

# Orcutt Christian Church

A Grace Driven Church for Grace Needing People!

God is NOT far  
Stay in your Car

## Chapter 30

### Paul's Final Days

Acts 20-23;27;-28; Eph. 1-6; 2 Tim. 1-4

January 10, 2021

- 1 🎵 Doxology [DH 1981]
- 2 🎵 Dear Lord and Father of Mankind - ALL - 639 - (DH - 1949)
- 3 🎵 What a friend we have in Jesus - ALL - 630 - (DH - 649)
- 4 🎵 O God our help in ages past 686 - (DH - 656)
- 5 🎵 Jesus is all the World to me - ALL - 512 - (DH - 194)
- 6 🎵 Who is on the Lord's side - ALL - 674
- 7 🎵 Family of God [DH 2357]

#### 2 Timothy 3:1-11 (NASB)

**<sup>1</sup> But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.  
<sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,  
<sup>3</sup> unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. <sup>6</sup> For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup> Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these *men* also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the**

**faith. But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. <sup>10</sup> Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, <sup>11</sup> persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me!**

The FINAL days of the Apostle Paul are so incredibly important and complicated that today is just the first of two sermons on Paul's Final Days to give you and I encouragement.

When you think about it, final words of loved one's are SPECIAL words.

If you've ever had a parent or sibling die then you know what I mean.

I would guess that you've memorized their final words.

These last sayings of our loved ones are indeed PRECIOUS to us aren't they?

They are because we know that a time will come very soon when we will no longer hear them speak, so we strive to catch every priceless syllable.

This is one reason that over the years people have compiled records of the last words of famous individuals.

**The Roman Emperor Julian** was raised as a Christian.

He was the Roman emperor from 361 to 363, dying in battle at the age of 32, and was buried in the Apostle Paul's home town of Tarsus.

But when he was 20 years old he left his Christian faith and became a pagan.

Looking back on his life in 362, Julian wrote that he had spent twenty years in the way of Christianity and twelve in the true way, i.e., the way of pagan Rome.

He was the last non-Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, and he believed that it was necessary to restore the Empire's ancient Roman values and traditions in order to save it from dissolution.

His rejection of Christianity, and his promotion of Neoplatonic Hellenism in its place, caused him to be remembered as Julian the Apostate by the Christian Church.

He attempted unsuccessfully to reverse the Roman Empire's official endorsement of Christianity.

It is said that the final words of Emperor Julian were, "*You have won, O Galilean.*"

I read that John F. Kennedy's last words were a reply to Nellie Connelly, wife of Governor John Connelly.

The Connellys were in the limo with the Kennedy's that horrible November day.

Mrs. Connelly had looked at the crowds lining the streets and said to the president, "*You certainly can't say the people of Dallas haven't given you a nice welcome, Mr. President.*"

And Kennedy replied, "*No, you certainly can't.*"

When Joan Crawford collapsed with a massive heart attack, her last words were printed in the newspapers.

When her housekeeper began to pray aloud. Crawford angrily said, "*Don't you dare ask God to help me.*"

Times of challenge are given to you and I.

Times we have to thank God for another chance at life.

Times to truly worship Him.

Second Timothy is Paul's last letter.

It is his final word of encouragement to you and I.

Do you ever wonder what your last words might be.

Well, Paul's last words are words of victory.

They are words of encouragement.

They are words of triumphant faith.

And, his last written words are found in Second Timothy.

There is good reason to believe that Paul had been released after

Luke closed out the book of Acts, but has been rearrested in Troas. This will be the subject of next Lord's Day sermon.

Think of the soaring words in 2nd Timothy chapter one:

**2 Timothy 1:12 (NASB)**

**I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.**

Oh, how I wish I had time this morning to plumb the depths of that declaration of triumphant faith.

But, reflect on these words of encouragement to Timothy:

**2 Timothy 2:11-13 (NASB)**

**It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; <sup>12</sup> If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.**

Paul is realistic.

He knows he and Timothy are living in terrible times.

And so he speaks to Timothy, and also to you and I.

**2 Timothy 3:1-5 (NASB)**

**But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, <sup>5</sup> holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.**

Then in 2nd Timothy chapter four, we have Paul's last words.

**2 Timothy 4:9, 13, 21-22 (NASB)**

**Make every effort to come to me soon; <sup>13</sup> When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the**

**books, especially the parchments. <sup>21</sup> Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. <sup>22</sup> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.**

For many people, their last words can also be filled with a special depth of wisdom.

When Rick Warren's minister father was dying, he said to Rick, "Oh if I could just save one more sinner."

I bring all this up because this past week in *The Story*, we have been reading some of the last words of the Apostle Paul.

After Paul's arrest in Jerusalem and transfer to Caesarea Maritima he was continually being threatened by hostile Jews, and finally exercised his rights as a Roman Citizen to appeal to the Emperor. For two years in Rome as he waited for trial by the Emperor, he lived in a rented house.

But he was chained to one of the Imperial Guards 24 hours a day. Every four hours his guards changed, which meant he taught 6 different guards a day about Christianity, and he won converts. These Imperial Guards then took the message into the palace and the government, and The Way spread throughout Rome.

Eventually his case was heard and Paul was set free.

He left Rome and resumed his commitment to preaching the Gospel message.

What took place between his release and his rearrest will be the subject of Next Lord's Day Sermon.

## **2 Timothy 1:3-4 (NASB)**

**I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, <sup>4</sup> longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy.**

When Paul speaks of Timothy's tears, he is speaking of the desperate grief that Paul had been rearrested.

After his rearrest, he is being held in the Mamertine Prison. According to tradition, the prison was constructed in the 7th century BC.

It was originally created as a cistern for a spring in the floor of the second lower level, but converted to a maximum security prison. Prisoners were lowered through an opening into the lower dungeon.

Once down in the hole, the prisoner knew he would be soon executed.

Paul knew he would not be freed.

He knew there would be no more voyages across the Mediterranean, no more visits to the churches he had founded, but worst of all, there would be no more taking the gospel to places it had not been heard.

Paul knew that his death, his time of departure from this world, was at hand.

Incarceration in facilities such as the Mamertine Prison was intended to be a temporary measure prior to trial or execution; abuses of this principle occurred but were officially censured.

The Roman historian Tacitus said on July 19, AD 64, a fire broke out in Rome, destroying ten of the city's fourteen districts.

Rumors spread through Rome that Emperor Nero had ordered the inferno so he could rebuild Rome according to his own liking.

Nero tried to stamp out the rumors—but to no avail.

He then looked for a scapegoat.

And since two of the districts untouched by the fire were disproportionately populated by Christians, he shifted the blame to them, and Nero engaged in a brutal crackdown on Christians which led to the executions of Peter and Paul.

Nero did not free him, and in a few short months Paul was taken outside the walls of Rome where he was beheaded.

But while in his dungeon cell Paul showed he was never one to sit around idly.

He worked for the furtherance of the Gospel even in this final imprisonment writing several letters to churches and friends. These letters to Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon became part of the New Testament and are known as Paul's Prison Epistles.

His final written words were the last prison epistle he wrote to young Timothy, who Paul thought of as his successor.

I want us to focus in on part of that last letter because in a sense its truth was meant for us as well.

You see, like Timothy, we are Paul's successors.

It is our job to finish what he started as we work to complete the Great Commission given to all believers by Jesus.

So, please this afternoon take your Bibles and turn to 2 Timothy, and read Paul's FINAL WORDS.

In these final words Paul tells us what we need to do to live as he lived, what we need to do to live lives of eternal significance.

Paul has four recommendations for Timothy and for you and I.

## **I. Keep ENDURING**

### **2 Timothy 3:10-11, 14-17 (NASB)**

**10** Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, **11** persecutions, *and* sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium *and* at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! **14** You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, **15** and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. **16** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; **17** so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We live in tough times, not only because of COVID, but because of civil unrest, and persecution of Christians..

Jesus and Paul say Christians should expect trials and tribulations. Tough times go with the territory when you name Jesus as the Lord of your life.

Obedying Jesus in a fallen world is going to mean that you will go against the flow.

It means you will be opposed many popular or politically-correct choices.

And that can be hard at times.

But Paul tells Timothy—and us—to persevere through such persecution, to follow his example of endurance and to depend upon God.

He says that trials will come our way, but in spite of this we must keep enduring, keep obeying our Lord.

At work you may be expected to compromise your ethics for the sake of a sale, but keep enduring.

Be obedient to God.

Don't compromise!

In your friendships you may be ridiculed for your faith, but keep enduring.

In your marriage you may be tempted to stop submitting yourselves to each other, tempted to stop putting the needs of your spouse above your own.

That kind of mutual submission in marriage can be hard and the temptation is to give up on this covenant you made with God but don't do that!

Maybe you heard about the young newlyweds who had severe marital problems, and they were always at each other's throat.

One day the wife came up with a possible solution.

She said to her husband,

***“You know what? Let's just both pray that one of us dies...then I'll go and live with Mom.”***

If you want to show the world how wonderful a marriage can be when lived out according to God's plan, keep enduring.

Keep loving.

Keep giving.

Keep sacrificing.

Paul is saying we must remember that making Jesus Lord means obeying Him in every area of life, and that is going to be tough.

There are going to be challenges.

Jesus promised us things would be tough.

In fact He promised us a cross.

But with Jesus crosses can be amazing blessings because our Lord has the power to turn crosses into crowns.

In fact, one thing that keeps us enduring is the promise of Scripture that God can and will use our tough times for our good.

If we hang in there, we will come through the fire as refined gold.

Perhaps Robben Island doesn't mean much to you.

It's a small island about four miles from Cape Town, South Africa.

It takes its name from the Dutch word for seals.

Over the centuries it has served as the home for a prison, a leper colony, a mental asylum, and a naval base.

But Robben Island's most famous use was as the home of one of the most well-known political prisoners in history, a man named Nelson Mandela.

As I'm sure you know, Mandela opposed the South African apartheid, a system designed to extend the rule and privileges of the white minority and diminish those of the blacks.

That segregation system ensured that the 14 percent **minority** would control the rest of the population.

Under apartheid, blacks were excluded from the "whites only" buses, "whites only" beaches, "whites only" schools, and "whites only" hospitals.

Blacks could not run for office or live in a white neighborhood.

Apartheid legalized racism.

Mandela was the perfect man to challenge the segregation system.

As a descendant of royalty, he was educated in the finest schools.

As the son of a Christian mother, he embraced her love for God and people.

Under the tutelage of a tribal chief, he learned the art of leadership.

And as a young black lawyer in Cape Town, he said he experienced a ‘thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments,’ which produce an inward fire to fight the system that imprisoned his people.

By the mid-1950’s Mandela was a force to be reckoned with.

He was passionate, driven by anger, given to retaliation.

With his enviable pedigree and impressive stature (six feet two inches, 245 pounds), he was, for many, the hope of the black culture.

But then on August 5, 1962 government officials arrested Mandela, convicted him of treason, and sent him to prison.

For the next twenty-seven years, he stared through wired windows. I wonder if Mandela was thinking how God was using this loss of freedom and persecution.

We all go through tough times and wonder the same thing.

This wondering can make it hard for us to hang in there and for us to endure.

We wonder if it’s worth it.

But Paul says it is.

He says we can endure because we can know that

**Romans 8:28 (NASB)**

**28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.**

Now, there are many things we do not know.

We do not know if COVID will get better.

We do not know when and where terrorists will explode their bombs.

We do not know when doctors will give us sober diagnoses, but Paul says we can endure anyway because of what we CAN know.

We can know that God works in our struggles whatever they may be, works in them for our good.

And Nelson Mandela learned the same lesson during those 27 years.

He was confined to a six-by-six foot concrete room.

It had one small window that overlooked the courtyard.

All his meals came from corn: breakfast was a porridge of corn; lunch and supper consisted of corn on the cob; coffee was roasted corn mixed with water.

Mandela and the other prisoners were awakened every morning at 5:30AM.

They crushed rocks into gravel until noon, ate lunch, then worked until 4PM.

They were back in the cell at 5:00PM and asleep by 8PM.

Yet God used it all this hardship to shape Mandela.

Over the years he read widely.

He exercised daily; a hundred fingertip push-ups, two hundred sit-ups, fifty deep knee bends.

With the help of God's Spirit Mandela honed his capacity to compromise and forgive.

He developed an attitude of courtesy in all situations which even the guards who had been assigned to him appreciated.

He became particularly close to one jailer who, over two decades read the Bible and discussed Scripture with Mandela daily.

Mandela reflected deeply about that guard's teaching.

Finally at the age of seventy-two Mandela was released.

Those who knew him well described the pre-prison Mandela as arrogant, "cocky and pugnacious," looking for a fight.

But after his imprisonment he was different.

Mandella said, "I came out mature...devoted to rationality, logic and compromise."

Old friends observed that he was "unmarred by rancor."

Within four years Mandela was elected president and set out to lead South Africa out of apartheid and into a new era of equality.

We can look back and see that God needed an educated, sophisticated leader who'd mastered the art of patience and compromise, and he was at work in Mandela's cruel imprisonment...preparing him for that good work.

Mandela became as gold refined in the fire because he endured.

Before time began, God looked into the future and foresaw your needs and demands.

He knew the challenges you would face.

And so He is instilling within you everything you need to fulfill His plan for your life.

As Paul puts it in

**Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)**

**10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

Paul says with this knowledge we can keep ENDURING.

## **II. Keep Studying.**

**2 Timothy 3:15-17 (NASB)**

**15 from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.**

All Scripture is profitable.

Since that is true, a Christian life without Scripture is useless.

The Bible equips the Christian for every good work.

And the importance of Scripture to Paul was huge so he passed that wisdom onto Timothy and to us.

The fact is if we're going to follow Jesus we need to be taught, rebuked at times, corrected, trained in righteousness.

So we need to keep reading, we need to keep studying.

When we're confused and depressed or frustrated and disappointed, we turn to this Book.

This is our source of authority.

This is our guideline for life and not Hollywood stars that our culture has elevated to the level of experts on morality.

Our guideline is not our ever-changing feelings

It's not our varied experiences.

It's certainly not tradition.

The BIBLE is our sole source of authority.

It is the “rock,” the foundation on which we build our lives. It tells us how to work, how to spend our money, how to be a husband or wife, how to parent so we have to keep on reading.

And, in the next series of sermons from the 111 verses known as the Sermon on the Mount, you will see that Jesus gives us a total foundation on how to live profitable lives.

A 2012 research study commissioned by the American Bible Society and conducted by Barna Research revealed some good news and bad news about Bible reading and biblical literacy in America.

Sadly, 46 percent believe the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon are equal but different expressions of the same spiritual truths.

The Bible clearly warns us that it’s not easy to listen for God’s voice.

There will be plenty of distractions from the culture, the devil, and from our own distracted hearts.

There’s only one way to combat spiritual counterfeits: know the voice of Jesus, hanging on every Word of His written Word as we trust and obey him—even when the crowd tells us to do something else.

Paul insists that we must keep reading and studying!

### **III. Keep PREACHING**

*2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NASB)*

**<sup>1</sup> I solemnly 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: <sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. <sup>3</sup> For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their**

ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. <sup>5</sup> But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Please understand, preaching is **not only** the delivery of sermons in a worship service—although that’s part of it.

Preaching is also about every Christian being prepared to tell good news.

We’ve all been charged with that duty.

Jesus was talking to all of us when He said, “*You shall be My witnesses.*”

The Apostle Peter says,

*1 Peter 3:15 (NASB)*

**<sup>15</sup> but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;**

Let me ask, are you ready and willing to share of the difference Jesus has made in your life?

Are you ready to “preach” when the opportunity comes?

Do you have any good news to share?

Of course you do!

Think about it.

What has Jesus done in you and through you and even to you?

How has He blessed you?

We have so much good news to share—and it should keep us wanting to share it with others rather than keep it to ourselves.

We should want to preach it and tell it to everyone we can.

#### **IV. Keep POURING!**

*2 Timothy 4:6 (NASB)*

**<sup>6</sup> For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and**

**the time of my departure has come.**

What does *being poured out* mean?

Paul is referring to the "drink offering" which is wine a Jewish priest poured out beside the altar following the offering of a ram, lamb, or bull in the temple.

Moses writes

**Numbers 15:10-13 (GW)**

**<sup>10</sup> Also give an offering of two quarts of wine. It is an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the LORD. <sup>11</sup> Do this for each bull, each ram, and each sheep or goat. <sup>12</sup> Do it for each animal, however many you sacrifice. <sup>13</sup> All native-born Israelites must do it this way when they bring an offering by fire, a soothing aroma to the LORD.**

Just as the drink offering symbolized the end of the offering, Paul's life was about to come to an end.

He is writing these words under Roman imprisonment and expects to be executed before too long.

Paul has already made one courtroom appearance during this imprisonment.

**2 Timothy 4:16-17 (GW)**

**<sup>16</sup> At my first hearing no one stood up in my defense. Everyone abandoned me. I pray that it won't be held against them. <sup>17</sup> However, the Lord stood by me and gave me strength so that I could finish spreading the Good News for all the nations to hear. I was snatched out of a lion's mouth.**

You can see that Paul is very clear and does not expect to be given another opportunity.

So Paul is borrowing that tradition that everyone was acquainted with.

Paul took that familiar image and described his life as an offering being poured out for the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you were to paraphrase this, Paul is saying

***“The Roman authorities will not take my life. Just like Jesus I will die living my life and giving my life. I will be a living sacrifice. I will complete that sacrifice by laying down my life for the One Who gave His life for me. Like a drink offering I am pouring my life out for Christ.”***

/Keep pouring.

Don't give up.

Keep on keeping on.

That's how to find a life fit for eternity.

Make your everyday life a living sacrifice to God.

Keep doing that and you will END WELL.”

Do you want your life to count for something?

When you leave this earth, do you want to leave an impact that will last long after you are gone?

As a Christ follower of course you do!

We are each called to be “world-changers.”

So follow the example of the Apostle Paul.

He faced all sorts of adversity, and yet he did not cower.

He did not compromise.

He kept pouring out his life for Jesus.

And there is an amazing **contrast between Nero and Paul** you will love to hear.

At the time of Paul's final imprisonment Nero was very popular.

He would've been on the cover of every magazine.

He would've had an astronomical following on Twitter.

In contrast Paul would've been seen by many as an old, odd, eccentric religious fanatic, who continually talked about Jesus of Nazareth, asserting that He was the Son of the one, true, living God.

And while Paul's departure was at hand, Nero was on this rocket to stardom.

Nero was hot; Paul was not.

Nero was a hero; Paul was a zero.

But that's not how things turned out.

Four years after the death of Paul, at 29 years of age Nero took his own life.

Today Nero is known for his extreme cruelty.

He is famous as being an incredibly evil man.

He did NOT end well.

And because of this you will never find a cathedral dedicated to Nero, but you don't have to look very far in any city to find an edifice that is dedicated to St. Paul.

I have never read anything written by Nero, but on countless occasions I have meditated on Paul's writings.

And you probably don't know a single person named Nero, but I have met plenty of Paul's and Pauline's.

People name their children after Paul and they name their dogs after Nero.

Nero was on a path to greatness;

Paul was on a path to defeat.

But Paul ended up great and Nero ended up defeated.

This is because Paul

KEPT ENDURING

KEPT STUDYING

KEPT PREACHING

KEPT POURING OUT

Paul lived right and ended well.

The Christian life is more of a marathon than it is a sprint, and the celebration comes at the end.

The celebration comes when you hit the tape and you cross the finish line.

So don't stop running until you cross that line! END WELL!

In the 1984 Summer Olympic games in Los Angeles they held the first ever women's Olympic marathon.

One of the runners was Gabriela Andersen-Schiess of Switzerland.

By the time she entered the stadium to complete the final 400 meters of that 26.2 mile run, her body had shut down.

She was fatigued, dehydrated, and nearly paralyzed from heat exhaustion.

She twisted and gimped her way around the track, waving off doctors.

A single touch from any one of them would have disqualified her. It took her nearly six minutes to complete that last turn but she finished.

When she staggered those final anguished steps and collapsed into the arms of physicians, people stood to their feet and applauded. The crowd of spectators applauded the fact that she ended well!

Almost anyone can start strong.

But finishing well, pouring your life out for Christ to the very end, is hard.

As Paul neared the finish line of life, he urged his young protegee to continue running as he had begun because he knew the toughest part of the race was yet to come.

And you know that Paul didn't just write these words to Timothy. Paul was prompted and guided by the Holy Spirit to write them to all who would run in his footsteps.

We must all train well, run well, and by every means finish well. In fact, the finish might just be the most important part of the race...and the adversary knows this.

A bad finish can ruin a good race.

I have known too many friends who forgot this.

They messed up at the end and all the victories that went before are forgotten.

So finish well the way Paul did.

## **Invitation and Prayer**