

# **Famous Last Pictures, Part 1**

**Series: Summer at Grace 2021**

**John 21**

**Robert Morris --- July 25, 2021**

Well, good morning, Grace. Here's the thing ... it's going to happen. There is nothing you can do or I can do about it. It's inevitable. I have tried my best to keep it at bay, but it's just not working. I'm turning forty this fall. I know, it's hard to believe...there's such youth in my eyes, right?

Well, I know it's a little bit cliché but there have been moments during this year as I approach that number that have me thinking about life in some different ways. Now, no worries, I don't foresee any major midlife crises coming on, and I don't have the money for a sports car, so I feel like we're good there.

But there are these seasons and these moments in your life where you maybe take a pause and you open your eyes, or you change your perspective in some different ways, and I'm certainly going through one of those right now. I start to think things like this: *Wow, Robert, if you're lucky to get eightyish years, then you're halfway over or more. How should I spend what seems like my more precious and fleeting time? What do I need to prioritize?*

Because I want to spend my next season focused on the things that matter, and I'm thinking about these things. Because something happens when you imagine the end. It begins to clarify some things. You maybe have some goals out there on the horizon and you've got a shorter time to get there, so you start to put things in place to reach those goals. And if you see the end's coming, or you really see the end's coming, like, you know it's coming soon, it really begins to clarify some things.

That's why so many movies or TV shows that, when a character has a moment when they realize this end is coming, they alter the way they live and they begin to speak in different ways. They might even share some of these famous last words, because the end has a way of clarifying something that's really important.

What would you say to those closest to you if you knew that tomorrow was it? You wouldn't spend time with the frivolous, you wouldn't talk about the game last night or your recipe for biscuits or brisket. You'd get right to the really, really important stuff.

And so, I find myself more and more each day wanting to listen to faithful men and women who are closer to the end of the road, closer to the finish line. And I want to learn from them. And it's this feeling or this atmosphere that I had during my daily Bible reading a couple of months ago when I found myself in the Book of 2 Timothy.

### **Paul and the Book of 2 Timothy**

The Book of 2 Timothy is one of the last letters Paul ever pens. He knows it's coming to an end and he knows it's coming very quickly. Paul's writing this letter to his dear friend Timothy and he's in prison in Rome awaiting his execution. It's kind of a farewell discourse, or the famous last words of a spiritual father to someone who's behind him in the race.

So, if you can imagine with me—Paul, the aged, in some dark and dank dungeon in Rome. There's no escape but death. His own life efforts are over and he wants to send Timothy this letter.

Now maybe you can resonate more with Paul. You may be towards the end of your life or your days and you want people to know some important things that you've learned in your life. But like most of us, I think we can resonate with Timothy and imagine a wiser and older saint imploring us or instructing us on the things that are really important. He's got some fatherly or mentor-style advice. He's spilled his life out, he's spent it well, and now he wants to make sure Timothy knows what's most important.

And as I read this letter a couple of months ago, I couldn't help but notice how many things there were, how many insights there were for me to build my life around, considering two things. One, just the world and the cultural climate we live in, it struck me as very timely. And two, the reality that my days are numbered. Some of us aren't going to be here next summer. And that's a sobering thought. And one of the pitfalls of humanity is nobody ever thinks it's them.

But what we have here is Paul saying, *Look, I'm at the end of my road and I think it would be wise for you to imagine the end and look at some of these words and hear the message*

*I have for you, Timothy.* And how gracious of God that this letter has been preserved for us and that we get to eavesdrop on this conversation from a couple of thousand years ago. Because we're all Timothys who can be reminded of what's important, what's not important, and how we should structure our lives accordingly. Because it's coming—the end is coming. It's inevitable. But there is something you can do about it.

So, here's what we're going to do. For the next two weeks we're going to be looking at the Book of 2 Timothy. We're going to look at two different kind of word pictures or images or metaphors that Paul uses. You could see them as maybe two desired visions of Timothy's future for the Apostle Paul. So, famous last pictures, if you would. And so, if you have your Bibles today and you want to follow along, we're going to be in the Book of 2 Timothy and we're going to start in chapter 2 here in just a moment.

Now as you're turning there this morning—if you're turning there, it would be helpful for me to give you some of the immediate context that precedes the passage that we're going to read today. Again, all of this is in the context of Paul's final instructions to Timothy.

In chapter 1, Paul gives Timothy a very heartfelt message about what's being entrusted to him and how he's proud of him. In chapter 2, Paul instructs Timothy to work diligently and reminds him that Christ is risen and that if you've identified with Christ, you're going to rise with Him one day, and that's a rock-solid and trustworthy foundation that you can build your life on.

And then we come to the passage for today. And so, let's read the whole thing together, and we're going to stumble onto Paul's first word picture, his first desired vision for Timothy's future. Here it is in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 14:

**<sup>14</sup> Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. <sup>15</sup> Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup> But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, <sup>17</sup> and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, <sup>18</sup> who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. <sup>19</sup> But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:14-19**

## Be an Approved Worker

So, as I was reading this a couple of months ago, it was verse 15 that stopped me in my tracks. I've heard it before, I've read it before, I've even heard messages about it, but that phrase just caused me to pause. It just hit me differently.

**“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed...” (vs. 15)**

So, the first picture, the first vision of the future for Timothy, this first famous last picture, Paul writes to Timothy, *I want you to show up. I want to show up at the end of your days as an approved worker, a no-shame worker. I want you to be able to present yourself. Do the best you can, Timothy, to present yourself as a craftsman of the faith and be approved.*

Now that word “approved” there in the original language has this idea of being counted worthy or passing scrutiny favorably. It's actually a term in some of the other literature of the time that's used to describe the process at the end when a precious metal is being refined. It's what's left over and tested. It hasn't been found wanting.

And so, Paul is saying, *Look, Timothy, there are two options for the kind of worker you can be. You can be the kind of worker that is approved and has no shame, who is tried and true and passed the test. Or you can show up that day as a worker that is maybe a little ashamed and didn't pass the test, who missed the mark.* And Paul is saying, *Look, Timothy, I want you to show up. I want you to show up at the end of your days as a worker who has no cause for being ashamed when their work is being expected at the end of their days. That's what I want for you, Timothy.*

Now, I'm not the handiest guy in the world, but I can get some things done. And last summer during the heights of Covid I put on my workman hat. And like everyone else, it seemed, we did a home project. And by “we” I mean me. And by “we decided” I mean my wife decided that we were going to change up our master bathroom. And I was happy to oblige, because I like putting on my workman hat every now and then.

Now, everything in our master bathroom besides the shower and tub, we ripped out and redid.



So here's the before and after.





So you get a picture of this. So, I know, right? You might be thinking, *Robert, great job! What a great workman you are!* Your wife might even put these pictures up on Facebook and you might start getting comments like, “Wow, side gig, huh?” “Come do my bathroom!”

But what if you look closer? Here’s what you don’t see in those pictures. That hot water knob on the righthand side of the sink is a little wobbly and loose. The screw got overtightened and stripped a little bit and now it’s got just a little bit of wobble to it. If you walk into our master closet where the flooring is, the vinyl plank flooring, right there near the doorframe, there’s a little cut and it’s not quite flush. Now you might not notice those things. But I go into

that bathroom every day. And there it is, reminding me, *You're not quite the workman you thought you were, Robert.*

There are times that I look back and think, *I should have watched one more YouTube video ... maybe I shouldn't have been in such a rush towards the end of the project as I was getting more and more progressively frustrated. Maybe I should have called somebody who knew what they were doing and asked for help. This kind of shoddy work wouldn't pass the inspection of a workman who knew what he was doing.*

Now in the grand scheme of things, I'm really proud of my bathroom. That's why I showed it to you, right? Okay. But there are those "what could have been" moments, those what-ifs. Because I want to be a good workman. I want my work to stand out. And I think deep in my heart and deep in your heart is this desire to be approved. If we think about our lives, how many decisions—check that—how many poor decisions have been made in the hope and the search for approval from someone ... too many to count on my end, for sure.

And I can imagine Timothy reading this letter and looking to Paul and saying that there was nothing more that he wanted than the approval of his spiritual mentor and father in the faith. And Paul kind of flips the script on him and says, *No, I want you to have the approval of your Heavenly Father. I want you to be approved as a minister and as a kingdom worker.*

Paul has this grand vision for Timothy's future, and I hope that as you hear me today, maybe it even becomes a vision for your own life as well. Imagine—just take a moment and imagine with me for a while—showing up at the end of your days with no reason to hang your head; no shame as an approved worker; no, not perfect, but approved.

So, naturally, my next question as I was reading this passage a couple of months ago was, *Okay, Paul, I get it. I get the picture. I get the desired vision. That sounds like the kind of finish line that I want to arrive at. How do I get there? What's the approved worker about?*

### **Four Instructions**

And as I read this passage, four things stuck out to me. Four things from this paragraph that Paul instructs Timothy to avoid or do in his hopes of showing up at the end of his days as a no-shame worker. This is what's important, this is what isn't important, this is how you should spend your time. This is maybe how you should aim your life. And so, I'm going to list them all

for you right now and then we're going to take a look at them individually as we work through the passage this morning. Here are the four things.

He tells them to:

1. Avoid useless and quarrelsome arguments
2. To handle God's word accurately
3. To avoid worldly and empty chatter
4. And then to not swerve from the truth—don't swerve from the truth and end up on a "list."

All right, let's take a look at those individually.

### 1. Avoid Useless and Quarrelsome Arguments

Verse 14: **"Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers."**

The first clue we get about a no-shame workman is that they avoid useless and quarrelsome arguments. Paul's implying that there's a kind of arguing that's not doing any good. I don't think Paul is saying don't ever disagree with someone about how they're using words. There's certainly a time to disagree and to debate and maybe talk an issue out. But there's a quarrelsome way of going about that.

This word, a "quarrel about words" in the original language, has this idea of wrestling or wrangling or waging war. There's a back and forth-ness to this thing and there's a quarrelsome spirit about you and the argument.

I don't think Paul is arguing for a kind of isolationism that never engages with anyone, but he might be asking Timothy, *How much of your precious and fleeting time are you going to spend in endless arguments, and is it helping? Is it doing you any good?*

It reminded me of a time a few years back when I was in seminary and I was meeting with this guy and I was trying to invest in his life. He was a neighbor of mine and we were meeting weekly. And what happened was that our conversations devolved into a lot of back and forth and fighting and arguing. And we were fighting just to fight and arguing just to argue. He was one of these debate guys. And I think what was happening is I was becoming kind of his

“pet Christian” that he was kind of testing out all his theories on. And I was happy to oblige because within me is this desire to be right, to argue back and get riled up.

Now, I’m not saying that those conversations were useless. Man, we went around and round about everything under the sun, debating, arguing, getting agitated even, about all these kinds of different social and cultural and political and spiritual topics, when really, at the end of the day, we were probably not going to see eye to eye on most things because we were coming from very different perspectives about what truth even was. And it wasn’t all a waste, and the relationship was good, but at some point I had to humbly come to him and say, *Look, I’m wondering if this is helpful to you, because I’m not feeling like what we’re doing—this relationship—is helpful to me.* And I asked him if maybe we could change the nature of the relationship and keep meeting with one another, because all this arguing wasn’t helping my younger and less mature spirit.

Now I can imagine Paul saying to Timothy, *There are some arguments going on in your community and they’re having a negative effect. They’re not serving the hearers well.* That phrase there—“leading to the ruin of the hearers” in the Scripture—that word “ruin” is *katastrophe*. That’s the word. It’s causing disaster. There’s a lot of damage being left over after these arguments.

Now to be honest, I’m not really sure where the line is on this one. I’ve read this passage through and through. I’ve tried to study it well and study outside resources. But Paul seems to be implying to Timothy that there’s a kind of argument that *I don’t want you engaged in that type of argument because it’s not doing any good for those who are listening.* That’s the clue we get from the Scriptures. There’s probably a specific issue that Paul had in mind and Timothy probably knows exactly what Paul is talking about.

And maybe the best way to summarize it is this: there’s a kind of quarreling or fighting about words and minutiae and issues that doesn’t help the hearers, and it’s not a good use of the precious time and energy of a workman who wants to show up at the end with no shame.

Now I could say let’s meet and let’s have a long discussion or debate about it, but that might be missing Paul’s point completely, right?

The first thing an approved worker (a no-shame worker), a craftswoman or craftsman of the faith, does is they avoid spending too much precious time quarreling, wrangling, fighting,



arguing, over words, minutiae—especially those who only ruin hearers. It’s not doing any spiritual good.

## 2. Handle the Word of God Accurately

Next on the list for the no-shame worker—if you’re going to show up at the end like this, if this is a vision for your future—verse 15 says this:

**“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15**

“Rightly handling the word of truth”—a no-shame worker, a craftswoman, a craftsman of the faith is going to learn how to handle the word of God accurately. They rightly handle it. That phrase there has this idea of—it literally means “to be cut straight.” It’s a picture of a craftsman cutting a straight line or a farmer plowing a straight furrow or a brick mason whose bricks are not crooked. It’s cut straight.

In contrast in verse 18 we’re going to see those who swerve or deviate from the truth. Their rows aren’t straight. And Paul is saying, *Timothy, look, if you’re going to be a careful and diligent worker you’re going to need to make sure your cuts are not off, and when it’s time to build it’s going to look kind of janky and crooked—like a worker who might not be able to walk into his bathroom or walk by his work without being reminded that it’s not quite up to the standard. And so, he says, Look, rightly handle the word of truth. Handle it with care. Stay on the straight path.*

Another way to say this is the opposite version of that, which is that disapproval awaits those who mishandle the word of God—especially those who have influence over others.

And so, Paul implores Timothy, *Look, you want to be an approved worker? Is that your vision for the future? I hope it is. Cut it straight. Learn to handle God’s truth with the humility and the care that it deserves. Before you go spouting something, you might want to be the kind of worker who measures twice and cuts once. Use your precious time to learn how to feed yourself and feed others from the Word of God so that it won’t be a waste and you won’t regret it, Timothy.*

### 3. Avoid Worldly, Empty Chatter

Then Paul instructs Timothy in verse 16—we see our third insight here:

**“But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene.” 2 Timothy 2:16**

The next mark of a no-shame worker, according to Paul in his final days, is they avoid worldly and empty chatter. Here are some synonyms I found as I was studying this passage in other translations and doing other study on this topic. These might help us:

Irreverent babble; empty chatter

Time-wasting talk

Spiritually harmful talk

Profane empty utterances

Nonsense

Vain chatter

Empty speech

Well, naturally, my first question was, *Okay, Paul, how do I know if it's irreverent babble* *How do I know? Help me here.* And the clue's in our passage here. He gives it to us. Paul says it's the kind of talk that leads to more and more ungodliness; the kinds of things that make us less and less like Christ instead of more and more like Christ in all of our life.

We want our talk to be the kind of talk that draws people closer to God and into good relationship with other, that brings them nearer to the truth instead of further away.

When I was younger, I could spend hours staying up late at night with my friends debating anything and everything under the sun. I still can. I still love a good conversation, especially around a campfire.

Now, here's the thing, friends. I'm going to be honest here. I'm really ashamed to confess to you how much time in my life I've spent discussing whether a hot dog is a sandwich. Okay? And even right now if you came up to me at the end of our service right here, I could be tempted to have another forty-five-minute conversation with you about it, especially if you disagree with my position.

This is just the nature of our humanity. We're prone to the frivolous and the useless and the emptiness; or worse yet, Paul says, the kind of talk that leads to less and less Christlikeness.

And Paul says, *Look, there's some wisdom to be gained here, Timothy. Time's too precious to be caught up in irreverent babble and useless talk. Why? Because it's leading to ungodliness.* Paul's really concerned that there's a kind of speech that's happening in Timothy's community that's leading to the wrong kind of growth. The wrong thing is growing in their lives.

That's why he uses this image of gangrene. Now we're not as familiar with that in these days as much as we used to be, but it's kind of this infection, this flesh-eating type of thing. And unchecked it will kill you. And Paul says, *Look, there's this kind of empty, worldly talk that acts like a raging infection that's going to need some attention. Otherwise it's going to get out of control. It spreads that quickly.*

And so, Paul might say this: *Look, there's a kind of talk that's as dangerous to your spiritual health as blood poisoning to your body or sepsis from a wound. And you don't want this to be a characteristic of your life.*

And so, Paul, maybe looking back on his own life, says, *Look, spend less time on empty, worldly conversations and chatter, this irreverent, irrelevant babble.*

#### **4. Don't Swerve from the Truth and End Up on a "List"**

And finally, Paul insists that Timothy not stray from the truth or the Gospel. Verses 17 through the end of our passage today reads like this:

**"...Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already happened. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.'" 2 Timothy 2:17-19**

He says, *Look, an approved worker, a no-shame worker is not going to swerve from the truth and end up on a "list."* He or she is not going to veer off in the wrong direction.

Friends, I'm always amazed and a little haunted that Paul names names here. Now everyone in Timothy's church, in Timothy's community, would have known exactly who he's



talking about. And that was bad enough. But can you imagine for generations and generations, thousands and thousands of years, that your legacy is of “Hymenaeus and Philetus, who swerved from the truth...and upset the faith of some.”

At that time, they were wrongly teaching that the resurrection of believers, this great hope we have, had already happened. It was more of a spiritual event, not an actual physical thing. And Paul says, *Look, you know that's not it. They're distracting others, they're swerving themselves, and they're upsetting the faith of some. And so, look, friends, Timothy, if you want to show up approved, you don't want to be part of that problem. You don't want to cause others to stumble and lead them astray.* And Paul's contrasting what these two men are about and what he wants Timothy to be about.

How haunting for us to consider that that's their legacy.

And then he uses this last verse in this section today to quote the Book of Numbers a couple of times and say, *Look, God's foundation is secure.* He says, *Look, the Lord knows who are His. He's got you. And if you are one of His, then let's live in a certain kind of way. Depart from iniquity; turn away from wickedness. This is the kind of foundation, Timothy, that you can build your life around, that God's got you and now you're free to demonstrate that in your life in such a way.*

So, you want to be an approved worker, a craftswoman of the faith? Don't swerve. Don't end up on this kind of list. *Stay, Timothy, on the narrow path that the disciple of Jesus is called to and don't lead others astray and don't subvert the faith of others.*

So, let's do a quick summary here of what we've seen so far. Paul in some of his final words to Timothy gives him a desired vision for his future of being a no-shame worker, a craftsman of the faith, who shows up at the end with no reason to hang his head, no shame. And then he says, Look, if you're going to get there, if you're going to get to that desired vision, these four things might help.

- 1. Avoid useless, quarrelsome arguments**
- 2. Learn how to handle the Word of God accurately**
- 3. Avoid worldly, empty chatter**
- 4. Don't swerve from the truth and end up on a “list”**

## Application

And so, men and women of Grace, now that we've heard this, the question before us is "So what?" Or "What do we need to do about this?" Or "How might we apply some of these things to our actual real lives in the here and now?"

We've heard Paul's vision for Timothy's life. Maybe you've signed on for that same vision for your own life. I hope you have. If you have days left (and you do), and if you're unsure of how many you have (and you are), then let's consider these four imperatives from Paul and ask ourselves some questions that might help us figure out how we might apply this to our lives in some real ways.

First up—are you quarreling? Are you a fighting kind of person? Would those closest to you, if you asked them for honest feedback, say, "You spend too much time arguing"?

Paul might say, *Stop. What good is it doing? Is it really helping, or is it leading to more ruin and disaster for those around. It's bad stewardship of your time and your energy.*

I can imagine Paul, if he lived in our day and age, might say something like this. *Are you really going to change their minds with your clever-yet-laced-with sarcasm comment on Facebook? And how much time did you spend thinking that one up? How deep in the rabbit hole of political Twitter are you really going to go down? Is it doing you any good? Maybe you're not even participating. Maybe you're just observing how men and women of our day and age talk to each other and argue and bicker and go back and forth with one another and name call and all these things. Is that doing you good? Is it helping? Is it serving others?*

*Maybe consider how often you spend stewing over a word or consider if there's a lot of broken relationships in your wake over things that weren't the main thing.*

When I thought about this, I immediately went back to Pastor Matt's message that we have every few years on opinions, beliefs, and convictions. He says, *Look, we've got to become the kind of people who care less and less about more and more, and care more and more about less and less. We've got to learn how to keep the main things the main things and keep them in the right spot.*

Now hear me clearly. There's a time to say, "This is true. I'm standing here in my convictions." But are you a quarrelsome person when you go about it? Are you riling yourself up and others? And is it serving those around you well?

Coupled with that, very much related to that, Paul might ask you, *Is your life marked with irreverent, irrelevant babble?* He might say, *Friends, you don't have time for this. Your time is running out. You've got a limited number of days.* You've got a guy who's sitting here at the end of his life, and he might say, *Look, if you want to know if your talk fits in this category, is it causing the right kind of growth?*

Maybe an application for you this week might be to do a conversation audit. I'm thinking about doing this this week myself. Put a note on your phone, a notecard in your back pocket, and after each conversation, just have two columns. Did this conversation lead to more and more godliness or less and less godliness? At the end of this conversation, was there more fear, more anxiety, more anger, more broken relationships, one party being less like Christ? Or did this conversation lead to more life-giving things and encouragement of each other and closer relationship and being closer to the truth?

Paul might say to you today, *How are the conversations you're having? Are they serving your efforts to become more and more like Christ? Or is something else growing, maybe like an infection?* And the Apostle Paul might ask you today, *Are you handling the Word accurately? Have you learned to use the Word to feed yourself and to feed others?*

There's kind of this growing and alarming lack of biblical knowledge in those who claim to be disciples of Jesus. It's true. The stats and the surveys of the global church in general are bearing that out to be true. We're losing this, friends. We're losing our ability to hear the messages of the world, the undercurrents of the world, the worldviews of our world, and say *No, that's not true*, or *That doesn't line up with the truth the Lord's provided for those who love Him*.

And I'm with you in this, my friends. I really am. I am surprised and often heartbroken about how often in my life—even after as best as I can tell thirty years of trying to find Jesus. I am surprised at how often I find myself believing something or basing some action in my life on something that's not right and real and true.

And Paul says, *Look, you want to show up as an approved worker.* You do. You've got to learn to rightly handle the word of truth. And that's going to take time and you're going to need to invest some resources in that. But the good news is that we now have some time that we can reallocate from those quarrelsome arguments and that empty babble. So, we've got that going for us.

Now I know that some of us are very intimidated by the Word of God. Maybe you have less experience with it, maybe you don't know how to start, it's confusing sometimes. Maybe you're humbled and a little ashamed because you feel like you've been a believer for long enough that you should be at this level, but really, you're down here somewhere. I know. But we can't let that keep us from trying. You've got to start the process somewhere. And the good news in a church like this is that there are so many men and women around us who would love to help you do that.

So, your application might be to simply find a group of people. Here are the two things. Find a group of people who are doing two things: they're trying to learn God's truth and they're trying to apply it to their life. You need both of those. Don't just learn God's truth to learn it, but learn it and apply it. And the good news is that here at Grace there are loads of great options, especially coming this fall or in this school year as our ministries ramp up. And so, your application might be to find a group of people who can help you learn how to handle God's truth accurately, and then apply it to your life.

And then finally, the Apostle Paul might ask you, *Are you swerving?* Is there some area of your life where you're maybe ignoring God's clear instruction? Or maybe you're delaying obedience in some area. Or maybe in an effort to be current or modern or in touch with the world around us, or maybe simply out of ignorance or not knowing, we're swerving from the truth. We're off in the ditch. The narrow path is called that for a reason—it's hard. It's always been hard to love people and to hold onto what's right and real and true. That's why I really appreciated this spring when we went through 1 Peter and learned that we're aliens and strangers, right? We can set our expectations in the right spot where we know we're on a very hard and temporary assignment in a foreign land.

But Paul says, *Look, don't end up swerving. Don't end up swerving from the truth on the side of the road. And certainly, you don't want your name on the kind of list where your legacy is that you spent your days leading people astray rather than leading them to the path of life.*

So, men and women of Grace, those of you who are disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't know whether you have six months or sixty years. But the Apostle Paul in some of his final words, with his last words with the end right before him, says, *Friends, I want you to show up. I want you to do your best to show up as an approved worker, a craftswoman or a craftsman of the faith. And I want you to be able to stand up and present your work at the review of all*

*reviews and say, “I’ve got no reason to hang my head”--because you spent your time and your resources and your efforts on the things that really matter.*

And so, next week Paul is going to continue his train of thought in this very same passage. And he’s going to give us another picture, another vision, of a desired future for us to consider. And so, we’re going to pick up right here where we left off. And I want you to show up next week, because we’re going to look at some of the Apostle Paul’s famous last words.

I think it would be wise for us right now to stop and pray that the Lord would give us the wisdom and the courage to become the men and the women who are unashamed workers, craftswomen and craftsmen of the faith, who will have no reason to hang our heads on the day it all ends. Because here’s the thing: it’s coming. It’s inevitable. It’s going to happen. But there is something you can do about it. And so, let’s pray towards that end.

*Faithful and gracious God, we come before You today with glad and grateful hearts: glad to be hearing from Your word, and grateful to be doing that amongst our brothers and sisters in Christ. God, would You grant us the grace we need, not only to see this vision of our future as an approved worker, a no-shame worker; but also, God, would You grant us the grace we’ll need to arrive at that kind of finish line at the end of our days? God, we confess to You that we don’t have the ability to do this on our own, and so we’re asking for Your help, and we’re asking Your wisdom, and we’re asking for Your strength to recognize where we might need to alter our lives based on Your word this morning. And we ask these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.*