

Paul, Timothy and Troubled Times Part 9

Paul has written this letter to encourage Timothy, to warn and prepare him to remain strong in troubled times because Paul knew he wouldn't be around much longer. Like a father to a son, "I won't be there to help you, Timothy, so preach the word, stay prepared at all times, especially in troubled times. Continue in the faith, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, don't give up Timothy, discharge all the duties of your ministry regardless of what happens around you." Then Paul writes these words that I'm sure Timothy hated to read. **"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing."** 2 Timothy 4:6-8

We will focus on fighting and finishing the race after Easter, but notice Paul says, "I am already being poured out like a drink offering." The Old Testament speaks of pouring out a measure of wine as a drink offering in the daily sacrifice (Num. 28). Paul uses this term to refer to the offering of his life. The truth is, the pouring out of his life began on the road to Damascus when the Lord appeared to him and saved him and called him and changed him forever. The giving of his life, the sacrifice had been going on since his conversion. Paul had been on the fast track to greatness among the Jews, a Pharisee, a Hebrew of Hebrews he said, a persecutor of the church, faultless in his legalistic righteousness, but he gave it all up to follow Jesus. Paul said, **"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."** Philippians 3:7-9

Paul had sacrificed everything and counted it as nothing compared to knowing Jesus and knowing his sins were forgiven and he was made righteous through faith in Christ. Paul described some of what he had endured (2 Cor.6; 11). Troubles, hardship, distress, beatings, imprisonments, riots, sleepless nights, no food, regarded as an impostor, five times he was whipped with 39 lashes, three times beaten with rods, once he was stoned and left for dead, three

times he was shipwrecked, constantly on the move for 35 years, constantly threatened and in danger. When he says he is being poured out like a drink offering, he is talking about the final emptying of the cup. He had given everything he had to give in living for Jesus and proud to have done so. Now it was time for the last drop to be offered.

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering and the time has come for my departure.” He is talking about his execution, his death, but notice how he speaks of it: “my departure.” Some of you may remember C.R. and Alice Long that attended here years ago. When someone died Bro. Long would ask, “What time did they leave?” I always thought that was the way to ask that question for a Christian. Jesus said if we believe in him we would live, even if we die. For the follower of Jesus death is just leaving here and heading home! Paul says “I’m getting ready to leave” like all those times before in his missionary journeys. This time he was headed home.

The Greek word translated as departure means to unloose. When Jesus calls us home and our body takes its’ last breath, there is an unloosing of our spirit and we leave this body of bondage and weariness and weakness and we arrive home free and victorious. Unloosed!

The word departure is used a couple of ways in the Greek language. It refers to the breaking down of a military encampment. The tent is broken down and packed away in order to travel to a new destination. Earlier Paul had written, **“Now we know if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling.”** 2 **Corinthians 5:1-2.** Paul was a tent maker, remember. It was the perfect analogy for him. If this earthly tent is broken down, we don’t have to be afraid because we get a new and eternal dwelling place, not made by human tentmakers, but made by God himself! Imagine how glad Paul must have been to think he was done with tents and was headed for an eternal home. A permanent dwelling place!

The second way departure is used in the Greek language was to describe the unloosing of a ship from its moorings and setting sail. It provides the picture of Paul standing on the dock, awaiting the call to board the ship and set sail. His exact departure time was unknown but the destination was certain and the travel time was the twinkling of an eye. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord! Paul was anticipating this final trip and the beginning of his greatest adventure. The time of departure was at hand. There is no hint of sadness or sorrow, no

dread or fear. Remember this series is Paul, Timothy and Troubled Times. Why wasn't he troubled? He is about to have his head cut off and yet he is talking about it like he was setting sail on another missionary journey. What makes the difference? Again, I remind you, this was part of the surrender he made to Jesus all those years ago on the road to Damascus. "Jesus, I'm yours now and forever." But how does he face all of this? How does he keep going in spite of all the trouble? Look at verse 8. **"Now there is in store for me..."** Here it is! It's a key for Paul, for Timothy, for all of us. Beyond all the trouble we may encounter in this life we know what's in store for us! King James reads "Henceforth there is laid up for me." Henceforth, that is from now on, from this point in time and forever, I know what's coming so I'm not disturbed or frightened. It's how you keep going in troubled times. I know what's in store beyond all this.

"Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing." The winner of the ancient Olympic games would receive a garland or a crown made of evergreen leaves. It was placed on their head, declaring them to be the winner of the race or the particular event. Paul isn't saying it's the crown given for being the most righteous person, it's the crown given to all those who have repented of their sins and trusted in Jesus for salvation. It's the crown given to those made righteous, declared to be righteous through our faith in Jesus. Because we have already been declared righteous, we receive this crown and it's given to us by the only righteous judge, Jesus himself. We fight the good fight, finish the race, remain faithful in spite of trouble and then we stand in the winner's circle and receive the victors crown, the crown given to all who have trusted in Jesus.

Paul was about to be condemned by an unrighteous and wicked judge, by the Emperor Nero himself, but Paul knew there was coming for him a glorious reversal of the injustice done to him when Jesus the righteous judge declares him righteous and welcomes him home.

Notice he says it's not only for Paul, it's for all who have longed for his appearing. Those who have repented of their sins and been forgiven, those are the ones who long for his appearing. Jesus is coming and we are ready and waiting and looking forward to his return. Those who don't know Jesus, who haven't had their sins forgiven, if they think about it at all, they sure aren't looking forward to Jesus appearing because it will mean judgment and condemnation. Hell is ahead for those without Jesus, but for the redeemed, the righteous in Jesus, we know what is in store!

Get this in your heart. In troubled times, we don't give up, we don't stop trusting, we don't lose heart because we know what's in store. Paul writes, **"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed..." 2 Corinthians 4:8-9** Troubled times but we haven't given up, we keep on going because we know Jesus and we know what's in store for us! Paul continues, **"...because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence...Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."** 2 Corinthians 4:14-18

Do you hear? Troubled times but we don't lose heart. We know what's in store. We know what's waiting on us. It's how we keep going in the worst of times. You know what is ahead. "Now there is in store for me and for all those who love Jesus and long for his appearing..." Something greater, something that outweighs all the trouble and all the hardship and all the sacrifice, all the "being poured out" for the cause of Christ over a life time, all of that is just light and momentary trouble compared to what we know is ahead for us. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. I can't see it, but I know what is ahead! It's dark and difficult and you feel like giving up, but you know what's in store for the child of God so you keep going! I won't stop because I know what's in store. I won't yield to temptation because I know what's in store. I won't turn back because I know what's in store. I'll press on because I know what's in store. I'll keep fighting and I'll endure hardship and I'll keep the faith because I know what's in store. I'll overcome, I'll resist the devil, I'll persevere, I'll hold on a little longer because I know what's in store.

How can I be so sure of what's ahead? Jesus, the righteous judge and my Savior and Lord told me I shouldn't be troubled or afraid because he was going to prepare a place for me and then he'd come and take me home to be with him forever. That's what's in store for me.

John the beloved disciple was caught up in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he saw a city coming down out of heaven and he said it had gates of pearl and streets of gold and walls of jasper and there was no need for the sun because the glory of the One and only Son would be the brightness of that city. John said God himself would wipe away all the tears from our eyes and

there would be no more sorrow or death or parting or pain because the source of our tears would be no more. The former things will pass away and all things will be new. He said the Lord told him to write that down because it was true. So when I think about what's in store for me, it makes me want to press on. It makes me want to keep fighting the good fight. It makes me want to keep my eyes fixed on what is unseen, on what is eternal.

Paul said, **“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” 1**

Corinthians 2:9-10. We can't conceive of it, but we've got a little bit of heaven in our soul already because the Holy Spirit lives in us. My eyes haven't seen the sights, my ears haven't heard the sounds, but there is a witness in my spirit that lets me know I can't quit now, I can't stop, I can't be distracted by anything because I know by His Spirit what's in store for me.

Do you know what's in store for you? Have you made Jesus the Savior and Lord of your life? If you have, then keep on going! Don't let anything stop you because you know what's in store. But if you haven't repented and asked Jesus to save you, I can tell you you won't like what is in store for you. Now is the time to repent and turn your heart and life to Jesus, then you won't have to fear what's coming.

If you know Jesus, don't lose heart in troubled times. These may be difficult days, but look beyond what you can see with your physical eyes to the eternal, to the unseen. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Remember what's in store! Something glorious is laid up for you!

I've appreciated the opportunity during these Sundays of Lent to celebrate communion together. Whether in person or online we've been able to join our hearts together and lift our voices together in repentance, in worship, in affirmation of the truth we know in Christ. If you have repented of your sins and trusted in Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you are invited to receive communion along with us. This morning I want us to read responsively from the prophet Isaiah. He speaks prophetically of the suffering servant, the one who bears our sin and our iniquity. As we read this passage, be reminded that it was for you! He suffered in your place, bearing your sins.

Reader: Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

Congregation: He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Reader: Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted.

Unison: But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

O Lord, we acknowledge our sins before you. Like sheep we have gone astray, willful in our stubbornness, in our waywardness, but we repent before you today. Forgive us, cleanse us, save us, and renew within us a right spirit. With thankful hearts we acknowledge your sacrifice and we trust in you and in you alone for our salvation. We know it is not because of righteous things we have done but because of your great mercy that we are saved. Depending on you and your mercy alone we come to your table to receive the gifts of your body broken for us and your blood poured out for us that we might have life. May we forever live for you and serve you with gratitude. In Jesus name, Amen.

