

Letters For Leaders – 2 Timothy (Part 10)

The four letters we are studying in this series were written by the Apostle Paul, probably while he was in prison toward the end of his ministry. They are unique among all his writings because they are PERSONAL, addressed to individuals in leadership roles rather than to churches as a whole. Also, Paul has had a “mentoring role” in the lives and ministries of each of these young leaders, so he feels at liberty to speak freely. Here more than anywhere else we see Paul being transparent about ministry.

When Paul wrote the letter we know as 2 Timothy, his situation had changed drastically. He was in prison in Rome and facing certain death (4:6 – “the time of my departure is at hand”). He MAY have been in prison when he wrote the other letters we have studied in this series; he definitely WAS in prison this time. Almost all of his associates in ministry were gone, and only Luke was at the Apostle's side to assist him (4:11 – “only Luke is with me”). It was certainly a dark hour in his ministry. But Paul's concern was not for himself – it was for Timothy and the church, because Timothy was doing a difficult job in a difficult time.

In chapter three, Paul speaks about the challenge of the last days, and then tells Timothy exactly how to respond. Some people get confused about the “last days,” which actually began with the ministry of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2) and will continue until He returns. It is called the “last days” because we are in the last “dispensation” in which God is completing His purpose for His people. Because Jesus appears to have delayed His coming, some people scoff (2 Peter 3:3-10) – but He will come just as He promised.

There are different “seasons” within the last days (Acts 1:7), but as they draw to a close the “times” will become PERILOUS. The Greek word means “dangerous, fierce, furious, savage” and is the same word used to describe the two violent demoniacs in Gadara. This suggests that demon spirits will be active in the last days, and behind much of the opposition against the church (1 Timothy 4:1).

If these challenges were already appearing in Paul's day, it is no surprise that they have increased in frequency and intensity in our day! (These “signs of the times” are like labor pains – Romans 8:22.)

2 Timothy 3:1-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Paul lists the characteristics of people who embrace the evil spirit of the age in the Last Days. Notice that everything they think is good, God thinks is evil; everything they embrace, God rejects. These people are only right in their own eyes. They will tell you that they are operating out of LOVE, but it is love of SELF (“lovers of their own selves”), love of MONEY (“covetous”), love of STATUS (“boasters, proud, heady, highminded”), love of IMMORALITY (“unholy, without natural affection, incontinent”), and love of PLEASURE (“lovers of pleasures”). The only thing they hate is anything GOOD (“despisers of those that are good”)!

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

The **first problem** with these people is that they are not just in the world – they also try to get into the church! They appear religious (“having a form of godliness”), but at the same time act rebellious (“denying the power thereof”) – they experience no real life change. And that's why Paul has a strong word for Timothy – “from such turn away!”

As we live in the world we deal with ourselves, God, people and things. We should refuse to serve ourselves, worship God, love people, and use things. But these people have everything reversed – they worship themselves, refuse to serve God, use people, and love things! And the **second problem** with these these people is that they make converts!

2 Timothy 3:6-9 For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

In Paul's day, WOMEN were especially susceptible to false doctrine because they had little education and a low status in society. The emphasis here is probably on doctrines the false teachers invented to justify their worldliness and sexual sins. Women were the main victims in Paul's day, but anyone in our day who wants to justify sin or is always looking for an easier way is very susceptible to false doctrine. They are “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Paul compares these false teachers to the magicians of Pharaoh who opposed Moses in Exodus 7-9, during the time of the Ten Plagues. Their names were Jannes and Jambres, and they IMITATED what Moses did. What God does, Satan always tries to COUNTERFEIT – and false teachers are merely the pawns in Satan's plan to deceive many people.

Paul says that these false teachers “resist the truth,” that they have “corrupt minds,” and that they are “reprobate concerning the faith.” That is a most frightening word, because it means “rejected, cast away.” It is a dangerous thing to tinker with truth! On the **FUTURE** day of judgment, “their folly shall be manifest unto all men” – but we need discernment **NOW** so that we are not deceived, ending up being judged ourselves!

Just like in the banking industry, the way to deal with the **COUNTERFEIT** is not to have more exposure to the **FAKE**, but to have more exposure to the **REAL**. **We fight false doctrine by knowing true doctrine; we fight false teachers by knowing true teachers!** The character and lifestyle of a leader matters – their submission to God’s Word is paramount! That’s why Paul says, “You have known my doctrine and manner of life!”

2 Timothy 3:10-13 But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

Notice the huge discrepancy between what Paul taught and experienced, and what most modern “Christian” leaders are known for! He tells Timothy, “All that will live godly shall suffer persecution!” We don’t like that! It will seem like evil is winning for a time – “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” – but ultimately the church is triumphant. The most important thing to do, when you experience opposition and persecution, or when facing false teaching, is simply to **CONTINUE!** In the last days, there will be more **DECEPTION** and more **IMITATION**, but Satan’s lies can be defeated if we hold on to God’s truth. **CONTINUE!**

2 Timothy 3:14-17 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

Timothy was in a position to be mightily used by God because of the Scripture he had learned when he was just a **CHILD**, and because of the godly people and experiences he had been exposed to. You may not have had the privilege of an Apostolic upbringing, but make sure your children have that privilege! Nothing is more important for their future!

Paul gives us an extremely important principle in 2 Timothy 3:16, letting us know what we should be looking for as we study the Word of God. All of Scripture is given by **INSPIRATION** (literally, it is “God breathed”), and all of Scripture is **PROFITABLE** in one of four areas. If we are careful to submit to it we will become **MATURE** (“perfect”) and **EQUIPPED** (“thoroughly furnished”) to do good works for God’s Kingdom.

	BELIEF	BEHAVIOR
YES	DOCTRINE <i>“what to believe”</i>	INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS <i>“how to behave”</i>
NO	REPROOF <i>“what <u>NOT</u> to believe”</i>	CORRECTION <i>“how <u>NOT</u> to behave”</i>

And now we come to the last chapter of the last book that Paul will ever write. These are literally his last words to Timothy, for he doesn’t know if Timothy will get to the prison in Rome before they put him to death. Watch what is important to this great man of God in his final moments!

2 Timothy 4:1-4 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

Paul charges Timothy to do one main thing – “**PREACH THE WORD!**” Everything else he says is related to this critical commission. We preach the Word because Jesus is coming ... because **WE** are headed to judgment, and because **OTHERS** are headed to judgment! We are to be **INSTANT** (“prepared, present, ready”) when conditions are favorable (“in season”) and unfavorable (“out of season”). While we must be **PATIENT** with people (“exhort with all longsuffering”), we cannot **ADAPT** our message to please people (“exhort with ... doctrine”). **We PREACH!**

Paul said “the time will come” (and it is **HERE!**) when people will not put up with (“endure”) sound doctrine, but they will have “itching ears” ... so they will accumulate (“heap to themselves”) teachers who will tell them what they **WANT** to hear, instead of what they **NEED** to hear. They want to be **COMFORTABLE** more than they want to be **CONVICTED**.

2 Timothy 4:5-8 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. 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.

Paul exhorts Timothy to be on guard (“watch”), be tough (“endure afflictions”), and to always be about winning souls (“do the work of an evangelist”). Timothy’s ministry would not be exactly like Paul’s, but he is to do what God has called HIM to do, and “MAKE FULL PROOF” of his ministry. The Greek word “plerophoreo” means “to entirely accomplish” and comes from a root word meaning “to have a burden” or “to be always accompanied by, to wear constantly like clothing.” Remember, **YOUR MINISTRY IS YOUR LIFE, AND YOUR LIFE IS YOUR MINISTRY.**

Paul knows that his departure from this life was imminent, and he is at peace with that. He says, “I am now ready to be OFFERED” (literally, “to be poured out on the altar as a drink offering”) – and this is the very same image he uses when speaking of Jesus “emptying Himself” in his incarnation (Philippians 2:5-8). He uses the word DEPARTURE to describe his impending death – a beautiful word meaning, “to set sail, to take down a tent (2 Corinthians 5:1-8), to unyoke an ox, to loose a prisoner.” **His death is not a dead end – his death is just a doorway!**

Paul says ... “I FOUGHT” ... “I FINISHED” ... “I KEPT” ... no regrets!

A crown of righteousness is God’s reward for a faithful and righteous life – and our motivation for faithfulness and holiness is His soon coming! Jesus will reward those who “LOVE HIS APPEARING.” So that begs a question: **“Will the return of Jesus be an INTERRUPTION of your life’s work, or will it be the CULMINATION of your life’s work?”**

2 Timothy 4:9-15 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words.

And now we see Paul’s humanity ... “Timothy, please hurry to visit me! And please bring my cloak (it’s cold!), and my books and parchments.” Paul doesn’t reveal his “humanity” to many, but Timothy is like his son.

I’ve heard people say, “I never heard them speak a negative word.” That would not be true of a godly leader, because they need to speak God’s TRUTH about people and situations! So Paul speaks very plainly here:

DEMAS has forsaken Paul because he loved the world.
CRESCENS and **TITUS** have departed to minister elsewhere.
LUKE has put everything on hold to be with the aging Apostle.
MARK has been forgiven by Paul for deserting him earlier (Acts 15).
TYCHICUS has been sent to Ephesus to relieve Timothy temporarily.
CARPUS has been taking care of the Apostle’s few earthly possessions.
ALEXANDER is to be avoided because of his opposition to Paul.

It appears that Paul had two trials before Caesar, with some time in between. Some scholars believe that he continued his missionary journeys during this brief reprieve, but we don’t know for sure. What we do know is that everyone forsook him, probably for fear of the Roman government. But GOD didn’t forsake Paul – He delivered him “out of the mouth of the lion” (Satan – 1 Peter 5:8, Psalm 22:21). And Paul was confident that – either way – God’s deliverance would continue!

2 Timothy 4:16-18 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Over 100 men and women are associated with Paul and his ministry in Acts and his epistles, and he sends greetings here to several friends. **The Apostle Paul was a firm believer in TEAM MINISTRY.**

2 Timothy 4:19-22 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

“Do thy diligence to come before winter.” If Timothy waited too long, it would be too dangerous for sailing and all the ships would be in port for the winter months. If Timothy waited too long, the aging Apostle could die in the brutal cold conditions of the Mamertine Prison. If Timothy waited too long, the Emperor could unexpectedly decree Paul’s execution. If Timothy waited too long, he would miss his chance to connect one last time with the Elder who had given him so very much.

DO THY DILIGENCE TO COME BEFORE WINTER ...