**How To Study the Bible**

**Pastoral Epistles**

**2 Timothy 4:1-5**

### 2 Timothy 4

What would your “final” words to your loved ones be?

1. Verse 6. What does it mean to be poured out as a drink offering?

Paul borrowed the vivid image of “being poured out like a drink offering” from the Jewish custom of pouring out wine at the base of the altar as part of the ritual sacrifice of a lamb (cf. Exodus 29:40, 41; Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:1–12; 28:7, 24).

The image of red wine splashing down upon the altar became an operative metaphor for how Paul regarded his life. Some five years earlier Paul had written to the Philippians about the possibility of his death, describing it as “being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service” of their faith (2:17). There it was hypothetical. Now as he writes to Timothy it is actual. He uses the present tense in its progressive sense to indicate the certainty of the event, as if it were actually taking place. Though there would be some more time before the event (he will ask for his books and a warm coat, v. 13), the last drops of Paul’s blood were in a sense beginning to fall.

Yet Paul was triumphant. It is clear that Paul did not think of himself as about to be executed but rather as offering himself to God. From the time of his conversion on the Damascus Road, everything he had was given to God—his wealth, his body, his brilliant mind, his passions, his position, his reputation, his relationships, his dreams. For years the red blood of his life had been spilling onto the altar. Now all that remained was his life’s breath, and he triumphantly gave that. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (250). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

1. Try to sense Paul’s mood here. How do you think Paul felt about his death?

Departing. By calling death a “departure”—“and the time has come for my departure” (v. 6b), Paul indicated the certitude that his life would not end and that he had no fear of death. The word translated “departure” is used in Greek literature to describe the loosing of a ship from its moorings or a soldier loosing the stakes of his tent. It pictures a ship lifting anchor, tossing off the ropes, and rising on the tide so the winds can carry her to sea. The word radiates sweet, triumphant continuance. Lewis had it right in The Last Battle where it is explained to the deceased children that “they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.”

Final “departure” was the culmination of Paul’s long-held dream that he had earlier expressed to the Philippians saying, “I desire to depart [to cast off the ropes] and be with Christ, which is better by far” (1:23). He believed with all his heart that it was “better by far.” Those who have departed to be with Christ are far better off. Though you have lived seventy-five years, it is better to be with Christ. Though you are the richest man in town, life in Heaven with Christ is far better. Though you are brilliant, it is far better. If you have lived only five years, it is better to be above with Christ. Though you have the greatest gifts for ministry, it is far better. The “far better” dominated Paul’s thoughts, as it should ours.

Here was a man who looked imminent death in the face and saw the stars. — Hughes, R. K., & Chapell, B. (2000). 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To guard the deposit. Preaching the Word (250–251). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

1. What do we learn about Christian living from Paul’s words in verse 7?

Those servants who refuse to get bogged down in and anchored to the past are those who pursue the objectives of the future. People who do this are seldom petty. They are too involved in getting a job done to be occupied with yesterday’s hurts and concerns. Very near the end of his full and productive life, Paul wrote: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim 4:7). What a grand epitaph! He seized every day by the throat. He relentlessly pursued life.

I know human nature well enough to realize that some people excuse their bitterness over past hurts by thinking: “It’s too late to change. I’ve been injured and the wrong done against me is too great for me ever to forget it. Maybe Paul could press on, not me.” A person with this mind-set is convinced that he or she is the exception to the command to forgive, and he is determined not to change.

But when God holds out hope, when God makes promises, there are no exceptions. With each new dawn there is delivered to your door a fresh, new package called “today.” God has designed each of us in such a way that we can handle only one package at a time . . . and all the grace we need will be supplied by Him as we live out that day. — Swindoll, C. R. (2005). Day by day. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

1. Occasionally you will hear someone say that Christian living is all about a relationship with God. Look at verse 7. Is that how Paul saw it?

We all want two things: something to do, and someone to do it with. Christianity, rightly understood, gives us both. Christianity is not all about a relationship. It is about a relationship, but that is not all it is about. It is also about a calling. It is about doing. Martha was not altogether wrong.

Bill Hybels got me on to this idea. He speaks often of following God as an exhilarating, breath-taking adventure. Exhilarating breath-taking adventure? Really? Look around church next Sunday. Does it look like most people are experiencing an exhilarating, breath-taking adventure? It was a new concept for me. Seems to be a new concept to a few other church-goers as well. But, I am starting to get it. I am starting to run the race. I am starting to reach for the prize. I am starting to fulfill the calling, not just enjoy the relationship. — Josh Hunt. The Amazing Power of Doubling Groups.

1. Verse 8 speaks of those who long for his appearing. What does this teach us about Christian living?

There are some pleasures in knowing God that we will not know until we get to heaven. This is why we are taught to long for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8) “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.” This life never will be heaven. There will always be tribulation in this life, Jesus promised that. There will be the constant battle against sin, the struggle for health, relational strains, persecution, financial difficulties, natural disasters, and personal failures. This is not heaven. There are pleasures reserved for us that we will never know on this shore. That is why Jesus is preparing a place for us. One of the quickest ways to lose your joy is to demand this we be happy all the time right now with no tainting of the sadness in this world. He has not wiped every tear from our eyes yet. — Josh Hunt. People Who Enjoy Their God.

1. What do we learn about Christian living from the last part of verse 13?

My friend, Bill Sloan, spoke one sentence to me that forever changed the trajectory of my life. I have never been the same. I will never be the same. My life is richer, fuller, and better in every way because of that one sentence.

My life is a long way from perfect, but it is better. I am healthier, my relationships are better, I have accomplished more, I enjoy my relationship with God more, I am a better father–about a hundred other things are better–because Bill spoke into my life.

What was this sentence? Well, first a little context. It was my second year in college. I was bragging that I had never ever read a single solitary book outside of assigned class reading. It was a point of pride for me. I was firmly entrenched in the non-reader camp. I liked it that way. Readers? I had lots of bad thoughts about readers, and I was not about to be named among them. Bill made one sentence that forever changed all that.

“You are just cutting yourself off from so much knowledge,” he pleaded. I am not sure what it was about those 10 words that got my attention, but they certainly did. Not that I changed instantly to become an avid reader, but I did make the one change that made all of the other changes possible. I read one book. I liked it so well I read another, and another, and another.

Whatever good things have come my way, whatever success I have enjoyed, to whatever degree I have been able to do things right, I owe much of it to the habit that developed out of those 10 words.

It is fair to say I have read thousands of books on a variety of topics. I purchase and read books constantly. When I walk out the door, I usually have my keys, my cell phone, my wallet, and a book.

One of my children’s fond memories is walking in a Barnes and Noble with me and pausing just as we enter, saying: “Ah, smell those books!”

I knew I had found a soul mate when one of my hosts for a conference took my by a Barnes and Noble once. As soon as we walked in the door he stopped us and said, “Ah, smell those books!”

I think if Paul ever went into a book store he would have stopped as he entered the door and said, “Ah, smell those books.” Look what he wrote in 2 Timothy 4:13: “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”

Howard Hendricks said, “If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow.” Teach from a full cup. Let people drink from a living stream.

Henry Ford said, “Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty.” — Josh Hunt. 10 Marks of Incredible Small Group Leaders.

1. How important were books to Paul?

Do you hear what Paul is saying? Get this. Winter is coming. It is cold. Paul needs his coat. He also left a stack of books [technically parchments and scrolls]. He asks Timothy to bring these things to him. Then he makes a value judgement between them. He clarifies to Timothy which of the two things is more important to him. We could paraphrase, “If you only have so much room, forget the coat. I can live without the coat all winter easier than I can live without my books.” That is the heart of a teacher. Teachers are readers. — Josh Hunt. Disciplemaking Teachers.

1. What books have impacted you spiritually?

Here is my list:

* + Desiring God
  + Knowing God
  + Experiencing God
  + Anything by John Ortberg
  + Daws

1. What have you read recently that has impacted you?

I am reading Mastery by Robert Greene. It is a secular book, but a good read. I wonder if he is a Christian. Christians seem to be over represented in his stories.

1. What do you want to recall from today’s conversation?
2. How can we support one another in prayer this week?