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WINFIELD BIBLE CAMP - 2003

OUR FAITH: CHALLENGES AND CONSOLATIONS

LAST WORDS AT AN END OF AN AGE

Speaker: Bro. Andrew Hill

Study #4: Paul - Continue thou in the things learned

Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-8  
(A cursory study of 2 Timothy)

Thank you brother Stephen, my dear brethren and sisters and young people.

As we have seen, last words are not to be trifled with; they're carefully weighed up, they're earnestly given and they carry a deep sense of gravity and importance. Here we have the last words of the apostle Paul facing execution, languishing in a damp, cold dungeon, desperately hoping that his young son in the faith, Timothy, would reach him with the cloak, but more particularly, with the parchments, with the scriptures, longing for him to come that they might be able to share together in the last hours, the joys of their mutual faith. So these last words to Timothy in this epistle, is second only to the tone of the last words of Moses, of Joshua and of David. You see, age has not wearied the great apostle. In his great abiding zeal for the maintenance of the truth, in his commitment to his Lord and to his beloved brethren and sisters, there's deep concern for the well being of Timothy.

So, brethren and sisters, I think we need to place ourselves in the position that Timothy was in, and for us to receive this highly personalized letter, to take the exhortations to heart, so that the impact of Paul's final words are not lost on us! This, of course, is not a study of the second epistle, we'll just pick out some of the highlights, so we'll be rather selective. But firstly, chapter 1, Paul shows a deep concern for his son in the faith, Timothy; chapter 1 verse 3 he prays for Timothy night and day; verse 4, he longs to see him, being mindful of his tears; and, of course, in verse 5, he is assured of Timothy's unfeigned faith, so genuine, so sincere, utterly without any pretense or hypocrisy. He's also mindful of Timothy's sensitive nature, he says he wants 'to stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands, for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and love and of a sound mind. Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but be thou partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God'. There's an application here, b&s, in the way that Paul speaks so personally with such very real deep concern and fondness for this young man.

It's a very wonderful feature of our fellowship that we can pray for each other, that we can bear up to the throne of grace, the burdens and the tears of our beloved brethren and sisters. B&S, we should do that! we should mention our brethren and sisters and our young people knowing their distress. Take it to the throne of grace. We, of course, will do our part, we will speak words of comfort, of reassurance and encouragement, to those of a fearful heart, as does Paul. B&S, I really believe that we need to show much more encouragement in these perilous last days. We all appreciate that these days are troublesome, we all appreciate that many are afflicted with feelings of deep depression, and anxiety, concerns for their children, for their grandchildren, so encouragement is wanted. I'd like to read this little piece to you:

**'Encouragement wanted:** more to approve, fewer to disapprove; more doers, fewer talkers; more to say it can be done; fewer to say it can't be done; more to inspire others with confidence, fewer to throw cold water on anyone taking even one step in the right direction. More to get into the thick of things, and do something about it; fewer to sit on the side lines merely to find fault. More to point out what's right, and fewer to keep harping on about what's wrong. More to light a candle, fewer to curse the darkness.'

We all need that encouragement, don't we? and we all need to give that encouragement. So, b&s, is it not equally true that the apostle Paul is writing words of encouragement to us? We who at times, we would confess that we have at times, shed those tears of deep sorrow and anguish, of hurt, of heartache, when the shield of faith doesn't quench all the fiery darts; when broken sleep and anxiety and fearfulness reveal that our faith in our God or in our brethren and sisters has faltered. There are a lot of mothers and a lot of fathers who shed tears of anxiety for their families. So maybe there are times, b&s, when our fires have died down, perhaps dampened by adversity, loss or remorse; b&s, these last words, and perhaps we can say, this Winfield bible school for 2003, is it not an opportunity for us to stir up the faith that we have, because the Greek indicates for the phrase 'stir up' to kindle afresh (329), to keep in full flame the fading embers of our heart? You know, b&s, from those verses, 5 and 6, I'm sure all of us can be reassured of faithful and sincere family forebearers, of our joy of our early days of conversion; of God's blessings of power and of love and of a sound mind; and, gradually Paul's reassurance can lift our minds to take comfort in God's purpose in calling us, and verse 9, 'to save us with a holy calling, that by Christ's resurrection in verse 10, God has brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. **That's the bigger picture, b&s.** When the clouds of despair block out the sun, we can be comforted that the grievous trials of the moment will give way to the eternal joy of salvation and immortality; that power of His resurrection can empower us today to go on believing.

You know, there are lots of words of reassurance in the words of verses 12 and 13, 'For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. **Hold fast the form of sound words which thou has heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**' You know, b&s, there's

something unshakable about Paul's trust, about his convictions, of his implicit faith and trust in his Lord. He had entrusted his life into God's faithful care, and he knows that God would safe guard it to the very end, despite the numerous trials, despite those numerous afflictions, and his impending death. Like his Lord, he knew that he would not be saved from death, but he believed that he'd would be saved **out of death**, at the day when the Lord returns to raise the dead. So neither Paul nor Timothy nor us, need ever feel ashamed or overwhelmed by present distress. The Lord will stand by us, just as surely as He stood by Paul in his shipwreck and many other trials and afflictions. So we hold fast! You know, many years ago, I used to teach architectural drawing and sketching, and of course, when we were drawing a building, we had to make sure that the building looked proportionally right. You couldn't sell a client a drawing with a building that looked twice the size than the actual plans, so drawing perspectives and sketches, it had to look right; you know, this '**holding fast**' (2192) in the Greek, has the idea of holding to a model or conforming to a pattern, so we conform to a pattern (if you're a parent with a child with an outline drawing, you say, you don't go outside the lines; you don't blur the lines), so we don't go outside the lines and we keep true to the pattern in truth and in practice. So we are in that sense, b&s, conforming to the example shown in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So this is what is called in Paul's writings, sound or healthy doctrine; we won't corrupt it, we won't change it, we won't defile it, we will continue to build up the spiritual health of the ecclesia. So how well are we holding fast or conforming to the plans, the specifications, the pattern or the model that has been given to us of God's precious truth? Are we conforming to it?

Chapter 2, an interesting word here in verse 1, 'thou therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus**'. You know, when you read the bible, you should always look for the words or phrases that seem to be added for emphasis; 'let's be strong' Paul is saying, not of works whereby we may boast; but Paul is saying, let us be strong **in the grace** of Christ, that we rely heavily upon the grace of our Lord; we are ever strengthened by it and as recipients of that grace we lead transformed lives of joy and peace. Yet we're called upon to endure, perhaps few, maybe many trials. That grace that was sufficient for Paul is, b&s, sufficient for us too! It enables us to have a positive attitude to those trials that do come upon us.

You know, the Greek word for verse 3, '**take part in suffering hardship**' is really one compound verb, so it's really saying, fellowshipping those hardships with Paul. Now I dare say, b&s, that there would be very few of us who feel that we are made of heroic stuff; if you want to put your hand up and say, yes, I'm made of heroic stuff, go right ahead. I don't think I see too many hands going up, but b&s, by the same token, are we prepared to suffer hardship? because you know what the apostle Paul says, he says, well here's the example: a soldier, an athlete, a farmer, b&s, the fact of the matter is that the truth is no place of ease, of enjoyment, of leisurely comfort. So do we, b&s, do we expose ourselves to adversity, to privations, to the vigour of self discipline and a total dependence upon God? I wonder! You see, the problem is that we (and I can only

speak for my country), but in our country we are sheltered from hardship by the social welfare systems that we've got in place, with all of the support services that are right there, right on tap and at the flick of a switch or a presentation of a special plastic card, our hardships are somewhat alleviated. We don't really have to suffer **hardship**, do we? It's probably true to say that this generation is 'insulated' and it's unique in its insulated life, because in most cases, there's always this safety net; but it's not always been like that, has it? This perhaps is a unique generation. It's not always like that either in many parts of this world today. Our brethren and sisters in many parts of the world and people in the mission field know this to be a fact. They are suffering, they are suffering hardship for Christ's sake; they are doing that today, let us pray for them! we in our comfort zone!

You know, we need to continue what Paul's saying, a man who's facing execution, in a cold damp dungeon; are we inspired, b&s, by Paul's patient suffering and endurance of all things? because he gave his life literally, that we may obtain salvation. Isn't that a beautiful spirit? Verse 10, 'I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. Look at the verses 11 to 13, you know, it's structured like a hymn, so much as though there was a favourite hymn that he could sing with all of his heart: 'It's a faithful saying, For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer with Him we should reign, if we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself'. So when under the pressure of hardship or the snare of materialism, when perhaps we may momentarily lapse into a state of apathy or faithlessness; one thing's for sure, we can only blame ourselves not others, if we're rejected for being in that state! You see, God cannot save the unfaithful, He cannot save the unholy, He cannot save the unresponsive to His grace, yet He abideth faithful; faithful to His promises, faithful to all those who have devoted their lives to Him. He will never deny their trust in Him! that's very reassuring. Just as much as He cannot deny Himself.

Then Paul gives Timothy and us some very sound advice in verse 14, he says, 'That judging them before the Lord, that they strive (or fight) not about words to no profit; to (cancel out the 'but') **to** the subverting of the hearers'. So he says, don't get into **word battles**, such strife, he says, is catastrophic! and I'm not using that word loosely, because the word is translated on one other occasion in 2 Peter 2 verse 6 for the word 'overthrow' of Sodom and Gomorrah. So he says, 'if you walk into these **word battles** and you wage that warfare, it could well be **catastrophic**! So the antidote is to study or to labour to be approved unto God, to meet His expectations more than be 'men pleasers'. So in our service we need not be ashamed, we need not be deterred, but as God's workmen, His servants, we hold a straight course; in the word of truth, we cut a straight furrow. So let's not get distracted, let's not get side tracked by the speculations of false teachers; we must not waste time, precious time on side issues but rather give ourselves to godly edifying.

You know, b&s, there are many times when we have to have the discretion when to take up a matter, and when to leave it alone! You see, to contend earnestly for the faith

sometimes means walking away from frivolous babblings, but it never means being **silent** when the gangrene of wrong doctrine is spreading. So it's reassuring to know, that in the middle of debate, and the middle of argument, we are in the house of God; you know, the house of God has a foundation which has 2 quotes on it; verse 19, 'The foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His, and secondly, 'let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' Isn't that a beautiful balance? Here is something positive, here is something negative. Yahweh **does know those that are His**, but they should also **separate themselves from iniquity**. So there is consolation and also separation. To name the name of Christ is to follow Him and leave behind iniquity. This is picked up again in verse 21, 'If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work'. So there are times when we must leave life's damaging situations, to flee from it, and maybe to break off that friendship, that relationship and to not get caught up in that dangerous friendship. You know, that was really the advice, wasn't it? that Joshua gave us. So in disassociating ourselves from that environment, we seek for positive sanctification. So we don't leave ourselves in a dangerous vacuum but we are actively engaged in our Master's service and prepared unto every good work.

We are called, b&s, to **separateness**, but let's not harp on about separateness alone; we are called to separateness but we are also a **vessel unto honour**, a vessel where God might dwell and where the light of truth shall shine forth! So it's a turning away from one thing, and fully committing ourselves to the other time. This is very evident in verse 22, 'Flee also youthful lusts but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart'. So coupling those two verses together, we're encouraged to disentangle ourselves from youthful lusts, to flee from iniquity, and to turn 180 degrees, and positively get involved. Get involved with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, and that, of course, is best done collectively; this is positive companionship like with our youth group and our CYC. Each contributing to the development of righteousness and faith and love and peace, qualities that are seen in active service, the Master's service; these are good works flying from a positive base. Of course, there's that abhorrence of evil and that cleaving unto that which is good. So it's an overcoming of evil with good; so, how does our ecclesia, how does our youth group measure up to those dynamics? How positive is our own contribution to those dynamics? are we injecting a dose of **zeal**, of contagious **enthusiasm**? Now that's getting involved! b&s, for the right reasons. You know as well as I know that it is very easy to be 'knockers', to be 'hypercritical', to be 'aloof', to be 'stand-offish'; well, b&s, let's all maximize our opportunities to lift the tone of our meetings, let's individually and as families, let's be a dynamic force for good. Let's reach out to others! You know, it has been said, that 'if we wrap up our lives in ourselves, we'll make a pretty small package'.

So then, what would Paul's advice be in dealing with those of a contrary view? Well, he's saying, don't get embroiled in disruptive disputes, but in a patient and a meek and a self-effacing manner as befitting the Lord's servants, he says, I want you to win over

your opponents. But as verses 24 to 26 show, it's God who oversees that interaction! It's God who can bless the work of the peacemakers; so prayer is vital in these encounters! It's not a question, b&s, of who won the argument? or who won the battle? or who came out on top? Primarily, the truth is confirmed and acknowledged, and all too often we hear about this group or that group, or this brother against that brother! What we should be conscious of, b&s, **is that error is vanquished by the quiet compelling reasoning of scripture**, and to use the words of Jude, 'a brand is plucked out of the fire, or the lost is found, and a prisoner is released from the shackles of pride and stubbornness, **but it's God's work!** and it is to **God that credit is given, that truth has been re-established.**

So chapter 3! In chapter 3 Paul tells us, in spite of all that you can do, in spite of all those positives that he's just mentioned, be sure of this, and these words, of course, apply to us: 'Be sure of this, that in the last days (our days) grievous times will set in'. You know, the Greek for the word 'perilous' (5467) is **fierce**, and it may well be translated that way in your bible; 'fierce' times, extremely hazardous times, so all the mannerisms of verse 2, right the way through to verse 7, are on full display in our world today, aren't they? But what we need to do is to look at those verses from verse 2 to verse 7 and say, is that exaggerated? is that a little bit over the top? Do we see it the way Paul sees it? do we see it quite the way the inspired scriptures portray it? Do we regard the whole world **lying in wickedness**? that it is **ripe for judgment**? do we see that the systems of men which are so godless, **are about to feel the lash of God's wrath** because they are morally bankrupt? You know, Revelation 11 talks about those that God will destroy because they **corrupt** the earth; they are corrupting this earth by causing God's standards to rot, to decay and to stink in God's nostrils. You know there is a paper thin veneer of respectability, there is a form of godliness, in verse 5, but if you remove that self restraint, then you see not too far under the surface this ugly, brutal side of human nature, which very quickly asserts itself, especially against those whose demeanour exposes their wickedness. So, in Timothy's days the seeds of corruption were already being sown; some were bent on self destruction, that is, false teachers were leaving the truth not acknowledging the truth, but as Jude describes them 'they were as brute beasts, corrupting themselves and others, especially silly, easily captivated women'. Paul says to Timothy, 'from such turn away'.

What would he say to us? Would he say anything different? What was the advice of Joshua? **get rid of your idols!** the entanglement with the Canaanites would be as snares and traps, as scourges in your sides and thorns in your eyes; and as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 17, 'Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you'. So Paul says, 'from such turn away'. So this is telling us, b&s, that we cannot safely expose ourselves to the evil of this age. We know it's going to rub off, the evil communications corrupt good manners; step by step we will sicken, we will die, if we breathe in the poison of this mad world. 'As for me and my house, we will turn away and serve the LORD'; so, are we alert to the danger, do we sense danger? I mean, we do in a natural

sense. You step out that door there, and you smell smoke and immediately your senses are alarmed to think that perhaps there's a fire nearby, so you sense danger! Well, we're not very good, are we? at sensing danger when the things of the flesh, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and those things come sweeping round and pollute our environment? Do the signals of being on the alert send off a warning in our brain, in our minds, and our heart, or are we perhaps deceived? You know, it's not a sign of weakness to flee from temptation! If evil men shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceitful, what's the antidote? Well, it's there in verse 14, 'Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of knowing of whom thou hast learned them; That from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'. (If you have a pencil or a highlighter just emphasize one word in verse 14, '**thou**' because in the Greek it is quite emphatic, Paul is saying, '**continue thou, you and I**', whoever's reading this, Timothy, of course, but you and I. It's a very emphatic term, it's almost as though he's shouting the words: **Timothy, brethren and sisters**, he's saying, you and I can't mope about, wringing our hands in anguish, like a lot of wet blankets moaning on about what the world's coming to; you and I have got to be pro-active, you and I have got to be not fatalistic, carrying on about how bad the world has become! that will get us no where. What we need to do, b&s, is to get stuck into our bibles, to draw inspiration, to draw comfort and strength from the pure waters of life.

So the antidote, rather than getting into a real tizzy about how bad the world's getting, which it is, the antidote is to get into our bibles and to be reassured and to reassure each other of our wonderful hope and of the purity of the truth. You know, Robert Roberts once said, talking about getting into our bibles, 'where the people place the bible, is how they value God'. So I wonder if our bible is just like those books we put on a coffee table? You know, it's not enough for us to say that we are in the truth, it's more important that the truth be in us. So are we heeding the warning of Moses and Joshua and of David, to learn and to do God's commandments, to meditate therein day and night, to observe to do according to all the Law; for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success'. This is what Paul is saying! almost the same words. You see, Joshua could look to Moses, and Solomon could look to David, Timothy could look to Paul and also to his mother and his grandmother. B&S, we all have role models for us, that will encourage us; God fearing parents perhaps, God fearing grandparents perhaps, most of us can surely count as one of our greatest blessings, that we've been brought up in the truth! that we've been brought up in a family that shows an unfeigned faith, without hypocrisy. That we've learned the truth from an early age, we've been assured of its life-giving message, and we know from experience that the scriptures are **inspired**, so we've been assured of its life-giving message. We know these things are profitable for us; we know that they can make us complete, we know that we are perfectly equipped for every good work. As in chapter 2 verse 21, 'we are sanctified and meet for the Master's use', so the point that Paul is

making is quite clear: having all that assurance, he says, so, continue in it; grow and develop and build with such a privileged upbringing, bring it to its full potential! You know, b&s, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want to come to a spiritual kindergarten. So we have a great heritage, don't we? What are we doing about it? Are we building on its sure foundations? We do have true and noble traditions, let's treasure them, let's reinforce them, let's ensure that our children and our children's children set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, to keep His commandments. Let's remember those well known words, 'But for me and my house, we will serve the LORD'.

So chapter 4! Paul now draws his final words together. There's a sense of soberness, an urgency as he lays down the mantle for Timothy to pick it up and to faithfully discharge the commission entrusted to him. God is called to witness his charge, 'I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom'. ...similar to Joshua, Joshua solemnly bound Israel to their vow, their vow of allegiance to God. So here Paul says, in effect, in the Greek, '**I testify through and through**' - that's quite emphatic! Heed very carefully what I have to say, in the light of that grand work of reconciliation to be wrought by God and His Son in the light of God's great purpose, Timothy, **preach the Word!** Well, this is a solemn charge made before God for us to preach the Word, and that's not by clever oratory or philosophical sophistry or popular sermonizing. It is simply that - **preach the Word.** We don't have to embellish it; let the Word speak for itself, but we've got to be the spokesman and to present it. So He who was the Word made flesh, has given us the Word to preach, in all of its clarity and in all of its self contained power; are we doing that, b&s? Can you appreciate the privilege of having this Word? because, b&s, we are ambassadors for the greatest monarch that shall ever set foot upon this earth. The greatest Lord and King and sovereign King, we are His ambassadors, we're out there preaching, telling people that He's coming! So we bring glad tidings, don't we? to a perishing world. You know, b&s, there's another dimension to this, and that is that we have to live a life that's consistent with our message. You know, we have a saying back home, and I think it's probably true, the saying is, 'that we may be the only bible that people ever read'. Do you know what that's saying? People look at you and they're reading you and your profession of faith, you may be the only bible that they ever read; are they attracted to heed your message?

So we preach by words and in actions; we preach giving the reason for the hope that is within us, in season or out of season. You know we're literally on 'stand-by', (you know what that means being on 'stand-by'? we're ready to catch the next flight!) We're on stand-by, ready to maximize any opportunity to turn a chance conversation to, (like brother Roberts did; marvellous, if you read the diaries of his two voyages, in that you sense how wonderfully well, in chance conversations with passengers on the ships, he was able to turn a conversation towards the truth, in about 2 or 3 seconds. Marvellous ability to do that! brother Bob Lloyd does that, so marvellously well; I wish I could do it!). It's a very beautiful talent to be able to bring the focus of a conversation into focus with the Word of God, in one way or another. It might be just simply saying about where we've been - we've been to a bible school, had a wonderful time up at Winfield, our

bible school. We did this and we did that! and you'll never know if someone's got an ear to hear and to listen and show an interest in what you're describing. Well, it might be how much better the world will be when Christ comes. You know, people often say, 'ah, I wonder what the world's coming to?' and you stand there like a stunned mullet and you don't say a thing! But you know exactly what the world's coming to! We can be much more proactive, can't we? to maximize the opportunities; we can say, this year, God willing, we hope to do this and we hope to do that! just that expression, **God willing**, just so simple! you don't know who's listening that picks it up most times, but some will!

So this is preaching the Word in season or out of season, and again Paul is conscious of Timothy, and it has to come back to the same problem of Timothy having to handle the agitators in the meeting. Again, the response must be to **exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine, to be unailing in patience!** 'Oh, no, not him again, ah, not that same argument, not that mad issue again!' So Timothy would have limited success as have all God's prophets and servants; there would be some to defect from the faith, despite Timothy's efforts. But for Christ to ask, 'shall He find the faith on the earth when He returns?' and surely just to even pose the question is to realize how deceptive sin really is! and the weakness of flesh and the sporadic periods we might have of growth, and to appreciate that we really are living in perilous last times. But again, Paul rallies to the positives! and so we have in verse 5, we have a check list; **watch, endure, work, make complete**. You know, that's a little checklist that we can do, in whatever capacity we serve our Lord, verse 5 is a checklist. That's our mandate - to watch, to be clear headed, to be sober minded, to endure afflictions, that is to put up with misrepresentations and speaking evil of you falsely and all that sort of thing, the smearing of character, the feeling of alienation; **endure**, Paul says, do the work of an evangelist, and that, of course, is our primary role as we've just said about preaching the Word, this must not suffer when we're contending for the faith, and make full proof and don't be distracted, fully discharge your responsibilities.

So Paul then gives us a very precious glimpse of his own personal state of mind, as he looks back over his long active life, a life of self sacrifice and dedication, that he knew was going to be cut short by the sweeping sword of the executioner. There is in verses 6 to 8, b&s, a marvellous peace of mind and a readiness to lose his life for Christ's sake. ' For I am now, ready to be offered (4689) and the time of my departure (3089) is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I've finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing'. You know, there are some very graphic word pictures here in the Greek. In verse 6, his life was like **a drink offering**, like a dedication of his labours. His departing in the Greek has the idea of **dissolving into separate parts**, otherwise used as 'unloosing of a moored ship', or 'the breaking up of a military camp.'

So we had in verse 7, he fought a good fight of faith-amazing perseverance; he would finish his course with joy, he had kept the faith safe and in tact from all of the attacks of

his detractors and uncompromised from its defectors. So what a marvellous example for us, b&s, for us in these last days, to draw inspiration from a spiritual Father. The apostle Paul, b&s, can be a role model for us, as he said, 'be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ'. So this is his farewell, these are his last words of faith that's purged by many trials. Like Moses, full of spiritual vitality as he looked back over the wilderness of life; like Joshua, he's a battle hardened campaigner, whose warfare of faith enable others to follow his lead. Like David, devoting all of his energy and his resources to his God in the house of his God, that his son might build upon a sure foundation..

Verse 8, Paul did with a **vision**, just the same as Moses did! Paul dies with a vision of being crowned with that incorruptible crown of life, of being a welcomed part of the victory of the Land, of mingling with the redeemed of all ages. They, of course, will ever be grateful recipients of grace from the Captain of their salvation. The apostle Paul, b&s, is a remarkable man! He has shown us such unflagging zeal for the faith and the steadfast love for his Lord, that in his life, he has endured all things for the **elect sake and for our sake**, and the apostle Paul has done that, that **we, you and I**, b&s, might obtain salvation. So in his vision of the victory of the Lamb and of His bride, he's got you and I in mind. He's got all of us in mind, for us to be there with him, 'not to me only but unto all them who love His appearing', and that includes us! That includes all of like precious faith from every kindred and nation, and people and tongue; from all ages. The criteria for all of that company, do you know what it is? there is one criteria, and it really is the benchmark, the one criteria for them all to be there, the one commonality amongst them is, **that they love His appearing**, above anything else! That's their desire, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. They want to be with their Lord, like a bride longs to be with her bridegroom; it's constantly on their mind, as they conduct their busy life, how long, O Lord, till Thou be in the earth? So the bride counts her days, she yearns for the company of her beloved.

So when our hearts are grieved with man's inhumanity to man, and the rapacious destruction of His environment, we long for Christ's coming who will make all things new, like the garden of the LORD, of breathtaking beauty and splendour; to see boys and girls happily playing in the streets of Jerusalem. The poor and the needy finding a deliverer for He has redeemed their souls from deceit and violence and precious shall their blood be in His sight! WE LOVE HIS APPEARING, for all of that! The man born to be King shall bring glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace and goodwill toward men. Verse 9, 'Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me'. You know, Paul cannot help but plead for Timothy to come and come speedily; he wants to move Timothy for the final strife, brief though their visit might be! You know, this is quite consistent really, it was like the Lord, didn't the Lord want to have Peter, and James and John to watch with Him in the garden? Paul yearns for the company of his son in the faith, to alleviate that depressing, cold, dank condition of the well dungeon; the problem was that the risks were high! Nero's persecutions of the saints were obscene and sadistic; before the day dawned, when a small group were lead to the place of execution upon the road to Ostain, before that last day would Timothy come? Would

Timothy come to refresh his father in the faith, to bring news of the brethren, to bring news of the progress of the gospel, where the Word of God was not bound, to speak of the joy set before them, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of their faith, for mutual strength and consolation? We don't know, do we? I hope he did come! I really hope he made it to Paul's side, that they did have the opportunity, albeit for a few hours, to share their mutual faith, and the joy, and the consolation of a farewell between two brothers. I hope he did!

But when that last day did dawn, and Paul our father in the faith, was lead into the brightness of day, we know where his mind was; he was glad to fellowship the Lord's sufferings, he followed his Lord without the gate, and his mind cheered on by a great cloud of witnesses looking up and seeing his Lord coming, the Bearer of grace! As the group paused and the charges of capital punishment were read out, as the sword was raised, I believe verse 18 was on his mind; 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen'.

B&S, surely we live in these end times! shall we not be moved to heed these last words of our spiritual fathers? and surely, b&s, we can be inspired by them, to be strong and of a good courage; for the days are quickly flying and soon we shall meet them! We shall personally meet Moses and Joshua and David and Paul and many others, and do you know what's going to happen, b&s? they will turn and look at us and they will say, 'my brother, my sister, you heard my last words?' Did you heed them? did you keep the faith? did you?