

# THE Rock COMMUNITY CHURCH

## 2 Timothy 4:6-8

### “Status Update: Paul's Past, Present, and Future”

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25:12

All right, it's a good day to be at church this morning, isn't it? So I just wanted before we jump in too far into our message, I just wanted to pause and acknowledge for a minute what this weekend is.

25:22

So this weekend we just reflected on Veterans Day a couple of days ago. So I just wanted to take a moment and thank all of our veterans in our church. So thank you for all that you have done in protecting and serving our country, especially this year.

25:38

It seems like there's news of war coming from all sides. I think we're reminded how significant that sacrifice is. So thank you for what you've done. So let's acknowledge that here this morning. With that, I also want to invite you to make your way to 2 Timothy 4.

25:56

2 Timothy 4 this morning. We're going to be coming down the final few verses next week. We finish our study of 2 Timothy. And this week we're going to look at some verses as the Apostle Paul kind of reflects upon his life.

26:12

So we've been looking over the course of this year really at the Apostle Paul as he has written these letters to Timothy and to Titus. And Paul has been this stalwart of the Christian faith. He has served as a missionary and traveled around to various towns and

planted churches and done all kinds of work.

26:34

For the sake of Jesus Christ and for his name. And so we see now in these final few verses Paul's life is coming to a close. And we see Paul coming to the end of his road. And so as he sits in this prison in Rome in the Mamertine prison, as he's sitting there cold and likely alone or perhaps with just a few prisoners there around him, it would be easy for us to consider the fact that Paul might feel forsaken by God.

27:01

And he might feel forsaken by his friends as he's going to talk about next week as he is sitting and reflecting on all those people who had stood by his side at one point in life. But they've left him one after another after another.

27:16

Only a couple are left there standing by his side. And as Paul has been forsaken by his friends and his associates as he's sitting there lonely in this dungeon in this prison underneath of Rome, I think it would be easy for us to assume that Paul is left to sit there and wonder about the results of his life's work.

27:35

See he's gone and served and done all these things and as he knows from updates that he's received from Timothy and Titus and others, there are false teachers that are circling around these churches that he's planted.

27:48

These false teachers are closing in on the churches that he has invested so much of his time and energy into. False teachers like Hymenaeus and Philetus that were called out earlier in this series, they were upsetting the faith of some.

28:01

And it would be easy for us to imagine the fact that Paul might be sitting there having a little pity party for himself, right? As he's trapped in prison, as he's feeling sorry for himself and he could easily wallow in self-pity as he sits there in prison, awaiting his trial and ultimately his execution.

28:18

But you know what? When we look at these verses, that's not what we find. When we

look at verses six through eight that we're going to look at this brief passage this morning, what we see is not Paul sitting wallowing in self-pity, but it's rather a glorious declaration of personal triumph as he reflects on how God is at work in his life in that moment, how God has worked in his life in the past and what he has waiting for him in his future.

28:43

We see this sort of a status update on Paul and where he's been and where he's going. Verse six looks at his present. Verse seven looks at his past. And verse eight looks at Paul's future and what's coming for him in the days and weeks ahead.

28:59

Paul's perspective at the end of his life, his dying perspective, seemed to be this incredible blessing to us because I think what it's going to tell us this week is it's going to tell us how to live well.

29:12

It's going to tell us how to die well. It's going to tell us how to walk this out and come to our final days without regrets in a way that we could look at our lives and reflect on what God has done in us and through us as Paul does.

29:25

We could hold our heads high like Paul does here in these verses. Let me read for you. I want to invite you to follow along in your copy or follow along on the screens. We're going to read 2 Timothy 4:6 -8 together this morning.

29:38

Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:6 that, "I'm already being poured out as a drink offering. The time of my departure has come. I fought the good fight. I finished the race. I've kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

30:01

These are the words of the Lord. Would you pray with me? God, we thank You for Your Word. God, we thank You that we can gather together, that we can come together with Your church and God that we can study Your Word.

30:13

God, that we can consider what You would have to say to us this morning. So as we look to and consider some of these final few words that the Apostle Paul would ever write, God, we thank You for the opportunity to consider and to read from these words this morning.

30:29

God, that as we talked about a few weeks ago, that You have breathed these out and God, that You have given us Your Word here for us to consider this morning. And so God, as we humble ourselves before Your Word, we pray that You would speak and that we would listen.

30:42

God, we pray that You would use these reflections of a man named Paul to challenge us, to encourage us, to push us forward, to cause us to reflect on the way that we live our lives and that we might be able to stand one day at the end of our life and to boldly say that we have fought the good fight, that we have finished the race that You have set before us and that we have kept the faith.

31:06

We give this time to you, we pray that you would use it for your glory and that you would use it for our good. And in Jesus' name we pray, amen. All right, well as we dive in, the first thing that we see in verse six is Paul reflecting on his present circumstances.

31:20

We see him reflecting on his present in verse six. Verse six, he says, I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come. You know, Paul is approaching his final days and it causes him to step back and to reflect on all that he has known in life, all that he has seen and done and accomplished as he's waiting for death to come, as those final days are being walked out.

31:46

You know, the reality is that death has a way of bringing clarity for us, doesn't it? Death has a way of bringing clarity in life because there's so many times, I don't know if you experienced this, but I certainly experienced this.

31:59

There's a lot of days where we get up and we get going and we just get so caught so quickly by the little details that require our attention that day. You know, we gotta get the

kids here and I've gotta deal with this at work and we've gotta make it to your mom's house in order for, you know, whatever the things are, all the things just crowd in on our day and days turn into weeks, turn into years.

32:22

I'm sure there's other people in the room that can resonate, it feels like time gets faster as we go, doesn't it? It feels like just yesterday I was having to remind myself, admittedly, I still have to remind myself.

32:32

I write the date out, it's 2023 now, not 2022, right? Every once in a while it comes out wrong. It's November. I'm gonna have to get a new number here soon. Time flies, doesn't it? As we get older, the days seem to keep going faster and faster and faster and it's easy for us to just get sucked into whatever it is that life has for us that day, we get sucked in and we get distracted and most of the time we don't necessarily focus on how we want to spend our time, we just spend it on whatever it is that's in front of us.

33:07

In fact, many of the times we even talk about wasting time, right? But death has a way of bringing clarity for us because we can be so easily distracted or confused or busy that we ignore the things that ultimately matter the most in life.

33:23

It's the reason why people who have that near-death experience we often see things change in their lives. Someone who gets a diagnosis that they don't have long to live, we see that priorities change in life.

33:36

They wanna spend the days that they've got left, they wanna spend them as well as they possibly can. They spend more time with family. They go work their way through that bucket list that they've been waiting all these things that they could have done but they've waited for some reason.

33:50

And so they go and they do the things that they want to accomplish or want to do before they run out of time. We often see near-death experiences, moments where our own mortality is placed in front of us, that they create change in us, that they cause people to make drastic changes as they realign their priorities.

34:10

You know, the Bible even acknowledges this and as we looked last year at the book of Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiastes 7:2 tells us it is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting.

34:24

For this is the end of all mankind and the living will lay it to heart. The author of Ecclesiastes is telling us it's better to go to a funeral than it is a wedding because a wedding we're just gonna go and party and have fun and blow the night away but a funeral causes us to stop, causes us to reflect, causes us to think about our own mortality because one day that is the end of all of us, right?

34:47

I've heard it said there's two things that are certain in life, right? Anyway, death and taxes, right? Death comes for all of us. wise for us to consider how we're going to approach that day instead of just accidentally bumping into it one day and going I hope it came out okay. It'd be wise for us to consider how we navigate ourselves to those final moments how we walk between here and there think this can be a good exercise for all of us when we slow down and consider that death comes for all of us it allows us to gain clarity in life it allows us to consider what truly matters in life and it causes us to live differently because we give priority to the things that should be given priority and we place those silly things in their proper perspective.

35:38

Can direct our priorities so as Paul comes to the end of his life he says that he's being poured out as a drink offering he uses this illustration of a drink offering so Paul borrows this image this illustration of a drink offering from the traditional Jewish custom of pouring out wine pouring out a drink offering at the base of an altar as they were making their Old Testament sacrifices.

36:01

We see it talked about in Exodus 29, Leviticus 23, and Numbers 15 if you want to jot those down and go back and learn about the the offerings and the sacrificial system. But essentially Jewish people would offer their sacrifices before the Lord and Paul is saying that he viewed his life as a sacrifice that had been laid before God. And his death was going to be no different.

36:28

Romans chapter 12 the Apostle Paul is writing a letter to the church in Rome he says in Romans 12:1, "I appeared I appeal to you therefore brothers by the mercies of God to

present your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your spiritual worship."

36:48

Paul is telling that the Romans there in Romans 12 that the acceptable the reasonable the only appropriate response for us we understand all that God has done for us the only reasonable response that we have is to give our lives back to him. Say God whatever you want from me my life is a living sacrifice before you use me how you see fit.

37:08

The same man who would say that we are to present ourselves as living sacrifices before the Lord is now saying as he comes to the end of his life that his life is being poured out as an offering as a sacrifice before the Lord. As a drink offering would be poured out before God in the Old Testament Paul says that his life has been poured out before the Lord as he's given everything that he had. Every moment of his attention every opportunity that he had he had given everything for the cause of Christ.

37:41

He had gone and he had faced all kinds of incredible challenges and Paul is prepared now to lay down his life in fact he's he's so certain that he's about to lay down his life that he uses the present tense here in this verse. And he says in this verse he says I am already being poured out as a drink offering.

38:00

He speaks of this in present tense to indicate the certainty my time has come. Paul was coming to an end, but as he references his death he he uses a term that I think is interesting to us. He speaks of his death by using the term departing. By calling death a departure, that the time of my departure has come, Paul's indicating with certainty that this life the end of this life is not truly the end. He knows that he's facing death in the coming days or weeks or whatever timeline Rome would set for his death, but he had no fear of death.

38:39

Because the word that's translated as departure here in our English translation is a word that's used repeatedly in Greek literature. It refers to it gives this picture to us of a ship that's lifting anchor and setting sail for for new waters. Gives us a picture of a soldier that's pulling the tent pegs up as he's packing up camp and preparing to continue his march as he continues onward in whatever the mission is. This word reflects the ideas of a forward momentum.

39:10

It indicates progress it indicates that my work here might be done but I have continuation that I have to keep going. Paul says it's time for me to depart, he doesn't say it's time for the end. Paul had been clear he knew that a day would come when he would leave his ministry on earth and he would go to be with Jesus. In fact he believed that it would be better that he was looking forward to that day when he could go and be with his Savior at some point.

39:39

He talks about that in Philippians chapter 1 he believed that it was better for him to leave Philippians chapter 1 Paul tells the church in Philippi for me to live as Christ and to die as gain. But if I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.

39:58

Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I'm hard-pressed between the two. For my desire is to depart and to be with Christ. For that is far better. He continues on and talks about how as long as he's here, he's got work to do.

40:12

So if God would take me home, great option, right? I get to go be with my savior and Paul looked forward to that day. It would be better for him to go and to be with Jesus. But as long as he was here, he told the Philippians, I've got work to do.

40:25

Well, the days between when he penned those words in Philippians 1, and now when he's writing these words here in 2 Timothy, as he's writing these last few words of his last letter, he continued to serve.

40:39

He continued to walk these things out. Now I was thinking this week, and just reflecting on our culture, we live in a culture that is so afraid of death. We're so afraid of death that Paul here in these verses is able to face death head on, because he knew his destiny.

40:58

He knew what came on the other side of this. We imagine death as this great unknown. Well, Paul doesn't seem to think of it the same way. Paul doesn't seem concerned about the unknown. Paul seems certain.



41:11

He knew where his destiny lied. And he was prepared to leave this broken world behind whenever Jesus said, let's go. I'm in, let's go. Paul reflects on his own mortality as he reflects on the present circumstances that are bringing him to his death that's coming in the coming days.

41:29

But as Paul has reflected on his present, now we see in verse seven, Paul reflects on his past. He reflects on his past in verse seven. He says, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, and I've kept the faith.

41:44

Yeah, Paul provides two images here in this verse talking about how he's fulfilled the work and kept the faith that God has passed along to him and given to him. And he refers to a fight, and he refers to a race.

41:57

A fight and a race. So first he says, I have fought the good fight. Now the good fight describes a competition. It describes a contest of some sort, right? You can't win a fight if there's no opposition that comes against you.

42:09

One must overcome opposition in order to win a fight. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul refers to the same idea that he's fighting the good fight of the faith. In fact, all throughout these letters, Timothy, Titus, we've been looking at this year.

42:29

Paul has reflected on the fact that there are false teachers, that there are enemies of the church. There are enemies of the truth that Paul, and by extension, Timothy and Titus, as he's challenged them, they have the responsibility to defend the deposit of truth that God had given to them.

42:46

Paul charges Timothy to defend the deposit, guard the deposit that has been entrusted to you. Preach the word, do all the things that God's word says, keep the word of God central in your life and in your ministry.

42:58

That's what we've talked about for the last month or so. But Paul is also not only contending with these false teachers that would come against the church. He was also facing pointed accusations from Rome.

43:12

He was facing persecution. He was facing governmental pressure to shut him up. The government wanted to make this guy just go away quietly because they were worried he was going to stir up the crowds.

43:24

He was gonna stir people up. Paul not only faced the false teachers, but he also was kind of in a fight against Rome. Perhaps more importantly than either of those things, he was contending with far more than Rome or a few men and women who would teach something different than the word of God.

43:43

Ephesians 6, it talks about how we fight with powers beyond what this world holds. Ephesians 6:12 says, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

44:02

Paul wasn't just fighting a fight against Rome. He wasn't just fighting a fight against the emperor or against people like Hymenaeus and Philetus that needed to be called out as they were teaching wrong things in the church.

44:14

He was fighting against the spiritual forces of evil that existed in his day. Can I tell you a secret? They still exist today. We don't just battle against the realities, the physical things that we see in life because there are times where something happens and it's just a physical thing, right?

44:36

You're driving down the road and you get a nail in your tire, your tire's gonna go flat and it may not have been a demon that did it, it might have just been the nail. But you know what? There's also times that it is spiritual forces of evil.

44:51

The best way to get yourself on the enemy's radar is to do what God has told you to do, is to boldly proclaim the good news of the gospel, to be a part of a church that is pushing back the darkness and is reaching in and taking the gospel of Jesus into spaces, whether it's in Southern California or whether it's on the other side of the world.

45:10

If you align yourself with the powers of Jesus, you align yourself in a way that God is pushing back the darkness, the darkness isn't going to like it. We don't wrestle just against flesh and blood. Paul certainly did not wrestle just against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil that are in the heavenly places.

45:36

Paul suffered an amazing list of dangers and pain and suffering. If you want to read a little bit about Paul's life story, go read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33. He lists there that he's been bitten by venomous snakes, he's been shipwrecked, he's had people throw big rocks at him and they thought he was dead and they left him outside the city and he wasn't dead.

45:58

There's thing after thing after thing that the apostle Paul faced trial after trial after trial, but he's shouting out in the midst of all of it what he said in Romans 8. Because in Romans 8:37 he said, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

46:15

We can win the fight not because we win a fight, but because Jesus is in charge in our lives and he's worth it. And whatever it is that happens, whether it was living or whether it was dying, Paul said either way, I'm okay with it because Jesus is in control.

46:32

It means that as I think I've expressed this to you before, talking about Paul's attitude that he expressed there in Philippians 1 that we just read a minute ago, the government that the authorities were trying to shut Paul up.

46:46

And you know what he did? They said, hey, stop talking about Jesus or we'll kill you. He goes, okay, cool, I'll go be with Jesus. That's a good, thank you, good news, right? They

said, no, no, no, no, no, don't do that.

46:58

You're going to stay alive. We're just going to leave you alone. You can't go be with Jesus. He said, okay, cool, I got work to do. I got work to do anyways. I'll go keep talking about Jesus. No, no, no, that's not going to work.

47:09

You can't go keep, we can't just let this guy run around and keep telling people about Jesus. We'll put him in jail and we'll tie him to a prison guard 24 hours a day. He goes, you're going to tie me to the same guy for eight hours at a time that I could just, and he's just got to sit there and listen to me?

47:23

Cool, I'll tell him about Jesus. And it didn't matter where he was, it didn't matter what was going on in life. He was going to do what God had called him to do in the place that God had put him. Again, they couldn't shut him up, they couldn't stop him, and even if they did, his response was, okay, I'll go be with Jesus.

47:44

In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. So now as Paul is reflecting on his life, he's reflecting on the fact that his days are coming to a close. In verse seven, he's able to look back and say, I have fought the good fight.

48:00

What an incredible testimony for Paul to be able to reflect on his life and to say, I fought well and I did the job that Jesus gave me to do. He says, I fought well, he also says, I finished the race.

48:14

Finishing well is so important, so important in the witness of a Christian. I think many of us could probably think of whether it's a famous preacher, whether it's someone in our own lives, someone who walked the Christian faith out pretty well for a while, but then something went sideways at some point in their life and they walked away.

48:32

And it blew up whatever testimony they had by discrediting it. Well, they were just a hypocrite all along. Finishing well is so important in the witness of a Christian. Paul said

he did not work for a little while and then give up, fall, walk away.

48:53

He made it from start to finish. Paul said he had completed the course that God had for him to run. I want you guys to notice something as we look at this. If you look at verse seven, he says, I have fought the good fight.

49:06

I have finished the race and I have kept the faith. If you notice something, Paul doesn't brag about winning the race. That was Luke's thing that he did at the end of his gospel. If you were with us, you remember that one.

49:17

Luke bragged about winning the race with Peter, but Paul simply says, I have finished the race that God gave me to do, gave me to run. There was no ego here. There was no comparing himself to how the others around him had fared.

49:32

His focus was on the Lord. His focus was on everything that God had set before him, everything that he needed to do. He had finished the work that God had given him. He had run the course that God gave him to run.

49:47

In fact, the writer of Hebrews notes that each believer has a course that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1 tells us to run with endurance the race that is set before us. That means that I'm going to have a course that's set out for me.

50:01

You're going to have a course that's set out for you and they may not be the same. Paul had a course that was set out for him and he didn't need to live my life the way that I'm supposed to live mine.

50:10

He needed to live his life the way that he was supposed to live his. The course for each of us is unique. The calling is that each of us should run the race, that we should finish the race that is marked out for us.

50:23

Because the course that we're on is the course that the sovereign God of the universe, that the God who loves us more than anyone else, that knows more than anyone else, that knows all things and has power in all things and loves us infinitely.

50:36

That is the course that God has given us to run. We don't need to complain about how ours is different than somebody else's. We need to say thank you for the one that he's given us. Like Paul said, our goal should be finishing the race that God is laying out before us.

50:51

Paul has been talking about this idea of finishing the race. Paul's example illustrates clearly, vividly, the Christian doctrine of perseverance. Christianity is not just about starting well. It's about finishing well.

51:06

Anybody, this would be a perfect New Year's Day message for us to preach through. Anybody ever had one of those famous New Year's resolutions where you start January, yeah, I'm going to eat better, I'm going to exercise, I'm going to read more, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that, all those things.

51:23

By the time February rolls around, there's books on the shelf that are collecting dust that you started it. You might have made it a chapter or two in, but then you just laid it aside. That diet just kind of fell by the wayside, that treadmill sits and you hang dirty clothes on it for the rest of the year.

51:39

Yeah, everybody's excited about something when it's new, right? There's lots of people that start things well. Paul's saying here, it's not about starting things well. The thing that separates those who are committed from those who aren't is the fact that some people finish well.

51:57

It's not those who begin to follow Christ who truly know what it means to follow Christ. It's not those who begin to follow Christ who inherit eternal life. There's lots of people who will say, yep, that sounds good, I'm going to follow Jesus and they do so for a few

weeks, they do so for a few months, they do so for a few years.

52:15

But then ultimately something else in life becomes more attractive to them than Jesus and so they decide to go chase after other things. By going and chasing after other things, you know what they're indicating?

52:27

They're indicating that they didn't ever really know who Jesus was and they didn't ever really have a relationship with him. They didn't ever really know what it meant that Jesus had laid down his life so that he might adopt them as his son or his daughter because if they did, there is no walking away from that.

52:43

There is no walking away. Hey, so I got this lottery ticket. It's worth billions of dollars. Can I give it to you? Nah. That's a crazy person, right? That's a crazy person. We would never walk away from the most incredible gift that anyone has ever given.

53:01

We would never walk away from that. So if somebody walks away from Jesus and walks away from eternal life, that tells me they didn't really have any idea what he was offering him to begin with. That's not just my opinion, right?

53:15

I talked about that last week. Don't just take my word for it. Let's see what the Bible has to say. It is not those who begin to follow Christ who inherit eternal life. It's those who finish. It's those who persevere to the end.

53:28

In fact, Hebrews 3:14 says, For we have come to share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. We come to share in Christ. We come to salvation. We receive that offering of salvation if we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

53:51

The difference between real Christianity and counterfeit Christianity is finishing. It's finishing. Those who know Christ will finish, but those who do not finish, who walk away and chase after whatever other shiny thing pops up in life, their falling away proves that

they never really knew Jesus to begin with.

54:12

Paul says, I have fought the good fight. He says, I have finished the race. Finally, by doing those two things, he says that he has kept the faith. By completing the work that God had given him to do, he had kept the faith.

54:26

Paul had charged Timothy in 1 Timothy 6 and 2 Timothy 1. He told Timothy to guard what had been entrusted to him. Paul is saying that he had succeeded in that mission, to guard what had been entrusted to him, to preach the word boldly, to boldly stand on the truth of God and not to apologize for what God had said.

54:47

To stand for the truth of God was at the forefront of Paul's mission. Paul is reflecting on this mission and saying that he had fulfilled his duty in fighting the good fight, in running the race, in finishing the race.

55:01

He had fulfilled his duty and now he was handing that responsibility to Timothy, to others, to guard the deposit that Paul had spent his life protecting. Paul is reflecting on the fact that he's coming through these final days, reflecting on his present circumstances.

55:16

Verse 7 points backwards towards his past, but verse eight, we see Paul point forward to what's waiting for him in his future. Verse eight, he says, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day.

55:32

Not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing. You know, Paul now turns his attention to what's awaiting him in his not so distant future. He's gonna stand before the righteous judge of the universe.

55:47

He's gonna stand before Jesus himself. Paul notes that Jesus has a crown of righteousness waiting for him, not only for him, but for all who have loved his appearing.



This idea, the crown of righteousness, I got stuck on this this week.

56:04

I think this is a beautiful and a fascinating picture as I've been chewing on this and considering what this looks like, what this means, why this in comparison to all the other things that God could have perhaps given to Paul.

56:16

You know, Paul doesn't look forward to a crown of power or a crown of glory or a crown of strength or wealth or anything else. And he's looking forward to this crown of righteousness that Jesus is going to give to him.

56:26

This is a beautiful promise from the Lord to us because there are many in this life who have achieved power and wealth, success, strength, all those other things, but this crown is not one that's familiar to any human that has ever walked the face of the earth, save for one.

56:43

Because there are many who have achieved power and wealth and all these things, but this crown is not familiar because perfect righteousness is an achievement that only one man or woman, one human throughout human history, there is one that has achieved perfect righteousness before God.

56:59

I will. We can only attain the righteousness that is necessary of us. We can only attain that through the work of Jesus Christ. And we're told in scripture, several different places, that we receive the righteousness of Christ when we come to faith in him, when we place our faith in Jesus for salvation.

57:25

The Bible tells us that we are recipients of the righteousness of Christ, that we are credited with the righteousness of Jesus, that as he lived perfectly and died a death that he didn't deserve, there's this transaction, there's this trade that takes place, that our sin was placed on Jesus and he paid that debt that he didn't know.

57:46

And the righteousness that Jesus had earned is placed on our account, even though we

don't deserve it. That God looks at us and he doesn't see our sinfulness anymore, he sees the righteousness of Jesus on our account instead.

58:00

We see it in Romans chapter three and Philippians chapter three, if you wanna jot those down and go back and look at those things. But I was reading this week and a light bulb turned on for me. When I read this statement, Denny Burke is a pastor.

58:16

He was writing a commentary on 2 Timothy. I read this in there. I wanted to just pass it along to you and then kinda explain why it jumped out at me. Denny Burke, talking about this topic, he said that a crown was the laurel wreath that was placed on the victor's head at the end of an athletic competition.

58:33

The crown in this case consists of righteousness. This crown points forward to the time in which God will make his people what he has already declared them to be in Christ, righteous. Only those who persevere will wear that crown.

58:48

God awards this crown not only to the faithful ministers, but also to all who have loved his appearing. In other word, this reward goes to all believers who persevere. There's a lot of things in this life that we can look forward to.

59:03

There's a lot of things in life that we long for. I think we can especially long for lots of things that heaven is gonna hold for us one day. That we're gonna have no more pain, that there's not gonna be any tears, that all these things, we've got paradise to look forward to.

59:20

It's a good thing, but there's few things that are more exciting to me than this one. because if you've lived this life of faith for any amount of time, you know that there's this wrestle, there's this fight that lives within us, right?

59:37

Because the Bible tells us that we are made right, that we receive the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but I wake up in the morning and I don't feel very righteous. I walk through

my day and I face those temptations and I slip and I stumble and I fall and I find myself thinking those same words that Paul said when he said, you know, the things that I don't want to do are the things that I find myself continuing to do.

01:00:01

The things that I should be doing are the things that I still struggle to do. There's this fight within us where the spirit is at work in us, but the old man, the old flesh, that old sinful nature still exists in us.

01:00:14

And so there's this fight that we try to overcome temptation, but there's this wrestling within us between these two influences. You know, we're set free from the power of sin in Christ. That happens at the moment of salvation.

01:00:29

We're set free, we're given a new nature, but that doesn't mean that we're perfect. We still wrestle with that flesh. We still have to regularly fight to put those things to death in us. And if we don't succeed, we still find ourselves in that pattern of having to repent of our sin and come back to Jesus and confess and ask for forgiveness again.

01:00:51

And there's few things that are more frustrating and demoralizing in my life than having to come and confess the same sin again. Jesus, I'm back and I did it again, right? We have those things that we fight, that it's that vice, it's that attitude, it's that temptation that pops up in our life time and time again.

01:01:09

We find ourselves regularly repenting and confessing and being restored and then slipping again and sinning again and repenting and confessing. And it's this ugly cycle, but to be crowned with the crown of righteousness is for us to be made righteous.

01:01:24

The war with sin is over one day. That the righteousness of Christ is given to us, not just on our account, but it is given to us where the war with sin will be no more. There will be no more, I'm sorry, Jesus, I did it again.

01:01:39

One day we're gonna stand before him and we're gonna be made right and our

relationship with him will be made perfect. And we will have the righteousness of Christ that lives not just on our account, but it lives in us.

01:01:52

We will no longer be trapped in this epic war with our sinful desires and with the flesh. That's a day I'm looking forward to, right? That's a day that we get to be set free from this fight. We get to put our weapons down and just live in the joy of our salvation.

01:02:08

That becomes easier the longer we walk in this life, right? You have victory today, you have victory tomorrow, you have victory the next day. It gets easier. It's gonna be a lot easier one day. It's gonna be a lot easier one day when that crown of righteousness is given to those who love Jesus and look forward to his appearing.

01:02:30

You know, Paul, in these verses, Paul is reflecting the fact that he has learned something and has lived out something that I hope to be able to say of myself one day as I reach the end of my road, trying to live out in my own life.

01:02:44

But Paul lived with the end in mind. I don't remember which preacher I heard say that, which book I read somewhere along the lines that, you know, I tried to Google it, there's enough people that have said it at this point, it's just, it's out there.

01:02:57

But I heard somebody say it once, you know, live your life with the end in mind. That means what is it that you want to be able to write on your tombstone one day? What do you want your epitaph to be?

01:03:08

You know, loving husband, loving father, godly pastor, all, you know, what are the things that I want to be able to have people that loved me say about me one day? How will I be remembered? And once I determine that, then I get to work backwards from there.

01:03:27

Then I get to work backwards because, well, if I want to be a loving husband, I better live today as a loving husband. If I want to be a good dad, I better, if I want to be able to hear that said of me one day, I better live today, choose to love my children in the way that

one day they'll say that I was a good father.

01:03:44

We live our lives with how we want the end to come out. We live with the end in mind. Paul lived his life with the end in mind. Paul focused his time, his energy, his efforts, everything that was in Paul in any way, shape, or form, everything that he had was focused on the mission of Jesus Christ.

01:04:09

That's how he could say in this passage that he fought well, that he finished the race. All of that with the ultimate goal of being able to stand before Jesus with his head high. And to hear those famous words that we recognize from Matthew 25.

01:04:27

That as we hope to stand before God ourselves one day and hear those famous words, well done, good and faithful servant. That's the goal for me. I think that's the goal for most of us, that we would live our lives in a way that one day we could stand before God, not ashamed and kicking rocks, and I hope he doesn't call on me, but to stand there with our heads high.

01:04:50

Not that we lived perfectly, but that we did everything in our power, that we did everything we possibly could, that we finished our race, that we fought the good fight, that we did our job like we talked about last week.

01:05:03

Paul arrived at the end. He knows these are his last few days. He was able to say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. So I think the question for us as we sit here, as we consider, as we see Paul's recollection on how he lived his life and was able to stand before God one day in his near future with boldness, with his head high, causes me to ask just a fairly pointed question.

01:05:36

What changes do you need to make in your life so that you'll be able to say those same words in your final days in the future? What's it gonna take for you to be able to come to the end of your life and to say, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race that God gave me, I have kept the faith?

01:05:54

Because whatever those changes are, I know, I've heard it, I've thought it in my own mind, I've certainly heard it time and time and time again. People say, oh yeah, yeah, before I die, I'll get some things straight.

01:06:08

I'm gonna live my life now the way that I want to, and then one day in the future, I'll give God his days. You know, when I'm old, and I don't get to have any more fun, right? You know, as I get closer to that, unfortunately, we don't know when that day comes.

01:06:25

Today might be the day. Next week might be the day. 100 years from now might be the day. We don't know when that is. So why would we wait? Even if we knew that it was gonna be 100 years from now, why would we wait?

01:06:46

Because if I wait 99 of those 100 years, I don't think I'm gonna stand before God with my head high knowing, you know, I gave you one. Why would we wait for some unknown day in the future to do what we could do today?

01:07:02

To take the opportunities that we have today, to speak to the coworkers that we work with today. We don't know when the last opportunity is that we're gonna get to talk to that person. Co-workers get hired and fired all the time.

01:07:16

Tomorrow might be the last day that you see that coworker. People move in and out of our neighborhoods, in and out of our lives all the time. We don't know how many opportunities we get. So the challenge that I think Paul would give to us is live your life so that one day you can stand before God with your head high and say, I did what I could.

01:07:40

I fought my good fight. I finished my race. Let's live with the end in mind so that we'll be able to do what Paul did. When we come to our final days, we'll be able to stand before God with boldness, saying it may not have been perfect, but I did what I could.

01:07:57

Our prayer team is gonna be down here after the service. If you need prayer in anything that's going on in life, they would love to pray with you. We also have our prayer wall out the back doors and off to the right.

01:08:07

If you wanna write your prayer requests down and leave it there, we would love to pray for you in that way as well. But at this time, I just wanna invite you, would you pray with me now? God, we thank you for the apostle Paul.

01:08:25

God, we thank you for how you radically changed his life, knocked him off of his path, turned his world upside down, and he was obedient to do what you invited him to do, what you commanded him to do.

01:08:44

That he was able to stand at the end of his life and say, I fought the good fight, I finished the race, I kept the faith. God, I pray that as we have had opportunity to consider and to study these books together this year, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, as we've had opportunity to consider how Paul has lived his life out in front of these other young men.

01:09:12

God, I pray that you would help us to live our lives out, that we would take every opportunity, that we would do our job, that we would do what you've called us to do, that we would be able to stand before you with our heads held high one day.

01:09:26

Say we did our best. God, help us to live with our end in mind. Help us to live and give priority to the things that truly matter in life. To live with eternity in mind. And to walk towards that day with boldness.

01:09:49

Not expediting it, but God knowing that one day you're going to bring our path to an end. And we want to be able to stand before you one day with our heads high. God, we thank you for Jesus. We thank you for the cross.

01:10:08

We thank you for adopting us as your sons and your daughters for those who have

placed their faith in you. God, we look forward to that crown of righteousness that is coming one day as we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus and as we are made perfect as this flesh is destroyed one day.

01:10:29

We look forward to your coming. Help us to work hard in the meantime. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.