance just as there was in the time of the Lord Jesus.

Initially, it's novel. Initially, it's something new and different. People are curious.

When John the Baptist is at the Jordan, all Jerusalem goes out to see him and to be baptized and it's the latest trend. It's the next big thing. But as John fades off the scene, he decreases and the Lord Jesus increases.

There's curiosity about the Lord and there is great excitement and interest because of the miracles and the buzz that is circulating about his presence and what he seems to be doing. But as time passed and the novelty wore off, now we're starting to lose interest and we want a king who will throw off the Romans and they try to take Jesus by force after he feeds them bread and to make him king. And it turns out that Israel is not ready for the next step in God's plan for them as a nation.

They're not ready. The promises of God are conditional. If you don't remember anything else from this morning's lesson in 2 Timothy, as we have been seeing frequently, Old Testament and New, the fulfillment of God's promises is conditional.

You have to look no further than the Lord Jesus coming. You notice in verse 6 here, Paul says the time of my departure is at hand. I pulled up a list of Bible passages, Old Testament and New.

We're not going to worry about the Hebrew or the Greek here. But the word at hand, the phrase at hand, and this is something that was first communicated in the days of the Lord Jesus. You have it in Matthew, chapter 3 and chapter 4. I'll just read you verse 17.

From that time on, Jesus began to preach, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. At hand. If Jesus is the king and he says the kingdom is near, you would expect that this is something measured in years, maybe months, maybe just weeks, maybe just days.

At hand is a flexible term like our word near. I could say, looking at the United States, that there are people I know who are near me, even though they're in the southeast corner of Oklahoma or in the northern part of Texas. But relatively speaking, they're near.

I could say that people in this room, some are near and some are further away. It's flexible and context tells us. So what does Paul mean when he says the time of my departure is at hand? And as we saw last time, he says it's at hand and he says, I'm being poured out as a drink offering.

You think, well, you know, sometime in the next few weeks, Paul will be leaving this life. But then further down, he tells Timothy in verse nine, be diligent to come quickly. Other people have forsaken me and gone.

I've sent people different places. Luke's the only one here. So get Mark and bring him with you.

How long is it going to take for Timothy to find Mark, for them to make arrangements to cover their responsibilities? Somebody's got to fill in for Timothy at the church at Ephesus. Mark may have to wrap up affairs or finish projects or get family situated with others who can look out for them. And then they're going to have to travel from Ephesus to Rome.

This is a journey that can take days passing into weeks. It's late summer. He says, come to me before winter.

He says, bring the cloak that I left in Troas. So there's going to be a stop in Troas, probably an overnight. He's got to go find carpets and get Paul's coat.

And he's got to go wherever the manuscripts and the parchments are and gather those and collect them. So you can see that when you say my time is at hand, at hand in this context means a year or less, perhaps. Something at least measured in a few months.

What's the point of Timothy coming just for Paul to gasp and go to glory? So his time is at hand. His life is drawing to a close. He's looking at the big picture just as he did when he charged Timothy.

You need to be ready to preach and to represent the word. I won't be here to continue to be the point of the spear because the time of my departure is at hand. Big picture thinking.

And in the big picture, as in the everyday things of life, we want to remember that in order for God to fulfill his promises, to bless our lives, to use us for our benefit and his glory, we need to qualify. And this is why for Timothy to preach the word, he's got to be ready. He's got to be prepared.

Whether it's a time of easy preparation or presentation or it's difficult to prepare and present. In season, no season. And this word for season is kairos.

And when Paul says in verse 6, the time of my departure is at hand, it's the same word, kairos, K-A-I-R-O-S. This is the word that is used in the Septuagint to translate Ecclesiastes. There is a time for every purpose under heaven.

And this can be something that's almost a season or it can be an immediate designated time. In this case, by context, we know that Paul is talking about the phase of his life, which is the culmination, the close. His plane is coming in for a landing, if you will.

The flight is over. The race is run. And he doesn't say, I'm almost finished running my race.

I'm almost finished with my fight. He says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

So he's anticipating the winter season and into the spring at a minimum with Timothy coming

and bringing him his coat, bringing him his study materials. And yet he says, my race is over. My fight is finished.

So there is the big picture. Come to me, bring Mark, bring these other things I require. And there is the immediate.

Here's my situation. There's no one here at the moment except Luke. I need some more men here.

So come and bring some. And in both cases, in the strategic view and in the tactical view, is how we would put it in military terms. Strategy is the war.

Tactics is the battle. Both senses. What am I doing today? What's going on in my life in this season? The key is preparation and awareness of where we are in God's plan and purpose.

We don't always know the specifics. Why has God put me in this situation? Why am I where I am doing what I'm doing? Experiencing benefit or experiencing hardship, experiencing plenty. Paul said, I have learned in whatever state I find myself to be satisfied.

I know what to do, whether I am abased or whether I abound. And in our lives, there are areas where we may be really struggling and other areas where we're abounding. And Paul says in another place, when you find that there are some things that are full and some things that are empty, if your glass has some fullness and some emptiness, think on the things that are true and honest and noble and lovely and of good report.

Don't dwell on the negatives except to use spiritual resources to deal with them. So this is the charge transitioning in this strategic view to the handoff of responsibility to pastors. Paul has trained pastors like Titus and Timothy and others in the work of the ministry.

These that he has sent like Crescens and Titus are deployed. Tychicus has gone to Ephesus. Tychicus is going to cross paths with Timothy.

And that'll be a means to liberate Timothy. For some reason, Timothy is the one Paul needs. Tychicus and Titus are not.

They have gotten the word. Paul has probably given them a similar charge. And now it is Timothy's turn to be in person with Paul.

This is a reminder to us that there are some things you can do at a distance. There are other things that require personal presence. I would be pretty sure that the same type of encouragement that is listed in this letter sent to Timothy has been given to these other men who are in ministry functions, in pastoral functions.

But he delivered it to them personally. Now he wants Timothy to come. And with this that has been given in writing, he's going to reinforce it.

He's going to illustrate it. He's going to answer questions about it when Timothy comes. And Titus and Crescens and these others like Tychicus have gotten their in-person training, their in-person charge, and they are now deployed.

Timothy has been deployed. He's going to come in, get a refresher, and go back out. So Paul is thinking because these are apostolic functions.

What is my gift? What is my purpose? This is a question we can ask ourselves every day. What has God given me and I'm good at it? Is it encouragement? Is it helps? Is it speaking the truth? Is it prayer? Is it just lifestyle evangelism in every sense of the word, evangel, meaning my life is a witness? There's a great song that says, your life will be your witness. And the scriptures show us the way.

That can be the assignment. And sometimes that is going to be in person. Other times it is the effect we have at a distance, as with Paul here.

I'm being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand. So Jesus says, repent. The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

He says it in Matthew 3, 2. He says it in Matthew 4, 17. And there are echoes of that in both Mark and Luke. At the end of his earthly presence, the Lord Jesus is in the garden.

And remember when he's in Gethsemane and he prays three times and the disciples fall asleep. And in Matthew 26, 46, Jesus says, rise and let us go. See, my betrayer is at hand.

Now that's a much more immediate at hand than I've run my race, finished my course, come to me before winter, bring my coat, because the time of my departure is at hand. But in immediate situations, as with the approach of Judas in the garden, as in larger circumstances, we need to be thinking about who we are and why we're here and trusting God to give us guidance. I would think that Paul was prayerful when he deployed his ministry associates and his partners in the gospel, his fellow workers.

And he knew who would be best in different areas because of other people he knew there who could receive them and who could encourage them and who could have fellowship with them. And so you have Priscilla and Aquila who he's going to greet in verse 19. And the household of Onesiphorus that we saw in chapter one, who has evidently passed away, but his household is there.

You would expect that Tychicus, when he's heading that direction, is going to link up with Prisca and Aquila and the family of Onesiphorus and others in that area. And there is a fellowship, but it's not always the same people doing the same thing. There is movement and some travel, others stay put.

Some are granting a blessing in hospitality and encouragement and support. Others are traveling with a fresh word from the Lord, another epistle of Paul. And this happens, of course,

with John and with Peter.

These letters that they write have to be delivered by messengers. And God is at work to will and to do for his good purpose among us as well as within us. So watching for the opportunities that God gives, being sensitive to the times and waiting for the Lord.

Paul says, at my first offense, no one stood with me. In verse 16, everyone forsook me. Well, it couldn't be everyone.

This reminds me of the way our current president speaks. He will be talking about a thing and he says, no one has ever seen anything like it. Everyone thought it ought to happen this way.

There is a superlative mode of speaking where you say, everybody's a crook or everyone has been misled or there's nobody that gets it. And it is hyperbole. It's exaggeration, meaning when you come away from it, you think, I've never seen anything like that.

It probably, if you sat down and enumerated what you have seen across your life, you'd say, well, of course, there was the Grand Canyon and there was a half-gnome at Yosemite. And there was, okay, well, maybe I've seen. But in the moment when Paul says, all forsook me at my first defense, may it not be charged against them.

You have to think if Luke was present, would he have forsaken Paul? Doubtful. Tychicus? Doubtful. Titus? Doubtful.

These men were there, but in terms of who should have been there specifically to support him. If this is a Roman trial and there are Roman believers who are in the church. And if you're up there on the platform and there's the pastor and two deacons and the church is empty, you could say everyone has forsaken the pastor.

Not counting the guys to my left and to my right. But in terms of who ought to be there, who you would expect to be there, who you would hope is there, they've all forsaken. And evidently the ministry was still in its early stages in Rome.

And these believers did not have the courage and the spiritual strength to stand with Paul at his first defense. But the Lord stood with him in verse 17 and strengthened him. So the message might be preached fully through me and that all the Gentiles might hear.

Notice, all the Gentiles might hear. Paul is not saying every Gentile in Rome and every Gentile in the Roman Empire is going to hear the gospel through him. All the ones who should hear it, all the ones who need to hear it, all the Gentiles who will hear it, who choose to listen to it, will have the opportunity.

And this is not only Paul's immediate preaching ministry, but his associates, his co-workers, fellow ministers of the gospel. And God prevented him from being found guilty, sentenced, and executed at his first defense. Even though there may have been Romans who said, I'm a Roman

lawyer, I have influence at the court.

I will stand with you and I will vouch for you. I will affirm, I will bear witness that you're not a threat to the empire. You're not bad-mouthing Caesar.

You're not going against what you have taught others in terms of fear God and honor the king. You're not dangerous and in need of execution. And then on the day, those people are too afraid to show up.

No one stood with me, but the Lord preserved me so that all the Gentiles will hear. Once again, this is a reflection of big picture thinking. Can you find individual exceptions? Of course.

This is strategy. And we have to learn to take a break, put our head up and look around, and remind ourselves of the larger moving pieces of God's plan and purpose, and not be driven by the immediate circumstances of the moment. If Paul did that, he wouldn't take time to write Timothy about his ministry.

This letter would have begun, to Timothy, grace, mercy, and peace, come to me before winter. I've got some things to tell you. Bring my coat, bring my books.

And this charge wouldn't be in there. Paul is thinking ahead. He is sure that the time of his departure is at hand.

What if his departure takes place before Timothy can make it there? He's going to give him a condensed version of what he hopes to coach him and teach him about in person. But he's ready for either eventuality. If it's near, if he's got another year, so much the better.

But he's thinking ahead, and he's planning for several possible futures. And this is an important spiritual value to have. We can pray, give us this day our daily bread.

We can also pray, Lord, plant my feet on solid ground. Guide me down the narrow road through the straight gate. These are our opportunities.

And you see the example here in this closing section of 2 Timothy. So, this very famous section, which is pretty straightforward. You don't have to exegete verses 6 through 8. I'm being poured out as a drink offering.

And this isn't I'm being shot like an arrow, or I'm being thrown like a stone. Pouring out a drink offering is a process. You can't pour something out all at once, unless maybe it's frozen solid.

But pouring a drink offering is a picture in the minds of those who have been to the temple and have seen the liquid poured out before the Lord. It begins, it takes place, and then it finishes. And being poured out like a drink offering is both the last of what is in me, is being dedicated to the Lord.

I had a beginning of my ministry. I had a rich, fulsome middle point where there were highs

and lows. I had wonderful moments where great crowds came to faith in the Lord Jesus.

And I had times where I was rejected and run out of town and stoned and whipped and so on. That's all a part of the process of pouring out the drink offering. The song, It Was a Very Good Year, I like older Frank Sinatra's version of that.

And in the last few lines, he's been talking about different years in his life, and he was somewhat amoral if you follow the course of the earlier verses. And when I was 21, it was a very good year. When I was 35, it was a very good year.

But he says now, and he didn't write this, but this is a significant closing to the song. Now the days are short. It is the autumn of the year.

And I think of my life as vintage wine from fine old kegs. From the brim to the dregs, it poured sweet and clear. It was a very good year.

And Paul has, in the spiritual sense, a similar view. That God has blessed his life, even in the hard times. And he's looking at it from the beginning to the end.

When it is poured out as a drink offering, you can think of that process. And in that process, he says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

Finishing a race is the most important part of the race. We saw this way back when we did Ecclesiastes. That a tall spirit isn't preferable.

It is the long spirit. It's not how tall do you stand at the beginning and how well do you leave the starting blocks. How do you finish? How do you endure? Are you sprinting across the finish line? Are you giving it the last ounce of your energy and ability to finish strong, finish well? The finish of the race is what counts.

Wouldn't it be different if these were reversed? If Paul said, I have finished the fight and I've run a good race. He doesn't say, I ran a good race. I fought a good fight.

Every time a punch was thrown at me, I endeavored to parry and thrust. I endeavored to defend myself and to throw my own punches when needed. This was a struggle.

There was opposition. And I was not knocked down. It was a good fight.

A bad fight would be some punch or other surprised me and knocked me down because I wasn't ready. I wasn't prepared. I wasn't in shape.

I hadn't practiced. But the race, it isn't, I ran a good race. I have finished the race.

That's what counts. Finish and finish well. And in both of these, the fight is more the immediate.

The fights are relatively short. If you've ever boxed a three-minute boxing round, as I know some of you have, because you went to the same school I did, and in the required class in

boxing, you've got a three-minute round. And by the close of the second minute and the beginning of the third minute, it is fire in your muscles.

If you've missed a few blocks and you've been punched, that last minute is tough. But it's an immediate thing. It's three minutes.

And however you do, it's how well you do in those three minutes. So you think of it more in the tactical sense. This is a short-term thing.

I've got to get through the minutes of this round. The race, races can take hours if it's a marathon. If it's a 10K, that's a lot of minutes of running.

And to finish the race requires planning for the long term, where in your fight, this is second by second, and watching and praying that you can defend yourself and be standing at the end of it, having done all to stand. And Paul says in both the fight, which is the short term, and the race, which is the long term, I have kept the faith. Faith got me through the immediate circumstances.

Faith got me through that long race. Because Paul has navigated immediate circumstances and long-term situations, with faith, and Paul has had his share of failures. We've seen this in the book of Acts and other passages.

But he says, Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day. There is nothing wrong with looking at ourselves and finding that there are areas where we're doing okay. We're always conscious of our failures.

We go to the Lord and pray Psalm 51 and 1 John 1 9, and I have erred and fallen short. My iniquities have carried me away in circumstances and situations, but we recover. We are cleansed.

We are restored and renewed, and we get back into the light, and we resume our journey on that narrow road. And if we continue to rely on God's grace through thick and thin, grace to keep us stable when things are going well, grace to sustain us when things are going badly, whether it is a fight, whether it is the immediate struggle and conflict, whether it is the longer-term wearing down. Everyone is more tired at the end of a race than they were at the beginning.

We're always worn down. We're always getting down near the bottom of the tank. It's almost empty.

In whichever case, we look to our faith, and we keep the faith. We sustain our faith. We rely on faith.

We go to the Lord in faith. We pray in faith. We look for provision and guidance in faith.

And when we do that, there is laid up for us the crown of righteousness. What is the fruit of faith? How do we attain righteousness? It is by faith. Righteousness by faith.

And when we live a life of faith, in both our fights and our race, the crown of righteousness, the righteousness we have laid hold of by faith, is waiting for us at the judgment. And he refers back again to the judgment, just as he did in verse 1. This is a powerful thing to say. Can we say it about ourselves? Not because we have a righteousness of our own making.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done. It is according to his mercy that he delivers us. We claim God's mercy.

We claim God's grace by faith. And the result is righteousness. We are judged righteous when the Lord returns.

And he will give that crown not only to Paul, but all who have craved his appearing. This word love is a powerful one. And it means to long for with a craving.

All those who crave his appearing. Who are thinking about it all the time. And it affects thoughts and words and actions.

What am I going to do today? The Lord is at hand. Let your moderation be known to all. The Lord is at hand.

He is near. So, we are going to pause here and take our break. But it is a wonderful example from the apostle Paul.

A great one for us to follow. As they say in citations sometimes, it is an example worthy of emulation. The Lord is going to grant to us a crown of righteousness.

The reward of that righteousness we grab hold of at his appearing. And what an exciting prospect. The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

That is the last line from Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus. A wonderful hymn. And something that ought to return to our minds frequently.

The things of earth seem important. They seem immediate. They seem very persuasive now.

But they will grow strangely dim in the presence of the righteous judge. And we are pushing for the finish to win the crown. We will take our break and come back.

We will pick up in verse 9.