

## Sermon Notes, 2 Timothy 4:9-22, Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2026

It is the custom in movies to give one final chance to do or say something before you kill them. Do you have any final words? What would you like for your last meal? Do you have a final wish?

What would be your dying wish? It's where we discover what we really value. What we really care about.

If you're a Christian, how is that transformed by the fact you know Jesus? How does being gripped by the good news of Jesus transform what your dying wish would be? Does it transform it?

If you're not yet a Christian, what would your last wish be? If you're pondering following Jesus, it's a helpful question to ask how this would change if you did.

Even if you're not about to die, there are similar questions. You retire and move to a new area. What's your wish for your final years, however many God gives you? Or if you're young: You leave home for work or university: What's your deepest wish for the next season?

This is very real for Paul. Verses 6-7. Philippians: Written from prison in Rome. Didn't know if he'd be released or executed, but on balance thought he'd be released. 2 Timothy: Again in prison in Rome. Again doesn't know, but this time expects it's the end. What does he wish for in what could be his final season?

The headings in our English Bibles are not particularly inspiring. These verses are about far more than just "personal remarks" and "final greetings".

We'll see that maybe Paul won't die in prison. This is a passage full of hope for Paul. He has work to do.

Normally I give us a series of headings to guide us through the passage. Today, we're going to run two series of headings at once. We need to distinguish what Paul is telling Timothy and what he's telling us. We're not Timothy. We aren't church leaders with oversight of churches across a whole region.

Verse 22. "your spirit" – singular. Greeting Timothy. "you all" – plural. Greeting the churches Timothy serves. It's like the letter an MP writes to the PM to resign from the cabinet. It's a personal letter to the PM, but you can read it on any news website. The message to the PM is: "I'm leaving". But there's a message to the public too. This is a personal letter to Timothy, but it's a public letter not a private one. There's a message for us too.

We'll work through, seeing 4 things Paul says to Timothy, and 5 things that are his dying wish for us. Being gripped by the good news of Jesus changes everything.

### 1. Gather the team (9-12)

Verses 9-12.

Many people read this and conclude Paul is cold, lonely and bored in prison. He longs for his mates.

That's not true. Verses 19-21. This does not sound like a man who is lonely. He's got loads of company, Roman Christians that he counts as family.

The people in verses 9-12 aren't his mates, they're his team-mates.

He's a bit short on team-mates at the moment. He's down three.

Demas has gone to Thessalonica for an easy life. We're told he "loved this world", literally he loved this present age. In verse 8, Paul held out the victor's crown for all who longed for Jesus to appear, literally all who have loved his appearing. At the start of chapter 3, we saw so much depends on people loving the right things. Do we love God or ourselves, money and pleasure. Following Jesus is about loving the fact that Jesus will come back one day. Loving the age to come. Demas loved this present age, so took early retirement.

Crescens and Titus are not with Paul because they're on mission somewhere else.

Paul still has Luke with him. He wants Timothy, and he wants Mark. These were his travelling companions in Acts, his mission partners.

He's not looking inward in loneliness. He's looking outward. Let's get the team back together. He's building a mission team.

What's the message here for us? Why does Paul want the Christians in Timothy's churches to hear this instruction?

Two things:

### ***(a) Spread the gospel***

Paul's priority, in a prison cell where he may die, is to gather his team and get on mission. How much more should that be the priority of Christians in churches where they are free?

There are countries where the penalties are high if you try to persuade people to become Christians. We've had Christians here who have had to flee those countries and can never go back. The UK is becoming more hostile, and people often don't want to hear. But that is nothing compared to Iran or North Korea.

You're not going to do this if you're like Demas. We have to be convinced that eternity matters. We have to love the reality Jesus will bring when he returns more than we love this life.

So let's have Paul's heart. Our church is a family on mission together. Let's share Paul's heart and get the good news of Jesus out there.

### ***(b) Send the gospel***

Timothy is in Ephesus. 1 Timothy opened with Paul telling Timothy to "stay there in Ephesus". 2 Timothy closes with Paul telling Timothy to leave Ephesus and to join him in Rome, picking up Mark on the way.

The unspoken message to the church in Ephesus is that Paul needs Timothy. "You know Timothy, you're really fond of him, godly, gifted, cares for you? I need him." Sure, Paul has sent Tychicus to take over, but it's just not the same.

It's a joy when a church has the privilege of sending someone off to train to be a pastor one day. It's a joy, but it's bittersweet. Almost certainly they will be someone people love and who is deeply involved. Or to send people off to serve the church in another country on the mission field.

We're talking about our desire to see new churches planted in Malton and Filey. If that happens people from here will probably choose to move across to help that happen. That hurts too.

Lots of wars all over the globe. Painful moment when young men or women sent off to war. Costly for them. They don't know if they'll come back. But just as hard for the families they leave behind. Costs them too, to say goodbye, to lose having this person with their family for a season, with the uncertainties.

If we love eternity, we'll not only spread the gospel ourselves, we'll send others, and that's costly.

## **2. Bring the tools (13)**

Verse 13.

Again, many writers picture poor old Paul, cold and bored. He wants a thicker duvet and his iPad.

This is no duvet. This is his travelling cloak. It's like asking for his walking boots and his waterproofs. And we don't know what was in his scrolls and parchments. But it's basically his notes or his library. It's like asking for his sermon notes and his Bible commentaries.

This is not a man who has given up. He wants his team and he needs his tools.

Imagine Lee is arrested and put in prison for being a pastor. He asks for the whole leadership team to visit, and to bring with them his commentaries on Malachi and Galatians, an offline copy of our church database, and his bishop's robes.

What's the message for us here? It's this:

### ***(c) Equip the gospel***

Gospel ministry needs resourcing. In this church, it's not just pastors doing the preaching while everybody else is passive. It's all hands on deck. There are so many ways to serve so that everyone can have a role.

Only some of us will get to go to Bible college, or be a missionary, or join a church plant. But we can all give generously to equip the ministry here and in new contexts.

We all have a role to equip the gospel.

## **3. Watch for trouble (14-15)**

Verses 14-15.

We don't know much about Alexander: who he was, what harm he did? Maybe he's the one who got Paul arrested. Maybe he lives in Ephesus? Maybe he lives in one of the towns Timothy will travel through on his journey to Rome?

Paul is warning Timothy to be careful. Alexander is trouble. Don't get caught in his net.

The message for us?

#### ***(d) Be shrewd with the gospel***

We don't want to be suspicious. We don't want to write people off – where we know someone won't want to hear about Jesus so we write the reply for them and don't tell them. We don't want to retreat into a corner, and not proclaim truths that will be unpopular and could get us into hot water.

All true. However ... that doesn't mean we should be naive. We mustn't assume everyone will love us. We must be ready for the fact that preaching Jesus could cause us some difficulty. We should be alert to the dangers, and not deliberately walk into trouble.

Most of the time, most of us can just carry on without worrying. But be alert. Let's say there's someone at work who really hates the gospel, and you suspect is watching for you to share the good news with someone you work with so they can report you and get you into trouble. It's not cowardice to wait until they aren't around to share the gospel with your colleagues. That's wisdom.

#### **4. Endure the trials (16-18)**

Verses 16-18.

Two things you need to know to understand what he's talking about.

1. In the Roman legal system, you'd have two trials. A preliminary hearing where you could be found guilty. But if not, you'd be back in custody waiting for the full trial.

2. You need a patron, someone who can speak up for you and reference your character.

Paul had nobody. He's got all these Christians sending greetings in verse 21, but not one of them put their head above the parapet for him. He's wonderfully generous in his spirit. He doesn't hold it against them and doesn't want God to either.

Remember how Peter denied knowing Jesus when Jesus was on trial. Jesus wonderfully restored him. Paul counts the Christians who should have stood with him as his friends, and his brothers and sisters. No hard feelings. Incredible.

He wasn't on his own. God was with him. God gave him the strength so he could use the trial itself to proclaim the gospel. And he was spared. Maybe not the literal lions for a Roman citizen, but maybe it would have been. He lived to fight another day.

What do you make of verse 18? "... rescue me from every evil attack". It can't mean God will get him off at the main trial, and he'll always escape deep suffering and execution. He expects his time has come. No, the rescue is to be brought safely to

God's heavenly kingdom. The Romans can execute him, but they can't stop God's plan to get him to heaven.

This is the man Timothy is going to join. Things could get bumpy. But Timothy can trust he is eternally secure, so he can endure whatever trials come his way.

What's Paul saying to us?

### ***(e) Endure for the gospel***

You can be as shrewd as you like, to avoid the local franchise of Alexander the metal-worker. But remember the promise of 3:12. You won't escape hardships, not if you live like Jesus and build your life around telling people about him.

What would success look like for Paul in his trials? Not that he gets off. But that he endured the trials, didn't deny Jesus, and continued using every opportunity to speak about him.

Exam season come to an end. Each one painful. You know the next one will be tough too, but that's the path to getting the qualifications you want. Imagine someone offers to rescue you from your last exam. What do they mean? Option A: "I'll take you out to lunch so you don't have to take the exam". "Will I still get my GCSE?" "No, you didn't take the exam". That's a rescue but not a useful one. Option B: "I've got permission to sit next to you, I can't give you the answers, you still have to revise, think and write, but I can encourage and strengthen to get through it, and you'll get through it". Much better. Still no guarantee you'll pass though.

God rescued Paul. He stood by him in the trials, so he spoke boldly about Jesus. He didn't withdraw him from the trial. But he got him through it, faith intact. And the eternal outcome is guaranteed.

If life gets more difficult for you because you follow Jesus, this is what endurance looks like. Not escaping the consequences. Some Christians do lose their job. Some do go to prison. Many do lose some friends. But coming out the other side still following Jesus, still being known as one of his followers, and still speaking about him to other people.

### **Conclusion**

Paul's final words? We don't know, but these are his last recorded words.

Paul's deepest wish at the end of his life? That the good news of Jesus keeps spreading. He gathers the team, gets his tools, and keeps speaking of Jesus right to the end.

Whether you've got a few hours left on earth or many decades, what is your deepest wish?

Paul would want you to be focused on more people hearing about Jesus so they can follow him to. Use the opportunities God gives to tell people. Help others to go. Do what you can to make sure others have what they need to be doing this. Keep your wits about you. And keep doing all of this, even when it hurts.

This is a radically different set of priorities and values to live our lives by. But it's God who is doing the really wonderful thing. It's his gospel. His plan of salvation. And if we're one of his children, he will rescue us from every evil attack and bring us safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.