

## 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

### HENCEFORTH

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up 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 loved his appearing.”<sup>1</sup>

**F**inal words spoken as death is imminent are freighted with significance in our estimate. Words uttered at the threshold of death are often a revelation for those remaining behind, as both saint and sinner hover before the grave, poised as it were with one foot planted among us who are yet trapped in the flesh even as the other foot settles in the realm of what lies beyond this life. It is as though for one brief moment the veil that now obscures our vision of that unseen world is parted, and through the eyes of those exiting this mortal existence we are permitted a glimpse of their eternal destiny. We thus receive a hint of our own final condition. Those things spoken at that moment of transition are of considerable interest to each of us, then, serving either as confirmation of what we have believed, or forcefully disabusing us of every false hope upon which we may have rested our eternal condition.

What would be the most important thing you could communicate with your final breaths? What would be your dying words? Your final words would perhaps be a revelation of what you were seeing for the first time, a spoken record of destiny, as it were, such as the words of D. L. Moody, who is reported to have said, “Earth recedes; Heaven opens before me.” When his son remonstrated with him, he replied, “No, this is no dream, Will. It is beautiful. It is like a trance. If this is death, it is sweet. There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go.”<sup>2</sup>

What will be the matters of primary concern for you? Will your business, your occupation and the work in which you were engaged in those final days reign primary in your mind? Will the care of your family occupy your thoughts, as you involuntarily surrender your responsibilities to another? Will you inveigh against the unfairness of your enforced removal? Will your mouth be filled with exclamations of praise, or with execrations and imprecations? Will you rejoice at the prospect of something better, or will you experience regret at your loss as you leave behind all that you deemed valuable. What will you say? And what will you feel? Chances are that you will speak of those things that now occupy your attention the majority of the time and that you will reveal the true condition of your heart; your life will be exposed and naked before those gathered about you. It is, after all, only when eternity forcefully intrudes into our thoughts that we surrender all concern for current activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>2</sup> William R. Moody, **The Life of Dwight L. Moody by His Son** (Sword of the Lord, Murfreesboro, TN n.d.) 552

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We have, as it were, the last statements of the Apostle Paul. The words he penned to his spiritual heir, Timothy, serve to inform us of his final thoughts as his exodus from this life was nearing. A review of those final thoughts serves to encourage each of us who follow the Son of God to review our spiritual priorities. I invite you to consider the final thoughts forced out of the Apostle's heart, as his departure from this life neared.

There was, for the apostle, **A RECOGNITION OF REALITY**. We read his foreboding words recorded in the **SIXTH VERSE**: "I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." That is reality speaking. "For I (*Egò gàr*)" in contrast to "As for you (*Sù dê*)" of **VERSE FIVE**. Timothy would continue to live and serve; but Paul's service was ending. Therefore, what the apostle has to say is penned against the backdrop of knowledge of situations which differed by the greatest imaginable degrees. Take note of the contrast presented by the two positions; just as Joshua succeeded Moses, and Solomon succeeded David, and Elisha succeeded Elijah, so now Timothy must succeed Paul. One generation succeeds another, as the work of God continues even though the life work of one generation reaches completion and that labourer ceases work while the labours of another begin.

Contending with the reality of the situations he and Timothy now faced, the apostle chose two metaphors of events which were even then transpiring in his life, one of a libation poured out as an act of worship and the other of a departure. He spoke of his own life "already being poured out like a drink offering." Nor is this the first time Paul has employed this thought of the saint's life as a libation. In **PHILIPPIANS 2:17**, likely penned only four or five years earlier, the aged saint had spoken of his life as a drink offering poured out on behalf of the Philippians. The intervening years had not softened his view of the lives of the saints as sacrifices offered up to God. The difference now is that he recognised his martyrdom as imminent. Nero had likely already pronounced sentence, or at the least he would shortly render an unfavorable judgment against the apostle. Paul would be executed in a matter of days.

In these words are found a beautiful way of looking at life and service for the Christian. Though casual observers would conclude that the old man's life was in Caesar's hands, the old man would review his life and conclude that the whole of his life had been a continual sacrifice to the One whom he called Master. Now, at the appropriate time, it was not that Caesar was taking life from him, but that he was offering his own life as a sacrifice.

The second picture conveys something else quite different. When Paul writes those seemingly innocuous words, "The time of my departure has come" [*analúseós*], he employs what had become for Greek speakers of that day a euphemism for death. Paul had previously employed this term in an earlier letter written during his first imprisonment, when he had written the Philippian Christians concerning his desire to depart [**PHILIPPIANS 1:23**]. The term *ánálusis* is a rich, exceptionally descriptive word. It was used of striking camp, of taking down a tent, of removing the shackles of a prisoner or of weighing anchor in preparation for slipping the moorings of a ship. Each use is particularly suggestive of a view which extends beyond time and into eternity for the apostle.

Already Paul was loosing his barque from its moorings in preparation for venturing onto an uncharted sea. The ropes were slipping as the tide was turning; departure was at hand. What seemed to be an end to anyone watching this final drama was in fact the beginning of a glorious new era when all restrictions would be removed and freedom was to become the rule of the day. The scene painted with striking verbal colours presents a novel view of death, presaging a rich insight provided shortly. For the Christian, death is not an end; it is a beginning.

In my library is a biography of John Jasper. Jasper was a powerful spokesman for God. Born into slavery in old Virginia, he was saved late in life and began to preach among the slaves. After the American Civil War, the old man found opportunity to preach in Richmond, Virginia, where he became the proud pastor of the far famed Sixth Mount Zion Baptist Church of that city. Few of his sermons exist, as his was an impoverished race and unable to pay for transcribing his messages. But Dr. William Hatcher, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of that city and a prominent Southern Baptist minister of a previous century, was an ardent listener to many of Jasper's sermons; he recorded portions of some of those sermons. Here is a description of one of his sermons preached as a funeral oration in the twilight of Jasper's years.

"The house was thronged to overflowing. It was the funeral of two persons—William Ellyson and Mary Barnes. The text is forgotten, but the sermon is vividly recalled. From the start Jasper showed a burden and a boldness that promised rich things for his people. At the beginning he betrayed some hesitation—unusual for him. 'Lemme say,' he said, 'a word about dis William Ellersin. I say it de fust an' git it off my min'. William Ellersin was no good man—he didn't say he wus; he didn't try to be good, an' dey tell me he die as he live, 'out God an' 'out hope in de world. It's a bad tale to tell on him, but he fix de story hisself. As de tree falls dar it mus' lay. Ef you wants folks who live wrong to be preached and sung to glory, don' bring 'em to Jasper. God comfort de mourner and warn de unruly.

"But, my bruthrin,' he brightened as he spoke, 'Mary Barnes was diffrent. She were wash'd in de blood of de lam' and walk'd in white; her religion was of God. Yer could trust Mary anywhar; nuv'r cotch 'er in dem playhouses ner friskin' in dem dances; she wan' no street-walker trapsin' roun' at night. She love de house of de Lord; her feet clung to de straight and narrer path; I know'd her. I seen her at de prayer meetin'—seed her at de supper—seed her at de preachin', an' sed her tendin' de sick an' helpin' de mournin' sinners. Our Sister Mary, good-bye. Yer race is run, but yer crown is shure."

"From this Jasper shot quite apart. He was full of fire, humour gleamed in his eye, and freedom was the bread of his soul. By degrees he approached the realm of death, and he went as an invader. A note of defiant challenge rang in his voice and almost blazed on his lips. He escorted the Christian to the court of death and demanded the monster king to exhibit his power to hurt. It was wonderful to see how he pictured the high courage of the child of God, marching up to the very face of the king of terrors and demanding that he come forth and do his worst. Death, on the other hand, was subdued, slow of speech, admitted his defeat, and proclaimed his readiness to serve the children of Immanuel. Then he affected to put his mouth to the grave and cried aloud: 'Grave! Grave! Oh, grave!' he cried as if addressing a real person, 'Whar's yer vict'ry? I hur' you got a mighty banner down dar, an' you terrorizes ev'rybody wat comes 'long dis way. Bring out yer armies an' furl fo'th yer bann'rs of vict'ry. Show yer han' an' let 'em see wat you kin do.' Then he made the grave reply: 'Ain't got no vict'ry now; had vict'ry, but King Jesus pass'd thro' dis country an' tore my banners down. He says His people shan't be troubled no mo' forever; an' He tell me to op'n de gates an' let 'um pass on dar way to glory.'

"Oh, my God,' Jasper exclaimed in thrilling voice, 'did yer her' dat? My Master Jesus done jerk'd de sting of death, done broke de scept'r of de king of terrors, an' He dun gone inter de grave an' rob it uv its victorious banners, an' fix'd nice an' smooth for His people ter pass thro'. Mo' en dat, He has writ a song, a shoutin' anthim fo' us to sing when we go thru, passin' suns an' stars, an' singing' dat song, "Thanks be unto God—be unto God who give us de vict'ry thru de Lord Jesus Christ".'"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Jasper, by William E. Hatcher (Global Publishers, Chattanooga, TN. n.d.) 175-77

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My brothers, that is exciting! That is glorious! That is victorious! When death comes, he shall steal neither my hope nor the victory that is provided through our risen Saviour. Death has been tamed; his power is but the means my God employs to bring me home. Fear of death, terror of the grave, dread of the tomb—all alike have been forever removed for the Christian; death has now been transformed, becoming the believer's escort into the presence of our Lord.

I fear that we who are called by the Name of the Risen Lord of Glory have, in these early days of the third millennium since He assumed human form, forgotten a beautiful, exciting and vivid truth. Challenged by religious infidels, the Sadducees, on a supposed difficult point of orthodox doctrine, our Lord provided them far more information than they had bargained for. "You are wrong," the Lord attested in **MATTHEW 22:29**, "because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God." Then, He both answered their original question and appended this wonderful truth which has ever since encouraged and edified believers familiar with the Word. "As for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living" [**MATTHEW 22:31, 32**]. Death, then, has become the servant of God to bring His child home. Death has become the door by which we enter into life. How marvelous is the might and the majesty of our God!

One day, should our Lord tarry, each of us will make this dark journey into the presence of the Master. Let us never imagine that men are able to take our lives from us or that we are powerless in the face of death. Death is the "last enemy," not because it is the last enemy we face, but because it was the last enemy He faced. And now that once fearful power has become servile and tame before the King of life. With the Psalmist, I cry out to God,

"I trust in you, O LORD;  
I say, 'You are my God.'  
My times are in your hands."

[**PSALM 31:14,15a**]

With the apostle each believer can shout: "If God is for us, who can be against us" [**ROMANS 8:31**]. There is no charge, no condemnation, no censure that may be levelled against the child of God. No condemnation stands against us who are in Christ; we are already accepted in Him.

There was as well, for the Apostle, **A REVIEW OF THE PAST**. Paul could boldly exult, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." One day, you and I shall review our days in this life. What will we see when we look back? Looking back over a ministry spanning thirty years, the apostle speaks, not boastfully but factually, in three terse statements. The three metaphors could all speak of the same thing, and some have so concluded.

In the estimate of some excellent minds, when Paul says, "I have fought the good fight," he is referring to competition. The word picture speaks of exertion much as witnessed in the Olympic or Corinthian games. When the aged saint says, "I have finished the race," he is narrowing the scene to a specific, dramatic event. Finally, when he says, "I have kept the faith," he is speaking of adherence to the rules of the games. It is as though the Apostle saw his life as a contest, and specifically as though he was one contestant entered in one of the competitions. Then, he asserts that he competed by the rules. Those who see this may be correct. But I prefer to believe that the great mind which so easily grasped such an expanse of thoughts and concepts is yet active in his old age, and he is reviewing the ministry as it truly is.

“I have fought the good fight,” continues the military image Paul has so often favored in previous letters [e.g. **EPHESIANS 6:10-17**; **1 TIMOTHY 1:18**; **2 TIMOTHY 2:3, 4**]. Any contest or conflict requiring exertion was spoken of as an “agony,” and that is the precise word the apostle uses. “*Tòn kalòn agōna egónismai*—I have agonized through the good agony.” What is good about exertion? What is good about “agonizing” through conflict? What makes this a **good** fight? It is a **good** fight because we do not wage war against mortals; the battle in which we are engaged is against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” [**EPHESIANS 6:12**].

It is a **good** fight because it is fought out in an arena where the combatants can assert, “We are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” [**HEBREWS 12:1**]. In this arena, saints and angels are the spectators. We exert ourselves to the point of exhaustion, and we want to quit. However, there are unseen spectators watching us, cheering us on. From Heaven itself throngs of angels watch with greatest interest; and saints that have gone on before cheer as we endeavour to do what is right. Can you hear them? Can you hear their shouts of joyous encouragement?

It is a **good** fight because the rewards are so “other” than we could ever anticipate now. Here, we labour many days only to be fatigued in such a short time; and though we may receive recognition, any fame we may receive now is fleeting, transient, unsatisfying. There, we will discover that we have laboured for such a short time that we might be received into unending recognition—recognition that can never fade. There, we shall ever be in brightness, in glory, in honour. Thus, we Christians are engaged in a “good fight.”

From the field of battle to the athletic arena, the apostle writes, “I have finished the race.” Speaking to the Ephesian elders some years previous to this final letter, the apostle was recorded as testifying to some of the very men who now stood with Timothy, “I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” [**ACTS 20:24**]. It was time for review; what had been purpose had now become a retrospect. The end was in sight; victory was assured. The Christian life requires endurance, and we are producing sprinters rather than marathon runners. It is of little consequence how you began your Christian life, though I would not for a moment disparage the need to begin well; however, it is vital that we end well.

Some years back, I saw what to me as a most poignant picture of perseverance and courage in the face of certain defeat. It occurred at the finish of the Boston marathon. The crowds had gathered, and had cheered as the various contestants had crossed that marker revealing their ability to endure the gruelling contest. Winners in the various categories were announced. Long after many of the other contestants had completed the race, stragglers struggled toward the conclusion of the race. One lone racer neared the finish line; and this entrant elicited the greatest cheers from the onlookers. This man, a wounded veteran of the Viet Nam conflict, had completed the course—without legs. Having lost his legs to what is euphemistically called “traumatic amputation” in military parlance, this man had run the race by bouncing on the stubs which had once been legs while pushing himself forward on the palms of his hands; and he had completed the course. Alternately bouncing and pushing, he became for those watching that day, a symbol of determination and courage, defeating many who had quit the race through exhaustion, through unpreparedness, or through lack of desire.

Images of war and athletic contests are employed to convey great truth; and now, stewardship becomes the third metaphor the apostle employed to communicate essential truths. “I have kept the faith.” Paul had guarded the deposit he received of God—the deposit of revealed truth; he had been a faithful administrator of the gifts and calling he had received.

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Through pressure and persecution, through trial and testing, the apostle had fulfilled the ministry God has assigned. Undeterred by imprisonment, floggings, exposure to death, beatings, stoning or danger and multiplied perils, whether labour or exertion to the point of exhaustion, the apostle had kept the faith. His was no fairweather faith and he was no fairweather Christian who would serve when convenient and prepared to retire when inconvenient.

How tragic the attitude of so many who are church members in this day. They profess themselves Christians; but they drop out when the going becomes rough. They will serve, so long as there are no hardships or so long as adulation is showered on them. However, when the conflict grows intense or when hardship is demanded, they will take a pass.

Isaac Watts was the son of a learned deacon in a dissenting church. At the time of his birth, Watts' father was in prison, because of his nonconformist views. Growing up, surrounded by people that willingly paid a terrible price to pursue righteousness, it should be no surprise that the young man embraced their courageous attitudes. As a young man, a wealthy benefactor offered to pay for a university education if Watts would agree to become a minister within the Established Church. The young man refused, choosing instead to prepare for the Independent ministry. At the conclusion of a sermon that he had entitled, "Holy Fortitude or Remedies against Fears," Watts read the words to a poem he had written—a poem which has become a beloved statement of Christian courage ever since.<sup>4</sup>

Am I a soldier of the cross? A foll'wer of the Lamb?  
And shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His Name?

Must I be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease,  
while others fought to win the prize and sailed thru bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood?  
Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign—increase my courage, Lord!  
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word.

Certainly, the work of an apostle, and in a measure the work of each Christian, may be pictured as a conflict, as a contest, as a custodianship. For the apostle, the Faith was every bit as objective as was the fight and the race. Each involves labour, sacrifice and even danger. Paul had proven successful in all three areas, just as I pray we are successful in all three areas when we review our lives in preparation for our final report.

There was this further issue of **A REWARD ANTICIPATED** by the apostle. The **EIGHTH VERSE** opens with a singular word—"Henceforth." It is but one word; nevertheless it is a highly significant word. Translated from the Greek term "*loipòn*," the word conveys the thought of something beyond the present chapter. In the **SIXTH VERSE**, we saw a hint that death is, to the Christian, something other than the terrifying monster which steals that which is most precious. Life is offered up to God as a sacrifice; and our times are in His hands. When we weigh anchor we sail away to another and a better shore. Here is confirmation of what was only suspected previously—"Henceforth."

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<sup>4</sup> Information from Kenneth W. Osbeck, **101 More Hymn Stories** (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI 1985) 30

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In a few days, the old man will stoop to kneel on the rough flagstone, and an executioner drawn from the ranks of the Praetorian Guard will lift a sword over his head as the final drama in this life is played out. Anyone who had previously known the apostle would be aghast at the spectacle they witnessed. Were that person permitted opportunity to speak with the condemned man, he might question the Apostle after this fashion. “Paul, you were the most brilliant student produced by the University of Tarsus. You could have been successful at anything to which you put your hand. You were understudy to Gamaliel; as such you were destined for leadership among your peers within the Sanhedrin. You were a scholar of first rank, brilliant in your grasp of the intricacies of the Law and of the Talmudic writings. Why was such brilliance wasted? What could have possessed you to discard such great opportunities for this? You’ve become spokesman for a small band of contemptuous and condemned men and women, the offscouring of the earth? How did matters come to this?”

People who ask such foolish questions don’t really want an answer. Actually, no answer could be given that would satisfy the interlocutor at such a time. Nevertheless, there is no better answer to such questions than that one word, “Henceforth!” If I live for time, I am a fool; for there is no particular comfort in the hardships of the Faith. However, since there is another chapter still to be written I live not for time, but for eternity.

I remember the astonished queries from a favorite professor under whom I had studied. “How could you give this up, Mike? Why would you want to be a Baptist minister when you could continue as a scientist? You have such potential and you can do so much good. Take some time off and think about what you are doing.”

I had been offered positions at multiple schools; opportunities seemed boundless at a time when others were desperate for an opportunity to apply what they had learned. I know it mystified my mentor, just as it left others of my colleagues dismayed and astounded. How could I do what I was then proposing to do—leave the field to enter into service among the churches? And my entrance was unconventional; I wasn’t entering holy service as others might have done.

At the time my mentor was questioning me, I wish I had then possessed the same insight God has since given me; I would have reminded Dr. Frenkel that this moment we call life is but the introductory chapter for eternity; and I would have reminded him that the introduction always concludes by leading into something better by far. Henceforth!

Perhaps you have heard the story of the woman who gave instructions for her funeral. She was nearing death, and she instructed his loved ones that when she was placed in the casket, she wanted a fork in her hand. Her family questioned why she would make such an odd request. “I’ve attended many church potlucks,” the elderly saint replied, “and it is often announced as people are eating, ‘Keep your forks!’ The announcement is a reminder that dessert will follow. Something sweet is coming soon after the meal. I want people to know that I anticipate something sweet, something better.” Henceforth!

In the eyes of those living for this dying world, nothing is left for the aged has-been—nothing save the prize. The Apostle had seen with the eyes of faith what the sightless eyes of those from this dying world can never see—he had seen the prize and Him who would award that prize. Therefore, the old man wrote, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.” The Emperor Nero may declare the aged Apostle guilty and condemn him to death; but there will soon come a magnificent reversal of Nero’s verdict when “the Lord, the righteous Judge,” declares the aged saint a winner. The inhabitants of this dark world are not fit to judge the service of God’s holy saints, neither can they assess the effectiveness of the prayers, the witness or the service the child of God has offered up to the praise of Christ’s glory.

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There are some points of great value I must declare to you. That crown of which Paul spoke—a prize of eternal worth—is offered to all alike. Each Christian may lay claim to this noble, celestial prize. None need feel himself or herself excluded by virtue of some supposed inability or through feelings of self-loathing. It is in fighting the good fight, finishing the race and keeping the faith, that suitability is determined for the divine award. The apostle declares the prize to be reserved not for himself only, “but also [for] all who have loved His appearing.” The crown of righteousness is a prize that is reserved, not for preachers alone, but for each individual who is attested to be one God’s holy saints.

Saint of God, I pray that this crown is yours; and it can be! Do you live for this dying age? Or are your eyes fixed on His return? Do you live to please the denizens of this dark world? Or do you look for His return? John closes the Bible with the promise of the Master, “Surely I am coming soon” [**REVELATION 22:20**]. Then, the Apostle of Love comforts God’s chosen ones with this glorious benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen” [**REVELATION 22:21**]. This is it precisely; we who live in the light of His return enjoy His grace now! And the grace we now enjoy is a harbinger of the grace that is to be revealed at the fulfilment of His promise to come for His own.

We anticipate Christ’s vindication. Despite the world’s assessment, the coming of the Master will mean vindication is for those “who have loved His appearing.” In light of this knowledge, what shall we say of those who have ridiculed His coming? What shall we say of those who, though professing themselves to be His followers, have nevertheless denied that He shall come again to reign in great power and glory? What shall we say of those who, though professing that they know Him, have yet lived as though He shall not come again?

This doctrine of the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus is of great importance, dividing, as it were, the redeemed from the lost, the saved from the unsaved. Those who have rejected Him have refused to acknowledge His coming; they live in dread that that against which they have inveighed will indeed come true. The unbeliever shrinks from the appearing of our Lord Jesus. The believer, on the other hand, looks forward to His appearing with eager anticipation and boldness. Only those who have entered by faith into the benefit of Christ’s first coming are eagerly awaiting His second coming. Those who have loved His appearing in the past will continue to do so to the moment of vindication when they receive the crown of righteousness. Is this not the Word of God? “Just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” [**HEBREWS 9:27, 28**].

I must speak to those who are young in years and who also are young in years of service to our Master Jesus. Our God is the God of history. As the saying goes, “God is working His purpose out, as year succeeds to years”; and “He buries the workmen, but carries on His work.” The torch of the Gospel is handed down by one generation to the next. As the leaders of the former generation die, it is all the more urgent for those of the next generation to step forward bravely to take their place. Timothy must have been profoundly moved by this exhortation from Paul, the old warrior who had disciplined him in the Faith. We should be asking who will seize the torch from our weakened hands. We should be asking if there is a generation to follow with testimony of God’s grace. Who is our Timothy?

Who led you to Christ? Who taught you the things of God? Is that one growing old? Are her years on this earth few? We cannot rest forever on the leadership of the preceding generation. The day comes when we must step into their shoes and assume our responsibility. That day had come for Timothy. It must come to all of us in time. Has it come for you?



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There is another moment which shall come to each of us. I have spoken at length of that inevitable moment. When it comes, and it shall come, and that singular word, “Henceforth!” is forced from your lips, will that word be for you one of joy and anticipation; or will it be something altogether different?

It was a time when dark clouds were gathering over the young nation. Soon, the social fabric would be rent as brother turned his sword against brother and vast numbers of the flower of her youth would lie dead on numerous battlefields. Jefferson Harscall penned a hymn in the shadow of the gathering storm. The song would comfort many during the dark days, and it would become a standard among bluegrass hymnody. It is a beautiful hymn that captures the thoughts conveyed by the Apostle in his final days.

My latest sun is sinking fast,  
My race is nearly run;  
My strongest trials now are past,  
My triumph is begun.

(Chorus)  
O come, angel band,  
Come and around me stand;  
O bear me away on your snowy wings  
To my immortal home;  
O bear me away on your snowy wings  
To my immortal home.

I know I'm nearing the holy ranks  
Of friends and kindred dear,  
For I brush the dew on Jordan's banks,  
The crossing must be near.

I've almost gained my heavenly home,  
My spirit loudly sings;  
Thy holy ones, behold, they come!  
I hear the noise of wings.

O bear my longing heart to him,  
Who bled and died for me;  
Whose blood now cleanses from all sin,  
And gives me victory.

Should Christ delay His return, there will come a day when each follower of the Son of God will speak as did the Apostle. At that time, each of us will say, “I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.” May we also say with full confidence, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day” [2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8]. Amen.