

“LOVE SPEAKS WITH URGENCY!”

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Name something that “knocks”! You think of someone **knocking** at your front door at home or at the office door, so you holler “**just a minute**” or “**come on in**”! Your vehicle develops a strange sound from the engine so you take it in and tell the mechanic “there’s a **knocking** sound in my motor.” The groom stands at the front of church with his bride as he tries to keep his knees from **knocking**. How many 1,000s of times have you parents/teachers told your rambunctious kids/students: **KNOCK IT OFF!**

There’s something else that knocks that you might not have thought of and that is **opportunities**. But I guess that must happen only once because the old proverb says: “**opportunities don’t knock twice.**” How true is that!

You’re trying to decide on buying this car you’ve got your eye on. You research it, test drive it, and go home to think about it. The next day you return to the dealer, and it’s gone – somebody else bought it. **You missed your opportunity**. In searching airfares, I play chess game when to book your tickets or how long to wait for fares to drop. On our upcoming trip to see our daughter, if I had waited this long to reserve flights, I’d be paying 2½ times more than what I did and **lost my opportunity for cheap fares**.

In our 6th stop along the **LOVE SPEAKS** road, Paul talks about opportunities. Today God’s Word recorded by Paul in 2 Timothy describes the urgency about taking advantage of opportunities because we’re not dealing with airfares, we’re dealing with souls. And there are few things worse than missed opportunities. We’ve been talking about **how and why** we share our faith because it is what faith does. That is what God made us for, that is our purpose: **to let our light shine**. So let’s see how:

“LOVE SPEAKS WITH URGENCY!”

1. **Speak now because the time of life’s end is coming**
2. **Speak now because the Lord is at our side**

1

The backdrop of our text finds the veteran pastor Paul giving his young protégé Timothy a list of instructions and warnings as he carries out his work alone. Paul was in a Roman prison cell realizing the end of his ministry and life was on the horizon. He figured he would be martyred for his faith and the prospect of his death was very real. So he advised Timothy to **preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage. Keep your head in all situation, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.** (2 Tim 4:2,5) He wanted Timothy to take every single opportunity to share that Word before it was too late.

In that Roman jail, Paul knew his time was just about up. **THE TIME HAS COME FOR MY DEPARTURE**. He talks about his “**departure,**” like a camper pulling up the stakes of his tent to break camp and leave....or a ship released from its moorings, ready to head out from dock, Paul was anticipating what was likely to be a pretty gruesome death, probably a beheading. But for Paul, it was pulling up the stakes in this life, being released from the moorings and departing to go home, finally delivered from all the problems of this life.

As Paul looked back on his life and ministry, he compared his last days to the **drink offering**. The drink offering was the final act of a worshipper at the temple in offering a sacrifice. Paul saw his life as one of sacrifice for God and now it was coming to an end.

And with thanks to God, Paul declares that **he fought the good fight**. He had fought temptation and did battle with those who wanted to destroy the Gospel. **He finished the race**. He kept in mind the goal God had for him to cross to enter into the joys of heaven, and he **pressed on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus**. (1 Cor 9:26) **He kept the faith**. Paul not only continued to trust the Lord and His Word, but preserved the truth of the Gospel at all risks, the sound doctrine as God had revealed it to him since his miraculous conversion. **Love spoke** the truth and that’s why he was in prison because he would not let the truth of the gospel be corrupted. Now **the time of life’s end was coming** and he rejoiced that God helped him to **fight the fight, finish his race, and keep the faith**.

What do you see when you look back on your life (and some of us don’t have much left)? **Does love speak with any urgency?** For me, all too often, I see missed opportunities. I see plenty of fights against temptation that I chose not to fight, but instead just follow. I see those days when my faith was fatigued from even running the race, let alone finishing it. I just wanted to give up, give in, throw in the towel and say “**what’s the use?**” I see the time when the truth of God’s Word became a curse for me because it always hammered me with how God’s punishment was waiting for me for all those pet sins of thought, word, & deed that I’m so good at committing. I see so many other paths that looked more appealing than the course God had laid out for me.

We all know those missed opportunities **to stand up** for Jesus, **to defend** his holy name when it was dragged through the mud by our friends, **to always give the reason for the hope that you have**, (1 Peter 3:15) to talk about the Savior we worship on Sundays, but then hide the other six days. **Our love didn’t speak with any urgency** because we crumbled under the notion that our friendship was more important than our faith, sports was more important than your Savior, sleep more desirable than the Spirit, when popularity with your peers was more important than “**being prepared in season and out of season**”.

For that, what should be in store for us is punishment. Our “**departure**” should be away from the presence of God forever. He should pull up our stakes on earth and hammer them into hell’s campground. He should tie us up to the moorings of eternal damnation – never to be released from them ever! God’s curse should hammer us forever for all those missed opportunities that won’t knock again, those times our love did not speak at all.

But Paul did not despair and neither should we. As he saw the time of his life ending, he knew what was in the future. **NOW THERE IS IN STORE FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY.** The Crown of Righteousness is the laurel wreath of victory given to the one who **LONGS FOR HIS APPEARING.** We loved his first appearing as Jesus was born of a woman, born under law, to redeem **those under law that we might receive the full rights of sons**” (Gal 4:5). We loved his appearing on the cross at Calvary where he was **pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities**” and announced **IT IS FINISHED!** (Is 53:5) We loved his appearing at graveside on Easter Sunday when angels announced **He is not here, He is Risen** and then he showed himself to the women and the disciples. We loved his appearing when he untied the moorings of this life and ascended into heaven to prepare rooms in the mansions for us. And we will love his appearing when He calls us out of this world to the eternal joys OR returns to make his final appearance on the Last Day.

Jesus perfectly completed the race. He fought the good fight and called it “finished on the cross.” So the Lord, the righteous Judge, has in store for you that crown of victory ready for you and me at the time of life’s end because **Jesus spoke his Gospel message with urgency.**

2

The righteous Judge has the crown of righteousness waiting at life’s end. The truth is there are times here when that crown isn’t so visible. In our text, Paul describes being abandoned by everyone at his trial, being in the lion’s mouth, harassed by “**every evil attack.**” Paul shows how he got through it all: **BUT THE LORD STOOD AT MY SIDE AND GAVE ME STRENGTH, SO THAT THROUGH ME THE MESSAGE MIGHT BE FULLY PROCLAIMED.** Love speaks with urgency because the Lord is by your side. No matter who may desert you, the Lord never will. He brought Paul out of every danger. And notice he did it for a purpose so that through Paul the message of Jesus’ love may be proclaimed.

About once a year, I get asked: “**what’s your greatest joy in ministry?**” I think of many over the years, e.g. baptizing babies, (esp. my own including my grandbabies), confirming young people (esp. my own), marrying people who share Jesus (esp my own). But of all those events, I’ve always remembered those opportunities to speak of Christ’s love to those on their deathbeds. That’s urgent because if you miss the opportunity, there may not be another one.

It may seem hard to do, and at times it is, but the Lord is by my side. He overcomes all those fears, apprehensions, or failures. He has a purpose and that is that **THE MESSAGE of Jesus’ love MIGHT BE FULLY PROCLAIMED.** This is the message that says **THE LORD WILL RESCUE ME FROM EVERY EVIL ATTACK AND WILL BRING ME SAFELY TO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM.**

The Lord is at your side. There is never a reason not to take an opportunity to speak to someone who needs to hear about Christ our Savior. Love speaks with urgency because the time of life’s end is coming and the Lord has a purpose for you to share what Christ has done in forgiving your sins and rescuing you from sin and death to bring you to His heavenly kingdom. **These are urgent times.** Let your love speak. And when you wear the crown of righteousness with the one you spoke to urgently, then **give praise and glory to God forever and ever. AMEN**