



## 2 Timothy - Chapter Four

### IV. 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8 - Paul's Charge to Timothy (continues/concludes)

#### Summary of Chapter Four

Paul commences this final chapter with one of the strongest exhortations given in Scripture, calling on Timothy and probably the church in general, to proclaim the truth of the Gospel in all seasons to all people, no matter what situation may prevail at the time. He acknowledges that there will be times when many people do not want to hear the message but disciples are charged to persist with it no matter what they encounter.

Turning to his own personal situation of languishing in prison under sentence of death, Paul remains upbeat that he has fulfilled his duty before God and that God will honour that on the Day of Judgement, for it is based on the promises that he has given to his people.

Paul is alone with Luke in Rome, as everyone else has departed for various reasons; some genuine, some not! Paul calls on Timothy to pay one last visit to him before death, asking him to bring Mark along, as well as some personal possessions as well.

He speaks of a trial before the Emperor Nero, in which he had been deserted by his supporters but not by his Lord, who stood beside him in Spirit, producing a favourable outcome for Paul at the time. Paul notes that whatever his situation, the Lord is there for him, right on into eternity.

Paul sends his personal greetings to those he knows in Ephesus and informs Timothy of the location of some other fellow servants in the Lord, ending this, the most poignant of letters, with an upbeat blessing and benediction for his beloved son in the faith, Timothy.

#### IV. b. 2 Timothy 4:1-8 - The ultimate charge

Having just reminded Timothy of his early training in Scripture, and of the power and divine origin of Scripture: *<<But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from*

*childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work>> (2 Timothy 3:14-17), Paul exhorts him to preach this word (v.2).*

Chapter 3 ended with a reference to being competent and equipped, and vv.1-8 then describes the specific good work of leadership that Timothy is now to show himself competent to do: vv.1-2 present the charge, followed by the reason why this is necessary (vv.3-4); v.5 returns to the charge in contrast to the evil of the current situation; and in vv.6-8 Paul provides another example, heightening the seriousness of his charge with a reminder that his death is imminent.

<sup>1</sup> In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you:

## 2 Timothy 4:1

Paul places his charge to Timothy in solemn eschatological perspective by reminding him that he conducts himself in the presence of God and Christ, which resembles the call recorded by John: <<*Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus*>> (Revelation 14:12), that Christ, and not those around him, whether opponents or faithful believers, is the one who will judge him: <<*While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead*'>> (Acts 17:30-31).

Paul also exhorts the certainty that Christ will return, i.e. his appearing, which translates the Greek *epiphaneia*, indicating a glorious manifestation of the Lord.

Who is to judge the living and the dead. Peter confirmed that it will be Jesus that would be the judge: <<*He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead*>> (Acts 10:42). A day will come, a day as yet unknown: <<*Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming*>> (Matthew 24:42), a day when Christ will return to judge the whole of humankind according to what they have done in this life. For some that will be after they have died but others will be alive at that time: <<*For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever*>> (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). They will face judgement: <<*Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books*>> (Revelation 20:11-12).

Christ's kingdom is then the ultimate reality with which Timothy should be concerned: <<*Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*>> (Daniel 12:2). For those who endure like Paul, and Timothy if he heeds Paul's call to faithful service, the rewards are guaranteed by a promise: <<*In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*>> (John 14:2).

<sup>2</sup> proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.

## 2 Timothy 4:2

The charge itself is spelled out in five imperative verbs, with four more to come in v.5.

Proclaim the message refers back to Scripture: <<*All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work*>> (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and thus includes proclaiming the good news of the Gospel in a broad, biblically anchored sense.

The Gospel for Paul is not only an evangelistic presentation; the Gospel is the core message, found in the whole of Scripture; which can be applied to unbelievers, a call to faith, or to believers, a call to continue to believe in and live out the implications of this message. Thus, the way to proclaim the message is by expounding the Scriptures, with a warning to those who do not: <<*If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!*>> (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Whether the time is favourable or unfavourable or be ready in season and out of season. When it is convenient and when it is inconvenient, convince, rebuke, and encourage, which means the communicating of all Scripture, including doctrine, instruction, correction, and exhortation. King Solomon offered wise counsel: <<*In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good*>> (Ecclesiastes 11:6). These are more than just calls for a bible teacher but for those of true leadership in Christ's Gospel proclamation.

Patience in such teaching is again encouraged, as indicated earlier in the letter: <<*And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will*>> (2 Timothy 2:24-26).

<sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires,

## 2 Timothy 4:3

**The time is coming.** Since Paul exhorts Timothy on how to respond when these things occur, it is apparent that he is not referring merely to sometime in the distant future but to a situation he expects Timothy to face, or to be already facing: *<<Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth>>* (1 Timothy 4:1-3), and: *<<You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come>>* (2 Timothy 3:1).

**Itching ears** indicates a yearning for novelty that results in a pursuit of teachers who will tell people what they want to hear, to suit their own passions, instead of orthodox teachers like Timothy. This was nothing new: *<<For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of the Lord; who say to the seers, 'Do not see'; and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel>>* (Isaiah 30:9-11).

This is also a warning from Paul that Christian leaders must teach the full truth of the Gospel, not alter it in any way that may suit modern times, and not to omit parts of it, or water it down to make it sound more attractive. Disciples of Christ are called to serve, to endure, and when necessary, to suffer for the sake of the name of Jesus. A message that expects less or offers something different is not why Jesus gave himself for his people. What he did for his people must be made known, what it offers must be made known, what it cost must be made known, and what that means for those who will choose to wholeheartedly follow Jesus must also be made known - in truth. As Paul wrote elsewhere: *<<For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence>>* (2 Corinthians 2:17).

<sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.

## 2 Timothy 4:4

**Will turn away from listening to the truth** indicates that such people have closed their minds to what they should be hearing in order to follow their own guiding fictions. Such people are beyond hope for they will never hear the message when it is proclaimed to them, nor will they accept any possibility of error on their part.

Driven by their own desires, people will readily accept fanciful **myths** rather than **the truth**. This has been noted by Paul before: *<<I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith>>* (1 Timothy 1:3-4), and: *<<That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they*

*may become sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth*>> (Titus 1:13-14).

Myths, Greek *mythos*, in the NT is a negative term, characterising beliefs as fanciful, untrue, and even deceptive. Such myths were often used to excuse immoral behaviour. Paul intimates these to be powerful delusions sent by God: <<*For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned*>> (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12), but here Paul also indicates it is clearly of their own doing.

<sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

## 2 Timothy 4:5

Always be sober. Since Paul had previously written to Timothy that he should: <<*No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments*>> (1 Timothy 5:23), clearly Paul is not concerned that Timothy is likely to overindulge with alcohol; he is most likely referring to his character trait that should be an earnestly thoughtful demeanour that was beyond reproach.

Endure suffering, translates the Greek word *kakopatheson* that calls for patient endurance. Paul had already reminded Timothy of his own perseverance in suffering over a period of up to 30 years, starting in Damascus not long after Paul's conversion: <<*After some time had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night so that they might kill him; but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket*>> (Acts 9:23-25). Timothy too was called to accept persecution and suffering as part of his ministry to Christ, and to show good witness by not running from it when it came.

The work of an evangelist. The full scope of an evangelist is not made explicit here or elsewhere in Scripture. Evangelists do not normally operate in single churches but move around watering existing plants and adding new where they do not exist. Timothy had been in Ephesus for some years by this time and perhaps Paul is concerned that he may become rooted and comfortable there. Paul instructs Timothy in terms of the Gospel: <<*whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me*>> (1 Timothy 1:10b-11), <<*Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*>> (2 Timothy 1:8-10), and: <<*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David – that is my gospel*>> (2 Timothy 2:8), which certainly includes proclamation to the unconverted, i.e. the continuation of Paul's mission to the Gentiles. However, Paul does not typically distinguish between evangelism and discipleship.

Carry out your ministry fully. Paul recognised the danger to the reputation of the church, and indeed to the faith of the congregation, if its leader were not fully and wholeheartedly committed to the work he was called to do.

<sup>6</sup> As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.

## 2 Timothy 4:6

A libation is a drink offering. Paul describes his impending death in OT sacrificial language: <<Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink-offering on it, and poured oil on it>> (Genesis 35:14), <<One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening; and with the first lamb one-tenth of a measure of choice flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a drink-offering. And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain-offering and its drink-offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord>> (Exodus 29:39-41), <<And the grain-offering with it shall be two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with oil, an offering by fire of pleasing odour to the Lord; and the drink-offering with it shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin>> (Leviticus 23:13), <<Moreover, you shall offer one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink-offering with the burnt-offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb. For a ram, you shall offer a grain-offering, two-tenths of an ephah of choice flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; and as a drink-offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine, a pleasing odour to the Lord. When you offer a bull as a burnt-offering or a sacrifice, to fulfil a vow or as an offering of well-being to the Lord, then you shall present with the bull a grain-offering, three-tenths of an ephah of choice flour, mixed with half a hin of oil, and you shall present as a drink-offering half a hin of wine, as an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord>> (Numbers 15:5-10), and: <<Its drink-offering shall be one-fourth of a hin for each lamb; in the sanctuary you shall pour out a drink-offering of strong drink to the Lord. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight with a grain-offering and a drink-offering like the one in the morning; you shall offer it as an offering by fire, a pleasing odour to the Lord>> (Numbers 28:7-8), suggesting he sees himself as laying down his life for the sake of the Gospel.

However, the use of the passive voice, I am already being poured out, stresses that it is God who is acting here, for the original Greek *ede spendomai* indicates it more as I am already poured out. The fact that Paul's death is close at hand underlies the urgency of the entire letter.

The time of my departure has come is a clear reference to Paul's impending death, something that Paul seems to look on with satisfaction and contentment. It is known that it occurred in Rome before the time of Nero's death, which occurred in June AD68.

Today, churches in Rome built during the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Century Byzantine period, mark the traditional burial places of both Paul and Peter, reflecting the post-NT church tradition, which claims that both Paul and Peter died as martyrs in

Rome during the reign of Nero, in a period of persecution for all Christians, circa AD64-68, perhaps after an incarceration in the Mamertine Prison.

The Roman catacombs house early Christian burials from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century and after, and these catacombs contain some inscriptions and graffiti testifying to Christian martyrdom prior to the legitimisation of Christianity by Licinius and Constantine, through the Edict of Milan in AD313.



The image shows the inside of the Mamertine Prison in Rome, where Paul, Peter and many other Christians were probably held prior to being executed.

<sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

### 2 Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. Using athletic imagery, as is typical of Paul: <<*Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified*>> (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), and: <<*I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus*>> (Philippians 3:14), he affirms at the close of his life that he has engaged himself in the one event truly worth one's life, i.e. the Gospel mission. Some have objected that Paul's statement sounds prideful, but there is no claim of personal glory here. Paul is simply saying that he has finally completed the course God ordained for him: <<*But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the*

*Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace>> (Acts 20:24). He has done, clearly by God's grace: <<But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them – though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me>> (1 Corinthians 15:10), what he is exhorting Timothy to do in v.5, which in essence is to copy what he has seen in Paul, as one who has kept the faith: <<Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions, and my suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them>> (2 Timothy 3:10-11). God has designed the Christian life so that much of one's progress comes through imitating other Christians, imperfect though they most certainly are.*

<sup>8</sup> From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

## 2 Timothy 4:8

From now on. Paul does not look back on what has gone before: both good and bad, triumph and trials. Instead he looks forward, for he had given up everything for the privilege of knowing his Lord and Saviour: <<More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ>> (Philippians 3:8).

Crown of righteousness. One interpretation holds that this means 'the crown that consists of righteousness', referring to the final righteous state of believers. Another interpretation is 'the crown that is the reward for righteousness', that is, a victory crown, which is the meaning of Greek *stephanos*, and fits with v.7. If this crown is understood as a reward for Paul's perseverance, this would be in accord with a common theme in Paul's epistles: <<If what has been built on the foundation survives, the builder will receive a reward>> (1 Corinthians 3:14), and: <<Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ>> (Colossians 3:24), and in the NT more generally: <<Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you>> (Matthew 5:12), <<For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same?>> (Matthew 5:46), <<Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in

*secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you>> (Matthew 6:1-6), <<And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you>> (Matthew 6:16-18), <<Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward>> (Matthew 10:41-42), <<Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward>> (Hebrews 10:35), <<He considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward>> (Hebrews 11:26), and: <<Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward>> (2 John 8). It is clear, though, that the rewarded behaviour is possible only because of grace and not what is worked for: <<Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure>> (Philippians 2:12-13).*

On either interpretation, Christ will give a crown not only to Paul but to all who have longed for his appearing, meaning all true believers who set their heart on the return of Christ. It should not be forgotten that it is only a crown of righteousness because of the holiness of God that makes the one receiving it righteous.

All who have longed for his appearing. Hoping for Christ's return is an essential element of perseverance, contrast absent Demas in v.10, with: <<*while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ*>> (Titus 2:13). As the author to the Hebrews wrote: <<*And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgement, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him*>> (Hebrews 9:27-28).

This section has taught that:

1. The Lord is the righteous Judge, for his judgment is according to truth.
2. The crown of believers is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and bestowed as the reward of the saints' righteousness.
3. This crown, which believers shall wear, is laid up for them; they do not have it at present, for during this age they are but heirs; they do not have it in their possession, and yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them.
4. The righteous Judge will give it to all who love, prepare, and long for his appearing. <<'Surely I am coming soon'. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus>> (Revelation 22:20b).

## V. 2 Timothy 4:9-22 - Conclusion

Paul, in typical fashion for 1<sup>st</sup> Century letters, closes with some final particular notes concerning travel and greetings. The key themes of the letter continue to resonate even here.

### V.a. 2 Timothy 4:9-18 - Personal Instructions

Paul calls on Timothy to visit him one final time as he knows that death awaits him, informing Timothy of others who are no longer with him in Rome. Only the faithful Luke remains so Paul would like Timothy to bring Mark also, along with some personal papers and his cloak for warmth.

He warns Timothy about Alexander, whose opposition to the faith may have led to Paul's final arrest, and he speaks of appearing before Cæsar, a trial that Paul considers to have had a successful outcome, because the Lord stood with him, as he will for all eternity.

<sup>9</sup> Do your best to come to me soon, <sup>10</sup> for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

### 2 Timothy 4:9-10

In contrast to Paul, who is persevering in spite of suffering: <<*For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him*>> (2 Timothy 1:11-12), and: <<*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David – that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful – for he cannot deny himself*>> (2 Timothy 2:8-13), because he has an eternal perspective (vv.6-8), Demas abandoned Paul because he was in love with this present world.

Demas had served with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment and was included in the greetings to those in Colossæ: <<*Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you*>> (Colossians 4:14), and: <<*Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers*>> (Philemon 23-24).

<sup>11</sup> Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry.

### 2 Timothy 4:11

Only Luke is with me. Luke had been Paul's constant companion since the second missionary journey, as noted by the 'we' statements in Acts: <<*When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced*

*that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days>> (Acts 16:10-12), <<When it was decided that we were to sail for Italy, they transferred Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius>> (Acts 27:1), <<There we found believers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome>> (Acts 28:14), and: <<When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him>> (Acts 28:16).*

Get Mark. Despite his earlier disapproval of Mark, who had accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey: <<When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission, they returned from Jerusalem, taking with them John, also called Mark>> (Acts 12:25 NIV), but he left them prematurely without Paul's approval: <<Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem>> (Acts 13:13), which had led to a disagreement between Paul and Mark's uncle, Barnabas: <<After some days Paul said to Barnabas, 'Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.' Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord>> (Acts 15:36-40), Paul now desires Mark's presence and considers him useful in my ministry. Clearly, Mark had by then demonstrated his effectiveness and commitment as a missionary pioneer: <<Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions – if he comes to you, welcome him>> (Colossians 4:10), refer also to Philemon 23-24. Although Mark had once let Paul down, Paul had clearly forgiven him and reconciled Mark back to himself in doing so. Mark had also served with Peter as his companion in Rome: <<Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark>> (1 Peter 5:13). It was either while Mark was with Peter in Italy or shortly afterwards that he wrote his Gospel, refer to the Introduction to the Gospel of Mark for more information.

<sup>12</sup> I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus.

## 2 Timothy 4:12

Timothy was in Ephesus and it may have been that Paul wanted the local Asian Tychicus, who was no doubt the bearer of the letter, to take over from Timothy in the city, while he travelled to Rome. Tychicus had acted as a guard with others when Paul took the church offerings from Achaia, Macedonia and probably Asia to Jerusalem: <<He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia>> (Acts 20:4). Tychicus had also taken letters from Rome to Ephesus for Paul: <<So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord>> (Ephesians 6:21), and to

Colossæ: <<*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow-servant in the Lord*>> (Colossians 4:7), which would have included the letter to Philemon, while Paul was in a Roman prison for the first time. He was also possibly sent by Paul during his unrecorded fourth missionary journey to join Titus in Crete: <<*When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there*>> (Titus 3:12).

<sup>13</sup> When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.

## 2 Timothy 4:13

Bring the cloak. A heavy coat that would be especially important in the winter, for Roman prisons were notoriously cold and uncomfortable, and in v.21 Paul makes a request that Timothy try to arrive before winter.

Left with Carpus at Troas. There is no mention of Carpus elsewhere in Scripture. Paul did visit Troas on both his second and third missionary journeys: <<*When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us'*>> (Acts 16:7-9), and: <<*They went ahead and were waiting for us in Troas; but we sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we joined them in Troas, where we stayed for seven days*>> (Acts 20:5-6). It was probably the third journey Paul had in mind when he wrote: <<*When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia*>> (2 Corinthians 2:12-13), for Paul had left Ephesus to travel to Achaia via Macedonia. However, it is also quite probable that Paul went to Troas as part of his fourth and unrecorded journey, leaving Timothy in Ephesus, while he travelled to Macedonia: <<*I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith*>> (1 Timothy 1:3-4). This would require Timothy to travel north to Troas before setting sail for Rome in the west; a longer journey but worthwhile for the benefit the cloak and other materials would bring to Paul in the winter that lay ahead.

Books refers to scrolls made of papyrus, while parchments would be vellum sheets made of animal skins. The papyrus scrolls may have included the OT Scriptures, writing materials, official documents, or Paul's personal correspondence. It seems most likely that the parchments would have been books of some kind, or perhaps a loose collection of notes that Paul had made throughout his journeys. In any case, although Paul was expecting to die soon, he was still concerned about getting his books and parchments, so that he could continue to work for the sake of the Gospel.

Since parchments were animal skins they also referred to the material from which tents were made, the way Paul had made a living before his

imprisonment: <<After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together – by trade they were tentmakers>> (Acts 18:1-3), some commentators have suggested Paul requested such materials to help pass the time in prison but this seems unlikely.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will pay him back for his deeds. <sup>15</sup> You also must beware of him, for he strongly opposed our message.

## 2 Timothy 4:14-15

The Alexander mentioned here cannot be identified with certainty. Many believe him to be the same Alexander that Paul mentioned before: <<By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme>> (1 Timothy 1:19b:20), as one who has been excommunicated. If he is the same person, he may still have been in Ephesus causing trouble. There were many metal workers in Ephesus, most of them it seems silversmiths, and one Alexander, a Jewish convert to faith, was mentioned during the Ephesian riots that broke out in opposition to Paul's work there: <<Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed forward. And Alexander motioned for silence and tried to make a defence before the people>> (Acts 19:33). He is a possible candidate if he subsequently left the church to become one of the false teachers.

However, since he is identified as a coppersmith and there is evidence of a guild of coppersmiths in Troas, this may be a different man who lived in Troas. This would help explain his mention here after Paul has asked Timothy to collect his cloak in Troas (v.13), although, as previously noted, Paul would most likely have travelled through Troas on his way from Ephesus to Macedonia.

**It is almost certain that he was not the son of the man who carried the Cross:** <<They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus>> (Mark 15:21), nor was he the man who was part of the priestly family in Jerusalem: <<The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family>> (Acts 4:5-6).

Did me great harm. Many commentators believe that it may have been Alexander who persuaded the authorities to have Paul arrested and shipped back to Rome, although other reasons for Paul's statement are available; none known for sure.

The Lord will pay him back is a reference to what he will face on the Day of Judgement. In the meantime, Timothy is to beware of him.

<sup>16</sup> At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them!

## 2 Timothy 4:16

My first defence. This could either refer to Paul's hearing before Nero during his first period of imprisonment in circa AD62 that led to his release. Or it may refer to a preliminary hearing before Cæsar during his second imprisonment.

No one came to my support. That such a good man as Paul, with many Christian friends in Rome, should have no one to stand by him and produce a good character witness on his behalf may seem strange, especially as Paul had himself written of the Romans: <<*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world*>> (Romans 1:8), and some commentators are quite critical of them for not doing so. However, if this were indeed during his second period of Roman imprisonment then many of the Roman Christians would either have been in prison as well or would have been martyred, for the persecution had begun in AD64 in the empire's capital city. Others, it would seem, had fled rather than enduring. Matthew Henry's commentary adds: 'But men are but men'. These are those that Paul asks God not to judge against for their sin was a sin of fear rather than faithlessness.

May it not be counted against them! In his extension of forgiveness to those who had abandoned him, Paul was following the teaching and model of Jesus: <<*Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing'*>> (Luke 23:34a); the practice of Stephen, whom Paul saw die: <<*Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died*>> (Acts 7:60); and his own teaching: <<*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth*>> (1 Corinthians 13:4-6).

<sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

## 2 Timothy 4:17

But the Lord stood by me recalls the Father's promise made to his children: <<*Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.*' Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: 'Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the Lord has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it. It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed'>> (Deuteronomy 31:6-8), <<*No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you*>> (Joshua 1:5), <<*David said further to his son Solomon, 'Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the Lord is finished*>> (1 Chronicles 28:20), and: <<*Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you'*>> (Hebrews 13:5).

After Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and his fate was unsure, the Lord stood by him at that time too: <<*That night the Lord stood near him and said, 'Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome'*>> (Acts 23:11).

Jesus famously cried out the words that begin Psalm 22, where David writes: <<*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?*>> (Psalm 22:1). Jesus' words have often been misinterpreted, as the Psalm is actually a cry of victory that is found in God the Father, and had become Jesus' victory cry on the Cross, along with: <<*When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.'* Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit>> (John 19:30).

And gave me strength recalls Paul's confidence in the sufficiency of God's power and strength, which is 'made perfect in weakness': <<*Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'* So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me>> (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).

The result of God strengthening Paul is that the message of the Gospel might be fully proclaimed through Paul, so that all the Gentiles might hear it, signifying that Paul has 'finished the race' (v.7), having completed the mission and calling that God had entrusted to him.

Rescued from the lion's mouth was a common biblical metaphor for rescue from great danger: <<*Save me from the mouth of the lion! From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me*>> (Psalm 22:21), <<*My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths so that they would not hurt me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no wrong*>> (Daniel 6:22), <<*And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets – who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight*>> (Hebrews 11:32-34), and here it probably means Paul was released if it were the trial (v.16), following his first imprisonment, or if his second, that he was not put to death immediately after his trial and was therefore allowed him time to write this final letter and request one last visit from Timothy.

<sup>18</sup> The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

## 2 Timothy 4:18

The Lord will rescue me is an assurance of ultimate well-being, not an assurance of release from his present danger. Paul entirely expects execution, but even through death God will bring him safely into his heavenly Kingdom: <<*You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls*>> (Luke 21:16-19). Paul would perhaps reflect on his own words: <<'Where,

*O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'*>> (1 Corinthians 15:55), and Paul knew that the victory of death was everlasting life in the presence of his Lord Jesus.

#### V.b. 2 Timothy 4:19-22 - Final Greetings and Benediction

Paul closes this, his final extant letter, by greeting those with Timothy in Ephesus and informing him of the location of some of the other disciples that he knew so well as friends. Paul ends the letter with a heartfelt blessing for Timothy.

<sup>19</sup> Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

#### 2 Timothy 4:19

Prisca, a variant of Priscilla, and Aquila are often mentioned in connection with Paul: <<*There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them*>> (Acts 18:2), <<*After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreæ he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow*>> (Acts 18:18), writing of Apollos in Ephesus: <<*He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately*>> (Acts 18:26), Paul himself writing from Ephesus: <<*The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord*>> (1 Corinthians 16:19), and later from Corinth: <<*Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus*>> (Romans 16:3).

The household of Onesiphorus. During one of his periods of imprisonment, probably his second, Onesiphorus travelled from Ephesus to Rome and sought Paul in his prison cell in order to serve him and bring him some comforting fellowship and practical support. Refer to comments made on 2 Timothy 1:16-18.

<sup>20</sup> Erastus remained in Corinth; Trophimus I left ill in Miletus.

#### 2 Timothy 4:20

Erastus remained in Corinth, which was his home city: <<*So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he himself stayed for some time longer in Asia*>> (Acts 19:22), and: <<*Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus, greet you*>> (Romans 16:23).

Trophimus, I left ill in Miletus. Even Paul, with his apostolic gifts for healing: <<*God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that when the handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were brought to the sick, their diseases left them, and the evil spirits came out of them*>> (Acts 19:11-12), and: <<*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works*>> (2 Corinthians 12:12), was not always empowered to heal, for it was not he that had the power but the Spirit working through him. Christians today should pray earnestly for physical healing, but God is still sovereign in whether he grants healing in each specific case. It is

beyond human comprehension to understand why some healings take place and yet other people who, from a human perspective, seem to have more need of healing, fail to receive it. All believers can do is to trust in God in all circumstances.

<sup>21</sup> Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers and sisters.

### 2 Timothy 4:21

Travel in the Mediterranean was basically suspended during winter due to dangerous conditions by both land and sea. If his journey to Rome was not completed before then, Timothy would not be able to <<*come soon*>> (v.9). Paul had made recommendations to the ship's owners for his own journey to Rome as a prisoner to be suspended for winter but was not heeded: <<*Since much time had been lost and sailing was now dangerous, because even the Fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, saying, 'Sirs, I can see that the voyage will be with danger and much heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.' But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said*>> (Acts 27:9-11). The ship and its cargo were indeed destroyed in a shipwreck on Malta, but God had spared the lives of everyone for the sake of his faithful servant Paul, whose divine instruction was to speak in Rome. Paul spoke to the owners, crew and his fellow passengers: <<*I urge you now to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you."* So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told>> (Acts 27:22-25), and it was as the Lord had promised.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

### 2 Timothy 4:22

The Lord be with your spirit. Paul uses similar language to this also in his closing remarks in: <<*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen*>> (Galatians 6:18), <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*>> (Philippians 4:23), and: <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*>> (Philemon 25); and grace be with you features in other letters: <<*The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*>> (Romans 16:20), <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you*>> (1 Corinthians 16:23), <<*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you*>> (2 Corinthians 13:13), and: <<*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*>> (1 Thessalonians 5:28).

Paul would have been well aware that the Psalmist wrote: <<*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; he bestows favour and honour. No good thing does the Lord withhold from those who walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, happy is everyone who trusts in you*>> (Psalm 84:11-12).

## Epilogue

Thus the writings and the life of a truly great man and faithful servant of the Lord is ended, but not lost to history thanks to those who preserved his words and ensured that his legacy would be timeless.

He is one of whom it can be truly said that he ran the good race and fought the good fight, enduring to the very end. Had he received a proper burial with a headstone, perhaps it would have read: <<*No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*>> (Romans 8:37).