2 Timothy 4:6-8 "Longing to See Christ"**1

Series: Christ: The Object of It All

Main Idea: In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 we discover that a person in whose life Christ is the object of it all is a person who is *longing to see Christ*. In Paul's testimony, we see the evidence of this longing and the expectation that results because of it.

- I. The evidence of a person who longs to see Christ (6-7)
 - A. We suffer well.
 - 1. Our Savior was poured out for us.
 - 2. We are to pour out ourselves for Him.
 - B. We fight well.
 - 1. Not all fights are worth fighting.
 - 2. Fights worth fighting are those that make the gospel of Christ known.
 - C. We finish 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 keep 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. 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.

Take Inventory: What is my greatest passion in life?

- 1. Am I ready to see Christ?
- 2. Am I living like it?

We've been marveling at our worthy Savior in our summer series, *Christ the Object of It All*. When it comes to life, Christ should be the center, the purpose, the focus, the *object* of it all. And when He is, it shows. We've looked at eleven verbs the New Testament uses that show us the kind of actions that demonstrate that Christ is the object of it all in our lives.

June 16 Revelation 3:14-22	Opening the Door to Christ
June 23 Galatians 2:20	Finding Our Identity in Christ
June 30 Luke 14:25-35	Following Christ and Hating Family for Christ
July 7 Philippians 3:7-11	Knowing Christ
July 14 John 15:1-4	Abiding in Christ
July 21 Colossians 1:24-29	Suffering with and for Christ
July 28 Romans 8:28-29	Resembling Christ
Aug 4 1 Peter 2:21-25	Walking in the Steps of Christ
Aug 11 1 Cor. 11:23-26	Remembering Christ
Aug 18 John 21:15-19	Loving Christ
Aug 25 Hebrews 12:1-3	Running with Our Eyes on Christ

This morning, as we finish our series, let's turn to 2 Timothy 4:6-8 where we'll see the twelfth activity, "Longing to See Christ."

Before I read today's text, I want you to think of a day in your life when you were longing to see something. I mean *longing*. I recall the first time I traveled out of the country, when I was 19 years old. After living in Israel for four months, I longed to put

^{**}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 For a previous look at this passage, see the 2 Timothy series.

my feet on my homeland and see my loved ones again. Longing is a powerful experience.

I certainly felt it one Saturday in July when I stood at the front of a church sanctuary and longed to see a special young lady walk down the aisle, for I longed to pledge my love to her for life.

What day comes to your mind? 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.

Perhaps it's when you held your first child. You had longed for that day, and what a thrill it was it came, and even the sleepless nights that followed were worth it.

Alright, those are all past tense longings. So what about now? What are you longing for as you live in the present and look into the future?

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

A few years ago, 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 our 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 (NIV), "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 talks about it again and again in his letters. For instance, in Titus 2:13, "While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

He says it in 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."

It's in 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). Many people who identify themselves as Christians aren't longing to see Christ. They say they believe in Him, but He is not the object of their heart's affection.

For Paul, the second coming of Christ wasn't merely an event that he affirmed on a doctrinal statement. It was the longing, the *love* that consumed his life.

This is today's message in a sentence. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul demonstrates by his own example that a person in whose life Christ is the object of it all is a person who is longing to see Christ. We see the *evidence* of this longing in verses 6-7 and the *expectation* that results because of it in verse 8.

I. The evidence of a person who longs to see Christ (6-7)

Notice verses 6-7, "For I am 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 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.

And there's evidence of it. What is it? When we are longing to see Christ, as Paul was, we show it in four ways.

A. We suffer well. The "I" in verse 6 is emphatic. *I* am being poured out like a drink offering. Paul is bearing his soul to his friend, Timothy. 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 (see Numbers 28:4-8, and 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. Three things were true of 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 isn't losing his life. Rather, he sees himself as one who is being poured out as a sacrifice to God.

Now that's perspective, and we need it too. William Barclay elaborates regarding 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, if we're thinking rightly.

- 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 ours lives for Him.

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."

This is what I mean by *suffer 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.

When we're longing to see Christ, we suffer well. Here is a second evidence.

- **B.** We fight well. In verse 7 Paul says, "I have fought the good fight." What fight is he talking about? Please realize this.
- 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, what he calls *the good fight*. What is the *good* fight? It's the fight that results in the greatest good of all, which is seeing the Savior Himself receive glory through the salvation of sinners.

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. Let's put it simply.

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 are fighting the good fight. I mean, just *living* is a fight when you're in Zambia. Several years ago, Jim and Rachel Chambers returned to Zambia after being gone for a couple of years and sent us this email to relate some of the challenges they were 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.

This past Wednesday, we had a wonderful time on zoom with Joel and Megan Richner in south Brazil. God is using them in wonderful ways, and they told us about a baptismal service taking place today for some who have come to know Christ. We asked how that came about, and Joel said he had a Bible study with a friend who lived two hours away from him. He drove that distance weekly for many months, getting home at 2 a.m., just to teach the Bible to this friend. Eventually others joined the Bible study, and today we have brothers and sisters in our forever family.

How do we show that we're longing to see Christ? That's how. Like the Chambers, Richners, and Paul himself, we show it by suffering well, and then by fighting well.

C. We finish 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 furry, it's rare to hear someone say in all honesty, "I have finished the race."

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 be involved in ministry." Or, "Well I used to open my home for hospitality."

Friends, when it comes to the Christian life, there's no prize for starting well. The goal is to finish well. And let's be honest.

1. That's something that people who love this world don't do. Remember Demas? Paul mentions 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 loving Christ's appearing, he *loved this world*. What's particularly sad about this is that Demas was once a fellow worker with Paul (that's what Paul calls Demas in Philemon 24), and served right alongside the apostle, until he deserted him.

Right here is where a fundamental breakdown occurs frequently. We have the wrong concept of the race. How do you envision 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 experience. You serve in every church ministry you can find. Until you burn out, and hit the sidelines.

But the Christian life isn't a jog in the park, nor is it a flash in the pan sprint. We're running a race, a *marathon*, 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.

- 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. As will we.
- **D.** We keep the faith well. Paul concludes verse 7, "I have kept the faith." Again, notice that Paul spoke of "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 this.

- 1. Not all faiths are the same. 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. He was incarcerated and facing execution because he believed and preached boldly that there is one Savior whose name is Jesus, and that if we believe in Him, we are saved from our sins and heading for heaven, but if we reject Him, we remain lost and will perish forever.
- 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 this. I have kept the faith.

My friend, if you are searching for meaning in life this morning, we are 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?

This brings us to our second point. We've just pondered the *evidence* of a person who is longing to see Christ. Like Paul, we suffer well, fight well, finish well, and keep

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. Expectation.

II. The expectation of a person who longs to see Christ (8)

Look at verse 8, "Henceforth 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 [NIV "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 gain two insights 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, and not just me, but all who have *longed for his appearing* (again literally 'have loved his appearing'; the Greek root is *agapao*).

Again, the question is, do we 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 and *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 is a person to be treasured.

Do you love Him, and specifically are you loving His appearing?

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 receive a gold medal. His reward was a garland made from green leaves. Intrinsically the prize had no value. What made the garland so valuable was what it represented. If you received this reward, 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." This phrase can 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. In reality, 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.

Yet it is a *certain* hope. If we love Christ, we 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 very soon the righteous Judge, Jesus Himself, would crown his righteous servant with the full experience of His divine righteousness!

And not just me, says Paul. This is the expectation of every person who is longing to see the Savior.

You say, "You keep talking about *longing* to see Jesus. That sounds so emotional. I take the duty approach to the Christian life. Isn't it dangerous to live by our feelings?"

That's a good question, and it's not a new one. Back in the 1800s, Pastor J. C. Ryle addressed it in England. Let's listen to what he had to say about feelings in *Holiness: It's Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots.*

It is no answer to tell me that you disapprove of a religion of feelings. If you mean by that that you dislike a religion consisting of nothing but feelings, I agree with you entirely. But if you mean to shut out feelings altogether, you can know little of Christianity. The Bible teaches us plainly, that a man may have good feelings without any true religion. But it teaches us no less plainly, that there can be no true religion without some feeling towards Christ.³

Do you have feelings for Christ? Do you feel in your soul a longing to see Him? Perhaps you say, "Honestly, I don't. Why don't I love Him?" Again, J. C. Ryle addressed this question, and his answer though lengthy is worthy of our careful attention.

If you do not love Christ, let me tell you plainly what is the reason. You have no sense of *debt* to Him. You have no feeling of *obligation* to Him. You have no abiding recollection of having received anything from Him. This being the case, it is not likely, it is not probable, it is not reasonable that you should love Him.

There is but one remedy for this state of things. That remedy is self-knowledge and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The eyes of your understanding must be opened. You must find out what you are by nature. You must discover that grand secret — your guilt and emptiness in God's sight.

Perhaps you never read your *Bible* at all, or only read an occasional chapter as a mere matter of form, without interest, understanding, or self-application. Take my advice this day, and change your plan. Begin to read the Bible like a man in earnest, and never rest until you become familiar with it. Read what the law of God requires, as expounded by the Lord Jesus in the fifth of Matthew. Read how Paul describes

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

³ https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/holiness16.htm

human nature in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. Study such passages as these with prayer for the Spirit's teaching, and then say whether you are not a debtor to God, and a debtor in mighty need of a friend like Christ.

Perhaps you are one who has never known anything of real, hearty, business-like *prayer*. You have been used to regard religion as an affair of churches, chapels, forms, services and Sundays — but not as a thing requiring the serious heartfelt attention of the inward man. Take my advice this day, and change your plan. Begin the habit of real earnest pleading with God about your soul. Ask Him for light, teaching and self-knowledge. Beseech Him to show you anything you need to know for the saving of your soul. Do this with all your heart and mind, and I have no doubt before long you will feel your need of Christ.

The advice I offer may seem simple and old-fashioned. Do not despise it on that account. It is the good old way in which millions have walked already, and found peace to their souls. Not to love Christ, is to be in imminent danger of eternal ruin. To see your *need* of Christ and your amazing *debt* to Christ, is the first step towards loving Him. To know yourself and find out your real condition before God, is the only way to see your need. To search God's book and ask God for light in prayer, is the right course by which to attain saving knowledge. Do not be above taking the advice I offer. Take it and be saved.⁴

<u>Take Inventory: What is my greatest passion in life?</u>

- 1. Am I ready to see Christ? Do I long to see Him? Do I love His appearing?
- 2. Am I living like it?

We're going to close the service today and our summer series by listening to a testimony, and then singing a song by Graham Kendrick, that expresses the heart-cry of a person in whose life Christ is the object of it all.

All I once held dear, built my life upon All this world reveres, and wars to own All I once thought gain I have counted loss Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Knowing You, Jesus Knowing You There is no greater thing You're my all, You're the best You're my joy, my righteousness And I love You, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know You more To be found in You and known as Yours To possess by faith what I could not earn All-surpassing gift of righteousness

⁴ https://www.gracegems.org/Ryle/holiness16.htm

Knowing You, Jesus Knowing You There is no greater thing You're my all, You're the best You're my joy, my righteousness And I love You, Lord

Oh, to know the power of Your risen life And to know You in Your sufferings To become like You in Your death, my Lord So with You to live and never die

Knowing You, Jesus **Knowing You** There is no greater thing You're my all, You're the best You're my joy, my righteousness And I love You, Lord, love You, Lord

Testimony of salvation: Richard Chicunque

Closing Song: "Knowing You Jesus" (song by Graham Kendrick, Joe playing)

Closing charge: Let the redeemed of the Lord...SAY SO.

Sunday evening (outdoor service): "A Labor Day Parable: Jesus' Story about the

Shrewd Manager" Luke 16:1-13