

Text: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Title: Poured out

Truth: Life should be lived for God from beginning to end.

Date/Location: Sunday October 2, 2016 at FBC

Introduction

In these verses, the apostle Paul reflects his belief that his death is coming very soon. Reading this portion is a sad task, yet at the same time we sense a trust in God that is remarkable.

This letter lacks the confidence that was visible in letters from his earlier imprisonment. In Philemon 22 he expressed confidence that he would be released and would need accommodations in Philemon's home. In Philippians 1:25 Paul expresses a level of certainty that he will be delivered from his imprisonment and remain with them, somewhere in the land of the living, for a while to come. This expectation was based on the relative spiritual need of the Philippians at the time, which seemed to Paul to outweigh the benefit of his own departure to heaven to be with Jesus Christ.

A possible setting for this text, and in fact the entire letter, is this: Paul has been imprisoned for a second time by the Roman authorities, in Rome. He has just had a trial under the court of Nero and the outcome, whether it was the final outcome or an intermediate outcome, did not look good. Paul knew where things were headed.

1. It is possible that he had to hastily scribble down this letter and get it off before his impending death, or at least so that it would arrive at its destination quickly so that Timothy could come to visit (4:9-13, 21). Under that kind of time crunch, Paul wrote the letter.
2. You can see the import of these words with more clarity and weight given those dire circumstances. Look again at the danger of being ashamed of the gospel (1:6-18), the training program for future ministers (2:2), the treachery of false teachers (2:16-18), the dangerous times that are coming (3:1), the urgent need to preach the Word of God to the people of God (4:2).

I. At the Door of Martyrdom, v. 6 The Present

Paul was about to die. The reason for his death is simply this: He was a Christian messenger. Because he will be killed for religious reasons, he is called a *martyr*, and his death is called *martyrdom*. Paul believed in Jesus. He told others about Christ's death and resurrection. He believed sinners need to know the good news. Some sinners don't want to hear this information, and the devil doesn't want to hear it, so they conspire to suppress the message by killing the messenger.

A. The reference to being poured out as a drink offering (libation) is a figure of speech related to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

1. The drink offering in the Old Testament is mentioned over 60 times. Most occurrences are in Numbers 28–29. Sometimes these offerings are made to false gods “on any high hill or under any green tree” (Ezekiel 20:28) in acts of idolatrous worship.
2. The drink offering was a way to "top off" an offering by pouring a liquid, the fruit of the vine, like for flavoring or fragrance. How exactly it was poured is not made clear, but what seems to be the case is that most offerings had an associated drink offering which completed the sacrifice.
3. The drink offering does *not* refer to giving God a drink. First of all, He does not need a drink because He is a spirit being Who does not have a physical body with human needs. Second, the text of the Bible does not indicate that He drank or ate any offerings given to Him. If any food is eaten from the sacrifice, it is the *people* fellowshiping at the altar who partake of the food that is cooked there. In some sacrifices, the meat and drink are burned entirely and go up in smoke. The remnants are disposed of away from the altar. There is no magic or hocus-pocus going on.
4. So what is the significance of the drink offering then if it is not some mystical thing? Like animal offerings, the drink offering is made to God. It is an act of worship. It is also an act of dedication because the drink is poured out entirely and is no longer available for human consumption. It is a *sacrifice* on the part of the offerer. The external offering of a tangible thing represents the worshipper's internal dedication to God. See 2 Samuel 23:16 for a similar situation that represented a thankful dedication to God.
5. In the only other use of this word "poured out" in the New Testament, Paul says in Philippians 2:17 that he views his life as a poured out drink offering on top of the Philippians' sacrificial service. That is, he sees a possibility that he might die for God. Notice that Paul says if that happens, he rejoices about it!
6. In summary, Paul is saying that he views his life and ministry as an offering to God. The pouring out is as an expression of death by which his last ounce of life is exhausted in the service of Jesus Christ. His death is like the topping off of a life of ministry, which is poured out as a sacrificial drink offering. He's given everything to the very last drop.

Question: Do you look at your life that way?

- B. Using the word *departure* is a more direct way to say that Paul will experience death by being killed. The time has come for death. The word for *departure* means loosing or untying. It can refer to undoing a tent or pulling up anchors on a ship. Paul was thinking about his death in terms of taking down the earthly tent and moving somewhere else. The tent idea is also used in 2 Cor. 5:1-4 and 2 Peter 1:14. The word is such a common figure of speech that it is clear that it means "death."

Question: Do you see how Paul accepted this God-ordained outcome? We read no complaining here. That is super-human.

Next, he offers a little self-evaluation about his own past, and a forward look to the reward that God gives His children.

II. Self-Evaluation, v. 7 The Past

A. This verse might seem to some as self-congratulatory and boastful. "Look at what I did—!!" But the original word order in Greek puts that myth to rest. Look at what Paul says:

"The good fight—I have engaged in it. The race—I have finished. The faith—I have kept."

Each verb form indicates a past activity with ongoing future results. The emphasis is on the completion of the action—Paul has reached THE END. The focus is not on Paul so much as it is on the completion of the Christian life and ministry *by God's grace* (see 1 Timothy 1:12 for Paul's Godward focus). Those have been paramount in his life. It is when these things come first and "I" come second that life is really meaningful.

B. Fought the fight. This is infrequently a term of war (John 18:36) but more frequently it refers to vigorous labor and competition with a prize in view (1 Cor. 9:25; Hebrews 12:1). It is about striving and the kind of struggling involved in Christian work (Col. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 4:10; Col. 2:1, 4:12) and Christian life (Luke 13:24). This is just what Paul told Timothy to do (1 Timothy 6:12).

C. Finished the race. The plan that God laid out for him was now coming to the finish line. He came to it like John the Baptist (Acts 13:25). He mentioned the same thing in Acts 20:24. To Paul, living well *and finishing well* for God was far more important than mere living!

D. Persevered in the faith. Paul "kept the faith" which means he continued to believe personally, and also that he protected the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). He preserved it and continued to proclaim it until the end.

E. These things are nothing less than inspirational for younger Timothy and for us. These are words of a victorious hero who is dying for his accomplishments. They inspire us to continue pressing forward in our own competition in this Christian life, as we struggle against sin and the world and the devil.

III. God's Reward, v. 8 The Future

A. Crown of righteousness. God will reward Paul with a crown—a victor's wreath that indicates that he has done well in his competition. The Christian does not serve God greedily to get a reward, but desires to serve God faithfully for whatever reward God will give.

1. The crown is made of righteousness. The reward will be perfect and complete final righteousness. With this, we will be very happy. Our hunger and thirst

for righteousness will have been filled. This is related to the crown of life (James 1:2 and Rev. 2:10). Eternal life would not be worth much if there were not perfect righteousness permeating it. Can you imagine eternity with sin and the curse?

2. While every believer has the imputed righteousness of Christ, this external judicial imputation is not all that the believer desires. We want to walk righteously in all our ways, and this will be accomplished when God finally rewards us—all to His honor—with perfect ultimate sanctification. We do not earn righteousness by our strivings; but we are told to strive to enter in the narrow gate and walk the narrow way. The end reward will be that which we strive for to please God—righteousness like that exemplified in the life of Christ. But it will still be God's gift to us, as are all the other aspects of our salvation.

B. Not only for Paul, but for many others. This kind of reward is not limited to apostles, prophets, pastors, or Bible teachers. It is also for "all those" who love His appearing. This means all Christians—who innately know that Christ came and that He is coming again, and look forward to it.

1. There is not a true Christian out there who hates the idea of Christ coming back, or His coming the first time. That is impossible. If His coming is a terrifying thing only, then there is something wrong. **Question:** Do you love Him and His coming again?

2. I read this passage to our former pastor, 93-year old Dr. Saxe, last night on the phone and asked him if he wanted to make a comment for the church family. He emphasized the blessing of the crown of righteousness to "all those who believe in his coming again," and he said, "and I believe in that too." He said that "he is watching for the rapture any moment, any day. The timing is in God's hand, and I hope and pray and trust that everyone who comes in the church meeting will get himself prepared to meet the Lord."

Conclusion

So that is the question: are you read to be poured out any day? Have you evaluated your life to see where you are at with the good fight, the race, and the faith? Are you earnestly looking forward to the coming of Christ?

A rich reward is promised to all who love the Lord. I trust you do.

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