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A Life Lived With No Regrets¹

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He wasn't young anymore. But neither was he very old. Certainly not so old that there shouldn't have been a number of good years ahead of him yet. He had faced death before. But this time it would come for sure. As the end approached, he reviewed his life. As he looked back, he had no regrets about the course he had chosen since the day he had met the master. The fundamental truths of Jesus Christ had been the theme of his teaching and preaching since then.

He was a highly educated man. He was a teacher, a preacher, an evangelist, an innovator, a hymn-writer, a man who sat on high church councils. He traveled for the sake of the cause he held dear, speaking to wide-spread audiences. When some in the church started to drift into modern false teachings, with clarity and conviction he called them back to the message that had been delivered to them in the start. He did not coddle those who sought to change or ignore the faith once delivered to the saints. His passion was born of love for Jesus, love for the gospel, and love for souls. You can see that in what was important to him as he knew that death was approaching.

He put down what was important to him in a three-page letter—his last before he died. I say three pages because it takes that many in my Bible. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, and expressed things I know were important also to C. Mervyn Maxwell, because I had the privilege of knowing him and talking with him at length in recent years. In his presence I felt like something of a Timothy to his Paul.

I believe that in the words of Second Timothy we can hear the words Mervyn Maxwell would want us to receive today: How to live a life with no regret before God. We find evidence of that theme in the first and second chapters, but I'm going to skip down to the third chapter, because in chapters three and four,

¹ The following sermon was preached at the funeral of C. Mervyn Maxwell, Pioneer Memorial Church, Berrien Springs, MI, 26 July 1999.

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Paul focuses and intensifies his concerns and links them together. The passages I'm going to read from Timothy are familiar to us, but, if you're like me, you've tended to see them in isolation—out of their context. Today, I want you to see them put together as Paul put them together and think about what it means. In them we'll find Paul's prescription for living a life with no regrets.

So in 2 Timothy 3, we find Paul offering this counsel. He says, from childhood, Timothy, "you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Paul tells Timothy to "pay attention to the Scriptures. Believe the Scriptures because they have a tremendous power to work in your life and in the lives of others. [Scripture is] able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." Yet some look to the Scriptures for no more than the minimum requirements for salvation. They discount the rest. But Paul asserts the inspiration and usefulness of all Scripture. He makes no dichotomy between Gospel and Doctrine, between Salvation and Christian Living, between Jesus and the Truth. All of Scripture is important to the conscientious Christian who wants to be complete, equipped for every good work.

Paul enumerates four things Scripture is good for. In the King James the first one is doctrine. That's teaching. That is, it tells us what we ought to believe. The second one is reproof. Oh, we're not so interested in that. We'd rather not be reproved. But, in fact, the Bible tells us where we may have gone wrong. Correction is the third. It tells us, then, how to get back on the right track when we have gone wrong. And the last one is instruction, or teaching in righteousness. How to stay on the right path. This is what Scripture is to us. All of it, Paul says. All of it is inspired. All of it. And it is profitable for these things.

And so, Timothy, pay attention to Scripture. Believe it. Follow it. Make it your own.

You know, you can't believe the Scriptures and not live what they say.

Dr. Maxwell read the Scriptures that said such things as, "Now onto Him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." And he believed that. And felt he should live it as well.

Believe Scripture! Live it! This is what Paul wants Timothy to grasp. And then, if Timothy, and if we, will grasp that and make it our own, when we come to the end, we'll have no regrets.

Right on the heels of that famous affirmation of Scripture, Paul takes the next logical step. We read it in 2 Tim 4:1. "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, Who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: Preach the Word! Be urgent in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke and exhort. Be unfailing in patience and in teaching."

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There's life in the Word, not in man's cleverness or opinions or philosophies. Preach the Word. Timothy's business, as a man of God, was to preach the Word. What is your business? What is mine? Are we not also commissioned—whatever our job may be—to preach the Word?

Now sharing the Word with others will not necessarily make everyone happy. Paul recognizes that in verses three and four. "For the time is coming that people will not endure sound teaching. But having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their likings, and will turn away from listening to truth and wander into myths." But Paul says to Timothy, "You have a sacred work to do." And in verse five, he says, "As for you, always be steady. Endure suffering. Do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry."

Mervyn Maxwell took that commission seriously. He devoted a lifetime to preaching and teaching the Word. He wrote books to call attention to the Bible's teachings. And even their titles not only tell us something of the subject of the book, but they make something of a road map of his journey.

Listen to these titles: *Man! What A God!*: A book on the loveliness, awesomeness, and character of our God. Isn't that where the Christian life really begins, as we come to that kind of appreciation of Who God really is?

Tell It To the World: Once we see Who God is and what His plan is, our hearts are filled with the desire to tell the world. Of course the book was about the Millerite Movement and the development of the Advent Movement that arose from it. *Tell It To the World*. But for him it represented that stage in his life, too.

God Cares: Couldn't do it in just one volume. It took two. *God Cares* so much. The books, of course, are about those central books of Scripture: Daniel and the Revelation. And the volumes have enabled people to understand Daniel and Revelation in a way they may have never done before. But for him, the experiences that he passed through helped him see indeed how much *God Cares*, whether in the good times or the bad.

Magnificent Disappointment: What the Bible teaches about 1844 and what happened then and what it means for us today. Today we're disappointed, aren't we? We'd hoped that he might yet have time. But in our grief, we can say that it is a *Magnificent Disappointment!* Because we have faith. We have hope in Christ that there is a better day coming. A time when there will be no more sickness. No more pain. *Magnificent Disappointment*.

In a gracious and winsome way, he made the Bible clear and appealing. And at the end of his life—at the end of Paul's life—Paul had no regrets that he had preached the Word. And neither did Mervyn Maxwell. And neither will you and I, if we determine to use our talents in faithfully proclaiming the Word of God.

And then the very next thing is this famous passage: "For I'm already on the point of being sacrificed. The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I've finished the race. I've kept the faith. Henceforth, there is

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laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will award to me on that day. And not only to me, but also to all who have loved his appearing.” Paul speaks his confidence in his Lord, in Whom he has but his trust. “Trust the Lord of the Scriptures,” he says.

When it’s all over, when we face the end, what shall we say? Do we want then to have regrets, or do we want to have confidence in the Lord? Will you and I have fought a good fight? Will we have finished the race, or dropped out along the way? Will we have kept the faith, or given it up? Paul trusted his eternity to the Lord Who called him and Who empowered him. He was confident of the crown laid up, not just for him, but for others who love Jesus’ appearing, including Mervyn Maxwell. And including you and me.

Shall we be there? Shall we determine today, that by God’s grace, we will have no regrets on that day? Dr. Maxwell, I believe, fought a good fight, finished the race, kept the faith, all through trust in the Lord of Scripture. He died trusting that same Lord for the next stage, for the crown of life. How about you and me? Will we do the same? Let us determine now, today, that we will believe the Word and live it. That we will preach the Word, by God’s grace, in whatever capacity He calls us. And that we will trust the Lord of the Word with our present life and our future destiny. Then what joy will be ours when God wipes away every tear from our eyes. And there will be no more death, but life and health every lasting.

Do you want to have no regrets on that day? No regrets! May God make that so, in your life and mine, is my prayer.

We’re going to sing a hymn, a hymn that was very special to Mervyn Maxwell, because he wrote it! It’s number 415 in the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal. “Christ the Lord All Power Possessing.” You’ll notice that in the upper left of the page there are three texts of Scripture that are given—one for each of the verses. The verses represent Jesus’ transits on the clouds. The first, of course, is when He—after His resurrection—left this earth and went up into the clouds of heaven and a cloud received Him up out of their sight. But Daniel 7 tells us of another coming on the clouds, where Jesus comes to the Ancient of Days at the time of the Judgment. Seventh-day Adventists have a special interest in that, believing that God called our attention to that at just the right time. And then there’s the reference to Revelation’s portrayal of Jesus coming again on the clouds. Coming back to this earth. Let’s sing this beautiful hymn with the spirit and enthusiasm that Mervyn would want us to have. And let us put our faith and our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and in His soon return.

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