

2 Timothy 4:6-8 "Longing to See Christ" **

Main Idea: In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 we discover two insights regarding the person who is longing to see Christ. We see the evidence of it and the expectation that results because of it.

I. Here's the evidence of a person who longs to see Christ (6-7).

A. We show it by suffering well.

1. Our Savior was poured out for us.
2. We are to pour out ourselves for Him.

B. We show it by fighting well.

1. Not all fights are worth fighting.
2. Fights worth fighting are those that make the gospel of Christ known.

C. We show it by finishing well.

1. That's something that people who love this world don't do.
2. That's why we need daily supplies of grace.

D. We show it by keeping the faith well.

1. Not all faiths are the same.
2. If you know the truth, you'll do all you can to protect it.

II. Here's the expectation of a person who longs to see Christ (8).

A. We will all see the Judge.

1. The judgment will be personal.
2. The judgment will be based on what we did with Him.

B. If we have loved His appearing, we will be rewarded with His righteousness.

Make It Personal: What's your greatest passion in life?

1. Are you ready to see Christ?
2. Are you living like it?

I want you to think of a day in your life when you were longing to see something, and I mean *longing*. For instance, I well remember a Saturday in July when I was longing to see a young lady come walking down an aisle in a church building, and to have the privilege at the front of that church building of pledging my love to her for life. That was a day for which I had longed, and its arrival brought incredible joy to my

soul!

What day comes to your mind? Maybe it's the day you held your first child. You had longed for that day. In fact, you could taste it, you wanted it so badly. And what a thrill it was when the day came (even the sleepless nights that followed were worth it!).

For some of you, it was the day you got your wheels. You had dreamed of the moment when you would get that little card with your picture on it that gave you permission to drive a car, and when it came, you could hardly contain yourself.

Alright, that's a past tense day of longing. So how about now? What are you longing for in the present? For some, it's fame. Last week, Richard and Mayumi Heene reported that their 6-year-old son was inside a flying saucer-like helium balloon in the Colorado sky, and the world watched anxiously as CNN covered the event. But later a sheriff reported that the couple had concocted the stunt to market themselves for a television show. Apparently, they were longing for the spotlight to shine on them.

For others, it's just the opposite. They don't want fame. Rather, they long for seclusion and solitude. "I can't wait to retire," you'll hear them say, "so I can leave the rat race of this world and have time just for me, you know, to fish and golf, with no boss hounding me. That's what I'm longing for!"

So what is it that you're longing for right now? I wonder if the following made your list. I want you to notice a phrase that Paul used to describe, not only his own personal longing, but what should be our longing. It's the final phrase of 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.*"

Are you longing for the appearing of Jesus Christ? The Lord Jesus Christ, of course, appeared the first time two thousand years ago, an event that Paul mentioned at the beginning of this letter, in 2 Timothy 1:10, "But it has now been revealed through **the appearing** of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

But Jesus is also going to appear a second time, and that event is something for which Paul *longed*. In fact, the apostle talked about it again and again in his letters. For instance...

Titus 2:13 "While we wait for the blessed hope—**the glorious appearing** of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

1 Timothy 6:13-14 "In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until **the appearing** of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2 Timothy 4:1 "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, I give you this charge."

There's a great tragedy these days, and that's not an overstatement. The tragedy is that many people who call themselves Christians aren't longing to see Christ. They say they believe in Christ, but He's not the object of their heart's affection.

For Paul, the second coming of Christ wasn't simply a fact he affirmed on a doctrinal statement. It was the longing that consumed his life.

Which raises the question. How do you show that you are longing to see Christ? This morning we're going to answer that question by probing Paul's testimonial in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. It's here we discover two insights regarding the person who is longing to see Christ. We see the *evidence* of it and the *expectation* that results because of it.

I. Here's the evidence of a person who longs to see Christ (6-7).

Verses 6-7 "For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Paul penned those words from a dungeon in Rome. He's going to die soon, and he knows it. But he's ready to go, and he's ready because he's longing for an event that's bigger than this life. He's longing to see Christ.

Now what's the evidence of it? If we are longing to see Christ, we like Paul will show it in four ways.

A. We show it by suffering well. The "I" is emphatic. Paul bares his soul to his friend, Timothy. I am being poured out like a drink offering. What's a drink offering? We'll see in a moment.

"The time has come for my departure," says Paul. Did you catch that? Paul knew that his death would come according to God's schedule, and not one day sooner or later than God determined.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that God is in absolute control of your life, including the timing of your death? Paul did.

And did you notice how he referred to death in verse 6? "The time has come for *my departure*." Don't miss that. Death is not a cessation. Death is merely a departure. It's a change of residence. The word "departure" (*analuseos*) was a traveler's term in Paul's day. It was used of a soldier taking down his tent and moving on. It was also a sailing term, for the last thing a sailor does before heading out to sea is untie his boat from its moorings.

That's what's happening to me, says Paul. The cords that have tied me to this world for sixty years or so are about to be untied. The time of my departure is at hand.

Now what about this "drink offering"? To appreciate Paul's confession, we need to remember that he was a Jew. His terminology here grows out of the Jewish sacrificial procedures mapped out in the Old Testament. Paul viewed his life as a drink offering. According to the Law, as stated in Numbers 28:4-8 (and in 15:1-10), when a Jew offered a lamb or bull as a burnt offering, he was also to offer a drink offering. The drink offering was a special concoction of the fruit of the vine. I want you to know three things about the drink offering: One, it was an offering. Two, it was offered as the final act of the sacrificial ceremony. And three, it was actually poured out. That's what Numbers 28:7 says, "Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary."

That's the way Paul saw his life. He saw himself as a drink offering. There in that horrible, foul-smelling Roman dungeon, he wasn't losing his life. Rather, he was being poured out as a sacrifice to God. Now that's perspective!

William Barclay observed this about Paul, "He did not think of himself as going to be executed; he thought of himself as going to offer his life to God. Ever since his conversion, he had offered everything to God—his money, his scholarship, his time, the vigor of his body, the acuteness of his mind, the devotion of his heart. Only life itself was left to offer, and gladly he was going to lay it down."

Is that the way you view your life? It makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

1. *Our Savior was poured out for us.* Isaiah 53:12 says, "He poured out His life unto death." Jesus Himself said in Mark 14:24, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." Jesus shed His blood. He *poured out* His blood, and He did it *for many*, indeed, for all who would ever accept His payment for their sins. So it only follows that if our Savior was poured out for us, then...

2. *We are to pour out ourselves for Him.* Not to earn His forgiveness, but because of it. He who was poured out for us deserves that we pour out ourselves for Him.^[1]

That's what I mean by *suffering well*. People who are longing for Christ's appearing rejoice when they

suffer because they see their suffering as an offering that they're presenting to the One who poured out Himself for them.

B. We show it by fighting well. In verse 7 Paul says, "I have fought the good fight." What fight is he talking about? Please realize that...

1. *Not all fights are worth fighting.* Some people like to fight. They feel important because they fight. And so they fight for causes. They fight for rights. Some people fight to save the whales and the polar caps and rain forests. Others fight to save democracy and the American way of life and church traditions (or church innovations).

I'm not saying there's not a place to fight some of those fights. But that's not what Paul's talking about here. He has a particular fight in mind. He says he fought *the good fight*. What's the *good fight*? It's the fight that results in the greatest good of all, the salvation of sinners, all to the glory of the Savior Himself.

I think that's what Paul has in mind here. I think that because of what he said elsewhere about this good fight. In 1 Timothy 1:18-19 he wrote, "Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them *you may fight the good fight*, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith."

Notice that Paul links "the good fight" to the prophecies made about Timothy. What prophecies? He tells us in 1 Timothy 4:14, "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you." Paul's talking about Timothy's ordination service when he was publicly set apart for the task of being a preacher of the gospel.

We find another "good fight" text in 1 Timothy 6:12, "*Fight the good fight of the faith*. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses." So what's the good fight? It's the good fight *of the faith*. Not your faith, but *the faith*, the once for all delivered unto the saints faith (see Jude 3). In other words, it's the fight of making known the message of Christ and His cross, for it's that message alone which is the object of true, saving faith.

To repeat, not all fights are worth fighting, especially fights that distract us from fighting the good fight. Simply put...

2. *Fights worth fighting are those that make the gospel of Christ known.* And those are the kind of fights that Paul fought wherever he went. And I mean *fought*. He took forty lashes on his back five times. He was beaten with rods three times. He was stoned once. He went without sleep countless nights and missed meals on a regular basis (see 2 Cor. 11:24ff). And he endured it all in order to make the good news of Christ known. That's the good fight, beloved.

Our missionaries, Jim and Rachel Chambers, are fighting the good fight. I mean, just *living* is a fight when you're in Zambia. As you may recall, the Chambers returned to Zambia last week after being gone for a couple of years. This past Wednesday they sent us an email to relate some of the challenges they're facing:

Sunday, we went to the store to buy groceries for lunch. There were traffic issues because any gas stations who had petrol had lines a quarter mile long into the roads. There is a fuel shortage and no diesel available for us. But... that goes with the fact that we have no car right now. The missionaries who were car sitting for us had our car in the shop a month ago, being told it was being worked on. Each phone inquiry resulted in assurances that they were almost done. A personal visit to the shop today found our tire-less car on its rims, transmission scattered all over the floor. (For those not accustomed to indirect cultures, the mechanics would not want to offend you by telling you that your car is not ready and no one is working on it either. To them, it is more honorable to try to make you happy with a pleasant answer. You know, "Don't worry; be happy!") Between the car surgery and the diesel issue, we are unsure when we can get down country.

How do we show that we're longing to see Christ? That's how. Like the Chambers, and like Paul

himself, we show it by suffering well, and then by fighting well.

C. We show it by finishing well. Notice Paul's next statement, "I have finished the race." Now that's quite a claim. In a day when many Christian workers start in a flash, and fizzle in a hurry, it's rare to hear the words, "I have finished the race."

In fact, four of the most discouraging words I hear as a pastor are, "Well I used to..." "Well Pastor, I used to attend church regularly." Or, "Well I used to work with the youth." Or, "Well I used to open my home for hospitality."

Listen. When it comes to the Christian life, there's no prize for starting well, only for finishing well. And to put it bluntly...

1. *That's something that people who love this world don't do.* Remember Demas? Notice what Paul said about Demas in verses 9-10, "Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica."

What happened to Demas? He deserted Paul. Why? Because instead of longing to see Christ, he *loved this world*. What's sad is that Demas was once a fellow worker with Paul (that's what Paul calls Demas in Philemon 25). Until he deserted him.

By the way, what kind of race are we running? I'm convinced that right here is where a fundamental breakdown occurs frequently. Right here is the reason there are so many floundering, weak, discouraged, disenchanting Christians. They have the wrong concept of the race.

How do you envision the race of the Christian life? For some, it's like an early morning jog, a leisurely stroll in the park. You fit it in if you have time. It makes you feel good if you do. But if the schedule is too hectic, it's no big deal to skip a day here and there.

For others, the Christian life is like a 100 meter dash. It's an intense, give it all you've got affair. You serve in every church ministry you can find. Until you burn out, and hit the sidelines.

No, the Christian life isn't a jog in the park, nor is it a flash in the pan sprint. We're running a *marathon race*, brothers and sisters, and there are no prizes for starting well. The objective is to finish well.

You say, "But I'm weak and sometimes I feel like quitting." I'll be honest. So do I, about every other week.

2. *That's why we need daily supplies of grace.* Yes, *daily* supplies. That's what Paul told Timothy earlier in the letter, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2:1)." And he told him because Timothy was getting tired of running. Timothy, tap into the grace of your Savior. That's where you'll find the strength you need. And so will we.

D. We show it by keeping the faith well. Paul concludes verse 7, "I have kept the faith." Again, notice that Paul said "the faith," not "my faith." As we commented earlier, *the faith* is the sacred deposit which God entrusted to Paul, and Paul gave to Timothy, and Timothy to faithful men, and faithful men to us. It's the good news concerning the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. It's the gospel message.

And Paul could say, "I have kept it! I didn't get sidetracked from it! I didn't water it down to make it more palatable. I have kept the faith." The truth of the matter is that...

1. *Not all faiths are the same.* They're not. Contrary to popular opinion, all faiths do not lead to the same destination any more than all roads lead to Chicago. Paul wasn't locked up in a dungeon because he believed Jesus to be one legitimate option among many. No, he was locked up because he believed and he preached boldly that there is *one* Savior whose name is Jesus, and that if you believe in Him, you're saved from your sins and heading for heaven, but if you reject Him, you remain lost and will perish forever in hell. It follows then that...

2. *If you know the truth, you'll do all you can to protect it. And that's exactly what Paul did, which is why he could say... I have kept the faith.*

If you are a seeker this morning, we're so glad you're here! It's our privilege to tell you what we know to be true, that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that through Him and Him alone you can enter God's forever family. Will you embrace the truth today, the life-saving truth about Jesus? Will you join the ranks of those who are longing for His appearing?

That brings us to our second point. We've pondered the evidence of a person who longs to see Christ. We show it by suffering well, by fighting well, by finishing well, and by keeping the faith well. But what would motivate someone to do that, to suffer and fight and finish and keep the faith? Paul tells us in verse 8...

II. Here's the expectation of a person who longs to see Christ (8).

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."

Here's what a person who's longing to see Christ knows. For starters, he knows...

A. We will all see the Judge. And I mean *all*. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; see also Heb. 9:27)."

What will that day be like? We learn two things about it here.

1. *The judgment will be personal.* Paul says, "*The Lord*, the righteous Judge, will award *me*." That day will be very personal, my friend. I as a person will appear before the Lord. You likewise will appear before the Lord. No one will be hiding in the closet.

2. *The judgment will be based on what we did with Him.* That's what Paul says. The Lord is going to reward me on that day, he affirms, and not just me, but all who have *longed for his appearing* (lit. 'have loved his appearing'; the Greek root is *agapao*).

Do you love Jesus' appearing? Let this sink in. Paul says the judgment will go well, not merely for those who prayed a prayer one time to Jesus, but for those who longed for, even *loved* His appearing.

I appreciate an illustration that John Piper uses. He says that for many people, Jesus is like a ticket to a show. You need the ticket to get in the show, but the ticket holds no personal value to the holder. And so, once inside the show, you throw the ticket away. My friend, Jesus is not a ticket to a show. He's a person to be treasured.

Do you love Him, and specifically are you loving His appearing? Here's the promise...

B. If we have loved His appearing, we will be rewarded with His righteousness.

When a competitor won a race in the Greek games, he didn't get a gold medal. His reward was a garland made out of green leaves. Intrinsically the prize had no value. What made the garland so valuable was what it represented. If you received a garland, it meant you had finished and finished well, in fact, you were the best in the race!

The reward made the race worthwhile for Paul. He knew the King of kings was going to honor him for his faithful service. He said he was going to receive what he calls "the crown of righteousness." That could be taken in two ways. One, it's a crown which is a reward for righteousness (as in Rev 22:12). Or two, it's a crown which is righteousness itself. Actually, I think the two are related.

Paul speaks of a crown in the first sense in 2 Timothy 2:5, "If anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules." Who gets the crown? The person who runs the race of life "according to the rules," that is, the person who lives the kind of righteous life that pleases God.

But how can a sinner ever live according to the rules? We all fall short. We lack the righteousness that God requires of us. In His grace, God provided a solution by giving His righteous Son. And God says that if we believe in His Son, He will declare us to be righteous in His sight. Now answer this. Are you yet righteous? If you have trusted in Christ, you are *declared* righteous legally, and you are clothed in Christ's righteousness, but practically speaking, the full experience of righteousness is still a future hope.

But it is a *certain* hope. If you love Christ, you will receive the crown which is righteousness itself. John put it this way in 1 John 3:2, "Dear friends, now we are children of God [it's a fact; we have been declared righteous], and what we will be has not yet been made known [here's another fact; we're waiting for something]. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him [righteous, like Him!], for we shall see him as he is."^[2]

The point is this. If we have loved His appearing in this life, Paul says we will be rewarded with His righteousness in the life to come.

And think about this. Where was Paul? In prison on death row. Why? Because Emperor Nero had declared him guilty and condemned him. But what did Paul know? He knew that one day soon, Nero's corrupt ruling would be overturned by a higher tribunal! He knew that one day soon the righteous Judge, Jesus Christ Himself, would crown his righteous servant with the full experience of His divine righteousness!

And not just me, says Paul. That's the expectation of every person who is longing to see the Savior. So let's make it personal...

Make It Personal: What's your greatest passion in life?

In a moment three individuals are going to enter the water of baptism. They're going to make public the fact that they love Jesus Christ. He's not a ticket in their pocket. He's the treasure of their lives. How about you?

1. *Are you ready to see Christ?* You will, but the question is, are you ready? And...
2. *Are you living like it?*

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[1] The only other place Paul used this word was in Philippians 2:17, "But even if I am being *poured out like a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you."

^[2] See Paul's explanation of this present reality and future hope in Philippians 3:8-11, 20-21.