

Paul's Farewell

Let's turn it to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 6 through 8. 2 Timothy 4 verses 6 through 8. Let us listen attentively to the Word of God. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering at the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day. And not to me only, but also to all who have loved his appearing. Let us pray.

Herein, gracious God, you have given us some of the final words of Paul and his admonition and concerns to Timothy. Here, in particular, his farewell address, at least partially, as he sees things on the horizon. As we look into the text and understand where he's coming from, where he has been, and where he is going, may we see as well where we have come from, where we have been, and where we are going.

And I ask God that we would all be encouraged and strengthened to continue to persevere on our way to heaven thereby. We ask this by your Son's work and life for us, we pray. Amen.

Paul's Farewell

So here, at the end of Paul's second letter to young pastor Timothy, Paul winds down his discussion and concerns and directions. He is pivoting from the call to preach to his own ministry, drawing to an end. He told me a few verses earlier, preach the word, just as he has done.

And that end appears to be the final, as he is eventually on his way to Rome for his appeal. As you recall, an axe, he appealed his decision all the way to Caesar. And that's how the book of Acts ends.

We don't know what happens to Paul. Not as a matter of historical fact, we have some third-hand information perhaps, we don't know exactly. But he sees something here, either through spirit, wrought insight, or sanctified common sense intuition, as he sees events unfolding before him.

Paul believes it was time to urge Timothy to carry on the gospel ministry, while Paul closes his own ministry sometime in the near future. For he has run the race and it's about time for his departure is at hand. Matthew Henry explains the matter this way, I think rather helpfully.

Paul was an old soldier of Jesus Christ. Timothy was but newly enlisted. Come, says Paul, I have found our master kind and the cause good.

I can look back upon my warfare with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. And therefore be not afraid of the difficulties thou must meet with. The crown of life is assured to thee as if it were already upon thy head.

And therefore endure afflictions and make full proof of thy ministry. With this context in mind, let us learn of Paul's evaluation and desire of his life, the desire of the glorified God, and how much we have in common with him. This is Paul's farewell address, valedictory, as it says in my translation, as the little title here of this, which is your farewell address.

Pour it out. Verse 6. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. It's an Old Testament imagery here of a drink offering, of giving up one's life for God.

Probably martyrdom, the idea. All the way up to martyrdom, of dying for Jesus. Paul would soon be in Rome, as I reminded us from the book of Acts, and that's how the book of Acts ends.

He's in chain with soldiers, but he has some freedom. So he's waiting somewhere, not exactly in a prison. He's got the soldier there, and he's writing his letter, or he has a secretary write his letters for him, it seems in some cases.

And he's talking to the Jews, admonishing them, encouraging them, and whatnot. And he knows his time is short. Exodus 29.40. We read, With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour, mixed with one-fourth of a hen of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hen of wine, as a drink offering.

As a drink offering. The imagery is from the Old Testament. Of course, it's ceremonial.

It's spiritual. It points to something besides the actual event. It's usually offered alongside burnt offerings, the whole burnt offerings, which is a sacrifice of total dedication before God.

You consume the entirety of the animal on the altar. You don't eat any of it. You don't share any of it with the priest, for example, like in the fellowship meals and the like.

It's a picture of giving ourselves, even to the spilling or pouring out of our lives, of our blood, a drink offering before God. And, of course, it's related to Christ's work, as all the ceremonial system points to Jesus and part of his work one way or the other in each bit of it, even to the formation of the temple itself. His body is the temple for us.

Titus 3.5-6 we read by Paul. We'll read it as we go to Titus next after this. Not by my works he writes of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

So even in that imagery of pouring out, it's not only about Jesus and his work for us, but Jesus and his work for us through the Holy Spirit, whom was poured out upon us through Jesus Christ. As we know, the Spirit and the Son work hand in hand, as we saw in Ephesians a little bit this morning. So in Titus 3.5-6, a similar language.

Poured out, in this case, the Spirit poured out upon us for redemption, for our salvation, for our sealing, for our regeneration, for ourselves. Often it's used elsewhere in the New Testament, this imagery, of pouring ourselves out or a drink offering for our own act of obedience. Philippians 2.17, yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and the service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Paul uses the imagery there with respect to his work and its relationship to their faith and how they were saved through his ministry. He's thankful for all the effort that he was able to pour out himself for that. Romans 12.1-2, we read, I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Now, there's nothing there about pouring out or a drink offering, but what do you read there that's similar to the idea of drink offering, at least the same category in Romans 12.1-2? I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice. The drink offering and the hope-earned offering are a sacrifice. We're done together often.

So although it's not a drink offering here, the point I'm driving at here, if I can expand my point, is that the Old Testament imagery of the ceremonial system, the language of the ceremonial system of drink offering, of a sacrifice, killing of an animal, is used in a moral sense in the New Testament. So it's not simply and only the ceremonial acts, the sacrifices, the holy days, the priests, particularly the acts, are only about Jesus. They also are tied to our sanctification or their sanctification of the Old Testament.

They gave the drink offering, they poured out the libations, they call it, and they killed the animal. They did it themselves, to be sure, or they were involved with it and they asked the priests to do it and the like. So the Old Testament imagery expresses moral truths both of what Christ is and would do and how he would do it, but also our sanctification, our growth, our purity, and holiness as well.

And so the language here of Romans 12 and Philippians and several other places, I almost listed all of them I could find, point to the spiritual reality of sanctification in the Old Testament and the New Testament using that language of the sacrificial system for Christians today, that we pour out ourselves, we give our lives as a living sacrifice to God, that is, we offer all that we have and do and are for his glory and for his work of his kingdom. And of course we know in particular that means how you live as a believer. So that ties into the doctrine this morning of holiness.

Another way of talking about holiness, of living out your life in holiness, and part of it is full dedication and honoring to God. So those truths that existed in the Old Testament are truths for us today, and although we should never go back, as the Roman Catholics do, of course, and re-institute some of these ceremonial systems, I was reading, for example, again, as you know, I'm reading from my committee report, a lot of related topics to kingdom and law, of course that goes into Mosaic law, and the old scholastics, the reformers picked it up, the scholastics were from the late medieval ages, the smart men like Thomas Aquinas, they would say the Mosaic law is dead, but the ceremonial law is deadly.

Which is to say you should never enact and go back to the ceremonial law, that's denying Christ and the gospel, the book of Hebrews.

No more sacrifices, no more priests, no more temple. But the Mosaic law you can resurrect, as it were, bring to the dead, to life, if it has general equity and is applicable to you here and now. That is natural law, it's a natural law.

So it's quite interesting that kind of phraseology they use there. One is dead, although it could be revived if it's in accordance to general equity, and the other one's deadly, it should never be revived under any circumstances. And that's exactly right.

So here, of course, he's not reviving it, and if anybody thinks so, they're confusing it. He's taking the moral lessons that they were there for to teach us, not only of Jesus, but the life of holiness that we dedicate ourselves to God Almighty. Now the time of departure is at hand, he mentions here, in conjunction.

I'm pouring out myself as a drink offering, I'm already poured out, and the time of my departure is at hand. The time of my departure is at hand is from a word that means use of loosening or loosing, loosing, I would say, loosening a vessel from its moorings. So, naval language here.

And this probably refers to his coming death. We don't know for a fact, but he seems perhaps to see this, which would tie in to using the idea of a poured out offering, which sometimes is a picture of martyrdom as well. So he's repeating it, being emphatic in these two statements or phrases here together.

He thinks his time is coming near. Tradition does have him being killed in Rome. Likewise, when we see the signs in our own life, we need to prepare to meet our maker as he is prepared to meet his maker when he sees the time is short, that his time for heaven is coming quickly.

And the best way, of course, is by repenting, by the transgressions of our life. Renewing our hope in Jesus, which is to say what we are called to do every day, but doubly so, because at that juncture, if we see death impending upon us, as Paul seems to see here, a time of my departure is at hand, all the more and more intensely ought we to examine ourselves to see about the good fight that we have fought. Are we finishing the race? Have we kept the faith? Have we have fled Jesus? And whatever the case may be, always bring our eyes to him and not upon our sins.

A life described, verse 7, so he unpacks here then with his farewell address. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith. The good fight, right, he's got a couple of metaphors here.

It's clearly not physical fighting. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. That is, he doesn't expect us to have soldiers to defend and put a wall up around this building and say this is Christ's kingdom, but it's in our hearts and our lives as we are ruled by his word and by his spirit.

But the fight is a good metaphor indeed. As we read through the book of Acts, you recall, going through the book of the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that's why it's often called the book of Acts, Paul, who was first known as Saul, aggressively tracked down Christians, as you recall, breathing threatenings and death to them, as the text tells us. And then he has an amazing conversion on the road to Damascus where he is blinded.

And Christ comes down to him and chooses him and admonishes him, in fact, and he is humbled and born again. And his post-conversion life, as you know, Paul's personality is still there. He's still what? Aggressive.

Before he was zealous and aggressive against the Christians, getting letters and following them all the way to Antioch, there into the bottom part of Turkey, hundreds of miles away, to track them down, to stone them. He was there when Stephen was stoned to death. He held the cloaks of the men who did it.

He knew his own guilt. In his post-conversion, Paul's aggression is there, and quickly thereafter he starts preaching. And he's preaching strongly and fervently as he was before, but now for Jesus Christ instead of against our Lord and Savior.

He goes what? From synagogue to synagogue, city to city, until they throw him out, until the Jews use their political connections and get the magistrate to come after him, and things like that. All these shenanigans going on. That's the kind of fighting he was doing is what I'm getting at.

He was aggressive, and they were even more aggressive against him. He discussed, he debated, he defended the truth of Jesus Christ, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles, as he did at Mars Hill in Greece. Athens.

But it was mostly against his own people. Not against in the sense, of course, that he just likes to argue and fight, but rather he was zealous for them. As we read in Romans 9, My heart goes out, I wish I could die instead of them, that they could go to heaven.

He loved his countrymen so much. His own kinsfolk of the flesh and of blood. And so his zeal in debating with them was the zeal of a man who wanted them to change their mind.

And so fighting is a good description, in the best sense of the word, of Paul's ministry. As he was a traveling evangelist. We don't typically have him that way anymore.

His debates got the Jews so angry they wanted to kill him. He was fighting. He was fighting well.

But he wasn't only fighting outside the church, he was fighting inside the church. And we see that in 1 Timothy, here in 2 Timothy. A little bit in Titus as well, where he writes to the men within the church about matters of the church.

Purity and holiness that he was zealous for. Church discipline which he enacted and he told the churches of Corinth to do. What are you doing in 1 Corinthians 5? Why aren't these two

being disciplined by the church of God? Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? What's going on here? And on and on he goes.

And so although in the book of Acts, one of the dangers we have in reading the Bible sometimes as Christians, at least in my experiences, we read it and say, well, that's the paradigm. What Paul did in the book of Acts, wonderful. All pastors should do that.

But you realize, oh, it was, everything you read is the apostles in the book of Acts. And then when you hear about pastors, it's like Timothy and Titus here, who aren't running around all the parts of the country but are in one area, dealing with a city and a church. So we have to be a little careful.

If they could do that, that'd be great. If we have pastors that were able to do that, we do have evangelists. They don't usually go that far.

He went pretty far all over that area. But here, fighting the good fight. And he's finished the race.

So he changes the metaphor here. I finished the race. We may recall back in 1 Corinthians 9.24. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

He's used this metaphor before, because it's a beautiful metaphor. It's a picture of marathons of Greece, which were started back then. We have our marathon.

We picked it up from the Grecian history, the Olympics from that, and the marathon and the like from that history. And Paul's there living that history, using it as a metaphor for the Christian life. And he continues on in verse 25 of chapter 9 of 1 Corinthians.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now, they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. And what do we read in verse 8? Finally, there's light up for me, the crown of righteousness.

The imagery continues on here of highlighting the spiritual zeal, the spiritual effort and work it takes on our sanctification and call of holiness, wherever we may be in this life, brothers and sisters. Running a race is a good metaphor. Now, I prefer to bike.

Don't like running. You'd think I'd like running. I'm a tall guy, don't like running.

I prefer a good biking, and biking far if I could. But running is a good, they're both good metaphors, for it describes the exertion, a lot of effort, because he's not just jogging, he's running. And of course, the direction.

So, you know, as a metaphor, you can see all the kind of imagery and how it ties in spiritually. The direction you're supposed to go is what? The straight and narrow, down this path, nowhere else, to heaven and following Jesus and the kind of work it takes. And of course, that work we know is empowered by the spirit.

We're not alone in our running and in our fighting. And ultimately, the goal is heaven. Paul, as I said, writes about a perishable crown, which is the imagery, of course, here of entering into heaven.

For the winners of the Greek game were given a wreath on their head. That was the crown that they had. We have a greater wreath, a greater crown than that.

Lastly, in describing his life, the picture of it, I have kept the faith. One thing I want to note here, before I continue to unpack this a little bit here, you read this. I hope you can read this and realize Paul is speaking the truth.

And when Paul is speaking the truth, in this context, that he sees his time is short, when he's speaking the truth, he's not bragging. Again, in my experience, maybe not yours, Christians are taught humility is not saying, I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith. What kind of humility is that? You're kind of a Christian, aren't you? Aren't you supposed to be a humble Christian? Aren't you supposed to always be in doubt and say, well, I'm kind of a weak Christian, I can't really speak this way? I don't think so.

I think there's a time to say this. And saying this, Paul is showing us that you can see this yourself. I don't think it was special supernatural revelation that opened his eyes to this.

He knew what he lived for, he knew what his own heart is, that he loves God, he's zealous, yes, he fell short, he sinned. We don't see as much of it, we see Peter's, we know it's there. So I want to encourage us that there is a time to say this.

It's not wrong. Of course, it's wrong to run around all the time, but just saying it is not evidence, depending on the context, of course, of being prideful. If it's relevant to the context, he's coming to the end of his life, he's examining himself, he's urging Timothy, as not all is lost.

Look, my life, by God's grace, of course, the implication is always what? By God's grace. He doesn't say by God's grace. I know he believes it's by God's grace, he says it everywhere else.

He kept the faith. The idea, or the word here, faith, I take to be objective content of the gospel, not subjectively, I believe, but what do you believe in? The word sometimes is faith. This is the object of what you believe in, is Jesus and the gospel and the truth therein.

So it's not the verb or your own personal belief, but it's the objective truth that you believe in. It's sometimes called the faith. It's just the way of speaking.

We do that in English. Take the same word and make it from the verb to the noun to the object to what we are and what they are. That alludes to Jesus, of course, the great object of our faith.

And it's emphasized, I think Paul emphasizes, he uses this word in contrast to I have kept the good works. But rather it's about Jesus and about believing in Jesus and living a life of that faith. And the crown of righteousness, he continues here.

Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day. Just there, as we read in verse 25 of chapter nine of Corinthians, they now obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown, this crown of righteousness, which is the imagery, of course, of getting into heaven, of being redeemed and saved there finally. The winners of the Greek game were given this wreath, we are given this great wreath of heaven when Jesus returns.

A blessing on top of a blessing is the imagery here. Could I be happy even just to get to heaven without a wreath? Thank you very much. All of grace, not of works, lest any man should boast.

And so he says here when he writes a crown of righteousness, it's not his righteousness, it's Christ's righteousness, who is what? The righteous judge. It's a crown of his blessing upon us for what he has done for us and what we have done for him. And as the day of his appearing, that day, of course, is the return, the second coming of Jesus Christ, when heaven and earth will be transformed and the dead in Christ were raised to everlasting glory and the wicked judged publicly and fully.

We don't know the day or the hour, the question is, will we be ready? Have we continued good to fight? Have we continued to run the race? Have we kept the faith? That's what our calling is. And he describes Jesus as the righteous judge there in the middle of verse 8, in which the Lord, of course he means Jesus, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day. Love and thankfulness, as we recall in Psalm 75 from last week, we give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks for your wondrous works.

Declare that your name is near. When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. So it's about the judging of God.

Of course, it's God and Christ. And here, Christ is described as a judge as well. A righteous judge, an upright judge, a holy judge, one who does the right thing.

Our Messiah, our Savior, our Deliverer is our King. And as he's a King, he is also a judge. And a judge upon all who hate him and hate his bride.

So Paul here, in describing Jesus as the righteous judge, he's describing him in a loving fashion. He loves the fact that Jesus is a righteous judge as opposed to an unrighteous judge. God forbid.

And it's a personal faith here in which he's writing about. Will be given to me on that day. And then he pivots, and not to me only, but also to all who have loved his appearing.

That is both his own faith that he speaks of and the faith of all of us as his cohorts in heaven and the church right here on earth. The community of faith, for faith and Christianity is a public religion, as you've heard before. We're all in this race together.

He talks about us singularly, but he also means all of us together. It's quite interesting. He doesn't stop there.

It's not just me, Timothy. It's all of us who love the appearing of Jesus. What? We long to see the great judge to come to earth and to exercise his power for us in a most marvelous manner.

Your Farewell

And all of us together. Your farewell, brothers and sisters. Your farewell.

Because the Bible is given for us and for you. We are called to pour out our lives. I pray it will never be for martyrdom.

It may be for martyrdom. Highly unlikely, of course. But you should be committed to Jesus.

Even if they mock you and ridicule you and kick you out of institutions for trusting and believing in him. They may disown you. Your family may disown you.

And so you should pray for grace and boldness as the apostles themselves had. You don't go looking for it. Of course not.

Paul didn't exactly look for it either. He looked for it more than you did, of course. He went to public places and he knew that typically, I don't think he was a dumb man, that the Jews don't respond very well to criticism.

But he did it. And other times he was able to leave and escape. He went through a crowd and escaped.

Other times, as you know, he went over the wall in Damascus. He was using his connections and being wise. He wasn't just looking, hey, kill me now, I want to be a martyr.

Of course not. And neither are you, but it may come to you anyways. At least in these other lesser forms of hardship and troubles, which I do not wish upon any of you.

But it may come. Minimally, pouring out points to dedication to the Lord's service, of course. And sanctification, being holy in thought, word, and deed, and following Him in your calling and vocation in life.

Pouring out, when Paul talks about a pouring out of himself as a drink offering to Jesus. We may miss the connection because you're thinking, well, he's an apostle, he's a super pastor. And of course, everything he does, he's praying, he's always preaching, he's going around acting like this, doing good, godly things.

I, I'm just at home, I'm at work, I'm a carpenter, I'm an engineer, no one sees this stuff, I'm not preaching Jesus, I'm just doing mundane, earthly things. Yeah, but are you doing them to God? You're doing it for the Lord. You're doing the best you can for the Lord, given your circumstances or your physical limitations or whatever the case may be.

That's the idea of pouring out, at least externally in your efforts, in your heart, is your desire and your wish to do more for God's kingdom, for His people, and for His church, and for God's glory, ultimately. That's the idea of giving it our all. We have this idiom, we pour our heart into the matter, right? It's an idiom, we pour out our heart into this.

I'm really into this job, I'm really into this hobby, I suppose, or into this politics. I don't know where it came from, maybe it came from the Bible, pour yourselves out as a drink offering, but we have it. We know what that means, that's what Paul was talking about, of dedication, of commitment, especially for our Lord and Savior above all.

Fighting the good fight. Are we fighting the good fight? Are we hiding from the good fight? Are we making excuses and not struggling and standing for the Lord Jesus when the opportunity arises? The fight here is two-fold. It's external and internal.

Externally, that's what we do with the temple of the Holy Spirit. Do we control it and use it for good? As we mentioned this morning, the members that God has given us, the members of our body, are we using it for righteousness? Holy acts with our hands and our feet and our mouth and our eyes and our ears. Our mouth for edification.

That's the external battle. That's the fight to say no to sin and yes to righteousness. And the internal fight, of course, and the battle therein, is where it begins and where it ends, as it were.

Because you're not going to use your hands and your eyes and your body for good things if your heart is not dedicated to it. If you're not poured out yourself by the Spirit within us to follow Him with all that you are, you won't follow through with your hands. Our outward actions may fail or be inconsistent, to be sure, but where is our heart? That's the ultimate and final question.

Because you will stumble. You will be inconsistent in your good works. All of us are.

But are we loving Christ? Are we loving the things that He loves and desiring the things that He desires and wishing to follow Him all the days of our lives? That's the question. That's a matter of commitment. That's something I cannot speak for you.

I cannot see in your hearts where you are in this matter. And it ebbs and flows, to be sure. Some days you feel especially strong because we're so attached to this body.

We know it. I mean, when you don't sleep well, you wake up in the morning like, I'm not committed to doing good things today. I am so exhausted.

I can't think straight. I need coffee or whatever. You know how limited you are sometimes.

You don't give up. Don't let that confuse you and say, well, that's the end of me. No.

What have you done? You continued on. You used the little help you had. If you gotta use help, use help.

No one's gonna say, don't use help. Use the caffeine. Use that coffee or whatever.

But you continue to do what? Your job, your love for your family, your spouse, for your kids, your work. All this, you do it anyways because you are running the race. You are keeping the faith.

That's the other metaphor here. Running the race. To keep us on the straight and narrow.

Running, in my mind, is about perseverance. Don't stop. You keep going until the end of that marathon.

Until we get to heaven. It's not about giving up or ever moving forward. Not stopping.

But keeping on the straight and narrow. For that's the call of holiness and sanctification and following Jesus. And thus, Paul and his emphasis there in 1 Corinthians 9 is upon perseverance.

That you control your body. That you beat it into submission, he says. That it does the right thing and goes the right way for God's glory.

To ever move forward in obedience in the fruit of the Spirit. Don't let your tired legs give you up. And that's why God has given us times of rest like Sunday and prayer and his word and grace of the Spirit within us.

And then lastly here, are we keeping the faith? You can look to yourself and ask, do I take seriously this call to keep or guard the faith? Within our hearts, of course. It's the same idea as the other two. They're just metaphors to emphasize, to get our attention, to show us.

Just what you do with your body, so you do with your soul. It takes effort. And you gotta keep on every day.

And to be aware. And to protect and prepare yourselves as you do in the case of running and stretching your body or in warfare to be aware of the enemy and the like. But here, keeping the faith is much more simple language, less impactful in some ways, but still nevertheless true.

Keep the truth of Jesus' good news in your heart. To believe it and to trust in our Lord and Savior. To never let go because he will never let you go.

To never give up because he has a place for you in heaven. And a perishable crown of eternal glory. His eternal glory given to us.

I don't believe your time is short, although I'm not a prophet nor the son of a prophet. But it's always good as we finish up here. And this farewell address of Paul who seems to think it's coming soon.

We don't know exactly the timeline. We have a good idea, but not down to the month or anything like that. Even a few years we're off.

But in our case, we still have time to see our lives, to examine our hearts, to see do we love his appearing? Our final hope is not in man, not in the things that we do here. They will fail. They will fade away.

The things that we have built up, the wealth, the connections, the knowledge of earthly things will all go away to nothing when Christ Jesus returns and there's a new heaven and a new earth. He is our redeemer. He is our judge.

And all the possessions and things in this world will pass away. What farewell will you give to your friends and families? Something to think about even now, I think. I pray as one that expresses the grace and the love of Jesus who will soon appear in glory.

Let us pray. Amen. Father God, come quickly.

Jesus, Maranatha, we pray. Meanwhile, may we continue to take time to examine ourselves and to see if this is true for ourselves. Are we fighting the good fight? Are we running the race? Are we keeping the faith? And do we love the appearing of our Lord Jesus? We long for your return.

May this be true for all of us, God, I pray, and that it would motivate and encourage us this week to carry on day by day that you are with us and that you are strengthening us as we see here implied by Paul because he has done all these things, we know, because of your grace in him. And we pray for more of your grace within and among us. We ask by the work of Jesus Christ and his love for us.

Amen.