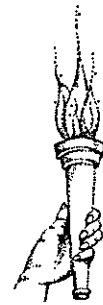


Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 1 . . . Passing Your Spiritual Torch (2 Timothy 1:1-5)



NOTES

This epistle is the most touching and personal of all Paul's writings. It is his final letter and has, therefore, been called his "last will and testament." In this book, Paul passes his spiritual torch to a new generation of believers—especially to young Timothy, who is the leader of the church at Ephesus.

Paul wrote this letter in 'A.D. 66 or 67, during his second imprisonment in Rome. After his first imprisonment, Paul was apparently released for a couple of years. During this time, the Roman emperor Nero blamed Christians for the burning of Rome and made Christianity an illegal religion. Sometime after that, Paul was again arrested and later executed.

In the first five verses of this last epistle, Paul reveals **four** principles required for effectively **passing your spiritual torch**. First . . .



Pass it with purpose (1:1).

Paul begins this letter: *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1a). Though life seems so unfair at this point, Paul has no misgivings about God's purpose for his life. Therefore, he reminds his readers he is *an apostle* (APOSTOLOS, a-pos'-tol-os), which means, "one sent forth with a message." The modern equivalent is the word "missionary." Paul was not one of the original twelve disciples, but he was personally called and commissioned by the Lord. As with each of us, God had a special purpose for Paul's life. In Acts 9:15b, what does God tell Ananias is His purpose for Paul's life?

Paul was *an apostle* not because he sought the position but *by the will of God* (1:1b). Though he certainly doesn't understand it all, Paul knows somehow God has a good purpose for the Roman axe that looms in his near future.

Suffering is not an indication we are out of God's *will* because doing God's *will* usually requires sacrifice and suffering. Choosing to do God's *will* for our lives often requires making the same choice as Moses. How is his choice described in Hebrews 11:25?

Paul was an apostle . . . according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus (1:1c). He was to declare the promise of life to those who were dead in trespasses and sin (Eph. 2:1). The phrase in Christ Jesus, or "in Christ," appears more than 90 times in his epistles. Probably the best known instance is 2 Corinthians 5:17. Personalize and write it below:

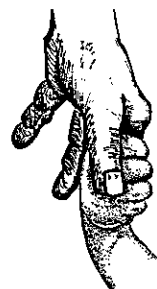
When passing your spiritual torch, remind your successors that Christians have the most important purpose in the world because the Gospel is the promise of life . . . in Christ. So, pass your spiritual torch with purpose and . . .



Pass it with parental affection (1:2a).

Paul probably first met Timothy when he and Barnabas visited Lystra on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:8-21). On the second missionary journey, Paul again meets Timothy and is so impressed with him he gets Timothy to accompany him and Silas on their journey (Acts 16:2-3).

Years later, Paul warmly writes: *To Timothy, my dearly beloved son* (1:2a), which reveals the intimate relationship between them. Apparently, Timothy's father was not a believer, so Paul became Timothy's spiritual father. This is an example of God's special way of filling the voids in our lives.



One blessing of being a Christian is belonging to a spiritual family with spiritual parents, brothers, and sisters. Jesus expresses this truth when His mother and brothers, who think Jesus has lost His mind, come to take Him back to Nazareth. They wait outside and send someone to tell Jesus they are there (Mk 3:31-32). Jesus looks at His disciples sitting around Him and says, *Behold my mother and my brethren!* (Mk 3:34). Then, what does He say in the next verse (Mk 3:35)?

In other words, we as Christians are a spiritual family, with sons and daughters in the faith to whom we will one day pass our spiritual torches. Therefore, pass your spiritual torch with **purpose, parental affection**, and . . .



Pass it with prayer (1:2b-3).

This is why Paul prays a triple blessing for Timothy: *Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (1:2b). Paul is expressing his genuine desire for God's best in Timothy's life. *Grace* is a request for supernatural strength, like God gave Paul to endure his thorn in

the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7-9). *Mercy* (ELEOS, el'-eh-os) is a request for kind acts beyond what is expected or deserved. God's *peace* (EIRĒNĒ, ay-ray'-nay) refers to inner tranquility that only comes from experiencing God's grace and mercy. *Peace* is the "spiritual tranquilizer" that keeps us from panic.

Chained and sitting in a cold, damp dungeon, Paul can no longer preach or travel, but he can write and pray, so he does. Paul writes: *I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day* (1:3). When Paul prays, Timothy is always on his mind. As Jesus passes His torch, He prays for two things concerning His disciples. What is His first request (John 17:15)?

Jesus wants His disciples to be in the world, but not of the world (Jn 17:16). We are to be insulated from the world, not isolated from it. That is only possible through Jesus' second request for His followers in John 17:17. What is it?

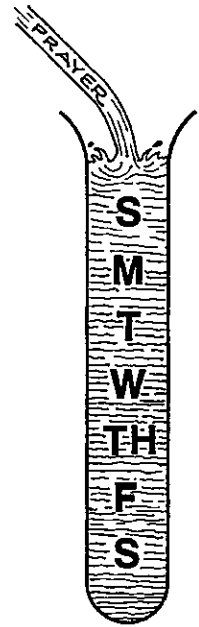
When I was dating Virginia, I got a new Bible. She wrote in the front of it: "This book will keep you from sin; but sin will keep you from this book." To be kept from the Evil One, we must allow the Word of God to *sanctify* us by living what it teaches.

As Jesus and Paul prayed for those who would follow them, we all need people for whom we pray and to whom we will one day pass our spiritual torches. Therefore, pass your spiritual torch with **purpose, parental affection, prayer, and . . .**



Pass it with praise (1:4-5).

Few things prepare people to accept the spiritual torch like praise. Paul is a master in this area because he knows the power of praise. Paul writes, *Greatly desiring to see thee . . . that I may be filled with joy* (1:4a & c). There is no greater praise than letting people know their presence brings *joy* to our lives. There are also very few people who fill us with *joy* when we are in their presence. However, as Christians, we have a common relationship that does fill us with *joy*. Read Psalm 16:11b-c and explain.



The phrase *being mindful of thy tears* (1:4b) probably refers to the tearful parting Paul experienced when he was arrested and shipped off to Rome. Paul had a similar parting with the elders in Ephesus. After Paul kneels and prays with them, what does Acts 20:37 record?

In our lives, there are very few people for whom we weep when we have to part from them. Paul's life is an example that the people with whom we have the strongest bonds are those we have helped find and prepare for God's purpose for their lives. These people will someday receive our spiritual torches.

Paul's praise continues: *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also* (1:5). Timothy's father was a Gentile, and nothing is said of his faith, so he may not have been a believer. However, it is clear Timothy's *unfeigned*, or sincere, *faith* was modeled by his mother and grandmother, who were possibly led to the Lord by Paul.

The best way to help someone develop an *unfeigned*, or authentic, *faith* and prepare them to carry the torch is praising them regularly. The Evil One uses discouragement, which is often the result of a lack of praise, to lead many believers into temptation. Therefore, when passing your spiritual torch, pass it with praise by obeying what command in 1 Thessalonians 5:11?

A major part of having a "journey to a faithful finish" is preparing others to accept your spiritual torch. Pass your torch with **purpose, parental affection, prayer, and praise**.

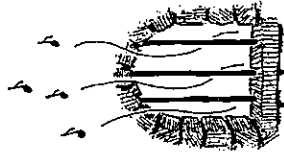
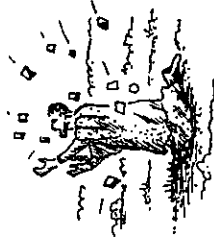
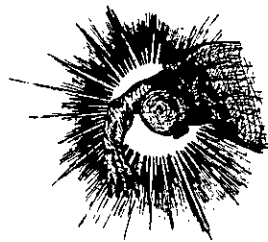
Paul's life gives us an excellent example of a "journey to a faithful finish." Answer the following questions by looking at the diagram of Paul's Christian life on page 11:

How many epistles did Paul write? _____

How many years between his conversion and martyrdom? _____

How many of his epistles were written during his imprisonments? _____

PAUL'S CHRISTIAN LIFE



Paul's Conversion
 Damascus
 A.D. 37

First Missionary Journey
 Galatia
 A.D. 48-49

Second Missionary Journey
 Macedonia
 Achaia
 Greece
 A.D. 50-52
 1 *Thessalonians*
 Place: Corinth (50)
 2 *Thessalonians*
 Place: Corinth (51)
Galatians
 Place: Antioch (52)

Third Missionary Journey
 Asia
 A.D. 53-57
 1 *Corinthians*
 Place: Ephesus (55)
 2 *Corinthians*
 Place: Ephesus (55)
Romans
 Place: Corinth (57)

First Imprisonment
 Rome
 A.D. 60-63
Ephesians
 Place: Rome (60)
Colossians
 Place: Rome (60)
Philemon
 Place: Rome (60)
Philippians
 Place: Rome (61)

Between Imprisonments
 Macedonia
 Corinth
 A.D. 63-66
 1 *Timothy*
 Place: Macedonia (64)
Titus
 Place: Corinth (64)

Second Imprisonment
 Rome
 A.D. 66-68
 2 *Timothy*
 Place: Rome (67)
 Martyrdom (68)

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 2 . . . Rekindling Your Spiritual Flame (2 Timothy 1:6-10)



NOTES

What should you do when your spiritual fire is flickering and about to go out? Paul tells us in this passage. When we read between the lines of this epistle, it seems young Timothy's spiritual flame has diminished, at least to some degree. Therefore, in these verses Paul reveals how to rekindle your spiritual flame. This requires at least **three** actions.



Remember your spiritual resources (1:6-7).

We all need regular spiritual rekindling, as Paul writes to Timothy: *Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God* (1:6a). The word translated *stir up* means to kindle into flames. It is present tense, which means continuous action. Therefore, it could be translated "keep ablaze."

The word translated *gift* (CHARISMA, kar'is-mah) refers to the spiritual gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit when we become Christians to equip us for God's purpose. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift. How does 1 Peter 4:10 express this fact?

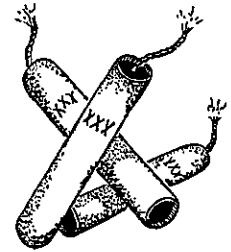
Paul writes that Timothy received his spiritual gift *by the putting on of my hands* (1:6b). This could refer to Timothy's ordination or to the time of his conversion, which is when we receive our spiritual gifts.

Paul continues with my favorite Bible verse: *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind* (1:7). Satan's most effective weapon in quenching our spiritual flame is *fear*. An acronym that wonderfully describes the fear Satan plants in our hearts is **False Evidence Appearing Real**.

A spirit of fear is seen in the Israelites when they finally come to the border of the Promised Land. They send out twelve spies to scout out the land. When they return, they report they *saw the giants*. Then, what do they say in Numbers 13:33a-b?

When you get that “grasshopper” feeling, remember God has given you **three** great resources.

The **first** resource is the *spirit of power* (1:7b). The word translated *power* (DUNAMIS, doo'-nuh-meece) is the Greek word from which we get our English words “dynamite” and “dynamic.” It refers to a great force or energy. God infuses us with His *power* so we can effectively use our spiritual gifts to fulfill His purpose for our lives. How is this power described in Ephesians 3:20?



Our **second** resource is the *spirit of love* (1:7c). The word translated *love* (AGAPE, uh-gah'-pay or ag'-uh-pay) is a supernatural love that enables us to love all people, regardless of who they are or how they act. Accompanying the *power* to do what God has put us on the earth to do is the supernatural ability to *love* believers and non-believers alike.

Nothing reveals our spiritual flames are flickering like our lack of love. When we have a hard time loving difficult people, we need to fan our spiritual flames. When our spiritual flames are fully ignited, we can obey what command in 1 Corinthians 16:14?

Our **third** resource is *a sound mind* (1:7d). This means we can remain cool, calm, and collected when others do not. When we act like “hotheads,” we don't have sound minds. God's Holy Spirit gives us the power to control our passions and reactions.

Power, love, and a sound mind are available to us because the Holy Spirit lives in us. Therefore, there is no reason to have a spirit of *fear*. To rekindle your spiritual flame, **remember your spiritual resources** and . . .



Rely on spiritual power (1:8).

The resources God supplies enable us to be faithful to the finish. Therefore, Paul writes: *Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord* (1:8a). Timothy may have been struggling with fears of being arrested and executed. Paul's impending execution planted fear in the hearts of all believers, which was Nero's intent.

When we are in an intimidating situation, we should not be *ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*. Have you ever been in a situation when fear caused

you to hope no one would find out you are a Christian? Have you ever been afraid to stand up for what is right? Have you ever been ashamed to speak up for biblical morality?

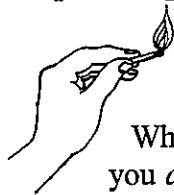
This is all part of being *ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*. Sometimes the only alternative to being ashamed is to suffer hardship for the Gospel. When tempted to be ashamed of our Lord, remember what He says about those who are ashamed of Him. What does He say (Luke 9:26)?

We are not to be ashamed of Christ, or of other Christians who are suffering because of Christ, for Paul writes: *nor of me his prisoner* (1:8b). Paul continues, *but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God* (1:8c). Suffering, being ridiculed, or enduring persecution in any form, is not something we must endure in our own strength but by *the power of God*. This kind of enduring *power* is not available until we need it.

Jesus tells His disciples to *take no thought*, or to not worry, about what to say or how to say it when they are arrested because they will be *given* the words to say (Mt 10:19). Then, what does our Lord tell them will happen (10:20)?

When we are suffering for the *gospel*, we receive supernatural strength by *the power of God* (1:8c). Do you know why most Christians never really experience God's *power* in their lives? They are never in the midst of circumstances where they need it. They just "go with the flow." But when you endure suffering, in whatever form, because of the Gospel, you will experience God's supernatural *power* in your life. However, this *power* is reserved for those who are not *ashamed of the testimony of our Lord* (1:8a).

To rekindle your spiritual flame, **remember your spiritual resources, rely on spiritual power, and . . .**



Review your salvation (1:9-10).

When your spiritual flame begins to flicker, remember who *saved* you and *called you with an holy calling* (1:9a). Why did God save us? He saved us so we would live *holy* lives in a sinful world. We are to let our lights shine. We are saved *not according to our works, but how* (1:9b)?

The **reason** for our salvation is God's *purpose* for our lives, and the **means** of our salvation is God's *grace*. *Grace* means we don't deserve salvation, but God saves us anyway. God gave us His saving grace *in Christ Jesus before the world began* (1:9c). In other words, Christ existed before the beginning of time, and the *grace* that saves us preexisted in Him. How is this truth expressed in Ephesians 1:4?

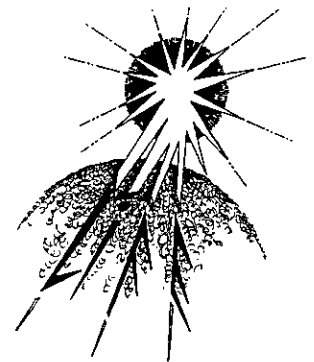
This means your salvation—and mine—was in the mind of God in eternity past, long before we existed. If that doesn't fan your spiritual flame, I don't know what could. God had you and me on His mind before the world began.

Before time began, God made provision for our salvation which *is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death* (1:10a-b). The word translated *abolished* (KATARGEŌ, kah-tar-geh'-o) means "to render inoperative." The Bible teaches when Jesus died on the cross, He took the *sting* out of death (1 Cor. 15:54-57). Death is no longer our enemy; it is our friend because it is not the end of life but the beginning of eternal life. Death is a comma, not a period.

Jesus also *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* (1:10c). Without knowledge of Christ, *life and immortality* are obscure and hidden in darkness, but Jesus brought eternal life *to light*, so we could see it and understand how to receive it. How is this described in John 1:4?

The word *light* refers to spiritual understanding. The life and words of Jesus, which are *the gospel*, penetrate our hearts and minds, bringing spiritual enlightenment about eternal life.

To rekindle your spiritual flame, **remember your spiritual resources, rely on spiritual power, and review your salvation.**



Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 3 . . . Being Bold to the End (2 Timothy 1:11-18)

As we read Paul's final written words in this epistle, we see no wavering—no doubt—in his mind about his faith in Christ. We only see unshakeable confidence and boldness, in spite of the fact he knows his execution is imminent. This passage reveals **three** requirements for **being bold to the end**. First . . .

Concentrate on whom you believe (1:11-12).

Paul writes: *Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles* (1:11). God *appointed* Paul to be a *preacher* (KĒRYX, kay'-roox), which means one who "heralds" or "proclaims." You have heard the Christmas song, "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." The herald angels are those who proclaim God's message. Along with Paul, all Christians are appointed heralds, or proclaimers. In the book of Matthew, Jesus tells His disciples that what He shares with them in the dark, they should *speak . . . in light* (10:27a-b). Then, what does He say (10:27c-d)?

In Jesus' day, it was common practice to use the flat roofs as platforms to make public announcements. We all have the responsibility of heralding, or proclaiming, what we learn from Jesus.

Paul also declares he was *appointed an apostle* (1:11), which means "one sent forth with a message." He does not represent himself, but the One who sent him. As Christians, we are not on this planet to represent ourselves but to represent Christ. How does Paul declare this fact in 2 Corinthians 5:20a-b?

He is also *appointed a teacher of the Gentiles* (1:11), which means a perpetuator of the Gospel. As Paul marvels at his privilege, he adds: *For the which cause I also suffer these things* (1:12a). This refers to Paul's imprisonment, the abandonment by most of his friends, and his imminent execution.

Why is Paul relentless in his preaching and teaching, rather than becoming discouraged? Paul is bold to the end because he could say: *nevertheless I am*



NOTES

not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed (1:12b). Notice Paul says, *for I know whom I have believed*, not **what I have believed** (emphasis added). Being a Christian is not believing certain doctrines or joining a particular church or denomination. Christianity is not a religion; it is a relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul's confidence was not in a book or a theology, but in Jesus Christ as God's only Son. Therefore, he is bold to the end.

Paul continues: *and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day* (1:12c). Paul committed his life and eternal destiny to the Lord Jesus, and he believes both are in good hands until *that day* when Christ returns. We can have that same assurance because of what promise of Jesus in John 10:28?



To be bold to the end, **concentrate on whom you believe**, and . . .

Dedicate yourself to guard God's Word (1:13-14).

Paul puts it like this: *Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me* (1:13a). Paul is telling Timothy to *hold* on to his teachings, which today make up almost half of the New Testament, using them as a *form* for his own teaching. The context in which this teaching is to be done is *in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus* (1:13b). In 1 Corinthians 13:1, what does Paul write about even the best teaching, if it is done without love?

Paul also exhorts young Timothy: *That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us* (1:14). The word *keep* (PHYLASSŌ, foo-las'-so) means "preserve intact." We must be loving in our teaching, but we must also be faithful to *keep* the truth of God's Word. The responsibility for preserving the Word of God intact can be obeyed through the power of *the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*. The Holy Spirit continuously resides in us, giving us the boldness to guard the Word.

We must continue to *guard* the Word of God that has now been *committed* to us. The battle is on. For example, I received an article through the mail entitled, "The Truth About Homosexuality." It was mailed to pastors all over America. A section of that article was subtitled: "What about sodomy? Is it a sin?" It read: "True biblical scholars tell us that the sin of the Sodomites was not homosexuality: it was inhospitality."

What was the sin of the Sodomites? When the angels visit Lot's home in Sodom, men from every part of the city surround his home. They call out to Lot, asking about the men who came to spend the night with him (Gen. 19:1-5b). Then, what do they say in Genesis 19:5c-d?

The word *know* is the literal translation. However, some versions of the Bible translate the word translated *know* (YĀDA', yaw-dah') "have sex" or "have relations" [HCSB, NIV, NLT, NASB]. Depending on context, the word does mean this. For example, how is the same Hebrew word translated *knew* (YĀDA') used in Genesis 4:1a-b?

Cain also *knew* (YĀDA') his wife, and she bore Enoch (Gen. 4:17). Also, if you read on about Lot, he goes outside and shockingly offers his *two daughters which have not known* (YĀDA') *man* (Gen. 19:8). To say the sin of the Sodomites was inhospitality is neither a mistake nor a matter of interpretation; it is a lie and a perversion of Scripture. If we don't say so, we are not obeying the command to *keep* what was *committed* to us by all the believers who have lived before us (1:14a).

If we protect *the good thing which was committed* to us, it is all or nothing. We must not allow any part of God's Word to be distorted. This is because of the warning God gives in Deuteronomy 4:2a-b. What is it?



To be bold to the end, **concentrate on whom you believe, dedicate yourself to guard God's Word, and . . .**

Anticipate disappointments and pleasant surprises (1:15-18).

Paul now expresses his disappointment: *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus [fih-jel'-us] and Hermogenes [her-mah'-jih-nee-z]* (1:15). Since Paul mentions these two by name, they must be a special disappointment. Most of Paul's friends deserted him when he was imprisoned, probably because they were afraid of being guilty by association.

In contrast to his **disappointments**, Paul also has **pleasant surprises**. One of which he refers to when he writes: *The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus [ahn-uh-sif'-o-rus]; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain* (1:16). Paul's being in prison did not faze this faithful friend and brother in Christ. Anyone visiting a prisoner, especially a condemned man, was looked upon with suspicion by Roman officials.

However, Paul writes: *But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me* (1:17). Onesiphorus lived in Ephesus but went to Rome and found Paul, who was one of thousands of prisoners. However, he did not allow the difficulty of finding Paul nor the danger of being associated with him keep him from locating Paul. In friendship, adversity separates the chaff from the wheat. We don't find out who our real friends are until we need them. Then, we learn what truth in Proverbs 17:17a?

Paul prays: *The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus* (1:18). Paul knows he will never again be free and in a position to return the kindness, so he asks the Lord to grant Onesiphorus *mercy . . . in that day*. *Mercy* refers to compassion that results in kind acts. The phrase *in that day* probably refers to the Judgment Seat of Christ, before which all Christians must appear (2 Cor. 5:10).

We will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ to determine our eternal rewards. According to James 2:13, at that judgment why will our *mercy*, or kind acts, to others be so important?

To be bold to the end, **concentrate on whom you believe, dedicate yourself to guard God's Word, and anticipate disappointments and pleasant surprises.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 4 . . . Being a Strong Christian (2 Timothy 2:1-7)



NOTES

Would you like to be a stronger Christian? At times we all feel weak because the Evil One uses fear, fatigue, and frustration as obstacles in our Christian lives. The spiritual battle can weaken us. Therefore, what command does God give us in Ephesians 6:10b?

How do we obey this command? In this passage, Paul tells us.

Be a receiver (2:1).

Since he has been in prison, many of Paul's friends and associates have deserted him. It is becoming increasingly difficult to be a Christian because of the persecution by Nero. Therefore, what does Paul write to Timothy in verse one that applies to you today?

The verb translated *be strong* (ENDYNAMOŌ, en-dyna-mo'-oh), is imperative mood, present tense, passive voice. Imperative mood indicates a command. Present tense means continuous action. Passive voice denotes someone else does the strengthening, which in this passage is God.

But how do you receive the strengthening *grace that is in Christ Jesus*? It's simple—admit your weakness. We receive strengthening, or empowering, grace when we admit our weaknesses and limitations. What does James 4:6b reveal about how to receive empowering grace?

The same *grace*, the same spiritual power available in Christ to Paul and Timothy, is available to you and me. However, remember the only way to receive it is by admitting you need it.

To be a strong Christian, **be a receiver** of God's empowering grace and . . .

Be a transmitter (2:2).

Strong Christians transmit the Gospel message. Therefore, Paul continues: *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2:2).* Transmitting the Gospel can be done in large groups—*among many witnesses*. It can also be done in small groups—one on one.

However, it should begin in our families, as it did with Timothy. Just as Lois and Eunice, the grandmother and mother of Timothy, shared their faith with Timothy, we must pass our own faith to our children. While we cannot believe for them, we can transmit the Gospel message in word and deed as we live out our faith before our children. Doing this requires obeying the command not to *provoke* children to *wrath* (Eph. 6:4a). Instead, what does Paul write in Ephesians 6:4b?

We are to *commit* the truth to *faithful men* who will pass it on (2:2b). The Greek word translated *men* (ANTHRŌPOIS, ahn'-thro-pos) is the word from which we get our word "anthropology" and can refer to both men and women, depending on context. The Greek word for man, the male gender, is ANĒR, (ah'-near).

Those to whom we transmit the Gospel should *be able to teach others also* (2:2c). This way the Gospel is passed on from generation to generation, creating an endless chain of Christian teachers.

To be a strong Christian, **be a receiver** of God's empowering grace, **be a transmitter** of the Gospel message, and . . .

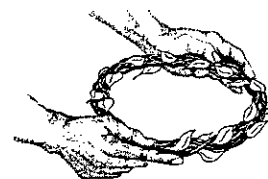
Be an applier (2:3-7).

Paul now gives us three illustrations of what it means to be a strong Christian. He begins with the illustration of a soldier by writing: *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2:3).* What does Paul say about a *good soldier* (2:4a)?

Paul uses a *soldier* as an example of the importance of remaining free from entanglements of less importance than serving the Lord. We should be involved in our community, but not become entangled to the point it eats up our time and energy, hindering our service as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

A good soldier's purpose is to *please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier* (2:4b). By refusing to get entangled in outside involvements, a good *soldier* is ready to follow the orders of the one who has enlisted him. This requires being able to distinguish between doing good things and doing the main things. As someone has said, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." Being a strong Christian requires refusing to become distracted.

Paul now gives us an illustration from athletics: *And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully* (2:5). The word translated *strive* (ATHLEŌ, ath-leh'-oh) denotes competing in a contest. The word translated *crowned* (STEPHANOŌ, stef-ahn-o'o) is the Greek word from which we get our English names "Stephen" and "Stephanie." It refers to the wreath given to winners in Greek Olympic Games and to generals returning from war. It is in contrast to the kingly crown (DIADĒMA, dee-odd'-ay-mah), which refers to a royal, or kingly, crown. The STEPHANOS crown was a token of honor for distinguished service or accomplishment. This crown reveals our goal should be to attain Christ's approval.



An athlete must know the rules of the event, train diligently, and compete with an understanding of those rules. The point is a strong Christian will *strive*, or compete, *lawfully*—according to the rulebook, the Bible. This means if we are to receive the victor's crown, we must run the race set before us with love, compassion, purity, and integrity. How does Philippians 1:10b express this principle?

The third illustration is of a farmer. Paul writes: *The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits* (2:6). A *husbandman*, or farmer, does all kinds of unattractive, mundane work, such as plowing, planting, and cultivating. From this illustration, we learn that being a Christian is sometimes just plain hard work.

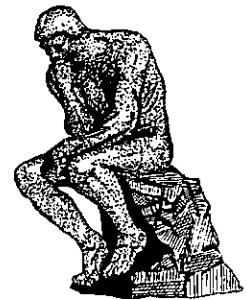
Sometimes, it's no fun being a farmer, especially when there are droughts, weeds, insects, or early frosts. The same is true of being a Christian. Sometimes, it's just plain hard work. When we finish our work, we should be able to pray what prayer of Jesus in John 17:4?

God has given each of us a spiritual field in which to work. We are to plow, plant, cultivate, and harvest. Our field may be a family, a school, an office, a factory, a store, a warehouse, etc. Wherever you go each morning is your spiritual field, where you are to be a hardworking "farmer" for Jesus.

When being a Christian is just hard work, remember the hard-working farmer *must be first partaker of the fruits* (2:6). Likewise, a spiritual farmer for Christ will be the first to reap the fruit of God's Word in the lives of people in whom the Gospel seed is planted.

All three of these occupations—the soldier, the athlete, and the farmer—involve work and sacrifice. Therefore, they are great illustrations of what is involved in **being a strong Christian**.

Paul ends this section by writing: *Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things* (2:7). The word *consider* means to meditate or reflect on the application. Meditating is much like worrying. When you worry, you take a negative thought and think about it over and over, looking at it from every angle. If you know how to worry, you know how to meditate because it is the same process. However, instead of taking a negative thought, you take a verse or passage of scripture and think about it over and over, looking for application to your life.



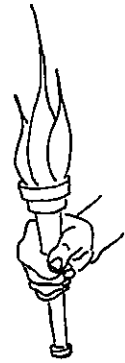
When God commissions Joshua, He tells him not to let the *book of the law* depart from his mouth (Josh. 1:8a). This refers to reading the Bible aloud, which was, and still is, common among Jews because it aids in concentration. Then, what does God say to Joshua that still applies to us today (Josh. 1:8b-c)?

In other words, **be an applier**. Paul is asking Timothy to meditate on what he has just written, knowing *the Lord* will help him see the wisdom of his words and the application to his life.

To be a strong Christian, **be a receiver** of God's empowering grace, **be a transmitter** of the Gospel message, and **be an applier** of all you have learned.

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 5 . . . Finding Peace in Your Problems (2 Timothy 2:8-13)



NOTES

Being a Christian sometimes produces problems. Until Jesus returns, if we take our faith seriously, we will have problems. That's why Jesus said, *In the world ye shall have tribulation*, or big-time problems (Jn 16:33b). However, you can find peace in your problems by remembering **four things**.

The Person You Serve (2:8a-c)

Whenever it is difficult to live the Christian life because of problems, the first thing to do is *Remember . . . Jesus Christ* (2:8a). Specifically, remember *He was raised from the dead* (2:8c), which proves His deity—He is God. We do not serve a book or a dead person. We worship and serve a Savior who is risen *from the dead*. This means we are to remember the Person we serve is alive. What difference does that make? How does Jesus answer that question to His disciples in John 14:19c-d?

In His humanity, Jesus was of *the seed of David* (2:8b). This means He was fully human and knows about our problems and suffering by experience. On His mother's side He was human, and on His Father's side He is divine. Why is remembering Jesus' humanity important? How does Hebrews 2:18 answer this question?

Because Jesus was human as well as divine, He understands the problems of living in this fallen world. From Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11), to Jesus' family thinking He was insane (Mk 3:21 & 31-33), to the persecution from the religious leaders, to the nails of His crucifixion, Jesus knows what it's like to be misunderstood, persecuted, put under pressure, and to suffer. Therefore, He can relate to every discouragement, every temptation, and every problem we will ever face. How does Hebrews 4:15b-c express this truth?



To find peace in your problems, remember **the Person you serve** and . . .

The Power of God's Word (2:8d-9)

Paul has more than his share of problems. He writes he is suffering in prison for preaching the Gospel about the Jesus he just described. He is being punished *as an evil doer, even unto bonds* (2:8d-9b). He is in a humiliating situation because he is being treated like a criminal—a thief or murderer.

However, Paul isn't discouraged because he knows the power of God's Word and writes: *but the word of God is not bound* (2:9c). Paul knows God's Word cannot be chained or imprisoned. In fact, Paul's imprisonment resulted in his writing several of the epistles. God's Word still spreads and changes lives, despite opposition and persecution. What promise does God give about the Word that goes out of His mouth (Isaiah 55:11)?

Regardless of the circumstances, God's Word will always *accomplish* its intended purpose. Therefore, to find peace in your problems, **remember the Person you serve, the power of God's Word, and . . .**

The Purpose of Your Problems (2:10)

Why was Paul willing to endure such suffering and humiliation? He tells us: *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake* (2:10a). The word translated *elect's* (EKLEKTOS, ek-lek'-tos) means "chosen" and refers to all those who will yet believe in Christ. The purpose of enduring tough situations is that people *may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus* (2:10b). Paul is suffering because, like Peter, he knows what truth found in Acts 4:12?



Sometimes, the purpose of our problems is that our endurance and response might influence others to *obtain the salvation which is in Christ*. Look at the chart on page 11, and list the five epistles Paul wrote while in prison:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Though Paul wouldn't live to see the impact of his epistles, he knows God will use his suffering to help win others to Christ. Only God knows how many people have come to Christ through reading the prison epistles or hearing them preached and taught.

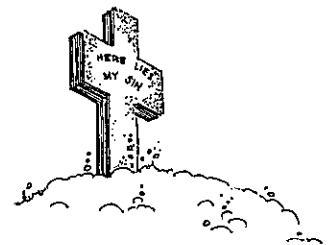
God sometimes allows us to be in "prison." It may not be a prison of bars and locks, but it is a prison just the same. It may be a problem relationship, a hostile work environment, a financial difficulty, a health problem, etc. How we react to the "prisons" of life is often our greatest platform of witness to non-believers. We should be like Paul and focus on the **purpose** of our suffering, which may be to bring others to Christ.

To find peace in your problems, remember **the Person you serve, the power of God's Word, the purpose of your problems, and . . .**

The Promise to the Faithful and Faithless (2:11-13)

Verses 11-13 are one long sentence and were probably an early Christian hymn. That's why, in some modern translations, it is set in verse form. Each of the four stanzas begins with an *if* that describes our actions and ends with the inevitable result of our actions.

The first stanza reads: *For if I be dead with him, we shall also live with him* (2:11). This refers to our death to sin and our old way of living and the new life we have in Christ. How does Paul describe this truth in Romans 6:11?



The second stanza reads: *If we suffer, we shall also reign with him* (2:12a). Faithfully enduring severe problems gives evidence we truly belong to Christ. Those who do not endure suffering for the Gospel give certain evidence they don't belong to Christ and, therefore, will not *reign with him*. The reward is amazing. We will not just be with Christ; we will *reign with him*. This means we will be an important part of the administration in heaven. Nothing reveals our true faith in Christ and His promises like our willingness to suffer for the Gospel. Much of the reward in heaven will be administrative responsibilities given to us. That's why Jesus will say to the faithful: *Well done, good and faithful servant* (Mt 25:23a-b). Then, what will He say (25:23c-e)?

The Bible teaches there are degrees of reigning with Christ, as is seen in the parable of the ten pounds (Lk 19:11-27).

The third stanza reads: *if we deny him, he also will deny us* (2:12b). The word *deny* refers to permanently disowning, or rejecting, Christ. True believers don't permanently *deny*, or depart from, Christ (1 Jn 2:19; 2 John 9).

Can we have problems or fears that cause us to temporarily have doubts? Yes! John the Baptist had doubts while in prison (Mt 11:2-3) and so did Peter the night of Jesus' crucifixion (Mt 26:69-75). Obviously, like John the Baptist and Peter, we can fall into temporary lapses of faith. However, true believers are guilty of only temporary failures. On the other hand, for those who permanently *deny* Him, what ominous warning does Jesus give in Matthew 10:33?

The verb *shall deny* in Greek (ARNEOMAI, ar-neh'-o-may) is aorist tense, which refers to steps in a continuous process. Therefore, it doesn't mean to deny two or three times, as Peter did, but to deny Christ repeatedly and continuously. Jesus is referring to a settled, permanent denial that never repents.

The fourth stanza reads: *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful* (2:13a). In contrast to *deny*, the phrase *believe not* refers to a temporary lack of faith. All of us fail the Lord from time to time. Do you know why? We are all human and by our very nature, prone to falter. If we lapse into temporary faithlessness, God *abideth faithful*, as Jesus did during the temporary denial by Peter. What eternal truth does Philippians 1:6 declare?

This is because *he cannot deny himself* (2:13c), which means God will not renege on His promise to condemn those who *deny* Him nor on His promise to remain faithful to those who temporarily *believe not*. God's holy and righteous nature will never allow Him to violate His Word. Because of His character, what does Titus 1:2c declare about God?

To find peace in your problems, remember **the Person you serve, the power of God's Word, the purpose of your problems, and the promise to the faithful and faithless.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 6 . . . Sensing God's Pleasure (2 Timothy 2:14-19)



NOTES

In one scene of the movie "Chariots of Fire," Olympic runner, and later missionary, Eric Liddell was asked why he ran with such intensity. He said he could sense God's pleasure when he ran as fast as he could. How can we sense God's pleasure in our lives? In this passage, Paul gives us **four** requirements for **sensing God's pleasure**.



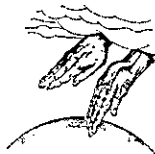
First, eliminate quarreling (2:14).

Paul begins this section: *Of these things put them in remembrance* (2:14a). The importance of repetition cannot be overestimated. Do you remember just the titles of your pastor's sermons for the past three Sunday mornings? The average person forgets about 90% of a sermon within 72 hours. That's why pastors and teachers need to keep reminding believers of the basics of the Christian faith. How does 2 Peter 1:12 indicate Peter's method of teaching and preaching the basics of the faith?

Paul instructs Timothy to charge *them before the Lord that they strive not about words* (2:14b). This refers to contentious debating or arguing. Arguments are always the result of pride. How does Proverbs 13:10a declare this truth?

The Hebrew word translated *pride* (ZĀDON, zaw'-done) refers to arrogance and rudeness. Quarreling is simply one person trying to prove he or she is right and another is wrong. Arguing about the Bible or your beliefs is of *no profit* and even worse, it subverts *the hearers* (2:14c-d).

Arguing tears down believers and turns off unbelievers. It's not just what we believe, but how we behave that builds up believers and draws unbelievers to Christ. Therefore, to sense God's pleasure, **eliminate quarreling** and . . .



Second, facilitate God's Word (2:15).

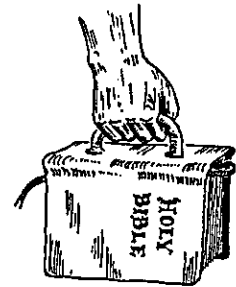
Now, we come to one of the most famous verses in *2 Timothy*: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed . . .* (2:15a-b). The word translated *study* (SPOUDAZŌ, spoo-dad'-zo) means to be diligent or persistent in accomplishing

an objective. In the context of this verse, it refers to giving the maximum effort to properly interpret, explain, and apply God's Word.

In this command, the word *workman* pictures workers who have done their work well and can present it to their superiors and not *be ashamed* of its quality. Our lives are to be based on the proper application of God's Word. If not, according to 1 Corinthians 3:15; what will happen at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

If our life's work doesn't conform to the Word of God, we will be like people who wake up in the middle of the night to find their house engulfed in flames. They escape through the flames, but lose everything except their lives.

Sensing God's pleasure requires *rightly dividing the word of truth* (2:15b). The root word translated *rightly* (ORTHOS, or-thos') is the word from which we get our English words "orthopedic" and "orthodoxy." It means "in a straight manner." It is the idea of staying on course, as when a farmer plows a straight furrow.



To sense God's pleasure in your life, **eliminate quarreling, facilitate God's Word, and . . .**



Third, amputate irreverent babble (2:16-18).

To sense God's pleasure, *shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness* (2:16). *Babblings* means "fruitless or meaningless discussion." A test of our discussion during Bible study is, "Does it help me understand the Bible or its application to my life?" If not, it is indulging in *babblings*, which leads to spiritual deterioration.

Paul continues: *their word will eat as doth a canker* (2:17a). *Canker* (GANGRAINA, gan'-grain-ah) refers to the decay of body tissue when the blood supply is obstructed. When a person's limb gets *canker*, or gangrene, it often must be amputated to stop the decay from spreading. The point is that *vain babblings* must be amputated from our discussions in Bible study because it obstructs the study of God's Word and causes spiritual decay. Instead of believing everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit, what should you do, according to 1 John 4:1b?

Those responsible for spiritual *canker* are *Hymenaeus* [Hi-men-ee'-us] and *Philetus* [Fih-lee'-tus], ^[18]*Who concerning the truth have erred* (2:17b-18a). Paul has already put Hymenaeus out of the church in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:20). Now, Hymenaeus has a co-conspirator misleading believers by *saying that the resurrection is past already* (2:18b).

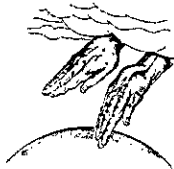
Perhaps they are teaching that the resurrection takes place when a person becomes a Christian and is spiritually reborn or resurrected. This would mean the future resurrection of the dead in Christ is not real and physical. How does 1 Corinthians 15:13 declare the vital importance of the future resurrection of the dead?

As a result of their false teaching, they *overthrow the faith of some* (2:18c). Whenever fundamentals of the faith, such as the resurrection, the divinity of Christ, or the infallibility of Scripture, are brought into question, Christianity itself becomes suspect, and that will destroy *the faith of some*. That's why attacks on basic Christian doctrines and teachings that are clearly taught in the Bible cannot be tolerated in the church. Instead of tolerating false teaching, what does Jude 3b say is required if we are to sense God's pleasure?



Therefore, **amputate irreverent babble.**

To sense God's pleasure, **eliminate quarreling, facilitate God's Word, amputate irreverent babble, and . . .**



Fourth, assimilate into a spiritual support group (2:19).

Some churches have a minister of assimilation whose task is to involve people in the church's ministries. Paul concludes this section: *Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure* (2:19a). This refers to the true church about which Jesus said, *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Mt 16:18). How does Paul describe *the church of the living God* in 1 Timothy 3:15d?

The word translated *ground* refers to a support built against a wall to reinforce it. The local church is the original support group.

True believers who sense God's pleasure assimilate with a Bible-teaching church and bear a *seal* (2:19b), which is a sign of ownership (2 Cor. 1:22). Jesus says someone who works for the *meat which endureth unto everlasting life . . . for him hath God the Father sealed* (Jn 6:27). Paul quotes two unknown sources to explain how the *seal* is revealed. First, *The Lord knoweth them that are his* (2:19c). How does Jesus affirm this fact in John 10:27?

The second way the *seal* of God reveals itself is *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity* (2:19e). *Iniquity* refers to gross injustice or wickedness. It is a violation of what is right and, therefore, is sin. Those who have the *seal* of God and sense His pleasure obey what command in 1 Peter 1:15?

To sense God's pleasure in your life, **eliminate quarreling, facilitate God's Word, amputate irreverent babble, and assimilate into a spiritual support group.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 7 . . . How To Be a Person God Can Use (2 Timothy 2:20-26)

In our last lesson, we discovered how to sense God's pleasure by eliminating quarreling, facilitating God's Word, amputating irreverent babble, and assimilating into a spiritual support group. Now, in this passage, Paul gives us **five** requirements for being a person God can use.

1. Be honorable (2:20).

The best way to help people understand spiritual truth is through illustrations. That's why Jesus taught with parables. One of the best descriptions of the use of illustrations comes from famous 19th century preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who said of the Bible: "The text is the house; the illustrations are the windows that let the light in."

In this passage, Paul uses another illustration to emphasize that the church is made up of individuals who honor the Lord by their dedication to the truth of His written word, the Bible. Using the illustration of a *great house* with affluent owners, what kinds of *vessels* does Paul mention (2:20)?

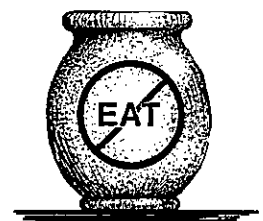
The *great house* represents the church, which is composed of many believers. The word translated *vessels* refers to jars or dishes and represents individual believers. Some *vessels* were made of *gold* and *silver* and were used for entertaining honored guests. Some were made of *wood* and *earth* and were used for disposing of trash and human waste.

The church contains *vessels . . . to honour*, which represent believers who are faithful and useful. What is the result of being an honorable vessel who lives worthy of the Lord, according to Colossians 1:10b-c?

The church also has had, and will always have, *vessels . . . to dishonour*. Imagine being a guest in someone's home and being served soup in an unwashed chamber pot that has been used to dispose of human waste. Then, you look at your plate and see it has not been washed and is covered with old food and maggots.



NOTES



The church will always have both honorable and dishonorable vessels. Some Christians draw people to Christ, while others drive them away because of their sinful lifestyles. George W. Truett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, in the 1940's, was once asked how many active members were in his church. He said he had 100% active—50% active in winning people to Christ, and 50% active in driving them away. Are you spiritually honorable or dishonorable? To get the truthful answer, first pray what prayer in Psalm 139:23?

To be a person God can use, **be honorable** and . . .

2. Be cleansed (2:21).

Paul writes: *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour (2:21a-b). We purge ourselves by taking advantage of this promise: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 Jn 1:9).* But how do you keep yourself clean in the future? How does Romans 12:2a-b answer that question?



As Christians, we must not conform to the world's lifestyle, vocabulary, values, or morals. When we do, we become dishonorable vessels the Lord can't use. Therefore, we must daily continue to renew our minds with God's Word.

God's Word acts as a divine cleansing agent, making us vessels *sanctified, and meet for the master's use (2:21c-d)*. What is the result according to the last phase of 2 Timothy 2:21?

To be a person God can use, **be honorable, be cleansed,** and . . .

3. Be balanced (2:22).

In verse 22, Paul says there are things we are to *flee* and things we are to *follow*. To be someone God can use, there must be a balance of fleeing and following in our lives. First, *flee . . . youthful lusts (2:22a)*.

Most bad habits start when we are young. Most people who gossip start as youths. Most people who curse, smoke, gamble, or drink in excess begin

when they are young. Most people who get involved in immoral relationships started as youths. That's why God gives what exhortation in Psalm 25:7a?

We are to *flee* from the bad things we started doing as youths. The word *flee* translates a Greek word (PHEUGŌ, few'-go), from which we get the English word "fugitive." This verb indicates you will still have the desires you had as a youth, but you must be a fugitive from them. In the Christian life, we often find ourselves in situations where we either *flee* or fall.

As we *flee* our *youthful lusts*, we are to *follow righteousness* (2:22b). We can't live in a vacuum. We can't just decide to *flee* evil habits; we must replace them with *righteousness*. A vacuum has to be filled with something, and if it is not *righteousness*, it will be some sin. As someone has said, "Every human heart has a God-shaped vacuum that only He can fill." When we are filled with God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, we will live lives of *righteousness*. The word *righteousness* refers to actions that follow God's directions in His Word, the Bible.

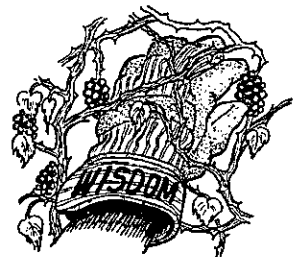
Following *righteousness* requires *faith*, *charity*, and *peace* (2:22c). *Faith* is a sincere confidence in God and His Word. *Charity* is a growing affection for God and other believers. *Peace* is seeking fellowship and harmony with all people. In James 3:18, what promise does God give for pursuing *peace*?

To be used of God, frequent the company of those who *call on the Lord out of a pure heart* (2:22d). The good traits of *faith*, *charity*, and *peace* are best developed in the company of people with *pure* hearts. This means one reason we come to all the services of the church is to make good Christian friends. Like towering pine trees, we all grow best together.

To be a person God can use, **be honorable, be cleansed, be balanced**, but also . . .

4. Be wise (2:23-24).

Wisdom means avoiding *foolish and unlearned questions* (2:23a-b). The word translated *foolish* (MŌROS, mo-ros') is the word from which we get our English word "moron." It means "dull of mind" or "silly." How does Proverbs 18:2 describe a fool?



The Bible forbids *foolish and unlearned questions* because they *gender strifes* (2:23c). What is the opposite of being *foolish* and *unlearned*? It is being wise. Therefore, Paul gives us four characteristics of a wise person. First, *the servant of the Lord must not strive* (2:24a). Instead of quarreling, a wise person will be *gentle unto all men* (2:24b). A wise person is also *apt to teach* (2:24c) the truth of God's Word.

Another characteristic of a wise person is being *patient* (2:24d). This means having patience when wronged or enduring ill treatment. Enduring evil requires heeding what words of Jesus in Matthew 10:16c?

To be a person God can use, **be honorable, be cleansed, be balanced, be wise, and . . .**

5. Be gentle (2:25-26).

People God uses will instruct opponents of the truth *in meekness* (2:25a). The reason to be meek is *God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth* (2:25b). We should be meek in the hope *they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will* (2:26). This is basically obeying what command in Galatians 6:1 regarding anyone who is overcome by sin?

A person God uses knows he or she will, in a spirit of *meekness*, seek to lead people to *repentance*.

To be a person God can use, **be honorable, be cleansed, be balanced, be wise, and be gentle.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 8 . . . Signs of the Last Days (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Have you noticed about the only way you hear God's name on television is as a filler in a sentence or some other vain way? Also, on television, the Bible is often referred to as a book read by serial killers. Sex and violence fill the TV screen, and the Bible and evangelical Christians are belittled unmercifully. This is the time to which Paul refers when he mentions what sign of the *last days* (3:1b)?



NOTES

The *last days* began with Christ's earthly ministry and will continue until His second coming. We are now living in the **last** of the *last days*. Therefore, the moral degeneration of society should not surprise us because the Bible says *perilous times shall come*. The *last days* will be difficult because there will be at least **three** changes. First . . .



A Change in Affection (3:1-2b)

Paul writes that people *shall be lovers of their own selves* (3:2a), or selfish. Being selfish causes people to become *covetous*, or materialistic (3:2b). Why do men and women work long hours at the expense of their family, church, and God? Why is personal debt the number one contributing factor to divorce in the United States? Because people love money and what it can buy! When people become selfish and direct their affection to money and material pleasures, there is no affection left for others or God. First Timothy 6:10 tells us that *the love of money is a root of all evil*. Then, of what does the rest of that verse remind us?

When people become *lovers* of themselves and *covetous*, there will be a **change in affection**, followed by . . .



A Change in Attitude (3:2c-e)

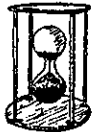
People in the *last days* will also be *boasters* (HYPERĒPHANOS, hyper-ay'-fan-os), which translates a word that means "seeing oneself above others" (3:2c). It is having an inflated view of oneself. Next, in the *last days*, people will be *proud* (3:2d). This is just a manifestation of selfishness. It is bragging about one's accomplishments, acquaintances, or assets. Boastful people love to be in the center of attention. They are always the heroes of their own stories.

Prosperity causes us to brag because we become *boasters* and *proud*. On the border of the Promised Land, Moses tells the Israelites that, when they enter the land, their livestock, silver, gold, and all they have will multiply (Deut. 8:13). Then, what does he say to them in Deuteronomy 8:14?

In the depths of the Great Depression, our courts would have never thought about ordering the Ten Commandments taken off the walls of public schools. They would not have forbidden teachers to lead in prayer during the heat of World War II. Because God has blessed this country beyond any country in history, we have become *boasters* and *proud*. What warning does God give in Proverbs 16:5?

Being *boasters* and *proud* always leads to being *blasphemers* (3:2e). Blasphemy is slandering people or God. People with an over-inflated view of themselves are always verbally abusive and irreverent. It shows up in vicious gossip and profanity.

In the *last days*, there will be a change in **affection**, **attitude**, and . . .



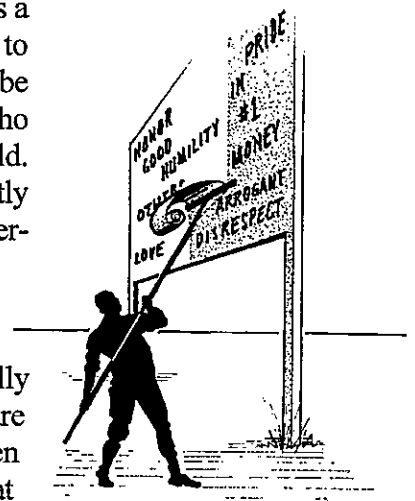
A Change in Actions (3:2f-5)

The result of the changes in **affection** and **attitude** will be seen in the basic institution of society—the home. Children will become *disobedient to parents* (3:2f). This is partially caused by the absence of parents from the home and a generation of “latchkey” children. This causes resentment and anger, which reveals itself in disobedience, often just to get the attention of parents. That’s why God gives what command in Ephesians 6:4a?

The word translated *fathers* (PATĒR, pat-air’) can also be translated “parents.” The same Greek word is used in Hebrews 11:23 when referring to the parents of Moses.

In the *last days*, people will also be *unthankful* (3:2g), which also is the result of pride and arrogance. People who think they deserve everything they have feel gratitude for nothing and constantly seek more.

Next, Paul describes people in the *last days* as *unholy* (3:2h). This translates a Greek word that literally means “profane” or “gross indecency.” It refers to people who gratify every immoral lust and passion. The *last days* will also be a time when people are *without natural affection* (3:3a). They don’t care who they hurt or even destroy. This is why swindlers are on the rise in our world. Bernard Madoff, with his Ponzi scheme (a fraudulent investment), recently defrauded investors of around \$20 billion. It was the largest swindle in American history.



The next trait of the *last days* is *trucebreakers* (3:3b), which refers to people who cannot be persuaded to enter into a covenant or truce. It literally means “irreconcilable.” This includes people who will not forgive and are filled with bitterness and anger beyond reason. They refuse to forgive, even when presented with the opportunity. This is a serious sin because of what words of Jesus in Matthew 6:15?

Continuing to paint word pictures of the *last days*, Paul writes that people will be *false accusers* (3:3c), which means “malicious gossips.” It refers to people who delight in spreading rumors and gossip. The evil spirit (the devil) leads us to gossip and tear people down. However, God commands us to refrain from corrupt talk (Eph. 4:29a). Instead, what does He command us to do (4:29b-c)?

In the *last days*, people will also be *incontinent* (3:3d), which refers to people who do not have the self-control to restrain their words or actions. They are shameless in their conduct. The word *fierce* (3:3e) means insensitive, rude, and crude.

The word translated *despisers of those that are good* (3:3f) literally means “haters of good or virtue.” It describes those people who in the *last days* will hate what they should love and love what they should hate. What warning does God give us about such people in Isaiah 5:20a-b?

People in the *last days* will also be *traitors* (3:4a). This refers to people who will betray the trust of family and friends to make a dollar. We see all kinds of

new ways people are becoming treacherous with the epidemic of deceptive telemarketing, “get-rich-quick” schemes, etc.

In the *last days*, people will become more and more *heady* (3:4b), which refers to people who act foolishly without concern for the consequences of their actions. This reveals itself in reckless sexual immorality that leads to horrible sexually-transmitted diseases. It also includes the mass murders on school grounds and college campuses—things we never heard of a generation ago in this country.

These actions come from being *highminded* (3:4c). People think they are above the consequences of their actions. In the *last days*, people will be *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God* (3:4d). They are controlled by *pleasure* rather than by God.

Paul concludes this list by writing: *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof* (3:5a-b). The phrase *form of godliness* means they are religious, go to church, and use religious clichés, but it’s all a sham. They just masquerade as Christians. How does Titus 1:16a-b describe such people?

They claim to be Christians, but their lives don’t conform to the teachings of the Bible. They are counterfeit Christians. There have always been such people, but it will intensify in the last days. To conclude his inspired description of the *last days*, what does Paul write in 2 Timothy 3:5c?

Don’t hang around with people who claim to be Christians but whose lives violate the teaching of God’s inspired Word, the Bible. Also, a church should never put such people in places of teaching or leadership.

In the *last days*, there will be a change in **affection, attitude, and actions**.

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 9 . . . Deflecting Deceivers (2 Timothy 3:6-9)

In our last lesson, Paul listed the characteristics of unbelievers in the *last days*, which will be a difficult time for those who hold fast to the teachings of the Bible. The list begins with *lovers of their own selves*, which leads to all the other vices listed in verses 2-5.

Another sign of the *last days*—the time between Christ’s resurrection and His return—will be an increase in deception through false teachers. We now live in the deception of the **last** of the *last days*. In this passage, Paul graphically describes actions needed for detecting and **deflecting deceivers**.

Recognize their procedures (3:6-7).

False teachers *creep into houses* (3:6a). The word translated *creep* means to sneak in. In this passage, the word *creep* refers to false teachers who conduct home Bible studies and lead discussions with the intent of gaining spiritual control of households. Jude describes these as people who have *crept in unawares*. He calls them *ungodly men* (Jude 4a-b). Then, how does he describe them in Jude 4c?

The word *lasciviousness* (ASELGEIA, uh-sel'-gay-ah) means “promiscuity” or “absence of restraint.” It is the idea of indulging in fleshly lust. Today, false teachers (even entire denominations) have almost perfected the art of deception. Their deceit includes what they teach about marriage, homosexuality, and the deity of Christ.

What makes matters worse is they claim to believe the Bible but pervert it to justify their false teaching. False teachers claim it is all a matter of interpretation. They continue to ask what question Satan asked Eve in Genesis 3:1c-d?

Satan doesn’t directly attack God’s Word. He knows that tactic won’t be effective. Therefore, he asks a question that suggests what God said needs to be reinterpreted. False teachers today are using that same satanic question to reinterpret what the Bible says about marriage and sexual behavior.



NOTES

False teachers also *lead captive silly women* (3:6b). The word translated *silly* means “weak-willed.” Here it refers to spiritually weak or immature women. Paul’s words about women are not a general statement about women, but refer to a certain type of woman in Ephesus. These women are *laden with sins* (3:6b). Apparently, they are so overwhelmed with guilt from their past sins, they are captivated by deceptive, false teachers. Some of the women have probably served as prostitutes in the Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, where sex was a part of worship. They are being *led away with divers lusts* (3:6c), which may mean they are sexually involved with the false teachers, who turn *the grace of our God into lasciviousness*, or promiscuity (Jude 4c). What does Paul write about such people in verse 7?

Spiritually weak people are always willing to listen to any captivating teacher who comes along. They are not able to understand the truth because they are continually *learning* false teaching. They only want to hear the sensational, the “feel good,” or the liberal—not the spiritual. They want to feel they are more spiritually enlightened than the rest of us, while in fact they are ignorant of *the truth*. The *truth* refers to the written Word of God.

To detect and deflect deceivers, **recognize their procedures** and . . .

Analyze their profiles (3:8).

To illustrate the profile of the deceivers of the last days, Paul writes: *Now as Jannes [Jan’ niz] and Jambres [Jam’ brez] withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth* (3:8a). *Jannes and Jambres* are not mentioned in the Old Testament, but Jewish tradition says they were Egyptian magicians who tried to duplicate Moses’ miracles to discredit him. When Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, Aaron throws his staff down in front of Pharaoh, and it becomes a snake (Ex 7:8-11). Then, Pharaoh summons his magicians. What happens next (7:12)?

Today’s false teachers fit the same profile. The magicians’ rods looked just like Aaron’s, and they seemed to have the same power. In the same way, deceivers use the same Bible and speak the same Christian lingo. Like Pharaoh’s magicians, many use trickery to appear to duplicate the miracles of Christ and the apostles.

False teachers *resist the truth* because they have *corrupt minds* (3:8b-c), which refers to an unalterable condition. Therefore, even when exposed to or confronted with the truth, they will remain unchanged. In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul describes such *corrupt* charlatans by writing: *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils* (1 Tim. 4:1). How does Paul further describe deceivers in 1 Timothy 4:2?

The word translated *seared* (KAUTĒRIAZŌ, kow-tay-ree-ah'-zo) is the word from which we get the English word "cauterize." It refers to the burning of tissue to create scar tissue that seals off blood vessels. Like scar tissue, false teachers have lost all sensitivity to the truth, so it does no good to discuss the truth with them. As far as the truth of God's Word is concerned, they are spiritual fools with *seared* consciences. Therefore, remember what truth in Proverbs 26:4?

When people hear you having an argument with a fool, they can't tell who the fool is. Therefore, the Bible says *turn away* from such people (3:5b).

Paul adds that since these people have *corrupt minds*, they are *reprobate concerning the faith* (3:8d). The word translated *reprobate* means "not standing the test, or rejected." It was used to describe metals that were discarded because they did not pass the test of purity. It refers to rejection because of being counterfeit or fake, and, therefore, worthless.

To detect and deflect deceivers, **recognize their procedures, analyze their profiles, and . . .**

Realize their plight (3:9).

In the last days, deceivers will be a problem to the church, *but they shall proceed no further* (3:9a). Neither in Paul's day nor ours will they strike a fatal blow against the true church. Today, it may seem that lies are winning over truth because wolves in sheep's clothing pervert the Bible. Some fill huge convention centers with weak-willed people who believe anything they say.

However, God's faithful remnant always has and always will persevere. When Jesus asks His disciples who they say He is, Peter gives what is called the Great Confession. He declares, *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living*

God (Mt 16:15-16). Then, referring to that confession, what does Jesus say to Peter (16:18)?

Jesus is the Rock or Foundation of not only the church but also of the *truth* (Jn 14:6).

The temporary success of false teachers inflates their egos and their *corrupt minds*, causing them to believe they can get by with anything. As a result, *their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as their's also was* [Jannes and Jambres] (3:9b, explanation added).

These verses remind us we are in a spiritual battle that will intensify as Christ's return draws nearer. Therefore, we must have biblical discernment. This requires being like the Jews in Berea, who *received the word* from Paul and Silas with *all readiness of mind* (Acts 17:10-11b). However, they did so only after taking what action, according to Acts 17:11c?

The Bible teaches deceivers will intensify in numbers and efforts in the *last days*. Therefore, it's more important than ever to know your Bible and attend a Bible teaching church.

To detect and deflect deceivers, **recognize their procedures, analyze their profiles, and realize their plight.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 10 . . . How To Be a Great Spiritual Mentor (2 Timothy 3:10-14)



NOTES

As I look back on my early Christian life, I can see the influence of spiritual mentors God placed in my path. One was my brother-in-law, Von Weaver. From Von, I learned people like to have handouts at church, which played a big part in the development of the “Journey” studies. From Von, I also learned the importance of using special days to reach people. This is one way to obey what command in Proverbs 19:20?

God wants us to **have** spiritual mentors because they greatly accelerate spiritual growth and the development of spiritual gifts. However, He also wants us to **be** spiritual mentors. This passage probably describes the mentoring, or discipling, process as well as any in the Bible. These verses reveal **three** requirements for being a great spiritual mentor.

Be an example (3:10-11).

Paul writes to young Timothy: *But thou hast fully known my doctrine*, or teaching (3:10a). Timothy knows all about the content of Paul’s teaching. Timothy heard Paul preach and teach scores of times. In contrast to false teachers, Timothy knows Paul always preaches the truth of God’s Word.

To be good spiritual mentors, everything we teach must be true to God’s Word. However, we must also model God’s Word. The powerful part of mentoring is not just teaching but also real-life modeling. Remember, **the Christian life is more “caught” than taught**. That’s why Paul reminds Timothy of his *manner of life*, or lifestyle (3:10b). Timothy knows Paul’s behavior matches his beliefs. Paul was an “audio-visual” Christian. He not only communicated but also demonstrated the Christian life.

We too must be audio-visual mentors. How does 1 Timothy 4:12b describe the areas in which young Timothy (and you) should be an example?

Paul tells Timothy to follow not only his *doctrine* and *manner of life*, but also his *purpose* (3:10c). Seeing Paul travel tirelessly and make great sacrifices,

Timothy knows Paul's *purpose* is not to "line his pockets" or gain a personal following. Paul is not an "armchair" mentor, remote from the struggles of the Christian life. He is mentoring Timothy from the frontlines of spiritual warfare. Consequently, Timothy knows even when Paul's life is in danger, Paul never waivers from his *purpose*. How does Paul describe his *purpose* in Romans 1:1?

In verse 10, Paul also tells Timothy to follow his good example of *faith*, which would be better translated "faithfulness," a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Paul is not referring to saving *faith* but to faithfulness in living out what he professes to believe. The next word Paul uses is *longsuffering* (MAKROTHYMIA, makro-thoo-mee'-a), which means "long tempered" or not having a short fuse. It refers to patience with people.

Paul was also a good example of *charity*, or "love" (3:10f, AGAPĒ, a-gah'-pay), which refers to a self-sacrificing love for others. Using the same Greek word for *love*, what does John write in 1 John 4:8?

Next, Paul was an example in *patience* (3:10g, HYPOMONĒ, hypo-mon-ay'), which refers to enduring or persevering during difficult circumstances, not *patience* with difficult people. Few things are as important as letting younger believers see how we handle adversity.

Therefore, Paul reminds Timothy of the *persecutions* and *afflictions* he endured in *Antioch* (3:11a), where he was driven out of the region (Acts 13:50). *Iconium* (3:11b) is where an attempt was made to stone Paul, causing him to flee (Acts 14:6). Paul also reminds Timothy of his experience in *Lystra*, Timothy's hometown (3:11c). What happened to Paul there (Acts 14:19)?

Paul mentions these *persecutions* and *afflictions* to contrast his experience with the pleasure-seeking false teachers. Paul doesn't take credit for enduring these things but writes *the Lord delivered me* (3:11d).

The Lord's deliverance doesn't always mean escape, and Paul is well aware of this. Even God's Son didn't escape the cross. There are some things we must endure. Sometimes we must stand up for the truth of God's Word at great



cost. We may lose friends, a job, or a promotion because we will not compromise our Christian convictions. But, whether the Lord's will is for you to escape or endure, **be an example** and . . .

Be an encourager (3:12).

Paul continues: *Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (3:12). Never be surprised when being persecuted or suffering for Christ's sake. What similar warning does our Lord give us in John 15:20c-d?

Some Christians deserve to be persecuted because they are obnoxious. They are always finding fault, always criticizing, and always acting holier-than-thou. However, the Bible teaches that even believers who are gentle and loving like Jesus will suffer persecution.

You may never be imprisoned, tortured, or martyred for your faith, but if you stand up for biblical values, you will be persecuted by those who hold the secular worldview. If you never face any kind of persecution, it could mean you are not making a difference in your world. We know we will face persecution because what percentage of those who live for Jesus *shall suffer persecution* (3:12a)?



When younger believers face *persecution* and *afflictions* because of their faith, **be an encourager** by reminding them they are making a difference in the world.

To be a great spiritual mentor, **be an example, an encourager**, and . . .

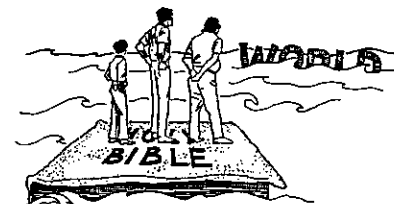
Be an exhorter (3:13-14).

To exhort means to strongly urge someone to do something. Before exhorting young Timothy, Paul explains, *evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived* (3:13). Paul is referring to false teachers who will go farther and farther away from the truth of God's Word. This means deception will become increasingly worse.

Therefore, Paul gives Timothy this exhortation, *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them* (3:14). Paul is encouraging Timothy to continue living as he has, rather than turning aside and following the example of the

evil men he has just mentioned. Because Paul was an example as well as a teacher, his life reinforced the truth Timothy *learned* from him. Paul's exhortation to young Timothy is reminiscent of what words of Jesus in John 8:31b-c?

The truths of God's Word are fixed, nonnegotiable, and eternal. Therefore, they are not subject to compromise or change. Because of persecution, Timothy may have been tempted to modify or water down what he had been taught. However, Paul tells him to *continue* in what he has *learned*. God's standards about gossip, bitterness, sex, and marriage never change. We know this because of what words of our Lord in Malachi 3:6a?



Few things contribute to having a “journey to a faithful finish” like having a spiritual mentor and also being one. To be a great spiritual mentor, **be an example, be an encourager, and be an exhorter.**

Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 11 . . . Staying Ready for God To Use (2 Timothy 3:15-17)



NOTES

The most important part of a “journey to a faithful finish” is staying ready for God to use. How do we stay ready for God to use? We find out in this passage. It begins with our salvation, which is the result of the knowledge of at least some scriptures. Paul reminds Timothy *that from a child he has known the holy scriptures* (3:15a). For Timothy, the *holy scriptures* was the Old Testament—*Genesis to Malachi*.

Timothy’s mother and grandmother taught him the Old Testament from childhood. Therefore, when Timothy hears the Gospel, what is the result (3:15b)?

The Bible prepares us to make all the right choices in life. This passage reveals **three** requirements for **staying ready for God to use**.

Believe All of God’s Word (3:16a).

Believe **all** of God’s Word, not just some or most, because *all scripture is given by inspiration of God* (3:16a). This means divinely breathed out. When you speak words, you breathe them out. Words travel out of our mouths on our breath. So, God’s breath, which is His Holy Spirit, transported His words into the minds of the biblical writers (revelation), and then guided the writers as they wrote down the words (inspiration). This is true of *all scripture*. How does Psalm 119:160a reiterate this truth?

No one in history revered and elevated the Bible like Jesus did. Over and over again in the Gospels, He refers to the Old Testament as *the word of God*. For example, Jesus says we should not live by bread, or food, alone. Then, what does our Lord say (Matthew 4:4)?

The word *scripture* (2 Tim. 3:16) refers to the Old Testament, since the New Testament was incomplete at the time of Paul’s writing. However, this verse certainly includes any biblical writings regarded as inspired. The apostles

considered the writings of Paul to be Holy Scriptures inspired by God. Yet, today even in so-called Christian circles, no portion of the Bible is more under attack than Paul's epistles.

In reference to Paul's writings, Peter writes that Paul wrote with the wisdom God gave him. He also writes that some of Paul's writings are hard to understand and some people who are *unlearned and unstable* twist his letters to mean something different than what he intended. (2 Pet. 3:15b-16c). Then, in the last phase of 2 Peter 3:16, what does Peter call Paul's writings?

Peter considered the writings of Paul to be *scriptures* inspired by God. Today, *unlearned* people are still trying to distort Paul's writings because these truths clash with the morality of our culture and often are not "politically correct." However, staying ready for God to use requires never retreating from the fact that the **entire** Bible is the inspired Word of God.



In its original manuscripts, the entire Bible is *by inspiration of God* (2 Tim. 3:16a). No prophecy or any part of God's Word came by the will, or initiative, of man (2 Pet. 1:21a). How does 2 Peter 1:21b describe this process?

Through the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, biblical writers, using their own style, penned the actual words of God as revealed to them. It is inconceivable an all-powerful, all-knowing God would allow us to have a Bible we cannot trust. We are in a spiritual war, in which the Bible is our *twoedged sword* (Heb. 4:12), and our loving God would not send us into battle with a faulty weapon.

To stay ready for God to use, **believe all of God's Word** and . . .

Receive God's Word (3:16b-e).

God's Word is not only inspired, it is also *profitable* when we receive it as His Word. The Bible is not just a book of inspiring stories about ancient people or a book of doctrine for theologians. It is *profitable* in everyday life. It is *profitable for doctrine* (3:16b). The word translated *doctrine* (DIDASKALIA, didask-uh-lee'-uh) refers to the content of teaching, not the method.

This means our *doctrine* and Christian instruction must be consistent with Scripture. Our God-breathed Bible gives us clear teaching on how to live, and it must be carefully received and obeyed.

When we stray from God's Word, we get out of God's will and are not ready for Him to use. What can we do then? Well, the Bible is also *profitable . . . for reproof*, or rebuking (3:16c). This means reading and hearing the Word of God brings conviction about sin.

Conviction occurs because the Word of God is *quick, and powerful*, not stagnant or dead. It is *sharper than any twoedged sword* because it can penetrate the *soul and spirit* as well as *joints and marrow*, which means it penetrates every part of our being (Heb. 4:12a-d). Why, according to the last phrase of Hebrews 4:12?



The Holy Spirit uses God's inspired Word to convict of sin but what then? At this point, the Bible becomes *profitable . . . for correction* (3:16d). The Bible not only rebukes us when we sin; it also tells us what to do to correct, or rectify, our sin and get us ready for God to use again. How does 1 John 1:9 describe this *correction* procedure?

To *confess* means agreeing with what God says in His Word is sin. It also means making a commitment not to sin again.

The Bible is *profitable* for teaching us, rebuking us, and correcting us. However, it is also useful for *instruction in righteousness* (3:16e). The Bible trains us in how to stay on the right track and be ready for God to use. As we study the Bible, we learn how to live righteously. How does the psalmist describe this in Psalm 119:11?

Through the pages of His inspired Word, God lovingly teaches, rebukes, corrects, and trains. To stay ready for God to use, **believe all of God's Word, receive God's Word**, and then . . .

Achieve the purpose of God's Word (3:17).

The purpose of the Bible is *that the man* (ANTHRŌPOS, awn'-thro-pos) [or woman] *of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*

(3:17). The Bible will completely equip you to do whatever God's purpose is for your life. Don't study the Bible just for knowledge so you can impress your Christian friends. Why, according to 1 Corinthians 8:1c-d?

God didn't give us the Bible so we could be obnoxious Bible experts. As we live God's Word, we conform to the image of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we progressively become more and more loving and develop into better instruments for God to use in building up His kingdom. In the last phrase of James 1:25, what promise does God give for not only hearing but also doing, or living, His Word?

The word translated *blessed* (MAKARIOS, mah-kar'-re-os) refers to happiness that is not dependent on outward circumstances. It is "divine delight."

To stay ready for God to use, **believe all of God's Word, receive God's Word, and achieve the purpose of God's Word.**



Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 12 . . . Finishing Well (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

In our last lesson, we learned how to stay ready for God to use. How long should we stay ready? Until the finish! How can we do this? Paul knows Timothy will often have times of opposition and discouragement. Therefore, this passage reveals **three** essentials for **finishing well**.

Fulfill your ministry (4:1-5).

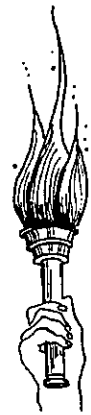
Paul emphasizes the importance and seriousness of these words by writing: *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ* (4:1a). This is similar to having a present-day notary witness the signing of a legal document to verify its authenticity. The “notaries” for these words are God and Jesus Christ. Therefore, Paul charges Timothy to carefully follow these instructions remembering *Jesus Christ is the one who shall judge the quick and the dead* (4:1b).

He also reminds Timothy of Christ’s *appearing*, or the Second Coming, which will lead to the establishment of *his kingdom* (4:1c). Jesus says the hour is coming when all who are dead will hear His voice to *come forth* (Jn 5:28-29a). Then, what will happen (John 5:29b-c)?

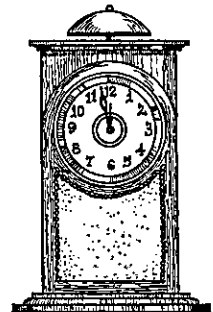
Next, Paul exhorts Timothy: *Preach the word* (4:2a). The word translated *preach* (KĒRUSSŌ, kay-roos’-so) means “to proclaim” what has been divinely spoken. Paul exhorts Timothy to *be instant* (prepared), to *preach in season and out of season* (4:2b). In other words, he is to preach God’s Word when it is popular and when it is not. Whether our “pulpit” is a literal one in a church or a lifestyle in a secular workplace, we must proclaim the truth of God’s Word. Why, according to Ephesians 5:16?

There is an old saying, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one.” That’s true of everyone. Seeing a sermon is far more effective than hearing one. Therefore, we should make the best use of our time by living so everyone can see a sermon of God’s love, compassion, and purity.

We must also make the most of every opportunity to share God’s Word for



NOTES



three basic purposes: to *reprove*, *rebuke*, and *exhort* (4:2c). The word *reprove* (ELENGCHŌ, el-eng'-ko) means "to convince of a fault." It is to lovingly convince people of their sin. *Rebuke* means "to convict of guilt." It is leading people to repent of their sins. The biblical way for spiritual people to *reprove* and *rebuke* someone is with gentleness and humility (Gal. 6:1).

The word *exhort* means "to comfort or encourage." Reproving, rebuking and exhorting are to be done *with all longsuffering* (4:2d), which means patiently, not in anger or harshness. When we lack patience with people, we lack love. Why is this true, according to the first two characteristics of AGAPE love in 1 Corinthians 13:4?

Reproving, rebuking, and exhorting must also be done with *all . . . doctrine* (4:2e), which means biblically. However, this will not always produce the desired result. The reason is that the time has come, and has been with us for some time, *when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears* (4:3).

Itching ears refers to people who want to hear bizarre doctrines or who desire the spectacular. Because of this, they will *turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables* (4:4). They want to hear about how to be healthy and wealthy mixed with some spiritual "junk food," but they don't want to hear about sacrifice and service to Christ.

When presented with the truth of God's Word, some people may become angry and hostile. So, Paul writes, *But watch thou in all things, or keep a clear mind* (4:5a). This is staying cool, calm, and collected. We are also to *endure afflictions* by responding in love and *do the work of an evangelist* (4:5b-c). According to 1 Peter 3:15b, how are we to *do the work of an evangelist*?

The word translated *answer* (APOLOGIA, apo-log-ee'-ah) is the word from which we get the word "apologetics." Apologetics is the branch of theology concerned with the defense or proof of Christian doctrines. When people see a sermon in our lives, they will ask questions, which we should be able to answer, about our *hope* in Christ.

To sum up his point, Paul writes: *make full proof of thy ministry* (4:5d). Notice he doesn't say "**the** ministry," but *thy ministry* (emphasis added). My ministry won't be just like anyone else's. God doesn't want me to be another Charles Spurgeon or John Calvin. He wants me to be **me**, and He wants you to be **you** and fulfill **your** *ministry* with the personality, gifts, talents, and experiences that are unique to you.

To finish well, **fulfill your ministry** and . . .

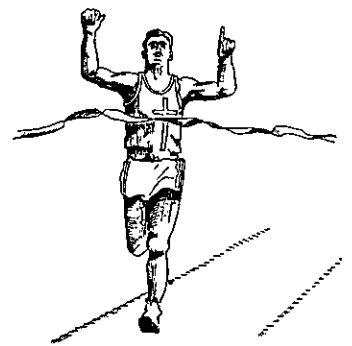
Follow Paul's example (4:6-7).

Paul had known plenty of discouragement during his ministry and had every reason to be discouraged. However, he writes: *For I am now ready to be offered* (4:6a). The word *offered* translates a Greek word (SPENDŌ, spen'-do), referring to the Jewish custom of pouring wine at the base of the brazen altar where animals were offered (Ex 29:40). When you think of something being poured out, you think of it being wasted. Yet, Paul's life was being poured out as an offering in the cause of Christ. Therefore, what does he write in the next phrase (4:6b)?

He knows he will not leave prison alive. The word translated *departure* describes a ship taking up anchor and putting out to sea. Paul knows the language of the sea and previously had a very eventful voyage to Rome (Acts 27). To Paul, his own death is but a time when the ship of his life will take up anchor and sail to his final port.

Paul is ready to sail because he has *fought a good fight* (4:7a). His clothing may be stained with salt water from being shipwrecked three times (2 Cor. 11:25). It may also be stained with his own blood from his beatings and stoning. Five times he received *forty stripes save one* from the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24). According to Jewish law, forty was the maximum number that could be prescribed (Deut. 25:3). The rabbis would only allow thirty-nine so if the flogger miscounted, he wouldn't accidentally sin by giving forty-one. What other sufferings does Paul catalog in 2 Corinthians 11:25?

Paul, one of God's greatest spiritual warriors, writes, *I have fought a good fight* (4:7a). Every syllable of this statement is true. Therefore, he can honestly write: *I have finished my course* (4:7b). Like an Olympic marathon runner, Paul has finished his lifelong race. Marathon runners know the exhilaration of finishing the grueling miles of their race and are thankful when finally they see the finish line. Paul has now finished the course set out for him by God at the beginning of his Christian life (Acts 9:15-16). Everything God set before him has been completed. Therefore, Paul can honestly write: *I have kept the faith* (4:7c). He kept it, preached it, lived it, and now he will die by it.



To finish well, **fulfill your ministry, follow Paul's example, and . . .**

Focus on the reward (4:8).

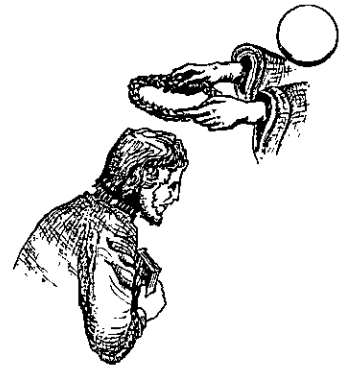
Paul looked at the present and the past, and now he looks to the future by writing: *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness* (4:8a). The phrase *laid up for me* means it is safely stored and carefully guarded. How does Jesus describe this in Matthew 6:20?

Paul knows his *crown of righteousness* is in safe storage, awaiting his arrival in heaven. The word translated *crown* (STEPHANOS, stef'-an-os) refers to a victor's crown. It is the crown placed upon winners of Greek athletic events, like the Olympic gold medal is today, as a sign of great accomplishment and honor.

This crown would be given to him by *the Lord, the righteous judge* (4:8b). Though soon to be beheaded by the order of an unrighteous judge, Paul knows he will be vindicated and rewarded by *the Lord, the righteous judge*, with the *crown* He will give him on that day. Then, what does Paul write about the *crown of righteousness* (4:8c)?

All Christians who truly love Jesus long for His appearing, which is the Second Coming. Therefore, they live righteously and will receive the appropriate *crown*, or reward.

To finish well, **fulfill your ministry, follow Paul's example, and focus on the reward.**



Journey To A Faithful Finish

LESSON 13 . . . The Reasons and Remedy for Loneliness (2 Timothy 4:9-22)



NOTES

At times each of us is overwhelmed by loneliness. Some of the greatest musical hits of all times are about loneliness because everyone can relate to loneliness. For example, one of Elvis' greatest hits was "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" What about Roy Orbison's "Only the Lonely?" Or, Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry?" Then, there was Merle Haggard's "Going Where the Lonely Go."

When Paul writes *2 Timothy*, he is alone in a damp, cold Roman dungeon, awaiting execution. In these closing verses, his last written words, we find the **reasons** and the **remedy** for loneliness.

The Reasons for Loneliness (4:9-11a, 14, & 16)

Paul was a "people person." He never traveled alone on his missionary journeys. Yet, now at the end of his faithful life, the greatest of all the apostles is experiencing loneliness, which is the result of two common causes.

1. Separation. Paul writes to Timothy: *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me* (4:9). Then, what does he write in 4:11a?

Loneliness occurs when we are separated from family and friends because of school, a job change, the military, or an "empty nest." One of the most difficult kinds of separation is the one that comes from the death of a loved one. When someone is going through a time of separation because of death, or any reason, it is time to obey what command in 1 Thessalonians 5:11a?

Not only is separation a cause of loneliness, but so are . . .

2. Desertion and betrayal. Paul writes: *For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica* (4:10a-b). Paul also writes of another betrayal: *Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works* (4:14). It could be Alexander had informed on Paul or had given false testimony at his trial

and was, therefore, the reason for his arrest and imminent execution. To make matters worse, what does Paul write in 4:16a-b?

Paul had led thousands of people to Christ, but *no one* came to speak in his defense or to be present as a symbol of support. Though terribly disappointed, Paul has no bitterness in his heart because he writes: *I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge* (4:16c).

When you have been deserted or betrayed, you feel lonely. Maybe your father deserted you as a child. Maybe a spouse betrayed your marriage vows. After devoting your best years to a business, maybe you were told you were no longer needed.

The **reasons** for loneliness are **separation, desertion, and betrayal**. Now, let's look at . . .

The Remedy for Loneliness (4:10c & 11b-22)

This remedy includes relying on **three** things:

1. God's people. Many good people have made horrible mistakes during times of loneliness by relying on the wrong people. Paul wants to be with God's people, his friends in the faith. He knows true friends will love him in all circumstances (Prov. 17:17a).

In this passage, Paul mentions five of his true friends. First, he mentions *Crescens* [kress'-uns], who has gone to *Galatia* (4:10c), the highlands of modern Turkey. He is among the thousands of faithful men and women known to the early church but unknown to us.

Each generation has its "Crescens," whose name never appears in the bulletin, who never writes a book or appears in the spotlight, who never pastors a famous church, but faithfully serves the Lord behind the scenes. However, no service goes unnoticed by our Lord. Therefore, what does Jesus tell us about such people in Mark 9:41?

Second, Paul mentions *Titus* who has gone to *Dalmatia* (dal-may'-shih-uh, 4:10d), which is modern Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia. Apparently, Crescens and Titus have gone to do missionary work.

The third friend mentioned is *Luke* (4:11). How does Paul refer to him in Colossians 4:14a?

Also, Paul refers to Luke as one of his *fellowlabourers* (Philemon 24). These are the only three times Luke's name is mentioned in the New Testament, though he wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. When Luke travels with Paul, as recorded in the book of Acts, Luke simply says *we*. He never mentions his own name, carefully keeping himself out of the spotlight. Luke probably stayed with the aged and ailing apostle Paul to take care of his health needs.

The fourth friend Paul mentions is *Mark*, about whom he writes: *Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry* (4:11b-c). This reveals the incredible change in Paul's opinion of John Mark. Mark had deserted Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. Barnabas wanted his cousin Mark to accompany them on the second missionary journey, but Paul didn't. As a result, what happened (Acts 15:39a-b)?



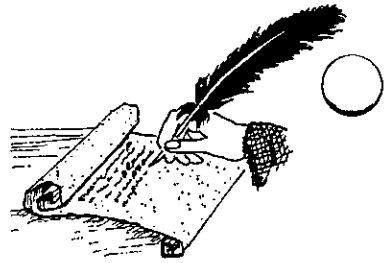
Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and departed on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:39c-40). At some later time, Paul realized Mark had become a worthy servant. This reminds us the Gospel is the gospel of the second chance.

The fifth friend Paul mentions is *Tychicus* (Tic'-ih-kus), whom he is sending to *Ephesus* to take this letter to Timothy (4:12). Tychicus was a trusted messenger, who also delivered the letters of *Ephesians* and *Colossians*. He wasn't a preacher or a teacher, but he was faithful with the gifts God had given him.

When you are lonely, rely on **God's people** and rely on . . .

2. God's purpose. Apparently, Paul's arrest was so sudden he was not allowed to gather his personal belongings. So, he writes: *The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee* (4:13a). The *cloke* was the heavy circular outer garment with a hole in the middle for the head. Paul asks Timothy to *come before winter* (4:21) because he must endure the cold weather and this was probably the only coat he owned. It could take months for Tychicus to make it to Ephesus with the letter and then for Timothy to return to Rome. We don't know if Timothy arrived before Paul's execution.

Paul also asks Timothy to bring his *books* and *parchments* (4:13b). The *books*, which were probably parts of the Old Testament, were made of papyrus rolled up on a stick and could be more than 30 feet long. The *parchments* were cured animal skins used for writing material. While in prison, what books did Paul write (see chart on page 12)?



The one thing that kept Paul going through all his problems is his faithfulness to God's purpose for his life. How does he explain God's purpose for his life in 4:17b?

When you're lonely, rely on **God's people, God's purpose, and . . .**

3. God's presence. Paul writes about being alone at his trial: *Nowithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion* (4:17a & c). Being *delivered out of the mouth of the lion* probably refers to the temporary delay in Paul's trial. When we are alone and in danger of our own "lion's mouth," where is God? He is all around us and in us, even when we don't sense His presence, in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Paul continues, *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom* (4:18a). Loneliness is an excellent time for us to get better acquainted with God. How do you do that according to James 4:8a-b?

When we get better acquainted with God through times of loneliness, we will say with Paul: *to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen* (4:18b).

Paul ends his final epistle with greetings to more of his dearest friends beginning with *Prisca* (Priscilla) and *Aquila*. When he went to Corinth, what do we read about Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila (Acts 18:3)?

○ *Onesiphorus* (awn-ih-sif'-oh-rus, 4:19b) visited and encouraged Paul during his final imprisonment (1:16-18). *Erastus*, who *abode at Corinth* (4:20a), was one of Paul's trusted helpers and a friend of Timothy (Acts 19:22). As the New Testament neared completion, Paul lost the gift of healing he demonstrated at Ephesus. How does he make that clear in 4:20b?

Nothing else is known of the four men listed by name in verse 21, though Timothy evidently knows them.

The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit (4:22a) is Paul's personal prayer for Timothy that God's ministry would continue in and through him.

Paul ends this epistle with his usual benediction: *Grace be with you* (4:22b). The *you* is plural in Greek and is Paul's final goodbye to all believers. The word *grace* here refers not only to God's unmerited blessing but also to God's empowering grace (1 Cor. 15:10).

○ We have no record of Paul's death. Yet, according to almost universal tradition, in A.D. 68 (or 67), he was beheaded by a Roman executioner's sword. However he died, we know for certain God sent His angels to escort His great warrior, who had *fought a good fight* (4:7a), safely to God's *heavenly kingdom* (4:18b). Upon his arrival, we can be sure he heard our Master say, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant* (Mt 25:21b-c). Then, what did our Lord say to him, according to the rest of that verse?

A "journey to a faithful finish," like Paul's, will conclude by entering into the eternal *joy* of the Lord.

In the meantime, when you are lonely, remember the remedy is to rely on **God's people, God's purpose, and God's presence.**

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