

SECOND TIMOTHY

In introducing Second Timothy in his book *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter writes: “This second letter to Timothy is the last writing of Paul preserved to us. As such it has a peculiar and touching interest. In it we see Paul’s final attitudes. These are a study all in themselves. Never does the apostle shine in nobler light. His passion for the great work to which his whole energy has been devoted is strong as ever upon him. This parting letter should often be read, especially by ministers and other Christian workers. Never was it message more needed than today.”

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*,¹ states in his introduction to this epistle: “Second Timothy is rather unique in that it recounts the last wishes and advice of a father to his spiritual son (2 Tim 1:2). In this respect it is intensely personal. Paul recalls memories (2 Tim 1:3-5; 3:10-11), gives reminders (2 Tim 1:6-7; 2:8-15), issues commands to be strong (2 Tim 1:8-9; 4:5), identifies false teachers (2 Tim 2:16-19), sounds warnings (2 Tim 3:1-9; 4:3-4), names deserters (2 Tim 1:15; 4:9-18), praises supporters (2 Tim 1:16-18), repeatedly charges Timothy to guard what has been entrusted (2 Tim 1:9-14; 2:1-7), urges him to come quickly (2 Tim 4:9, and requests a cloak and scrolls left behind at Troas (2 Tim 4:13).”

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia observes about Second Timothy: “The requirements in 2 Timothy are (a) that Paul had recently been at Troas, at Corinth, and at Miletus, each of which he mentions (2 Tim 4:13,20); (b) that when he wrote the epistles he was in Rome (1:17); (c) that he was a prisoner for the cause of the gospel (1:8; 2:9), and had once already appeared before the emperor’s supreme court (4:16,17); (d) that he had then escaped condemnation, but that he had reason to believe that on the next hearing of his case the verdict would be given against him, and that he expected it could not be long till execution took place (4:6); (e) that he hoped that Timothy would be able to come from Ephesus to see him at Rome before the end (4:9,21). These requirements cannot be made to agree or coincide with the first Roman captivity, but they do agree perfectly with the facts of the apostle’s release and his subsequent second imprisonment in that city.”

Date:

Halley’s Bible Handbook writes about the date of writing: “The book of Acts closes with Paul in prison in Rome about the year 63 A.D. The common belief is that he was acquitted, returned to Greece and Asia Minor, was later re-arrested, taken back to Rome, and executed about 66 or 67 A.D. This Epistle was written while he was awaiting martyrdom.

OUTLINE OF 2 TIMOTHY by Jon C. Laansma:

- I. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)
- II. Paul’s Charge Based on Timothy’s Conversion and Commission (1:3-18)
 - A. Heritage, Empowerment, the Gospel, and the Apostle’s Example (1:3-14)
 - B. Examples, Bad and Good (1:15-18)
- III. Call for Strength and Endurance in Suffering (2:1-13)
- IV. Dealing with the Opponents (2:14-26)
- V. Paul’s Charge Based on the Character of the Last Days (3:1-4:8)
 - A. Understanding the times (3:1-9)
 - B. Roots and Resources (3:10-17)
 - C. Knowing What to Do (4:1-8)
- VI. Appeal for Timothy to Come and Related Comments (4:9-18)
- VII. Final Greetings and Blessing (4:19-22)

The Text:

- I. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹ Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, part of Tyndale Commentaries.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes about the name Paul: “As a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37-39; 22:26-29; 23:27) Paul would have had three names, a forename (praenomen), a family name (nomen gentile) and a surname (cognomen); additionally it was common to possess an unofficial, informal name (signum or supernomen). Paul’s Jewish name Saul was likely this informal appellation. Paul was most likely his Roman surname (Acts 13:9). It may be that he routinely used the Roman name during the years of his ministry to the Gentiles.”

The Greek text of vv.1 and 2 reads literally: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by [the] will of God, according to [the] promise of life which [is] in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy and peace from God [the] Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Paul addresses Timothy as “my dearly beloved son,” using the Greek word *agapetos*. It is the same word God, the Father used at Jesus’ baptism, where we read: “And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”²

Paul pours out a threefold blessing upon Timothy: *cháris* (grace), *éleos* (mercy) and *eireéne* (peace). The tenderness of Paul’s affection for this young man is palpable. This outburst shows what imprisonment had done to the Apostle emotionally. It had not made him bitter or desperate, but it had brought the best out of him. Actually, we owe the Apostle’s most profound and beautiful epistles to the last years of his life spent in a Roman dungeon.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes: “Mercy is added only in the Pastoral Epistles, apparently for the encouragement of Paul’s dearly beloved son, Timothy, and his ‘own son after the common faith.’”

We don’t read that Paul had been instrumental in Timothy’s conversion. When the two met for the first time in Lystra, Timothy is described as “a disciple.”³ The term “son” therefore has no specific spiritual connotation; it is an expression of special affection.

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “In ... 1 Timothy 1:2 (as in ... Titus 1:4) it is ‘my true child,’ or ‘my own son,’ A.V. The idea broached by some commentators, that this variation in expression marks some change in St. Paul’s confidence in Timothy, seems utterly unfounded. The exhortations to boldness and courage which follow were the natural results of the danger in which St. Paul’s own life was, and the depression of spirits caused by the desertion of many friends (... 2 Timothy 4:10-16). St. Paul, too, knew that the time was close at hand when Timothy, still young, would no longer have him to lean upon and look up to, and therefore would prepare him for it; and possibly he may have seen some symptoms of weakness in Timothy’s character, which made him anxious, as appears, indeed, in the course of this Epistle.

II. Paul’s Charge Based on Timothy’s Conversion and Commission (1:3-18)

A. Heritage, Empowerment, the Gospel, and the Apostle’s Example (1:3-14)

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.

4 Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.

5 I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life — not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time,

10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher.

12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

² Matt. 3:17

³ Acts 16:1

**13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.
14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.**

Paul's intercessory prayer for Timothy was, in the first place, a prayer of thanksgiving. God had done a work of grace in Timothy's life. But Paul's prayer, as stated in v.3, reveals more about the Apostle than about Timothy. He states that he serves God, as did his forefathers. Yet, his forefathers did not serve Jesus in the way Paul had dedicated his life to Christ. What Paul seems to be saying is that the Old Testament worship, which consisted in fellowship with God by means of bringing animal sacrifices, pointed to the reality of Christ's death and resurrection of which the Old Testament rituals were a foreshadowing. Paul's forefathers lived in the expectation of the coming of the Messiah; Paul, who initially persecuted the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, had come to the discovery that the One he persecuted was the One his forefathers had been waiting for.

Paul's reference to the previous generation from which he descended served to remind Timothy of his own spiritual background. We learn from the reference in Acts 16 that Timothy's father was Greek, which may mean that he was not a Jewish proselyte, but a pagan, but his mother was a Jewess, who had converted to Christianity, as had his grandmother.

Bible scholars observe that the way Paul phrases his thoughts in v.3 lacks clarity, because it does not clearly indicate what the object of Paul's thanksgiving is. The context makes clear, however, that Paul simply praises God for Timothy for the testimony of his life and for his spiritual heritage.

It is probably safe to interpret "night and day" as "constantly," or "as often as I can." Paul must have spent some time sleeping, even in the cell of a Roman prison. But Timothy occupied an important part in Paul's daily prayers.

We don't know when Paul and Timothy separated, but evidently the separation had been emotional and Timothy had shed tears. Paul treasured the memory of that moment as proof of Timothy's affection for the Apostle.

There is in Paul's words about Timothy's emotions an interesting interplay between what Timothy went through and what Paul experienced. Timothy's tears speak, of course, of his sadness about Paul's imprisonment, but the reference to Paul's joy at an eventual reunion suggest that Paul had his own tears.

Spending time in a Roman prison was no joyful experience. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* states about imprisonment in Roman times: "The Roman ... military imprisonment consisted in chaining the prisoner by one or both hands to the soldier who watched him (Acts 12:4; 21:33), or if the offender was in prison, in putting his feet in the stocks (16:24)." It was the most severe form of physical restriction imaginable. It is true that when Paul was imprisoned with Silas, as we read in *Acts*, they overcame their misery by singing, but that does not mean that their circumstances gave them anything to sing about. Paul's tears must have matched Timothy's under those circumstances.

Yet, Paul's prison experience had not quenched the fire in his soul. We learn this from what he wrote to the church in Philippi. We read there: "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."⁴

The Pulpit Commentary comments: "St. Paul knew Timothy to be cast down and depressed by his own imprisonment and imminent danger, and therefore exhorted him to revive 'the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,' which was given him at his ordination. The metaphor is taken from kindling slumbering ashes into a flame by the bellows, and the force of *ana* is to show that the embers had gone down from a previous state of candescence or flame — 'to rekindle, light up again.' It is a favorite metaphor in classical Greek."

Barnes' Notes observes about the kindling of the flame in Timothy's heart: "The original word used here denotes the kindling of a fire, as by bellows, etc. It is not uncommon to compare piety to a flame

⁴ Phil. 1:12-14, 20-24

or a fire, and the image is one that is obvious when we speak of causing that to burn more brightly. The idea is that Timothy was to use all proper means to keep the flame of pure religion in the soul burning, and more particularly his zeal in the great cause to which he had been set apart. The agency of man himself is needful to keep the religion of the heart warm and glowing. However rich the gifts which God has bestowed upon us, they do not grow of their own accord, but need to be cultivated by our own personal care.”

We do not learn what was the particular spiritual gift Timothy received at the time of his ordination to the ministry. There must have been a meeting at which, not only Paul, but several elders laid their hands on Timothy, dedicating him to the Lord’s service. We read in the same kind of exhortation in I Timothy: Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”⁵

The Greek text of v.7 reads literally: “For God has not given us [the] spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” The Greek word, rendered “sound mind” is *sophronismos*, which is derived from a word meaning “discipline.” This is the only place in Scripture where this word is found.

Barnes’ Notes comments: “The Greek word denotes one of sober mind; a man of prudence and discretion. The state referred to here is that in which the mind is well balanced, and under right influences; in which it sees things in their just proportions and relations; in which it is not feverish and excited, but when everything is in its proper place. It was this state of mind which Timothy was exhorted to cultivate; this which Paul regarded as so necessary to the performance of the duties of his office. It is as needful now for the minister of religion as it was then.”

We interpret “discipline” in this context as meaning primarily “self-discipline.” The Holy Spirit helps us to keep our mind and us under control. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul stated: “Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”⁶ Some interpret “I beat my body” literally, but that may not be what Paul meant. It probably just means a form of self-discipline. *The Pulpit Commentary* doesn’t like the word. We read: “‘Discipline’ is not a very happy rendering, though it gives the meaning; ‘correction,’ or ‘sound instruction,’ is perhaps nearer. It would seem that Timothy had shown some signs of weakness, and had not boldly reprovved and instructed in their duty certain offenders, as true love for souls required him to do.”

The Adam Clarke’s Commentary comments on the “sound mind” idea: “A sound mind implies much more; it means a clear understanding, a sound judgment, a rectified will, holy passions, heavenly tempers; in a word, the whole soul harmonized in all its powers and faculties; and completely regulated and influenced, so as to think, speak, and act aright in all things. The apostle says, God hath given the spirit of these things; they are not factitious; they are not assumed for times and circumstances; they are radical powers and tempers; each produced by its proper principle.”

But the whole idea seems to be that the presence of the Holy Spirit in one’s life does not automatically produce self-control. The “self” is the ultimate key in keeping control, but it may call upon the Spirit for help. One of the most encouraging truths in this all is that the Holy Spirit is there to help us to do some clear thinking. The idea that surrender to the Gospel message muddles the mind is nonsense.

Timothy may have been shy by nature. But God’s call upon his life could enable him to overcome his natural shyness. *The Matthew Henry’s Commentary* observes: “The spirit God gives to his ministers is not a fearful, but a courageous spirit; it is a spirit of power, for they speak in his name who has all power, both in heaven and earth; and it is a spirit of love, for love to God and the souls of men must inflame ministers in all their service; and it is a spirit of a sound mind, for they speak the words of truth and soberness.” It is the One in Whose Name we speak Who will help us to overcome all natural reservations. Public speaking may seem frightening to some. The Holy Spirit is there to help us. What Jesus said about speaking when being interrogated by a government official who is hostile to the Gospel, can be applied to other circumstances as well. We read: “When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”⁷ In public speaking for the Lord’s sake, we may remind the Lord and ourselves of this promise.

⁵ I Tim. 4:14

⁶ I Cor. 9:26,27

⁷ Matt. 10:19,20

Whether Timothy was actually embarrassed about Paul being in prison, we don't know. He must have known that Paul's imprisonment was not crime-related. In some situations, imprisonment is considered honorable. During the Second World War, when we lived under Nazi occupation in the Netherlands, my father spent time in a prison for political prisoners. This was widely considered to be an honor among the Dutch. It seems that Paul was proud of his imprisonment; writing to the Corinthians, he boasted: "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again."⁸

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes about Paul's prison experiences: "Paul was no stranger to prison. Acts records imprisonments in Philippi (Acts 16:16-40), Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-23:22), Caesarea (Acts 23:23-26:32), and Rome (Acts 27:1-28:31). Second Corinthians 11:23, written at the time of Acts 20:1-2 (AD 55-56), implies that there were in fact several imprisonments prior to that time (in addition to Philippi), leaving the total number unknown."

The context suggests that Timothy lived in an environment in which imprisonment for political or religious reasons was not well-known. Timothy's peers might have looked down upon him when they learned that he associated himself with prisoners, whoever they were.

It may also be that Timothy's realization that his Christian testimony could lead to his own imprisonment, made him hesitant to speak to others about salvation in Christ.

It was not only the shame of Paul's imprisonment, but shame of the message that Paul writes about. Crucifixion was considered to be the most shameful way to be executed. It was a punishment reserved for the scum of the nation. To preach a Messiah who died on a cross was a message that would go against the grain of all human acceptance. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."⁹

Paul invites Timothy to "join with [him] in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God." There is a price to be paid for holy living. Elsewhere Paul compares serving Christ with joining the army and experiencing the trauma of warfare.¹⁰ That kind of suffering is both physical and emotional.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, observes: "There is a tight cause-and-effect relationship between faithfulness in Paul's roles and suffering (3:12), a point that Paul wanted Timothy to accept. The words 'that is why,' which begin 1:12, establish that relationship; the way 1:12 resumes 1:8 and the repetition of the theme of suffering at 2:3; 3:12; 4:5 ... and 4:14-16 suggest the desire to deeply impress this point. Until Jesus returns, the plot of his own story will be played out again and again by his disciples, who take up their crosses and follow. In this way, those who preach the appearing of Christ Jesus do more than simply narrate it in speech; they embody it and reenact it through their lives. This is a general theological fact that Paul makes clear through his own example. At this point he does not develop the inner logic that accounts abstractly for the reason that a preacher of the Good News will suffer ... But he takes up the concrete fact of his own present situation and states that these roles in fact account for his present 'suffering here in prison.' He may be chained in a Roman prison as a criminal (2:9), but his conscience was clear (1:3) as he accepted the fact accorded the genuine prophets of God."

The factor that made Paul decide that suffering for the cause of Christ was worth it, was the grace of God. Salvation was not something that could be earned by performing certain acts. As a matter of fact, most of the time it is when we do things that oppose the Gospel message, God surprises us by saving us. C. S. Lewis calls the call upon his life "Surprised by Joy." It was when Paul was in the process of persecuting the church that Jesus called him and turned his life around.

Paul says here some very remarkable things about God's purpose with the lives of those He calls. In stating that it was "before the beginning of time," he points to eternity. *The Greek Interlineal Bible* uses the words *chrónoon aiooníoon*, which can be rendered "time eternal." The Apostle John expresses the same thought in the phrase "the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world."¹¹ For us, who live within the boundaries of time and space, it is difficult to understand how something that happens in time can have existed before time began. When we enter eternity, we may be able to better understand.

⁸ II Cor. 11:23

⁹ I Cor. 1:23,24

¹⁰ II Tim. 2:3

¹¹ Rev. 13:8

Paul relates the principle of God's eternal plan with human lives to his own call as well as to the fact of the Incarnation, the death of Christ and His victory over death, which opened the gate of eternal life to all who want to enter.

The discovery that God's plan with our life was conceived before we were born, even before the world in which we were born was created, is too mind-boggling to analyze.

Paul uses three terms in the job description God had given him: "herald," "apostle" and "teacher." The Greek text uses the words *kerux*, "preacher," *apóstolos*, "a delegate," and *didaskalos*, "an instructor."

Paul makes no effort to soften the blow of Timothy's call to the ministry. It will be hard and it will hurt. It means fighting a war against an enemy who will do everything to discourage and unarm his opponent. Unless Timothy is aware of that and prepares himself for battle, he will not be able to endure the fight, let alone be victorious. When Paul writes later in this epistle: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith,"¹² he implies that losing the faith would have been a real possibility. Unless one keeps in mind the reason for fighting a war, the war will not be worth fighting. Paul holds up his own suffering for Timothy to see. That way Timothy will realize that it can be done. Paul will be his example as he follows Christ in taking up his own cross.

The Pulpit Commentary states: "The apostle adds the weight of his own example to the preceding exhortation. What he was exhorting Timothy to do he was actually doing himself, without any wavering or hesitation or misgiving as to the result."

V.12 is a difficult verse to analyze. The Greek text reads literally: "For [the] which course I also suffer these things: Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." The difficult word is the Greek word *paratheke*, "a deposit, or "trust." The word is only found in Paul's two letters to Timothy.¹³

The Adam Clarke's Commentary states: "This is variously understood. Some think he means his life, which he had put, as it were, into the hands of Christ, in order that he might receive it again, in the resurrection, at the great day. Others think he means his soul. This he had also given into the hands of his faithful Creator, knowing that although wicked men might be permitted to take away his life, yet they could not destroy his soul, nor disturb its peace. Others think that he is speaking of the Gospel, which he knows will be carefully preserved by the great Head of the church; for, though he shall be soon called to seal the truth with his blood, yet he knows that God will take care that the same truth shall be proclaimed to the world by others, whom God shall raise up for that very purpose."

Barnes' Notes comments more extensively: "[And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him] That is, the soul, with all its immortal interests. A man has nothing of higher value to entrust to another than the interests of his soul, and there is no other act of confidence like that in which he entrusts the keeping of that soul to the Son of God. Hence, learn:

(1) that religion consists in committing the soul to the care of the Lord Jesus; because:

- (a) We feel that we cannot secure the soul's salvation ourselves.
- (b) The soul is by nature in danger.
- (c) If not saved by him, the soul will not be saved at all.

(2) That the soul is a great and invaluable treasure which is committed to him.

(a) No higher treasure can be committed to another;

(b) In connection with that the whole question of our happiness on earth and in heaven is entrusted to him, and all depends on his fidelity.

(3) It is done by the true Christian with the most entire confidence, so that the mind is at rest. The

FOUNDATIONS of this confidence are:

- (a) what is said of the mighty POWER of the Savior;
- (b) his promises that he WILL keep all who confide in him (compare the notes at John 10:27-29);
- (c) experience-the fact that those who HAVE trusted in him have found that he is able to keep them.

(4) This act of committing the soul, with all its interests, to the Savior, is the true source of peace in the trials of life. This is so because:

- (a) having done this, we feel that our GREAT interests are secure. If the SOUL is safe, why need we be disturbed by the loss of health, or property, or other temporal comforts? Those are secondary things. A man who is shipwrecked, and who sees his son or daughter safe with him on the shore, will be little concerned that a casket of jewels fell overboard-however valuable it might be:

¹² II Tim. 4:7

¹³ I Tim. 3:20; II Tim 1:14

(b) All those trials will soon pass away, and he will be safe in heaven.

(c) These very things MAY further the great object—the salvation of the soul. A man’s great interests MAY be more safe when in a prison than when in a palace; on a pallet of straw than on a bed of down; when CONSTRAINED to say, ‘Give us this day our daily bread,’ than when encompassed with the wealth of Croesus.

[Against that day] The day of judgment-called ‘THAT day,’ without anything further to designate it, because it is THE great day; ‘the day for which all others days were made.’ It seems to have been so much the object of thought and conversation among the early Christians, that the apostle supposed that he would be understood by merely referring to it as ‘THAT day;’ that is, the day which they were always preaching about, and talking about, and thinking about.”

The Pulpit Commentary observes: “The ground of the apostle’s confidence, even in the hour of extreme peril, was his perfect trust in the faithfulness of God. This he expresses in a metaphor drawn from the common action of one person entrusting another with some precious deposit, to be kept for a time and restored whole and uninjured. All the words in the sentence are part of this metaphor ...

What the *paratheke* was may be difficult to express in any one word, but it comprised himself, his life, his whole treasure, his salvation, his joy, his eternal happiness — all for the sake of which he risked life and limb in this world, content to lose sight of them for a while, knowing that he should receive them all from the hands of God in the day of Christ. All this hangs perfectly together. There can be no reasonable doubt that *paratheke mou* means, ‘my deposit’ — that which I have deposited with him. Neither is there the slightest difficulty in the different applications of the same metaphor in ver. 14 and in ... 1 Timothy 6:20. For it is as true that God entrusts to his faithful servants the deposit of the faith, to be kept by them with jealous fidelity, as it is that his servants entrust to him the keeping of their souls, as knowing him to be faithful.”

The most important lesson to be drawn from Paul’s statement is the fact that Christ can be trusted and that it is the most reasonable thing to do to entrust oneself to Him and His safekeeping. The ground for our eternal security is not in us but in Him. We are secure in our salvation as long as we keep our eyes on Jesus. This is well illustrated in Peter’s experience in his effort to walk on water.¹⁴

Having given the example of his own suffering for Timothy to follow, Paul now exhorts Timothy to take his preaching of the message as a paradigm for his own preaching. This refers, first of all, to the content of the message. The Greek text of v.13 reads literally: “Hold fast [the] form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which [is] in Jesus Christ.”

The Greek word *hupotuposis* refers to “a sketch.” *The Adam Clarke’s Commentary* comments: “The word *hupotuposis* signifies the sketch, plan, or outline of a building, picture, etc.; and here refers to the plan of salvation which the apostle had taught Timothy.”

We must remember that at the time of Paul’s writing, none of the Gospels had yet been written. All Timothy could have known about the Person of Jesus and the significance of His death and resurrection was in the message that had been conveyed orally.

A touching feature in Paul’s admonition to Timothy is the reference to the Holy Spirit, which is the same Spirit of God that had taken His residence both in Paul and in Timothy.

B. Examples, Bad and Good (1:15-18)

15 You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

16 May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.

17 On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me.

18 May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

The Greek text of v.15 reads literally: “This you know, that all they which [are] in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.” The key verb in the sentence is *apostrepho*, which, in some contexts, carries a sense of perversion. In some versions the verb is rendered “has deserted.” Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “This translation of the aorist verb *apostrephēsan*

¹⁴ Matt. 14:29,30

(to turn away from by rejection...) implies that the desertion had taken place (recently?) in Rome. The Greek allows that this desertion may have occurred in Asia—possibly in connection with Paul’s arrest—and that Paul was looking back on that experience. For the moment the main point probably concerns the fact ... of the desertion as an example for Timothy and other readers to avoid. Yet taken together with 4:9-20 it does contribute to a more general picture of Paul’s present isolation and abandonment. It is possible that Paul saw in this act an abandonment of the gospel itself.”

Phygelus and Hermogenes are mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, so we don’t know who they were or what Paul’s connection with them had been. Paul may have considered them to be good candidates for the preaching of the Gospel, but in this he had been disappointed.

Onesiphorus is only mentioned twice in Scripture, both times in this letter to Timothy.¹⁵ He was a Christian whom Paul befriended while in Ephesus. The way the text reads suggests that Onesiphorus traveled to Rome on business and that he made extraordinary efforts to locate where Paul was held in prison, so he could visit him. The fact that his visits were a refreshment to Paul is an indication of his loneliness and feeling of abandonment.

Barnes’ Notes observes: “This man, so kind to the great apostle, will be among those to whom the Savior will say, at the final judgment, ‘I was in prison, and ye came unto me;’ Matt 25:36.” The author of Hebrews may have had Onesiphorus in mind when he wrote: “You sympathized with those in prison.”¹⁶ And: “Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”¹⁷

The amazing fact remains that we owe Paul’s richest epistles to his imprisonment, both in Rome and elsewhere. Paul’s ministry while in prison surpassed all he did on his evangelistic travels. Our most miserable moments may turn out to be, to use the title of Winston Churchill’s book, written about the Nazi bombardments of London: “Our finest hour.”

On the day Onesiphorus stood before Christ, his name must have been found in The Book of Life and his visits to Paul in prison in Rome must have been mentioned and turned into a jewel on his crown.

III. Call for Strength and Endurance in Suffering (2:1-13)

1 You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs — he wants to please his commanding officer.

5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules.

6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.

7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel,

9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained.

10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

11 Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him;

12 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;

13 if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

In addressing Timothy here, Paul uses the Greek word *téknōn*, “son.” This word is related to the Greek word for “to beget,” suggesting that Paul believed Timothy to be his spiritual son. The NLT reads: “Timothy, my dear son ...”

The thought of being strong in the grace that God gives in Christ Jesus is remarkable. How can one be strong in grace? It means renouncing any other source of strength, knowing oneself to be weak.

¹⁵ See II Tim. 4:18.

¹⁶ Heb. 10:34

¹⁷ Heb. 13:3

The Pulpit Commentary comments: “The strength, Timothy is reminded, by which he was to fight the good fight, was not his own, but that which would come to him from the grace and love of Jesus Christ (comp. ... 1 Corinthians 15:10; ... Philippians 4:13).”

There is also a touching element in the fact that Paul emphasizes his affection for Timothy and then sends him away, so to speak, as a soldier in the army. Parents who have seen their children enlist in the military would be able to empathize with Paul. It is difficult to see a loved one being exposed to dangers that could lead to death. Paul needed the same strength that he advises Timothy to avail himself of.

But before elaborating that part of his advice, Paul outlines a strategy that could be called the ground rule of evangelization. The most effective way to preach the Gospel is not by holding mass meetings, although that must not be neglected, but to disciple people who can disciple others. One-on-one evangelism is the best strategy. In order to spread the Gospel seed over the most fields it is better to train farmers than to do most of the sowing oneself.

This means that what is needed is not only to explain the way of salvation, but to teach others how to share their faith.

All this is done in a war-situation. The devil will do his utmost to prevent one-on-one evangelism. He will use disappointments and difficult circumstances to discourage us. He will try to keep likely candidates away from us. We do well to ask the Lord, not only to give us the words to say, but also the people to whom we can say them.

Timothy had Paul as an example of evangelism. He had attended the meetings where Paul preached and counseled people personally.

Paul uses a series of illustrations to make Timothy understand how serving the Lord Jesus works in everyday life. Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, heads this section with: “A Good Soldier, Athlete, and Farmer.” We read: “The call ‘to be strong’ (2:1) is resumed and reinforced with a rapid-fire series of comparisons drawn from the military, athletics, and agriculture. Paul called upon Timothy to ‘endure suffering along with [him],’ both in terms of how Timothy is to conduct himself in obeying 2:1-2 and in terms of what manner of life he should pass along with Paul’s teaching to the trustworthy people (cf. 3:10-17). This resumes and carries forward a theme that runs through the whole letter (1:8, 12; 2:9; 3:12; 4:5): giving voice to the fresh experiences of suffering on the part of the writer, the anticipated effect of the same on the reader, and the expectation of suffering for ‘everyone who want to live a godly life in Christ’ (3:12). Suffering is the context in which the Lord’s strength will be realized (see 2:1). The most immediate test of obedience to this command will be Timothy’s willingness to come to Rome, where his association with Paul would pose serious risks for Timothy ... The number of times Paul returned to this theme in this brief letter supports the idea that if Timothy had not already displayed some hesitation, Paul found it necessary to act against the possibility of it. The triad of comparisons—soldier, athlete, farmer—was also employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:7, 24-27 and was used similarly by other writers in the Greco-Roman world. For the present purposes a mere mention of each suffices. Each of the three comparisons in its own way represents a life that requires discipline, resolve, well-defined commitments, application, sacrifice, and endurance; and when so done, that yields a proper reward.”

Timothy may have been concerned about his support. Who would provide for his daily needs as he went around as an itinerant evangelist? Paul assures him that the Lord will provide. He had his own experience at this point, which was, at some times abundance and at others trying. To the church in Corinth he wrote: “I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.”¹⁸ A call to serve Christ may be a call to suffer for Him.

V.4 has an interesting construction in Greek. It reads literally: “No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of [this] life; that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier.”

The Greek verb for “to war” is *strateuomai*, which, in some case simply means “to be a soldier,” as in the verse: “Then some *soldiers* asked him, ‘And what should we do?’”¹⁹ The phrase “him who has chosen him to be a soldier” is one single word in Greek: *stratologeésanti*. It is only found in this verse in the New Testament.

What Paul is saying is that Timothy’s support is God’s responsibility as long as Timothy is intent upon pleasing God in the way he serves Him. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “The great lesson here

¹⁸ II Cor. 11:27,28

¹⁹ Luke 3:14

taught is that the warfare of the Christian soldier requires the same concentration of purpose as that of the earthly warrior, if he would win the victory.”

There have been situations in world history in which soldiers were not being paid by those who employed them, which meant that they supported themselves by stealing from the civilians whose country they invaded. In some situations some well-paid military would steal also. Those who are paid to kill often have no qualms about honesty.

Having used military service as an example of support as it was known in the Roman army at that time, Paul proceeds to outline the rules. For this he uses the Olympics as an illustration.

Verse 5 is also interesting in Greek. It reads literally: “And also if strive for masteries, a man is not [yet] crowned unless he strive lawfully.” The words “strive for masteries” is the single word *athleé* in Greek. The literal meaning is “to contend in the competitive games.”

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary remarks: “As a soldier, the believer is one of many; as an athlete, he has to wage an individual struggle, and that continually, bearing the discipline of the preparation as well as the conflict.” *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* observes about “striving lawfully”: “This implies both the training for the contest and the rules governing it.”

In the illustration which compares evangelism as going to war, the emphasis is on the discipline of service; in the one about competing, it is on following the rules of the game. In most games the rules are the most important part. Breaking of the rules in some sports would cancel the game. It would be impossible, for instance, for a chess player to make up his own rules for the way to move his pieces.

The third illustration of the farmer and his crop, doesn’t speak about the harvest, but is used here to exemplify support.

Using the Old Testament temple service as an example, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”²⁰

Unfortunately, Paul does not give any suggestions as to how this ought to be put in practice in the churches.

Bible scholars have labored over the meaning of Paul’s advice. Some stress the point that Timothy must understand that he will have to work first before he can expect support. *Barnes’ Notes*, for instance, states: “The point was not that the husbandman would be *the first one* who would partake of the fruits; but that he must *first labor* before he obtained the reward. Thus understood, this would be an encouragement to Timothy to persevere in his toils, looking onward to the reward. The Greek will bear this construction, though it is not the most obvious one.”

It seems clear, however, that a farmer would not sell the entire crop he harvests and not hold back enough food to feed himself and his family. Some scholars see a spiritual application in these words, rather than an advice about finances.

Quoting some other theologians, Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “... the emphasis of this statement as a whole is on the importance of devoted service and hard work more than on the reward. The latter seems the better perspective, following on the exhortation of 2:3. To this we may add that the world also values hard work, but the fruit (certainly belonging to the Kingdom here) that is sought and valued determines the focus of the labor (Matt 6:19-21; John 6:27) and the level of energy that is warranted.

Paul does not elaborate on this triad of comparisons; rather, he urges Timothy to make his own reflections: ‘Think about what I am saying.’ To this Paul added, ‘The Lord will help you understand all these things’ (2:7). Since Timothy had just been told to think about what Paul was saying, this statement does not mean a bestowal of understanding that simply bypasses normal thinking processes. Having spent as much time with Paul as he had, Timothy can doubtless call to mind countless applications he had heard Paul make, and perhaps, in the particulars of his present circumstances, something more pointed. Assuredly they would relate to the false teachers, who demonstrated either directly or indirectly an aversion to the cross-bearing and single-minded devotion that is symbolized in these metaphors. The above comments make for at least the beginning of our own obedience to Paul’s exhortation to think.”

The Greek text of v.8 reads literally: “Remember [that] Jesus Christ was raised from [the] dead of [the] seed of David according to my gospel.” This is a most remarkable verse! Paul seems to emphasize two aspects regarding the Person of Jesus Christ, which Timothy must keep in mind in order to become an

²⁰ I Cor. 9:13,14

effective evangelist. The first one is the humanity of Jesus; physically, He was a descendant of David. The title “Son of David” runs as a scarlet thread of promise through the Old Testament. He is the promised Messiah, the hope of Israel and of the world. He is the fulfillment of God’s promise to Eve, the One who would crush the serpent’s head.²¹ Although Paul does not mention Christ’s divinity in this verse, that doesn’t mean, of course, that he denied it. But since the emphasis is on Christ’s resurrection from the dead, His humanity is highlighted. As God, He could not die. Only in taking upon Himself the body of a mortal human being in the Incarnation, could He become the Savior of the world, conquering death by submitting Himself to it. The Greek verb *egegerménon* is the perfect passive participle of the verb *egeiro*, which simply means “to get up.” It is used in the verse in which Jesus says to His disciples in Gethsemane: “Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”²²

What Paul seems to say to Timothy is “Remember the resurrection!” Since death is the ultimate cause of man’s despair in life, the message of the Gospel, the Good News, is “Christ is risen!” God became human to conquer death and open the gate of eternal life for us. That message is the answer to our deepest need.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary observes that the way the verbs are used in this text “underscores the fact that he rose and now lives.” The most important statement of the core of the message is found in the words Jesus addressed to the Apostle John in Revelation, saying: “I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”²³

Although the word “chained” appears twice in v.9 in the NIV’s rendering, the Greek uses two different words. The Greek text reads literally: “Wherein I trouble, as an evildoer, [even] unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound.” The Greek word, rendered “bonds” is *desmon*, “shackle.” It refers to literal shackles like handcuffs, but it is also used in a figurative sense, as in the verse: “And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”²⁴ The second “chained” is the rendering of the Greek word *deo*, “to bind,” as in the verse: “They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.”²⁵

Paul may have been chained physically to two Roman soldiers, who served as his guard for a certain period and then were released to be replaced by two others. Tradition has it, that Paul used the opportunity to explain the Gospel message to each of these guards, thus preaching the Gospel to a rather large number of military. In a way, Paul’s inner freedom as a soldier of Christ made him the free man and his guards the shackled ones.

Commenting on Paul’s words “God’s word is not chained,” *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “A beautiful reflection of an utterly unselfish mind! The thought of his own bonds, likely soon to be exchanged for the bonds of a martyr’s death, awakens the comforting thought, Though they bind me with an iron chain, they cannot bind the gospel. While I am here, shut up in prison, the Word of God, preached by a thousand tongues, is giving life and liberty to myriads of my brethren of the human race. The tyrant can silence my voice and confine it within the walls of my dungeon; but all the while the sound of the gospel is going through all the earth, its saving words to the ends of the world; and I therein rejoice, yea, and will rejoice; and not all the legions of Rome can take this joy from me.”

The New Living Translation reads vv.9 and 10 as: “And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained. So I am willing to endure anything if it will bring salvation and eternal glory in Christ Jesus to those God has chosen.”

Vv.12 and 13 are probably the text of a hymn that was sung in the Christian congregations of Paul’s day. Paul calls the text of the hymn “a trustworthy saying.” The Greek word used is *pistos*, which in some cases is used of *trustworthy* servants.²⁶

Some Bible scholars believe that Paul refers to baptism in which a person identifies himself with the death of Christ. This may be true, but in Paul’s own circumstances physical death was a real possibility

²¹ Gen. 3:15

²² Matt. 26:46

²³ Rev. 1:18

²⁴ Mark 7:33-35 - KJV

²⁵ Matt. 27:2

²⁶ Matt. 24:25-27

and it seems more likely that Paul thought of his upcoming martyrdom which would lead him to the place where he would reign with Christ.

To die with Christ cannot be interpreted, of course, as dying physically. It is the dying that Paul defines in Galatians as: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."²⁷

V. 12 reads literally in Greek: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." The Greek word *hupomeno* means literally "to stay under," or "to undergo." Paul uses the same word in the verse: "Be joyful in hope, *patient* in affliction, faithful in prayer."²⁸

The Greek verb in "If we disown him, he will also disown us," is *arneomai*, which literally means "to contradict," or "to disavow." The same verb is used for Peter's denial of Jesus during the court case that led to His crucifixion. We find it in the verse where Jesus says: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"²⁹

The Greek word *apisteo*, rendered "faithless" does not necessarily refer to a moral condition; it can simply mean "to disbelieve," as in the verse: "When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they *did not believe* it."³⁰ *The New Living Translation* renders it: "If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is." *The Living Bible*: "Even when we are too weak to have any faith left, he remains faithful to us and will help us, for he cannot disown us who are part of himself, and he will always carry out his promises to us." Our unbelief can be caused by the fact that the message of the Gospel sometimes seems to be "too good to be true."

IV. Dealing with the Opponents (2:14-26)

14 Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen.

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,

18 who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.

19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

20 In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble.

21 If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.

25 Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

In this section, the topic is not only how to deal with opponents, as the heading suggests. These verses are packed with advice on what to teach, how to lead people in their thinking and walk with the Lord, how to personally serve God, how to deal with people who cause problems in the church, and more.

²⁷ Gal. 2:20

²⁸ Rom. 12:12

²⁹ Matt. 7:22-23

³⁰ Mark 16:11

Paul begins with a reminder of the text of the hymn quoted in vv. 11-13. The words can be used as a paradigm of Christian living. It is a good thing to remind people and oneself, of what we say when we sing hymns or choruses. There is no value in singing “I surrender all,” when one doesn’t.

The phrase: “who correctly handles the word of truth” is the rendering of the Greek text that literally reads: “rightly dividing the word of truth.” The Greek verb used is *orthotomeo*, which literally means “to make a straight cut.” This is the only place in Scripture where the word is found. We may think of the plowing farmer who makes straight furrows in his field. Jesus said about this: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”³¹

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “The allusion is to quarreling, quibbling, wrangling over words, seizing on texts without due attention to their proper context, engaging in polemics, reveling in novel interpretations and disputed points of teaching. Whatever these people were doing, it is clear what they were not doing, namely cherishing and promoting the ‘wholesome teaching’ (1:13) and the Scriptures (3:10-17).”

Paul hits it exactly on the head in 1 Timothy 1:3-7: They were missing love—love for the Lord and for his family, the love of the Lord who wants all people to be saved, and a loving longing for Christ’s future appearing (cf. 4:8). Into the void rushes vanity, and the result is the stuff of sin and death. The arguments and fights were, by all standards of genuine love, ‘useless’ – nothing good come of it (cf. Titus 3:8,9) – ‘and they can ruin those who hear them’ (2:4). The coughing and hacking by which they disseminate their loveless ideas spread the contagious and bring the ruinous disease to those in reach (3:5-7; 4:3-4; 1 Tim 1:19; Titus 1:11, 16). The verb translated as ‘hear’ may have the stronger sense of ‘listen to’ (attentively), but the idea may be simply that it is destructive merely to be in the audience of such teaching. Either they are just plausible enough to convince the unwitting or their words did not take root because of some other weakness in the listener. ... Paul’s concern here is with what happens in the churches. This sort of business must simply stop and be replaced by ‘wholesome teaching.’”

Words convey meaning. This must be remembered, not only in singing, but also in speaking, in preaching and arguing. Some people love to argue, merely for the sake of arguing. In some situations this can be seen as harmless entertainment. In a court of law, however, arguing can be a matter of life or death. Paul makes it a matter of life or death when he invokes God in it. “Warn them before God” has the power of an oath. It also establishes Timothy’s ministry as being called by God for the work entrusted to him.

Saying this, Paul reminds Timothy of his call and of the way he ought to deal with it. Verse 15 has become the theme of a youth movement entitled AWANA, “a workman, approved, not ashamed.”

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

Jon C Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes about “Be an Approved Worker”: “Timothy for his part, was called upon to ‘work hard so [he] can present [himself] to God and receive his approval’ (2:15). Theodore Roosevelt said: ‘Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.’ The idea in this passage, however, is not that Timothy is to be a hard-working person but rather that he is to take pains to present himself. This isn’t about a work ethic but about what is zealously and conscientiously to be worked at. This idea of the formal presentation before God for his approval recalls the mention of ‘God’s presence’ in 2:14 and also the combined images of Jesus’ parables in Matthew 25:14-30 (‘Well done, my good and faithful servant’) and 25:31-46 (‘Come you who are blessed by my Father’); note also John 12:43 (cf. Rom 6:13; 14:10, 18); 1 Corinthians 3:5-4:5; and 2 Corinthians 5:9-15. In this context the emphasis is on Timothy’s use of Scripture, which must contrast with that of the word-fighters and set an example for others ... The word translated ‘approval’ relates to that which proves genuine on the basis of testing Scripture is consistent on this point. Only that which can pass the test of trials is genuine, and only that which is genuine counts (e.g. Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 1:6-7).”

The Greek text of v.16 reads literally: “But shun profane and vain babblings; for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”

“Gangrene” is a good translation or transliteration of the Greek word *gaggraina*. It is derived from the verb *graino*, which means “to gnaw.” Paul mentions Hymenaeus and Philetus as two of the teachers who disseminated the kind of talk Paul wants Timothy to shun. Paul had mentioned Hymenaeus earlier in his first epistle to Timothy, where we read: “Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have

³¹ Luke 9:62

handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.”³² We don’t know much about Hymenaeus, except what Paul writes here about the doctrine he propagated that “the resurrection has already taken place.”

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes about this: “Hymenaeus and Philetus had ‘left the path of truth’ (2:18). These false teachers had been Christian believers. Their theme is summarized in their claim that ‘the resurrection of the dead has already occurred’ (2:18). First Corinthians hints at similar teachings at work in Corinth (1 Cor 15:12; cf. 1 Cor 4:8-13; 2 Thess 2:2). But what does this line mean here? This is not a claim that there is no resurrection (contrast the Sadducees; Matt 22:23; Acts 23:8). It may have been a radicalization of Paul’s own teaching about being ‘raised with Christ’ (Rom 6:5; Gal 2:20; Eph 1:3; 2:6; 5:14; Col 2:12; 3:1-4), possibly also the denial of a bodily resurrection yet to come. In Gnosticism, a heresy of the second century and later, we can see that such ideas could lead in quite different ethical directions ... Such ideas could have the potential of leading adherents to consider bodily conduct to be irrelevant, and thus lead to moral license. For instance, one is free to engage in sexual immorality because it concerns only the body, which is destined to be discarded anyway (cf. e.g. 2:22; 3:4; 1 Tim 6:9; Titus 3:3). But this thinking could also lead in the opposite direction, to a type of world-denying asceticism, a greater emphasis on the denial of physical desires (1 Tim 4:3; cf. Col 2:8, 16-23). This latter development conceivably could have drawn on expectations of life in the age to come (e.g. Matt 19:10-12; 22:30) and/or their teachings on the Old Testament law (1 Tim 1:7-11). Their teaching may have also involved a radicalization or overly aggressive promotion of the social equality expressed in Galatians 3:28 on the basis of the belief that the age to come was here since the resurrection had already occurred. The effect of it appears to have been greatest on women and households (3:6; Titus 1:11; see 1 Tim 2:11-15; 6:1-2; 5:13-15).”

Paul responds to the confusion caused by the false teachings mentioned above, that God knows who are His. He may have had in mind the incident in which Korah and some of his followers challenged Moses’ authority, to which Moses responded: “In the morning the Lord will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him.”³³

In v.19 Paul seems to be mixing his metaphors. The word “foundation” usually refers to a building, but “The Lord knows those who are his” obviously refers to persons. Yet, we often do the same; the word “house” is generally used for a building, but we refer to the British royal family as “the house of Tudor.” We read that when David made plans to build a temple for the Lord, God said to him that He would build a house for David, which meant that David’s sons would inherit the throne of Israel for centuries to come.³⁴ The mix of metaphors here concerns the fact that, elsewhere, Paul identifies Jesus Christ as the only foundation,³⁵ while here he uses the image for individual believers.

The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary observes: “The ‘foundation’ here is not ‘the Church,’ the ‘ground’ or basement support ‘of the truth’ ... Christ Himself being the ultimate ‘foundation’ (1 Cor 3:11). The Church being the ‘house’ (2 Tim 2:20), can hardly be also ‘the foundation,’ which would make the house to be founded on the house. Rather, ‘the foundation’ is ‘the word of truth’ (2 Tim 2:15), ‘the truth’ (2 Tim 2:18); in contrast to Hymenaeus and Philetus’ ‘word’ which ‘eats as a canker’ (2 Tim 2:17). They pretend to build up, but really ‘overthrow,’ not indeed the word of truth, but ‘the faith of some’ in it (2 Tim 2:18). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the overthrow of their faith the object of faith, ‘the word of truth,’ ‘the sure foundation of God stands fast.’ The ‘house’ (2 Tim 2:20) is the elect whom ‘the Lord knoweth’ (acknowledges as His, Matt 7:23; John 10:14; 1 Cor 8:3), and who persevere to the end, though others ‘err concerning the truth’ (Matt 24:24; John 10:28; Rom 8:38-39; 1 John 2:19).”

On the last part of v.19, “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness,” *Barnes’ Notes* comments: “This is the other seal or inscription which is made on the foundation which God has laid. The foundation has two inscriptions - the first implying that God knows all who are his own people; the other, that all who are his professed people should depart from evil. This is not found in so many words in the Old Testament, and, like the former, it is not to be regarded as a quotation. The meaning is that it is an elementary principle in the true church, that all who become members of it should lead holy lives. It was also true that they *would* lead holy lives, and amidst all the defections of errorists, and all their attempts to draw away others from the true faith, those might be known to be the true people of God who *did* avoid evil.”

³² 1 Tim. 1:20

³³ Num. 16:5

³⁴ See II Sam. 7:4-16

³⁵ 1 Cor. 3:11

In v.20 Paul lifts his eyes from the foundation to the building that is erected upon it and he actually enters the house to look at its inventory. The “large house” is obviously the church of Jesus Christ. As in any household, there is a variety of articles which make up the substance. Although the image used here is quite different, the principle is the same as in the picture of the church compared to a human body in which each member has its own specific function.³⁶

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “The architectural imagery of the foundation stone (2:19) is continued with that of a house. Unlike the images of soldiers, athletes, farmers, and workers (2:3-7, 15), Paul expands this one by saying, ‘In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use’ (cf. 3:17; Rom 9:21; Philem 1:11). The imagery alludes to the fact that the church is a mixed community including within its ranks both the true and the false ... The Greek of the second line is more literally ‘some [or, the former] unto honor and others [or, the latter] unto dishonor.’ It is unclear whether the distinction concerns the materials (e.g. gold for honor, clay for dishonor) or cuts across them (some, of gold or clay, for honor, others, again or either material, for dishonor). In any event, the distinction between materials does not appear to carry through in what follows. The primary point of their valuation depends on the use to which they are put: expensive vases for decorating as apposed to chamber pots, for example.”

The Greek text of v.21 reads literally: “If therefore a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified [and] meet for use [and] prepared unto the master’s every good work.”

“Meet for use” is the rendering of the Greek word *euchrestos*, “easily used,” or “useful.” Paul is the only one who uses the term in the New Testament. We find it in two other instances in his epistles, in: “Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is *helpful* to me in my ministry,”³⁷ and: “Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become *useful* both to you and to me.”³⁸

It is difficult, however, to determine what the matter is of which a person is supposed to purge himself.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, states: “The meaning of the Greek is uncertain. After verse 20 it appears to mean that one would get rid of the vessels ‘unto dishonor,’ but this breaks down in what follows. With some violence to the image (the application overrunning the strict imagery), the idea appears to be one of being promoted from being a vessel of dishonor to one of honor. This cleansing is accomplished by getting rid of the associations of a vessel unto dishonor. In the present situation, this means getting rid of the practices (teachings and behaviors) of the false teachers; some suggest it is the false teachers or their teachings specifically that must be removed, though this is less likely. By being cleansed, ‘you will be a special utensil for honorable use.’ The general point is that within God’s household one should endeavor to be the vessel ‘unto honor’ – that is, one that will be cherished, used, and preserved (= enter glory) rather than treated with contempt and thrown out (= fall under judgment). Given the paradox of ‘power in weakness’ that pervades this entire passage, Paul might have intended some irony in this image: The ‘vessel unto honor’ appears to be anything but that in the present (2:9; 2 Cor 4:7)!”

Going back to the image of the body and its various members, Paul may be saying here that, having accepted our assigned place in life, we ought to function to the full of our capacity, attempting to glorify God in what we are meant to be and to do.

Although it seems that Paul was speaking about the people Timothy was shepherding, in the following verse, Paul, obviously, addresses Timothy personally. The Greek words, rendered “youthful desires” are *neoterikos*, “juvenile,” *epithumia*, “longing,” or desire. The first word is only found in this verse in the New Testament, the second is a common word which covers desires of any kind, both good and bad. Jesus uses the word in connection with the institution of the Lord’s Supper, saying: “I have *eagerly desired* to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”³⁹ In the context in which Paul uses it, it probably refers particularly to sexual temptations, common to young people.

What Paul seems to be suggesting is that there is safety and protection against certain temptation in the exercise of fellowship with other believers who sincerely seek to follow the Lord. Although this is not mentioned specifically, Paul may have had in mind the practice of group counseling in which young people gather together and share their problems and pray for each other. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*

³⁶ Rom. 12:4-8; I Cor. 12:12-31

³⁷ II Tim. 4:11

³⁸ Philem. 11

³⁹ Luke 22:15

comments: “The preceding verse calls for separation from evil company; this verse calls for fellowship with the Lord’ people and seeking the graces of the Spirit.”

In v.23 Paul warns against a danger that, although it may be particular to younger people, is certainly not limited to any age group. It is the desire to argue about things one doesn’t actually know enough about. The NIV uses the term “stupid arguments.” The Greek uses the words *apaideútous zeeteéseis*, “unlearned questions.” This suggests that people, who really knew what they were talking about, wouldn’t say those things. The Greek word *apaideútous* is only found here in the New Testament.

Paul seems to see a connection between arguing about certain points and quarrels. In writing to Titus, he issues the same warning: “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.”⁴⁰ Paul is fully aware of the fact that the core of the Gospel message is the saving of the human soul. The devil tries to prevent this by diverting the attention toward arguing about details that would make one forget the goal of preaching. All the details and requirements of the law are covered by “loving the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength.”⁴¹ And love involves surrender.

The Greek text of v.24 reads literally: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient.” The NIV renders the Greek word *anexikakos* with “not resentful.” It only occurs in this verse in the New Testament. *The New Living Translation* elaborates it with: “be patient with difficult people.” *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “It means literally ‘bearing up against ill treatment,’ patiently enduring it.” Paul warns Timothy that, in serving the church, he will find out that not all the members of the body of Christ are in perfect health. As a young pastor, Timothy may not have been prepared to face that issue.

The Greek text of the phrase, which the NIV renders as “Those who oppose him,” uses the word *antidiatithemai*, which literally means “to set oneself opposite.” The KJV reads: “that oppose themselves.” This word also is only found **h** here in the New Testament. The suggestion seems to be that those people not only oppose their pastor, but that they suffer from an inner conflict; they are not at peace with themselves, probably because they are not at peace with God. Timothy’s prayer for those people should be that God convict them of sin, so that they would experience forgiveness and acknowledge the truth of the Gospel.

Paul wants Timothy to understand that the battle for the human soul is not a battle against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness. Satan has set his snares all over the place and unless one recognizes who the real enemy is, there will be no conversions. The strong man must be bound before his inventory can be taken.⁴²

V. Paul’s Charge Based on the Character of the Last Days (3:1-4:8)

A. Understanding the times (3:1-9)

1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,

4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

6 They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires,

7 always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth — men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.

9 But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

Paul doesn’t define the term “in the last days.” It is obvious, however, that Paul believed he was living in the end times and that the return of Christ was close at hand. He must have been aware of Jesus’ prediction that the end of world history would not occur until the Gospel had been preached to all the

⁴⁰ Titus 3:9

⁴¹ Deut. 6:5

⁴² Matt. 12:29; Mark 3:27

nations of the world.⁴³ Paul considered that that point had almost been reached in his day, and that Christ could return after the Gospel had reached the limits of the Roman Empire, which was Spain.⁴⁴ We cannot blame Paul for not knowing about those parts of the world that had not yet been discovered in his day. The Apostle might have been shocked if he knew that more than two millennia later we are still waiting for Christ's return.

The period Paul is describing seems to be what Jesus called a time of "great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again."⁴⁵

While on the one hand Paul describes the public mentality that would prevail in the last days, he intimates that that mentality prevailed already at the time of his writing of this letter. The words "Have nothing to do with them" makes this clear. The Apostle John touches upon the same principle in his first epistle, where we read: "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour."⁴⁶ That which will be the prevailing mentality at the end of world history is not something new; it is the same corruption of the human mind that was born when man fell into sin and which came to full bloom in the days of Noah. It will only cease to rule mankind at the return of Christ.

The whole list of characteristics that portrays the human mind can be reduced to one contrast: love of self instead of love of God. In between those two, Paul gives us a list consisting of seventeen vices that merit individual consideration. Jesus condensed the whole law to two main commandments: love of God and love of one's neighbor.⁴⁷

Paul begins his list of love of self instead of neighborly love. The Greek uses the single word *philautos* for "self-love." The second Greek word is *philarguros*, which can be translated "love of silver," referring to money. The KJV uses the word "covetous." The third Greek word is *alazon* for "bragging," or "boasting." Paul uses the same word in his Epistle to the Romans, describing sinful humanity in general.⁴⁸ The Greek word for "proud" is *huperephanos*, literally meaning "above others."

The word "abusive," which the NIV uses, is the translation of the Greek *blasphemos*, which generally pertains to man's relationship with God, rather than with man. Paul used the same word to describe himself before his conversion: "Even though I was once a *blasphemer* and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief."⁴⁹

The sixth word, "disobedient," *apeithes* in Greek, is used in the context of parental authority. Paul uses the same admonition in his Epistle to the Ephesians, where we read: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'-which is the first commandment with a promise— 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'"⁵⁰ This supposes, of course, a healthy family condition in which the parents are obedient to God and the children grow up in a condition of love and safety.

The Greek words *acharistos*, "ungrateful," and *anosios*, "unholy," are particularly used in connection with man's relationship with God. Paul uses the same terms in his first letter to Timothy, where we read: "We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the *unholy* and irreligious."⁵¹

"Without love" is the rendering of the single Greek word *astorgos*. The only other place in Scripture where that word is used is in Romans, where it is translated "heartless."⁵²

The Greek word for the NIV's "unforgiving" is *aspondos*, which the KJV renders with "truce-breaker." It probably refers to people who don't keep their promises.

"Slandorous" is the translation of the Greek word *diabolos*, which is used for Satan: John uses the term in Revelation, describing the punishment of Satan. We read: "For the *accuser* of our brothers, who *accuses* them before our God day and night, has been hurled down."⁵³

⁴³ Matt. 24:14

⁴⁴ See Rom. 15:24, 28.

⁴⁵ Matt. 24:21

⁴⁶ I John 2:18

⁴⁷ Mark 12:30,31

⁴⁸ Rom. 1:30

⁴⁹ I Tim. 1:13

⁵⁰ Eph. 6:1-3

⁵¹ I Tim. 1:9

⁵² Rom. 1:31

“Without self-control” is the rendering of the single Greek word *akrates*, which is only found here in Scripture.

“Brutal” is *anemos* in Greek, “savage.” This word also is only found in this Scripture verse.

“Not lovers of the good” is the translation of the single Greek word *anemos*.

V.4 has four more characteristics describing people who keep God out of their lives. The Greek uses the noun *prodotai*, plural for “traitor.” Luke uses the word to identify Judas: “Judas Iscariot, who became a *traitor*.”⁵⁴

“Rash” is the NIV’s rendering of the Greek word *propetes*, which literally means “falling forward headlong.” Here it is, of course, used in the figurative sense.

“Conceited” is the translation of the Greek word *tuphoo*, which is derived from a word meaning “to envelop with smoke.” Matthew uses it to describe Jesus’ ministry, saying: “A bruised reed he will not break, and a *smoldering* wick he will not snuff out.”⁵⁵ Paul uses the word twice in his first letter to Timothy.⁵⁶

The terms “lovers of pleasure” and “lovers of God” are both translations of single words in Greek: *philedonos* and *philotheos*. Both words occur only in this text in Scripture.

V.5 could be interpreted to mean that those people look like they are Christians but the Holy Spirit is not in them. They have not experienced the new birth that makes them members of the body of Christ. Paul advises Timothy to “turn away” from them.

Paul’s description of the people he warned Timothy about may be borrowed from Jesus’ condemnation of the Pharisees, about whom He said: “They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.”⁵⁷

Paul says about these false teachers that they “creep into houses,” using the Greek word *enduno*, which can be rendered “sneak in.” *Barnes’ Notes* comments: “They endeavor by their address to ingratiate themselves first with weak women, and through them to influence men.” These teachers follow Satan’s strategy that caused the fall of man by tempting the woman.

Paul accuses them of being “swayed by all kinds of evil desires,” referring to covetousness, the sin against the Tenth Commandment. He uses the same term in his Epistle to the Roman, saying: “For I would not have known what *coveting* really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of *covetous* desire.”⁵⁸

Most Bible scholars interpret the words “always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth” as referring to the “weak-willed women,” not to the false teachers. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “This is the crowning feature of this powerful sketch of those ‘silly women,’ whose thoughts are busied about religion without their affections being reached or their principles being influenced by it. They are always beating about the bush, but they never get possession of the blessed and saving truth of the gospel of God. Their own selfish inclinations, and not the grace of God, continue to be the motive power with them.”

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, observes: “These women are characterized as ‘burdened with the guilt of sin and controlled by various desires’ (3:6). The nature of the sins and desires is unspecified. Many suspect sexual sins are involved ... but it is worth considering that Paul might have said so more directly if that had been the case. It is at least as likely that a rigorist and ascetic doctrine, such as was espoused by these false teachers (1 Tim 4:3; cf. Col 2:16-23), would appeal to people (in this case women) in a state of moral desperation ... In modern jargon, they were grasping for a spiritual fix and for a sense of fulfillment. Now as then, there are not a few ‘Christian’ charlatans eager to promise them what they want.”

Jannes and Jambres are not mentioned by name in the Old Testament story of Moses’ appearance at Pharaohs’ court. *Barnes’ Notes* writes: “It is not certain where the apostle obtained their names; but they are frequently mentioned by the Hebrew writers, and also by other writers; so that there can be no reasonable doubt that their names were correctly handed down by tradition. Nothing is more probable than that the names of the more distinguished magicians who attempted to imitate the miracles of Moses, would be preserved by tradition; and though they are not mentioned by Moses himself, and the Jews have told many ridiculous stories respecting them, yet this should not lead us to doubt the truth of the tradition

⁵³ Rev. 12:10

⁵⁴ Luke 6:16

⁵⁵ Matt. 12:20

⁵⁶ I Tim. 3:6; 6:4

⁵⁷ Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47

⁵⁸ Rom. 7:7,8

respecting their names ... By the rabbinical writers, they are sometimes mentioned as Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses in Egypt, and sometimes as the sons of Balaam. The more common account is that they were the princes of the Egyptian magicians. One of the Jewish rabbis represents them as having been convinced by the miracles of Moses, and as having become converts to the Hebrew religion. There is no reason to doubt that these were in fact the leading men who opposed Moses in Egypt, by attempting to work counter-miracles. The *point* of the remark of the apostle here, is, that they resisted Moses by attempting to *imitate* his miracles, thus *neutralizing* the evidence that he was sent from God. In like manner, the persons here referred to, opposed the progress of the gospel by setting up a similar claim to that of the apostles; by pretending to have as much authority as they had; and by thus neutralizing the claims of the true religion, and leading off weak-minded persons from the truth. This is often the most dangerous kind of opposition that is made to religion.”

B. Roots and Resources (3:10-17)

10 *You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance,*

11 *persecutions, sufferings — what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.*

12 *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*

13 *while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

14 *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,*

15 *and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,*

17 *so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Timothy must have been aware of Paul’s experience and in some cases had been an eyewitness. The main point of Paul presenting himself here as an example of endurance to Timothy, seems to be to encourage Timothy in his own suffering of opposition.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “Though Timothy’s recruitment (Acts 16:1-3) followed these events, he was from that area and would have heard from both Paul and others about these things. In any event, Paul was rescued by the Lord from these persecutions. This is no hollow triumphalism. He had in fact, been rescued from bodily harm. However, this is not meant to suggest to Timothy that the Lord would likewise deliver him in the same way from any and every situation. From Stephen on (Acts 7) the church began to realize this, and Paul was writing these words on death row. But Paul’s past experience does demonstrate that God will carry Timothy through to the completion of his ministry (4:5-8, 17-18); there is no ‘premature’ death of a servant of the Lord. Along with the ‘righteous sufferer’ of the Old Testament (cf. Ps. 34:19), Paul’s experience also typifies and confirms God’s promise of ultimate deliverance (4:7, 18) and further promotes reliance on the God who raises the dead (2 Cor 1:9-10).”

But Paul did not only mention his endurance, although that may have been the main point in this reminder. He began by referring to his teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience and love. All these are models Timothy is encouraged to follow.

The persecution Paul and Barnabas suffered in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra is recorded in detail by Luke in Acts. In Antioch the Jews turned against Paul and Barnabas when they saw how the Gentiles responded to the Gospel message. We read: “They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.”⁵⁹ In Lystra the crowd overreacted to a miraculous healing by Paul and Barnabas, believing that they were the incarnation of the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes. They intended to bring sacrifices to the Apostles, who barely succeeded in preventing them from doing this. We read what happened next: “Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went

⁵⁹ Acts 13:50,51

back into the city. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.”⁶⁰ It is not clear whether Paul was actually dead as a result of the stoning, or whether the people left him for dead. But in either case his rapid recovery was miraculous.

In writing to the church of Corinth, Paul refers to those experiences, stating: “We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.”⁶¹

Having grown up under the influence of his mother’s and grandmother’s faith, Timothy was very familiar with the Scriptures, which here refers to the Old Testament. Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, comments: “Not only were Timothy’s roots in the Scriptures deep and reliable, but these are the Scriptures that had given him ‘the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting Christ Jesus’ (3:15). The idea here is that the Old Testament Scriptures are necessary for understanding Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is necessary for understanding the Old Testament Scriptures. In view of 4:2-4, Paul had an eye on the abuse of the Scriptures by the false teachers (cf. 2:15; 3:7; 1 Tim 1:4-7). Even if that abuse had not led to a neglect of the Scriptures (which is a possible motive for the present emphasis), there is a perennial need of the Scripture’s potency to be affirmed in the strongest of terms, as the history of this very passage attests.”

The Old Testament teaches that death is the result of man’s sin and that God accepted a substitute as in the animal sacrifices. The blood of a sacrificial animal substituted for the blood of the sinner. God forgives our sins because some other creature takes the death sentence in our place. In the words of Hebrews: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”⁶² The ultimate substitution for the sins of the whole world population was in the death of Jesus Christ. All the Old Testament animal sacrifices, therefore, pointed to the death of Jesus on the cross. It was by faith in Christ’s sacrifice that Timothy experienced salvation of his own soul. Timothy’s understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures gave him a solid basis for the assurance of salvation.

This brings Paul to the classic statement of divine inspiration of the Old Testament. Paul’s statement does not limit divine inspiration to the Old Testament alone. But since the New Testament had not yet come into existence when Paul wrote this epistle, this is all he could say to Timothy.

The NIV renders the Greek word *Theópneustos* literally as “God-breathed.” The RSV reads: “All scripture is inspired by God,” which sounds better in English.

The problem for us is that, in the Greek the word for “spirit” is the same as for “wind,” or “breath.” A classic example of this is in Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus, where Jesus says: “The *wind* blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the *Spirit*.”⁶³ The Greek words used are *pneuma*, “wind” and *Pneúματος*, “Spirit.”

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, observes: “The key word is the term translated ‘inspired by God.’ This translates the adjective *theopneustos* ... which appears here for the first time in Greek literature ... It may have been coined by Paul. ... To say that Scripture is inspired is to say that its words are God-breathed (a more literal translation); it is God’s own personal speech breathed out by God (cf. Heb 4:12-13; 2 Pet 1:20-21; also Num 24:2; Hos 9:7). This does not negate the active involvement of human authors, but it does affirm that God is fully responsible for Scripture, and it is therefore as true, reliable, authoritative, permanent, and powerful as is God himself. Its message is coherent and consistent, and it is such in its witness to Jesus Christ (Luke 24:25-27, 44; John 5:39-40; Acts 3:24; 1 Cor 15:3-4). If it were not so, it could not bring salvation nor inspire faith. Because it is so, it must not be abused after the fashion of the false teachers but properly taught. It should also be said that inspiration results in the fact that Scripture is not just like all other human literature, and that is important to remember when it comes to thinking about the principles of interpretation (hermeneutics). But it is more than human literature; and this also has implications for interpretation.”

⁶⁰ Acts 14:19,20

⁶¹ II Cor. 1:8-11

⁶² Heb. 9:22

⁶³ John 3:8

Paul's statement about divine inspiration of the Bible is not merely a theological concept; it has very practical implications for the believer. It is important that, as believers in Jesus Christ and as recipients of salvation, we accept the whole Bible as the Word of God.

In his autobiography *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham, recounts his struggle with the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. He had many intellectual questions that could not be answered. On the eve of a major evangelistic campaign, he took a walk through the woods. At one point he knelt down and prayed: "Father, I am going to accept this as Thy Word—by *faith!* I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and doubts, and I will believe this to be Your inspired Word." He continues: "When I got up from my knees at Forest Home that August night, my eyes stung with tears. I sensed the presence and power of God as I had not sensed in months. Not all my questions were answered, but a major bridge had been crossed. In my heart and mind, I knew a spiritual battle in my soul had been fought and won."

Whether we will be men (or women) of God, thoroughly equipped for every good work, will depend on whether we accept the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God and submit ourselves to its authority over us.

C. Knowing What to Do (4:1-8)

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:

2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.

3 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.

4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

6 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.

8 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.

What Paul writes here to Timothy may be the same words he used at Timothy's ordination to the ministry. If not, these words could certainly be used as an ordination charge.

Paul makes a declaration under oath, appealing to the threefold authority of God, the Father, of Jesus Christ and of the Second Coming. Preach and encourage, the first and the last parts of the charge, assume an audience of several people, as in a congregation. The verbs "correct," "rebuke" and "encourage" suppose one-on-one ministry. "Careful instruction" applies to either circumstance.

The Pulpit Commentary states: "It is impossible to exaggerate the dignity and importance here given to preaching by its being made the subject of so solemn and awful an adjuration as that in ver. 1."

The preaching of the Gospel is not an option that can be accepted or neglected according to one's whim. If God calls a person to the ministry of preaching it becomes a pressing obligation. Paul's own call made him exclaim: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"⁶⁴

Paul urges Timothy to preach "in season and out of season." The Greek words used are *eukairos*, "conveniently," and *akairos*, "inopportune." The first word is used in connection with Judas' betrayal of Christ, where we read: "So he watched for an *opportunity* to hand him over."⁶⁵ The second word only occurs in this verse in the New Testament.

In referring to the Second Coming, Paul reminds us that we will be judged on the way we handled that what God had entrusted to us. Jesus' Parable of the talents,⁶⁶ or the Parable of the minas,⁶⁷ are rich illustrations of the fact that we will one day be called upon to give an account of what we did with the task given to us.

⁶⁴ I Cor. 9:16

⁶⁵ Mark 14:11

⁶⁶ Matt. 25:14-30

⁶⁷ Luke 19:12-26

Another factor that gives great urgency to Paul's charge is the prevailing mentality of the audience Timothy would face. Evidently, the people were willing to hear. But Paul foresaw that this would not always be the case. There would come a time when people would hear the Gospel message and consider it to be irrelevant or "déjà vu." The Greek word used is *anechomai*, "to put up with." Paul uses it twice in his epistles; one in a negative sense as in "You gladly *put up with* fools since you are so wise!"⁶⁸ And once positively in: "*Bear with each other* and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."⁶⁹

The advice to preach, even when it is inconvenient, may refer to the change in mentality of an audience, that is no longer interested enough to listen. Paul says: "Tell them anyhow!"

Verse 3 makes for interesting reading in Greek. It reads literally: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but they shall heap teachers to themselves after their own lusts, having itching ears. The Greek verb translated "heap" is *episoreuo*, "to accumulate further," or "to seek additionally." The word is only found in this text in the New Testament. "Itching ears" is the translation of the Greek *akoeén knetho*. The first word can be translated either as a noun (ear), or as a verb (to hear). In the latter form we find it in the verse: "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever *hearing* but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.'"⁷⁰

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, comments on the term "itching ears": "This translates the phrase, *knēthomenoi tēn akoeén*, meaning 'feeling an itch in respect to hearing.' ... The phrase gets at the motive for their search for alternative teachers. The verb (only here in the LXX and Greek NT) from which the phrase is formed is used figuratively 'of curiosity, that looks for interesting and juicy bits of information. This itching is relieved by the messages of the new teachers. With the same components as a background one might translate: to have one's ear tickled.'"

What Paul describes is the person who wants to be blessed without having to go through the process of confession of sin and repentance.

The Greek word for "myth" is *muthos*, which is best rendered "fiction." Paul uses the word four times in his letters to Timothy and Titus.⁷¹ Peter uses the words once.⁷² There is a place for fiction in people's life if it is kept in the realm of entertainment. But if fiction is confused with reality, we are in trouble. For instance, what would be the point to pray for the conversion of Shakespeare's Hamlet, or for the grandmother of Little Red Riding-hood?

Unless faith is based on historical facts, it cannot provide salvation of the soul. If the anchor of the soul is not attached to the reality of Christ's death and resurrection, it will not keep us from floating away.

The NIV renders the Greek word *nepho* with "keep your head." Paul uses the word several times in the sense of being sober, that is not getting drunk. As such the NKJV renders the word in the text: "Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be *sober*. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be *sober*, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation."⁷³

We could render Paul's advice as a suggestion to think clearly. The idea that the Gospel goes against human reasoning may be true in some instances, but that doesn't prove that God, who created the human mind and logic, would be wrong and man right. The only real human wisdom is in the fear of God. There is nothing in the Gospel message that offends clear thinking. The Gospel is only foolish to the fools!

The Pulpit Commentary comments on Paul's advice for sobriety: "Here 'Be sober in all things' clearly does not refer to literal sobriety, which Timothy was in little danger of transgressing (I Timothy 5:23), but comprehends clearness, calmness, steadiness, and moderation in all things."

"Endure hardship" is the translation of the single Greek word *kakopatheo*. Paul uses the same word twice in this epistle. The first time about himself in: "This is my gospel, for which *I am suffering* even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained."⁷⁴

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary comments on Paul's command for Timothy to do the work of an evangelist: "If this is meant to indicate a special office (Acts 21:8), the list in Eph 4:11 is noteworthy, for it

⁶⁸ II Cor. 11:19

⁶⁹ Col. 3:13

⁷⁰ Matt. 13:14

⁷¹ I Tim. 1:4; 4:7; II Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:14

⁷² II Peter 1:16

⁷³ I Thess. 5:6-8

⁷⁴ II Tim. 2: 8,9

is fuller than the parallel list in 1 Cor 12:28: prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers are mentioned as compared with prophets, teachers. Probably these functions would overlap; the evangelist might well stand between prophet and pastor-teacher. Timothy's life had included much itinerant evangelism, joined with pastoral and teaching work."

"Discharge all the duties" is the translation of the single Greek verb *plerophoreo*, "entirely accomplish." Luke uses the word in the opening statement of his Gospel: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that *have been fulfilled* among us."⁷⁵ In Romans, Paul uses it to describe Abraham's faith, stating that Abraham was "being *fully persuaded* that God had power to do what he had promised."⁷⁶

In vv. 7-9 Paul indulges in some form of self-evaluation, knowing that he has finished the race. He felt he was about to receive the reward. Evidently, Paul had expected Christ to return before he would come to this point in which his earthly life would end. He had longed for the Second Coming, but he believed he would no longer be alive on earth when that occurred. It would make no difference; he would receive "the crown of righteousness." James calls this "the crown of life."⁷⁷ And, Peter, referring like Paul, to the Olympic Games, where champions were crowned with a crown of laurels, calls it "the crown of glory that will never fade away."⁷⁸

VI. Appeal for Timothy to Come and Related Comments (4:9-18)

9 Do your best to come to me quickly,

10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

12 I sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.

15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

16 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.

18 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. Amen.

There is great urgency in Paul's request to Timothy to come to Rome as quickly as he can. It is repeated in the end of this epistle: "Do your best to get here before winter."⁷⁹ One reason was that it had been Paul's own experience that sailing the Mediterranean in winter was wrought with problems.⁸⁰

But loneliness must have been the main reasons Paul longed for the company of his beloved "son." Demas had left Paul, evidently for selfish reasons. He may have feared that staying with Paul could mean that he would share in Paul's martyrdom and he was not ready to face this. Paul uses strong terms to describe Demas' desertion. "Deserted" is the rendering of the Greek verb *egkatalipo*. Whether it refers to good or bad leaving depends on the context in which it is used.

In his Epistle to the Romans Paul uses it in the good sense, stating: "It is just as Isaiah said previously: 'Unless the Lord Almighty *had left* us descendants, we would have become like Sodom, we

⁷⁵ Luke 1:1

⁷⁶ Rom. 4:21

⁷⁷ James 1:12

⁷⁸ I Peter 5:4

⁷⁹ II Tim. 4:21

⁸⁰ Acts 27, 28

would have been like Gomorrah.”⁸¹ But it is also the word Jesus used when He cried out: “‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’-which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you *forsaken* me?’”⁸²

This is the only place in Scripture where Crescens is mentioned. Consequently, we know nothing about him.

Titus appears several times in Paul’s biography. *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* writes about him: “We find no mention of Titus in the Acts and must draw materials for a biography of him from 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Titus, combined with 2 Timothy. If, as seems probable, the journey mentioned in Gal 2:1,3 is the same as that recorded in Acts 15, then Titus was closely associated with Paul at Antioch and accompanied him and Barnabas from there to Jerusalem. At Troas the apostle was disappointed in not meeting Titus (2 Cor 2:13), who had been sent on a mission to Corinth; but in Macedonia Titus joined him (7:6-7,13-15). He was sent back to Corinth in company with two other trustworthy Christians, bearing the second epistle to the Corinthians and with the earnest request that he would attend to the collection being taken for the poor Christians of Judea (8:6,17). The ‘brethren’ who took the first epistle to Corinth (1 Cor 16:11-12) were doubtless Titus and his companion, whoever he may have been. In the interval between the first and second imprisonment of Paul at Rome, he and Titus visited Crete (Titus 1:5). Here Titus remained and received a letter written to him by the apostle. From this letter we learn that Titus was originally converted through Paul’s instrumentality (v. 4). Next we learn the various particulars of the responsible duties that he had to discharge in Crete. He was to complete what Paul had been obliged to leave unfinished (v. 5) and to organize the church throughout the island by appointing presbyters in every city. Next he was to control and silence (v. 11) the restless and mischievous Judaizers, and he was to be peremptory in so doing (v. 13). He was to urge the duties of a decorous and Christian life upon the women (2:3-5), some of whom, possibly, had something of an official character (vv. 3-4). The notices that remain are more strictly personal. Titus was to look for the arrival in Crete of Artemas and Tychicus (3:12), and then he was to hasten to join Paul at Nicopolis, where the apostle was proposing to pass the winter. Zenas and Apollos were in Crete, or expected there, for Titus was to send them on their journey and supply them with whatever they needed for it (v. 13). Whether Titus did join the apostle at Nicopolis we cannot tell. But we naturally connect the mention of this place with what Paul wrote shortly afterward (2 Tim 4:10); for Dalmatia lay not far north of Nicopolis. From the form of the whole sentence it seems probable that this disciple had been with Paul in Rome during his final imprisonment.”

Paul mentions Luke three times in his epistles. The first time he introduces him as “Our dear friend Luke, the doctor.”⁸³ Luke’s presence must have been of help to Paul, since the doctor would have been able to provide some physical comfort for the Apostle.

An interesting detail is Paul’s request for Timothy to bring Mark with him when he comes to Rome. Mark had been the point of contention that caused a split between Paul and Barnabas as they prepared to go together on their second missionary journey. We read: “Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work. They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.”⁸⁴ The fact that Mark turned out right, as is clear from Paul’s request here, seems to indicate that Barnabas had shown better insight than Paul in the matter that caused their split-up.

Bible scholars differ in opinion about the reason Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus and asked Timothy to come to Rome. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* suggests: “Paul probably meant that Tychicus was to relieve Timothy, who probably was still at Ephesus, so that Timothy could join the apostle in Rome. This would suggest that Tychicus was the bearer of the letter.” But if Tychicus was the bearer of this letter to Timothy, what would be the point of mentioning that Paul had sent him?

In his commentary *2 Timothy, Titus*, Jon C. Laansma observes about the sending of Tychicus: “Paul told Timothy that Tychicus had been sent to Ephesus (4:12). For this coworker, whose name means ‘fortunate,’ see Acts 20:4; Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8; and Titus 3:12. He appears to have been a Greek (implied in Col 4:7-8, 10-11) from Asia Minor (Acts 20:4). It is possible that he was coming to take over for Timothy (and that he was carrying the present letter), if Timothy was in Ephesus (see 4:19). If

⁸¹ Rom. 9:29

⁸² Matt. 27:46

⁸³ Col. 4:14

⁸⁴ Acts 15:37-40

Timothy was elsewhere, then Paul was reporting Tychicus's whereabouts and possibly adding to the picture of his own isolation. What emerges out of the list of names thus far, then, is the pathos of desertion and isolation, on the one hand and the orchestration of a very lively mission, on the other. Death and life intermingled, as always in the Good News of the Cross."

Paul asks Timothy to bring two or three things he left behind in Ephesus: a cloak, some scrolls and a parchment. The latter may have been part of the second item requested. The Greek word for "cloak" is *phelones*, which may have been Paul's topcoat. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: "Some think it was the bag in which the books and parchments were packed." Paul had left Ephesus in a hurry when an uproar broke out, instigated by Demetrius, the silversmith, who saw his business of selling small silver shrines of the goddess Artemis go down the drain when a large group of people converted to Christ as a result of Paul's preaching.⁸⁵ Evidently, Paul had had no time to pack his belongings, since he had to flee for his life.

There are some questions about Alexander, the metalworker, to which it is difficult to find the answers. Most English Bibles call him "the coppersmith."

The Adam Clarke's Commentary comments on Alexander: "We are not to understand this of any tradesman, but of some rabbi; for it was not unusual for the Jews to apply the name of some trade as an epithet to their rabbis and literary men. He is, in all probability, the very same mentioned Acts 19:33 ... and it is not unlikely that he may have been the same whom the apostle was obliged to excommunicate, 1 Tim 1:20."

Since Paul gives no further details about Alexander's activities that caused him harm, we are left in the dark on this point. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: "The question naturally arises — When and where did Alexander thus injure St. Paul? — at Ephesus or at Rome? [One Bible scholar] suggests Rome, and with great probability. Perhaps he did him evil by stirring up the Jews at Rome against the apostle at the time of 'his first defense;' or by giving adverse testimony before the Roman tribunal, possibly accusing him of being seditious, and bringing up the riot at Ephesus as a proof of it; or in some other way, of which the memory has perished."

Paul sounds somewhat revengeful and unforgiving. The main point of his mention of Alexander, however, may be a warning for Timothy to watch out for this man who could harm him as he did Paul. That would suggest that Alexander was in Ephesus and not in Rome.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes about Alexander: "Somewhat abruptly a new actor comes on stage: Alexander the coppersmith. Though Alexander was a common name, this could well be the same individual mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20; note also the Alexander mentioned as being in Ephesus in Acts 19:33. This Alexander (4:14) is described as a *chalkeus* ..., a 'metalworker' (not necessarily of copper). There was a guild of coppersmiths in Troas. If Alexander was there, then this, along with the allusion back to Paul's life before his arrest in 4:13, may be the connection of thought with 4:13. Alexander had done Paul 'much harm' (4:14). He may have had a hand in Paul's arrest ... If so, this underscores the fact that Paul's struggles were not merely matters of theological disagreement within the church, mere in-house disputes as are most of our present-day ecclesiastical differences. The spilling over of theological disputes into the public and civic arenas is familiar from Acts (e.g. Acts 18-19). Whether or not that was the case, Paul appeared to have in mind significant harm, possibly of a physical nature."

Laansma continues: "Paul told Timothy, 'Be careful of him' (4:15). This Alexander was an ongoing personal threat to Paul's delegates and assistants in Asia, possibly in Troas where Timothy was headed. Paul said that Alexander 'fought against everything we said' (4:15). The verb *anthistēmi* ... (set oneself against, oppose) was used of Jannes and Jambres and Timothy's troublemakers in 3:8. The opposition that Paul mentions here may have been general (Paul's teaching as such, whether in church or public) or specific (a defense in court. It is not clear where it took place (Troas, Ephesus, Rome), if a particular set of circumstances is meant. Paul could be emphasizing something Timothy knew (out of paternal concern for Timothy) or passing on new information."

In contrast to what Paul wrote about Alexander, stands the observation that those who were on Paul's side, didn't dare to associate themselves with Paul either when he stood trial for the first time. Paul is much more lenient about them than about the coppersmith.

The Greek text of v.16 reads literally: "At my first answer no men stood with me, but all men forsook me: [I pray God] that it may not be laid to their charge." The latter is *meē logizomai* in Greek. The words literally refers to taking an inventory. What Paul is saying is that he asked God to wipe this sin of omission of these people's slate. When people sin against us or cause us harm in any way, we have the

⁸⁵ Acts 19:23-27

right to ask God not to condemn them for that particular offense. This may have been what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples: “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”⁸⁶

While I was on the mission field in Indonesia, I was once attacked by a robber who stabbed me. The young man was later killed by someone else who was also stabbed at the same time. I prayed and asked the Lord not to hold his offense against him. I trust that my prayer has made a difference for him in eternity.

We have no historic record of Paul’s arraignment. Paul used the occasion to preach the Gospel to the judge before whom he stood. To the church in Philippi he had written at an earlier time: “Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.”⁸⁷ Something similar may have occurred when he was arrested the second time. He was saved from being thrown to the lions, which was probably what literally happened to some Christians who had been condemned in Rome. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded.

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, comments on Paul’s statement in v.16: “The Lord was the one who would strengthen Paul. The result of this strengthening—pointedly not human strength or assistance but God’s strength in Paul’s weakness (see 2 Cor 12:5-10) - is nothing short of the crowning of Paul’s entire ministry. ‘The Lord stood with me and gave me strength so that I might preach the Good News in its entirety for all the Gentiles to hear’ (4:17). Paul was the agent of God in the manner of the proclamation that had been entrusted to him (Titus 1:5). But any note of triumph in what follows redounds to the glory of the Lord, who has broken ‘the power of death and illuminated the way to life in immortality through the Good News’ (1:10). The language carried the possibility that Paul was envisioning the advancement of the gospel through his successors (due to his own example; cf. 1:11-14; 2:2; 4:5), but the succeeding clause makes it more likely that he is referring to his own, extreme circumstances. As in his earlier experiences (Acts 16:25-34; 22:1-21; 23:1-11; 24:10-21, 24-25; 26:1-29; cf. 2 Tim 2:9; Phil 1:12-14), so also here his defense (*apologia*) ... had turned into proclamation.

It is important to pick up on the implications of Paul’s allusion to the Old Testament. At more than one point Paul’s language has suggested that he was paralleling his circumstance with Jesus’ on the cross and especially in relation to Psalm 22, a psalm that has strong associations with Jesus’ death ... One can then note that Psalm 22:27-28 had anticipated the conversion of the nations: ‘The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For royal power belongs to the LORD. He rules all the nations.’

The implication is that this psalm, cited by Jesus, reaches a new stage of realization through Paul, whose trial and death are being patterned after Jesus’ passion. Specifically, this was occurring in Paul’s climactic and symbolic proclamation before the court in Rome. And with this event Paul sensed that his task had been completed (4:6-8): ‘all the nations’ (Rom 15:11; 16:26; Gal 3:28; this is inclusive of the Jews) have heard. In this ‘it is important to note that Paul’s suffering and death do not simply indicate the temporal end of ministry; they are rather elements through which fulfillment is achieved. The importance for Timothy, who had been charged to fulfill his ministry (4:5), is that the moment of fulfillment for Paul, Timothy’s model, took place while Paul was a prisoner sharing in the sufferings of Christ.’”

The Greek text of v.18 reads literally: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” The Greek verb for “deliver” is *rhōumai*, “to rescue.” It is the same word that is used in “The Lord’s Prayer” in the phrase: “And lead us not into temptation, but *deliver* us from the evil one.”⁸⁸ In this context it obviously doesn’t mean “being preserved from” but “being delivered while going through.” Paul was not being kept from death but the Lord went with him through the experience. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “A triumphant martyrdom is as true a deliverance as escape from death.”

Paul’s fear must have been that the pain of martyrdom might endanger his faith in Christ. He did not trust in his own strength of character, but in the assurance of Christ’s presence which would allow him to keep the faith. He did not expect to be delivered from death, but in death. For this he gave the glory to God.

⁸⁶ John 20:23

⁸⁷ Phil. 1:12-14

⁸⁸ Matt. 6:13

Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, observes: “The language employed here is loaded with meaning. The verb for ‘save’ (*sōzō*) ... brings to a head the related language of 1:9, 10; 2:20; and 3:15 (cf. Titus 1:3-4). The preposition *eis* ... (unto) follows, suggesting movement; the salvation is being thought of as a process with a direction and goal. This salvation was carrying Paul through his trials, preserving Paul from both external pressure and internal weakness (Phil 1:20; Eph 6:19-20). Here, just as in the foregoing verses, Paul might be continuing to express himself through Psalm 22 ...; the Greek version of Psalm 22:28 reads, ‘the kingdom/dominion [*basileia*] is the Lord’s and he rules the nations’ (cf. Rev 11:15). That he describes this kingdom as heavenly relates not to any anti-creation, anti-material outlook but to its purely divine and therefore eternal, incorruptible, and holy nature. This is God’s reign, already realized in Jesus’ exaltation to God’s right hand and yet to be realized finally in the future restoration of all creation As in 2 Timothy 4:8, Paul may have intended a pointed contrast with the earthly kingdom that was about to pass judgment on him. Certainly the whole thought brings to a climax the promise of life that opened the letter (1:1; cf. 2:8).”

Although death was immanent, Paul did not expect to be executed immediately. He trusted that there would be enough time for Timothy to come before his final day had arrived, that is before winter.

Paul closes his letter with some greetings to and from people and with information about some people with whom Timothy must have been acquainted.

The first greeting is for Priscilla and Aquila, whom we know from the story in Acts where we learn that they were in Ephesus when Apollos came to that city. They informed that preacher about the Gospel message with which he had been unfamiliar.⁸⁹ They had originally lived in Rome, but had been evicted from the capital city by order of Emperor Claudius, who had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome.⁹⁰ Paul also mentions them in his Epistle to the Romans, evidently written before Claudius’ edict had been issued.⁹¹

Paul mentions the household of Onesiphorus for the second time in this letter.⁹² We know nothing about them from any other Scripture reference. Bible scholars have argued about the fact that Paul sent greetings to the family instead of to the head of the home. Some suppose that Onesiphorus had died and that his family still lived in Ephesus; others believe that he was merely absent from home. The Greek word used is *oikos*, “house,” which in this case obviously does not refer to a building but to a family. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “This repetition of the ‘house of Onesiphorus’ is almost conclusive as to the recent death of Onesiphorus himself.”

The same commentary states about Erastus: “We learn from ... Romans 16:3 that Erastus was the chamberlain of Corinth, which accounts for his abiding there, he was one of St. Paul’s companions in his missionary journey, and we learn from Acts 9:22 that he was sent by St. Paul with Timothy into Macedonia just before the great riot at Ephesus. The mention of him here clearly indicates that St. Paul had gone from Troas, where he left his cloak, to Corinth on his way to Rome.”

One of the most remarkable points in this epistle is the mention of the sickness of Trophimus. We gather from several incidents in Paul’s ministry that he had the gift of healing. We read, for instance that, on the island of Malta, Paul placed his hands on a Roman official, the father of Publius, and that the man was healed by prayer, as were all of the other sick on the island.⁹³ We don’t read whether Paul prayed for Trophimus, but that may be safely assumed. Jon C. Laansma, in *2 Timothy, Titus*, writes: “Plainly there had been no miraculous healing in Trophimus’s case. This is hardly a point Paul was making, but it is well worth stressing in response to modern versions of the ‘health and wealth’ gospel. The solution was not merely to heal Trophimus, nor was Paul wringing his hands over any lack of faith, whether his or Trophimus’s.” Since Paul limits himself to merely mentioning the fact of Trophimus’ illness without making any comments, there is nothing for us to build a theology of healing. We do conclude, though, that Trophimus was healed, whether naturally or miraculously, because we find him later in Jerusalem when Paul visited that city for the last time.⁹⁴

Eubulus is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture, neither are Pudens, Linus, or Claudia. *The Pulpit Commentary* observes: “Of these persons Linus is probably the same as is mentioned by Irenaeus and

⁸⁹ Acts 18:26

⁹⁰ Acts 18:2

⁹¹ Rom. 16:3

⁹² See II Tim 1:16.

⁹³ Acts 28: 7-9

⁹⁴ Acts 21:29

Eusebius as the first Bishop of Rome. Irenaeus ... says, 'When the apostles, therefore, had founded the Church (of Rome) they entrusted the office (*leitourjiav*) of the episcopate to Linus, of whom Paul makes mention in his Epistles to Timothy.' Eusebius ... says, 'Linus was ordained the first Bishop of Rome (*protos klyroutai ten episkopen*) after the martyrdom of Paul and Peter.'

Some Greek manuscripts add the Name of Jesus Christ to the blessing "The Lord be with your spirit." In the final blessing "grace be with you," the word "you" is in the plural in Greek. Most Bible scholars conclude from this that the blessing is addressed to the church and not to Timothy alone.