

"It Is Well With My Soul"

Aspiration

How to Attain a Purposeful Life

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh trump of th angel! Oh voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing. "

(2 Timothy 4:5-8)

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Monday:

- (1) Read "Day 1: For Thy Coming We Wait!"
- (2) Answer Questions for "Day 1"
- (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
- (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."

Tuesday:

- (1) Read "Day 2: The Farewell Counsel to Timothy"
- (2) Answer Questions for "Day 2"
- (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
- (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."

Wednesday:

- (1) Read "Day 3: The Farewell Confession of Paul"
- (2) Answer Questions for "Day 3"
- (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
- (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."

Thursday:

- (1) Read "Day 4: The Battlefield and the Racetrack"
- (2) Answer Questions for "Day 4"
- (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
- (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."

Friday:

- (1) Read "Day 5: The Victory of a Warrior"
- (2) Answer Questions for "Day 5"
- (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
- (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."

Saturday:

- (1) Read "Supplement: John Flavel on Aspiration"
 - (2) Answer Questions for "Bonus: Supplement"
 - (3) Memorize 2 Tim. 4:5-8
 - (4) Memorize Stanza of "It Is Well With My Soul."
 - (5) Write a Testimony: Choose one of the truths learned from the lesson and explain how you personally experienced that truth in your life during the week.
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1. Day 1: For Thy Coming We Wait!

- (1) What impact does the Lord's promise make upon the life of a Christian?
- (2) How can we live our lives with purpose?
- (3) What benefit does a Christian enjoy as a result of his confidence in the Second Coming of Christ?

2. Day 2: The Farewell Counsel to Timothy

- (1) With what does an energetic spirit need to be balanced?
- (2) How does a "prudent ministry" fit together with a "proving ministry"?
- (3) How does a "persevering ministry" fit together with a "preaching ministry"?

3. Day 3: The Farewell Confession of Paul

- (1) What three components should be included in your deathbed confession?
- (2) How can Paul's three-fold purpose become your three-fold purpose in life?
- (3) How can you best prepare yourself for death?

4. Day 4: The Battlefield and the Racetrack

- (1) Name the men who forsook Paul at his time of death.
- (2) Describe the two lessons Paul teaches us about the conflict of a battlefield.
- (3) What is the difference between the conflict of a battlefield and the competition of a racetrack?

5. Day 5: The Victory of a Warrior

- (1) Why was Paul prepared to die for Christ?
- (2) What changes do you need to make in order to live for Christ?
- (3) What is the "crown of righteousness" and why do Christians love the Second Coming of Christ?

6. Bonus: Supplement

- (1) According to lines 1-8, why are the sailors happy, saying, "What cheer, ho"?
 - (2) According to lines 9-22, what do the sailors promise God if He will save their lives.
 - (3) According to lines 23-30, why are the sailor's "soul's shipwrecked though the bodies live"?
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The Scripture Frame

2 Timothy 4:5-8

(These notes are to be used in conjunction with the daily studies)

I. The Farewell Counsel to Timothy: Verse 5

General Directions: A Prudent Ministry - exercising discernment in the gift (watchful in all things)

5 But watch thou in all things,

Special Instructions: A Persevering Ministry - its nature (stedfast in hardships)
endure afflictions,

Special Instructions: A Preaching Ministry - its nature (faithful to the Gospel)
do the work of an evangelist,

General Directions: A Proving Ministry - furnishing evidence of the gift (proving in all things)
make full proof of thy ministry.

II. The Farewell Confession of Paul: Verses 6-8

The Victory of a Warrior: Departure from the Earth - an anchor of bondage

6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

The Conflict of a Battlefield: Fighting Against the Enemy Face to Face
- the exercise of the warfare ("I have fought the fight")

7 I have fought a good fight,

The Competition of a Racetrack: Running with the Brethren Side by Side
- the completion of the relay ("I have finished the course")

I have finished my course,

The Conflict of a Battlefield: Fighting Against the Enemy Face to Face
- the equipment of the warfare ("I have kept the faith")

I have kept the faith:

The Victory of a Warrior: Entrance into Heaven - a crown of righteousness

8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Day 1: For Thy Coming We Wait!

*But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!*

Introduction: What child has not imagined for himself a fantasy world where anything is possible and he is the central character in his fictitious story? He aspires to discover that world and turn his fantasies into a reality. When a person becomes a child of God, he too imagines for himself a world other than this earth and a life that takes on a different form. However, his thoughts are not an imagined fantasy, but rather a developed picture based on what His Lord has promised. It is for this reason, the hymn writer unashamedly admits that he has a "blessed hope" and a "blessed rest" when he hears the reverberation of the "trump of the angel" and the "voice of the Lord" echo back through time. For it is "the sky, not the grave, [that] is [his] goal", because he awaits the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This future glory poetically described by the hymn writer evolves around three important truths.

I. The Effectiveness of the Lord's Promise. "But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait." The second coming of Jesus Christ to this earth is a truth that could only be known if the Lord Himself announced it. Concerning future events, Jesus said, "they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matt. 24:30) So as the disciples watched Jesus ascend into heaven after the Resurrection, two angels said unto them, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The effectiveness of this promise is realized in the counsel of the Apostle Paul who said to the church in Thessalonica, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words...for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:16,17)

II. The Establishment of our Life's Purpose. "The sky, not the grave, is our goal." The prospect of our future glory with Christ determines the purpose for which we now live. For "if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3:1-4)

III. The Elegance of the Believer's Poise. "Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord! Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!" The believer in Christ possesses a graceful and elegant bearing in his soul as a result of his unshakeable confidence in the return of Christ. No matter how loud the threatening voices of opposition may rise, the anticipation of the "voice of the Lord" produces a steady calm within the heart of His people. Ah, "beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jn. 3:2,3)

Day 2: The Farewell Counsel to Timothy

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."—2 Tim. 4:5

Introduction: We assume the ambitions of a young man would differ significantly from those of an older person. For instance, the younger generation may base its future objectives and lifelong plan upon its adventurous outlook of an unknown yet rather exciting future; whereas, the older generation will most likely base its objectives upon its experiential outlook of a known past. Although it is important to cultivate an energetic spirit, such passion must be controlled by a prudent mind. It is this balance the Apostle Paul is prescribing for Timothy, who was not only much younger in years, but was one of Paul's own converts to the faith and pupils in the ministry. Paul was in prison awaiting execution when he wrote this final letter to Timothy who was the pastor of the congregation in Ephesus. Regarding his ministry, Paul said, "watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."

I. General Directions. Before mentioning specifics, Paul encircles his counsel to Timothy with two general guidelines. (1) A Prudent Ministry: "Watch thou in all things." To be "watchful" simply means to be vigilant. Exercising discernment through the gift of the ministry is one of the most important qualities of a pastor. The active ability to distinguish between all things is the qualifying reason why members of a church should submit themselves to the oversight of their pastor, for Paul exhorts the Jewish churches to "obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." (Heb. 13:17) (2) A Proving Ministry: "Make full proof of thy ministry." A pastor is chosen by God being equipped and gifted for the ministry and subsequently recognized by the church being ordained and inducted as the under-shepherd. He must therein always be furnishing evidence of his calling from Christ, as he is given to the church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. 4:11-16) Indeed, the capacity of a proving ministry is largely determined by the prudence of the man fulfilling it.

II. Special Instructions. Paul now arrives at the particulars with which he wants Timothy to give special attention. (1) A Persevering Ministry: "Endure afflictions." There is little room for timidity in the heart of a pastor, for there are many hardships he must overcome. After all, "God hath not given [him] the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7) Again, it was in the midst of Paul's report on the leaders of the church that he encouraged the believers in Corinth to resemble their faith: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13) (2) A Preaching Ministry: "Do the work of an evangelist." Preaching the good news of Jesus Christ is part of the three-fold commission given by Christ to His church. (Matt. 28:18-20) Although a pastor must be fearless in the face of opposition, he must also be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Gospel. Indeed, the whole purpose for "enduring afflictions" is in order for the pastor to "give [himself] continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." (Acts 6:4) But it should be borne in mind that these four injunctions (prudence, proof, perseverance and preaching) are characteristics every Christian should cultivate, for Timothy was to be an "example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (1 Tim. 4:12) Let us all, therefore, "stand fast in the Lord."

Day 3: The Farewell Confession of Paul

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."—2 Tim. 4:6-8

Introduction: Most of the words we hear people say are filtered through our internal "junk box" and disregarded from our minds. However, when a person faces certain death and he chooses to share what is on his mind, we rightfully tune into what he will say. A deathbed confession demands special attention, for not only will these be his last recorded words before leaving this world, but often these words will encapsulate that person's unique interpretation on the multi-faceted impressions he received through the experience of his life. The words of our text configure the deathbed confession of the Apostle Paul. Through his testimony, we may learn how to construct our own deathbed confession.

I. He Makes a Review of the Past. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." After all, the prospect of death sobers the mind like no other concoction. It is an interesting experiment: Why not take a few moments to gather your thoughts together with the hypothetical scenario that you have only a few days left to live? How would you summarize the accomplishments in your life with the time God has given you on this earth? It may alarm us to discover our time has been flittered away by years of neglect and abuse which has resulted in a rather aimless life. How sad this is! Oh, that we might begin now to make the necessary changes in our lives that we may one day join the Apostle with a positively gratifying confession, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

II. He Models a Resolution in the Present. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Death is pending, but it has not yet arrived. Perhaps there are only inches remaining before Paul crosses the boarder of death, but these inches are valuable, for with them he is preparing himself for the transition. By his example, may we too boldly stare death in the face with the dignified affirmation that "[we are] now ready to be offered, and the time of [our] departure is at hand", yet will we not fear for there is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]." (1 Pet. 1:4)

III. He Mentions a Reward for the Future. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Paul has looked into his past and arrived at the conclusion that he has "finished [his] course"; he had looked at the present and resolved that he is "now ready to be offered" in death; he finally looks into the future "at that day" when the Lord shall give him a "crown of righteousness", "and not to [him] only, but unto all them also that love" the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. The last words of a person who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ are both dreadful and meaningless, for what hope is there for such a sinner? But the deathbed confession of a child of God is like the reviving beauty of a rainbow on a dark rainy day, for the Christian is confident that the "God of hope" will fill him "with all joy and peace in believing" that "death is swallowed up in victory", for "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 15:19)

Day 4: The Battlefield and Racetrack

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."—2 Tim. 4:7

Introduction: Like any ordinary person, the Apostle Paul had hoped to be surrounded by family and friends during his last days on earth. Instead, he was presented with the departure of his dear companions, he was confronted with the challenges of evil men and he was faced with the indifference of his own church relations. Of his companions, Crescens had gone to Galatia, Titus had gone to Dalmatia and Tychicus had been sent to Ephesus; of his foes, Demas had forsaken him and departed to Thessalonica and Alexander the Coppersmith did him much evil; of his church relations, no one stood with him when he dealt with Alexander the Coppersmith, for the members either supported Alexander or else were neutral on the issues. Sadly, aside from Luke, no one stood with Paul at the end of his life, nevertheless, Paul testifies that the "Lord stood with [him], and strengthened [him]." Within this context, Paul perceived himself to be a warrior fighting on the battlefield of truth and as a competitor running a race with fellow believers. Indeed, conflict against the enemy and competition with fellow workers are metaphors used repeatedly throughout Scripture to describe the nature of living the Christian life on this earth. (1 Cor. 9:24-27; 1 Tim. 6:12; Heb. 10:32-37; 12:1,2) Consider how Paul brought these ideas together in his deathbed confession.

I. The Conflict of a Battlefield. The nature of a conflict is for the opposing sides to fight face to face against each other. It is characterized by opposition which requires the tireless and unceasing efforts of every Christian to defend the faith and oppose the workers of unrighteousness. (2 Tim. 2:3,4) The Apostle Paul teaches us two important lessons about our Christian warfare: (1) The Exercise of the Warfare: "I have fought a good fight." The "good fight" must be "fought". It is a responsibility that necessitates action. The enemies we face are fierce and dangerous: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." It is for this reason, we are commanded to "put on the whole armour of God". "Wrestling" and "putting on" imply we must be active in fighting against the enemy. (Eph. 6:10-13) (2) The Equipment of the Warfare: "I have kept the faith." How is it possible to "fight" this enemy more powerful than ourselves? Paul tells us that he succeeded on the battlefield by "keeping the faith". The Christian soldier must put on the whole armour of God: girdle of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of the Gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit and a voice of prayer. (Eph. 6:14-18) Paul's equipment as a soldier and his diligent action in the fighting the enemy secured for him success on the battlefield.

II. The Competition of a Racetrack. The nature of a competition is for the competitors to run side by side with each other. It is characterized by cooperation which requires every Christian to run with each other instead of against each other, "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." (Heb. 12:2) The Apostle Paul describes this type of competition by testifying, "I have finished my course." These words refer to the ancient Grecian game of racing. Paul is telling us that his portion of the race is coming to an end. He had dedicated his Christian life, along with other Christians, to serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Although his race was finished, our race is not yet over. We must continue to work with our fellow believers by striving together for the Gospel of Christ and the glory of God. (Heb. 12:1)

Day 5: The Victory of a Warrior

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand...henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."—2 Tim. 4:6,8

Introduction: The Apostle Paul had been delivered to Mamertine Prison in Rome. It was a bottled dungeon that could only be entered and exited from a hole at the top. Having no staircase, the prisoners had to be lowered and lifted by a rope. Many Christians spent time in this cell and conditions were so awful that it is reported many of the captives were eaten alive by the infestation of rats. Paul had already been sentenced to execution and he was only waiting for the orders to be carried out. He assuredly envisioned his impending death, when the Roman soldiers would lead him out through the Appian Way, outside the city, where his head would be laid on a block of wood, and with the drop of an axe, severed from his body. However, he was unmoved by this fearful prospect, for he was certain that his final journey to the place of execution was only the beginning of his new journey with the Lord in glory. Paul refers to both incidents in his deathbed confession.

I. His Departure from the Earth. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." Not only was he ready to be put to death, but the time of his execution was drawing near. Is it not true that many Christians who have faced death were not able to say with Paul, "I am ready to die"? How is it with you? If God were to call you home today, would you have peace in knowing that all things are as they should be and your heart is settled in bidding adieu to this world? What if your departure from this world were to be apparently cut short by the hands of persecutors? Perhaps we could have peace if our death were the result of natural causes, but would we possess the same peacefulness if our death were the result of someone killing us? The Apostle's life was being ended abruptly by executioners, yet he was still able to be at peace with his death. Why? "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake", "yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12) Paul was prepared to die for Christ, because he was living for Christ. Thus, he says, "I fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" - the whole of his life was in service to his Lord!

II. His Entrance into Heaven. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Although wicked men were about to remove his head with an axe, the Lord was about to adorn it with a crown of righteousness. This is the victory of a Christian warrior. The righteous Judge shall reward His valiant soldiers with a crown recognizing the righteous cause for which they lived and died. This crown is reserved in heaven for every soldier of Christ. Paul emphasizes how all Christian soldiers love the appearance of Christ, for "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:16,17) It will be at that day when all believers shall be gathered together and the "course" shall be finished by all!

Supplement: John Flavel on Aspiration

"Navigation Spiritualized"

1. The ship that now sails trim before a wind,
2. E'er the desired port it gains, may find
 3. A tedious passage; gentle gales a while
 4. Do fill its sails, the flattering seas do smile,
5. The face of heav'n is bright on every side
6. The wanton porpoise tumbles on the tide.
 7. Into their cabins now the seamen go,
 8. And then turns out again, with, *What cheer; ho?*
9. All on a sudden darkened are the skies,
10. The lamp of heav'n obscured, the winds doth rise;
 11. Waves swell like mountains; Now their courage flags.
 12. The masts are crack'd, the canvas torn to rags.
13. The vessel works for life; anon one cries,
14. The main masts gone by th' board; another plies
 15. The pump, until a third does strike them blank,
 16. With, Sirs, prepare for death, we've sprung a plank,
17. Now to their knees they go, and on this wise
18. They beg for mercy, with their loudest cries:
 19. Lord, save us but this once, and thou shalt see
 20. What persons, for the future, we will be:
21. Our former time's mis-spent, but, with a vow,
22. We will engage, if thou wilt save us now,
 23. To mend what is amiss. The gracious Lord,
 24. Inclined to pity, takes them at their word;
25. The winds into their treasures he doth call.
26. Rebukes the stormy sea, and brings them all
 27. To their desired haven: once a-shore,
 28. And then their vows are ne'er remembered more.
29. Thus soul's are shipwreck'd tho' the bodies live,
30. Unless in time thou true repentance give.