

2 Timothy

H. A. Ironside

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Chapter 1 A Godly Heritage

2 Timothy 1:1-7

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (vv. 1-7)

This Second Epistle to Timothy was written from a dungeon death cell. It is the last of Paul's letters, as 1 Thessalonians is the first, which God has preserved for the edification of the church. Paul, of course, may have written, and probably did write, a great many more letters than the fourteen (including Hebrews) that we have in the Word of God. But these are the only ones which the Spirit of God both inspired Paul to write, and also which He included in the canon of Scripture.

The circumstances in connection with the writing of this last letter are very interesting. We do not get much information from the Scriptures themselves, except what we glean from that which Paul tells us in these Epistles and in that to Titus. Much has come down to us,

however, from some of the earliest Christian writers which enables us to piece things together, and so to know something of the actual conditions under which the letter was penned.

We learn from the book of Acts that Paul was sent to prison in Rome, charged with endeavoring to incite an insurrection against the Roman government. For two full years he remained a prisoner under guard in his own hired house until he appeared before Caesar, and then he was set free because the charges which the Jews had brought against him were not sustained. He was permitted to take up again his work of ministering the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as we can learn from these early records, he then went on to Spain and preached there for a time. There is a legend—I think it is only a legend—to the effect that he crossed over to the British Isles and that he was the first to preach the gospel in Britain, but there is no proof of this which careful historians accept. From Spain he retraced his steps and went back to the region of Illyricum, along the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea. He visited a number of churches where he had preached before, and went to Crete and other places not visited previously.

He was arrested again at a time when there was a great persecution against Christians. During the first imprisonment Christianity was looked upon as a sect of Judaism, which was a legalized religion. But shortly afterward the city of Rome was burned down, and by many this was attributed to Nero's own order. Finding that he was greatly blamed for such iniquity he attempted to turn the onus from himself by putting it upon the Christians. He issued an indictment demanding that all Christians should be sought out everywhere in

the empire as enemies of Rome and put to death. It was during this persecution that Paul was arrested again, and taken back to Rome and confined in the Mamertine dungeon.

If you visit the city of Rome today you can see that dungeon. You can go down into it, and as you look around at those bare walls and gaze up at the ceiling, where there is just a little hole in the center from which food was dropped down to Paul and water passed through in some kind of vessel, you get an idea of the suffering that he must have endured. There is no window whatsoever through which to look to the outside world. A river passes underneath, and there is a cleft in the floor where you can look down and see the water running. It must have been cold and damp in there at all times of the year, particularly in the winter. As I stood there I had some little realization of what it must have meant for God's servants in early days to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word of God. Surely in comparison the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places.

Just how long Paul remained in that dungeon we do not know. Nero died in the sixty-eighth year of our era. So sometime before that, possibly about a.d. 66 or 67, Paul was led out from his prison one day to the place of execution on the Ostian Road. There he laid down his gray head upon a great stone, and in a moment the executioner's axe had decapitated him. Paul was absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Some time during those months he wrote this letter—the last letter of his that has come down to us. There is always something tender about the last message from

one whom we have learned to love. How we thank God for the apostle Paul's ministry. How delighted we would have been if we might have known him and heard his message delivered from his own lips. Here is his last word to his son in the faith.

As we read this epistle we shall find again and again that it is a triumphant message, though it came from a dungeon death cell. The great outstanding theme of the letter is the importance of faithfulness to Christ in a day of declension. First Epistles are, almost invariably, given to teaching; the Second Epistles are given more to prophecy. Now prophecy is not simply foretelling, but it is forth telling—stirring up the hearts and minds of God's people by proclaiming the ministry suited to the times. As we read this letter we hear not simply the voice of the teacher, as in the First Epistle, but we hear the voice of the prophet calling us to increased devotedness to Christ as the days become darker.

We have the salutation in the first two verses: "Paul, an apostle [that is, a sent one, an official messenger] of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." In the letter to Titus, Paul uses a similar expression, but adds these words, "which was given before the ages began." What promise of life in Christ Jesus was given before the ages began? The probationary ages which began after the fall of man. The promise of life was given in connection with the curse put upon Satan when God said to him, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

After their sin was committed, Adam and Eve had no reason at all to expect to live. They had every reason to expect that they would be destroyed immediately, but instead of that, in infinite grace, God gave the promise of life in Christ Jesus. He said that the Seed of the woman who should yet be brought into the world “shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Adam immediately accepted this as a promise of life, and we read that he changed his wife’s name. He called her “Eve.”

You will notice she is never called Eve until after the Fall. We read that in the beginning “God created man in his own image, ... male and female created he them”(Gen. 1:27), and He called their name “Adam.” When the man first beheld the wife God had given him, he called her Ishah (lady) because she was taken out of Ish (man). But after God gave the promise of life in Christ, Adam called her “Eve,” for Eve means “the mother of all living.” So Christ came and through Him God offers life to the world. Paul had gone through many lands proclaiming this message of life for all who believe the gospel.

“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” We have noticed in looking at the previous epistle that when the Apostle addresses a church he simply says, “grace and peace,” when he addresses individuals it is “grace, mercy, and peace.” It is so in 1 Timothy and in that to Titus. In the case of the letter to Philemon he does not insert the word mercy, because he is addressing not only Philemon but also “the church in thy house.” The church, as such, does not need mercy, but

individuals do because individuals fail and, therefore, are in need of constant mercy.

The introduction to the letter is found in verses 3-7 The great thing which this introduction emphasizes, it seems to me, is the blessing of a godly heritage. Now grace is not inherited. Every individual has to be born again, no matter how pious and devoted his parents may have been. But on the other hand, it is a great thing to have a godly heritage, to have parents who have known and loved the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have in my desk an old, old photograph. It is a photograph of my greatgrandfather, just a farmer in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. The photograph is almost faded out with age, though I have tried to keep it covered from the light because I wanted to have it as long as I might live for this reason: I have been told many, many times by those who knew my great-grandfather (people who have long since gone home to heaven but used to know me, and whom I knew as a child) they told me how that great-grandfather of mine, at the close of every day, used to gather all his family—and it was a large family—and all his farmhands—and he had a large farm—about him and have family worship. He always prayed for the salvation and the blessing of his children and his children's children unto the third and fourth generations—and I come in there. As I look at the grizzled face of that old Scottish farmer I thank God for a godly heritage, and I thank Him for the way in which He has answered prayer.

Oh, young men and young women, never undervalue the piety of your dear father and mother. If they know Christ, thank God for it. Thank Him that you have

Christian parents. Do not imagine you belong to a generation better instructed than they. You may know a little more about the sciences of today, but I fear few of us know nearly as much as many of our Christian parents knew of the things of God and eternity.

Now Paul himself was indebted to a godly heritage. "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience." His mind went back over the centuries, and he realized that he came from a line of godly people who loved the Lord and loved the truth of God. Even though, as Saul of Tarsus, he misunderstood and was zealous in his effort to destroy all who were followers of Jesus of Nazareth, doubtless his conversion was in answer to prayers which were made long before the time came when he was brought to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

"That without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day." Paul valued Timothy because of his love for Christ, and he adds, "Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy." Evidently Timothy was very tenderhearted and affectionate and wept over sinners and over his own sins. Paul delighted to think of this because Timothy was his own convert and later his companion in the ministry.

He reminds Timothy of his early training. He says, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee." We know from another passage of Scripture that Timothy's father was a Greek, and perhaps he was not a believer at all (Acts 16:1), but Timothy's mother and grandmother were Jewesses. They were pious women who loved the Word of God and taught it to Timothy. We are told in this same letter that, "From a

child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15). Now when the Apostle says that, he does not mean that Timothy knew the New Testament, for it had not been written at that time. When he was growing up in that home yonder in Lystra or Derbe, there was no New Testament, but his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois taught him the things of God out of the Old Testament. No doubt many times as a lad he sat at their feet as they read those marvelous Messianic Psalms and prophecies of the coming Redeemer. One can imagine him asking what this meant and what that meant as the Scriptures were explained to him. So when the day arrived that Paul came to that region preaching the gospel, Timothy listened to the message, and the Spirit of God created faith in his heart, for "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). So Timothy was saved by faith in Christ Jesus.

I repeat what I said in the beginning, grace is not inherited. It is not necessarily true that because your parents are Christians you will be saved. But unless a spirit of rebellion is developed against the things of God, the children will follow on in the steps of godly parents and be led on in the ways of God. As Christian parents we have a right to expect that our children will be saved if we bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But we need to be careful that we walk before them so that they may see in us just what a Christian ought to be.

"Which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." The faith dwelt first in the grandmother, then was

manifested in the mother, and finally in young Timothy who, when he heard the gospel, was ready to believe and confess Christ as his Savior.

Timothy was still out preaching the Word. Paul says, “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” When Timothy was leaving Lystra to go out into the work of the Lord, the elder brethren met together—the Presbyters as they are called—and placed their hands in loving fellowship upon his head. Paul was with them. And they prayed that God would give Timothy some special blessing, and in answer to prayer there was a definite gift bestowed upon him. Notice again the words here: “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.” In response to Paul’s prayer of consecration as this young man went forth to preach the gospel, God gave him a special gift in order that he might be more useful in Christian service.

Then Paul urges him not to become lax, not to become careless, but to stir up the gift of God thus given. He says, as it were, Do not forget your responsibility, and do not let anybody terrify you. Do not be afraid of others, no matter how great the persecution may be and how great the hatred. “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” These are the indications that one is really controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. These things will be manifest in the life. There will be power over sin. There will be power as we go out to win others to Christ. There will be power as we preach the gospel. There will be love for all men, “Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom.

5:5). Then he speaks of a sound mind. The Spirit of God will not lead into fanaticism. I have heard a great many people talk about being filled with the Spirit who, as far as I could see, gave every evidence of an unsound mind. They were taken up with all kinds of queer, fantastical, emotional experiences. Where the Holy Spirit controls there will be a sound mind. The Spirit of God will guard our intellect so that we will serve God in a reasonable and intelligent way. In this Christ Himself is our example.

In closing may I stress again the blessing and responsibility of a godly heritage? If I am addressing any who are still out of Christ and yet have had a true Christian home, who have had the blessing of faithful parents whose prayers went up to God daily on your behalf, and who read the Word of God in that home, remember that a tremendous responsibility rests upon you. You can be sure that God will never overlook your indifference and your carelessness as to the privileges you have enjoyed as a boy or a girl raised in such an atmosphere. I plead with you, therefore, to determine early in life that you are going to belong to the Christ of your father, that your mother's Savior will be your Savior and your God, that the Bible they loved will be treasured by you, and that your life will answer to the prayers that they have offered on your behalf.

Chapter 2 Not Ashamed

2 Timothy 1:8-18

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well. (vv. 8-18)

There is so much in these verses that I was almost tempted to divide this portion into about three sections. But in one way they are all linked together, so I thought it best to consider them all at one time. They are connected by that expression “not ashamed.” We have it three times in these verses: first, in the admonition of Paul to Timothy; second, Paul’s own declaration; and third, in that which he testifies concerning his friend, Onesiphorus.

I wish we might fix our attention upon these words, “not ashamed.” In Romans 1:16 we have that declaration of the Apostle, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” Why should anybody be ashamed of the gospel? It answers every question concerning sin and its remedy that the mind of man can possibly raise. God has opened up His heart to men in the gospel. It is His message concerning His blessed Son and the salvation He has wrought out for all who believe.

It was because of his faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel that Paul was in prison. And now, writing to his younger friend, he said, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.” It is as though he said, “Timothy, you have something of which you need never be ashamed as you go forth in Christ’s name, telling how God has given His only begotten Son up to the death of the cross that all who put their trust in Him might be redeemed from sin’s guilt and power.” There are preachers who never seem to have anything to say about the blood of Jesus or the cross on which He died. But this is God’s own message to a lost world, and we to

whom it has been committed should never be ashamed of it.

The Apostle adds, "Nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." He says, "Do not be ashamed of me." There might have been those who would say to Timothy, "You are linked up with that fellow, Paul. I understand he came to a bad end and is now in prison." It would be easy for Timothy to say, "Oh, I knew him somewhat, but I was not intimate with him." But Paul said, "Do not be ashamed of me, but speak out boldly and let people know you stand for the same things for which I stand, because it is for this that I am in prison. It is for you to be partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God."

It is a great privilege to partake of the blessings of the gospel, but God has ordained that we should not only have a part in these privileges, but that we should also be permitted to suffer for Christ's sake. This is the only world in which we can do that. Nobody suffers for Christ in heaven. It is down here only that we have this blessed opportunity. We should ever count it a privilege to bear shame for His name's sake when we think of what He has done for us.

In verse 9 he says, "Who hath saved us." Are you sure that you have been saved? There is a lot of uncertainty with many about this question. Some people think of salvation as a process going on all through life, and eventually, if they are faithful enough, they hope to be saved. But the Apostle says, "Who hath saved us."

In the epistle to the Ephesians he writes, "By grace are ye saved [literally, by grace have ye been saved] through

faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (2:8-9).

There is no reason why any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should be uncertain in regard to this question of salvation.

It may sound humble to sing as John Newton wrote one time when he had a fit of despondency,

'Tis a point I long to know,

Oft it causes anxious thought;

Do I love my Lord, or no?

Am I His, or am I not?

But that is not the language of faith. The man who believes God can say, He "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works." We do not purchase salvation by good behavior or by anything else we can do, but it is "according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"—that is, before the ages began. Before sin came into the world, God had made all His plans for redemption. It was not an afterthought with God. It was all arranged. The Devil thought he was ahead of God when he caused man to sin, but God had already prepared for man's redemption, and that redemption "is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death."

It is written in Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." That is what makes death so terrible for the unconverted man: he has to face God in judgment after he leaves this life. But the Lord Jesus Christ has "abolished death, and

hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Elsewhere it is written, “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). In the Old Testament even believers had a fear of death. They did not know the blessedness of an accomplished redemption; and so many of them were left in a state of doubt and uncertainty as to what death might mean. They could not all say with Job, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (19:25-26). Many did not understand that. But now Jesus has gone down into death and has come up in triumph. He says, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, ... and have the keys of hell and of death” (Rev. 1:18). Thus He delivers them “who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15).

I have often used an illustration of this, and it might not be out of place to repeat it in order to make this clear. Years ago when I was preaching out in the mountains of California the Lord gave me the joy of seeing many souls saved. After they were converted it was my desire to baptize them, and I have always been very old-fashioned in my idea of baptism. I take them right down under the water. Of course, some of you may sympathize with me in my ignorance, but that is all right, I return the compliment. I have baptized in lakes, in rivers, in ponds, and even in horse-troughs.

One time we had quite a group to baptize, both men and women. It was in the winter, and winter in California is a rainy time. It was in the region where the only water available was in the Sacramento River, which runs high in the winter and is very dark because of the silt brought down from the hills. I went out the day before and scouted around to find a place that seemed to be fit. There was room for a good audience to stand on the bank. I waded out into the river to make sure it was all right. On the next day we gathered together. It had been noised around that there was to be baptizing, and so there were hundreds of people gathering from all over the countryside. We preached the gospel. I saw those who were to be baptized looking at that dark river, and away down in their hearts I am sure everyone of them wished they were Presbyterians! I could tell they did not want to walk down into the water; they did not know what kind of experience it might involve.

While the people were singing the final hymn, I left the company, walked out into the water, and went on until I reached the place suitable for the baptizing. I felt around to see that there were no deep holes or dangerous rocks. I could see that those who were to be baptized were watching me. Finally, I went back to the shore, and when I put out my hand they came one after another. They were not afraid anymore. Why? Because I had gone down into the dark river and had come up safely.

Jesus went down into the dark waters of death and came up in triumph. And those who have trusted in Him do not dread death. They know death simply means going home to be forever with the Lord.

Now the Apostle says, "It is this that I was sent to preach, for which 'I am appointed... an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things.'" He was in prison. He was enduring much hardship. He was suffering for His name's sake who gave Himself for lost mankind. And in order that he might carry that gospel to the world, he had given up all his earthly ambitions. He had given himself wholly to this one purpose of carrying the message from nation to nation, from people to people, from city to city. Now they had put him in jail, and this seemed to be the end of life, for in a little while he was going out to die for Jesus' sake. But he could say, "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Paul gloried in the privilege of suffering for Christ. He was not ashamed of his message or of his Lord.

Observe Paul does not say, "I know what I have believed." He did know what he had believed. He had no doubts about that. But it is one thing to believe what, and quite another thing to believe whom. He says, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Again and again the questions come to me, either by mail or from people whom I meet, "Do you believe in the perseverance of saints? Do you believe that if a man is once saved he is saved forever?" I generally say, "I certainly do not believe in the perseverance of saints as such. I know them too well, for I am one myself. But I believe with all my heart in the perseverance of the Lord

Jesus, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

The Apostle had committed his soul to the Lord, and he knew that He would not let him down. That is why he is able to say elsewhere, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). Do you know anything which is neither included in things present nor things to come? Do you know anything that is not included in life or in death? Paul says that nothing in death, nothing in life, nothing present, nothing to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Again he says to Timothy, “Hold fast the form of sound words.” In other words, he is saying, “Timothy, do not let anything go that you have received from God. Cleave to the truth, and then in that day when you have to give an account you will have the Lord’s approval because of your faithfulness.” On the other hand, he adds, “Which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” You know it is an easy thing to become very disagreeable and contentious, even when one is endeavoring to be faithful to truth. The servant of God is called upon to contend for the faith. He is to maintain an attitude of faithfulness to Christ and love to the brethren. As we walk in love toward our brethren and stand firmly for the truth, we will commend to others that truth which we seek to proclaim with our lips.

At the time that Timothy went into the service of the Lord, he was commended to the Lord in a special way by a group of the elder brethren at Lystra, Paul joining with them, as we have noted already. In answer to their prayers, God gave Timothy some special gift to fit him for the work. So here in verse 14 Paul says to him, "That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us."

Paul had heard that many in Asia had turned away from the truth, the simplicity which is in Christ. Timothy was in Asia at this time where Paul had labored years before, and where many Christians had been led away from the truth by certain evil-disposed men who had gone in among them, teaching things contrary to the grace of God. Many of the saints were getting bewildered and carried away with these teachings. Some had even gone so far as to repudiate Paul's doctrine and refused to accept him as an apostle. We see that in the epistle to the Galatians. This was a great grief to him.

"This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." Now do not misunderstand. Paul did not say they were no longer Christians, but he declared that they had turned away from him. These false teachers had come in and turned the saints away from the full gospel message that Paul had taught them, and they had repudiated him, no longer recognizing him as an apostle of Christ.

Next he mentions one who had come from Asia, who had been very faithful to him and very true. Paul speaks most tenderly concerning him. I do not know what had happened, whether he had been imprisoned or martyred

for Christ's sake, but something had taken place which led him to write, "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

Evidently this man was what we would call today a traveling man. He moved about, possibly on business, or it may be that in the work of the Lord he went from place to place. In the course of his travels he came to Rome while Paul was a prisoner there. "But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me." It might not have been easy to find Paul in that great city, but Onesiphorus inquired of one and another until he found him.

Paul said, "[He] was not ashamed of my chain." He was not ashamed to stand by that prisoner in the dungeon and say, "He and I are friends. He and I stand for the same things. We serve the same Master."

I repeat, I do not know what had happened, but in the next verse Paul says, "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."

"Not ashamed!" Paul says to Timothy. "I do not want you to be ashamed. Do not be ashamed of the testimony of God; do not be ashamed of those who suffer for Christ's sake." Paul himself was not ashamed. Onesiphorus was not ashamed. He boldly identified himself with the prisoner of the Lord.

So I pass the word on to you who know and love the Lord. May we never be ashamed of His name.

Chapter 3 Service and Rewards

2 Timothy 2:1-13

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself. (vv. 1-13)

Many have noticed long since that in this second chapter the believer is presented in seven distinct aspects, and we shall eventually have opportunity, I trust, to look at each one of these. But in this section before us we see him in four aspects: a son in verse 1; a soldier in verse 3; an athlete in verse 5, and a husbandman in verse 6. As we go on through the

chapter we find him presented as a workman in verse 15, a vessel to the glory of God in verse 21, and a servant of the Lord in verse 24. In all these different characters the believer is called upon to represent the Lord Jesus Christ in this scene.

In this first section the subject particularly dealt with is the question of service and rewards. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul speaks of Timothy as his son, because it was through his preaching that Timothy was brought to know the Lord. So Paul was pleased to think of Timothy as his own child in the faith.

Now every believer is a child of God. We are not children of God by natural birth. I know there is a teaching abroad that all men are God's children. All men are God's creatures. He is the Creator of them all. But only those who are born again are spoken of as children of God, and they alone are entitled to look up into the face of God and say, "Our Father."

I trust that we all know the reality of this; that everyone of us can look back to a time when, through infinite grace, we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and so began the walk of faith. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Grace is God's favor bestowed upon those who have no merit of their own. We are saved by grace, stand in grace, and are to walk in grace.

In verse 2 the Apostle instructs Timothy to pass on to others the things that had become most precious to him. We may all take this to heart. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." Paul had instructed Timothy as to the great

historic facts of Christianity and the doctrines based upon them. These had been attested by many witnesses. It became the responsibility of the younger preacher to make these things known to others, that the truth might be spread far and wide. This is the true apostolic succession, as distinguished from a sacerdotal system such as Rome and some others advocate.

All down through the history of the church this is the way God's truth has been made known. One generation receives the truth, is led to believe in the Lord Jesus, that generation passes the Word of truth on to the next generation, and so it has been through the centuries. And upon us rests this same responsibility. That which we have received is not for ourselves alone. As God has opened up precious truths in His Holy Word, it is not simply for our own enjoyment. But our responsibility is to pass on to others that which means so much to us, to bring others into the same blessed fellowship of the truth of God. This will often take a great deal of self-denial. The path of witnessing for Christ may be a very hard one. God has never promised His children an easy time in the world. Our Lord Himself said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

So Timothy is commanded in verse 3 to "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Each Christian is called to do valiant soldier service, contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). This figure is frequently used in the Epistles. Note especially 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:8, as well as here.

The Christian life is a constant warfare. We have three subtle and cruel enemies ever arrayed against us—the world, the flesh, and the Devil—and against all these we are called to make a resolute stand. We do not fight in our own strength, but as we are empowered by Him whose soldiers we are.

So we find Paul, with zeal unquenched, urging upon the younger preacher, Timothy, that he persist relentlessly in the battle for righteousness against all the hosts of evil. He, himself, maintains this soldier character to the last, as he realized that his fighting days were nearly ended and that soon he should give account of his part in this warfare, when he would stand at the judgment seat of Christ to receive the crown of righteousness, the divine recognition of faithful service, as he looked on to the appearing of his great General who had fought and overcome on his behalf so long before.

The figure of the soldier suggests obedience to orders, rigid discipline, holding the body in subjection, and valor in defense of the truth. These things should characterize all Christ's servants. The path of devotion to Christ is not an easy way. It calls for steadfast endurance and abiding faith. These are soldier qualities every Christian needs in order that he may overcome in the warfare with iniquity.

Then again a true soldier must be separated from the affairs of this world. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." He has to leave many things to which he has been accustomed. So you and I who were poor, godless worldlings have now been separated to the Lord and are called to walk apart

from the world in devotion to the great Captain of our salvation.

In verse 5 the believer is looked upon as an athlete, as a man striving for mastery: "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." A more accurate or literal rendering is, "If a man contend in the games, yet is he not crowned if he have not observed the rules." One would gather as he reads these Epistles that Paul in his youth must have had a keen interest in athletics, for he gives so many illustrations from the athletic games, such as racing and wrestling contests. He applies these to the life of a Christian.

It is a well-known principle in athletics that a man who enters a contest will not receive the reward unless he observes the rules of the game. Many years ago when I was laboring among the Laguna Indians in the southwest, I went into a store one Saturday night and found my Indian interpreter standing on a chair reading from a newspaper. The store was filled with Indians, and he was translating what he read into their language. The newspaper contained an account of the Olympic games that had been celebrated that year in Stockholm, Sweden. The man who had won most of the prizes was a full-blooded Indian, known as Jimmy Thorpe. How thrilled these Indians were as my interpreter was reading and telling all about his victories. He told them how at the time when the gold medals and other trophies were being conferred, the King of Sweden himself decorated Jimmy Thorpe, and taking him by the hand before all the people, he said, "You are to be congratulated. You are the greatest amateur athlete in the world today." Those Indians were most enthusiastic

as they heard that one of their own people had won out over so many other athletes.

I went into that same store some weeks afterward. Again the place was filled with Indians, and my interpreter was reading to them. But the result was not the same. There were no bright, happy faces. I wondered what had made the change. I learned that some white men in this country had been so indignant that an Indian had carried off so many prizes that they had been searching into the Indian's past. They found out that one summer while attending Carlyle School in Pennsylvania he had served on a baseball team for \$5.00 a week. That information was sent to the committee, who referred it to the King of Sweden. The result was that the king had to write Jimmy Thorpe to send back all the medals and trophies because he was not entitled to them. The athletic games, the king said, were for amateurs and not for professionals. Jimmy had taken money for playing ball and so was a professional. Poor Jimmy sent a letter to the King of Sweden, saying, "I am only a poor, ignorant Indian, and I did not know that the fact I had accepted \$5.00 a week one summer for playing on a baseball team had made me a professional. I didn't mean to deceive." He sent back all his honors.

As these Indians listened to this account, they were stirred deeply. They could not understand the white man's way. But no athlete is entitled to reward if he has not observed the rules.

As Christians we are here wrestling with the powers of evil, and we are to be rewarded only if we observe the rules. The rules are contained in the Word of God. We

must conform our behavior to the Word if we are to be rewarded.

In verse 6 the believer is referred to as a farmer. Husbandman is the old-fashioned English word for a tiller of the soil. First we read, "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits." More literally, we might read, "The farmer that laboreth first becomes partaker of the fruits." The farmer has his work to do: his plowing, sowing, harrowing, and reaping before he can enjoy his fruit. We are here to labor. Oh, what a day it will be when at last we come before our Lord at the judgment seat of Christ and become partakers of the fruit! How much it will mean to any of us who have had the privilege of winning souls for Christ, to stand at that judgment seat with those whom we have brought to Him, and say, "Behold I and the children whom Thou hast given me!" How sweet His "Well done" will sound to these ears of ours in that day of reward!

Paul adds, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things." If we are going to labor faithfully for Christ, we must have Christ before us.

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."

"Remember...Jesus Christ. "It is really a battle cry—as of late we often hear the slogan, "Remember Bataan." The word that is omitted from the Revised Version. When pressed by the foe, even to the point where one despairs of life, let us remember Him who could not be overcome by death but arose in triumph from the grave. It is He who beckons us on to ultimate victory. His promises never fail of fulfillment. Jesus Christ went down into

death, bore the judgment our sins deserved in order that we might be saved, and then came up in triumph from death as the Captain of our salvation. And for His sake, says the Apostle, "I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."

As we have seen previously, Paul wrote this letter in a Roman dungeon. Though he was imprisoned as a malefactor, he had a conscience void of offense toward God and man because he was there for the gospel's sake. He said, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." The elect are those who receive Christ, those who put their trust in Him, who rest their souls for eternity upon Jesus Christ who died for sinners.

The last three verses of this section are considered by scholars generally as a little poem or hymn, probably sung in the early Christian assemblies. It is written in metrical form, and therefore might have been so used.

It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself, (vv. 11-13)

What words are these, "We have died with him!" Those of us who have taken Him as Savior are seen by God as identified with Him in His death. We have a right to say, as Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). We died with Him, so we also live with Him. And if

we suffer with Him, we shall share His glory. We shall reign with Him when He comes again. All believers suffer with Him, but all do not suffer for Him to the same extent.

On the other hand, if we who have professed to be Christians turn away from Him and deny His name and prove our unreality, then He will deny us. He said, “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8-9). “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

It is a challenge to reality. Mere profession does not save. We need to receive Christ and trust Him with all the heart, and then we shall boldly confess His name. If we believe not, yet He remains true. He can never go back on His word. Our unbelief cannot change His plan or purpose, nor alter His truth—He cannot deny Himself. He must be faithful to His own character.

Unless we distinguish carefully between salvation by pure grace and service or discipleship, for which a sure reward is promised, we are likely to become confused when considering such a portion as this. We are not called to fight our way to heaven. But as already bound for that blessed country, we are called to be soldiers in our Lord’s army, contending against every unholy thing that would impede our progress or bring dishonor upon our Savior’s name. For all such service we shall be

rewarded “in that day,” that is, when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10).

Our conflict in this age of grace is not, as Israel’s was in the past, with adversaries of flesh and blood. We do not draw the sword to destroy the opponents of our Lord and His gospel. But we fight with the sword of the Spirit against spiritual powers of evil—the unholy forces that would, if they could, nullify our testimony by leading us into things that bring dishonor upon the name of Him whose we are and whom we serve (Acts 27:23).

Chapter 4 Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

2 Timothy 2:14-18

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. (vv. 14-18)

We noticed that in this second chapter the believer is presented in seven distinct aspects. We have considered him already as a son, a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer. Now we come to consider him as a workman or an artisan, a laborer in this scene to the glory of God.

Referring to what he has already brought to our attention, the Apostle says in verse 14, "Of these things put them in remembrance." That is, of the importance of being wholeheartedly out for God as a soldier; of the necessity of remembering that an athlete contending in the games does not receive the victors reward unless he observes the rules, and, therefore, of the importance of going by the Word of God, for this is our Book of rules.

If we are to be partakers of the fruit, there must be labor first. Even as a farmer must plow, sow, and cultivate the ground before he can expect a crop, so if

we are to receive a reward at the judgment seat of Christ we must labor faithfully and devotedly now.

Then we do not want to forget that our Lord Jesus Christ died for us and has been raised again by the power of God. We do not want to forget that this message of the gospel is ours to proclaim to lost ones, no matter what is entailed in that, no matter whether there be suffering or imprisonment. For Paul it did mean imprisonment and death. But we are to remember, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." All these things are to be kept in remembrance as we go on in the service of the Lord.

Then notice this special command, "Charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." It is so easy to become occupied with minor details in regard to the Christian message, which, after all, have nothing to do with the great fundamental issues. How many there are who become occupied with some of these side issues, stressing them on every occasion, and even dividing the people of God because of them, instead of placing the emphasis on the great central truths of the Word that are so tremendously important. We are not really serving the Lord when we are striving with one another about things that are unprofitable. We are called to contend for the faith, not to become contentious. As a rule, it is these minor things that lead to contention when they are emphasized out of all proportion to their relative importance.

On the other hand, the Christian needs to give himself to a careful study of the Scriptures in order that he may

understand the truth and use it aright, as we get it in verse 15: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Paul himself says elsewhere that he was not at all concerned about having man’s approval. In writing to the Corinthians he says, “With me it is a small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment” (1 Cor. 4:3). It made little difference to him whether men approved or blamed, but he was greatly concerned to have the approval of the Lord. And this is what he stresses here for us—that we need to study the Word so that we may be pleasing to Him who called us by His grace, who, has saved us in His infinite, loving-kindness, and has left us in this scene that we may glorify Him.

In the Old Testament we read of Abraham’s first son—that son, Ishmael, who was born of Hagar. You remember that all that was contrary to the mind of God. Abraham began to wonder if God was going to fulfill His promise in regard to Isaac who was to be born of Sarah. Instead of blessing coming to the household, there was trouble. Instead of Ishmael being a joy to Abraham and to Sarah, he was the very opposite. We read of Ishmael that he “shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren” (Gen. 16:12). Then long years afterward the time came for him to leave this life, and we are told, “He died in the presence of all his brethren” (Gen. 25:18). Ishmael was a man, as far as we have any record, who was never, in all his life, in the presence of God but lived in the presence of his brethren. He was one whom the world would admire. He was a man of the great open spaces, a daring warrior and a great hunter. He had all the characteristics that men like to see in one another,

and so he had the approval of his brethren. But he did not have the approval of God.

It is quite possible for a man, even in the work of the Lord, to be approved by his brethren and not have the approval of God. And so the importance of heeding these words, "Study to show thyself approved unto God." For not he who commends himself, nor whom his brethren commend is necessarily thus approved, but he whom the Lord commends. He whom God approves is the man who makes much of this blessed Book, who studies it and seeks to live in the power of the truth herein revealed. David prayed, "Order my steps in thy word" (Ps. 119:133). God has given us His Word, not only that it should unfold wonderful and precious things to us concerning the great, eternal future, but that through it we may learn how God would have us live as we go through this scene.

The Lord Jesus prayed for His disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). As we meditate on the Word and let it direct our lives, we will be sanctified in this practical sense. Oh, the neglected Bibles in the homes of the people of God! Wherever you find a neglected Bible you will also find a fruitless life. You will find a life out of fellowship with God. There will be nothing in that life that really honors Him. But where you find that the Word of Christ dwells richly in the heart and mind of a believer, then God will be glorified. So we are to study to show ourselves approved unto God.

Studying the Bible means more than just reading it casually. It means giving it our careful attention, comparing one Scripture with another, weighing the

words in every chapter and every verse. But even as we read the verses and meditate upon them, we should avail ourselves of every possible help that might open things up to us more clearly, making it the business of our lives to become more familiar with the Holy Scriptures. "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We are to avoid slipshod work or carelessness in our consideration of the Word. We are not to put our own ideas in the place of the Word. If you were building a house and hired a man to do the work for you, you would hand him the blueprints and instruct him to go by them. Suppose he were to go ahead and work according to his own desires and his own ideas. You would soon discharge him. He might attempt to argue with you and to insist that his ways were better than yours, but you would say, "This is not what I wanted."

"I know it isn't according to the blueprint," he might reply, "but I thought it would be very much nicer this way."

You would say, "But I do not care what you thought. I engaged you to build this house according to the plans I gave you."

So it is when we are working for the Lord. Many of us are very, very busy in what we call Christian service, but we are not working in accordance with the Word. And someday we will stand ashamed before God because of the wasted years that we have spent following our own ideas instead of being guided by His instruction. But if we are to be thus guided we must know the Word and be able to use it aright: "A workman that needeth not to be

ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Other translators have suggested different renderings for “rightly dividing the word of truth.” J. N. Darby’s version reads, “Cutting in a straight line the word of truth.” That, I think, is very suggestive. You see, the Bible does not deal with one great subject only, neither does it speak to just one class of people. So as we study the Word, it is always important to ask, as we read, For whom was this written? What did God have in mind in giving it? Is it for me? Is it about me, or does it have to do with some other group of His people?

In 1 Corinthians we find three definite groups brought before us to whom God has spoken in His Word: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32). To rightly divide the word of truth we need to consider what parts of the Word are written particularly to God’s earthly people, the Jews—what parts have to do with the Gentile nations as such, and what parts are particularly intended for the guidance and direction of the church. There are these three classes of people in the world today. There was a time when there were only two. Before Pentecost there were two classes—Jews and Gentiles. Since Pentecost, since the Holy Spirit descended, we have three groups in the world. The third group is known as the church of God. And this blessed Book has a great deal in it that is addressed particularly to the church of God. Now all Scripture is for me, but all Scripture is not about me... The Old Testament Scripture is for me just as truly as the New Testament, but I will look in vain for guidance as to my path through this world, for instance, in the book of Leviticus or in the book of Chronicles and some other Old Testament books. Yet all are part of God’s Word, and are profitable, “For

whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). But we have to learn to rightly divide the Word and see to whom God was speaking and why. Then we will be able to see what is for our instruction as we seek to do what He commands.

These distinctions are not the only ones to be considered when we attempt to rightly divide the Word of truth. There are many other lines of truth. For instance, there is that which has to do with our salvation, which is by the grace of God and to which no works of ours can be added. But it would be a great mistake if we neglected a kindred line of truth which has to do with our responsibility as children of God in this world. On the other hand, we have Scripture passages that deal with our justification, which depends entirely upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus. I cannot be saved by works of righteousness which I have done. Yet there are other Scripture passages that lay tremendous stress upon good works which should follow faith in Christ, and they show me that only as we engage in good works can we expect reward at the judgment seat of Christ.

Before He went away Jesus said He was going to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would operate in a different way from which He had ever done before. The Savior said, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit was with the people of God before the flood. We read, "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24). Noah was a preacher of righteousness for 120 years while he was building the ark. The Spirit of Christ was preaching in him, as Peter tells us in 1 Peter 3:20. And

God said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man” (Gen. 6:3). It was the Spirit after the flood that guided the patriarchs and directed them. It was the Spirit of the Lord in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night that led Israel through the wilderness. It was He who spoke in the prophets. And when Jesus was here on earth we read that the Spirit was given to Him without measure.

Thus He was with the apostles. They had wonderful privileges such as no other children of God ever had—the presence of the Spirit was with them in the Person of the Christ of God Himself, “for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34). Jesus said, “He dwelleth with you,” and then looking forward to the new dispensation, He added, “and [He] shall be in you” (John 14:17). This is the great truth in our present age. If you are born of God, if you are a Christian, then the Holy Spirit dwells in you. What a wonderful thing it is to know that the Spirit of God is moving about through this world in you and in me. This divine Person is dwelling in us! “Know ye not,” says the Apostle, “that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16).

Oh, how careful we ought to be then as to our behavior when we realize that the Spirit of God, this heavenly Guest, dwells in our very bodies—those of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus as our Savior. We need to cut in straight lines the Word of truth regarding the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

We also need to learn how to distinguish between salvation by grace and reward for service. We cannot lose our salvation, but we are ever in grave danger of

losing the reward that the Lord will give to all those who are faithful to Him.

There are many other lines of truth that we ought to understand clearly in order to be workmen that need not to be ashamed, cutting in straight lines the Word of truth.

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.” This word babblings means “baby talk.” Men may have great learning who are just given to babblings in spiritual matters. Take the great philosophers. What is a philosopher? A man who is trying to find out the mystery of the universe. And here is a Book that will tell him all about it, but he turns his back on that which God has revealed and tries to find things out for himself. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). The mature Christian is instructed out of the Word of God. He is not misled by these babblings. People say sometimes, “I don’t think it makes any difference what a man believes if he is only sincere.” But you know down in your heart that this is not true.

You might drink poison, sincerely believing that it is pure water, but it would kill just the same as if you knew its nature and took it with intent to commit suicide. No, you do not believe it makes no difference what one believes so long as he is sincere. You know in your own heart that one can be sincerely wrong and bring disaster upon himself and others. What we need to be sure of is that God has spoken in His Word. It is only the Word that will keep us right. When we turn from the Word to human theories, which are just profane and vain babblings, they will increase unto more ungodliness.

Experience proves that no man's life will be in the right who refuses the truth of the Word.

We must know the truth of God in order to walk in the truth. The Apostle here instances two men who failed in this—two men who went off into error and misled others. He says, "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."

"And their word will eat as doth a canker"—like a cancerous growth in the body, it will get worse. Here are two men who had evidently been fellow laborers to some extent with the apostle Paul. At any rate, they had been recognized as Christian preachers and teachers, but they drifted from the truth. They turned away from God's revealed Word and took up with vain speculation, saying, "The resurrection is past already." And with this false teaching they overthrew the faith of some. It might seem a small thing as to whether the resurrection has passed or not, but it is a tremendous thing. If they were right, then our hope in Christ would go for nothing.

God grant that you and I who profess subjection to Christ may give increased attention to this Book so that our Bibles may not be neglected but read faithfully in dependence upon the Spirit of God, as He opens up the truth to us that we may walk in the power of it.

Chapter 5 Separation and Service

2 Timothy 2:19-26

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (vv. 19-26)

In our consideration of the earlier verses of this chapter we have seen the believer presented in five different aspects: as son, soldier, athlete, husbandman (or farmer), and workman or artisan. And now in these closing verses we come to consider him in two more characters: first, as a vessel for the display of the glory of God; and, second, as the servant of the Lord.

All that we have here is in view of declension and corruption coming into the professing church. It had

begun already and, as we have seen, Hymenaeus and Philetus were misleading many. There is something rather interesting about their very names, which suggest that these men were of agreeable and pleasant character, and yet they were using their natural charm to mislead God's people. Hymenaeus is really the "singing" man; the word means "a wedding song." Philetus is the "kissing" man; the name means "a lover." The two would make quite a combination! These two false teachers were seeking to mislead the churches.

You can never be sure about a man just because he has a nice, attractive personality. Satan's ministers, like Satan himself, can appear in very persuasive roles. And so the Apostle tells us to be on our guard. No matter how much false teaching may come in, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure." Our blessed Lord said to Peter, "Upon this rock [Christ the Son of the living God] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). All the power of the enemy has been brought against the church of God down through the centuries, but the church abides and will abide until the Lord comes again. "Having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." We may not know for certain, but it is not for us to judge.

We are responsible, though, to walk in the truth and depart from error. "And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ [or, of the Lord] depart from iniquity." Separation from known evil is mandatory. We are commanded to depart from iniquity, or lawlessness, to depart from self-will, and this includes all forms of ungodliness and worldliness. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from [lawlessness]," depart from having his own way. This will settle many questions

for young Christians. So many young Christians say, “Is it wrong to do this? Is it wrong to do that?” That is hardly the question for you as a Christian to ask. Rather, one should inquire, “Is this something that is profitable? Is it something that will help to make my Lord more precious to me? Will it draw me closer to Him?” Every Christian should have the desire to please the Lord Jesus Christ. True Christian living is subjection to His will.

In the next verse the Apostle uses a little parable. He says, “In a great house [that is, a house of a wealthy person, a mansion] there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” As you enter such a great house you may see on the sideboard in the dining room beautiful silver, golden, or cut-glass goblets, and other vessels, while out in the kitchen and in the cellar there will be earthenware vessels and vessels of baser metal. “Some to honour, and some to dishonour.” The vessels unto honor are for the pleasure of the family and are used for the refreshment of their guests. These vessels are displayed openly where all may see them. They must be kept clean and bright, and after each using they must be separated from the other vessels of less value.

“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour.” Every Christian should be a vessel for the display of God’s glory in this scene—a vessel unto honor. But in order that this might be, we need to be clean, not only clean ourselves but also clean as to our associations. We are to purge ourselves by separating from evil associates and from everything unholy in our lives. Thus we shall be vessels “unto

honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Let me try to illustrate this. Suppose we are in a great house. The host has brought some friends home, and he desires to refresh them. So he goes into the dining room and looks for some beautiful goblets, but there are none. He calls a servant and asks where the goblets are—the silver goblets, or the cut glass, whatsoever they may be. The servant replies, "Why, there was a banquet here last night, and all the vessels are out in the kitchen to be cleaned." The host directs him to go out and clean them and bring them to him so that his guests may be served. The servant has to separate these valuable vessels from all the mixture that is out there in the kitchen sink. Every piece has to be purged, individually cleansed, and so made fit for use. Then he brings them in and presents them to the host, who takes the vessels and uses them unto honor.

You see, Christians are like those vessels. There is a sad mixed condition in Christendom today, saved and unsaved, often united in the same church fellowship. There are those who profess to know the Lord and those who have never confessed Him, and people wonder why there is so little power and blessing. If you want to please the Lord who has made you His own, you must separate yourself from all that is unclean. Then you will be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

Paul adds, "Flee also youthful lusts." Youth is the time when natural desires predominate, when carnality and concupiscence are very manifest. We are to flee these things. We are not to allow them to have dominion over

us. On the contrary, we are to “follow righteousness, faith, [love], peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” We are to be separated from those who are unclean, and to fellowship with those who walk before God in righteousness and holiness of life.

In the next place we are warned against occupation with trivial matters. He says, “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” After we have taken our stand for God, after we come out from the world or from some worldly church where the truth is no longer preached, it is so easy to be self-satisfied and occupied with minor questions, and thus lose the sweetness and attractiveness that should characterize one who is separated to the Lord Himself.

In the next verse we have the seventh aspect in which the believer is presented in this chapter. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” It is difficult sometimes to be faithful to the truth without becoming quarrelsome. We are called upon to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). We are not to be contentious or querulous, manifesting a bad spirit about right things, but we are to be characterized by the spirit of grace even as we stand firmly for the Word of God. “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves.” The man who opposes the truth is working harm to himself. We need to remember this. It will make us kind and considerate as we seek to recover them from error, “if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Some who were the bitterest enemies of the gospel have been won for Christ by faithful dealing. “And that they may recover

themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

This second chapter of 2 Timothy has a very important message for us in these times of declension, when corruption and false doctrines abound on every hand. It is a time when believers in the Lord Jesus Christ need to be more careful about their contact with things that defile the Spirit. We need to take to heart these words, and separate ourselves from everything unclean and everything unholy. We need to yield ourselves entirely to the Lord to be guided and directed by Him that we may be vessels unto honor. Let us so manifest Christ in our lives that we will make the truth attractive to those who do not know Him. Sometimes we do harm to the very cause for which we stand because of the harsh and unkind spirit that dominates us. It took a long time for many of us to see some of these things, and, therefore, we should be patient and sympathetic in dealing with others who have not yet understood them.

In writing to the Philippians, the Apostle says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (3:15-16).

Chapter 6 Characteristics of the Last Days

2 Timothy 3:1-9

In his First Epistle to Timothy, as we have seen, Paul speaks of the latter times, and he depicts conditions that have long since been fulfilled—conditions, however, which were still far in the future when he wrote. He said, “In the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

We have only to look back into what we speak of as “the Dark Ages” to recognize the fulfillment of these words. We have it in the Romish apostasy, in looking upon an unmarried nun or a celibate monk as a holier person than the Christian wife and mother, or husband and father. “Commanding to abstain from meats,” as though these were conducive to lead one into sin, and the abstinence from them had a tendency to make one holier. We know how all that has been fulfilled.

And now we come farther along the stream of time. We come to our own times—the last days of this Second Epistle. (In order to give a somewhat fuller exposition of this passage than time permitted in the oral address, I have substituted a portion of my book, *The Midnight Cry*.) Paul says:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be self-lovers, money-lovers, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, unforgiving, false accusers, incontinent, savage, haters of good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away. For of this sort are they who creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with manifold desires, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all, as theirs also was. (vv. 1-9, 1911 version)

These are the great outstanding features of the “last days”—closing the church dispensation and to be immediately followed by the coming of the Lord. Can any believer in Holy Writ doubt our being now in the very midst of them?

But it may be here objected: “When have men in general been other than as here depicted? Is not this but a repetition of what Paul has already said in describing the heathen world in his day (Rom. 1:29-32)? In what special sense are they any more characteristic now than then?” To these very natural queries I reply that such things, indeed, ever described the heathen, but in 2 Timothy 3 the Holy Spirit is describing conditions in the professing church in the last days! It is not the openly wicked and godless who are being depicted here. It is those who have a form of godliness while denying its

power. This is what makes the passage so intensely solemn and gives it such tremendous weight in the present day. There are twenty-one outstanding features in this prophecy of church conditions in the last days, and that each may have its due weight with my reader I touch briefly on them in order.

1. "Men shall be self-lovers." It is men self-occupied, as contrasted with the godly of all ages who found their joy and delight in looking away from self to God as seen in Christ. This is the age of the egotist in matters spiritual as well as carnal. They find their God "within" them, we are told, and not without. They make no secret of it. When they profess to love God, it is themselves they love.

2. "Money-lovers." Is it necessary to speak of this? Colossal fortunes heaped together by men who profess to believe the Bible and its testimony! What a spectacle for angels and demons! There was one Simon Magus of old. He has myriads of successors in the professing church today, and the command "not to eat" with a covetous man or an extortioner is in most places a dead letter indeed.

3. "Boasters." Read the so-called Christian papers, attend Christendom's great conventions of young people or old. Listen to the great pulpiteers of the day. What is their theme? "Rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!" Great swelling words are rapturously applauded by people dwelling in a fool's paradise, even when uttered by men who are tearing the Bible to shreds, and who deny practically every truth that it contains.

4. "Proud." So proud as to glory in their shame—congratulating themselves on the very things the Word of God so unsparingly condemns. Proud of their fancied superiority; proud of their eloquence; proud of their miscalled "culture"; proud of their very impiety, which is hailed as the evidence of broad-mindedness, and a cultivated intellect! How nauseating it must all be to Him who said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

5. "Blasphemers!" Yes, there it is—that big, ugly word that one hesitates to use, but which is chosen by the Holy Spirit Himself to describe the men drawing salaries as ministers of Christ who use their office to impiously deny His name! Blasphemers! Aye, the whole host of the new theologians, miscalled "higher critics," and all their ilk—all who deny the Deity of the Son, His virgin birth, His holy humanity—blasphemers, every one, and as such to be judged unsparingly in the harvest of wrath so near at hand! And think of the disloyalty to Christ of Christians—real Christians, I mean—who can sit and listen to such men week after week and are too timid to protest, or too indifferent to obey the Word, "From such turn away!"

6. "Disobedient to parents." It is one of the crowning sins of the age, and indicates the soon breaking-up of the whole social fabric as at present constituted. Opposition to authority is undoubtedly one of the characteristic features of the time. Children will not brook restraint, and parents have largely lost the sense of their responsibility toward the rising generation. Does this seem unduly pessimistic? Nevertheless, a little thoughtful consideration will, I am sure, convince any reasonable person of its truth. And it may be laid down

as an axiom, that children not trained in obedience to parents will not readily be obedient to God. We have been sowing the wind in this respect for years, as nations and as families. The reaping of the whirlwind is certain to follow.

7. “Unthankful.” It is the denial of divine Providence—utterly forgetting the Source of all blessings, both temporal and spiritual. Straws indicate the turn of the wind, and even “so small a matter,” as some may call it, as the giving-up of the good old-fashioned and eminently scriptural custom of thanksgiving at the table, we may see how prevalent is the sin of unthankfulness among professed Christians. Go into the restaurants or other eating houses. How often can you tell the believer from the unbeliever?

8. “Unholy.” The godly separation from the world according to the Bible is sneered at as “bigotry” and “Puritanism.” In its place has come a jolly, rollicking worldliness that ill comports with the Christian profession. Piety—that characteristic Christian virtue—how little seen now! It is not necessary to be outwardly vile to be unholy. Giving up the line of separation between the believer and the unbeliever is unholiness.

9. “Without natural affection.” The foundations of family life are being destroyed. Unscriptural divorces and all their kindred evils cast their dark shadows over the professing church, as well as over the body politic.

On the next unholy octave I need not dwell particularly. To enumerate them is enough to stir the heart and appall the soul when it is remembered how they are tolerated and spreading through the great professing body.

10. "Unforgiving"

11. "False accusers" (Let us beware lest we be found almost unwittingly in this satanic company!)

12. "Incontinent"

13. "Savage"

14. "Haters of good"

15. "Traitors"

16. "Heady"

17. "High-minded"

This last accounts largely for the daring things proudly uttered by learned doctors against Scripture and the great fundamentals of the faith, and complacently accepted by unregenerate hearers. Surely, the time has come "when they will not bear sound teaching, but according to their own desire shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3, 1911 version).

18. "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God."

Would you not almost think the words were written by some fiery-souled exhorter of the present day? How aptly they characterize in one brief clause the greatest outstanding feature of the religious world. The church of God has gone into the entertainment business! People must be amused, and as the church needs the people's money, the church must, perforce, supply the demand and meet the craving! How else are godless hypocrites to be held together? How otherwise can the throngs of unconverted youths and maidens be attracted to the "services"? So the picture show and the entertainment, in the form of musicale (sacred, perhaps!) and minstrel

show, take the place of the gospel address and the solemn worship of God. And thus Christless souls are lulled to sleep and made to feel “religious” while gratifying every carnal desire under the sanction of the sham called the church! And the end? What an awakening!

19. “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” Men must have some form of religious expression, and so the outward thing is sustained after the life is gone out of it. Thus formality prevails where regeneration, conversion to God, the Spirit’s sanctification, and everything really vital has long since been virtually denied. The bulk of so-called “church-members” do not even profess to have been saved or to be Spirit-indwelt. All this is foreign to their mode of thought or speech. The gospel, which alone is “the power of God unto salvation,” is seldom preached and, by the mass, never missed! Could declension and apostasy go much further? Yet there are still lower depths to be sounded!

20. Feminism. No, you will not find the word—but read verse 6 again, slowly and thoughtfully. Does it not indicate a great feminist movement in these dark days? “Silly women, laden with manifold desires”—craving what God in His infinite wisdom has forbidden them: authority, publicity, masculinity, and what not? Thus they leave their own estate and make a new religion to suit themselves. Is it a matter of no import that just such emotional women were the tools used by Satan for the starting and propagating of so many modern fads? Need one mention Mesdames Blavatsky, Besant, and Tingley of Theosophy; the Fox sisters’ relation to modern Spiritism; Mrs. Mary Baker Glover Eddy and her host of

female practitioners in the woman's religion miscalled "Christian Science"; the neurotic Ellen G. White and her visionary system of "Seventh-day Adventism"; Ella Wheeler Wilcox and her associates in the spreading of what they have been pleased to denominate the "New Thought," which is only the Devil's old lie, "Ye shall be as gods," in a modern garb; and the women-expounders of the "Silent Unity," or "Home of Truth" delusions? All these are outside the "orthodox" fold. But when we look within, what a large place has the modern feminist movement secured in the affections of women who profess to believe the Bible, but who unblushingly denounce Paul as "an old bachelor" with narrow, contracted ideas, little realizing that they are thereby rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the signs of the times, and clearly shows toward what the professing body is so rapidly drifting! 21.

21. "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"— and that by their own confession. They are "truth-seekers." Ask them if it be not so. They confess it without a blush and consider it humility thus to speak. According to these apostates, the church which began as "the pillar and ground of the truth" is, in this twentieth century of its existence, "seeking" the truth, thereby acknowledging they never yet have found it! Truth-seekers! Yet the Lord Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Why then seek further? Because they have drifted away from Him and His Word, so they go on, ever learning, ever seeking, and ever missing the glorious revelation of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Well, this is the end. Declension can go no further than to deny the Lord that bought them, until He Himself

shall remove His own to the Father's house. Then the apostate body remaining will declare, "We have found the truth at last!" and they will worship the Antichrist, believing the Devil's lie and calling it the truth. And how comes such delusion? "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie; that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12, emphasis added, 1911 version).

As for those who have been the leaders in turning others from the truth, what will happen to them? "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was." That is, in due time God is going to deal in judgment with those who mislead the ignorant and unwary, and who turn them unto fables which encourage them to live in sin and follow after the lusts of the flesh.

This is God's picture of the last days. And I challenge you to look about you and see if these are not the conditions that characterize a great part of Christendom today—no reality, no power, yet much profession. God give us to be genuine, to be real, that eternal things may so grip our souls that we will live and do the work and be real witnesses for Him.

Chapter 7 The Authority of the Holy Scriptures

2 Timothy 3:10-17

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, (vv. 10-17)

In contrast to the false teaching and evil practices of many in the last days, we now have the example of Paul himself set forth under nine heads, after which he stresses the importance of cleaving to the Holy Scripture as our security against error.

First we read, "But thou hast fully known my doctrine." Paul was preeminently a teacher. He was also an evangelist, but his great gift was that of teaching, unfolding the truth that God had revealed to him for the blessing of others.

Second, inasmuch as Timothy had been associated with Paul for a number of years—ever since the early days when he first began to witness for Christ—the Apostle writes to him, “Thou hast fully known my ... manner of life.” It is a pitiable thing when one’s behavior is not in accordance with his doctrine. You have heard of the preacher who preached, “Do as I say, but not as I do.” That is a poor testimony. We cannot lift men higher than ourselves. If one is not living for God, is not walking with Christ, then he cannot be a real blessing to other people.

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul said, long years before he wrote 2 Timothy, “Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thess. 1:5-6). Paul and his companions lived such lives that they gave power to their message.

Third, we read, “Thou hast fully known my... purpose.” It is most important that we have a purpose and stand by it when that purpose is not to magnify oneself but rather in all things that Christ might be magnified.

Fourth, “Thou hast fully known my... faith”—not the faith that saves but that faith which enables one to lay hold upon God day by day and triumph over all circumstances.

Fifth: “Longsuffering”—enduring all things for Christ’s name’s sake and the gospel. Coupled with that is “charity,” the sixth in order. This word has come to mean “almsgiving,” but that is only a very small part of its meaning. The original word translated “charity” is not

simply almsgiving, though that may be included, but it is unselfish love and compassion for men everywhere, thus enabling one to rise above jealousy, envy, covetousness, and every unholy tendency. We are to love even our enemies, no matter how they treat us.

Seventh: "Thou hast fully known my... patience." It takes a lot of patience to go on in the work of the Lord. So many things try and exercise one's heart. But if we recognize the fact that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28), we can patiently endure even the most distressing experiences.

Eighth and ninth, the Apostle adds, "Persecutions, afflictions," which he had to suffer for Christ's sake. Timothy knew a great deal about them. He knew what Paul had gone through at the beginning in Antioch, in Iconium, in Derbe, and in Lystra, where Timothy lived as a lad. It was at Lystra that Paul, having performed a great miracle, had difficulty to keep the people from worshiping him and Barnabas, his companion, as gods. Later these same people were stirred up by unbelieving Jews and tried to kill Paul. They thought they had done so and dragged his body outside the city gate, leaving it there as refuse. However, as the disciples gathered about him in great distress and were about to make arrangements to bury him, he opened his eyes and indicated there was no need of a funeral for the present.

Timothy was familiar with all these things, but Paul could say, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me."

You and I sometimes think we suffer if people cross our wishes, if they find fault with our motives. But I am sure it could be said of most of us, as Paul said to the Hebrew

Christians, “Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:4). Many Christians in other lands have been called upon to suffer excruciatingly, to suffer in ways we have never known. Unto us it is given not only to believe on Him but also to suffer for His sake.

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” If to some extent we are not the objects of the world’s hatred, if we do not have the disapproval of those who despise Christianity, if we are not evil spoken of as were the prophets of God of old, then we may very well raise the question as to whether we are living godly lives or not. Persecution is inevitable for those who are faithful to God in a world like this, where “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” The world is ripening for judgment. It goes on and on in rebellion against God and His Christ, and its doom cannot be delayed much longer.

I know some people have the idea that the whole world is to be converted and all men brought to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ by the preaching of the gospel. But Scripture gives no hint of anything of the kind. In fact, we find it teaches the very opposite. Our Lord said, “As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:37). The world was not converted in the days of Noah. The mass of men were given over to violence and corruption. And the Lord Jesus Christ put the question, “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). The nearer we get to the end, the higher is the rising tide of rebellion against God.

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” Paul was thinking of Timothy’s instruction in his home, as well as that which he had received from Paul and others of his companions who had been fellow laborers in the gospel. In those early days there was no such thing as a Bible Institute or a Theological Seminary where young men, who wanted to give themselves wholly to the work of the Lord, could go in order to be trained for Christian service. The custom was for an experienced servant of Christ to take one or more young men with him and instruct them in Scripture and train them in the work of the Lord. This was Timothy’s case. He had gone forth with Paul, had heard him preach the truth of the gospel, and had learned from him that which he had gotten direct from God Himself through divine revelation.

Then Timothy had his Bible, and he was responsible to read it. Paul says, “From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures.” It is a wonderful thing to know the Holy Scripture from childhood. Many of us can thank God that we first learned to reverence and love the Bible in our own homes. How we should praise Him for godly parents who loved this Book and who implanted in our hearts a reverence for its teachings. Timothy had this privilege. If any of you parents do not give this privilege to your children, you are robbing them of something they will never be able to get anywhere else. Do not depend upon sending your children to others to teach them; do not depend upon the Sunday school or the church service to do this for them. These, of course, are important, but you should supplement this work by instruction in the home.

Timothy was well furnished. He knew the Word of God from a child. It was not, however, the New Testament which the Apostle had in mind. That had not been written when Timothy was a child. Do not neglect the Old Testament. Many Christians do. Many give very little time to the Old Testament, and the result is that they have a very imperfect understanding of the New Testament, for the roots of the New Testament go deep down into the Old Testament. Timothy knew the Hebrew Scriptures. He was familiar with the prophecies concerning the coming of Messiah, so that when the Lord Jesus was presented to him, he was prepared to believe in Him. "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Simply knowing Scripture will not produce salvation. One may know the Bible, one may be able to quote many Scripture passages, but that in itself does not save. But the Bible reveals Christ, and when one believes in Him, he is saved. That is what happened in Timothy's case, and thank God, in the experience of millions more.

Note how fully Scripture meets every need for the believer as he goes through this scene. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Originally this term scripture was applied specifically to the Old Testament. Later the books of the New Testament were likewise so designated. In the last chapter of his Second Epistle the apostle Peter adds Paul's letters to the other Scripture passages.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God"—that is, it is divinely breathed. The men who wrote the Bible did not write their own thoughts. They wrote as guided by

and directed by the Holy Spirit. We read, “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Whether it be the historical books of the Bible; or the poetical books, like the Psalms; or the wisdom literature, like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; or the Gospels and the Epistles of the New Testament, the writers of all these books wrote not simply their own thoughts, but they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God. As we turn to any page of this Book we may know that God is speaking to us. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable.” One might not think there is much that is profitable or instructive in some parts of the Word, such as the genealogies, for instance, but all are of value, whether we realize it or not.

Scripture is profitable for four things: “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” First, it is “profitable for doctrine.” The only authoritative book on divine teaching is this blessed volume. Men have written thousands of books to try to explain the Bible, but the Bible itself is the only authority. No matter what teaching may be set forth, if it is not found in the Bible then we are not to accept it. We are to test everything by what is written here.

Second, Scripture is “profitable... for reproof.” It is profitable to show where we are wrong in our lives and in our thoughts.

Third, it is “profitable... for correction.” It shows how to get right.

In the fourth place, it is “profitable... for instruction in righteousness.” After I have taken the right path, it shows me what God’s will is for me. Therefore, we shall never reach the place where we can be independent of the Word of God. Sometimes just one verse will change one’s whole viewpoint. We need to read and ponder every word in dependence on the Holy Spirit that He may open our understanding to the truth.

As we learn from Scripture, we shall find that it is all-sufficient to so guide and direct “that the man of God may be perfect [or mature], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

In the light of this passage we may be sure that nothing is esteemed by God as a good work if it is contrary to the Word of God. When we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, it will not be a question of what we thought about this or that, but what God said. The standard is His Word, not our understanding of it. But we should seek to understand it as the Spirit of God opens it up to us in order that we may walk in obedience to it. If any turn aside from the Word, they will be held responsible for disobedience. The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the basis of instruction and guidance for the Spirit-led believer. God grant that we may be subject to that blessed Word.

Chapter 8 Paul's Last Charge to Timothy

2 Timothy 4:1-5

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry, (vv. 1-5)

As we read this letter we need to remind ourselves again and again that it came from one who was about to die for Christ's sake, a man who was under no delusion as to his future. He knew that within a little while he would end his long career at the executioner's block, yet there was no fear on his part, no regrets that he had given himself to that ministry which was to close so tragically, as far as this world is concerned.

He wrote this letter, as we have seen, to one whom he loved, whom he had the privilege of leading to Christ many years before, and who had then gone out with him in the Lord's work and was now ministering in various places where Paul himself had labored for some time. He does not for a moment intimate to the younger preacher that perhaps, after all, it would be better not to give oneself so drastically to the work of the Lord, not to

be so self-sacrificing—that perhaps it would be better to compromise to some extent, and thus avoid persecution for Christ’s name’s sake. No, there is nothing like that in Paul’s exhortation to Timothy. He exhorts him to endure his share of suffering and persecution for Christ’s sake. It is a poor kind of Christianity that rejoices in the fact that Christ has purchased for us eternal life through His death on the cross, yet refuses to identify oneself with Him in suffering and persecution.

Here we have the Apostle’s last charge to the younger preacher. Notice the things he stresses: “I charge thee therefore before God,” who in infinite grace had sent His Son to redeem sinners to Himself, “and the Lord Jesus Christ,” whose Timothy was and whom he served. Notice how he gives our blessed Savior His full title. He is Lord. He is Jesus. He is the Savior. He is the Anointed of God the Father, “who shall judge the quick and the dead [the living and the dead] at his appearing and his kingdom,” or as it might be rendered, “and by his appearing and his kingdom.”

Believers are to look forward to the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time He is going to give rewards to those who have labored for Him down here, who have been ready to suffer with and for Him, and have held the things of this world with a loose hand while fixing their affection on things above. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

In both the Old and New Testaments we have promises of the coming kingdom. That golden age is still in the future to be ushered in when the Lord Jesus returns from heaven in power and glory, to put down iniquity,

and to reign over this lower universe for a thousand wonderful years. This is the kingdom for which we pray when we join together in saying, "Thy kingdom come," when, "Thy will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven."

So it is in view of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ and the setting up of His kingdom that Paul stresses the importance of faithfulness to Christ while we await the fulfillment of His promise.

He says to Timothy first of all, "Preach the word." He did not tell him to preach philosophy, nor preach politics, nor preach some system of morals, but preach the Word! And that takes in the entire Bible, for our commission is not only to preach the gospel that tells us how lost sinners may be saved, but we are to proclaim the whole truth of God which not only gives us the way of salvation but also shows how we ought to live after we are redeemed. The servant of Christ who preaches the Word will never be at a loss for subjects, for he has the whole Bible from which to choose.

There are many ministers of Christ who have never learned that it is their business to preach the entire Word, and they are always trying to think up topics that may thrill, charm, and entertain the people. But the servant of God is not called to do these things. He is to seek to make people acquainted with the mind of God, to preach the gospel to the unsaved, to show them their lost condition, and then to set before them the remedy that God has provided. He is to open up God's Word to Christian people, showing them how they may be kept from sin and live daily in this life to the glory of God. This is the charge of the Holy Spirit to every minister of

the gospel: Preach the Word! He who does this may never be highly esteemed among men as a great orator or declaimer, but he should not mind that. His one object should be to glorify God in setting forth His truth in the way He Himself directs.

Observe the next charge: "Be instant in season, out of season." Paul is really saying, "Be constantly on the lookout for opportunities to glorify God and to make Him known to others." You remember when William Haslam, that English church clergyman, was converted. He preached with such power that he won every member in his own parish to Christ. There was not a person living in the Baldhu section of Cornwall who had not confessed the Lord. Then he became greatly concerned about his neighbors, so he began preaching in adjoining parishes and winning souls there. The other ministers became upset over it, and sent in their objections to the Bishop, saying, "Mr. Haslam is interfering with our work. He is poaching in our parishes, telling our people that they have to be converted and need to be born again."

The Bishop sent for William Haslam and said, "I understand you are preaching all the time. You don't seem to be doing anything else."

William Haslam replied, "My lord bishop, I assure you I preach only in two seasons of the year."

"Oh," said the Bishop, "I am glad to know that. And what seasons are they?"

"In season and out of season," replied William Haslam.

That is the charge that comes to everyone of us if we really know Christ. It is not just for official proclaiming of the Word, not just for pastors and elders, but for all

Christians. Let us be instant in season and out of season in winning precious souls to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there will be occasions when we will have to “reprove, rebuke, exhort.” The last word has really the thought of comfort. So we are to comfort those who need help, assuring those who have sinned of pardon and restoration if they will turn to the blessed Lord and make confession of their failures and wrongdoing. But we must do this with all longsuffering and tenderness. The preacher of grace must not behave in an ungracious manner. I am afraid that when many of us try to reprove we get in a bad spirit ourselves and forget that the servant of the Lord should not strive, but should be characterized by longsuffering, by patience, by tender consideration even of those whom he has to rebuke or reprove.

Note the emphasis put upon teaching sound doctrine. Some people say, “I am not interested in doctrine. I like practical preaching not doctrine.” But we need to know the great truths of Scripture in order that we may learn how to behave in accordance with the revelation God has given. Sincerity of purpose is not enough. We are to be sanctified by the truth. David prayed, “Order my steps in thy word” (Ps. 119:133). We must know the Word in order that our lives may be as God would have them. The servant of Christ is therefore responsible to give out sound teaching.

The Apostle knew that the day would come when people would not want this kind of ministry, when they would prefer to hear smooth things. He says, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves

teachers, having itching ears.” It is not that the teachers have itching ears. The teachers in this instance generally have itching palms! They are in the business for filthy lucre. But the people have itching ears. They want preachers who will say things to them that will not trouble their consciences but will tickle their fancy.

I never feel worried when people write me letters, saying, “I resent your personal attack on me last Sunday.” They always come from people I do not know. If I do know something bad about a person, I am careful never to refer to it in a public address. I would rather see him privately. But every little while I receive a letter, saying, “I don’t like your preaching, and I don’t think you had any right to expose me in the way you did. I don’t know who has been talking to you about me.” And they always end up by saying, “It is not true.” So whatever made them think I was talking about them, I do not know. I am never concerned about such letters, for when the preacher presents God’s Word it is bound to speak to some people. You remember what Sam Jones said, “If you throw a stone into a pack of dogs and one of them yelps, you know who got hit.”

We should so walk before God and so live in fellowship with God that the Holy Spirit can speak directly through us. Many will not like this kind of preaching because they have itching ears. They want people to say nice things to them so that they can go away feeling good.

Then we read, “They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” Some years ago two gentlemen were sitting opposite one another in a railway car. One was reading his Bible. The other looked

across and said, "Pardon me. Is that a Bible you are reading?"

The man looked up and said, "Yes, this is the Bible, God's Word."

"Well, well," said the other, "that really astonishes me. You look to me like an intelligent man. I didn't know that intelligent persons ever read the Bible anymore. I used to believe in that when I was a child, but after I became somewhat educated I found there was nothing to it. I believe the day will soon come when civilized people will have no more confidence in the Bible than they have in the old idea of ghosts."

This Christian gentleman looked up quietly and said, "You may be right, but when the day comes that people no longer believe in the Bible they will believe in ghosts again!"

And we see the evidence of that on every hand. People turn away from the truth and take up with—what? With Spiritism, Theosophy, and all kinds of other weird systems and strange cults. They turn away from the truth to satanic doctrines that lead men down to perdition.

Paul says to Timothy, "Watch thou in all things." The Christian life is a warfare. We are in conflict with three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We need to be on our guard continually, watching in all things. "Endure affliction," that is, be willing to suffer for faithfulness to the truth.

Must I be carried to the skies

On flowery beds of ease,

While others fought to win the prize

And sailed through bloody seas?

He adds, "Do the work of an evangelist." Now I do not think Timothy was an evangelist. I think, as I read over the passages of Scripture that give information regarding the character of his work, that he was a pastor. He had a shepherd's heart. He cared for the sheep and the lambs of Christ's flock. But Paul says to him, "Do not forget the gospel. Men are dying in their sins. Do not be so occupied with feeding the flock that you overlook the need of those who are out of Christ. Do the work of an evangelist." Some ministers say, "I don't feel I have any evangelistic gift, so I never preach to the unsaved." It is not necessary to have any special gift to preach to the unsaved. Just give them what God says in His Word about the salvation He has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The last exhortation is, "Make full proof of thy ministry." In other words, Paul is saying to Timothy, "Do not be halfhearted, Timothy, and do not be content with halfway measures. Give your whole soul, all your strength, all your ability, all your talents, all your heart, your whole life to the great work to which God has called you."

Although these words were addressed directly to Timothy, they have been preserved by the Spirit of God Himself in order that they may come home to everyone of us, that we may seek to act upon them in our day and generation even as he was responsible to do in his.

Chapter 9 Paul's Valedictory

2 Timothy 4:6-8

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing, (vv. 6-8)

We may well call this "Paul's Valedictory." Someone has designated it as "Paul's Swan Song." I think I quite understand what he meant. But, personally, I do not feel like speaking of it in that way. You know they say—it is an old fable—that the swan is silent all its life, but opens its bill and begins to sing just as it is dying. I have never been present at the death of any swan, and so I could not witness to the truth of this. But Paul did not wait until death to start singing. From the time he was saved by God's grace, he had a song in his heart which he continued to sing all his life. The night he was in prison in Philippi with his companion, Silas, they both sang praises unto God, even though their feet were fast in the stocks and their backs terribly lacerated by the cruel flogging they had received. Paul said, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15). He did not begin to sing just as he was about to die.

This letter has peculiar interest. It is Paul's final message, not only to his young friend Timothy, but also to the church as a whole. We should remember some of the circumstances under which these words were

written. The Apostle was now an old man. He had been preaching the gospel for over thirty years, perhaps about thirty-five years. He had been confined for some months in the Mamertine Prison in Rome. There is no window in that prison where he could get a whiff of fresh air, just a hole in the roof through which they dropped whatsoever food they cared to give him, and through which water was lowered down to him. As I stood there I noticed a cleft in the floor, and you could look down and see the dark water of the river rolling beneath the cell. From that foul and dismal dungeon Paul sent forth this glad, triumphant message.

He was a lonely man. He tells us farther on in the chapter of one after another who had left him, going out to minister the gospel in various places. "Demas," he says, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world... Only Luke"—faithful Dr. Luke, whom Paul called elsewhere, "The beloved physician" (Col. 4:14)—"only Luke is with me." Luke remained with him to the last no doubt, ministering in every way that circumstances permitted.

Under such circumstances you might forgive a man if he were discouraged and disheartened, and if, looking back upon his long years of service, he felt that God had not fully appreciated what he had done. But Paul had no such thoughts as these. He says, "I am now ready to be offered," literally, poured out. In writing to the Philippians, he says, "Yea, and if I be offered [or, poured out] upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (2:17). The reference is to the drink offering. If the burnt offering was a sheep or a lamb, the parts were placed upon the fire on the altar, and the priest took a flagon of wine and poured it out

upon that which was to be burnt. This was called the drink offering. It symbolized our blessed Lord Jesus pouring out His soul unto death for our redemption on Calvary.

Paul was to drink of the same cup. So he says, "For I am now ready to be offered." He was ready to yield up his life, for it belonged to Christ; He had saved him and now Paul was glad to die for Him. That is really what he meant. He adds, "The time of my departure is at hand"; literally, "The time of my dissolution is at hand." The hour was near when his spirit was to be separated from his body, to depart and be with Christ. He did not mean merely that the time of going out of the world was nigh, but rather the time of the separation of spirit and body. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 he says, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." He speaks of dwelling in this body while living, and going out of the body in the hour of death. At death the Christian goes out of the body and goes home to be forever with the Lord. So Paul says, "The hour of my dissolution [the end of present conditions] is at hand."

Then as he looked back over scores of conflicts with unseen powers in heavenly places, the world-rulers of this darkness, of which he speaks in the epistle to the Ephesians, he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight." It is not exactly as we have it in our King James Version, "I have fought a good fight." To say that would be to pass on his own ability as a fighter, as though to say: "I have done very well; I have fought a good fight." What he really said is this, "I have fought the good contest." He was on the right side in the conflict. Some

of us may feel that we have not done very well as Christian soldiers, but at any rate, we will be able to thank God in that day that we were on the right side. We were on Christ's side in the war against iniquity and unrighteousness. That is what Paul means, "I have fought the good fight."

"I have finished my course." In the twentieth chapter of the book of Acts, where Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, perhaps some six years before he wrote this letter, he told the elders that his one great concern was to finish his course with joy (v. 24). He had run well by the grace of God for nearly thirty years since that day he met the Lord on the Damascus turnpike. His earnest desire was to finish well. He did not want to break near the end. Oh, how many have fought a good fight for years and then in some way, even in old age when we think one should be free from temptations, they have been broken down, perhaps because of self-confidence! They have gotten their eyes off the Lord. Some who made a good record for many years have had a dishonorable old age.

I will never forget, as a boy, how I used to be amazed as I heard an old preacher say in public prayer, "O Lord, keep my eyes on the Lord Jesus. Don't let me become a wicked old man." I used to wonder why he prayed like that, but I have since seen many who had a testimony for Christ in their early days break down and become wicked old men because they got their eyes off Christ.

I am not talking about losing one's soul. I am talking about our lives counting for Christ here in this world, and the danger of losing one's testimony for Him.

“I have kept the faith.” God grant that everyone of us who confess the name of Jesus may be able to say that when we come to the end—“I have kept the faith!”

Some years ago a fearful railroad wreck took dreadful toll of life and limb in an eastern state. A train, loaded with young people returning from school, was stalled on a suburban track because of what is known as a “hot box.” The Limited was soon due, but a flagman was sent back to warn the engineer in order to avert a rear-end collision. Thinking all was well, the crowd laughed and chatted while the train hands worked on in fancied security. Suddenly the whistle of the Limited was heard, and on came the heavy train and crashed into the local, with horrible effect.

The engineer of the Limited saved his own life by jumping, and some days afterward was hailed into court to account for his part in the calamity. And now a curious discrepancy in testimony occurred. He was asked, “Did you not see the flagman warning you to stop?”

He replied, “I saw him, but he waved a yellow flag, and I took it for granted all was well, and so went on, though slowing down.”

The flagman was called. “What flag did you wave?”

“A red flag, but he went by me like a shot.”

“Are you sure it was red?”

“Absolutely.”

Both insisted on the correctness of their testimony, and it was demonstrated that neither was color-blind. Finally the man was asked to produce the flag itself as evidence. After some delay he was able to do so, and

then the mystery was explained. It had been red, but it had been exposed to the weather so long that all the red was bleached out, and it was but a dirty yellow! Oh, the lives eternally wrecked by the yellow gospels of the day—the bloodless theories of unregenerate men who send their hearers to their doom instead of stopping them on their downward road!

No wonder the faithful Apostle cries, “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8). And lest any should think he spoke in haste, not weighing his words, he adds, “As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:9). To trifle with souls is an awful sin.

How many there are who once bore a faithful testimony and proclaimed salvation through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, but who, after some years have gone on, have failed to carry out the commission given to them, and their message is no longer that of the blood of Christ. It is a dirty yellow flag of man’s personal acceptability to God on the ground of his own character and good works, and the result is that many are being lured on to their eternal doom.

There is no other real message than that of the cross. “Without [the] shedding of blood [there] is no remission.” “The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin.” When we get home, the blood will be the theme of our song for eternity. “They sung a new song,” says John, “saying, Thou art worthy...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy

blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9).

Paul had kept the faith, and now he says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." In 1 Corinthians he speaks of crowns and rewards. The crown is to be distinguished from salvation. The crown speaks of approval; salvation is by grace through faith, but rewards are for service. Our blessed Lord, the righteous Judge, will give rewards for the work done in the body. So Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:27, says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Or, literally, should be set to one side; should fail of the reward. He draws an illustration from the arena. How carefully young men train that they might receive the prize. He says, "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" (1 Cor. 9:25). And so through the years he had kept a prayerful watch that he might not allow himself to give way to the desires of the flesh. He did not allow the body to dominate, but, he says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Instead of permitting his body to master him, he mastered it. At the end of the race he could say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day."

There is a difference between the gift of righteousness and the crown of righteousness. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ receives the gift of righteousness. All of us are made the righteousness of God in Christ. We

have no righteousness of our own. That which we fancy to be our righteousness is but as filthy rags in God's sight. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, and we stand before God cleared of every charge. That is our justification. That is perfect. That is complete. But the crown of righteousness is something quite different. It is the reward that is given to those who have lived righteous lives as they have waited expectantly for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul says, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." The Lord, the righteous Judge, will sit on the judgment seat where the works of believers will be examined.

This is different from the Great White Throne where the unsaved are to be judged. We find the expression "the day of Christ," and sometimes, "the day of Jesus Christ," and in one place, "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." These terms always refer to the time when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Then we shall stand before His judgment seat. That will be the day when we will give account of the deeds done in the body.

Observe that expression, "deeds done in the body." I do not know of any Scripture that promises reward for post-mortem gifts for the work of the Lord. There are some who accumulate vast fortunes, forgetting the Lord's warning about laying up treasure on earth. Then when they are about to die they bequeath their wealth to

Christian enterprises. It is far better to give what you can while in the body, for if given as unto the Lord this assures reward in that day.

If you have money you are not going to need, put it to work while you are in the body. To do it for Jesus' sake is to assure a reward in that day.

Paul adds, "And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He is not thinking of himself only. He was not the only one who will have a crown of righteousness. It is for all them also that love Christ's appearing. Do you love His appearing? Are you waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is that the lodestar of your soul? We read, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). The hope of the coming of the Lord is the most sanctifying thing I know. If you are living day by day as one expecting the early return of your Lord, you are not going to be carried away by the trend of the times. You are not going to yield to the solicitations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

May God grant that in that day not one of us will come up empty-handed; that not one of us will have to look back with regret upon years that might have been lived to the glory of God but were not, or upon hoarded wealth that might have been put to use for Christ!

Chapter 10 Luke and Demas

2 Timothy 4:9-22

Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen. (vv. 9-22)

A section such as this might not seem to have very much in it that is for real spiritual edification, and one might ask whether divine inspiration was needed to give us

these greetings and salutations. But God had a special reason for causing the Apostle to put these things into his letters. In the first place, in order that they might be preserved for our instruction and help in a future day, and then to enable us to understand the circumstances in which Paul found himself at this time much better than we otherwise could.

We have noticed that Paul wrote this particular letter during his second imprisonment, while awaiting execution as a martyr for Christ's sake. He was anxious to see his friend, Timothy, to whom this letter is written, once more before his impending death. So he urged him, in verse 9, to do his "diligence to come shortly unto" him. A little farther down, in verse 21, Paul says, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." This might have a double suggestion. Possibly he already knew that he was to be martyred that winter, or because the cold weather was near at hand he wanted Timothy to bring him the needed supplies that would help to make the winter in an underground dungeon more comfortable.

Then he spoke sorrowfully of one of his former companions: "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica." He also mentioned two other associates who had gone away on evangelistic tours: "Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia." Luke, the beloved physician, remained with him, as we are told in verse 11, "Only Luke is with me."

Then there is a very interesting request: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry." This is the John Mark who went out with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but

who left them at Perga in Pamphylia and returned to his home in Jerusalem. Paul felt that Mark had manifested a rather poor spirit at that time, and later on when Barnabas wanted to take him on another journey, Paul refused to agree to this, as he considered Mark had proven untrustworthy before. You see, with Paul, a missionary journey was no pleasurable excursion, and he wanted a man who would stay with him, endure the hardship, and not go back home if things became difficult. So he said, "No, we will not take Mark with us." Paul and Barnabas were both very godly men, but this was something on which they could not agree. Barnabas, who was closely related to John Mark, pleaded with Paul to give the boy another chance, but the latter was adamant. So we are told that the contention became so sharp between them that they separated. Barnabas took Mark and returned to Cyprus, while Paul went another way and chose Silas to go with him. God blessed and used both Paul and Barnabas in spite of their difference of opinion, and they were warm friends later on, as we know (1 Cor. 9:6).

As the years went on, we find this difference had passed away. Paul speaks very tenderly and lovingly of Mark, and expressed his desire to see him again.

I am glad that Barnabas gave Mark another chance, for he made good the second time. He went on in the Lord's work, and Paul recognized that God had made Mark a profitable servant. It was he who wrote the second gospel.

Next Paul mentioned Tychicus, who had traveled with him, "Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus."

In verse 13 he says something that is rather interesting: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." Evidently he had been entertained in the home of a man named Carpus. Just where, we are not told, but he had left his heavy coat there until he should send for it. Now he felt the need of it. He requests also that Timothy bring his books and, especially, some parchments. These parchments may have been simply plain material on which he could write letters, but if they contained parts of Scripture we can well understand why he would be anxious to receive them.

"And the books"—that he might pass the time profitably in prison. Here I am reminded of what Francis Newman said of that devoted servant of God, J. N. Darby: "Never before had I seen a man so resolved that no word of the New Testament should be a dead letter to him. I once said, 'But do you really think that no part of the New Testament may have been temporary in its object? For instance, what should we have lost if St. Paul had never written, "The cloke that I left at Troas...bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments"?' He answered with the greatest promptitude, 'I should have lost something, for it was exactly that verse which alone saved me from selling my little library. No! Every word, depend upon it, is from the Spirit, and is for eternal service.'"

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words." This may have been the same Alexander referred to elsewhere, whom Paul had delivered unto Satan,

because he was leading the believers into false teachings (1 Tim. 1:20). As Paul looked back over his first appearance before Nero, he said, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." Think of that: the aged apostle charged with sedition against the Roman Empire, standing there alone before Caesar. No one to take his part. No one to say, "I know this man. I know him to be a man of uprightness and integrity, and I heartily endorse his message." But there he stood, alone, faithfully witnessing to the truth of God. Did I say alone? No, he was not alone. He himself said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." In a little while he was to die for Christ's sake, but he could say with confidence, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Then the letter concludes with several salutations. "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." Priscilla and Aquila were friends of Paul's with whom he had lived in Corinth and Ephesus. They had given him a home when he had none of his own. "And the household of Onesiphorus." He had spoken of how this man had sought him out (1:16-18). His household is mentioned here. One of his companions, Erastus, remained at Corinth. "But Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Paul was forced to leave this brother behind because of illness. Some people think that Christians should never be sick, and if they are, it is because of their unfaithfulness to the Lord. But Paul had

to leave his sick companion at Miletum, and there is no indication of unfaithfulness here. Neither did Paul heal him. Healing from sickness is not always God's will for the Christian.

Then we have that word, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." He next mentioned several who sent greetings: Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia. Linus is listed in Roman Catholic chronology as the second bishop of Rome. Peter was supposed to be the first. But neither Linus nor Peter knew anything about it, you may be sure of that! Paul then closes the letter with the words, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."

Now, having glanced briefly at this portion, I am going back to note what is said about Demas and Luke. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world... Only Luke is with me."

These two names had been linked together in other Epistles. In Colossians 4:14 we read, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you." Then in the little epistle to Philemon, in verse 24, these two names are mentioned with others, "Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellowlabourers." It is very evident that both Luke and Demas were very good friends of the apostle Paul. He counted on them. They worked with him, traveled with him, no doubt relieving him of a great many responsibilities.

Here we read, "Only Luke is with me." Luke remained faithful to the end. He was found by Paul in Troas, as we gather from the book of Acts. Luke may have been a Greek-speaking Jew; on the other hand, he might have been a Gentile. There is no evidence either way. If a

Gentile, then he is the only New Testament Gentile writer, for all the rest were Jews, Hebrew Christians. The word Luke means "light." He was a scientific man, a physician, a man of culture and refinement. He had investigated Christianity very carefully before accepting it. The introduction to his gospel tells us that he had looked into these things that had been reported concerning Jesus. He gives considerable detailed information regarding the virgin birth of our Lord. Matthew simply mentions that His mother was a virgin in accordance with the prophecy in Isaiah, but Luke gives many particulars that evidence the physician's personal conversation with Mary.

From the time when he met Paul at Troas until Paul's death, Luke was always closely linked with him. At different times in the book of Acts we see that he remained behind when Paul went on, doubtless to help build up young converts. Then he would join Paul later.

Not once does Luke mention his own name either in his gospel or in the book of Acts, and he wrote both of these. But in the Acts we are able to know when Luke is on the scene and when he is not. If he is with Paul, he uses the pronouns "we" and "us." If he is not with Paul's party, he uses "they" and "them." Then when he rejoins them, it is "we" and "us" again. In this way we can trace his journeys with Paul in the latter chapters of the book. He was faithful to the end, and what a crown there will be for him in that coming day!

About this other man, Demas, we know very little. He and Luke must have been very intimate. We get this from the way their names are found together in these two Scripture passages. Now Paul is in prison, and

Demas must have said, "This business of preaching the gospel isn't going to pan out very well." So he did not know whether he could go on or not, and by-and-by, after careful consideration, he determined to leave Paul and return to the world.

Paul says, "Demas hath forsaken me." He does not say that Demas has forsaken God or given up his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but that "Demas hath forsaken me." There is nothing to indicate that he gave up faith in the gospel that he professed and became an apostate. There is no intimation that he plunged into a life of sin. But he turned away from Paul, having loved this present world. He was more concerned about temporal things than he was about getting a reward at the judgment seat of Christ, and therefore his name goes down on the page of Holy Scripture as a warning to every servant of Christ.

We remember the words of our Lord Jesus, "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Demas lost his great opportunity. He might have been honored of God as a wonderful soul winner, but he loved this present world.

May that speak to everyone of our hearts. It is only as we are occupied with Christ Himself that we are set free from the love of the world. The Spirit of God says to every Christian, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:15-17).

May we be encouraged by Luke and warned by Demas to go on faithfully in the path of service to which our God has called us. God grant that it will never be said of any us that we “loved this present world.” And if I am speaking to any who have never come to Christ, oh, I plead with you, make the choice that Luke made. If you are troubled by doubt and perplexity, then study Scripture for yourself. Look for the evidences of the truth in the Word of God itself, and look for corroborative evidence in the lives of those who have received Christ. See what wonderful things God has done for them. Put your faith in Jesus, and so go on with us to yonder glory-land.