

# FINISHING WELL

## 2 Timothy 4.6-22

2 Timothy was the last letter that Paul wrote. He thought his execution was close at hand (2 Timothy 4.6). He was nearing the finish line in the race of his life (2 Timothy 4.7).

Christians give a parting gift when they show others how to die well. One reason why Christians do not practice euthanasia is because we see meaning in dying in the manner and at the time that God determines.

### **Finish well by investing in other people**

2 Timothy includes many names from Paul's ministry network. Paul understood that the quality of life often rests on quality relationships.

Some of Paul's associates, namely Hymenaeus & Philetus (2.17), denounced the faith they once professed. Others, like Phygelus & Hermogenes (1.15) or Demas (4.9; Cf. Philemon 24; Colossians 4.14) deserted Paul for things more enticing than the mission. Still others, like Alexander, made the ministry difficult (4.14). This created great pain for the Apostle.

We also see the reality of disagreement and the possibility of reconciliation. Presuming that the Mark referred to in 2 Timothy 4.11 is the same Mark that featured in Acts 15.36-41, we have a wonderful story of growth. Much earlier in their careers, Paul refused to work with Mark because he quit on the mission. Now we see that he became "very useful" to Paul. People can develop. Relationships that were once strained can improve. Mark joining Paul in Rome would have been daring.

Paul has Luke at his side, dispatches Tychicus to lead the church in Ephesus, and longs for Timothy to come to Rome (4.11-13; Cf. 4.9, 21). He has been blessed by Onesiphorus, Prisca & Aquila, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, and Linus & Claudia (2 Timothy 4.19-21).

Paul's mind is occupied on the big picture of the message of the Gospel going to the nations (2 Timothy 4.17) and on some basic needs – a friend to come, a coat to keep warm, and texts for sharpening the mind (2 Timothy 4.13).

Even with meaningful relationships, this is a lonely life. How few of us have the same person present with us at birth and at death.

It is important to know that for those in Christ, the Lord is always near (2 Timothy 4.17).

## **Finish well by stressing hope, praise, and grace**

Even for mature Christians, great trials come at the end of life. I think we do well to adopt a worldview of “hopeful realism”. We know this world is fallen and presents “dangers, toils, and snares”.

We remain anchored in hope. By referring to his death as a “departure” Paul demonstrates that going to be with Jesus is “better by far” than anything life on earth can give (2 Timothy 4.6; Cf. Philippians 1.23). He knows the crown of righteousness awaits him and all who long to see Christ.

Even in the dark dungeon, Paul breaks into doxological praise (2 Timothy 4.18).

Paul goes out with a word of grace (2 Timothy 4.22). Note how he forgave those who deserted him (2 Timothy 4.16). How many of us become calloused, hard, & cynical as the years go by. May we be those who go out pronouncing God’s favor on the undeserving.

**Key Idea:** Finish the race of life living for Jesus

### **Application Questions:**

Facing death, what does Paul think about the past, present, and future?

Describe some companions who have been good friends during the hard times of your Christian journey. What made them valuable during that time?

What does it mean to adopt a posture of “hopeful realism”? How well does this describe the Christian worldview?