

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF SECOND TIMOTHY

I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

Read 2 Timothy 3:14-4:22

Introduction.

This final study of 2 Timothy includes two major sections. The first section develops the importance of the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:14 - 4:5). The second section offers concluding thoughts to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:6–22). Paul's reason for using this strong, commanding language is his own impending death. As this study will show, Paul knows that he will not survive his current run-in with Roman law. After all the encouragement and coaching he has offered in this letter, Paul wants to leave a clear impression on his friend (and son in the ministry) to continue the work they have done so far.

Continue in what you have learned.

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (vv3:14-15)

It was as if Paul wrote this: “Timothy, you learned these things. Right now, you firmly believe them. Now, you must continue in the things which you have learned. The important thing is to abide in them, to continue in them, to never let them go.” The rest of the passage — up until the fourth chapter — simply describes for us what this means, and why it was so important for Timothy to do this.

Continue in the things you have learned, *remembering who taught you those things*. It was as if Paul wrote, “Remember, Timothy: you learned these things from me.” Paul was too humble to say his own name here, but it certainly seems that is what he meant.

Timothy had known the word of God from his earliest years; yet see how strong the exhortation is from Paul that he continues in them! Nothing is assumed; the furthest thing from Paul’s mind is an attitude that says, “Well of course we are all founded on the Bible, and we can assume that and move on to other things.” For Paul this was never assumed — not even with his trusted protégé Timothy.

Continue in the Holy Scriptures.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (vv3:16-17)

Paul exhorted Timothy, “Continue in these things because the Bible comes from God and not man. It is a God-inspired book, breathed out from God Himself.” This means something more than saying that God inspired the men who wrote it, though we believe that He did; God also inspired the very words they wrote. We notice it doesn’t say, “All Scripture writers are inspired by God,” even though that was true. Yet it doesn’t go far enough. The words they wrote were breathed by God. Paul exhorted, “Timothy, continue in these things because the Bible is profitable, and profitable in many ways.”

- **Profitable for doctrine:** telling us what is true about God, man, the world we live in, and the world to come.
- **Profitable for reproof and correction:** with the authority to rebuke us and correct us. We are all under the authority of God’s word, and when the Bible exposes our doctrine or our conduct as wrong, we are wrong.

- **Profitable for instruction in righteousness:** it tells us how to live in true righteousness. There is perhaps here a hint of grace because Paul knew what true righteousness was instead of the legalistic false righteousness that he depended on before his conversion.

This all means something else very simple: We can understand the Bible. If the Bible could not be understood, there would be nothing profitable about it.

Paul's final testimony to Timothy.

“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.” (vv4:1-5)

As Paul sat in his cold, damp prison cell, he understood there was a spiritual reality present that went beyond the walls of his cell. Spiritually, through this letter, he gave solemn testimony to his young friend and associate, and he did it in the presence of the God who will judge us all. The words ‘will judge’ more literally are ‘is about to be judging’; they point to the fact that Paul was living in the hope of the imminent return of Christ.

Preach the word!

Paul's emphasis on the word of God has been constant. There are some 36 references to the true gospel in this letter and some 17 references to false teachings. This constant emphasis makes Paul's point clear to Timothy:

- Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (2 Timothy 1:8).
- Hold fast the pattern of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13).
- The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men (2 Timothy 2:2).
- Rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
- A servant of the Lord must be... able to teach (2 Timothy 2:24).
- All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16).

As a pastor, Timothy was not required to merely know the word or like the word or approve of the word; he was required to preach the word. The word of God must be preached by Timothy; it was to be the content of his message. “Be ready in season and out of season” tells us when the pastor should be ready to preach the word. He should be ready always. He should preach it when it is easy and preach it when it is hard. He should preach it when the fruit is evident and preach it when the fruit seems invisible. He should just preach it.

Sound Doctrine!

Timothy needed to keep focused on the Word of God because man, by his natural instinct, does not want God's revelation. He would rather hear what he wants to hear — something to scratch his itching ears. “They will heap up for themselves teachers” reminds us that the most popular teachers are not necessarily the most faithful teachers. There are so many teachers today in the pulpit broadcasting to a people, over the social media, and over other devices that are committed to meeting the ‘itching ears’ of their audience. For example, giving to comedies; they pray but what they pray is scripturally unsound; they write songs, and the songs lack content or is heretic etc. Once people leave the Word of God, they

often then embrace fantasies (fables). When a man rejects God's truth, it isn't that he believes in nothing; he will believe in anything.

Fulfil your ministry!

This is an instruction of contrast against the people mentioned in the previous sentence. Though others turned aside to fables, Timothy was to be even more dedicated to doing what God wanted him to do. Their presence was to make him more dedicated, not more discouraged. Timothy could not fulfil his ministry unless he kept careful attention, being watchful in all things. Every good shepherd has his eyes open.

Ministry is just like life — there are afflictions to be borne with. For some this is a disturbing thought because they thought that the ministry would be one beautiful spiritual experience after another. There are plenty of wonderful blessings in serving God but there are also afflictions to be endured. Timothy must do the work of an evangelist. This implies that Timothy was not particularly gifted as an evangelist, but he still had to faithfully do that work as a preacher of God's Word.

Paul's Life and Reward

“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” (vv6-8)

The idea of a drink offering is first presented in Genesis 35:14, where Jacob poured out a drink offering before the Lord as a sacrifice. In the Mosaic Law, drink offerings could be a part of sacrifice to the Lord (Exodus 29:40-41 and Leviticus 23:13). There was also a Roman idea here. Every Roman meal ended with a small sacrificial ritual to the gods — a cup of wine was taken and poured out before the gods. In this sense Paul said, “The day is done, the meal is just about over, and I'm being poured out unto God.”

The time of my departure is at hand.

Paul felt that he was in the airport and his flight to heaven was ready to depart. He waited for his boarding call. Paul's exhortation to Timothy is therefore even more meaningful because he knew he was passing from the scene and Timothy must carry the torch. God's workmen pass on, but God's work continues. Paul said: *“I have finished the race”*. Throughout his ministry Paul used the picture of the race and the Christian being an athlete running that race (Philippians 3:12-14, Acts 20:24, 1 Corinthians 9:24, Hebrews 12:1). Now he knew his race was just about finished.

With regards the crown, Paul envisioned an awards ceremony where he would receive the crown that waited for him. Paul was about to be condemned and executed by an earthly court, but he was also going to be rewarded by a heavenly Lord. This promise of a crown in heaven is for us — if we will set our focus on heaven and on the Jesus who both walked the earth and now reigns in heaven, who is waiting to receive us.

Co-Workers, Faithful and Unfaithful

Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the

coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.” (vv9-15)

Have you ever had people leave you? Even when they leave on good terms, it hurts to see them go -- especially when your own world seems to be diminishing. It was especially hard for Paul to see Demas go. The word translated here and in verse 16 as "deserted" (NIV, NRSV), "forsaken" (KJV) is "enkataleipō", "to separate connection with someone or something, forsake, abandon, desert." When Paul had been imprisoned in Rome previously, he had referred cheerfully to Demas as his "fellow worker" (Philemon 24, Colossians 4:14). Now Demas has deserted him with others when Paul's execution drew near. Instead of having his hope firmly fixed on the Kingdom of God, Demas had succumbed to the allurements of "this present world" (KJV, NRSV) and left for Thessalonica in Macedonia.

Others left him out of necessity (like Crescens and Titus). Some other left because Paul sent them (like Tychicus). Luke, who had travelled with Paul on many of his missionary journeys, remained with Paul. Everyone else was gone. This was a significant contrast to Paul's first Roman imprisonment ten years before, where he received many visitors (Acts 28:30-31).

Alexander the Coppersmith

In 1 Timothy 1:20 Paul mentioned Alexander as someone whose faith had suffered shipwreck. Now Paul warned Timothy about this same man. Paul simply wrote that Alexander did me much harm — but that he would also oppose Timothy (You also must beware of him). It would have been wrong of Timothy to respond to this by saying to Paul, "Paul, Alexander has always been nice to me. He has his faults, but don't we all?" Instead, we can be sure that Timothy respected Paul's judgment — and took his counsel to beware of Alexander. Alexander's judgment would be simple. It is a terrible thing to be judged according to one's works.

Paul's Hearing before the Emperor

“At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!” (vv15-18)

Paul was all alone, but Jesus stood by him, and Paul served God faithfully during his first defence. The words *“May it not be charged against them”* show that Paul was not bitter that all forsook him. This is powerful evidence of a great work of grace and spiritual maturity. God had delivered Paul before, so he had no doubt about God's power or goodness. Paul just didn't know if this time his fate would end with being delivered out of the mouth of the lion or being preserved for His heavenly kingdom.

Final Greetings

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.” (vv19-22)

In his parting words, Paul's heart was for the people he knew. He thought about others and not himself. Paul knew the nature of Jesus and was an others-centred person just as Jesus was. The last words of Paul reflect a man who simply loved Jesus and had received His grace. This simplicity, and all the power that went with it, marked the entire ministry of Paul.