

II Timothy, Sermon #31

- Napoleon said, “I die before my time; and my body will be given back to earth, to become the food of worms. . . .”
- P.T. Barnum in 1891: “Ask Bailey what the box office was at the Garden last night.”
- Humphrey Bogart (1957): “I should have never switched from scotch to martinis.
- “My God, what happened?” – Princess Diana 1997
- “All of my possessions for a moment of time” (Queen Elizabeth I of England).

Voltaire died a terrible death. His nurse said, “For all the money in Europe, I wouldn’t want to see another unbeliever die! All night long he cried for forgiveness.”

John Newton, writer of “Amazing Grace,” (1807): “I am still in the land of the dying, I shall be in the land of the living soon.”

II Timothy 4

A person’s last words are significant.

They are a window that helps us to look into his heart, or a measure that helps us evaluate his life.

In this chapter, we have Paul’s last words—Paul knew that the end was near.

I’ve entitled this two-part series “The Epitaph of the Apostle Paul”—very personal comments/remarks

II Timothy 4:6

Let us stand for the reading of God’s Holy Word.

II Timothy 4:6-8

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

The Epitaph of the Apostle Paul

Paul examines his life from three perspectives.

- In verse 6, he looks at the close of his earthly life and ministry and declares he is ready.
- In verse 7, he looks at the past and declares he was faithful.
- In verse 8, he looks at the future and anticipates heavenly honor and reward.

Vs. 6 – We see the present; Vs. 7 – the past; Vs. 8 – the future

I. The life which now is—the present

- What a horrible feeling it must be to come to the end of one's life and have nothing but regrets at a wasted life.
- How important to be honest with ourselves.

Vs. 6-8

- With our last breath, may we give expression to language so full of joy.
- The sun of life is setting; the day will soon be gone; the night of death is near.

Vs. 6 – “offered” – this is a word used of pouring out a drink offering—libation (Numbers 28:4-7)

- The drink offering was poured over the sacrifice, which was really hot because it was on a brazen altar with fire underneath it.
- You know exactly what would happen. The drink offering would go up in steam.
- It would just evaporate and disappear.

Paul's life would soon disappear in a vapor.

What is our life?

“It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14)

“Offered” is a figure taken from the Old Testament sacrificial system.

- While alive, he had offered himself to the Lord as “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” – Phil. 2:17 – Paul poured himself out for the Philippians.

Paul’s speaking of his death as a final offering. This referred to the type of execution he expected to suffer.

- Because Roman citizens were not to be crucified, he knew that he would likely be beheaded, literally pouring out his own blood for the Lord.
- A bloody spectacle

It would have been sickening to see him put his head on the chopping block, to watch the strong Roman soldier lift that sword above his head, then with one fell swoop sever the head from the body and see the head drop into a basket on one side and the body fall limp and trembling on the other.

Paul is ready to be poured out and used up.

Observe the Manner in Which Paul Speaks of Death – vs. 6b – The time of my departure is at hand. The time had come. His death was certain. He was about to die.

Death is imminent

- There are many people within a step of the grave, and they want to deny it.
- For whom the bell tolls—we want to believe it tolls for someone else.

Death is inevitable – it is appointed unto men once to die (Hebrews 9:27).

- The old man under the weight of years and people say, “His time is short.”
- A sick person is the victim of some dangerous disease, and they say with tears in their eyes and sadness in their hearts—“He cannot live till morning.”

But many without physical affliction don’t think that they themselves may follow **soon**.

When King David was running for his life, he said, “there is but a step between me and the grave” (death) – I Samuel 20:3

Paul recognized the need to treasure time.

He had maybe a couple of months to live—v. 9, 13.

We do not know how long God will hold open the door of opportunity for us.

“Redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16)

God gives us many things without limit—His love, His grace, mercy.

But His gift of time is strictly measured.

The time of my departure is at hand.

This word “departure” is like a diamond—multi-faceted

“Departure” is the word for unyoking an animal from the cart or the plow.

- Death to Paul was rest from work/labor. He would be glad to lay the burden down.

Secondly, departure is the word for loosening the chains, to be let out of the bonds, fetters or stocks.

- Death for Paul was a liberation and a release.
- He was to exchange the confines of a Roman prison for the glorious liberty of the courts of Heaven.

Thirdly, departure is the word for loosening the ropes of a tent.

- For Paul it was time to leave camp again.
- Many a journey he had made across the roads of Asia Minor and of Europe.
- Now he was setting out on his last and his greatest journey: He was taking the road that led to God.

Fourthly, departure is the word for loosening the mooring ropes of a ship.

- Many a time Paul had sailed the Mediterranean, and had felt the ship leave the harbor for the open and deep waters.
- Now he is to launch out into the greatest deep of all; he is setting sail to cross the waters of death to arrive in the haven of eternity.

For a Christian, death is exchanging the burden of earthly life for the eternal joy of heaven.

Philippians 1:21, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Paul did not die like other men.

- The apostle faced his **departure** with no feeling of futility or despair but with the assurance that his real life was only about to begin.
- He faced earthly dying without fear.

“Death is swallowed up in victory” . . . “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

Philippians 1:23, *“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.”*

II Corinthians 5 talks about our earthly house being dissolved—our body.

We have a building of God, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven.

II Corinthians 5:8, *“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”*

The death of the Christian may appear to be like that of the lost person, but there is a vast difference.

For all true believers, the Son of God has abolished death.

II Timothy 1:10, *“By the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

We are not exempt from the law of death, but we are from its sting, grave and grip.

The day of the Christian’s departure is his ascension-day to Heaven, where he shall be crowned with “joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

- Such knowledge produces joyous anticipation.
- The Christian’s death is a departure to be with Jesus.

Such a prospect may well rejoice the heart and give sweet consolation in our last journey.

Paul always had been ready to make the ultimate sacrifice, but now the possibility was about to become reality: **the time of my departure has come.**

The clouds of death had come and still hovered over him.

But for Paul, they were not dark clouds - Like Peter, he viewed death simply as “the laying aside of his earthly dwelling.”

II Peter 1:14, *“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.”*

It was a move from his demanding and painful life on earth to the infinitely glorious life of peace and rest to come, when he would forever be with the Lord.

- I am ready to go; my work on earth is done.
- My time to depart has come.

“The Epitaph of the Apostle Paul”

Let us stand for closing invitation.

Paul was about to move off the scene and Timothy would have to take his place.

There is a special urgency for Timothy to perform his ministry with steadfastness, because Paul's ministry was about to end.

That's why it's important that we make full proof of our ministries.

Things that are inevitable should be prepared for!

- Death is inevitable – there is only one way to prepare for it.
- Repent of our sins and trust Jesus alone for salvation

Then, and only then, are we ready for death.

Gideons Offering