

Sermon 2 Timothy 4

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

● Return of the King

III – Bronnie Ware was a woman who worked with people in their final stages of life, and often heard people say their final words on their deathbed. Here are the **most common 5 Deathbed Wishes** she heard from people:

- 1. I wish I had the courage to live a life true to myself and not the life others expected of me.
- 2. I wish I didn't work so hard.
- 3. I wish I had the courage to express my feelings
- 4. I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends
- 5. I wish I'd let myself be happier.

To me, these don't sound like deathbed wishes. They sound like deathbed regrets. I've lived an unfulfilled life. I worked too hard. I was never honest about my feelings. I was too busy for my friends. I wasn't happy. What will you be thinking at the end of your life?

Listen to Paul's words as he faces the end of his life from verses 6-8:

"I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith."

Paul's final words are: Thank you God that I've made it to the end and kept faithful to you! Paul has deathbed thank yous!

- 1. Thank you that I've lived the life YOU expect of me.
- 2. Thank you that I worked hard for YOU.
- 3. Thank you that I freely expressed my faith in YOU.
- 4. Thank you that I put YOU above my friends and family and everything else in this world.
- 5. Thank you that I have GREAT JOY knowing that I'm headed to heaven with you for eternity.

For Paul, the reality is that this world is passing away and eternity is coming when Jesus comes to judge. Other people might regret what they've missed out on in this life, but Paul is **thankful** of that he's followed God and he's thankful for what's ahead of him in heaven. For a Christian, that's what matters – to live a life faithful to God and to wait for his return.

That's why Paul starts this chapter with these words in verse 1:

- ¹ *In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom...*

Today, as we come together as one congregation to give thanks to God, this is a great reminder – Paul wants us to remember that we live in the presence of God each day and we're waiting for Jesus to return. And can I suggest to us all today – that's the source of our thankfulness! We live in God's presence and we're waiting for Jesus to return.

● Word of the King

And because we live in God's presence and are waiting for Jesus' return, Paul says to Timothy, verse 2: "I give you this charge":

- *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.*

Paul doesn't want Timothy to have any final regrets in life. He wants him to preach the Word. No matter what the circumstances are, Paul wants Timothy to share the gospel. Even when it's not easy to do.

- **III – Fads.** Do you remember at school, there were always fads that came along and went? Fads like **Hula hoops, yo yos, Rubik's cubes, flares**,... fads are things that come and go. One day they're popular and the next day they're not.

When it comes to our faith, sometimes Jesus will be in season and other times he'll be out of season for people. Sometimes Jesus is acceptable, sometimes he's not. Sometimes it's fashionable to talk about Jesus, sometimes it's not. Sometimes talking about your faith is convenient, sometimes it's not. But because Jesus is returning to judge the living and the dead, people need to hear the gospel – from all of us. People need to hear God's word, even when it's difficult or inconvenient to hear. When we get to the end of our lives, we want to share those words of Paul – *"I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith."*

And we often might think about how hard that is to do. But consider the situation Paul is in:

● Meeting the King

Paul finishes this letter, his last letter, reflecting on the people around him. He lives in God's presence, and he's waiting for Jesus to return. And right now, he's in prison, and he's thinking about the people God has placed around him.

There are Christians who have left him, who have deserted the Christian faith because it was too hard. There were people like Alexander, who did a great deal of harm by opposing the message of the gospel. And in verse 16, perhaps the hardest to hear of all:

- ¹⁶ *At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.*

NO one came to Paul's support. EVERYONE deserted him. Here was Paul **on his own**. At the end of a faithful life. Facing death. And deserted. But Paul was focussed on the Christian reality. He was focussed on the promises of God and the future of heaven. And he says this:

- ¹⁷ *But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

"God stood by me and I was able to share the gospel." "The Lord will rescue me." "And the Lord will lead me safely home." "The Lord will take me to heaven."

Paul is focused on heaven. Even in the most difficult circumstances, he remembers that he's living in God's presence and he's waiting for Jesus to return.

● Waiting for the King

Today, **we** live in the presence of God, and **we're** waiting for Jesus' return. But we should also be so thankful to live in this community. We should be thankful that we're not alone. That we're not on our own. That we're often not

greatly persecuted for our faith. That we have the freedom to share our faith. And we have that opportunity to share the gospel **together** as a church.

Let me read to you a letter from a member of our evening service, Jody, who has been unwell, and after a 7 month absence from church, was able to return 2 weeks ago. He's written a letter to us today to express his thanks for this community:

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

I am sorry not to be able to join you for this wonderful celebration today. However, it has been a joy indeed to be reunited with the 5pm fellowship from the Sunday before last.

What a great opportunity is presented by Giving Thanks Sunday to express my deep gratitude to you all for sustaining me during my past seven months of illness. The kindness, generosity and, not least, the prayer has enabled me to endure this period of absence in the certain knowledge of God's goodness, wisdom and guiding hand on my life. It has also been a wonderful testimony to the Spirit of God working in the hearts of the ASW (All Saints) fellowship that has overflowed into this practical Christian expression of your faith.

I cannot let the opportunity pass without mentioning two people whose permission would no doubt be withheld, were I ask to them! They are Matt, who made a DVD of every 5pm Service for me, as well as driving Anne to church most Sundays, and Alana. Thanks guys – what a great ministry of encouragement, which really helped me to feel I was in continued touch with the 5pm saints.

Some of you may want to ask how this episode helped or tested my faith, especially as I had not experienced anything quite like this previously. Heb 12 : 1-13 was an enormous help to me, e.g. v3 'Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart; v5 *'My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him, for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves . . . 'v11 'Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.'*

Thank you one and all for your practical ministry, love and prayers.

Jody.

We live today in God's presence. We live today waiting for Jesus' return. And we should be so thankful for that. But we should also be thankful for each other. For this community. For this place. And for the opportunity to give for the planting of churches in Tanzania, to give Bibles for our persecuted brothers and sisters, to open gospel opportunities with our local Police. Give thanks that we have the opportunity to employ staff for more gospel work, and an opportunity, after 6 years of hard work, to build facilities to help us reach the people of Waitara with God's word.

Listen to Pauls' words of thankfulness as he comes to the end of his life – verse 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.*

DO you long for his appearing? Today, we give thanks that we live in God's presence. We give thanks that we're waiting for Jesus' return. And we give thanks for this community as we worship God and share his gospel with our world.

Let's pray.