

Study 18: 2nd Timothy Chapter 4

Introduction

This chapter is the last section of the last letter that Paul wrote. It is very melancholy as Paul discusses the bleakness of his future. However, he is comforted from knowing that he had done all that he could for the work of the Lord, and that what was awaiting him was the crown of life.

Body of the Study

Third Appeal – Continued

The work of an evangelist

Paul’s final appeal

Final Instructions to Timothy

Final warnings for Timothy

Final Greetings

Homework and preparation for next week:

- *Read the notes as a review of the study*
- *Re-read all of the notes for the Pastoral Epistles studies in preparation for the next study.*

- *Paul is facing the end of his life. He knows the end is near, yet he has a positive outlook. If you knew that you had only a short time to live, what would you want to do and accomplish in that short time?*
- *Why do you think that Paul was not bitter against the brethren in Rome who had abandoned him in his time of need?*

Notes for study 18: 2nd Timothy Chapter 4

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Third Appeal – Continued

The charge to Timothy to remain faithful in his work continues, as Paul starts the chapter with the bridge *...therefore...* The discussion goes back to the last few verses of chapter 3 – *all scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be complete...* Paul then starts the chapter with *“...I charge you therefore before God...Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage, with all patience and teaching...”* (2:4:1-2). The gist of what he is saying is that because of the preparation we have from the scriptures, we need to be prepared to apply it to the fullest extent at every opportunity (whether it is a convenient time, or otherwise!).

In verse 1, Paul adds the comment concerning the Lord, that *“...God and the Lord Jesus Christ...will judge the living and the dead at His appearing...”* (2:4:1 NKJV). We have here a quite clear statement concerning the judgement. Jesus (in His fullness as God the Messiah), and God the Father will be our judge, and that judgement will occur at the time when He appears for the second time. The reference to the kingdom in this passage is to the future heavenly kingdom, rather than to the church.

Timothy is to be ready to act, and make the most of the opportunities that present themselves, *“...For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths...”* (2:4:3-4 NIV). Those causing the problems in the church (in this case, in Ephesus, although the same applies generically everywhere), did not want to listen to the truth, and would only hear what they wanted to hear. Timothy needed to ensure that the gospel received the maximum effect while ever the opportunity presented itself.

The work of an evangelist

Despite the afflictions which were sure to come upon him (2:3:12), just as they had upon Paul, Timothy was to ensure that he made the most of every situation, and did not over-react *“...But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry...”* (2:4:5 NIV).

Evangelist comes from the same root word (*euangelion*) as the word *gospel*. An evangelist is a proclaimer of the good news – a *gospeller* – who goes about teaching and preaching the good news about Christ. This verse is one of a few where the evangelist is specifically described (the other two are Acts 21:8; Eph 4:11). Here (in the context of these letters), Paul describes the role of an evangelist. Timothy is to correct, rebuke, encourage, and teach. He is to set the disorderly church in order (1:1:3), and to see that the church is instructed in carrying out God’s commands (1:4:6). He is not only to teach, but he is to train men who will be able to teach others (2:2:2), and is to endure the hardships that he will inevitably face (2:2:3) by not quarrelling but rather enduring through gentleness and humility (2:2:24-25).

The evangelist may be permanently located (as Philip was – there is a period of around 24 years between Acts 8:40 and Acts 21), or he may be roaming (as Paul, Timothy, and Titus were).

Paul's final appeal

Paul knew the seriousness of his situation. During his first imprisonment, he was very optimistic of being released. As a Roman citizen he had appealed to the Emperor, and he knew that the charges against him could not be sustained. However the political climate had now changed, and this time it was a different Emperor (Nero) who was the one pursuing him – trying to blame him as the ringleader of the “sect” for Nero’s own folly of burning Rome. Even although Paul knew that he was not guilty of the charges, there was nowhere to appeal. His only hope of escape was for the Lord to arrange his release, just as he had done to Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 12:11), and to Paul himself in Philippi (Acts 16:26).

The circumstances in Paul’s life had also changed. The previous events were much earlier in the history of the church, and much work was yet to be accomplished. Paul had now made 4 or 5 missionary journeys (the three recorded in Acts, the journey to Rome, as well as the fourth missionary journey after his release from the first Roman imprisonment). He had previously written some 10 years earlier *that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ, and made it my aim to preach where Christ was not named* (Rom 15:19-20). At that stage he had almost gone from one end of the Empire to the other, and was later to preach to Kings, to Caesar’s household, and to visit Spain.

This time, Paul knows that his work is finished. He is old (probably around 70), and has had a hard life (2 Cor 11:23-28; 1 Cor 4:9-13). “...*For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...*” (2:4:6-7 NIV). As the end of his life approaches, Paul knows that he has done everything that he could have done for the Lord. He has used the images from athletics on many previous occasions (eg 1 Cor 9:24-27), and as in that passage, he is now ready to receive the prize. “...*Now there is in store 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 longed for his appearing...*” (2:4:8 NIV).

The crown of life that awaits Paul after faithfully completing his life, also awaits everyone who finishes. As Christians, we do not have to be afraid of death, for we know what lies beyond it, and *we know whom we have believed, and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him until that day* (2:1:12).

Final Instructions to Timothy

Timothy is urged to come quickly to Rome to assist Paul. He is feeling alone and low as a result of his situation, and because many of his friends had moved on. Given the circumstances of impending death for being (supposedly) the leader of the sect, anyone who was also seen to be part of the sect was also likely to suffer the same fate. In the Roman letter (written 10 years earlier), there are around 30 named people in chapter 16. But now, most of them seem to have gone underground in the face of the persecution, and only four people are specifically named at the end of this letter.

With the persecution, “...*Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica...*” (2:4:10 NIV). He had been one of Paul’s fellow workers during the first imprisonment, and is mentioned in his letters (Col 4:14, Phm 24). He was not willing to pay the price that Paul was going to pay, and was not willing to forsake the world for his heavenly country. Whilst this verse is often used to teach that Demas abandoned the faith, it could just mean that he has left the persecution in Rome, and has moved to Thessalonica, where he remains a faithful Christian. Likewise, “...*Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has left for Dalmatia...*” (2:4:10).

Luke had been a companion of Paul for many years, first joining him at Troas on the second journey (Acts 16:10), and staying with him for a good part of the first Roman imprisonment, where he gained his knowledge from Paul to write the book of Acts. This time, Luke has joined

Paul again, and was able to minister to Paul as his physician (doctor), which may have given him some immunity from persecution. There is sadness in Paul's words "...only Luke is with me..." (2:4:11).

John Mark (the author of the second gospel, and the nephew of Barnabas), had a falling out with Paul after he left the first journey at Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). This later caused a dispute between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). However, Mark was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Col 4:10), and Paul is requesting Timothy to "...Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry..." (2:4:11 NKJV).

Tychicus had been a previous worker with Paul (Acts 20:4), and delivered the letter to the Colossians (Col 4:7-8), and to the Ephesians (Acts 6:21). He is (presumably) to replace Timothy in Ephesus, having been sent there by Paul.

Timothy was to "...bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come..." (2:4:13 NKJV). Winter was approaching (2:4:21), and the coat would help to keep him warm in the cold prison. Either Timothy was to travel by land, which would have taken him through Troas, where he could collect the coat, or alternately he would be able to be in touch with the brethren in Troas and have the coat brought to Ephesus before he left by ship for Rome.

Paul also wanted Titus to bring with him "...the books, especially the parchments..." (2:4:13 NKJV). At a time when all documents had to be hand written, on hand made paper (or similar), these were very valuable indeed. They were probably scrolls of the Old Testament (although since this is relatively late in the New Testament era, they could have been some of the New Testament writings. Parchment was a writing material made from the skin of sheep or goats, and was of a superior quality to the Papyrus material sourced primarily from Egypt. Manufacture of Parchment was a large industry in Pergamon.

Final warnings for Timothy

Timothy is warned, "...Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm... You must also beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words..." (2:4:14-15 NKJV). Presumably this is the same Alexander mentioned in 1:1:20, who was (also presumably), one of the fallen elders in Ephesus. However, it could be another Alexander somewhere else. Alexander's fight against the gospel would not go unheeded, and Paul notes "...May the Lord repay him, according to his works..." (2:4:14 NKJV).

Paul had already had a preliminary hearing, and at that time, he had been totally abandoned by his friends, lest they also would be arrested for association with Paul. "...At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. ¹⁷ But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth..." (1:4:16-17 NIV)

Timothy is being prepared for the seriousness of the situation that is playing out in Rome. The situation with Paul is very serious, and Timothy may well find himself embroiled in it also. Whilst delivery from Nero (the lion, 2:4:17) was unlikely (he had already escaped after his preliminary hearing), Paul knew that God would deliver him to eternal glory "...The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever..." (2:4:18 NIV).

Final Greetings

Priscilla and Aquila had again moved back to Ephesus, and Onesiphorus had been a great help to Paul whilst in the Roman prison (2:1:16-17). His family were also in Ephesus. Erastus was the director of public works in Corinth (Rom 16:23), and he had stayed in Corinth. Trophimus must have been travelling with Paul, and after he had left Ephesus, Paul must have gone by way of Miletus (not too far South of Ephesus). Trophimus had become sick, and Paul had been forced to

leave him there. This suggests that it was not a great time after leaving Ephesus that the letter was written (but remember that the first letter was written during this period also, most likely from Corinth), and then Paul was going to Nicopolos intending to spend the winter there (Tit 3:12). The time in Nicopolos must have been short, as Paul is now in prison in Rome, has already had a preliminary hearing, and is dreading the coming winter. He requests Timothy to “...*Do your best to come before winter...*” (2:4:21 NKJV).

We don't know whether Timothy reached Rome before Paul was executed, as tradition has it that he was put to death during the summer (May or June) of AD 68. Nero was killed in mid June of AD 68, and it is unlikely that Paul would have been executed soon after Nero, as Nero was the one who was pushing the case against Paul.

Paul sends final greetings from some of the brethren “...*Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers...*” (2:4:21 NIV). His last (preserved) penned words are “...*The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you...*” (2:4:22 NIV).

And so ends the last that we know of the great apostle to the Gentiles, to whom we owe so much, having written almost half of the New Testament.