

2Timothy 25-03-09b

We're ready now to continue looking at this section of 2nd Timothy chapter 4, down in verse 9, having reviewed his life, established his hope in the present and his expectation for the future, Paul is now going to talk about his immediate circumstances. And again, he is sharing this with Timothy and the Lord is sharing it with us for a reason. The upshot of the fight, the race, and the task of guarding the faith is largely complete.

It's very interesting to see what departure looks like in Scripture, in terms of phraseology. Paul said in Philippians chapter 1 verse 23, I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. He calls it in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 verse 8, absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Of course, he describes it in Philippians chapter 1, in the English it says that to live is good and to die is a gain, it's an advantage. In 1st Thessalonians 4 verse 14, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. And you see there the dual perspective when you talk about a departure from this life, from the perspective of those who remain, the person has fallen asleep.

From the perspective of the person who is making the transition, it is to leave the body and be present with the Lord. And the reconciling of those views is something that we have looked at before. But the idea here, just in closing of the fight, the agonizomai, Paul mentioned this in 1st Timothy chapter 4 verse 7 and 8, when he says in 1st Timothy chapter 4 verse 7, reject profane and old wives' fables and exercise yourself toward godliness.

This is the word that we get gymnasium from, gumnadzo, but it has this athletic struggle idea that is synonymous with the agonizomai we have in ours. So this is strain yourself, exert yourself is a good translation, exert yourself toward godliness. Bodily exercise, bodily effort profits little, but godliness is profitable for all things.

So this fighting the good fight is in the realm of godliness. It isn't just, wow, that was really hard, or this is a difficult challenge and I am getting satisfaction in meeting it and overcoming it. It is something where we are reflecting our walk of faith, our life before the Lord.

And that is what gives it meaning. Godliness is profitable for all things. Notice what he says at the close of 1st Timothy 4 verse 8, having promise of the life that now is and of the life which is to come.

Looking ahead to that evaluation day and the life that will follow that judgment. When the righteous judge evaluates us, this is going to be the basis for assignments. There are so many examples of this.

People who graduate at or near the top of their class have opportunities that others don't. If you are in military training and you wind up being honor man in your platoon, in the Marine

Corps they used to do this, I assume they still do, but you are a private. But if you do well, the highest man in the platoon or highest person in the platoon immediately gets a promotion to the next level, private to PFC, PFC to Lance Corporal.

If you do well in training, there is advancement and opportunity. If you graduate magna cum laude or summa cum laude, this is attractive to employers or to academic places that want to hire someone who really knows their stuff. What was your GPA? People often want to know or will ask.

And what is our GPA for this life? And I can tell you as one who went through academic struggles and had low grades to the point of danger, you can't change your low grades in the past, but in the time that remains, and I, by God's grace, was able to do this starting about halfway through my college career, to hit a stride and be in an area where I could do well and my later grades pulled up my bad grades from the beginning. And we have time remaining to us in this life and to press toward the mark of the high calling, forgetting those things which are behind. If they're a product of failure or shortcoming or apathy on our part, we can confess that and it's gone.

And we can look for that day and anticipate that righteousness crown because we are thinking about the appearing and we're looking forward to it. We don't dread it. We're not wondering if we're going to be patting the flames out from the flash fire of the fruit of our life, but we know that there's gold and silver and precious stones.

We know that we've been able to avail ourselves of God's grace. We've seen his work in us. God is at work in you to will and to do for his good purpose.

It is all of grace. We can take pleasure. We can be gratified that God has been able to do something in us, with us, and through us that is not of ourselves.

It is a gift of God, not of works. We're not boasting, but we can certainly anticipate the day in which that work is revealed and rewarded with a crown of righteousness. We should never dread the evaluation.

There's no excuse for that. If there's something dreadful in our past or in our present, we can acknowledge it. We can be cleansed of it and from it.

We can anticipate and claim the promise that God will work all things together for good, because we know we are called according to his purpose. It's his course. It's his fight.

It's his faith that we have the privilege of being involved with. That's what Paul is talking about here. So when he says that you need to shun profane myths and tales, we saw this in 1 Timothy, we're focusing on our faith.

It's easy to get caught up in the rat race. It's easy to live like any other American that doesn't have access to the throne of grace through the new and living way, that doesn't have the

privilege of prayer, that doesn't have the knowledge of Scripture, that doesn't have the ability to convert time into righteousness. We can have accomplishments.

We can get things done. We can look over a well-manicured lawn. We can look over a cleaned house and everything in its place.

We can arrange circumstances in this life to great advantage. But none of this is going forward. This world is going to be immolated.

It is going to perish in unquenchable fire. It is going to be rolled up like a scroll. What we take with us is the righteousness crown.

What we take with us is what has been laid up for us as treasure in heaven. So what is the point of short-term satisfaction and short-term gratification and the effort that brings about pleasing results in our eyes or the eyes of others that is so short-lived, so perishable? It is an evanescing. It is a vapor, as Solomon says.

But we can take these very same things, still do them well, still enjoy their present fruits and benefits, but they have been invested in eternity. They have been gilded. They have been translated into eternal life because we did them not just to get them done, not just to make ourselves or someone else happy, but we did it with an eye on the Lord's appearing.

And in that day of His righteous judging, we know that these things are going to count. They will matter beyond the moment, beyond the mundane and the earthly and the temporal. They have a lasting significance.

This is such a unique privilege, and I don't think it is spoken about enough in Christian circles. People think that the eternality of life is to help someone become saved so that they have eternal life, and that will be something that moves forward. I was instrumental in sharing the gospel, and someone came to faith.

What a wonderful privilege. It is a great opportunity. But what about all of the time, the days and the weeks in between those opportunities? Are those wasted days? Because it is only eternal if somebody's soul is transferred from darkness to light and into relationship with God and expectation of the future kingdoms.

Every minute, every hour, every waking moment, whatever we are doing, we can convert that into eternity. Everything is saved. The hour is saved.

The task is saved. The attitudes and the thoughts and the motivations, the love that we express, the fruit of the Spirit that we cultivate and and produce counts. It all counts.

I think that is a truth that is not emphasized enough in our modern and postmodern and metamodern Christianity. I think I mentioned a few weeks ago, you've got to look up and see what we are now. It's metamodernism.

That's a trip. So this is the point. We have this privilege of running a race, of struggling a good struggle, one that counts, one that matters.

And in this, Paul uses language that he uses in other places. He also talks about his race. You can turn over, I'll just give you one example.

There are many and you can do this with a concordance. Just turn to Acts chapter 20. And when he's addressing the Ephesian elders, he says in verse 25, Indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

Therefore I testify to you this day, I am innocent of the blood of all men. I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Take heed yourselves in the flock.

I know this, in verse 29, after my departure, same word that he's using in our context, savage wolves will come in, not sparing the flock. Watch and remember, verse 31, that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. This testimony that he has given over time has cost him.

You can read that in the earlier part of this address to the Ephesian elders. And he reminds them in verse 32, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. In verse 35, I have shown you in every way by laboring like this, that you must support the weak.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, it is more blessed to give than to receive. A word of the Lord not found anywhere in the gospels. And this is the survey of his life.

It turns out that he's going to have years ahead from talking to the Ephesian elders. But we should be able at any point to take stock. If you witness a car accident, if you see someone suddenly fall, I was up on the roof yesterday and thinking about the distance from the eaves to the ground, and one false move, catch your toe, go over, and your life could be forever changed or even ended.

I mentioned the day before yesterday, I witnessed a bad car wreck within feet of me. And it is a reminder that the kind of evaluation that Paul is doing, recognizing that his season of life is coming to a close and the season of his departure is at hand, we can ask ourselves regularly the question, what if this was my last day? What if this was my last season? And I might not be here in a week or two or in a month. I don't know what the future holds, but can I take stock now and say what Paul says? Up to this point, to the best of my ability, I have fought the good fight.

I have run with patience the race that is set before me. You see this, if you flip forward to Hebrews, you know my views on who wrote Hebrews. And when you get to chapter 12, you have the author, who I think is Paul, saying we're surrounded by this cloud of witnesses that he has enumerated in chapter 11.

Let us lay aside every weight and the sin, which so easily ensnares, and let us run with

endurance the race that is set before us. Very same metaphor. How do we run the race? How can we say with Paul, I have finished my course.

I have run a good race. Well, we have to remember what scripture teaches us about lives that reflect God's glory through faith, by faith. We have to lay aside weight, those impediments, things that distract us, that take away our thinking time.

We have to lay aside the sin that easily ensnares. Can't run if your feet are tangled up. What tangles up our feet? Sin, unaddressed sin, unconfessed sin, sin that becomes a habit and is repeated.

It ensnares us. We can't run at best. We hobble, we stagger, we stumble forward.

But to lay aside the weight and the sin that ensnares us, and we run with endurance. Don't wear out, don't give up, don't get discouraged. Whatever this course is, God mapped it out.

If it's got a hill and we're starting to slow down and breathe hard, God put that hill there. He has mapped out our circumstances and He will provide the strength to power our way up and to rest and coast down the other side. There is, with every test, a comfort from God, a way of leaving it, of getting through it and past it.

The way of escape really means, with every test, there is a way past it. Looking unto Jesus. And once again, in verse 2 here of Hebrews 12, this is loving His appearing, looking unto Jesus.

He is the author and the completer, the finisher of our faith. And we are looking to Him. And this is our motivation.

We love His appearing. We want to see Him. We want to be with Him.

We want to be approved by Him as the righteous judge in that day. And we measure our life, we measure our efforts, we measure our tasks, our hours, our weeks, everything that we say and do and think against the standard of that appearing. What will Jesus judge when He looks into our eyes and reviews the events and the experiences of our life? How did we do? Well, we think about that now and it encourages us and helps us understand what we need to do now so that we will be approved in that day.

Looking unto Jesus, author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured. Same word, run with endurance, the race. The Lord Jesus endured.

How? There was a joy set before Him. He was looking ahead to that day. His Father's approval of His life and His work, His willingness to expend Himself like a drink offering.

That's how the Lord Jesus did it. And He did it in His humanity. He did it in the filling of the Spirit, in the knowledge of the Scriptures, in communion with His Father through prayer and reflection on the truths of the Old Testament Word that was at His disposal.

For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. The shame didn't get to Him. He offloaded that.

He pushed it aside. He despised it. He rejected the idea that there was something shameful in being meek and lowly, humble of heart, walking around without the emoluments of the world and the approval of the religious establishment, despising the shame specifically of the cross, dying a criminal's death, being ridiculed and mocked.

And there was never a person less deserving of that ridicule than the Lord Jesus. But He didn't let that deflect Him. The injustice of it, the arrogance of it, the hubris, the rank evil of it did not deflect Him because He wasn't focused on that.

He was focused on the joy that was set before Him, not the circumstance that afflicted Him. And now He has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. And this is the place from which the Lord Jesus will come to judge in that day.

So many other passages we could go to. It's fascinating. There are other places where Paul encourages Timothy to fight the good fight, to run a good race is a metaphor he uses of himself in other places.

But we understand its meaning. And so as we move forward toward the close of this letter, you have in verse nine, be diligent to come to me quickly. This be diligent is effort.

Be diligent to come to me. And then the word quickly is the same one that the Lord Jesus uses in Revelation 22, when he says, behold, I come quickly. This is a word that means soon, suddenly, it can mean before long.

And we gain insight into the Lord's use of it. When he says, behold, I come quickly by the use of it here. When Paul tells Timothy, endeavor, be diligent to come to me quickly.

Come to me quickly. This is the word *tachaios*. We get tachometer from this or tachycardia, where something is speeding up.

Speedily would be the idea, but it's helped by its context. So how soon is Timothy going to be able to come upon receipt of this letter? As we've said, it requires preparation to make a journey of this length. You go from Ephesus to Rome.

He's got to find Mark, collect him and let him pack and be ready. There are others that will accompany him on this journey. He's got to stop by Troas and collect Paul's coat and get some manuscripts and parchments.

So he says, come to me quickly. Quickly in this context is going to be something probably measured in weeks. It will take weeks.

When Jesus says, behold, I come quickly. This is something that has sometimes been translated suddenly. I will come suddenly.

But the use of the word here tells us that in the sweep of history, in the scope of the plan and purpose of God, he is coming quickly. This is another one of the reasons I believe that for us, the rapture takes place at our departure, at the close of our life. That is the soon return of the Lord, his coming.

He is coming as soon as we are finished with this life. That's going to be our next experience. I don't believe that souls have been suspended for years and centuries and millennia in some sort of time where they can't live a life, they can't do anything.

They're just sort of waiting for history to close. This verse, the meaning of the word tekeos means you'd better be ready because it won't be long. And that's true for each and every one of us.

So be diligent, to come to me quickly, come to me as soon as you can. It shouldn't be very long. I shouldn't have to wait months to see you.

Then you have Demas and very interesting note here on Demas because he is in fact mentioned in other places. The fourth chapter of Colossians, Colossians 4.14, in writing to Colossae, Paul says toward the close of that letter, Luke, the beloved physician and Demas greet you. At that time, Demas was a fellow worker with Paul and with Luke.

Luke knows him well. In Philemon, verse 24, Paul says, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow laborers, greet you. This had to be painful for Paul because apparently Demas was a co-worker for some time and in several different situations and circumstances.

And to peel off late is tragic. I think all of us can think of people who maybe early on were companions in the faith. We went to church together.

We maybe went to school together, worshiped and studied and fellowshiped together, but something happened and they got distracted by things in the world. And they're no longer of that spirit and of that heart. And we don't enjoy the kind of fellowship that we once had with them.

And it is always painful. It's always hard to think of those that Paul says, you were running well, who hindered you? When he tells the Galatians, you were running well, who tripped you? That race metaphor. And we're together.

We're progressing down the road. We're negotiating the course and someone peels off. Someone gets distracted, deflected, gets caught up in the world and the things of the world when we are to love not the world or the things that are in the world.

And that includes the people. And in many cases, we have to look at someone as a casualty on the battlefield. We can pray for them.

This is the equivalent of saying, medic, come help this person. But we've got to move forward

with our own life, with our own mission to finish our race, to struggle our struggle as best we can. And in many cases, there are others who are left behind.

Inevitably, the hardships of this life, the resistance and the opposition in this life is going to thin out the Christian runners and a hill is going to fatigue someone and they're going to give up and quit. There will be a side trail. There have been great runners who misread the marks of where the trail is when it's a marathon and it runs through a town and they say, okay, turn here, go down this street.

We've cleared it. Somebody takes a wrong turn because they're not paying attention to the markers and the guidance. This is the path, walk ye in it.

And they wind up running away from the race. And by the time they realize it, it's too late. So Demas has forsaken me.

This is tragic news. And Paul leads with this. This is the hardest and most tragic piece of news.

So when he gives a current situation report, he tells Timothy, can you believe it? Demas has left me. Demas that was my companion when I wrote to Colossae, Demas that was my companion when I wrote to Philemon. Demas has left me, has abandoned, forsaken me because he fell in love.

Agapao, here as in verse 8, those who love the appearing, do you love what is coming in the future or do you love the world? Our love is going to fasten on something somewhere. Is it going to be a subjective love or an objective love? Is our love going to blind us? Is it going to warp our judgment? Is it going to cause our truth and right detector to give false information to us? Things seem right, but they're not. Demas didn't wake up one morning and say, let me twist the ends of my mustache and plot some sort of evil and I'll forsake Paul and become an enemy of the cross and fall from grace.

Demas no doubt thought he was doing the right thing. He decided, well, Paul has taken a left turn here and I can't stay with him anymore. I'm going to go over and do this thing.

And it is something that was related to the world instead of to the mission. And it blinded him. Demas didn't decide that he would become a forsaker and a departer and someone who is in love with the world.

How many times do you think he heard Paul teach and preach on this subject? Love not the world or the things that are in the world. But that knowledge didn't prevent Demas from going astray. Why? We have to keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

We have to love the day of his appearing and not let anything obstruct that view. Or we can be deceived. We can be deflected.

We can fall in love with the wrong world. Dr. Criswell has a sermon titled, Loving the Wrong

World. And it is not the world to come.

It isn't the world that God has in store for those of us who love the Lord's appearing. It is this momentary, ephemeral, temporary world that will inevitably turn to ashes in one's mouth. He fell in love with the world.

That's the participle. It's an aorist participle, having fallen in love with the world. That's what separated him from Paul.

You look at 1 Timothy 6, verse 17. Those who are rich in this present age, charge them not to be high-minded, nor to have their hopes set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything for our pleasantness, our enjoyment. It's a choice that we make.

Well, we're having one final study here in 2 Timothy. It's coming up next week. We will complete and conclude chapter 4 at that time.

But plenty to think on and to apply for ourselves in this wonderful concluding section. So we'll stop for today and close in a word of prayer. Father, we are so grateful for the riches that are to be found in your word.

Every page, every paragraph, every sentence is a communication from you for our benefit to draw us closer to you, to enhance our appreciation for the Lord Jesus, our expectation of the coming age where he will preside. And we have the privilege of serving with him if we qualify, if we remember what you tell us in these pages. We pray that the Holy Spirit will bring it to our mind, help us to remember the situation, the potential, the opportunities that we have by your grace, so that we can represent the Lord Jesus now and in the ages to come and reflect his glory in yours.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.