

“Dying Confession”
2 Timothy 4:6-8
(Preached at Trinity, November 6, 2022)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul is writing this letter from the cold, dark, Roman prison. He knows his days are limited – "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."
2. Paul has time to reflect on his life. It had been some 30 years since he met Christ on that Damascus Road. He had spent these years with one purpose and goal – to serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all of his heart. Now there is no tone or remorse or regret over anything at all. There is only a great peace in knowing that he had faithfully fulfilled his journey and now he was ready to meet Christ.
3. As he looked back over his life Paul could see that he had lived the life that he had preached. He was always an example to the brethren. Now he sees his death as a willing sacrifice of himself for the cause of Christ. This too was consistent with his preaching.
Romans 12:1 NAU - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*"
4. This morning I want us to examine these words by the great apostle. I title this sermon, “Dying Confession.” Paul is like a man on his death bed. What is striking is the amazing confidence he manifests in this moment.
 - a. Death was something he was ready to receive without fear.
1 Corinthians 15:54-55 NAU - "But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"
 - b. Paul looked upon death as the higher calling.
Philippians 1:21 NAU - "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."
5. All of us are going to pass through death into eternity. All of us are dying. Like sand pouring through the hourglass, our lives are slipping away. We must always be mindful of our mortality
 - a. Some of us will die unexpectedly without warning. Some will have time to contemplate as life leaves our body.
 - b. What if you knew that you only had hours to live? As you took inventory of your life what would you see? Would you lay there in peace and confidence or would you weep and tremble at a wasted life. Would you see things that you wish you could change; things that cause you agonizing grief? Or would you find a life that was focused and filled with fulfilling God's call upon your life?
6. This morning I want us to examine these words of Paul as we look at our own life. Can you say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith:"

Remember, it is never too late to repent and change course. It's never too late to begin anew. Where there is life there is hope. God promises, May these words from Paul serve as an example for us so that when we come to the end of our course we will have no regrets.

I. "I have fought the good fight"

A. The Christian life is a battle, a great struggle between good and evil – The Bible often describes it using the metaphor of war.

1. Paul's continued exhortation to Timothy was for him to continue in his duties as a soldier of Christ
1 Timothy 1:18 NAU - "This command I entrust to you, Timothy, *my* son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,"
1 Timothy 6:12 NAU - "Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."
2 Timothy 2:3-4 NAU - "Suffer hardship with *me*, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."
2. This is true for every Christian – we are all soldiers in the greatest war ever fought *J.C. Ryle* - "There is no holiness without a warfare."
Warren Wiersbe – "The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground.
 The word for fight is ἀγών which refers to a great struggle.
 We get our word agony from it
3. Ours is a "good" fight. It is "the" good fight.
 - a. Fighting and warfare are often seen in the negative. But ours is a good fight. A noble war. A worthwhile struggle.
 - b. Most people give great energy to what they feel is important – but they are useless struggles to fulfill carnal desires.
 Ours is a good struggle – a mighty battle against the forces of evil

B. Our Battle is both Defensive and Offensive.

1. The believer is in a defensive war against a triune enemy
 - a. Satan is our arch enemy. He lies and deceives. He tempts and entices us to sin against our Commander – to commit treason. He strives to cripple us with fear.
 - b. The World – This world system has its own rules and ways.
 - (1) It presents its pleasures – intoxicated with hedonism.
 - (2) It presents its values and standards of morality.
 The world reacts strongly against those who dare oppose.
 - (3) Its ways are opposed to God.
 God opposes the world and will crush its rebellion.
James 4:4 NAU - "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

- c. Our own flesh that continually draws us back to sin
Romans 8:5-6 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,"
 - 2. The Believer is also in an Offensive War
 We are taking the battle to the enemy as we preach the gospel
Matthew 16:18 NAU - "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."
 This can be interpreted both defensively and offensively. It pictures the armies of Satan rushing out of the gates of hell and the saints charging the gates.
 - C. Fighting the "good fight" demands that we stay focused and do not become distracted. It demands that we stay armed and ready to fight.
2 Timothy 2:4 NAU - "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."
- II. "I have finished the course"
 - A. Paul saw his life as a Divine appointment
 - 1. Paul believed that God had placed him on a particular course.
Acts 20:24 NAU - "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."
 - 2. For Paul, death was merely the finishing of his course.
 This is what he meant when he said,
Philippians 1:21-24 NAU - "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake."
 - 3. Paul refers to his death as, "the time of my departure." It is like a ship weighing anchor departing for a voyage, departing at the appointed time according to the designated schedule. This is how we should see death – as departing at the appointed time.
 - B. What was true for Paul is true for every believer – all of us have been sovereignly set on a course of service.
 - 1. Every Christian is expected to spend his life laboring for the gospel. All of us must live with Christ as our focus and His Kingdom as our priority. It is your divine appointment

2. It is our responsibility to stay on course – to not veer off to the left or right
Proverbs 4:25-27 NAU - "Let your eyes look directly ahead And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. ²⁶ Watch the path of your feet And all your ways will be established. ²⁷ Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil."
 3. It is easy to wander from our course.
 It takes great patience, diligence, and discipline to stay on course
 Many a good life has been ruined by some foolish act. Pastors' ministries have been destroyed by a single act of sin.
 Solomon's good life was spoiled by being swayed by his godless wives.
1 Kings 11:4 NAU - "For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*."
- C. Sometimes our course will lead us into great hardship for the Lord
 This too is by Divine appointment
1 Thessalonians 3:3-4 NAU - "so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. ⁴ For indeed when we were with you, we *kept* telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know."
Philippians 1:29 NAU - "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake"
- D. Our course encompasses our entire life – we must never compartmentalize our life
 Do you see a Divine appointment in your life's vocation?
 Do you see your life's work as a calling from God?
1. Every believer should spend much time in prayer before making life changing decisions
 2. Are you happy and satisfied with your appointment from God?
 - a. Once we have occupied a labor in life we must see it as a divine appointment
 3. We must occupy our labor with joy and contentment
Philippians 4:11 NAU - "I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."
 4. Do you practice excellence in your calling?
 Do you strive to be the very best in your vocation?
 5. No one knows the end of their course nor of the terrain that lies ahead
 Our time must be spent well.

- III. "I have kept the faith" – We should see this in two ways:
- A. First, "The Faith" refers to all that pertains to Christianity – the content of faith.
2 Corinthians 13:5 NAU - "Test yourselves *to see if you are in the faith*; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?"
1 Timothy 6:10 NAU - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
1. It points to the doctrines of our religion – the very essence of the Gospel. It was that which had been entrusted to Paul, and to every believer.
Jude 1:3 NAU - "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints."
 2. "The faith" refers to the things which must be believed – it is the essence of our faith.
- B. Second, it points to the essence of the Christian life. The course upon which every Christian has entered. It refers to the duties of our religion – the demands of the Gospel. Remaining true to our profession. Keeping the faith.
1. The Gospel demands discipline
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU - "but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."
 2. The Gospel demands steadfast labor
Luke 9:62 NAU - "But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."
 3. The Gospel demands undivided faithfulness to Christ
Luke 14:26 NAU - "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

Conclusion:

1. Are you involved in the good struggle, the good fight? Are you faithfully maintaining your course?
2. A ship's captain continually checks his maps and makes minor corrections so that he stays on course. Keep in the Word. Be diligent in prayer. Discipline yourself unto holiness. And maintain your course.