

PAUL'S SWAN SONG

Grace to the Very End

2 Timothy 4:16–22



LET'S BEGIN HERE

When popular entertainers end their careers, they often give one last concert to bid farewell to their fans. Their final song on stage is their “swan song,” and it is usually the song that made them famous. The familiar song pours from their hearts as the music crescendos, and the final note rings out in a thrilling finale. The fans leap to their feet cheering and applauding while the performers bow again and again, receiving the people’s adulation until, finally, the aging entertainers exit the stage never to return.

Paul’s swan song came to its climactic close with far less fanfare. No bright lights surrounded him in his dungeon cell. No one cheered him on. He wrote alone, but his words left behind far *more* meaning and lasting impact than any entertainer’s song. His final lines of 2 Timothy rang out in praise of God, resonating his life’s theme: “May the Lord be with your spirit. And may *his grace* be with all of you” (2 Timothy 4:22, emphasis added).

Grace. “Even before I was born,” the apostle once acknowledged, “God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace” (Galatians 1:15). Grace marked Paul from his mother’s womb, and even at the end of his life his signature tune played on. Grace in the beginning. Grace every step of the way. Grace to the very end.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

As we examine 2 Timothy 4:16–22, we’ll notice six variations of Paul’s theme of grace in his final words. Begin by reading these verses, and note the natural division at the end of verse 18. What titles would you give the two sections, verses 16–18 and 19–22?

Quotable

*Begin preparing
now for your
inevitable final
hours, and choose
grace as your
life’s credo.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Although the word *grace* appears once in these verses, the melody of grace permeates every line. Let's tune our ears to hear it as we dig deeper into the text.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tip

Observation is the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* method toward unlocking the meaning of a text and applying its principles to your life.

Observing the Text: What Does It Say?

You've already observed the two main sections; now look closer at the words. If you prefer not to mark your Bible, print the passage on a separate piece of paper and mark the text as you do the following exercises.

Do you see repeated words? Specifically, find the phrase, "the Lord," and circle each one. Also, circle any reference to God.

Underline the action words in the text that stand out to you. In the chart below, write down these words that describe what happened to Paul, what Paul did, and what God did and will do.

Key Actions in 2 Timothy 4:16–22	
What happened to Paul?	
What did Paul do?	
What did God do? What will He do?	



Summarize your observations in the space below. Note who is the focus of the passage and any hints of grace that you find.

Now let's take the next *Searching the Scriptures* step of interpretation.

Interpreting the Text: What Does It Mean?

Based on our observations, let's draw out six grace-related themes to enhance our understanding of the passage.

Grace theme one: Paul asked the Lord not to hold others' offenses against them (2 Timothy 4:16).

Heartache accompanied Paul's first notes of grace: "The first time I was brought before the judge, no one came with me. Everyone abandoned me" (2 Timothy 4:16).

To learn more about Paul's first trial and the reason it was so vital for supporters to be present, read the article, "The Injustice of Roman Justice," on the Insight for Living Ministries Web site. See the "Articles" tab under the Additional resources heading at this link: <http://insight.org/broadcasts/current-series>. Write down your findings.

Paul's first hearing, the *prima actio*, was the first-century Roman version of today's arraignment hearing, in which a judge determines probable cause and decides whether or not to order a trial. This hearing represented Paul's best chance for acquittal, since maniacal Nero, officiating Paul's second trial, would most certainly sentence him to death. Yet no one testified to defend Paul's innocence and counter his accusers. The judge probably had no choice but to order Paul to stand trial at the imperial court.



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On the heels of a great disappointment in which “everyone [had] abandoned” him, Paul expressed great grace, “May it not be counted against them” (2 Timothy 4:16)—echoing Christ’s words of grace from the cross: “‘Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing’” (Luke 23:34).

Application

Have others let you down? Even betrayed you? Write down what happened. Reflect on Paul’s response of grace, and ask the Lord for the strength to act likewise toward those who have offended you.

Paul could have reacted with bitterness (“I’m innocent! This is unfair!”), bearing a grudge (“I’ll never forgive my friends!”), or with self-pity (“This is what I get for helping people.”). Yet by keeping his focus on his Lord, he responded with grace. Let’s look closer at Paul’s faith in Christ and breathe in the fragrance of gratitude that infused Paul’s spirit.

Grace theme two: Paul displayed an attitude of enormous gratitude (2 Timothy 4:17).

Paul mentioned “the Lord” three times in the passage (4:17; 4:18; and 4:22). He centered his thoughts on his Savior and trusted in Him, not on his own abilities or on a possible rescue from prison by his friends. His vertical focus guarded him against the fear and bitterness that would have imprisoned his heart behind walls thicker than Rome’s Mamertine prison. Instead, gratitude to the Lord gave him a positive, hopeful attitude that no prison bars could restrain.

What truths gave Paul the spiritual resources to respond with grace and gratitude (4:17)?

Application

On what truths about your Savior can you focus your mind to set you free from fear and bitterness?



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Grace theme three: Paul maintained a confident expectation (4:18).

Paul's next line exudes confident expectation: "Yes, and the Lord will deliver me from every evil attack" (4:18). How could a man on death row be so confident in his deliverance?

Correlation

To find the answer, correlate this passage with Paul's expression of confidence in his letter to the Philippians. Read Philippians 1:20–23. What was Paul's attitude toward life and death? What did "deliverance" mean to Paul? And how did this mind-set boost his confidence and hope?

Application

Has the heat of hardship melted your confidence and hope? How can Paul's mind-set help you in your situation?

Grace theme four: Paul claimed a secure home in heaven (4:18).

Paul's concluding thought in verse 18 reveals the secret to his confidence: "Yes, and the Lord will . . . bring me safely into his heavenly Kingdom. All glory to God forever and ever! Amen!"

No amount of darkness that closed around Paul could dim the dawning light on his horizon—the shining face of Jesus welcoming him to his eternal home. This is the hope of the gospel!

Application

How can the hope of the gospel encourage you today?



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Grace theme five: Paul delighted in the benefits others receive (2 Timothy 4:19–21).

Read Paul's final farewell in 2 Timothy 4:19–21, and note his positive regard toward his friends, some of whom lived in Rome and may have been among those who abandoned him in his hour of need. What do Paul's words of blessing tell you about grace?

Application

Our capacity to delight in the blessings of others while we're struggling is a true test of our ability to show grace. In what specific situation in your life does Paul's example of grace toward others give you a model to follow?

Grace theme six: Paul released others from his expectations (4:22).

Paul concluded his swan song with a stirring finale: "May the Lord be with your spirit. And may his grace be with all of you" (4:22). He expressed his anthem of grace with a final flourish of ink on parchment and then set down his quill, never to pick it up again.

Paul's heart was free from guilt and full of hope—and his words released his friends to enjoy a guilt-free, hope-filled life with God as well. He laid on them no burden of expectation, no sharp jab of blame because he's in prison and they walk free. Grace doesn't second-guess decisions or dwell on petty offenses. It releases people into God's care to walk with Him as He leads them.

Application

How can you show grace to others by releasing them from your expectations?





Bring It Home

As you close your study of 2 Timothy, linger over the theme of grace. Recall Paul's explanation of the gospel back in 2 Timothy 1:

For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. (1:9–10)

Let the grace of Christ fill your heart as it did Paul's heart, and let it spill over into your relationships, just as it did in Paul's life. How can you demonstrate grace today toward those to whom you are closest?

Can you hear, ringing in your heart, Paul's signature tune of grace in his swan song of 2 Timothy? If so, let the melody ring out through you today and every day!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, You prepared Paul for his final moments by filling his heart with grace and hope. Now prepare me as well. May grace be my life's credo, and when my time comes may my heart be filled with grace to the very end. Amen.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

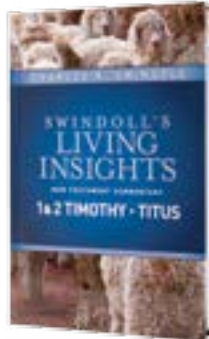
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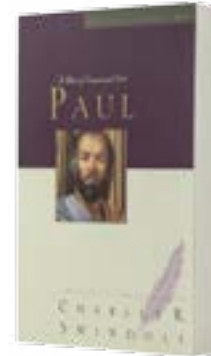
Tools for Digging Deeper



Paul's Swan Song:
A Study of 2 Timothy
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For the 2017 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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