

2 Timothy 4:1-8

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[0 : 00] 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 1 through 8 will be our text this morning. 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 1 through 8.

If you've been with us, you know that we've been making our way through the book of 2 Timothy and the variance that it has with 1 Timothy in that in 1 Timothy, Paul is writing to Timothy as he's left him behind at Ephesus to raise up elders and deacons and leaders within the church.

And he's writing the letter of 1 Timothy in the swing of his ministry, and he is writing it as he is busy planting churches and being used of the Lord, and he's encouraging Timothy how to establish and how to raise up the church.

And he tells us in 1 Timothy chapter 3, he's writing these things so that he would know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church, the pillar of support of the truth. So he's writing so that they would know how to be the church.

2 Timothy couldn't be any more different than 1 Timothy than it is in that now Paul is no longer busy on the ministry trail. Paul is actually still in a Roman jail cell awaiting his imminent execution, as we'll see in just a moment in our text.

[1 : 05] And he's writing to the same individual, but he's not writing about how to be the church. He's writing about how to be the man. And he's writing to Timothy to be strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because the days are difficult, because it is hard to be faithful.

And we have the temptation, if we're honest, to look at this and say, well, that's a pastoral epistle. And boy, I am glad that I am not a pastor. And brother, I could have amended you this morning and could have rejoiced because he got into a part of vocational ministry.

And I was trying in my mind, I was already going, I'm going to have to tie this together so that people see the application goes so much further beyond just the pastor. And I want the believers to just really grasp this reality.

And just as was already shared, that if we are a follower of Jesus Christ, we are in vocational ministry. It's not a matter of if we are, it's just a matter of how you do ministry. My ministry just happens to be the proclamation of the gospel, the proclamation of the word of God from behind the pulpit.

It's not the ministry that I chose. It's not the ministry, honestly, that I thought the Lord would call me to. But it is one that he called me, but it was not my first ministry. My first ministry, the very first time that I ever proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ was on a set of hooks, standing on a telephone pole, 20 foot up in the air with another individual belted on above me.

[2 : 22] Now, that's a good place to share the gospel. If you know anything about climbing poles, it's because if you're belted on the bottom, he can't go anywhere until you move. So you have a captive audience. And he was scared on the pole, and I was, by this time, was pretty comfortable.

So I could have this great gospel conversation. He wasn't going to go anywhere. I was literally holding him up with my belt. He wasn't going anywhere until I let him down. People listen to you when you have them like that, you know, 20 feet in the air.

The second one I had was on an assembly line at a Nissan motor manufacturing plant. As I was doing the job, I thought I would never do. I was working in a factory, and I was sitting there sharing the gospel across the line.

And then the Lord said, okay, well, now we'll take you to a place where people expect you to do it from behind the pulpit. But vocational ministry, the pastoral epistles, are not confined to just a select few.

So I say that because when I read the text this morning, so many have the tendency to go, oh, I'm glad that's not written to me. I'm glad that's for you, pastor. And you have to carry that.

[3 : 20] Well, we can take it. Let's just take it a little bit further. I believe in the priesthood of the believers. I believe husbands, fathers. You are called to be the pastor of your home.

So there's application that goes all the way down to each and every believer. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you stand with me as we read the word of God found in 2 Timothy chapter 4, starting in verse 1.

And we're just going to go down to verse 8. The word of God says, 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, preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction.

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, and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

[4 : 24] But you be sober in all things. Endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry. For I'm 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 course. I have kept the faith. In the future, 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. Let's pray. Father, we thank you so much for this day. We are so grateful that we have the opportunity to come together, to lift up our voice and song with one another, to encourage one another in fellowship.

Lord, to be able to give to you for your usefulness and your glory. But Lord, what a grand privilege it is to read the word of God with one another. As we've seen it, we've heard it, we've read it, Lord, would you speak to our hearts and minds now through it.

Would you speak into our lives with intentionality? Lord, would you speak into our lives with force? And would you use it as we apply it for your glory and yours alone?

[5 : 42] We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see from our text this morning, accepting the charge of responsibility.

Accepting the charge of responsibility. If you've been with us, you know that one thing that we allude to in these last couple of chapters, in particular, in the book of 2 Timothy, is a reality that is also declared to us elsewhere in Scripture, namely the book of Judges.

That society is not progressing and getting better. The book of Judges shows us that the further and the longer time goes on, the further people get away from the Lord God.

And there were those who rose up who knew not Joshua, nor the leaders of Joshua. And then by the time we get to the end of the book of Judges, we are met with this reality that's repeated five times. And those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

What started out pretty good among the nation of Israel, because there were people who knew what God had done, and how the Lord had proven and shown himself, as he told Moses, miraculous deeds which they will not believe, and wonders which they will not understand.

[6 : 53] And he had declared his glory to them through his movement and through his action. But as time progressed, that was forgotten about. And those who had seen it were no longer around. And then there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

If I had to theme the book of Judges, I always theme it man's desperate need for a king. Man needs a king to rule over his life. And Paul alludes to the same reality that in these latter days, now pay attention to that, because Paul is referring to his time as the latter days, and those latter days continue until Christ returns again, he acknowledges the reality that as time goes on during the quote-unquote latter days, it's not going to get better.

And he tells this to Timothy because he is encouraging Timothy not to just say, well, I'll wait out this period, and after some time maybe it'll get better, and then I'll do what I ought to do. He says, Timothy, it's not going to get any better.

We need to know that, right? We need to understand these realities. There's not going to be a better day to be faithful than today. Because if the Lord tarries, it's going to be harder to be faithful tomorrow than it is today.

And if we're not faithful today, then I can almost guarantee you that we will not walk in faithfulness tomorrow. There will not be a better day to be a believer of Jesus Christ and to be strong in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ than the day we're given right now.

[8 : 11] We're not looking back and saying, oh, well, we want to go back to the glory days. If we're talking about glory days, then we've got to go all the way back to the book of Genesis, like Genesis 2, right? Or anything before Genesis 3.

Those are the only glory days we can go back to. And since we can't, then we need to know that it's not going to get better until he comes again. There are no good old days.

There are no times that are going to come back. There are none of these things. I always remind people, and I don't mean to dismiss nor to diminish things that happened in the past, but yesterday's good old days gave us today's problems.

And we need to understand that because it is the nature of mankind to continue to get worse. But today is a great day to be faithful. Today is a great day to accept the charge of responsibility.

And that's exactly what Paul is doing. He is giving a charge. Now, to charge is to give a warning or to adamantly testify to someone of something they are about to do. And he is adamantly testifying to Timothy and to us, this is what you ought to do today and today and moving forward.

[9 : 24] And he is calling on Timothy, and he's calling on us as well to accept that charge. What does it look like to be faithful, to be the man or the woman that God has called us to be, to be one who accepts that charge of responsibility?

For we do have responsibilities. And what does it look like to accept that? Number one, we see that as we are looking at this, the first thing that we must do is to have a consideration.

Because Paul says, I solemnly charge you. By the way, he's already done this very thing in 1 Timothy. He solemnly charges Timothy there in the fifth chapter as well to be faithful.

I solemnly charge you. I solemnly charge you. Jesus himself, by the way, says this in the reality that we ought to be doing something in light of his coming, in light of his appearing, and in light of the reality that he will come one day and judge, as it declares to us here.

But Paul had a way of solemnly, very seriously, charging those around him. He said, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.

[10 : 30] So he's not only saying, hey, Timothy, come here. I want to charge you with something. He says, no, I'm going to charge you in the presence of someone. Because much like was discussed earlier this weekend and much like I discussed in pre-marriage counseling, when it comes to the wedding ceremony, when you're entering into that covenant, who you're entering into that covenant before really matters.

That before the Lord God Almighty, I covenant with you to do this. Now Paul brings this charge. He says, I'm bringing you this charge in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.

Because, friend, listen to me. Who you're charged and challenged in front of almost matters, if not matters more than what you're actually charged to do. Who the audience is.

Who that's listening in. Because that's who you're responsible to, right? We say it this way, that if I tell you to tell me the truth and you look lightly upon my character, you're not really, you may or may not feel compelled to tell me the truth.

But the moment that I take you to court and now all of a sudden you are in the presence of the judge and you put your hand upon the Bible and give an oath to tell the truth. Now, because of whose presence you're in, you ought to tell the truth or you'd be held in contempt of court.

[11 : 48] Maybe that doesn't do it. But the further we go up the ladder, the more we are really aware of the fact that because of who's here, I have to do what's being asked of me to do.

And Paul couldn't take us any further, right? He says, I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. There's no greater court of appeals. There's no greater courtroom.

There's no greater person. There's no greater place. There's no greater audience that could have been present for the charge that he's about to give Timothy and to us as well. So we need to consider, first of all, who it is we're charged and challenged in front of.

I'm not just asking you, and no one was asking me to be faithful just because they expected me to be faithful. The person that shared the gospel with me the first time really challenged me, upset me, confronted me, made me mad, pushed me to scripture.

I read scripture. I came to Christ. As a result, some of you know, I was reading the book of Romans. He's the same individual that just a short time later, he baptized me. He says, based upon your profession of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I baptize you, my brother, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

[13 : 02] We are buried in the likeness of his death. We are raised to walk in the newness of his life. The same thing that I declare today every time I do a baptism. But notice what he didn't say. He didn't say, I baptize you in my presence. I baptize you in front of me because here's the reality.

That individual is no longer alive. He's my mentor. He's no longer alive. He's no longer around. So if my charge was given just in his presence, then I would be free from that charge, correct?

But I'm not because it was given to me in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus. So consider first what you accepted and who you accepted it in front of.

But then go a little bit further because he doesn't just stop with that. He begins to define who this is. Who is to judge? Some of you know that there are just five questions that I ask myself when I read a portion of scripture.

One of those questions is where is God or who is God in this passage? You know, what of God? And we can't escape these eight verses without seeing him as judge, Christ as judge. As a matter of fact, in eight verses, in the first verse and last verse, Christ is declared to be the judge.

[14 : 11] Right? So he says here, who is to judge the living and the dead. So consider the reality that this is who I'm given the charge in front of and the one that I'm given the charge in front of is also the very one who will judge.

You say, well, pastor, I'm not judge. You can't judge me. And we're not for the living, by the way, because there's the living and the dead. The living there, the believer, right?

Because Jesus says that once you've accepted me, you have already passed out of death and into life. Gospel of John declares that to us. One of the beautiful things for the believer is that you're a dead man living.

You've already died and you are living in Jesus Christ. But the judgment there for the believer is not a judgment unto condemnation, but it is, and I know we don't like this a whole lot, it is a judgment of evaluation.

That is how we have walked since the Christ. It is a judgment of evaluation.

[15 : 24] Paul would say this, that all of our good works will pass through the fire and that which can be consumed will be consumed and that which endures will endure. Right? It is this reality that we don't think about a lot of times.

Oh, I'm glad I'm not going to be judged. Well, Paul argues differently. He's writing to Timothy, his child in the faith, his son in the faith, the pastor Timothy, and he is reminding Timothy that the charge I'm giving you, I'm giving you in the light of the one who's going to judge you.

We don't like to speak about judgment. You say, well, pastor, can't we do a feel-good thing? Well, we can. We can only feel good when it's true. But it doesn't stop right there because, and I've tried to soften it just a little bit, but you can.

He says, who will judge? So not only will he judge, but how will he judge? You say, well, I know when I read the word, I feel conviction, I'm a little bit judged. But look at the judging and how you're charged and by his appearing and his kingdom.

Now, that seems kind of strange because not only is it Christ Jesus who will judge the living and dead, and I'm being charged in light of his appearing and his kingdom. So let's flesh it out just a little bit more.

[16 : 28] This is what I want you to consider. Then in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, we have been given a charge. And since we've been given that charge in their presence, now he who hears the charge that we have accepted or rejected, that we've been given, he is going to judge us someday in light of, for the believer, an evaluation of what we did or how we lived according to the charge.

But it is not just some distant judgment, because look at what he says, and by his appearing, so that judgment will be face to face. We will stand before him face to face, individually.

We don't get to hide in the multitude of the church body. We are face to face in his appearing and his kingdom. That is, when I stand before him, he will be in all of his glory and splendor and power and majesty.

I will not be standing beside a stable with a baby. I will not be standing beside a lowly servant riding on the back of a donkey.

I will not be standing in front of a suffering savior. I will be standing in front of the king of kings and lord of lords who has eyes of fire and a robe of righteousness and the sword that's coming out of his mouth.

[17 : 57] The book of Revelations declares that to his right. I will be standing in front of him in his kingdom. Those are things worth considering when we're given a charge.

We're given it in front of him, and someday we will be standing physically in front of him, answering to it.

So what is that charge? Which leads us to the second thing. Not only is there a consideration, there is, number two, a calling. Now, Timothy had a very particular calling. Some of us have that same calling.

Look at what he says. He says, In light of all this, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, and with great patience and instruction. So here's Timothy's charge, right?

Do this. Do exactly what God's called you to do. So this is Timothy's particular one. This happens to be mine, right? There are, I mean, surprise, surprise, there are some seasons where I'm kind of out of season.

[19 : 02] That is, I don't always feel like preaching. Sometimes you're kind of out of it. Sometimes you step down and you're like, wow, and your pastor's wife, most of the time is the only one who knows it.

She walks in the office sometimes, and I'm just in there, and she's like, you okay? I was like, well, not really, but it's okay. You know, sometimes there's just this battle that's going on, and I don't always feel like walking out of the office and coming into this room and preaching, but guess what?

It's not about feelings. Thankfully, I've told her that, and sometimes she just let me, she says, well, get over your feelings. You know, feelings don't dictate actions. It's about calling. She can say that.

You can't, okay? Just so you know. You say, well, pastor, you say it to us all the time. Well, yeah, I know. It's kind of my responsibility, and God's given me one too, right? So she says, your feelings don't matter.

You say it all the time. So what about your feelings? But sometimes it's out of season. Now, sometimes there are seasons where I can't wait to preach, but the charge doesn't change. But that's Timothy's.

[19 : 59] But look at what we can sum it up there at the end of verse 5, where it says, fulfill your ministry. What is your charge?

It is your calling, right? To fulfill your ministry. Each one of us in Christ Jesus, for those of us who have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, have been given a ministry.

We are called to the ministry. The scripture says it this way. There are good works prepared before the foundations of the world were laid for us to walk in. Something for us to do.

And the thing that we are evaluated in light of is if we fulfilled it. One of the earliest sermons I ever preached, and I don't think this one is even on, I have like all these cassette tapes of my early sermons.

They're in this building somewhere. I'm not going to tell you where. They are in this building because when I left my former church, I brought them with me. I didn't want anybody knowing where they were at. They were so terrible. And I don't even want them at home because I didn't want the kids to find them and put in all these cassettes.

[21 : 08] And thankfully, I don't think there's a tape player one in this church. Praise the Lord for that. But those things at some point will be destroyed. I don't even think this sermon is even recorded. Someone might talk to us, I think we can find a cassette player.

We're not going to find the tapes. Okay? So anyway, we're going a little bit further. I remember, it was a great title, probably a terrible message. It was called The Untouchables.

And it was the reality that when we're doing the work of God and the will of God, we are untouchable until we finish it. And there needs to be that conviction that if I'm doing what God has called me to do, as He called me to do it, I'm untouchable until I finish it.

Now, there's a lot in that. It is quite possible to be an affront to the Holy God who called us to a work and not be doing it and then God not be mocked and we not finish that.

But when we're doing the work of God and the will of God, we are literally, I believe with all my heart, untouchable until we have completed what He's called us to do. But it is the reality of, will we understand our calling and fulfill your ministry?

[22 : 24] One of the most dangerous things, I believe, that could ever happen, and I believe it, is to ever, as a matter of fact, it says in Scripture, don't be quick to make a vow. Right?

If you ever say, I think the Lord is calling me too, then what does Scripture say? Then you better be sure to do it. Because God will not be mocked.

I was very hesitant to ever declare, I think God's calling me to preach. I was really hesitant to do that. As a matter of fact, my mentor is the one who asked me and after about six months of praying for me, and after about six months of really sensing, he looked at me one night, we went to an association meeting together, and we were sitting in our driveway at 201 Canova Drive in Shelbyville there, and I was about to get out.

I said, Bill Joe, I've got a question for you. He said, do you ever think the Lord might be calling you to preach? And I kind of laughed. I said, I don't know about that, Brother Billy, and I kind of left it there, but what he didn't know is I'd been wrestling with that same thing forever, but I also knew the reality is I didn't want to say it because then I'd have to do it.

Right? And then a little bit later, I couldn't wrestle with it anymore, and I knew, so I told him about it, and he's like, well, I've known it for about a year, and then I did this scary thing.

[23 : 35] I went and told my wife, same place, 201 Canova Drive right there in town. We had this playground in the back of this itty-bitty yard, and Hunter was in the swing, and we were pushing Hunter in the swing, and I'll never forget that.

I was all this pea gravel around it, and I was a telephone man climbing telephone poles and all this other good stuff, and I looked at my wife. I said, I think God's calling me to preach, and she laughed. She said, I don't think so.

She said, he ain't calling me to be a pastor's wife. You know what I did? I left it right there. I didn't do anything. I just left it there. I just said one thing, and we fast forward just a little bit more.

It was about just a few months later. I just kind of let it lie, and just a few months later, she came to me, and she said, I really do think God's calling you to preach, and then that just started the whole reality, right?

I didn't want to say it because I knew if I said it, I would have to do it, but friend, listen to me. Once God calls you to do something and he confirms it, then the responsibility falls upon you to fulfill it.

[24 : 46] That's the charge. Each of us have a calling because he calls you. No man comes lest he be drawn, right?

No man comes lest he be called, and God the Father does not call you through Jesus Christ just so you can hold pews down and just so you can fill the courtrooms of heaven.

Heaven's courtrooms already filled with myriads and myriads and myriads of angels, right? And we've said this before. If all it was was about getting to glory, then the most loving thing the Father could have ever done is once we accepted Jesus Christ as him, take us on to glory.

But he didn't. He left us here because there's a calling, there's a purpose, there's a reason. Once you know what it is, fulfill it. That's your calling. You say, oh, well, pastor, you don't know how hard it is.

Well, good. I have a third point. There's the consideration, there's the calling, and number three, there's the consistency. Look at what it says. After Paul tells him to do this, I notice as a pastor that he tells him to do all these good things.

[25 : 54] I love the reprove, rebuke, and exhort. I love that. But then he says, with great patience and instruction.

But then look at what he says. This is what Timothy is supposed to do. And Paul doesn't paint things better than they are. Look at what he says. He says, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

It has already come. In case you've missed it. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, wanting to be told they're okay, wanting to be told everything's fine.

I'm not a doom and gloom guy, but this is the reality. That they will accumulate for themselves, teachers in accordance with their own desires. And will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

So you know what he's telling Timothy? He says, Timothy, this is what I want you to do, but know that while you're doing it, that most people aren't going to want you to do it. That as you're doing it, people will want something that makes them feel good.

[26 : 56] And that as you're doing it, people will want other teachers. And as you're doing it, you will not always attract a large crowd. And as you're doing it, you know it won't always work good for you because the natural tendency is you're not really what they want.

And he tells Timothy that. I love this. One of my favorite writers, pastors that have gone on is A.W. Tozer. And I love the reality. A.W. Tozer, while he was used in a large scale in Christian publication, wrote a lot, most of his books were done after his death, but spoke all over the world.

But Tozer never pastored a large church. He pastored in some large cities, but he never pastored a large church. And people always scratch their heads and say, why did Tozer, his church was always kind of average. Well, the reason is because he either sent them away or he ran them away.

He'd either commission them and send them to the field or they would get offended and they would leave. And Tozer would write to pastors, that's okay. But he never changed his message, never changed his stance, never changed his doctrine.

That's okay. Okay. Why? Because it's to be expected. Now the pressure is to say, oh, well, what am I doing wrong? What am I doing wrong?

[28 : 10] This doesn't seem to be going wrong. In your ministry and in your calling and whatever it is God's called you to do, it's not always going to be easy. You're like, I must be doing something wrong. Well, stand in front of that mirror at some point. Say, Lord, okay.

Search me. Try me. Help me to know my desperate thoughts and my wicked ways, right? Lord, help me to know about myself. Start with yourself. And then when you stand on the authority of Scripture, if it's not easy, then okay.

Guess what? It's not easy. He was telling Timothy it's not going to be easy, but look at what he tells him. He says, since that's going to happen, but you, you with the calling, you that I'm given the charge, be sober in all things.

Endure hardship. I got a newsflash for you. Every now and then, well, let's be honest, most times, calling involves hardship.

And the longer you go in this life and in this world, the more it will require hardship. And it will require endurance.

[29 : 28] Endure the hardship. You say, it's hard, Pastor. Okay. I'm not as compassionate. As a matter of fact, one time, Carrie and I went through a ministry thing and I scored a zero on the compassion skill.

Not that I don't care about people. I just, I don't have, I care about you when I really need to care about you. I really, well, I got a look from the pastor's wife then.

Like, that was a good way to say it. Thanks. For the legitimate needs, I care a lot more than the skill shows.

And Carrie has told me that. She said, you're a lot more compassionate than you think you are. But one thing that I had to learn and one thing that I challenge other people to learn is, it's something that I've told our kids, hard doesn't mean impossible.

Hard just means you've got to buckle down and do it. But unfortunately, we live in a life of Christianity in which when ministry gets hard, we just quit. We just quit.

[30 : 36] The ministry and the marriage, we quit. The ministry and the church, when it gets hard for pastors, they quit. The average tenure of a pastor is about two, two and a half years.

Southern Baptist world. You know what happens in about two and a half years? It is very difficult. The honeymoon of being a pastor is over. People get to know who you are. Some people love you. Some people don't.

And it just gets hard. Just like we talked about, there are prime years in marriage. The prime year in ministry, your most fruitful years in ministry come after year seven. That's your most fruitful years in ministry.

and very, very, very few pastors make it past year two in a church. And they always wonder why. Because they won't endure. They won't endure the hardship.

They won't just buckle down and say, this is where God's called me to be. It's much easier to quit. And many of you in your life, some of your most fruitful years of ministry come after a lot of enduring. And it's hard and it's difficult.

[31 : 32] You say, well, I'm not a pastor. Well, no, but you have ministry assignments as well as I do. And until you understand that you have to have this dog consistency that I'm going to keep doing it, don't expect any different results.

It says, endure hardship. Do the work of an evangelist. To be an evangelist is just to proclaim the good news. Each one of us can do that, right? Fulfill your ministry.

Endure ministry. Be sober. Endure and do the work. There is the consistency that's needed. And fourth and finally, no one is there a consideration, a calling, a consistency.

Here's the good news. There is a conclusion, right? There's a time when it comes to an end. Look at what Paul says.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering. Now the drink offering is the very last offering poured out in the sacrificial system. He says, I'm making the last sacrifice. I'm born in my body the brand marks of Jesus Christ.

[32 : 44] I've suffered hardship. I've been displaced. I've been shipwrecked. I've been hungry. I've been thirsty. I've been clothed. I've been naked. I've been rich. I've been poor. But now I'm given the last sacrifice. I'm about to pour out my life.

He says, for I'm already being poured out as a drink offering in the time of my departure has come, which means your ministry assignment is confined to one location. This is it.

There's a time when it ends. There's a time when it ends. It has struck me the reality that pastors really have no jobs in heaven.

I mean, who are you going to tell about Jesus there? They're just going to talk to the man himself, right? You don't stand on a street corner and gather a group of people and tell them about the writings of Paul because Paul's right there.

You just don't. But there's an ending to every one of our ministry assignments. And Paul says he's near his. He says, I have fought the good fight.

[33 : 51] I have finished the course and I've kept the faith. Paul is not declaring perfection here, but he is declaring endurance. It doesn't say I've done it perfectly. As a matter of fact, when we read a little bit further, we'll see that Paul says, bring Mark because he's helpful for the gospel.

Now that's telling because the last time Paul mentions Mark, he doesn't want anything to do with him, right? Paul kind of said, ah, what good is Mark? He departed from us. We don't need Mark. Now he's saying, I'll bring Mark.

He has some maturing and growing to do. He doesn't say, I've done it right, I've done it perfectly, but he says, I've done it. Are you going to mess up?

Are you going to fail? Yes, absolutely. Are you going to stumble? Sure. You'll have a bunch of cassette tapes you hope nobody ever hears because your theology and your doctrine was completely wrong. You'll have outlines that you hope nobody ever pulls out of your filing cabinet.

But if there's not some progression, the reason I keep them there is because I won't sometime after my departure, maybe my kids or my grandkids will open up my filing cabinet, pull out all these outlines and all these folders and there's all these sermons I've ever preached and they'll say, wow, dad at least grew in his understanding.

[35 : 04] He didn't have it all right at the beginning, but near the end, he was getting a little bit better. Right? At least he was fighting. At least he was pushing.

At least he was digging in. Could they say the same thing? Could we say the same thing near the end of our life? I have fought the good fight. I've finished the course. I've kept the faith because here's the hope.

Here's the conclusion because in the future, Paul says, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. There's a victor's crown waiting on me.

But then notice what it says. Which the Lord, the righteous judge, will reward me.

Paul says, I know I'm going to stand before him and I'll know, I will give an account he declares elsewhere there are some things in my life that will be burned up. But I also know that that righteous judge will place this laurel wreath of righteousness on me and say that I am in right standing with the Holy God.

[36 : 18] That's the end. But he says this, but it's not only for me, but for all of those who have loved his appearing.

In light of the consideration that there will be a day when he comes and I stand before him in light of the consideration that when I stand before him in all of his glory and splendor and he is in his kingdom, am I loving that?

Or am I fearing that? I'll tell you when we love it, we love it, is when we are accepting the charge and we may not be doing it perfect, but we are doing it.

And we are fighting and we are maintaining and we are keeping and we are consistent. We fear that when internally through the conviction of the Holy Spirit we know, I quit.

I gave up. It got hard, so I stopped. Paul gives the charge to Timothy. But I think he rightfully also gives the charge to each and every one of us to own the responsibility of our calling.

[37 : 28] The only question that remains is where are we in light of that charge? Let's pray. Father, thank you for this day.

Thank you for your word. Thank you for your patience and your goodness towards us. We thank you for your calling of each and every one of us that know you as Jesus, as our Lord and Savior, that you have called us not only to glory, but you've called us to labor.

Lord, that labor field looks different to each and every one of us, but it's your field in the kingdom nonetheless. So give us clarity, give us certainty, and may we be people of your word and our word for your glory.

There's one here today who doesn't know you. Lord, may they understand the reality of that judgment as well. A judgment that is going to be personal, physical, and real.

May you draw us to yourself. We ask it on Christ's name. Amen.