

UPON THE ROCK

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THE LORD AND TWO SECONDS— THESSALONIANS AND TIMOTHY, THAT IS!

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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The Lord and the Pattern of Sound Words

Skip Andrews

To study the letter of 2 Timothy is to study the last known words of the beloved apostle Paul, Through the last two thirds of Acts of Apostles and all through the epistles, we can follow his preaching career (which lasted only 25-30 years). We can see him win great victories for Jesus Christ and we can see him suffer over and over—nearly to the point of death. We can pray with him, preach with him, cry with him, and suffer with him. As he writes this last letter, we sense that his death is near.

But it is not sad! He is *not* destroyed by the thought of his coming death! Yes, he would like to see Timothy again, and there is all of that unfinished business, and...But Jesus is waiting. The thought of death encourages Paul. It gives him the strength to write this one last letter, to motivate Timothy to keep on keeping on, and to lift up countless other saints for more than 1900 years.

The day for which Paul has been waiting is rapidly approaching. He is finally going to “be with the Lord”—which is far better (Philippians 1).

O GLORIOUS DAY!

Let us briefly overview the letter, then let us note a key subject of chapter one, and then let us make a few applications. The theme of 2 Timothy is based on the famous line “preach the word” (4:2). The theme is presented from three simple perspectives:

I. Preach the Gospel with Respect to the Past (1:6-18).

II. Preach the Gospel with Respect to the Present (2:1-26).

III. Preach the Gospel with Respect to the Future (3:1-4:8).

and become like them. It is also so that they will be ashamed and want to reform their lives to conform to the will of God. We must never grow weary in well-doing because the Lord is with you while you are with him. We need to hold on to the right way, and hold out to the end. We must never give over, nor tire in our work. It will be time enough to rest when we get to heaven. There is an everlasting rest which remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:3). Heaven is prepared for those who are prepared to go to heaven.

We need to be like the prophet Isaiah, who realized that he was just a man with unclean lips. But when his sins were purged he said, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:5-9). The Lord needs us to stand for what is right and be His voice in turning the hearts of the people to him.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

Christians must focus on the Christ and follow His example of faithfulness to the end. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). We must follow the advice that Paul gave to Timothy, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (I Timothy 4:13,15). Notice that he encouraged Timothy to give himself completely to these things so that he would progress. It is so easy for us to lose our focus and mind the earthly things (Philippians 3:19). We must heed the warnings and set our minds on things above. “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2,3). We must constantly remind ourselves of who we are and where we are going. This world is not our home we are passing through to get to our eternal home. We must not fall in love with the things of world because they will all be burned up in the end (II Peter 3:10,11).

The apostle Paul taught by inspiration that we should not tolerate those who walk disorderly. The disorderly are those who are out of step with the will of God. There were some among them who were idle, not working at all, or doing nothing, and therefore disorderly people. The apostle warns Timothy (I Timothy 5:13) “to beware of such as learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and are not only idle, but tattlers, also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.” The apostle was concerned about the influence of the disorderly and gave the command to “note” them, which means “to mark, to signify, mark out, to put a tag on them (George Milligan, Eerdmans, 1953). Then they were not to keep company with those who walk disorderly. This was to be done so that they would remain faithful and not grow weary. They were to continue to admonish them to be faithful and walk according to the will of God. But they were not to mix themselves with those who chose to walk in a disorderly way!

We need to heed this admonition mark those who are walking disorderly among us today. It seems we have swallowed the world’s cry for tolerance to the point that we can’t see sin. We are failing to see the purpose of the marking and the withdrawing of those who choose to walk disorderly. It is so that we do not learn their evil ways

The letter begins and ends with very typical lines from Paul. In 1:1-5, he gives a very spiritual and prayerful greeting, and in 4:9-22, he gives a very person oriented closing. Both of these sections are full of meaning and valuable lessons.

Now let us look at a key subject of chapter one—“hold fast the pattern of sound words” (1:13). This phrase is in the section where Paul stresses the past. The urgent need was to do certain things right then! The first set of factors that would encourage Timothy was based on the past. There were two bases for this theme—

--Do not be ashamed of the gospel, for we have infinite blessings through it (1:6-14).

--Recall the positive and negative examples from the recent past (1:15-18).

The phrase in the title of this article is in the section that covers 2 Timothy 1:6-14. Here the apostle listed and discussed several blessings that were/are connected with the gospel. He reminded Timothy that he had a miraculous gift (1:6). He wrote of the spirit (disposition of mind) which overcomes (1:7). He wrote the most about the fact that God has saved us, given us hope, and expects us to not be ashamed of the gospel, all of which are built on the “pattern of sound words” (1:8-13). And he encouraged Timothy to accept the power of God that was available to him (1:14).

Now let us read verses 8-13 to see some of the connections that exist between our theme and the context:

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For this reason I

also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have *heard from me*, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (NKJV).

A person might not see the powerful emotions that Paul must have had at the time he wrote this until after reading chapter four. But a second, third, and fourth reading should easily multiply our appreciation of his heartfelt and moving words! In light of all of the words, phrases, and sentences in verses 8-12, the command to “hold fast the pattern of sound words” comes forth as the way by which Timothy can honor his beloved father in the faith, and please his beloved Father in heaven!

How could anyone ever even think that holding fast the pattern of sound words is not important? How can we not be interested in learning what it means to hold something fast? Why would a person who claims to follow Christ not be intensely involved in discerning the pattern that emerges when one learns what sound words are? And why would we insult the memory of this inspired apostle (not to mention insulting the Lord of glory) by not being concerned about what sound words really are?

Anyone who reads the lines of 2 Timothy 1 will find instruction and motivation in the remaining chapters, for chapter two teaches us how to use (rightly divide) these sound words, and chapters three and four moves us to preach these words in all circumstances.

Finally, we can say that holding fast is essential to our salvation (and to the salvation of everyone else on earth). We can say that God has revealed a pattern by which we can know all of the things that He wants us to know (which implies that we can also know what things please and displease Him in every part of life). We can say that these words are the kind of words that can make us sound (spiritually healthy) because they are sound words!

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We have been warned throughout the Bible to seek the truth, teach the truth to our children, and meditate on the word day and night. Will we heed the warning and examine our love for the truth?

THE LORD AND THE NEED FOR FAITHFULNESS

II Thessalonians 3:1-5

When we reflect on the life of the apostle Paul we are impressed with his relentless determination to preach the gospel to all that would hear. He went from city to city facing difficult circumstances and extreme persecution. Our Lord knew that he would face difficulties and suffer for preaching the gospel. “But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9: 15,16). The Lord revealed to him that He was with him and that he would eventually preach in Rome. “But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome” (Acts 23:11). Having endured many hardships and trials in his life, Paul could identify with the sufferings that the church would face. He would visit and write letters to encourage Christians to be faithful. Paul would offer up many prayers of concern as well as thanksgiving for the faithfulness of his fellow laborers. (I Thessalonians 1:2)

The second letter to the Thessalonians Paul would request prayers on his behalf that the word of the Lord would run swiftly and that he would be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men (II Thessalonians 3:1-2). The apostle having commended their obedience for the time past, and mentioned his confidence in their obedience for the time to come, proceeds to give commands and directions to some who were walking disorderly among them (II Thessalonians 3:6). In particular, there were among them some idle persons and busybodies (v.11). They were wasting energy walking around meddling in the affairs of others. In the next verse Paul exhorts them by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness (v.12). The word “quietness” signifies a calm and contented life style. As Christians we must maintain our focus and purpose in life.

The second essential element for the word to bear fruit in our lives is that we must love the truth. In the second letter to the Thessalonians the apostle Paul taught that before Christ would return the lawless one would come first with all power, signs, and lying wonders and would deceive the people (II Thessalonians 2:9). People would be deceived because they did not receive the love of the truth (II Thessalonians 2:10). The gospel is God's power to save and without it no one could be saved (Romans 1:16). Yet it is up to the hearer to love and desire to know the truth. We are taught that we are responsible for our study habits. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). God wants us to hunger and thirst to know His righteousness. For this reason many will never come to the righteousness of God. Think about our own study habits, how little time we spend in study and meditation of God's divine word. If we ate like we study many would die of malnutrition.

Those who fail to love the truth will believe the lie and receive a strong delusion. "And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:11,12). The reason God does this is because of the lack of love for the truth and the desire for unrighteousness. When the word of God is preached it exposes our hearts and our true thoughts. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all *things* are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:14,15). Think for a moment of what these passages tell us. One, that the word is alive and powerful. Two, it penetrates to the deepest part of the soul and exposes the very thoughts and intents of our mind, Three, we can't hide from God. It is the word of God that pricks the heart and causes men to ask, "What shall we do?" When the answer is given to repent and be baptized the word penetrates the heart and causes men to obey (Acts 2:38-41). Yet the same word causes men to react in disobedience (Acts 7:51-54). Those who are unwilling to love the truth will receive a strong delusion and go through life believing the lie. Think of the multitudes of divisions caused by a lack of love and respect for the word.

The Lord And The Diligent Disciple

Brandon Britton

Within the first two verses of 2 Timothy 2, Paul gives us what is essentially the whole of Christianity. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 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." There is a dual nature to Christianity: 1) personal faith and 2) personal evangelism. The Christian not only has a responsibility to himself and his Lord to serve faithfully, he also has an obligation to others to serve them. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). The context of this statement includes the admonition to, "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus", followed by Paul's description of Jesus as one who sought to serve others instead of seeking His own.

In this section of Paul's second letter to Timothy he begins to string together words of encouragement that will help the younger Christian grow in his ability to serve the Lord and remain faithful. Paul encourages him to "be strong" (v.1), "endure" (v.3), "remember" (v.8), "study" (v.15) and "flee youthful lusts" (v.22). From these words we can deduce that Timothy was facing some challenges and difficulties in his discipleship. Being a disciple of Christ is one of the more difficult things that a person can choose to do in life. It is hands down the single most rewarding and greatest thing that a person can do, but it is not easy. It is the difficult path as opposed to the broad path (Matthew 7:13–14). Being a Christian isn't easy, but it is easier than going to the cross.

What then is required of a disciple? The easy answer would be diligence, but what then does that mean. What does it mean to be a diligent disciple? sprinkled throughout this section of Scripture are answers and examples of what it means to be a diligent disciple, which we will examine in the next few pages.

DILIGENCE IN DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE

Unlike the Renaissance period paintings which depict Jesus as a thin, frail, pale "hippie type", the Bible describes our Lord as a man of great strength, courage and boldness. He was strong and brave enough to drive the money changers out of the temple (Matthew 21:12–13). Jesus had the boldness to stand up to the religious leaders who were hypocritical and abusing the common people (Matthew 23). Who among us would have the courage to surrender to a murderous mob, endure the scourging and beating of the Roman soldiers and still march up to the pinnacle of Mount Calvary to be crucified? If the Lord is willing to go to such extreme lengths to make it possible for us to be saved, the diligent disciple must be willing to show strength and endurance in representing his Lord.

Chapter two begins with the words, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The strength that the disciple of Christ has is not derived from physical exercise or from his own accomplishments and abilities, but from the grace that he has received in Christ. This strength makes it possible to, "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (v.3) Hardness, difficulty, hardships, afflictions WILL COME, therefore strength is required. It is not something that can be avoided, but must be endured (suffered through). Obviously the disciple of Christ desires to receive the reward that God has promised (mastery = to crown with honor or reward as a victor in a contest, 2 Timothy 2:5), but in order to receive it he must STRIVE (to engage in a contest as an athlete contending for a prize) and do it lawfully. Think about what an Olympic athlete endures as they strive to win the gold medal. Consider the countless hours of training, running, weight lifting, practicing and following a strict diet in order to achieve the goal. This is the illustration Paul uses. He does this professing that he too had suffered trouble, even being bound as a prisoner, because of his discipleship. Paul even declares that he would, "endure all things" (v.10) as a disciple and for the disciples. For the disciple to enjoy the reward, he must also be diligent enough to suffer for his Lord (v.12).

THE LORD AND THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH

Larry G. Reynolds

The wise man in the book of Proverbs admonishes us to "buy the truth, and do not sell it" (Proverbs 23:23). Truth is to be a valuable commodity in our lives—we are to obtain it at all costs and once obtained, never let it slip from our hands. It is the truth that sets us free from the shackles of sin (John 8:32). Our Lord taught in the parable of the sower the importance of how we receive the word. The soils represent the different hearts and how they receive the word. The parable illustrates that we have an obligation to prepare our hearts so that the word can bear fruit in our lives (Luke 8:15). There are two things essential in order for the word to bear fruit in our lives. One, the word must be taught. "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day, It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught by God, Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:44,45). God chose preaching as the means to take the gospel to the entire world. (Matthew 28:19,20; Romans 10:14). For this reason God communicated His will to us through the avenue of words. The Holy Spirit searched the mind of God and revealed it to the apostles. "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (I Corinthians 2:10-13). The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). The apostles then recorded the words of the Holy Spirit and preserved it for us today. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof; for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). God has given us His words to help us live godly lives. "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to glory and virtue" (II Peter 3:1).

you keep My commandments you will abide in My love just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

The lost sinner must obey the gospel (Acts 10:34,35). The child of God must also obey the gospel (Philippians 2:12), If we refuse to obey the gospel, Christ will come to take vengeance. Christ will be the judge that will render the just punishment. The penalty is eternal separation from God. Man will lose all worth of existence when he is separated from God. Those who know not God and obey not the gospel of His Son will be punished with an everlasting *punishment*. They will suffer everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. The word destruction means, "to lose self worth, or value". The soul separated from God is of no value! Christ came into the world to give us the opportunity to save our souls and to avoid eternal destruction. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16) God sent His Son so that we would not perish, suffer the ruin of our souls. Those who reject the Christ will suffer the consequences.

The Coming of Christ in that Day will be a glorious day for His saints. They will rejoice at His coming because they have been faithfully waiting for His return. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that *any* should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking and hasting the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (II Peter 3:10-13). We will enter the perfect environment where righteousness dwells. All sin and harm will all have been dissolved. I encourage you now to prepare yourself for eternity by obeying the gospel today!

DILIGENCE IN DISCIPLESHIP REAPS REWARDS

Jesus once admonished those who wanted to follow Him to first count the cost (Luke 14:28-33). Before becoming a follower/learner of Jesus (disciple), you should first consider if the rewards are worth the requirements. We have just noticed some of the requirements, but what are the rewards? Paul indicates, using an illustration of a farmer, that those who labor in the vineyard will also partake of the fruits thereof (2 Timothy 2:6). This year my family put out a garden in the backyard. For several weeks there was plenty of hard work that had to be done. There was plowing the ground, tilling the soil, planting the rows of seeds, hoeing the weeds, spraying for pests and then picking the fruits and vegetables. After all of that hard work there came the Saturday when we all sat down around the kitchen table to enjoy a meal of all the foods we toiled so hard for over the course of many weeks. So shall it be at the return of the Lord. Those who have labored in the vineyard, sowed the seed of the kingdom (which is the Word of God, Luke 8:11) and brought forth fruits (Mark 4:20; Galatians 5:22-23), will be invited to gathered around the table and enjoy the feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

The laborer in the vineyard may be required to make some great sacrifices, including suffering and death, but there is the assurance that, "if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Timothy 2:11,12). We are not only called to share in His sufferings, but to receive the blessing and reward of living and reigning with Him. The reward is, "salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).

DILIGENCE IN DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES REMEMBRANCE AND REPITITION

One of the great weaknesses from which humans suffer is forgetfulness. Is it not a strange phenomenon that we cannot forget the things we want to forget, but we somehow forget things we want to remember? Because we are prone to forget even important things we will leave ourselves notes, tie a string around our finger and do most anything to remember. Why must the disciple of Christ be diligent in all he does? Because there is always the danger of forgetting. We can forget that we have been cleansed of our past sins

(2 Peter 1:9), our Maker (Hosea 8:14), exhortation (Hebrews 12:5), the law of God (Hosea 4:6) and so many other vitally important things. Much of the work of the apostles was to prevent these things from happening by constantly teaching and reminding the church. Peter wrote, "wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. . . Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" (2 Peter 1:12-15). The diligent disciple must always remember and repeat what he knows and has learned and "ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). Timothy was bound by the dual obligation of remembering what he had been taught and then repeating it to others who could do the same (2 Timothy 2:2). Timothy had heard these things, he had been taught these things and he was now to pass it on.

Later he will be told to consider (ponder, think on) what Paul had said, and then the prayer is offered that the Lord will help Timothy understand (2 Timothy 2:7). The understanding will not be given miraculously, he would have to remember what he had learned by Paul's teaching of the Gospel (2 Timothy 2:8). He was going to have to study to be able to properly discern and divide the Scriptures he had been taught. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). However, these things were not only for his benefit, but so he could be a blessing to others too. "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord. . . apt to teach. . . in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Timothy 2:14, 24-25) . The diligent disciple remembers what he was taught and is always aware of his requirement to repeat it to others.

DILIGENCE IN DISCIPLESHIP REQUIRES REBUKING AND REPENTANCE

Many cultures have a customary procedure for dealing with those who engage in activity that is unacceptable. Some societies practice "shunning" which is a turning away from and avoiding of one whose

worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer" (II Thessalonians 1:3-5).

These people were enduring persecutions and afflictions, and the apostle recognized the reason for the persecution and affliction; they suffered for the Kingdom of God. These experiences of trial had called forth the first letter, and they had not changed when this second was written.

God is revealing in this second letter that He is aware and that He will repay those who would trouble His church. "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (II Thessalonians 1:6,7). Let this serve as a warning to all of us, that we need to maintain a humble attitude and submit to the will of God in all that we do and teach, so that we do not bring harm upon the body of Christ!

The apostle encourages Christians to be faithful and wait for the time that God will take vengeance. Christ will come from heaven with His mighty angels and will take vengeance on those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Verses 7,8). Notice the two groups of people that Christ will take vengeance upon. First, the one's that know not God. These are those that the devil takes the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved (Luke 8:12). The second group are those who hear and understand, but choose not to obey. Jesus taught at the beginning of His preaching that, "Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matt hew 7:21). Language such as "obey the gospel" is often lacking in our vocabulary today. It is not only lacking, but is often foreign. Phraseology such as "obey the gospel" suggests the gospel is structured, understandable, and authoritative. Many think more in terms of "get religion," or "get saved," something which externally is bestowed, and that God does it all. To obey the gospel means you must believe the gospel. They are synonymous words as we see in Romans 10:16, when Paul quotes Isaiah 53:1 and uses the word "obey for "believe". The reason people do not believe and obey the gospel of Christ is because they don't love Him. Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). "If

of the church, the current Christians and the future Christians, the word of God must be preached without fear or favor. It must be handed down faithfully to each generation, II Timothy 2:2, if the church is going to be faithful now and if the church is going to exist for our children and grandchildren.

It was the Lord's command that we go into all the world and preach the gospel. It is the revelation of the heart and mind of God as he wants to communicate to us. It offers instruction and hope. To add to it or take away from it is to undermine God and his power and purpose. Teaching another about God by any way other than the word of God itself cheats the student from the true power. Why must we continue to preach the word without fear in this hard-hearted and hate-filled world? (1) Souls must have opportunity to come to God. (2) Faith, true biblical faith, comes only from hearing the word of God.

THE LORD AND ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

II THESSALONIANS 1:3-12

Larry G. Reynolds

The second letter to the Thessalonians was a sequel to the first, but the purpose was different. The purpose of the first letter was comfort, while that of the second was correction.

To understand this letter it is important that we should recognize the circumstances of these Thessalonian Christians at the time when Paul wrote. Of these, we have no historical picture. The book of Acts gives the account of the founding of the church, and of the departure of the apostle; but gives no account of the subsequent history of the church. From the two letters we may learn the condition of affairs in Thessalonica so far as these Christians were concerned. The conditions are distinctly described in the beginning of this letter: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted

behavior is disgraceful. The diligent disciple is told this must be his attitude toward sinfulness. "But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Timothy 2:16). The reason is made clear: sin will breed more sin. Paul wrote, "And their word will eat as doth a canker of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:17,18). The word "canker" is actually gangrene, a disease that infects and inflames one part of the body, only to continually spread to the entire body, eventually eating the bones. For this reason sin must be rebuked and repentance must be practiced. Paul even has the boldness, courage and love to rebuke, by name, two men who are spreading the infectious disease of sin. The diligent disciple does not enjoy, but neither will he avoid rebuking those in sin. These men were not diligent disciples because those who are depart from sin. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). The diligent disciple is not perfect, without fault, flaw or need for improvement. On the contrary, he realizes he has good qualities, but also weaknesses. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:20,21). The honorable, sanctified, prepared, diligent disciple knows his faults and works to purge them from him. He will flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22) because they only serve to cause problems (v. 23) . The diligent disciple will accept rebuke and then repent and he will rebuke others in sin that they might come to repentance.

CONCLUSION

The diligent disciple is not content with "just being a Christian." He will seek to become more like his Lord, making whatever sacrifices are necessary. He understands that it will not be an easy task, but that the reward will be worth whatever sacrifice he must make. He will, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10) and will watch "in all things, endure afflictions" (2 Timothy 4:5). He will remember the things he has been taught and then teach them to others. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19,20) . He will repent of his own sins and rebuke others, making known to them their need for repentance. Ultimately he will reap the rewards of being a diligent disciple of Christ.

THE LORD AND PERSECUTIONS

A.J. Cox

The purpose of Paul's final epistle was to encourage Timothy, his protégé and son in the faith (2 Timothy 1:2). Among other things he admonished Timothy to endure persecution in what was, to many Christians, a very trying time. (2 Timothy 2:3). Drawing upon his own personal experience, Paul told Timothy exactly what he needed to hear to steer him in the face of cruel treatment. Herein, particular attention will be given to Paul's reassurance to his persecuted comrade.

The Certainty of Persecution

When Paul spoke of persecution he could speak from a deep reservoir of experience. He was, in fact, a chosen vessel destined to suffer for the name of Christ. (Acts 9:15, 16). Even as he penned this letter he was in chains for his faith and awaiting martyrdom. (2 Timothy 1:8, 12, 16; 2:9; 4:6). The Bible student cannot help but be impressed by the almost incredible litany of afflictions endured by the apostle Paul.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst,

evil at worst. The only way to get them back is by preaching and reasoning together with them in God's word.

The Lord and preaching

As we are considering the topic 'the Lord and his charge to preach the word', this is exactly what he did. Matthew 4:17 *'from that time Jesus began to preach and to say,...'* Jesus focused on preaching the kingdom and "seeking and saving that which was lost," Luke 19:10. But what did he say, *"For I have not spoken of myself but the father which sent me, **He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak**, and I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."* It is God's word that must be spoken. It is God's word that must be received with meekness in order to be saved, James 1:21. It is God's word that must be received in order to be built up spiritually, Acts 20:28. Just as Jesus did then so we must do now in order to get the same results. Speak what the father has spoken to us through his word. That is what *"we should say and what we should speak"*.

Paul's charge to Timothy

Paul's charge to Timothy is just as relevant to everyone preaching and teaching God's word today. Paul's charge was to preach the word. Why? Because Paul's life was completely immersed and consumed with The Father, The Son and His church and the time of his death was at hand. Knowing death is near often brings life and what is important in focus. What is going to be left behind? Who is going to care for my spouse, child, etc.? Paul was concerned with what would happen to the church. Ephesus had false teachers and immorality dwelling there that needed to be dealt with, I Timothy 1: 3-11. He was concerned about how Christians were behaving themselves with in the House of God the church of the living God, I Timothy 3:15. The only thing to remedy the problem is preaching the word. Now, to the possible concern of Paul for Timothy. Timothy had a monumental task in front of him as a young preacher. He seemed to be a sickly young man, I Timothy 5:23. Also, he seemed to be timid or lacking in confidence, I Timothy 4:12, 14; II Timothy 1:4-8. And yet, for the good

condition of our world, spiritually speaking, and lose hope or want to throw our hands up in surrender thinking all is lost, we would do well to remember those who have gone on before us. The prophets and the apostles all had something in common. They were told to “go and preach the word”. The apostles and the first church were given the command to preach the word. “Go and teach all nations...” Matthew 28:19; Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel...” Mark 16:15; “Preach the word...” II Timothy 4:2; the list could go on but these shall be sufficient for the point that we are to proclaim with great boldness the message from God.

The Prophets

God, in different times and in a myriad of ways spoke to the fathers by the prophets. This is a paraphrase of Hebrews 1:1 which brings out the point that God has always wished to communicate to man. He has always instructed man thus demonstrating his love for him. How many would say “I love my spouse, parents or children but I never talk to them.”? Communication, especially when God speaks to man, is showing love. God loved mankind and wished to communicate it. We could go back as far as Noah to see God communicating his concern for man. The thoughts of man were continually on evil yet God told Noah to preach to the people hoping to save them from death in the flood. It was Isaiah who said “come let us reason together”. Why? So the sins that were as scarlet could become white as snow. God wanted Isaiah to reason with the people who were in sin in hopes of turning them around. During the days of Jeremiah God’s people could not even blush when they were doing evil yet God sent Jeremiah to preach to the people hoping they would come back to the “old paths”. In Ezekiel, God said my people are rebellious, hard headed, stiffnecked, yet again he sends out Ezekiel to preach and bring the people back to God and to serve him faithfully. What was true then is true now.

Just as the people, God’s people, so long ago were not faithful and were immersed in evil they needed to be called back. The only way to get them back was by preaching and reasoning from God’s word. The same is true today for us in twenty-first century America. Many in the world and some Christians are indifferent at best and immersed in

in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

Having been reared in Lystra, Paul’s young brother in arms was fully aware of the afflictions he had suffered at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, and Lystra. (Acts 13:45, 50; 14:1-7, 19, 20; 2 Timothy 3:10, 11). Now Timothy wept for his father in the faith as he was kept in Rome under a capital charge. (2 Timothy 1:4; 2:8, 9; 4:6).

While a person in such a position as Paul might be expected to be totally consumed with his own misfortune the apostle’s attention is focused rather upon his beloved pupil. Timothy is now called upon to suffer shame for the name of Jesus and Paul’s hope and prayer is that he would endure the hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. (Acts 5:41; 2 Timothy 1:3; 2:3). Timothy would be tempted to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord and of Paul. He must, however, follow the example of Paul and not be ashamed, but be a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel. (2 Timothy 1:8,12; 4:5).

The Christian should always remember that persecutions and afflictions accompany the life which they have chosen. That the faithful child of God will suffer persecution is an absolute certainty. Paul said, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12). What, therefore, Paul and Timothy were experiencing was simply par for the course. The Lord has never tried to trick people into becoming Christians by giving them the impression that the Christian life is a life of ease. Rather, He has been upfront with man by assuring him that if he lives a godly life in Christ he will suffer persecution. This is because the Christian life is at variance with the world. The world hated the Lord and persecuted Him. Since the servant is not greater than his master, it is only natural to expect the world to hate and persecute those who conform to the image of Christ. (John 15:18-21; 16:1-3). While the form of the persecution may vary depending upon when and where the Christian lives, the suffering of persecution is no less certain. The faithful child of God must always be prepared to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3).

Confidence in Persecution

Though the Christian is destined for affliction and persecution he need not despair! Paul indicates it is possible to have confidence in persecution. Paul was confident that his suffering was for the elect's sake. (2 Timothy 2:8-10). He suffered, not as an evil doer, but, as evil doers suffer, and was even imprisoned. It was for the gospel that he was in chains, but the gospel was not bound! He knew that his preaching would enable others to obtain salvation, and that his example would inspire untold numbers to endure as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Far from being a cause for sorrow, when Christians suffer and are reproached for the name of Christ it is actually a cause for happiness and glorifying God. (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:14-16). Paul was confident that the Lord was with him in all his trials. The apostle credits the Lord with his deliverance out of the persecutions in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. (2 Timothy 3:11). The Lord had also delivered him out of the mouth of the lion, whether literal or symbolic. (2 Timothy 4:17). Even when no man had stood with him, but all had forsaken him, the Lord stood with Paul and strengthened him. (2 Timothy 4:17). Paul was supremely confident that Christ would deliver him from every evil work. (2 Timothy 4:18). Though the Lord had often preserved Paul's life so that the preaching might be fully known, he knew that his life would not be spared indefinitely, indeed, Paul discerned that his end was fast approaching. (2 Timothy 4:6). He was sure, however, that even at his last hour the Lord would never leave him nor forsake him. (Hebrews 13:5).

Paul was confident in his soul's condition. The importance of this for the persecuted Christian, especially one whose life is threatened, cannot be overstated. Even though the keeping of his body had been committed to a Roman prison, the keeping of his soul had been committed to the Lord. (2 Timothy 1:12). Because he had suffered for the name of Christ he would also reign with Him. (2 Timothy 2:12). Perhaps Paul's most emphatic declaration of confidence is found in 2 Timothy 4:6-8. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." To the Christian who is a partaker of Christ's

sufferings, the Lord's return will be an occasion for gladness and joy. (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Conclusion

The child of God should remember that a godly life in Christ and persecution go hand in hand. But these trials may be met with confidence because the Christian does not suffer in vain, the Christian does not stand alone, and the Christian has entrusted the Lord with the keeping of his soul. Thou, therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

The Lord and the Charge to Preach the Word

Mike Gors

The Lord's charge to preach the word is as relevant today as it was two thousand years ago. There are many who sit in indifference toward "the faith once delivered", both in the church and out. There are many who sit in defiance toward God in any form or fashion, i.e. prayer in school, "in God we trust" displayed on the money of the United States, or displaying of the Ten Commandments in a government building. The mere mention of God or His Son causes great discomfort in their lives. Then there are those who use His name, talk of grace, mercy and hope because of the cross of Calvary, but disregard his law. And still others who have left the traditional places of worship and all the vain worship, the creeds and the names of men just to venture further into error. There is immorality and indifference everywhere. The world, this country in particular, has bought into the idea of no absolute truth, situational ethics, political correctness. This is nothing new. God in the days of Noah saw that man thought about evil continually (Genesis 6:5). In the days of Isaiah they would call good things evil and evil things good, (Isaiah 5:20). God through Jeremiah said His people could not even blush at the evil things they were doing. God would show Ezekiel through a vision the "wicked abominations" that God's own people were doing. It was Paul who had to write the Corinthian congregation and rebuke them because a Christian was engaged in a sin that the heathen man would not even do. The next time we feel concerned about the