

## ***“Passing On The Torch”***

### **A Study of 2 Timothy**

#### **Sermon # 8**

### ***“The End of the Road”***

#### **2 Timothy 4:9-22**

This is our final message in our series on 2 Timothy entitled “Passing on the Torch.”

Paul writing from the dark dank Mamertine Prison in Rome, pens his final message to his young protégé Timothy to encourage him to continue in the work after Paul’s imminent death. In a very real sense this letter is Paul’s last will and testament. I believe that one of the lessons of 2 Timothy is this, *“Every generation must pass on the torch to the next generation!”*

After the final words of chapter four the curtain closes on the life of the apostle Paul. What happened next has been debated for the last two centuries. But it seems most likely that very soon after these words were written that he was beheaded by Nero. So what are his last recorded words? What was on his mind at the end of his life? Most of what he has to say has to do with people.

Paul ends his letter with some explicit directives.

First is a personal directive to Timothy to Come Quickly (vv. 9-11a, 21) *“Be diligent to come to me quickly.”*

He wants Timothy to be with him as he faces his final court appearance and what is certain to be the end of his earthly life. Above everything else, he wanted Timothy to come see him in prison before he died. Remember that Timothy is probably in Ephesus, hundreds of miles away, and it would take several months for him to come to Rome. The aged apostle wanted to see his young friend one final time before he died.

The fact is that friends may desert you.

The late-night comedian David Letterman is famous for his top ten lists that are a staple of his late night show. On one of his shows, the top ten list for the night was the “Top 10 Signs You Have No Friends”. I pared down his list down to just the “Top 5 Signs You Have No Friends”.

5. James Taylor sings the first bars of “You’ve Got A Friend,” notices you in the audience and stops.

4. At your funeral, the entire eulogy is, “Well, he’s dead.”

3. You are one of the five best solitaire players in the world.
2. You go to a video store and say out loud to yourself, *“Well, what do you want to rent tonight?”*
1. No calls from salespeople pushing MCI’s “Friends and Family” plan.

Among Paul’s companions there are three kinds of separations. (vv. 10b, 12)

*“... for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia... (12) And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.”*

(1) Demas *“has forsaken me”* He had either quit the ministry altogether or at least had decided to shun the kind of ministry that involved sacrifice and hardship. I like Kent Hughes assessment of Demas he says, “Paul’s assessment that it was ‘because he loved this world’ does not make Demas a villain, but merely a man, so much like us.”

[R. Kent Hughes & Bryan Chapell. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit. (Wheaton, Ill.:Crossway Books, 2000) p. 259.]

(2) Crescens and Titus *“departed”* suggesting that Paul did not consider their leaving a desertion but rather just left for other fields of service. Crescens to Galatia (probably modern Turkey) and Titus to Dalmatia (seacoast of modern Yugoslavia). It was both good and necessary that these two men had gone. But their absence only heightened Paul own sense of loneliness.

(3) Tychius (v. 12) was *“sent”* by the Apostle Paul (v. 12) meaning he left under Paul’s direction. Some suggest that Tychicus was sent to Ephesus to take Timothy’s place when Timothy came to Paul.

In the first part of verse eleven we read, *“Only Luke is with me.”* Some hold that Luke “the beloved physician” (Col 4:14) had traveled with Paul for many years and he had done so in order to minister to Paul because of his poor health. William Barclay in his commentary says that it was a Roman custom that when a citizen was taken to Rome for trial he was permitted to take two slaves with him. It may well be that, in order to travel and stay with Paul, that Luke actually volunteered to be his slave. [William Barclay. The Letters to Timothy, Titus & Philemon. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) p. 248]

It is so important for Timothy to be with Paul that he repeats his directive again in verse twenty-one (he again uses an imperative) Paul here requests, *“Do your utmost to come before winter.* In 1915 Clarence McCartney, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsburgh, Penn-sylvania, preached a sermon called *“Come Before Winter”* based on verse 21. It so moved

the congregation that they asked him to preach it again. So he did—every year—for 37 straight years. It became one of the most famous sermons of the 20th century.

In that sermon he sets out that there are some things must be done “before winter” or they will not be done at all. There are doors of opportunity that open before us today, but if we do not take advantage of them, by springtime they will be forever shut. You can’t wait forever to respond to things that are important.

We understand that every day things essential and basic are neglected. We mean to say a word of encouragement, but we never get around to it. We mean to write a letter, or make a call but it never gets done. We mean to share Christ with a neighbor, we intend to get serious in our Christian faith.

So we must ask ourselves, What is it that God is calling us to do? What good deed? What act of forgiveness? What step of faith? What sin should you confess? What bad habit must be broken? What service could you render for the Lord and his church? What class could you teach? What call must you make? What letter must you write? What relationship must you repair? Who in your life needs to know Jesus and you’ve been putting off telling them? Whatever it is we need to remember Paul admonition, “Come before winter.”

Paul desperately wanted to see his “dearly beloved son” (1:2) Timothy, whether he did or not is uncertain.

*Paul not only asks Timothy to Come Quickly but ...*

Secondly, Paul says, Bring Mark (v.11b)

*“Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.”* He asks Timothy to bring John Mark to Rome with him. John Mark’s fainthearted departure from the mission team as recorded Acts 15:36-38, frustrated Paul so intensely that later when John Mark again wanted to travel with them Paul refused. The disagreement between Barnabas and Paul over John Mark was so strong that the two parted company. Yet now, some years later Mark had managed to regain Paul’s respect. John Mark stands as a testament to anyone who has failed in the past that hard work can result in a restoration to future usefulness in Christ’s work. Past failure does not prevent us from ever being used again in the Lord’s work. Paul now says Mark is “useful” (*euchrestos*) a word used elsewhere as “vessel of honor.”

*Paul ask Timothy to Bring Mark and he also says...*

Third, Bring My Cloak (v. 13)

*“Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.”*

Paul requested certain items that he considered necessities. In this verse Paul referred to his personal belongings, his cloak, books and parchments. The cloak was what we would today call a poncho, a circular garment with a hole in the middle for the head, made of warm material that Paul would doubtless need for the coming cold winter in Rome, not to mention the present cold and damp of the dungeon.

Paul also want his books (*biblia*) literally scrolls and parchments which were velleum sheets (made of animal skins) and because of their expense primarily reserved for important documents.

Fourth, Beware of my Enemies (vv.14-15)

*“Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. (15) You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.”*

Alexander the metal worker is obviously not a friend. Some believe that this is the same Alexander put forward by the Jews who created such an uproar against Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:33) and the one who Paul ultimately excommunicated in 1 Timothy 1:20. If this is true it would explain why this man has such a fanatical zeal to oppose Paul.

When Paul said that Alexander *“did me much harm,”* (*endeiknumi*) means *“to show”* or *“to inform”* suggesting that he was chief witness against Paul before the Roman authorities.

Because Alexander had done Paul so much harm Mark and Timothy would both have to be on their guard against him.

Friends and enemies both forsake him in his hour of need but there is one who sticks closer than a brother. (vv. 16-17) *“At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. (17) But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. (18) And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!*

When Paul expresses his belief that *“the Lord will deliver”* him and *“preserve him”*, it is clear that he does not mean he thinks he will get out of jail alive, but rather that the Lord will carry rescue to heaven. The word *“perserve”* is in other places translated *“salvation.”* Deliverance was not be from death but through death.

Finally, Paul says, Salute My Brethren

(v. 19) *“Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.”*

Paul has known and loved this couple for fifteen years. He first met them in Corinth where they had apparently come after Emperor Claudius had driven all the Jews from Rome.

They became co-worker with Paul in Corinth. They apparently returned to Rome after the Emperor death. They now have returned to Ephesus perhaps at Paul's direction.

Onesiphorus was the brave man who had sought Paul out in his previous imprisonment in Rome (1 Timothy 1:16) and who may have paid for his loyalty to Paul with his life.

As a part of his final greeting in verse twenty he tells them of the whereabouts of two of the brethren. "Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

Trophimus, was the man who, in Jerusalem, was accused of going with Paul into the temple, and precipitated the riot that resulted in Paul's arrest there and his first trip to Rome and imprisonment there. Paul says "Trophimus I left ill at Miletus." This is a remarkable verse, because if we are to believe many of the faith healers of our day it is absolutely wrong for a Christian ever to be ill. It is because of a lack of faith, they say. If that is so, then why does Paul leave Trophimus behind sick, especially when as an Apostle he had demonstrated a remarkable ability to heal the sick? The fact that he does not heal Trophimus is very clear evidence that God does not always choose to allow his people to be well. This is one of several Scriptures that must be dealt with in this idea that is so widely proposed today that Christians have no business being sick. Paul himself had a "thorn in the flesh" (1 Cor. 12:7), and here he leaves a valued companion ill.

John MacArthur points out in his commentary. "The sign gifts were coming to an end. There is no evidence that any of the apostles, including Paul, performed miracles of any sort during their later years. As more and more of the New Testament was revealed and made available to the church, God's word no longer need the verification of miracles." [John MacArthur. MacArthur New Testament Commentary – 2 Timothy. p. 215]

#### *Final Greetings and Farewells (vv. 21b-22)*

*"Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. Farewell (22) The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."*

Beyond the final greetings of verse twenty-one, the benediction of verse twenty-two is divided into two distinct parts. The first *"the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit"* is singular and is intended as a personal encouragement to Timothy. But the second *"Grace be with you"* is plural and intended a corporate blessing for all Christians.

#### Conclusion

Ultimately Paul did appear again before Nero at which time he was condemned to death. He was led out where he placed his head on the executioner's block, the axe flashed in the sun, and Paul found to be true what he himself had written *"to be absent from the body is to be present with the LORD!"* (2 Cor. 5:8)