

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY – PASSING THE TORCH OF LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

Not surprisingly, the book of 2 Timothy is closely aligned with 1 Timothy which we studied last Sunday. So much of the background information remains the same.

Let's consider **Paul's Situation** as he writes this epistle from his second Roman imprisonment around 66 AD. So this is the last known letter of Paul that we have.

Let's spell out some of the **Details of his Situation:**

1. Paul was imprisoned this time as a condemned criminal

By contrast, during his first imprisonment:

- He lived in rented quarters (**Acts 28:30**). Book of Acts closes with Paul still in prison
- He received visitors freely.
- He preached the gospel openly.
- He expected release (**Phil. 1:19-26; 2:24; Philemon 22**).

After his release, he apparently enjoyed a brief period of ministry which we can call his **fourth missionary journey** – not recorded in the book of Acts

During his second imprisonment:

- He was confined in a harsh Roman dungeon, probably the infamous **Mamertine Prison**.
- He was chained "*like a criminal*."
"For which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned." (**2 Tim. 2:9**)

The Greek word translated "**criminal**" (*kakourgos*) is the same word used of the criminals crucified alongside Jesus (**Luke 23:32-33**).

2. Nero was emperor

Paul's second imprisonment occurred after the Great Fire of Rome in A.D. 64.

Many historians believe Emperor Nero either started the fire or allowed it to spread to make room for new construction. To divert suspicion, Nero blamed the Christians.

This initiated the first empire-wide persecution of Christians.

According to early Christian writers:

- Christians were burned as human torches.
- Some were sewn into animal skins and torn apart by dogs.
- Others were crucified.

Paul now faced trial in a political climate where merely being a Christian leader could result in execution.

Yet we saw in 1 Timothy that Paul exhorted that prayers be made for all in authority, especially kings and other rulers that could impact the safety and well-being of believers.

3. Paul expected to die soon

Unlike Philippians, where Paul expected release, 2 Timothy reflects certainty that death is near.

"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come." (**2 Tim. 4:6**)

The imagery is significant.

a. A drink offering

The drink offering was poured out completely upon the sacrifice.
Paul viewed his entire life as an offering to God.

b. Departure

The word "*departure*" (*analysis*) was used for:

- loosening a ship from its moorings
- striking a tent
- releasing a prisoner
- beginning a journey

Death was not defeat.

It was simply "breaking camp" to go home.

4. Most of Paul's friends had left

One of the saddest features of 2 Timothy is Paul's loneliness.

Some deserted him

"Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me." (4:10)

Others had departed for ministry purposes:

- Crescens
- Titus
- Tychicus

Still others had abandoned him out of fear.

"All who are in Asia turned away from me." (1:15)

At his first legal defense:

"At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me." (4:16)

Imagine standing trial for your life with no Christian standing beside you.

Yet Paul immediately added:

"May it not be counted against them."

Just like Stephen—and ultimately Jesus—Paul responded with grace.

5. Luke alone remained faithfully with him

One bright spot shines through the letter.

"Only Luke is with me." (4:11)

For decades Luke had accompanied Paul.

Now, near the end, Luke remained faithfully by his side.

This quiet statement beautifully illustrates the ministry of steadfast friendship.

6. Paul longed for Timothy's presence

Repeatedly Paul urges Timothy to come quickly.

"Make every effort to come to me soon." (4:9)

Again:

"Make every effort to come before winter." (4:21)

Winter navigation would soon close the Mediterranean shipping lanes.

Paul knew that if Timothy delayed, he might never see him again.

7. Paul lacked even basic necessities

He requested ordinary items:

"When you come bring the cloak... and the books, especially the parchments." (4:13)

- **The cloak**

Likely needed for warmth in the cold prison.

- **The books**

Probably papyrus scrolls.

- **The parchments**

Perhaps copies of Scripture or materials for study and writing.

Even awaiting execution, Paul wanted:

- warmth,
- fellowship,
- and God's Word.

His passion for Scripture never diminished.

8. He faced opposition from enemies

Paul specifically warned Timothy:

"Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm." (4:14)

Alexander may have testified against Paul before Roman authorities.

Paul entrusted justice to God:

"The Lord will repay him according to his deeds."

9. Yet Paul remained spiritually triumphant

The remarkable feature of 2 Timothy is that Paul's spirit is completely unconquered.

He can confidently say: Key Verse:

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (4:7)

Notice what he does **not** say:

- I built great churches.
- I planted many congregations.
- I wrote many letters.

Instead, his emphasis is **ministry faithfulness**.

10. His confidence rested entirely in Christ

Perhaps the greatest statement comes in chapter 1.

"For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." (2 Tim. 1:12)

Notice:

- Paul does not say, "I know what I believe."
- He says, "I know **whom** I have believed."

His confidence rested in the **Person of Christ**.

As we begin our study of **2 Timothy**, we face 4 major themes immediately:

- 1) Theme of the Last Words of the Apostle Paul to his trusted colleague Timothy – issuing his final charges and exhortations

Paul was a great soldier for Jesus Christ – the last words of one of America’s most memorable generals provide a fitting comparison:

The reported last words of **Douglas MacArthur**, spoken shortly before his death on April 5, 1964, were:

"I remember the hymn."

When those around him asked which hymn he meant, he reportedly replied:

"Onward, Christian Soldiers."

Shortly thereafter, he lapsed into unconsciousness and died at age 84 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

The significance of these words

MacArthur had been raised in a Christian home by his mother, Mary Pinkney Hardy MacArthur, whose deep faith profoundly influenced him throughout his life. Although remembered primarily as one of America's greatest military leaders, he frequently acknowledged **God's providence** in his speeches and writings.

The hymn "**Onward, Christian Soldiers**", written in 1865, begins:

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before."

The hymn portrays the Christian life as a spiritual battle under the leadership of Christ. For a lifelong soldier like MacArthur, it was an especially fitting image.

A fitting conclusion to his life

MacArthur is perhaps even better known for another statement—not his final words, but his farewell to Congress in 1951:

"Old soldiers never die; they just fade away."

He closed that speech by saying:

"Like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty."

Taken together, these statements paint a consistent picture of a man who viewed both military service and life itself through the lens of duty, honor, and, to some extent, faith.

MacArthur's reported last words make an effective illustration of **the lasting influence of spiritual truth**. After decades filled with military campaigns, political controversies, and public acclaim, what surfaced in his final conscious moments was not a battle plan or a speech, but the memory of a Christian hymn learned long before. It reminds us of the **importance of storing God's truth in our hearts**. As the psalmist wrote, *"Your word I have treasured in my heart"* (**Psalms 119:11**). What fills our minds throughout life often emerges in moments of greatest weakness and at life's end.

So what we have here are Paul’s final words – they could not be more significant.

- 2) Theme of the Passing of the Baton of Leadership – from Apostolic Authority to this trusted Apostolic delegate who has been trained to fully implement Christ’s blueprint for His church as we studied last week in 1 Timothy; **Leadership transition** can be a tricky time – It is difficult for someone who has been in such a prominent leadership role as the Apostle Paul to trust the Lord to use different individuals to now take up the torch of

active leadership – You can think back on some of the challenges of leadership transitions that you may have witnessed – maybe not just in the church but in other realms as well

Example: PEF – Dr. Fullerton to Wayne Wever
Pastor Earl Johnson to Pastor Jerry Harmon

3) Theme of Finishing Strong – Persevere to the end – Faithful to the Finish
Paul knew that the Christian life was a **marathon**, not a sprint. He was thankful to be able to testify that he had finished his course with faithfulness and perseverance. He had seen others drop by the wayside. He wanted Timothy to continue on strong in Christian ministry.

I have witnessed key spiritual leaders turn aside from the faith and become shipwreck. It brings great shame to the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ.

4) Theme of Loneliness and Abandonment
Nobody experienced these feelings to the extent of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet certainly Paul had his deep disappointments at not being better supported – especially now at the end of his life. But he was able to strengthen himself in the Lord and in His presence with him.

Don't forget the **challenges facing Timothy** in Ephesus which we covered last week:

- False teachers were majoring in some speculative theology,
- Disorder in worship practices and how to care for certain vulnerable groups in the church community – with a special emphasis on the priority of Prayer
- A need to establish mature godly leaders and more organizational structure from an administrative and oversight function; in particular the proper role of men and women
- Timothy's youthfulness was seen as a liability by some so Paul emphasized the proper motivation and walk of a Christian minister
- Materialism and improper stewardship of wealth

Big Idea: Persevere in the Hard Work of the Gospel Ministry Through Courage and Faithfulness in Preaching the Word in the Face of Growing Opposition

Unlike 1 Timothy, which emphasizes **church order**, 2 Timothy emphasizes **personal endurance**.

Dr. Daniel Wallace: The theme of this short epistle is bound up with the fact that this is both Paul's last letter and it is to his closest companion. Although the apostle could have dwelt on his own accomplishments, he is more interested in making sure that Timothy is prepared to carry on the work. The double emphasis seen throughout is on endurance and faithfulness to the truth. The theme might be summed up this way: "Persevere in the proclamation of the gospel."

Outline:

(1:1-7) INTRODUCTION: DON'T DROP THE BATON!

We can all remember Olympic relay races where dropping the baton doomed a team's chances. How much more important are the stakes in the spiritual warfare where ministry faithfulness is so key.

I. (1:8-2:2) GUARD THE GOSPEL WITHOUT SHAME – A CHARGE TO COURAGE AND FAITHFULNESS

We might think of the charge that God gave to Joshua after the death of Moses:

Joshua 1:7-8 *Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*

II. (2:3-26) ENDURE HARDSHIP -- A CHARGE TO PERSEVERANCE AND GODLINESS IN THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

Nobody could speak more directly and personally to the issue of suffering hardship in Christian ministry than the Apostle Paul.

III. (3:1-17) STAND AGAINST APOSTASY -- A CHARGE TO WITHSTAND THE TOUGH TIMES AHEAD – OF GROWING DEPRAVITY AND OPPOSITION

These are the tough times of the last days in which we still live today as we await the return of our Lord.

IV. (4:1-8) PERSEVERE IN MINISTRY – A CHARGE TO PREACH THE WORD TO THE VERY END

William Hendriksen: There are no sharp divisions. Rather, the emphasis gradually shifts from one point to another. When a new point is made, the old one is not entirely relinquished. The thoughts overlap like shingles on a roof. For example, a key passage in chapter 1 is, “*Do not be ashamed*” (**verses 8, 12, 16**). The idea recurs, however, in chapter 2 (**verse 15**). Similarly, a key passage in chapter 2 is, “*Suffer hardship along with us*” (**verse 3**; cf. **verse 9**). But this has been anticipated in chapter 1 (**verse 8**).

This letter asks searching questions:

- What will I do when faithfulness becomes costly?
- Will I be ashamed of Christ before an unbelieving world?
- Am I guarding the truth, or reshaping it to fit the culture?
- Is God's Word shaping my mind and conduct?
- Will I finish my life faithful to Jesus?

Paul's answer throughout this letter is clear: Remember Jesus Christ, rely on the grace that is in Him, remain in His Word, and **finish the race He has given you**.

PERSEVERE IN THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY THROUGH COURAGE AND FAITHFULNESS IN PREACHING THE WORD IN THE FACE OF GROWING OPPOSITION

(1:1-7) INTRODUCTION: DON'T DROP THE BATON!

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS IS TO BUILD ON A SOLID FOUNDATION OF FAITH WHILE UNLEASHING THEIR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL FOR MINISTRY

Vs. 1 -- *“according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus”* – very forward looking and positive oriented despite facing a death sentence for the cause of Christ; not feeling sorry for himself

Vs. 5 – *For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.*

this book has a lot to say about the **multiplication of disciples** from one generation to the next – look at the key roles played by Timothy’s mother and grandmother; we need to be involved in this process with our children and grandchildren

Vs. 6 -- *“And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”*

How are you kindling afresh the spiritual gift which God has graciously given to you?

Vs. 7 -- *For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*

This verse does not teach that Christians will never feel afraid. Timothy may well have felt fear. The issue is **what controls him**. God does not intend His servants to be governed by cowardice. Through the Holy Spirit, believers are equipped for courageous faithfulness, love toward others, and disciplined self-control.

I. 1:8-2:2) GUARD THE GOSPEL WITHOUT SHAME – A CHARGE TO COURAGE AND FAITHFULNESS

A. (1:8-12) A CHARGE TO COURAGE

PAUL CHALLENGES TIMOTHY TO REJECT FEAR AND EMBRACE SUFFERING IN FULFILLING HIS CALL TO THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

Vs. 8 – Paul says: Don't Be Ashamed

- Don't be ashamed of Christ or His gospel
- Don't be ashamed of Paul or true gospel ministers
- Don't be ashamed of suffering

B. (1:13-18) A CHARGE TO FAITHFULNESS / LOYALTY

PAUL CHALLENGES TIMOTHY TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND TO REMAIN FAITHFUL TO PAUL’S PERSONAL MINISTRY AS THE MESSENGER OF THE GOSPEL

vv. 13-14 *Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁴ *Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*

Actively guard the gospel message = *sound doctrine* = *a treasure entrusted to us*
How much do you value Christian truth?

William Hendriksen: “Paul states that Onesiphorus had *refreshed* him, *had*, as it were, *caused him to breathe more easily*. And Onesiphorus had done this not only once but frequently. Just how the visitor had carried out this bracing and cheering ministry is not stated. Perhaps by his very presence, a presence which implied self-sacrifice and love; furthermore, by bringing news to Paul concerning individuals and churches; by encouraging him on the basis of God’s promises; by bringing him food, drink, literature. One is reminded of the services which, with great danger to himself, Jonathan rendered to David (**I Sam. 18, 19, 20**). Even Paul, a man of dauntless courage and amazing faith, could use encouragement at times.”

C. (2:1-2) THE SOURCE OF COURAGE AND THE GOAL OF FAITHFULNESS

1. THE SOURCE OF COURAGE = THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS

2. THE GOAL OF FAITHFULNESS = REPRODUCING YOUR MESSAGE AND MINISTRY

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² *And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.*

THE POWER OF COMPOUND INTEREST – A REPRODUCING MINISTRY

THE PRIMARY MISSION OF DIVINELY EMPOWERED SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IS TO FAITHFULLY REPRODUCE BOTH THE MESSAGE AND THE MINISTRY

The chain of gospel transmission is only as strong as its weakest link;

cf. the game: “**whisper down the lane**” – all it takes is for one person to blow it to affect an entire generation; fortunately we have the written Word to refer back to – even when the oral teaching is not accurate

You can’t be a minimalist and just try to pass along what you deem to be essential truths – we are charged with transmitting the whole body of truth to succeeding generations

Ray Stedman: “four qualities I look for in someone in order to pass on what I myself have learned:

1) **a searching mind**, a mind that is ready to learn ...

2) **a humble heart**, for somebody who has already learned that truth is bigger than he is. He will have learned that we are to set aside our own egos, that truth is not given to us in order to build up our image in the eyes of people, that we are not to manipulate people to gain standing or prestige among them, but we are to be willing to submit ourselves, to put ourselves down and not seek credit

3) **an evident gift** ... somebody who has a gift of the Spirit that can communicate and impart to others what he himself has learned ...

4) **a faithful spirit** ... he does not quit when the going gets tough ...”

I remember Dr. John Whitcomb at seminary hammering home this key verse – I think it must have been his life verse. Biography written by his son – **A Good and Faithful Servant; p. 60** [book of the week club – Marvin Rosenthal on the Pre-Wrath Rapture; my Princeton thesis – a little harder to obtain; and now this book]

II. (2:3-26) ENDURE HARDSHIP -- A CHARGE TO PERSEVERANCE AND GODLINESS IN THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

A. (2:3-7) THE RIGHT STUFF FOR THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

PAUL USES THREE PORTRAITS TO EXHORT TIMOTHY TO DEDICATE HIMSELF TO THE HARD WORK OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY – FOCUSED ON THE ULTIMATE REWARD

1. **The Dedicated Soldier – Undivided Loyalty** – a dedicated soldier who suffers hardship to please his commander-in-chief
2. **The Disciplined Athlete – Follows the Rules**
3. **The Diligent Farmer – Patient Labor**

B. (2:8-13) KEEP RUNNING THE MARATHON RACE

2 MOTIVATIONS FOR PERSEVERANCE IN THE FAITH AND IN THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

1) (:8-10) KEEP RUNNING THE RACE BECAUSE OUR TESTIMONY IMPACTS THE SALVATION OF GOD’S ELECT

Vs. 8 – Remember Jesus Christ -- At the center of chapter 2 is Paul’s command: remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This protects Timothy from discouragement. Christianity is not merely a moral philosophy or a list of commands. It is grounded in a historical Person: Jesus, the promised Messiah, risen bodily from the dead.

Vs. 10 -- *For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

2) (:11-13) KEEP RUNNING THE RACE BECAUSE GOD GUARANTEES THE OUTCOME

- God’s Guarantee to those who Persevere = live and reign with Christ
- God’s Guarantee to those who Quit = Christ will deny us
(not talking about loss of reward for believers)

Key Principle: God remains faithful to both His promises of blessing and cursing

Ernest Campbell: Re **denying Christ** – “That you may more fully understand the meaning of this verb, let us consider how it is used in the New Testament. In **Acts 3:14**, Peter says, ‘*and you denied the holy and righteous one,*’ i.e., they disowned Him and asked for (owned) a murderer instead. In **Titus 1:16**, Paul says of the Cretans, ‘*They confess to know God, but in works they deny him.*’ This implies that the denial Paul is speaking of may be in the form of contradictory works. In **First John 2:22**, we read, ‘*Who is the liar except the one denying that Jesus is the Christ?*’ This denial of Christ may be by the lips, works, or by both.”

C. (2:14-26) TRUTH AND GODLINESS MUST GO HAND IN HAND

PROPER ETIQUETTE FOR USING THE UTENSILS OF TRUTH

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER OF GOD’S WORD PROMOTES TRUTH AND PURSUES GODLINESS AS A DILIGENT WORKMAN, A VESSEL PURIFIED FOR HONOR, AND A GENTLE BONDSERVANT (IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ERROR – AS OPPOSED TO FALSE TEACHERS)

Vs. 15 Work Hard at Accurately Handling the Scriptures

1. Proper **Manner** -- Diligent – “*Be diligent*” – studying the Word systematically
2. Proper **Motive** -- Accountable – “*to present yourself approved to God*” -- not a man-pleaser; not swayed by popular opinion
3. Proper **Model** -- Faithful – “*as a workman who does not need to be ashamed*” --
4. Proper **Method** -- Competent – “*handling accurately the word of truth*” –
Hermeneutics – principles of interpretation

vv. 20-23 John Stott: “the two sets of vessels in the great house ... represent not genuine and spurious members of the church but **true and false teachers** in the church. Paul is still, in fact, referring to the two sets of teachers he has contrasted in the previous paragraph, the **authentic** like Timothy and the **bogus** like Hymenaeus and Alexander. The only difference is that he changes the metaphor from good and bad workmen to noble and ignoble vessels.”

1. (:20) Discern Good from Evil – Recognizing the Reality of Both
2. (:21) Separate from Corrupting Teachers
3. (:22) Separate from Corrupting Temptations
4. (:23) Separate from Corrupting Thoughts

III. (3:1-17) STAND AGAINST APOSTASY -- A CHARGE TO WITHSTAND THE TOUGH TIMES AHEAD – OF GROWING DEPRAVITY AND OPPOSITION

A. (3:1-9) TOUGH TIMES AHEAD – PART 1

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER MUST BE PREPARED TO STAND AGAINST THE INCREASINGLY BLATANT DISPLAY OF DEPRAVITY UNLEASHED BY APOSTATE HYPOCRITES

Catalog of Corruption / Description of Depravity

1. Their Primary Interests / Motivation / Heart
 - a. “*lovers of self*” = this is fundamental
place themselves first in all things

Example of Christ = did not please Himself – **Rom. 15:3**

b. “*lovers of money*” = this follows closely after

Luke 16:14; 1 Tim. 6:10

money and materialism being the means people pursue for self-gratification

c. “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God*”

Church needs to be careful that it does not buy into this “entertainment” Orientation

2. Their Pride

a. “*boastful*” – Rom. 1:30 – bragging about themselves

b. “*arrogant*” -- James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5 – God is opposed to the haughty

3. Their Perverse Rebellion – in Attitudes and Actions and Relationships

a. “*revilers*” – destructive speech; against both men and especially God

b. “*disobedient to parents*” – rebellious towards authority figures

c. “*ungrateful*” – Luke 6:35; Rom. 1:21

d. “*unholy*”

e. “*unloving*” – without natural affection; cf. growing divorce rate

f. “*irreconcilable*” -- not interested in pursuing peace

g. “*malicious gossips*”

h. “*without self-control*” -- no restraint of their sinful lusts

i. “*brutal*” -- opposite of mild or gentle; untamed and ferocious

j. “*haters of good*”

k. “*treacherous*” – betraying confidences

l. “*reckless*”

m. “*conceited*” – blinded by pride and conceit

4. Their Powerless Hypocrisy

“*holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power*”

B. (3:10-17) TOUGH TIMES AHEAD – PART 2

THE EXAMPLE OF GODLY MENTORS AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE WORD OF GOD EQUIPS THE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL TO PERSEVERE IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION AND GROWING DECEPTION

- Importance of godly mentors – Model yourself after them in these areas:
 - 1. “*Teaching*”
 - 2. “*Conduct*”
 - 3. “*Purpose*”
 - 4. “*Faith*”
 - 5. “*Patience*”
 - 6. “*Love*”
 - 7. “*Perseverance*”
- Sufficiency of the Word of God

Vs. 16 -- Scripture Is Practical

Scripture teaches us what is true, rebukes what is false, corrects what is wrong, and trains us in righteous living. It does not merely inform the mind; it reforms the life.

Consider the four functions:

- Teaching: What does God say is true?
- Rebuking: Where am I wrong in belief or behavior?
- Correcting: How do I return to the right path?
- Training: How do I develop habits of obedience?

IV. (4:1-8) PERSEVERE IN MINISTRY – A CHARGE TO PREACH THE WORD TO THE VERY END

A. (4:1-5) FINAL CHARGE -- PREACH THE WORD

PAUL'S FINAL CHARGE TO HIS YOUNGER PROTÉGÉ: FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY BY PREACHING THE WORD (REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THE MESSAGE IS POPULAR)

Warren Wiersbe – cf. an old maxim for preachers: “He should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted”

(:3-4) DON'T CHANGE THE MESSAGE TO SATISFY POPULAR DEMAND!

A. Apostasy is Inevitable

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”

Trace the downward, compromising path of any major Biblical institution – denomination, seminary, etc.

B. Accommodation Becomes the Rule

“but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires”

C. Adulterated Message Is the Popular Preference

1. *“turn away their ears from the truth”*

2. *“and will turn aside to myths”*

(4:5) THE ESSENTIALS OF THE CHARGE: FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY!

“But you” – in contrast to those false teachers who are willing to accommodate their message to the masses

1. Be Serious-Minded – *“be sober in all things”*

not intoxicated by the thrill of popularity or the enticement of novel doctrines

2. Be Strong in Facing Every Difficulty – *“endure hardship”*

3. Be Stretched to Perform a Wide Range of Ministry – *“do the work of an evangelist”*

4. Summary: *“fulfill your ministry”*

B. (4:6-8) FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL -- A VIEW FROM THE FINISH LINE

A LIFE OF PERSEVERANCE EARNS A PERSPECTIVE OF CONTENTMENT, FULFILLMENT, AND EXPECTATION

1. (:6) PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE PRESENT: CONTENTMENT

- a. Content to be a Living (and Dying) Sacrifice
 “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering”
 Goal = to be pleasing to the Lord
- b. Content to Depart this Pilgrim Existence
 “and the time of my departure has come”

2. (:7) PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE PAST: FULFILLMENT

- a. Image of a Boxer or Wrestler – *“I have fought the good fight”*
 Fulfillment in Fighting the Right Battles
- b. Image of a Marathon Runner – *“I have finished the course”*
 Fulfillment in Running the Entire Course
- c. Image of a Faithful Steward – *“I have kept the faith”*
 With the definite article, Paul here is referring to that deposit of the entire system of sound doctrine, the gospel message in its entirety, the body of truth, to which he had remained faithful to pass it along unchanged to the next generation of spiritual leaders.

3. (:8) PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE FUTURE: EXPECTATION

- a. Reward = *“the crown of righteousness”*

John MacArthur: The context here seems to indicate the crown represents **eternal righteousness**. Believers receive the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification) at salvation (**Ro 4:6, 11**). The Holy Spirit works practical righteousness (sanctification) in the believer throughout his lifetime of struggle with sin (**Ro 6:13, 19; 8:4; Eph 5:9; 1 Pe 2:24**). But only when the struggle is complete will the Christian receive Christ's righteousness perfected in him (glorification) when he enters heaven.

- b. Judge = *“the Lord, the righteous Judge”*
- c. Timing
 - 1) *“in the future”*
 - 2) *“on that day”*
- d. Recipients
 - 1) Apostle Paul – *“not only to me”*
 - 2) *“but also to all who have loved His appearing”* = all true believers
 cf. **1 John 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.*

(4:9-22) FINAL REQUESTS

PAUL'S FINAL REQUESTS REFLECT

- HIS HEART FOR MINISTRY,
- HIS STRUGGLE WITH LONELINESS

- AND HIS ASSURANCE OF HEAVENLY GLORY

CONCLUSION: What Does Faithfulness Look Like?

Second Timothy calls the church to a sturdy, Christ-centered faith.

It calls us to:

- Guard the gospel rather than change it.
- Reject shame and speak of Christ with courage.
- Endure hardship rather than assume comfort is the goal.
- Avoid sin and false teaching rather than accommodate them.
- Remain in Scripture rather than be ruled by cultural pressure.
- Correct others gently rather than quarrel arrogantly.
- Preach the Word rather than entertain itching ears.
- Finish faithfully rather than merely begin enthusiastically.

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- Suffering hardship in the ministry requires a special type of fortitude and perseverance
- The charge to stir up one's spiritual gift and fulfill one's ministry is always challenging
- There is great comfort in being reminded about our eternal security
- The perilous nature of the last days needs to be anticipated in order to live godly in the midst of persecution
- The exhortation to "Finish strong" in light of the future reward keeps things in perspective
- The last words of any man facing imminent death are always particularly revealing