

2 Timothy

Chapter Four

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2Tim 4:1-2 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

Paul uses words that imply a legal obligation to Timothy to carry out the charge of Paul. This must have been very intimidating to Timothy because of his character but he had so much respect for Paul that he would accept the challenge. Paul first tells Timothy to look first at Jesus Christ as the coming judge and king. Paul uses the authority of God rather than his own authority so Timothy would know that the charge was divine. Knowing that he is a servant of God and an ambassador of Jesus Christ would keep him from being deterred from his mission. Paul wrote of the second return of Jesus in his earliest letters and in this letter. He now knows that Jesus will not return before he dies but he still looks forward to it and desires that all Christians should anticipate it with great comfort. Paul knows that when Jesus does return He will come to judge the living and the dead and that He will consummate His kingdom as the reigning King. All will have to give an account of their actions one day and all should keep that time firmly in mind as a way to keep us motivated.

He tells Timothy to preach the word, which Timothy would know is the proper doctrine that he has heard from Paul and consists of the OT Scriptures and the NT teachings of the work of Jesus Christ. The same charge exists today for us to spread the word and only the word. The gospel is indeed “good news” for sinners and should be preached to everyone for only God knows who He will cause to be born again. To be ready in and out of season means at any time and not just in formal teaching situations. The message must be told with a sense of urgency for nobody knows when they will die: *Luke 12:20-21 "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' ²¹"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."*

The word translated “reprove” is sometimes also translated as “convince”. Paul gives Timothy three ways of proclaiming the word: convince, rebuke, and exhort. The Word speaks to different people in different ways and the Christian must use his discernment to know how to speak it to different people. Of course only God can open the eyes and ears of people so that they respond positively to the word but we should be alert to observe what method works best to different people. Some people have fallen into sin and the Holy Spirit has touched them so that they need to hear a message of rebuking but with the message of hope. Other people have already been

born again but need to be exhorted so that they will continue with enthusiasm as a child of God. However we also are to be patient and not use human pressure to force a person to “make a decision”. We are to patiently teach the word and to rely upon the Holy Spirit to perform the miraculous born again process. Only God can prepare people to properly receive the word: *Matt 13:19-23 "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰"And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²²"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."*

Each Christian has a duty to preach the word and God usually will use the combined efforts of men to effect His growth:

1Cor 3:6-9 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. ⁷So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

John 4:37 "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows, and another reaps.'

The only harvest will come from seed planted by God:

Matt 15:13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up.

Matt 13:37 And He answered and said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,

We also are to spread the word with instruction. Kerygma is the proclaiming of the word to unbelievers and includes a summons to repent. Didache is the ethical instruction to Christians. But our kerygma must also include didache so that the message is true. Timothy is told to preach the word with proper instruction as to its application.

2Tim 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; ⁴and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

Paul now gives another basis for the foundation of his charge to Timothy that also includes a future event but not the time of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. From what we have already read from Paul, we know that the situation was already pretty bad but now he says that it

will get worse. This future time will be when people cannot bear to hear the truth. They decide ahead of time what they want to hear and they seek the teachers who will tell them those messages. The more the truth is distorted the more they will seek to hear that message for they hate the truth. We know that Satan hates the truth and has been a liar from the beginning: *John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.* Satan had already been bringing in false teachers as Paul has clearly described previously but he will become cleverer and use distortions of the truth to meet the desires of people. Paul had already warned Timothy of people teaching myths: *1Tim 1:4 nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith.* He had also written such to Titus: *Titus 1:14 not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth.* So some myths were those of Jewish origin but the people only would have ears for myths and the more the truth was distorted the more they would be drawn to the message for they hate the truth.

So has this time already come? Is it yet to come? I would say that it began slowly in Paul's time, escalated during 1400-1500 and is escalating again now. Luther was disgusted at the indulgencies and other works of the Roman Catholic priests and certainly many people liked the concept of being able to buy their relatives out of "purgatory". So certainly this time proclaimed by Paul has come and is coming very strongly now. Preachers today are proclaiming the false gospel of prosperity and have been doing so for fifty or more years. However, today more people are flocking to hear such preachers and certainly do not want to hear that God chooses His people rather than people choosing God autonomously. The PCA denomination sticks to the truth fairly well but it is also a distinct minority among "Christian" denominations. More "Christian" denominations are ordaining homosexual preachers and seeking such for members. It remains to be seen how many perturbations of the truth God will allow before the second coming of the Lord Jesus to judge and reign.

2Tim 4:5-8 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; ⁸in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Paul tells Timothy that in contrast to such false teaching he is to endure hardship and continue to spread the true gospel message. He is not to dilute or distort the message but he is to teach that which many people will find abhorrent since they hate the truth. He is to be sober, meaning that he is not to become spiritual drunk with any power that might accrue from being greatly

followed by people seeking a false doctrine. He is to endure any hardship that results from preaching a pure doctrine of Christianity. He is to make the teaching of the true word his life's work and not let anything detour him from that task. Even if very few people seek the truth and most would rather have their ears tickled, he is to fulfill his ministry so that he will be able to also say that he has fought the good fight when his earth days are over.

It is even more important that Timothy do his work for the work of Paul is at an end. He likens his coming death to that of a drink offering and to a time of departure. He had previously used the same metaphors:

Phil 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;

Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.

The phrase translated “time of departure” has been interpreted by some as a picture of untying a boat from its mooring. The freeing of the boat is a good example for death for the Christian is a freedom from being tied to the earth and being allowed to sail to better places.

He then looks back on his 30 or so years of service to the Lord Jesus Christ and describes it with three expressions. First he says that he has “fought the good fight”. The phrase could also be translated “run the great race” and this would fit with his next expression. Whichever expression is used, we can certainly agree with him from our perspective and we can expect that God was well pleased also. We certainly want to hear the similar words from our Lord: *Matt 25:21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.'*

Secondly he says that he has “finished the course”. Every race had a distinct course marked out and the runners had to stay within the guidelines of the course and cross the finish line. Paul is saying that he has done both. Thirdly he says that he has “kept the faith”. We know that there are two possible Christian interpretations of “faith”. God gives His people faith so that they can believe, obey, and trust Him. Also faith can mean the true doctrines of Christianity. In context we know that Paul is saying that he has preserved the principles of all the doctrines of the gospel message. Certainly he has done that admirably and is now charging Timothy to do the same.

The crowns given to winners of the Olympic Games were made of evergreen leaves and were greatly valued and all such winners were admired by all. But even though Nero will judge him guilty, God will judge him righteous because of the work Jesus Christ did for him. On that great judgment day Paul knows that he will receive the crown of righteousness, not based even upon all the great work done by him but because of the work done by the Son of God. Paul then says that such awaits all who have loved His appearing. All Christians have that goal in our minds and it drives us to also endure hardships and preach the good news gladly to all we are allowed to address in whatever way. Those who hate the concept of Jesus being the Son of God will shrink

away from Him when He comes back but the redeemed will eagerly approach Him with confidence: *1John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.*

Heb 9:28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

God has been building His church for about 2000 years and will continue to build it until it is perfected to present to Christ:

John 17:23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

Col 1:28 And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.

He passes the baton from worker to worker until the day when the final chosen person is redeemed.

2Tim 4:9-13 Make every effort to come to me soon; ¹⁰for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. ¹²But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. ¹³When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments.

Having briefly looked at his past, Paul now looks at his present condition and his future. He wants Timothy to visit him if at all possible and as soon as possible. The desertion of Demas has obviously been very painful to Paul and he does not give enough details for us to know exactly what happened. We cannot know who are born again and who are the pretenders but those not truly redeemed will make it known by their actions when persecution attends their confession or their love of the world overcomes them. Paul had previously mentioned Demas as one of his fellow workers but now he laments that he has shown his true love for the world and gone to Thessalonica:

Col 4:14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas.

Philemon 1:24 as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers.

Paul gives no details on the other three. Crescens is not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. Titus had probably finished his tasks in Crete and gone to another place. Paul does say that he has sent Tychicus to Ephesus so he apparently is still active in the faith. He may be meaning that he has sent Tychicus to take the place of Timothy when he visits him in prison. Faithful Luke is still with Paul and may have been helping write this letter. Mark is also still a faithful servant and Paul asks Timothy to bring him when he comes to visit as he has some tasks for him also. Mark had been a deserter on Paul's first missionary journey but had been restored (Col 4:10; Philemon 1:24; 1 Peter 5:13).

Paul asks for three things: the cloak, some books, and the parchments. The cloak was needed for the cold, damp conditions and he may have left it when he was arrested this last time. The books and parchments would have been needed to keep him occupied mentally in his confinement. The books were probably made of papyrus and many translators think the parchments were copies of portions of the Old Testament.

2Tim 4:14-18 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. ¹⁵Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. ¹⁶At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. ¹⁷But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth. ¹⁸The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

A contributing factor to Paul's ordeal was the opposition he has endured by various people. We do not know the identity of Alexander. He was a worker of bronze and he may have been the same as the heretic described in his first letter to Timothy: *1Tim 1:20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.* Some people suggest that this Alexander was responsible for his second arrest. If this happened at Troas and Timothy would have to go through there on his way from Ephesus to Rome, then such would explain why Paul explicitly warns Timothy of Alexander. Paul was confident that the Lord would repay Alexander for his actions. The first defense is probably his defense after the second arrest. In Roman court a person could call witnesses to defend him against charges. We do not know the explicit charges against Paul but nobody was in Rome who could come to his defense. Paul then had to face his ordeal alone as did Christ: *Mark 14:50 And they all left Him and fled.* Also, like Jesus, Paul asked that the lack of support of any person there not be held against them.

Contrary to the people, the Lord sustained and strengthened Paul so that he could complete his assignment to proclaim the gospel and that all Gentiles might hear it. There is a lot of controversy regarding the identity of the lion. Some think that he is referring to Satan: *1Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.* Others think that he is referring to Nero but, since Paul knew that he was going to die soon, context makes me consider Satan as the most logical reference since God did keep him safe from every evil outside of God's permitted will. He knows that soon he will be brought safely to the Lord's heavenly kingdom as he has served admirably in the Lord's earthly kingdom. Paul has an ending to the letter in verse 18 as he asks that all glory be to Him forever and ever.

2Tim 4:19-21 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. ²⁰Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. ²¹Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

Before completing the letter he asks that Timothy greet some specific people, to give him so information on two other people, to give him some greetings from others, and he asks that he come before winter since he will need his cloak and Timothy's friendship. Prisca and Aquila are fellow workers (Rom 16:3) and he stayed with them in Corinth (Acts 18:2; 1 Cor 16:19). They seem to still be in Ephesus where he last referred to them (Acts 18:26). He had previously mentioned Onesiphorus being in Ephesus (1:16-18) and, as discussed previously, his family was still in Rome. Erastus might be the person described as Corinth's 'city treasurer' (Rom 16:23) and the person Paul sent with Timothy into Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Erastus might have traveled with Paul as far as Corinth as Paul was being taken to Rome for prison. Trophimus was a native of Ephesus and had been one of Paul's fellow companions on his third missionary trip and on the trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-5; 21:29). We do not know the nature of the illness of Trophimus. He then gives the greetings of three men: Eubulus, Pudens, and Linus and one lady: Claudia. Lastly he gives the greetings from all the brethren who were probably people who visited him in prison.

2Tim 4:22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

These are the last recorded words of the great apostle Paul. He has served as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ for about 30 years with no intermission. He is probably within days of being beheaded and he knows that he has fought the good and kept the faith (7) and he knows that he is going to receive his crown of righteousness (8). He may have been previously dictating to Luke but he probably now takes up the pen to write these last words. The word "your" is singular as Paul prays that the Lord uphold Timothy's spirit. The word "you" is plural as Paul expects the letter to be read to many people, including us today. The last part of verse 18 is also a closing statement as Paul asks for glory to be with Jesus Christ forever. He has never asked for glory for himself but always for his Lord. As we read this letter let all of us praise Jesus Christ for His work for us and remember Paul for his faithfulness in giving us such wonderful knowledge of our Lord in all of his writings.