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THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

BY

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Introduction

This is the last Epistle the Apostle Paul wrote. He was once more imprisoned in Rome, and shortly before his martyrdom he wrote this second letter to Timothy. His movements between his first and second imprisonment may be traced as follows: After having written his first Epistle to Timothy he returned to Ephesus, as he intended, by way of Troas. Then he left the books he mentions (4:13) with Carpus. From Ephesus he went to Crete, and after his return wrote the Epistle to Titus. Next he went by Miletus to Corinth (4:20), and from there to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12) and then on to Rome. If he visited Spain, as tradition claims, it must have been immediately after his release.

Timothy was evidently still in Ephesus, obedient to the charge of the Apostle delivered to him in the first Epistle. That Timothy must have been in Ephesus when he received this second letter may be learned from the persons mentioned in this Epistle. Onesiphorus is mentioned in chapter 1: 16-18 as having sought out the apostle in Rome, and also having ministered to him at Ephesus. In chapter 4:19 Paul sends greetings to the household of Onesiphorus, and they lived in Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila are also saluted, and they lived generally in that city. Hymenaeus is stigmatized as a teacher of false doctrine (2:17). There can be no doubt that he is the same person mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20. And so is Alexander the coppersmith another evil teacher whose residence was also in that city.

The Object of the Epistle

The Apostle knew that the martyr's death was soon to be his lot. He

has a great and deep desire to see his beloved Timothy once more. He therefore wrote him to that effect, "greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (1:4). "Do thy diligence and come before winter" (4:9, 11, 21). Being uncertain how it might be with himself, whether he should live or be offered up before his arrival, he wrote this letter with his final warnings, exhortations and instructions.

The Contrast

There is a marked difference between this second Epistle and the first. In the first Epistle the house of God, the Church, is seen in order, and the fullest instructions are given how this order in all godliness is to be maintained. The house as such is no longer mentioned in the second Epistle, though we read of "a great house" in which are vessels to honor and some to dishonor; the believer is urged to purge himself from the vessels of dishonor. The professing church is foreshadowed as becoming now a great house; as the little mustard seed became a big tree, sheltering in its branches the fowls under heaven. And this great house no longer manifests the order as laid down in the first Epistle. It has become dilapidated and is in disorder. What has happened in the history of the Church is foreseen in this Epistle, in fact the beginning of it was even then noticeable when Paul wrote this last Epistle. Paul had to see before his departure the beginning of the ruin of that which as a master workman he had been used to build, and over which he watched so faithfully. He had labored more than all the other apostles, and now he had to be a witness of the decline of that which he had loved so much; departure from the faith he had preached, and with it corruption set in. The power of God had been at work and he was the channel of that power, but man fails in it.

Because the professing church, the house of God, is anticipated in its failure and disorder, not a word is said of elders and deacons. Nor is there a promise made, nor instruction given, about a recovery from these conditions. They continue to the end of the age. It is true revivals, partial recoveries there have been, but only to show that man fails again after each renewed action of the Holy Spirit. It goes from bad to worse in the professing church, till the hour strikes when the Lord takes His faithful remnant, the true Church, out of the great house (1 Thess. 4:13-18). What happens then to the great Babylon-house is written in Revelation 18:2. The house completely abandoned by the restraining Spirit becomes "the habitation of demons and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Paul before his departure is alone. It is a mournful record--"all they in Asia are turned away from me"; "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present age"; "only Luke is with me." It also foreshadows the position of the individual believer in the midst of disorder and confusion. The sure foundation of the Lord abides forever, and as we shall learn from our brief annotations, the individual believer under these conditions is to be faithful and maintain the true testimony for the Lord.

The Division of Second Timothy

The opening chapter contains the loving greeting of the apostle, and exhortations to faithfulness, especially to hold fast the form of sound words which Timothy had heard from Paul. Then follow other exhortations to

be strong, to endure hardness, to strive lawfully, to labor, to consider and to remember. It is the conflict which the true servant has in the world, in which he is to be as a good soldier of Jesus. This is followed by a description of the departure from the faith, and the path the believer is to follow. In the third chapter the last days are prominently brought into view by the Spirit of God, and all that these days mean in the manifestation of evil. The fourth chapter contains the final words of the apostle; faithful to the end, and the Lord's faithfulness to him.

- I. PAUL'S PERSONAL WORD TO TIMOTHY (1)
- II. FAITH'S CONFLICT AND THE BELIEVER'S PATH (2)
- III. THE LAST DAYS AND THEIR PERILS (3)
- IV. THE LAST WORDS OF THE APOSTLE (4)

Analysis and Annotations

I. PAUL'S PERSONAL WORD To TIMOTHY

CHAPTER 1

- 1. Paul's affectionate words and confidence (1:1-5)
- 2. Difficulties and assurance (1:6-12)
- 3. Holding the form of sound words (1:13-14)
- 4. Turning away and faithfulness in contrast (1:15-18)

Verses 1-5. Paul speaks in this last Epistle as an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." It is a blessed word and shows how the prisoner in Rome, facing now the martyr's death, had full assurance that all was well. He knew that he was in the hands of God. The promise of life in Christ Jesus was his portion; he possessed that life in Him who ever liveth. Again he addressed Timothy as his beloved son (1 Tim. 1:2) with the greeting of grace, from which all blessings flow, mercy, so constantly needed by all His own, and peace, which his people know and enjoy, who look to Him alone for grace and mercy. The apostle speaks of the past; he had served God, so had his forefathers, with a pure conscience (Acts 23:1); they had been pious, God-fearing Jews.

This also had been the case with Timothy. There was unfeigned faith in him, which dwelt first in his grandmother, Lois, and in his mother, Eunice. Both Lois, the grandmother, and his own mother, who had a Greek for a husband (Acts 16:1) had trained the child Timothy in the Holy Scriptures (the Old Testament) and he had known them from the earliest childhood (3:15). Therefore when the gospel of Christ was presented to them this unfeigned faith laid hold upon it at once. It was good ground which had been prepared to receive the gospel-seed. Thus it should be in the Christian household. The promise is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." (Acts 16:31). Unfeigned faith will be produced in the young by instructing them out of the Word of God, for "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17). Without ceasing Paul remembered Timothy in his prayers night and day. He remembered his tears, occasioned no doubt by the second imprisonment. How he desired to see his beloved son to be filled with joy!

Verses 6-12. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up

(stir up in a "flame" or "rekindle") the gift of God, which is in thee by the laying on of my hands." God had used Paul as the instrument in bestowing a gift upon Timothy. This gift needed rekindling. The danger of decline, which began even then to be manifested, is evident by this exhortation. The rekindling of a gift needs constant use of the Word of God and fellowship with the Lord, as well as a prayerful exercise of the gift itself. And the Spirit given of God to minister is not a spirit of fear, or cowardice, fearing men and conditions, but a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Therefore he was not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, which men began to reject, nor of him, who was now the prisoner of the Lord. It was Timothy's blessed calling and privilege to be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. He was not to shrink from the reproach and difficulties which then set in, but to endure it all, enabled by His gracious power.

The gospel may be rejected and despised, so that the enemy seemingly is victorious, but finally the Lord and His truth will have the complete victory. The believer knows this amidst all present difficulties and discouragements, for God "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." (This refers to the first promise in Genesis 3:15, the promise of life, salvation and final victory.) "Before the world began" does not mean eternity, but the time before the dispensations, "the age-times," began. And all 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. The full accomplishment and victory comes when He who abolished death by His death on the cross, and triumphant resurrection, comes again. Paul was the herald of this gospel to all men, to Jews and Gentiles. It was for this he suffered, and he was not ashamed. He knew all he passed through, all reproach, all afflictions, would not leave him ashamed. He knew the Lord and His power. "For I know whom I believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"The apostle does not say 'in what I have believed,' but 'whom,' an important difference, which pleases us (as to our confidence) in connection with the person of Christ Himself. The apostle had spoken of the truth, but truth is allied to the person of Christ. He is the truth; and in Him truth has life, has power, is linked with the love which applies it, which maintains it in the heart and the heart by it. 'I know,' says the apostle, 'whom I have believed,' He had committed his happiness to Christ. In Him was that life in which the apostle participated; in Him, the power that sustained it, and that preserved in heaven the inheritance of glory which was his portion where this life was developed" (J.N. Darby).

Verses 13-14. Next he exhorts Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words. "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 is one of the most important exhortations of this Epistle, and of special meaning for all believers who, in these days of departure from the truth, contend earnestly for the faith delivered once for all unto the saints. The expression "the form of sound words" is a strong argument for verbal inspiration. The truth of God is conveyed in the very words of God, and therefore the form in which the truth of God is made known is to be maintained. It is all to be held fast in faith and love, which are in

Christ Jesus. It does not mean a certain creed constructed by man, but the whole truth of God as revealed by Him. And whatever good thing is committed unto the believer, in the form of a gift as a member of the body of Christ, must be kept by the energy and power of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the believer. What we have received, the knowledge of the form of sound words and the gift imparted, must be used. "in proportion as we do not care to communicate to others the 'sound words' which we have received, we shall find their power over our own souls diminish and their sweetness for us also."

Apostasy starts with the giving up of the form of sound words. Critics and other deniers of inspiration speak of the spiritual meaning of the words of the Bible, and, that the Bible contains the Word of God, instead of is the Word of God. And that is the starting point of the ever increasing departure from the truth of God in our days, which will soon culminate in the predicted complete apostasy.

Verses 15-18. All in Asia (the province) had heard the Gospel in years gone by from the lips of the apostle. And now the great man of God had to write mournfully: "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." It would be wrong to conclude from this that they had turned their backs completely upon Christianity and abandoned the profession of it. Such was not the case. Their faith had become weak and they had withdrawn from the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he had become a despised prisoner, and with this act they showed likewise that they were departing from the great and blessed doctrines the Apostle had preached unto them. Perhaps some of those in Asia had visited Rome and had repudiated Paul the prisoner. It was an evidence of the spiritual decline which was setting in.

But there was a notable exception. Onesiphorus had also visited Rome and had diligently sought him and found him finally. There were many thousands of prisoners in Roman dungeons, and we may well imagine how day after day Onesiphorus sought for his beloved brother, going from dungeon to dungeon till he had located Paul. What a meeting that must have been! He had ministered to Paul in Ephesus, which was well known to Timothy, and now he was not ashamed to minister unto the prisoner of the Lord. He prays therefore for his house and that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day. The reward for his faithfulness to Paul will be mercy, as everything else is mercy in the believer's life.

(Strange it is that the prayer of the Apostle for the house of Onesiphorus is used as an authority to pray for the dead. The assumption that Onesiphorus had died is incorrect.)

II. FAITH'S CONFLICT AND THE BELIEVER'S PATH

CHAPTER 2

1. The apostle's charge (2:1-2)
2. As soldier and husbandman (2:3-7)
3. Identification with Christ (2:8-13)
4. Exhortation and warning (2:14-18)
5. The great House (2:19-22)
6. The believer's path (verses 23-26)

Verses 1-2. First we find a charge of the apostle to his spiritual son Timothy. The blessed servant of the Lord knew that he was soon to depart, and therefore he charges Timothy to commit the great truths concerning the Gospel, which he had heard from the lips of the apostle in the presence of many witnesses, to faithful men, who are able to teach others. To the apostle it had been given to complete the Word of God (Col. 1:25). No new revelation is promised through Timothy, but he is charged to communicate the revealed truth to others, who would be chosen by the Lord, as His gifts to the Church, to propagate His truth. This is the only true apostolic succession, not through the church as an organization, nor through certain men who claim ecclesiastical authority, but through those who hold the form of sound words and who minister it to others in the energy of the Spirit of God. Timothy needed for this the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And so does every servant of Christ.

Verses 3-7. Here the qualities that Timothy ought to possess in order to carry on the work are given by the apostle. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ, warring a spiritual warfare, he must suffer hardships and many privations. He must beware not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. The soldier's calling is to please him who has called him, and all else, comforts and self-indulgence must be sacrificed. The soldier does this to obtain a corruptible crown, how much more then should the soldier of Jesus Christ do this to gain an incorruptible crown!

The Christian is also a laborer, a husbandman. He must labor first in order to enjoy fully the fruit of his labor. And that requires patience. He urges Timothy to consider what he tells him, with the assurance that the Lord would give him understanding in all things. These are the practical conditions for all who are engaging in service--enduring hardship, self-denial, unentangled, separated from the world and its ways, fighting lawfully and laboring first to be partaker of the fruits.

Verses 8-13. In connection with this he was to remember "that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from among the dead" according to the gospel, which he calls "my gospel"--"wherein I suffer as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound." Christ suffered, and though He is of the seed of David and has the promises of David's throne, yet it is not yet His; He waits patiently for it upon the Father's throne. In the meantime He, raised from among the dead (the seal upon His blessed work), has given His gospel of grace and glory to be preached. And suffering is connected with this (Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24).

"The afflictions found in the path of service in the gospel assume here a high and peculiar character in the mind of the suffering and blessed apostle. It is participation in the sufferings of Christ, and, in the case of Paul, to a very remarkable degree. The expressions he uses are such as might be employed in speaking of Christ Himself as regards His love. As to the propitiation, naturally no other could take part in that: but in devotedness, and in suffering for love and for righteousness, we have the privilege of suffering with Him. And here what part had the apostle with these sufferings? 'I endure,' He says, 'all things for the elect's sake.' This is truly what the Lord did. The apostle trod closely on His footsteps, and with the same purpose of love--'that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,' Here of course the apostle has to add, 'which is in Christ Jesus'; still, the language is marvellous in the lips of any other person than the Lord Himself For it is what Christ did."

The servant is identified with his Lord and called upon to go in the same path. "It is a faithful saying, for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." While this is true positionally of all believers, all have died in Christ and live in Him, the meaning here is the practical manifestation of it in self-denial and suffering with Him. If we suffer and endure we shall also reign with Him. And if any deny Him He will also deny them before His judgment seat (Matt. 10:33). These are solemn words little heeded in our days of laxity and declension. "If we are unfaithful, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself," that is, His own nature. "The One we serve must of necessity be served according to the reality of what He is. The Righteous One must be served in righteousness; the Holy One, in holiness; the One who is not of the world, by those who seek no place in the world. We cannot make Christ other than He is, and we cannot make the world other than it is" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 14-18. These things he was to remember. And if they are remembered they will bring deliverance from the strife about words, vain and unessential disputations in which there is no profit, which only subvert the hearers. It is through disputes about words, and speculations, that Satan brings in his most subtle deceptions. The true way is to strive diligently to show oneself approved of God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, "rightly dividing the Word of truth." What a havoc has been wrought by a wrong dividing of the Word of truth! Law and grace have been jumbled together, Israel robbed of her promises, and the church impoverished on account of it. The Word of God and the truth of God have suffered most from the hands of such unskilled workmen, who, not dividing the Word of truth rightly, have produced confusion worse confounded. The sad division of Christendom, a carnally minded, professing church, is the fruit of it, and much else. The whole truth of God has been obscured, and unbelief fostered by it. To insist upon "rightly dividing the Word of truth" and to practice it both in teaching and living is a most essential requirement of the true workman.

Profane and vain babblings are to be avoided, for they only produce ungodliness. Hymenaeus and Philetus, who held that the resurrection had taken place already and thereby overthrew the faith of some, were examples of it. How true it is that error is like a gangrene, spreading vileness and corruption everywhere.

Verses 19-22. But in the midst of the declension and perversion of the truth of God, as it began in apostolic days, and is now more fully developed in our own times, there is the foundation of God, which stands firm and unmovable. Christ is the foundation of faith, and of His church. There is a double seal. "The Lord knoweth them that are His"--this is the divine side. This statement is given for the comfort of His own, and it is a most precious comfort, "the Lord knoweth them that are His." But this comforting assurance must lead us into communion with Himself. If He knoweth us as His own, we also know Him and delight ourselves in His fellowship. And so we also know in the days of decline and departure from the truth, that the Lord knows and keeps those who belong to Him. But there is also another side, "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." This is the solemn responsibility of every one who nameth that blessed Name, which is above every name. This is the true evidence that we walk in real fellowship with Him, that He knows us and we know Him.

The great house of which Paul speaks is Christendom. It contains vessels of gold and silver, and vessels of wood and earth, some to honor and some to dishonor. Here we have the two classes found in the professing church, those who are really the Lord's, known of Him, who know Him, who walk in His fellowship and witness to it by departing from iniquity; and the other class, which merely profess His name, who have the outward form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; more fully described in chapter 3:1-5. If the true believer is to be a vessel fit for the Master's use he must purge himself individually from such. This is demanded again by the apostle when in the above passage, describing the moral character of these vessels to dishonor, vessels of wood and earth, he writes, "from such turn away." This is the solemn responsibility of every true believer; he is not to be in fellowship with such, and when obedient to this call the believer becomes a sanctified vessel, a vessel set apart, separated, and then as such a fit vessel for the Master's use and prepared unto every good work.

The whole of that which calls itself "Christian" is looked at here as a great house. The Christian is of it outwardly, in spite of himself, for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself Christian. But he cleanses himself personally from every vessel which is not to the Lord's honor. This is the rule of Christian faithfulness; and thus personally cleansed from fellowship with evil, he shall be a vessel unto honor fit for the Master's use. Whatsoever is contrary to the honor of Christ, in those who bear His Name, is that from which he is to separate himself.

By purging himself from all those who are unto dishonor, the servant of God shall be unto honor, sanctified and prepared for every good work. For this separation from evil is not merely negative; it is the effect of the realization of the word of God in the heart. I then understand what the holiness of God is, His rights over my heart, the incompatibility of His nature with evil. I feel that I dwell in Him and He in me; that Christ must be honored at all costs; that that which is like Him alone honors Him; that His nature and His rights over me are the only rule of my life. That which thus separates me unto Him, and according to what He is, separates me thereby from evil. One cannot walk with those who dishonor Him, and, at the same time, honor Him in one's own walk (Synopsis Of the Bible).

Verses 22-26. Exhortations follow pointing out the way the servant of Christ is to walk and serve as a vessel unto honor, and fit for the Master's use. He is to flee youthful lusts and follow righteousness, faith, love and peace, in true fellowship with all who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. His service, under the direction of the Lord, must be among those who are destitute of the truth and who are ensnared by the devil, though they profess to be religious. The servant of the Lord has a solemn responsibility towards such. How he is to act in this service is given in verses 24-26. And blessed are those servants who, walking in true separation, reach out for the unsaved masses of professing Christendom and labor in love in the great house.

III. THE LAST DAYS AND THEIR PERILS

CHAPTER 3

1. The characteristics of the last days (3:1-7)
2. What the last days mean for the true believer (3:8-13)

3. The need of the Word of God (3:14-17)

Verses 1-7. Little comment is needed on these words. They are a prophecy. The apostle by the Spirit of God reveals what shall come in the last days. It is a description of the moral qualities in the vast number of professing Christians of the last days, "who have the form of godliness," that is, go "to church," profess a creed of some sect, and are outwardly religious, "but deny the power thereof." Three times they are shown to be lovers. "Lovers of themselves"--they live for themselves and know nothing of self-denial, they live and walk in the flesh. "Lovers of money"--this is what the word covetous means. Greed controls their activities so that they can enjoy themselves and live luxuriantly and in pleasure. And therefore "they are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

The same class is mentioned in Phil. 3, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, minding earthly things. Their end is destruction. Compare verses 1-4 with the last verses of the first chapter in Romans. There the characteristics, morally, of heathendom are given, and here the characteristics of the professing masses of nominal Christendom. There is no difference between the two, only the condemnation of the profession, the unsaved, religious element in Christendom is greater. There is no need to point out how this prophecy given by the aged apostle has come true. We live in the midst of these conditions, and are surrounded by them on all sides. Evil teachers began in apostolic days to creep into houses, winding about silently like a serpent, and captured silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. How much more true this is today.

Verses 8-13. What true believers may expect in the closing days of this age, if they walk in separation and are faithful in their testimony, is the theme of these verses. Jannes and Jambres were the Egyptian sorcerers who withstood Moses. Jewish tradition gives the information that the magicians of Ex. 7:11-22 bore these names. The Spirit of God assures us here that this is correct. Another Jewish tradition claims that they were the sons of Balaam. They worked by imitations. They produced by Satanic powers certain miracles which were imitations of God's power. Such is the case in our own days. Christian Science, Spiritism and other systems are the sphere where Satan's power of imitation is manifested. Satan also imitates in a still more subtle way the work of the Holy Spirit. All this will work on till finally (after the Church has been called away) the times are reached as prophetically described in 2 Thess. 2:3-12. And like the folly and wickedness of Jannes and Jambres were manifest, so will these deceivers and perverters of the truth be uncovered. This will be when the Lord comes.

How happy in the Lord Paul must have been that he could point to himself as an example. The grace of God had enabled him to be all he writes to his beloved son Timothy. "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long suffering, 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." Paul endured persecutions because he was a faithful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ and did not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." If the believer is true to the Lord, if he lives in separation, the world, and especially that which is called "the religious world," with its unscriptural aims and endeavors, will not applaud him, but he will have to bear the reproach of Christ and suffer persecution. Why do so few

Christians suffer persecutions? Because they have not purged themselves from the vessels unto dishonor, and are consequently yoked with unbelievers.

"But evil men and seducers (juggling impostors) shall wax worse, deceiving, and being deceived." Things morally and religiously are therefore not getting better in this age. There is no hope apart from the coming of our Lord.

Verses 14-17. The inspired Scriptures of God are the need, the supreme need of the believer in the last days. Timothy had known the sacred Scriptures (the Old Testament) from a child, and of these Scriptures Paul writes, "they are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus." He exhorts him therefore, "Abide thou in the things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been assured, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Then the assuring statement of the Holy Spirit, the author of the Scriptures, that all Scripture is inspired of God. It is well known that the revised version has dropped the "is," so that it reads "every Scripture given by inspiration of God." We do not accept this, for it opens the way to deny that parts of the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God.

"We are told we have to read as, 'Every Scripture inspired of God,' as if it distinguished such from other Scriptures side by side with them, and therefore we had to distinguish in like manner. At once the human mind is set in supremacy over the Scripture, and we become judges of it instead of its judging us. But the apostle has been already pointing out the sacred Scriptures of which he is speaking when he says 'all Scripture.' Nothing is Scripture in the sense he uses the word except that which is in the sacred Scriptures, and nothing that is in them is without that inspiration of God which makes it 'profitable for doctrine, for conviction, or instruction in righteousness'" (Numerical Bible).

How important it is to hold fast the great truth that the Bible is the Word of God, and therefore "God-breathed." All apostasy starts with the denial of this fact. The Scriptures are the permanent expression of the mind and will of God. It is not merely that the truth is given in them by inspiration, but they are inspired. They are the expression of His own thoughts. They are our only authority. Upon the constant use of them depends everything. Without adhering to the Scriptures and being obedient to them, we also would be swept along by the current of apostasy. They are the one thing profitable. Note the order: Profitable for doctrine, which we get alone from the Word of God, and which is the foundation of everything. Then follows "reproof" or conviction, and that is followed by correction and instruction for righteousness. It starts with the doctrine and leads, after conviction and correction, to righteousness. And then the man of God, obedient to the Scriptures in all things, is perfect, thoroughly finished unto every good work.

IV. THE LAST WORDS OF THE APOSTLE

CHAPTER 4

1. The last charge (4:1-5)
2. His last testimony (4:6-8)

3. The last personal messages (4:9-22)

Verses 1-5. This last chapter is a most impressive one. It is the farewell of this great man of God. joy and sorrow, confidence and love breathe in his final charge and message. "The sorrow that he might have in his soul was only for those he was leaving, and even that is almost swallowed up in the joyful consciousness of the thought with whom he was leaving them." And so he delivers one more charge, and that solemnly before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who is about to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom. He is as a servant to keep the coming of the Lord, His appearing and His kingdom before his heart.

"The apostle urges this upon Timothy as what would, amid all the difficulties of the way, be his strength and assurance. It is always according to Scripture, 'yet, but a little while, and He that will come shall come, and shall not tarry.' We look back and see how long it has been, and we take this to make the distance behind us put distance into that which is before us. The apostle's way for us would be rather that we should say, 'The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.' We may, after all, go to the Lord before He comes to us, but we shall not have missed the good of having been in the meanwhile 'like unto men that wait for their Lord.' The whole character of our Christianity will be affected by our 'holding fast,' or practically losing sight of His coming, as our constant expectation" (Numerical Bible).

With the thought of the coming of the Lord before his soul, Timothy is charged to preach the Word at all times. The blessed hope gives energy to continue in the ministry of the Word. Preach the Word! The Word, all the Word of God, the gospel and dispensational truth, is needed in the days when sound doctrine is no longer endured. And how all has come to pass! As the Apostle testified even so it is today. Sound doctrine no longer endured, "after their own lusts they heap to themselves teachers, having an itching ear." They care nothing for the message of God, but have man's person in admiration (Jude). They admire the teacher, his great swelling words (Jude). And the teachers and preachers are men-pleasers. And as a result of this their ears are turned away from the truth and are turned to fables, such as evolution, higher criticism, Christian Science and other delusions. In the midst of all this departure from the truth of God, the Lord still maintains His testimony through those who keep His Word and who do not deny His Name (Rev. 3:8).

Verses 6-8. The martyr's death now looms up, and he pens the never-to-be-forgotten words of faithfulness and assurance of the crown of righteousness. "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not only to me, but also to all that love His appearing." Upon the incorrect translation of the Authorized Version "I am now ready to be offered" has been founded that strange theory that the apostle was now ready to die, and had at last the assurance that he was worthy of being a participant in the first resurrection. (See annotations on Philemon 3.) The apostle from the moment he had trusted in Christ had the fullest assurance that he belonged to Christ and was His co-heir; and so every believer knows that he is fitted for glory, not by what he does, or what he has suffered, but through grace alone. To teach that the Apostle Paul received his assurance that he would share the glory of Christ in resurrection, after,

and as the result, of, his prolonged suffering, is pernicious, inasmuch as it denies all the great revelations in his Epistles concerning the standing of the believer in Christ. But he did not say he was ready; his words are, "For I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." Knowing the time of his departure, in which he would have fellowship with His sufferings and be made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:10), his heart contemplated in joyful expectation the moment when he would depart to be with Christ. In this sense he was being already offered, having his heart set upon the early departure to be with His Lord. He had fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. He had been faithful in all things and resisted the attacks of the enemy.

And now he looks forward to the reward. He knew that there is laid up for him the crown of righteousness. He does not say that this crown would be bestowed upon him immediately after he left the earthly tabernacle. He will receive it from the righteous judge in that day, and that day has not yet come. At the same time "all that love His appearing" will receive the rewards. The Lord will come for His saints, as it is promised in the Word of God, and take them to Himself, and the kingdom which follows the rewards for faithful service will be enjoyed. To be in that glory with the Lord, in the Father's house is the blessed destiny of all who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are accepted in the Beloved. No service can secure that destiny. The grace of God puts it on our side. Faithful service will be rewarded in the kingdom. How great the reward that awaits the Apostle Paul in that day! May it be an incentive to all His people to labor on, to spend and be spent.

Verses 9-22. And now the last message of the apostle. How he would have loved to have his beloved Timothy at his side and look into his face once more! "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me." And once more at the close of the letter he writes, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." It was the cry of deepest affection of one who was deserted by others and yet not a lonely man, for the Lord was with him. Demas, a fellow worker and with Paul in his first imprisonment (Philemon 24; Col. 4:14), perhaps a Thessalonian, had forsaken the prisoner of the Lord. It is a mournful record, "having loved the present age, and is departed unto Thessalonica." It is wrong to conclude from this that Demas ceased to be a Christian and had renounced the name of the Lord. He, with love for the present age in his soul, would avoid the cross and its shame, and therefore abandoned Paul. What became of Demas? What was his after-history? The Lord alone knows this.

And Crescens had also gone away to Galatia. We know nothing else of him. Titus went to Dalmatia. It is supposed that Titus joined Paul at Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12) and accompanied him to Rome, and then went to Dalmatia to preach the gospel there. Only Luke, the beloved physician, remained with him, and no doubt he ministered in every way to the comfort of Paul. Then Mark is mentioned. It is the same John Mark mentioned in Acts 13:5 and 15:36-41. For a time after his failure in service Mark was unprofitable. His restoration had taken place, accomplished by the grace of God, and therefore the apostle desires to have him again at his side, "for he is profitable to me for the ministry." And this John Mark became the chosen instrument to write the gospel record which bears his name, in which the Spirit of God describes so blessedly the Servant of all, who never failed.

Tychicus he had sent to Ephesus. Winter approaching he feels the need

of the cloak which he had left with Carpus in Troas. We see that he paid attention even to so small a matter, and that as to his earthly possessions he was poor. He also wants the books, but especially the parchments. He had opportunity as a prisoner to read and study. We do not know what these books and parchments were.

And then the sad record of Alexander the coppersmith. He warns Timothy against him, for he had done him much evil. It must be the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Tim. 1:20. It may be possible that this man became incited against Paul on account of having mentioned his name in the first Epistle, and that he persecuted him for it. "The Lord will reward him according to his works." This is according to God's righteousness. At the time of the apostle's first defence no one took his part, by standing by him; all forsook him. They left him alone and had not the courage to defend him. Beautiful is his prayer, "that it may not be laid to their charge."

But while all men had forsaken him, one had not forsaken His faithful servant. True to His promise, "I will not leave nor forsake thee," He had stood with Paul and strengthened him. And when he stood before the Roman authorities the Lord had given him another opportunity to proclaim the Gospel he loved so well, "that through me the preaching might be fully known, and all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

And then in simple confidence he counted on the help of the Lord to the end. "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

He sends his last greetings to his dearest friends and old companions, Prisca and Aquila and to the house of Onesiphorus. Erastus had remained in Corinth, where he was treasurer (Rom. 16:23). The Ephesian brother Trophimus (Acts 20:4; 21:29) he had left sick in Miletus. Then the final greetings and the last works of his inspired pen, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you."

"It is evident that this Epistle was written when the apostle thought his departure near at hand, and when the faith of Christians had grievously declined, which was proved by their having forsaken the apostle. His faith was sustained by grace. He did not hide from himself that all was going wrong: his heart felt it--was broken by it; he saw that it would grow worse and worse. But his own testimony stood firm; he was strong for the Lord through grace. The strength of the Lord was with him to confess Christ, and to exhort Timothy to so much the more diligent and devoted an exercise of his ministry, because the days were evil.

"This is very important. If we love the Lord, if we feel what He is to the assembly, we feel that in the latter all is in ruin. Personal courage is not weakened, for the Lord remains ever the same, faithful, and using His power for us: if not in the assembly which rejects it, it is in those who stand fast that He will exercise His power according to the individual need created by this state of things" (Synopsis of the Bible).

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