



2 TIMOTHY 2-4 PAUL'S LAST INSTRUCTIONS AND FAREWELL ADDRESS

Paul, knowing he has a short time to live, is urgently preparing his young pastor, Timothy, as best as he can. He explains to him how to view false brethren such as Hymenaeus and Philetus, who were spreading wrong doctrine. He tells him you can only do so much about such people and compares them to unworthy vessels, saying, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

So he uses the example of a wealthy home, where different vessels are used according to the need. Some are cheap vessels of wood and clay for dishes or trash cans, and expensive gold and silver vessels for especial occasions. They picture the quality of people in God's Church (he uses a similar analogy in 1 Cor. 3:12-15). Some are "for honor" and others "for dishonor," which Hymenaeus and Philetus have now become. This is a candid teaching in the Scriptures—that not all in the Church are "of the faith" (2 Thes. 3:2). Paul frankly calls some, "false brethren" (2 Cor. 11:26). God permits these situations: (1) to test and show who are the ones approved (1 Cor. 11:19) and (2) to judge and condemn those who had a choice to straighten out and "cleanse" themselves of wrong attitudes and actions, but in the end, didn't do it.

On the other hand, Paul exhorts Timothy to continue his efforts to be a "vessel of honor." To that end, he needs to, "Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife" (2 Tim. 2:22-23). So while Timothy is to *run away* from such lusts, he is to *run toward* the good virtues which are not a given.

"Metaphorically, this verb [*dioko*—to run after] is used to portray the Christian's *pursuit* of the will of God," says John Stott. "Under the figure of a chariot race, Paul describes himself straining forward with eagerness, and adds, 'I press on' and again, 'I press on toward the goal' (Phil. 3:12,14). So we are to *run away* from spiritual danger and *run after* spiritual good" (*Guard the Gospel*, p. 75).

Although Timothy is to correct such false teachers, he is to do so in a proper Christian manner. As he brings out, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

He reminds Timothy he is a "*doulos* of the Lord," the term meaning a household slave. He should be "gentle" with those that oppose him, the Gk. word is *epios*, or kindhearted. Jesus Himself said He was "gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29). Yet, this does not mean being weak, but rather, being meek; thus being kind, but firm at the same time--*humbly* correcting those that oppose sound doctrine. As Gal. 6:1 warns, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of *gentleness*, considering yourself *lest you also be tempted*." So, *how* you correct is as important as *what* you do. If a servant of God is harsh and haughty when correcting others, he is guilty of having an ungodly attitude. Instead he should gently instruct those in error, but not force the change upon them, for in the end, it depends more on that person's relationship with God.

As the *Tyndale NT Commentary* notes, "It must be the aim of the Christian minister to lead them, if possible, to repentance, although the apostle implies here that such repentance is a *gift* from God. It requires a change of mind to come to the recognition of truth, when the mind is already ensnared... 'that they may return to soberness,' a metaphor implying some previous duping by evil influences. As in the case of intoxication, the devil's method is 'to benumb the conscience, confuse the senses and paralyze the will'... The devil is portrayed [as] both the intoxicator and the captivator of men's minds" (p. 155).

The devil's strong influence then reminds Paul of the end times when this would be multiplied, saying, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful,

unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!" (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Jesus described such days being like Noah's and Lot's times, when society would end up being so terribly corrupt that it would cause God's intervention and punishment.

As the *Tyndale NT Commentary* mentions, "The *last days* is a common New Testament phrase denoting the period *immediately preceding* the consummation of the present age. Yet in the apostle's thought, this future time is not unrelated to his own, for from verse 6 onwards, he uses the present and not the future tense" (p. 156).

He then describes *nineteen* characteristics of end-time society, divided into three parts. The first section pictures a society that is very self-absorbed, namely, self-centered, money-centered, and self-aggrandized. The second part focuses on a degenerating family life, especially with children becoming cruel, uncaring, insolent and rebellious. The last part depicts society as full of slanderers--promiscuous, profane, disrespectful of authority, haters of good, treacherous, conceited and yet feeling self-righteous, as Pr. 30:12 says, "There is a generation that is pure in its own eyes, yet is not washed from its filthiness." Now we see all of that!

He notes about false brethren, "For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was" (2 Tim. 3:6-9).

These false teachers subtly enter homes while men are away at work and flatter and deceive morally weak women wanting to hear something new. They remind Paul of the two magicians in Moses's day, named by Jewish tradition as Jannes and Jambres, who opposed the truth with their tricks, but ultimately failed, so these will too.

He then says, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith,

longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:10-13). Paul contrasts those lawbreakers with his example, and how much he had to endure to remain faithful to God's truths.

Regarding the truth, he reminds Timothy of its only true source, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

So he refutes the idea the Old Testament has been done away, for it is the *foundation* of God's truths, which the New Testament then builds upon. As he stresses, Scripture is "God-breathed" (from the Gk. *theo-pneustos*) which should be used to do four things—(1) establish God's doctrines, (2) refute false concepts, (3) correct what is wanting, and (4) instruct in God's ways. The result is being equipped to do God's will. As John Stott brings out, "We have no liberty to invent our message, but only to communicate 'the Word,' which God has spoken and has now committed to the Church as a sacred trust" (op. cit., p. 106).

Paul then tells Timothy what he should focus on, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all

things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Paul says people would rather be entertained, emotionally moved, and intellectually impressed than to follow basic Bible truths that may not appear as exciting. *The Believer's Commentary* notes, "Their ears will itch for doctrines that are pleasing and comfortable. To satisfy their lust for novel and gratifying doctrine, they will accumulate a group of teachers who will tell them what they want to hear." He knew false teachers would twist the Scriptures to deceive the unwary, the lazy learners, or the spiritually immature. The term "fables," from the Gk. *muthos*, are religious myths, such as those we have today: immortal soul, pagan holidays, heaven or hell, or praying to the dead.

He says, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and 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" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Paul knows his death is near, but is at peace, knowing he has remained faithful to the end. He likens it to a runner on the last lap who can now see the finish line. His life is being given as a sacrifice to God. Note he says here he will *not* die and go to heaven, but will be rewarded *only* when Christ returns to the earth, and be given the crown of glory, and also to all who remain faithful.

Next, Paul has some personal requests for Timothy, saying, "Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words" (2 Tim. 4:9-15). Paul still longs to see Timothy one more time before his execution, which for a Roman citizen is not

crucifixion, but being beheaded by the sword, a much more merciful death. He says Demas, once a close associate and minister, has left the faith and went back to his former life, for not all will be faithful to the end. Notice Paul is now using Mark, whom he earlier had refused to bring along and caused a rift with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40).

He now feels very lonely and abandoned, and says only Luke, the beloved physician (Col. 4:14), dares to visit him in prison. He asks for some items he left at Troas—his cloak or heavy outer garment, since winter was near, and to bring the "books, especially the parchments." The term "books" or *biblia* in Gk., refer to papyrus rolls, and probably included writing material for penning his letters, also official documents he would need for his trial, and maybe some of the Gospels, or Jesus' sayings. The "parchments" were more expensive books, made of animal skins, and likely included a copy of the Old Testament. Even in prison, he was always studying and meditating on God's Word.

He continues, "At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (2 Tim. 4:16-17).

Since he was a leading figure in Christianity, being implicated with him, especially after the fire in Rome, could mean being locked up and then summarily executed. So when Paul went to his preliminary hearing, no one dared accompany him. This was very disappointing, but he forgives them for their lack of courage. The reference to "the lion" probably means the ruler at that time, maybe even the cruel and vicious Nero himself.

He ends his epistle sending greetings to the brethren in Ephesus and asking Timothy to hurry and come before winter sets in and the sea lanes are closed. His final words are filled with faith and hope, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:22). So God's spirit must work with our spirit to accomplish great spiritual feats. Without it we are lost. But with it, as Paul just gave us a wonderful example, we can ultimately become the *winners* before God.