

Last Words and Testimony

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Preacher: Wayne Sutton

[0 : 00] Great. Thank you, Lisa, for reading that. And thank you, God, for giving that, right? This is God's Word. And there's a reason that He's given that to us this morning.

Great to be with you. Thank you for allowing us to come and just share and worship with you again this morning. So Acts chapter 20, if you have a Bible and you haven't turned there already, let's go to Acts chapter 20.

And just an absolutely incredible passage, really, from a number of different points of view. You'll obviously, I'm stepping into this with you today, but you've been in the flow, right?

You look like you're in the flow. You look like the flow has stopped. I'm not quite sure yet. But you guys have been in the flow. I assume you've been working your way through the book of Acts.

Yeah? You've been going through Acts. My goodness, what a book, isn't it? What a book. This is the, this is, in one sense, it's the culmination of many things, isn't it?

[1 : 01] Acts is the culmination. I mean, you're, you're, we're in the, we're in the new covenant now. So it's the culmination of thousands of years. So in one sense, it's the culmination.

In another sense, Acts is what? It's the beginning, isn't it? We look back, we, we who are the church, we who are part of the body of Christ, we who are entered into now this, this, just this incredible reality of, of, of the new covenant work of Christ.

We look back on this and we say, well, the early church, we would call this, right? This is the early church or, you know, the beginning of the church.

And so you've got these two kind of amazing things going on here. You've got the culmination because this is post, this is post crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, right?

So now Jesus is seated at the right hand of the father, but the work in one sense. So here you go again, the work in one sense, you can say is finished, right?

[2 : 02] Jesus hung on the cross and he said, it is fit. Thank you. I'll find out your name later on and shake your hand. Okay. It is finished. But in another sense, now the Lord has ascended into heaven and what for us, it's beginning work is beginning.

So again, you just have this, this incredible reality of the work of, of Christ. The, the, the, the atoning work has been, has been completed. The reconciling work has been done.

And yet we go forth to the world with a message of reconciliation, right? And so this is just, this, this transitional kind of time. It's a transitional book.

It's old covenant, new covenant. It's, it's Christ ascended church marching on kind of a thing. So, so we're a part of this now. This is, we're a couple of thousand years on, but we're a part, we're still involved in this work that God is doing.

So, so I'm sure you are excited, right? I'm sure you are excited. Just, just, just send your, your face a wee email so that, so I can get encouraged.

[3 : 11] Okay. So here we go. Acts chapter 20. That's a, just a little bit of a part, just setting the scene a bit. You already, you know, this, you've been working your way through, um, Acts and, and, and, you know, Acts finishes, Acts 28.

And then, you know, you've got this, this organization of, of churches called Acts 29, you know, which is really us. Acts 29 and following. And so this is, it's all about Paul.

Paul, in one sense, right? This is Paul where, where, where, where it's a historical account. And we're looking at this man whose life was changed, just dramatically changed by the power of God.

And, and, and, and, and, you know, just, just, just stopped him dead in his tracks. Literally did that.

Um, and his life has been changed and, and the Lord has used him mightily. He's gone. He's gone. Paul's gone.

Great man. Great, great, great life. He's left a, just a, a great testimony, but he's gone. And we're here now. So that's the, that's the vibe.

[4 : 10] Okay. You just feel it. What'd you feel? Are you feeling it? Feel it. That's the vibe. Paul's gone. We're reading about his life. So this is about Paul, but it's not just about Paul. It's about us too.

Is that not fair? We're not just reading this to get a history lesson this morning. We're reading this because this is about us. So here we are 2022. We're the church guys, right? We're the church now.

Paul and these people were the church. They were the church. And we thank God for them. And all those who've gone before us, we're going to sing here a song concluding here, um, in, in, in just a few minutes about the church taking on the baton and running.

Paul was the church. Now we're the church and it will be gone. We'll be gone. And then the church will in God's providence. And if Christ, the last Christ returns to take us all home, the church will go on.

So that's the, that's the vibe. So feel it. Be encouraged by that. This is, this is for our feeding. This is for encouragement. Encourage one another all the more as you see the day drawing near. So be encouraged.

[5 : 12] And let's see what we can get from this this morning. Okay. You've heard of, you've heard, I'm sure of, of last will and Testament, right? You've heard of last will and Testament. This is more in a sense, last words and testimony this morning from the apostle Paul, who is coming now to the end of, of probably what's been about 25 years of, of, of, of, of astounding church planting, um, and missionary work.

And, and, uh, he's probably over those 25 years, you know, um, no trains, no planes, no automobiles, right? That's the, the carts and horses and, and everything.

But, um, amazingly, probably over those 25 years, if, if you just trace his missionary journey mileage, he's probably done round about, um, 10,000 miles or so, mostly by foot, mostly on foot.

Um, he's traveled, um, just listen, really just as, as, as, as, as a, as a way of introducing this, because this is where he's coming to now. He's, he's kind of saying goodbye, isn't he?

He's kind of saying goodbye. He's not saying goodbye to everyone because he still has a few more years to live, but he is saying goodbye to these dear people. And it's right at the end now of his missionary work. He's coming to the end of that season of his life.

[6 : 34] We're all in different seasons of life. He's coming to the end of that season of his life. And he, he kind of not here, but he looks back in second Corinthians. He looks back and he describes these 10,000 miles in these 25 years.

And, and, and here's how he describes it. He says, I've been beaten. You know, we come back from a holiday and we're like, well, I've been, you know, sunburned. I've been beaten times without number, often in dangers of death.

Five times I received from the Jews, 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night in a, and this is Corinthians. This is in the middle of his ministry.

So there's more that comes even after, after this. Three times I was shipwrecked. Night in a day, adrift at sea. I've been on frequent journeys in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from countrymen, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brethren.

I've been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst without food and cold and exposure. And then, really interesting, I've always found this really interesting at this point. Almost as if to just casually dismiss all that as minor irritation.

[7 : 45] He says, never mind all that physical stuff. He says, apart from such external things, I have had the daily pressure on me. Of concern for all the churches.

Listen, that's, that's, if he was here today, that would be for us. He'd be saying that about us. Never mind, yeah, I've been whipped and I've been beaten and you want to see my scars, I'll show you all my scars. But almost like, that's not really it.

Because that's all by and by. That's, you know, that's life in a broken world. But the concern, the pressure that I carry for the churches. Can you see his heart? You feel his heart here.

Who is weak, he says, without me being weak? Who's led into sin without my intense concern? Listen, no, no, no wonder we remember this guy. Right? What a guy.

And so here he is now and he's pretty much at the end of his missionary career. And he's just been back for one final tour of duty. We call it his third missionary journey. One final tour of duty through the churches of Asia Minor and Greece.

[8 : 47] He's been to Galatia and Phrygia and Ephesus and Macedonia, Greece, Troas. And now he's stopped at a place called Miletus or Meletus.

I'm not quite sure, Lisa, which one is right. You're probably right. And I'm wrong. I've always called it Miletus. But anyways, but this place called Miletus down on the coast, southern west tip of Asia Minor, as it was then Turkey now.

And he's stopped now in Miletus, believe it or not, for an elders meeting. Right? He's stopped for this. So if dare you ever think elders meetings aren't important. Okay?

He stopped for the end of the whole deal and he stopped for an elders meeting. This is like a text that should be read at the beginning of every elders meeting, isn't it?

To remind us how important this stuff is. Miletus about 63. There is on the map. It's about 63 miles or so south of Ephesus. And here's the culmination of almost 25 years of ministry.

[9 : 49] All right? And here are just some of his final words. So this is what we've got that Luke's recorded for us here. Just some of his final words. And I just want to share with you just what I get from this.

Right? No fancy stuff. No shenanigans. Just what do we get from this? What can we carry on from this now as the church that's here now?

Paul's gone. He's gone. These guys that he's written to and spoken to, they're gone. They're not saying anything to anybody other than the angels and I guess the Lord in praise right now.

But they're gone. They're not reaching Edinburgh. God's got us here to do that. Amen? You with it? Okay. We'll get there. You'll get there.

So just a couple of things that we can get from this. And there's loads. There's loads and loads. I'm just going to give you five quick things here. There could probably be 50 that you could take out of this. Just last words and testimony of the Apostle Paul to these people here.

[10 : 46] Just five quick things here. Number one, what are some of the things Paul's saying here? Number one, Paul says, I believe, redeem the time that God's given you. Did you get that out of this?

Redeem the time that God's... Make the most of what you have now while you have it. Redeem the time that God has given you. Can you feel his pulse on this?

Paul says in Ephesians 5.15, he says, Be careful how you walk, not as unwise people, but as wise, making the most of your time.

Because the days are evil. And my goodness, the days are evil, aren't they? Aren't they? I mean, what about today? Where are we? Sarah and I today just walk in the dog.

And we were reminded, just in an encounter that we had with some folks that we've known for years, some neighbors, we were reminded how incredibly time has changed and how our culture is changing.

[11 : 46] And my goodness, the days are evil. Is that not fair? The days are evil. I mean, people are calling good evil. And they're calling evil good.

Is that not right? We met this couple and we'll get into all of it with it. But basically, just in a tiny short exchange of time, they, right in front of our face, called evil good.

Now, we had to come to church. We were almost late already. So we didn't quite have the kind of time that maybe we could have taken to sit down with them and pull out a little couple of chairs and have a cup of tea and talk to them about why what they thought was now becoming a normal thing for them was actually evil and they were calling it good.

You hear me? You guys are seeing this happening all over the place. You're working with people like this. You're living around people like this. People like this are in your family. And the whole deal is changing, isn't it? We're calling evil good and good evil.

And it's all over the place right now. One of our guys from Corubbers this past week was speaking before the Equalities Commission. He works for EA, Evangelical Alliance.

[12 : 53] And he was speaking. He was one of the contributors to a panel dealing with the Gender Recognition Act. And he was speaking to the Equalities Commission.

And I want to tell you, man, crazy, absolutely crazy just looking at that. And I think it was him. At the time, it was this guy who works for EA and represented from the Catholic Church on one side. And on the other side was the Humanist Society and the Church of Scotland. So do with that as you may. All right. But I'll not go any further because I'm American and you're Scottish and I got to watch myself.

But that's how. So listen, crazy what people think is normal. That's the point, right? Make the most of the time. My goodness, folks, times are changing, aren't they? In this country right now, times are changing.

Churches are departing from the truth, guys. Churches are departing from the truth. We can be influenced if we're not ready. We'll get to that in a minute. But redeem the time. Redeem the time.

[13:57] My goodness. People are calling truth lies and lies truth. And here we are as ambassadors for Christ. Amen. Okay, we'll get there. Here we are as ambassadors for Christ.

One life. That's all we have. Let's make the most of it for Jesus. Paul in 1 Timothy 3.15 called the church, the church, us.

He called it the pillar in support of the truth, didn't he? That's us. It's us. And I think he's trying to remind them of this here. Make the most of that. So watch. Where are you getting this from, Wayne? Verse 19.

Verse 19. Look what he says. Verse 19. You know, he says, gathers all these elders together. You know from the first day I came to Asia. You see that? The first day I came, he says, I what?

I what? Serve the Lord. From the first day I came. And he could have said, from the time I left where I was, I was serving the Lord. And then I came to this place and I'm serving the Lord.

[14:59] We, you know, I don't know what you get. You probably have, you know, a world mission view and wanting to send people far and wide.

Here we go this morning, Singapore for, you know, and whatever. And I'm not quite sure how you do with all that. But we like to see people serving here before we send them off to serve in another, you know, part of the world.

Rather than just kind of doing whatever here and doing nothing here. And oh, I'm just going to go across the world and share Christ. I'm not quite sure that's the way it works. And just, you know, Paul's just saying that. I served where I was.

I'm serving here. My whole life is where I'm making. I'm trying to make the most of the time God's given me. How have I served, he says. I've served with humility, with tears, and with perseverance through trials. Have you seen that?

Investment, guys. Investment. Not easy. Not easy. Right? Humility. Tears. Tears in ministry.

[15:56] Tears in living for Jesus. Fair? Fair. Tears. And perseverance. Perseverance. Why? Trials. It's tough. It's tough. Listen, he says, verse 20.

I held nothing back. You see that? I held nothing back. Verse 20. It's like when the coach tells the players before the game. What does the coach tell the players before the game that he wants them to do with all the stuff that they brought to the game?

I want you to leave it all, what? On the field. Couple athletes. I want you to leave it all. You understand what he's saying there? I don't want you to bring any energy back into the locker room when the game's over.

That's the idea. Are you with me? This is the work of Christ, folks. This is the church. This is us. I want you to leave it all on the field. And this is the field, isn't it? This is our field.

Your field's Bruntsfield here. We're High Street. This is the field. Leave it all on the field. This is the Christian version here. It says in verse 22, I've got no idea what lies ahead of me.

[16:57] I can make the most of the time. You see that? Because I've got no idea what's coming down the road. Lord, you're here today. God's given you strength today. You've got opportunity today. Use it.

Because you've got no idea. Like Paul, what's ahead of you? And so he says in verse 24, don't count your life as dear to yourself. Just finish the race. Just finish the race.

Fulfill the ministry that God's given you. Testifying somehow, somewhere to someone of the gospel of the grace of God.

Listen, I love that. Don't you? I love that. Paul says, let's make the most of the time while we have it. Verse 25, because we never know when we'll be saying, I'll see your face no more.

Right? Don't know when you're going to be saying, I'll see your face no more. Some people don't get a chance to say it. That's it. And it's over like that. Some people do get a chance to say it. [17:54] And they know that their days are numbered in this world. And they say, well, you know, it's a few more days and I'll not see your face. You don't know when that is going to come, but it's going to come. And we'll be saying that. Take every opportunity.

Paul says in verse 26, I testify to you that I've got nobody's blood on my hands. Is that not quite a statement? And I think all Paul's saying there is that I've taken advantage of every opportunity. Nobody's blood for not hearing the gospel when I've been in their presence is on my hands. Is that not an astounding thought? Is that not an astounding thought? Nobody, I've got no, when I've been in the presence of somebody and it comes to the gospel, I got nobody's blood on my hands. Every opportunity, I can't say that. I wish I could because I clam up from time to time. Paul could say it. And boy, what a challenge that is for me this morning.

It's a challenge for you. What an incredible challenge that is. I've taken every opportunity that I've had for Jesus. Wow, leave it all on the field. Okay, so redeem the time. Number two, raise your guard.

[18:54] Redeem the time. Number two, raise your guard. You see how Paul kicks it off here. Verse 28, therefore, based on what he's just said, take heed to yourselves.

You get it? Take heed to yourselves. Be ready. Be prepared. Be on guard. Take heed to yourselves. And for these guys, the flock that they're shepherding, that has been purchased by Christ's own blood.

You see how serious he is about that. But to be on guard, why are they to be on guard? Why are they to be on guard? He's going to talk about savage wolves coming into the church. And surprisingly, from places where they might not even expect it.

But savage wolves. We've heard people say before, it's a jungle out there, haven't you? We've just thought about this. It's a jungle out there. So why be on your guards? Because, folks, every single day we wake up, we're in a battle.

Aren't we? You're not going to wake up in this world before Jesus comes. Listen to me. You're not going to wake up. There's not going to be one day you're going to wake up in this world before Jesus comes when you're not going to have to fight some kind of a battle spiritually.

[20:00] Fair? You might be on holiday. You might go to the south of Spain and lay out on a lounge chair and have somebody bring you a drink, whatever. But the spiritual battle is raging all around you.

Sorry to ruin your holiday. The spiritual battle is still. We have to remind ourselves this is true. This is true. Paul's reminding you of this.

Be on guard. Take heed to yourselves. He says, watch out. You're in a battle. Savage wolves want to literally tear this thing apart. And so Paul says in verse 31, watch out.

See it? Watch out. He says, remember that for three years, I never ceased to warn everyone night and day with tears. Warn about what? The battle. Be on your guard.

Be on your guard. Be on your guard. Paul feels it. He feels it. It's like a boxer. Isn't it? It's like a boxer who the moment he lets his guard down gets hit.

[20:57] You see the guy there? You see him? Poor fella. That's the name. See where his hands are? See where the guy's hands are? Where's his hands? The guy that's getting hit. Where's his hands? They're down. They're down.

The other guy's ready. His hands are up. It's like that. It's just like that. Soon as you let your guard down, you're going to get hit. This battle never ends in this life, folks. It never ends.

Let me ask you a question. Does your sin ever go away? Does your sin ever go away? Do you ever stop getting badgered by your sin? Right?

Does the enemy ever disappear? Does the lion ever stop prowling? Does your flesh ever stop pressing? Never. It never does. And the Bible never gives us an indication that it will.

Because God wants us to be ready. So it's never going to, you know, you just need to know this. Every single day you're going to wake up. And you have to wake up in battle readiness. A few verses.

[21:56] Galatians 5.17. The flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit. The spirit what is contrary to the flesh. And they are in conflict with each other constantly. James 4.1.

What is the source of the wars and fights among you? They come from your passions that wage war within you. Listen, you get it?

Ephesians 6. We don't wrestle against flesh and blood. We don't wrestle against F-16s and howitzers. We don't wrestle against that little petty stuff.

We don't wrestle against nuclear weapons, that little stuff. You get it? Yeah, we're all, of course, I'm not saying don't be concerned about nuclear weapons.

So you understand what I'm saying. And yet we just think, oh, my goodness, nuclear warfare, third world war, global destruction. And the Lord is just saying that your eyes are in the wrong place.

[22 : 53] You're thinking just physically. Don't do that. It's far bigger than that. Far bigger than that. Don't worry about the person who can just kill the body. Remember Jesus said that?

Don't worry about the guy who can just kill the body. Be concerned about the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell. That's the deal. That's the deal. And it's still wrestling against flesh and blood and principalities, powers, world forces of darkness in heavenly places.

Are you kidding me? And I'm going to let my guard down? I can't. I can't. I'll get nailed. And sometimes, like poor Paul warns these Ephesian elders, the punch is going to come right out of left field where we least expect it.

OK, so redeem the time. Raise your guard. Number three, in the midst of all that, thinking about who? Because I'm feeling tired now. You feeling tired with all this? I'm feeling like, Lord, you know, you're going to help me?

Yes. Yes. Number three, rest on grace. Isn't that good? We just sang an amazing grace that what? Save the wretch like me. So there you go. There you go. It's there. It's there. And it's just tucked in here.

[23 : 54] It's tucked in here. Verse 32. Great verse. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of his grace. You see that? I mean, because he's laid a heavy one on him here, hasn't he?

I mean, he's really laid a heavy one on him. This is his last will. And this isn't just like kicking back having a lemonade, is it? That's not what he did the last time he was with these guys. He was never going to see their face again.

And he never did. He never did. And so he just told him the brutal truth about life. And you're just thinking, oh, man, that just knocks the wind out of me.

Probably. Good. Probably. You're getting it. If it knocks the wind out of you, you're getting it. But that's not where he leaves it. Because God's got to, you know, I'm just human. I'm frail. I'm fragile. And so the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Listen, isn't that good? In the midst of the battle, God gives grace.

[24 : 52] Doesn't he? In the midst of the battle, God gives grace. Whether that be with my own sin or with the brokenness of the world or with an illness or a spiritual attack or a loss or a grief or whatever it is, God gives grace.

He's promised that. And that grace is sufficient. Sufficient. Here's the way I would put it. Many others have put it this way as well. Grace is the way in.

And grace is the way. Well, it could be out. On. That's all right. We're going to try that again. Grace is the way in.

And grace is the way on. You see it? Grace is the way in. And grace is the way on. In other words, we're saved by grace. Ephesians. What is it?

Ephesians 5. Right. Ephesians 5. Thank you. Ephesians 2.8. 2.8. Thank you very much. Ephesians 2.8. We're saved by grace. Ephesians 2.8. And we're also sanctified by grace right here in Acts 20.32.

[25 : 52] Saved by grace. Sanctified by grace. And so we never outgrow our need for grace. We never outgrow our need. I love Jerry Bridges on this.

He's written a lot of great stuff on the Christian life. Your worst days are never so bad that you're beyond the reach of God's grace.

And your best days are never so good that you're beyond the need of God's grace. Isn't that good? You got it? You got it? The way in is the way and the way on.

So redeem the time. Raise your guard. Rest on grace. Number four. Resource others. Resource others. Right? It's not...

The Christian life is not an individual sport. Is it? It's not an individual sport. Right? It's a body. It's body life. It's community. Isn't it?

[26 : 50] Community. Of course we can worship on our own. And sometimes our own private worship is just so sweet. Isn't it? We can worship. But you can't only worship on your own. You can worship on your own.

But don't stay there. Right? Don't stay there. You can't only worship on your own. Need each other. Need to resource others. This is so good. Verse 33. Paul just says, listen, you know me. I coveted no one's silver or gold. I didn't look for that. It's not what I was into. Yes, you yourself knows that these hands have provided for my necessities. He worked for those who were with me also.

I've shown you in every way by laboring like this that you must support the weak. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Listen, isn't that shocking? Think about that for a minute. That's shocking. That's shocking. It's more blessed to give than to receive. Wait a minute. What are you talking about? What are you talking about?

[27 : 47] Our world constantly thinks it's more blessed to receive than to give, doesn't it? Because that's where we're at. We're out for all we can get. Because that's all there is. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow you, you die.

Just so it's the opposite. The world is set up the opposite way. It's more blessed to receive than to give. No, no. Jesus says no, no. And when you do this, you know this is true, don't you?

Because God confirms it to your heart that it's more blessed to give than to receive. Isn't it?

Because you know that blessing. If you're a giver, if you're prone to hospitality, if you love giving what you have and you know that all that you have is not yours anyway, God's just giving you some tenancy over it for a little while, then you know this is true.

How many testimonies have you heard where people just said, you know, I was in so many different contexts in my life, and then I came to this church.

I came to this church. Never been to church before. I came to this church called Brunnsfield Evangelical Church. And I just, it was just, it was like another world.

[29 : 00] I don't look like I'm convincing you. It was like another world, right? I mean, if you're going to say amen, say amen to that, right? You're here this morning. It was like another world. I was just, I just never met people like it.

I've never met people like it in my life. Just, they just were so generous. Aren't you, Brunnsfield? So generous. And so that, you're getting it.

You're getting it. Let's just resource others. It's more blessed to give than to receive. It's the upside down kingdom of Christ. That's what it is. Proverbs 11, 24.

One gives freely and yet grows all the richer. How does that work? I thought when you gave, you lost what you had. One gives freely yet grows all the richer. Another withholds what he should give, but only suffers one.

It's just backwards. It's backwards. What a great verse that is. 1 Timothy 6, 17. Be rich in good works. Be generous, ready to share, thus storing up treasure for yourselves and a good foundation for the future.

[30 : 00] 2 Corinthians 9, 7. God loves a cheerful giver. Listen, leave it all on the field. Leave it all on the field. Because we're not taking any of it with us anyway.

1 Timothy 6, 7. For we brought nothing into this world and certainly we carry nothing out. Listen, sobering thought. Sobering thought. Redeem the time. Raise the guard. Rest on grace.

Resource others. And then finally here, last bit here, and I love this. I was chatting with somebody at a barbecue yesterday afternoon about this. Retain a good testimony.

Retain a good testimony. And just look at the way how this ends. Look at it. Because I read this passage. You know, you get an email from somebody at Brunnsfield. Could you come and preach on this passage?

So I want to be faithful to what you're asking me to do. I want to preach on this passage. And then I get to this part of this passage at the end. And I'm thinking, do I just forget about it? Because it doesn't look like much is going on.

[30 : 55] It just looks like a, you know, they're all just falling apart at the seams emotionally. You know, so do I try to reenact that in front of you, you know, in some way?

Or, you know, what are you going to do with this? And then the more I looked at this, the more I just thought this might even be the best part of the passage. It might actually be the best part of this last bit. Verses 36 to 38. The best part of the passage.

You see what's going on? It's like it's a real tearjerker, isn't it? If it were a movie, this would be where the hankies come out. It's a real tearjerker that Paul has just become so beloved by these people.

Think about this. He's become so beloved by these people that they can't even bear the thought of not seeing him again. Do you see that? They can't bear the thought of not seeing him again. And they're kneeling and they're praying and they're weeping and they're kissing.

Listen, sounds like a Scottish church service, doesn't it? You'll get there, guys. You'll get there. But what a powerful picture, isn't it?

[31 : 52] What a powerful picture of a life that has been so invested in the gospel and in other people that this is how it ends. Such a powerful picture.

This is how it ends. Listen, I would love to have this in my final departure. Wouldn't you? I'd love to have this rather than, you know, well, that's him gone.

Right? I'd love to have this at my final departure rather than people just saying, you know, I wish he would just go. Have you ever seen that?

Because it happens in church, folks. It happens in church. And I've seen it. I've seen it.

I've heard it. And it happens at work, doesn't it? Where you work. If you're a boss or you have a boss. It happens in families.

[32 : 51] Sadly, doesn't it? I wish they would just go. Isn't that sad? Isn't that sad? That that's the reputation we have. We have such a rotten reputation with people that all they can say about us is that I just can't wait for them to go.

I wish they would just go now. Have you ever heard that? Come on, guys. You're being too polite this morning. You've heard it. You've heard it. You may have even said it. Those words may have come out of your mouth.

I wish they would just go. Rather than, what are we ever going to do without them? What are we ever going to do without them?

How can we go on without them? You see, you're in it. Because that's what's going on here. This isn't just a little weepy ending. This is really powerful. Really powerful. And so Paul says, 2 Timothy 4, 7.

Retain a good testimony to the end. 2 Timothy 4, 7. I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. Now there's in store for me crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award me on that day, not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearance.

[34 : 04] Listen, let's pray that that's the way it is with us when the end comes. Amen. Let's pray that that's the way it is with us. Just one final little illustration here. I don't know if you've ever read the combined or the two-volume version of Hudson Taylor's biography.

Great book. If you've never read it, get it. I don't even know if it's being printed anymore. It's by his son, Howard Taylor. Great two-volume set, Hudson Taylor's biography. But then there's a combined, a condensed version, a collected works of J. Hudson Taylor by a guy named John P. Dorsey.

And right in the introduction of that, here's what he says. I'll finish with this. Here's what he says. He says, The majority of folk, and shamefully, many of the lords as well, are an aimless, wandering lot. Drug through life by the ever-changing desires of their eyes, ears, and carnal hearts. For most, this continues on and on through the entire course of their time on earth.

And then one day, those same eyes, ears, and hearts, which were dazzled, tickled, and strung on by the delights of this present world, fail and falter.

[35 : 33] And there, sitting head in hand, with feet dangling into eternity, A person with any wisdom whatsoever will inquire of themselves, Where have I been?

And what have I done? And many, far too many, will only be able to shake their heads and wonder. They will wonder where days went, and where months went, And indeed, whole years that seem not only fruitless, but completely forgotten.

Because their days lacked substance. They simply vanished as a vapor. And this, says Dorsey, is an unspeakable tragedy.

Listen, may it rather be, may it rather be well done, my good and faithful servant. Amen. All right. Now let's pray. Father, we want to thank you this morning for just one another.

[36 : 47] Thank you for good Christian fellowship. Thank you for a gathering of believers to sing and pray and praise and encourage and exhort and learn and grow and be challenged.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you for Jesus. Because without him, what would we have other than our own condemnation? And so thank you for Jesus and the great message of reconciliation that we now have to bring to our lost and dying world.

Lord, help us to receive that message and to proclaim it fearlessly for your glory. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.