



# **To Be Found FAITHFUL**

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

**MAKING THE CHOICE TO LIVE FAITHFULLY TO OUR GOD**

**Melanie Newton**

**Joyful Walk Bible Studies**



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We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many women who served as contributors to this study guide, especially Liz Church, Lori Schweers, and Penny Semmelbeck. Without your help, we would never have accomplished this monumental task in a timely manner. Thanks also to all those who served as editors for the lessons. Your work is much appreciated.

Melanie Newton

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Melanie Newton



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We pray that you and your group will find *To Be Found Faithful* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with God.

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# To Be Found Faithful

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## Using This Study Guide

### The Basic Study

This study guide consists of 9 lessons covering the last letter in our New Testament written by the Apostle Paul—2 Timothy. The lessons are short; most are divided into two days of study for your convenience. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage covered by the lesson.

*Process of Bible Study:* Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (*Observation: what's actually there*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author's intended meaning*)
- How does this apply to me today? (*Application: making it personal*) Questions identified as **“To Live Faithfully”** lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life. You will be given opportunity to use creative means to express God's faithfulness to you in your life's journey.

### Study Enhancements

*Study Aids:* To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, five additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

### To Be Found Faithful

*Faithful = unwavering in belief, consistently loyal*

We all want those closest to us—mate, family members, friends, co-workers—to remain faithful to us. What security we feel when we know their loyalty is consistent and unwavering! Faithfulness is an important character quality.

Our God is a faithful God. He is consistently loyal to those whom He loves and who place their trust in Him. God desires that we also be faithful to Him—to be unwavering in belief and consistently loyal to Him—throughout our spiritual walk. And, our God is the One Who protects and preserves that which He has entrusted to us—He enables us to live faithfully as we choose to do so. Will you choose to be found faithful by your God each and every day?

## Discussion Group

1. **Share insights** from your personal study time. Remember, as you spend time in God's Word, that the Holy Spirit teaches you truth! Decide during the first week of your study that you will, with God's help, *set aside some time* during the week to do the study questions. The goal of Bible study is not so that you will "get the right answer;" it is so that you will get to know Jesus! It could change your life!
2. **Respect each other's insights.** Some of the questions are "share questions (*To Live Faithfully*)." The answers to these questions are your personal experiences, not strictly the same factual information for everyone. These questions have no "right" or "wrong" answers.
3. **Encourage each other.** Each woman in your group is important to the group and important to God. He can use each of you in someone else's life. Consistent attendance benefits the whole group, but come whenever you can. Don't miss because you haven't done your questions, or have missed for a while...you are a vital part of your group.
4. **Share, but do not dominate** the discussion. Some of you are more vocal than others are. And, some of you have spent more time in the Bible, so your group will benefit. But, try to share the available time we have with everyone!
5. **Celebrate unity** in Christ! We want to avoid controversial subjects such as politics, gossip and denominational differences or dissatisfactions we have with a ministry in which others present may be affected.
6. **Pray together.** Sharing one another's needs and praises is important as well. Pray for the individuals in your group through the week and follow-up on the requests. Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the group in order to gain each individual's trust and vulnerability to share.
7. **Get to know the women in your group.** Have lunch, start a playgroup, and/or visit one another. However, with the advent of so many home businesses, it is advisable that you do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes.

**ENJOY YOUR JOYFUL WALK BIBLE STUDY!**



## Overview of 2 Timothy

As a result of Paul's missionary journeys and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, local churches were formed. These believers met in homes or wherever they could gather to continue in the apostles' teachings and to live out the Christian faith among one another as well as among the unbelieving world.

When Paul visited Ephesus after his release from Roman house arrest, he discovered that during his absence, the church was plagued with all kinds of spiritual problems. The city itself, with all of its corruption and idolatry was proving to be a spiritual battleground for the congregation of believers. Having faithfully done all he could to develop and teach the truths of the gospel throughout his ministry, Paul is concerned near the end of his life that his faithful disciples would entrust these truths to other faithful Christians who would in turn entrust them to still others, and on and on. Paul viewed this body of truth as a special stewardship from God, to be managed with great care. Since this truth leads to godliness by pointing believers to Jesus Christ, it was the most valuable of treasures. The local church leaders were not only to faithfully teach truth to their congregations but also to sternly resist all attempts to undermine, pollute, or attack the true gospel.

### Pastoral Letters

Paul's three letters—1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and Titus—are called “pastoral epistles” because for the most part they are Paul's counsel to his assistants who served in the pastoral or shepherd-like function of the local churches, particularly in the regions of Ephesus and Crete. Paul left Timothy in Ephesus and Titus on the island of Crete to continue the work of teaching the truth and resisting error creeping into the young churches there. These letters we have in our Bible were written to encourage the younger pastors, reminding them to teach and train others to be faithful to the true Gospel.

Because of the corruption, idolatry and heathen worship predominant in these areas, Timothy and Titus are being reminded and encouraged by Paul to teach and train others to be faithful to the true Gospel, as he states in 2 Timothy 4:1-4:

*“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”*

The three letters address the issues facing local churches just like the one you are attending now—issues faced by the pastoral leaders as well as the members. Four major themes are woven throughout Paul's instruction to Timothy and Titus.

- 1) Teach and maintain truth and sound doctrine - guard against/avoid error
- 2) Importance of identifying leadership who will faithfully teach truth
- 3) Concern for the reputation of the church, "...so that God may not be dishonored"
- 4) Do good deeds demonstrating what you believe

These themes are especially evident in 1 Timothy and Titus, but you will see glimpses of them in 2 Timothy as well. The Joyful Walk Bible Study *Adorn Yourself with Godliness* covers 1 Timothy and Titus. This study, *To Be Found Faithful*, covers only 2 Timothy.

## Who Was Timothy?

Timothy was born and reared in Lystra in Lycaonia. His mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were devout Jews who became believers in Christ (Acts 16:1, 2 Timothy 1:15). Timothy's father was a Greek who evidently did not convert to Christianity. Timothy first heard Paul preach the gospel on Paul's first visit to Lystra. Paul then became a spiritual father to Timothy, and he accompanied Paul on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey.

Six of Paul's epistles include Timothy in the salutations (2 Corinthians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1 and Philemon 1). Paul was so fond of Timothy that in his last message, he requested that Timothy join him during his final days of imprisonment (2 Timothy 1:4, 4:9, 21).

On Paul's 2nd missionary journey, Timothy helped to establish churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (Acts 16:1 – 17:14). When Paul left Berea to go to Athens he left Timothy and Silas behind, but later sent word for them to join him (Acts 17:13-15). Timothy was sent to Thessalonica to strengthen the faith of believers there (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2). He also traveled with Paul to Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Jerusalem, Antioch and back to Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19:1). While Paul remained at Ephesus, he sent Timothy and Erastus to Greece to minister to churches there (Acts 19:22, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10). But before Paul left Ephesus, Timothy rejoined him (Romans 16:21, 2 Corinthians 1:1). They then traveled to Macedonia, Achaia and back to Macedonia and on to Asia (Acts 20:1-5).

The Bible does not mention Timothy during Paul's two-year imprisonment at Caesarea. After Paul's release (around AD 62), Timothy and he traveled to Ephesus where Timothy was left to care for the church. Paul wrote 1 Timothy around AD 64 from Rome or Macedonia.

The most tender and moving of Paul's letters was his last one to Timothy. He was a prisoner in a Roman dungeon when he wrote 2 Timothy, approximately AD 67. He knew he had a short time to live, so the letter is his spiritual last will and testament – his "dying wish" – to friend and co-worker, Timothy.

The area surrounding Ephesus probably had a number of young churches, not just one, with each church led by an elder. Timothy was sent as an "apostolic representative", that is, as Paul's substitute. He was not appointed as an elder, bishop or overseer of the churches. He had the authority to order worship (1 Timothy 2:1-15)

and appoint elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-3).

So what happened to Timothy? The Bible does not reveal any details of the death of Timothy. According to *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, which was written several centuries later (originally published in 1563), Timothy remained in Ephesus until AD 97. During a pagan celebration of a feast called "Catagogian," Timothy severely reproved the people in the procession for their ridiculous idolatry. This of course antagonized the party-goers who beat him with clubs "in so dreadful a manner that he expired of the bruises two days later."

## To Be Found Faithful

Jesus told a parable to His disciples in Matthew 25. A man entrusts some treasure to his servants while he goes away. When he comes back, he evaluates how faithful the servants were with the treasure. The master's response to the two faithful servants is no doubt familiar to you,

*"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23)*

Paul considered the task of spreading and preserving the gospel message a treasure entrusted to him by the Lord Jesus. While a prisoner in a Roman dungeon (~AD 67), Paul reflects on his life, which he viewed as a sacrifice to God. Paul knew he would be executed soon. The time for his departure had come. He could confidently say he had been faithful to God and what God asked Paul to do with his life. Thus Paul could face death calmly, knowing that he would be rewarded by His Lord Jesus Christ.

*"For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." 2 Timothy 4:6-8*

The definition of faithful is "unwavering in belief, consistently loyal." We all want those closest to us—mate, family members, friends, co-workers—to remain faithful to us. What security we feel when we know their loyalty is consistent and unwavering! Faithfulness is an important character quality.

Our God is a faithful God. He is consistently loyal to those whom He loves and who place their trust in Him. God desires that we also be faithful to Him—to be unwavering in belief and consistently loyal to Him—throughout our spiritual walk. And, our God is the One Who protects and preserves that which He has entrusted to us—He enables us to live faithfully as we choose to do so.

*Will you choose to be found faithful by your God each and every day?*



## Lesson 1: Introduction

### Background

The Great Fire in Rome occurred in 64 A.D. Nero himself burned the city. Though an inhuman brute, he was a great builder. It was in order to build a new and grander Rome that he set fire to the city, and fiddled in glee at the sight of it. The people suspected him; and historians have commonly regarded it as a fact that he was the perpetrator of the crime. In order to divert suspicion from himself he accused the Christians of burning Rome.

Nero's persecution of Christians is the direct background of 2 Timothy, and was the persecution that brought Paul to his martyrdom, and, possibly Peter as well. Our source of information is the Roman historian Tacitus. He knew that the Christians did not burn Rome. But somebody had to be made the scapegoat for the Emperor's crime. Here was a new and despised sect of people, mostly from the humbler walks of life, without prestige or influence, many of them slaves. Nero accused them of burning Rome, and ordered their punishment.

In and around Rome multitudes of Christians were arrested and put to death in the cruelest ways. Crucified. Or tied in skins of animals, and thrown into the arena to dogs, for the entertainment of the people. Or thrown to the wild beasts. Or tied to the stakes in Nero's gardens, pitch poured over their bodies, and set afire as human torches to light Nero's gardens at night, while he drove around in his chariot, gloating over the agonies of his victims.

It was in the wake of this persecution that Paul was re-arrested and brought back to Rome. This time as a criminal, by the agents of Rome, not on some technical violation of Jewish law as before (when arrested by the Jews). We do not know specifically what crime he was accused of, but he was the leader of the people being punished for burning Rome. Whatever the crime was, his trial had proceeded far enough that he knew there was no hope of escape. While waiting in the Roman dungeon for the "time of his departure," he wrote this last letter to Timothy, his "beloved son" and co-worker, encouraging him to be faithful, in spite of everything, as a minister of Christ, and to hurry on to Rome before winter.

In that dark hour is one of the noblest passages of Scripture. Paul would be executed for a crime of which he was not guilty, his friends forsaking him and leaving him to suffer alone. The cause for which he had given his life was being blotted out in the West by persecution, and in the East by apostasy. Yet there is no hint of regret that he had given his life to the service of Christ and the Church. No hint of doubt that the Church, though now apparently suffering defeat, would eventually be triumphant. And no doubt that the moment of his execution he would go straight to the arms of HIM whom he had loved and served so devotedly. This Epistle is the exultant cry of a dying conqueror. (Adapted from *Halley's Bible Handbook*)



## Day Two Study

One of the themes in Paul's pastoral letters (those written to Timothy and Titus) is "teach and maintain truth and sound doctrine; guard against/avoid error." This theme really breaks down into positive vs. negative.

3. Let's start with the positive. Read the following verses. What does Paul keep emphasizing?

- 2 Timothy 1:13-14—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:2—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:15—
  
- 2 Timothy 3:14-17
  
- 2 Timothy 4:2,5—

4. What specifically is the truth or sound doctrine? See also Romans 1:1-5a.

- 2 Timothy 1:8-11—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:1—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:8—

5. Now for the negative aspect of this theme. Read the following verses to see what we are supposed to do when we encounter error.

- 2 Timothy 2:14—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:16-18—
  
- 2 Timothy 2:23—

6. Read 2 Timothy 3:2-7 and 4:3-4. Where does error lead?

7. Once again, Paul emphasizes over and over a common message. In your own words, what is Paul teaching them to guard against...and why?

8. ***To Live Faithfully:***

- Certainly you can agree that if Paul made this many comments on the same subject, it should be taken seriously. What could happen to the local church ... therefore you ... therefore the world ... if we do not seriously and energetically apply Paul's emphatic message to Timothy and the church?
  
- What specific actions can you or do you take in your daily life to ensure that you don't wander away from God's truth or sound doctrine?



## Lesson 2: Serving Christ

### *2 Timothy 1:1-7*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:1-7. What words and phrases in this passage reveal the depth of Paul's relationship with Timothy?

2. Why do you think their relationship is so meaningful?

3. ***To Live Faithfully:***

- Have you ever had a spiritual parent or mentor like Paul? If so, who, and how did that person influence you?

- Have you ever had a spiritual child or trainee like Timothy? If so, who, and what do you do to mentor him/her?

4. Reread 2 Timothy 1:1-7. In verse 3, Paul compares himself with his forefathers. Who were Paul's forefathers? (See Exodus 3:15, Acts 3:13).
  
5. What sort of spiritual heritage did they leave Paul? (See Hebrews 11, especially verses 17-40, but read the entire chapter if at all possible).
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. According to 2 Timothy 1:5, who were Timothy's primary spiritual mentors as he was growing up? What gift did they impart to him?

***Historical Insight:*** A Mother's Legacy—Eunice (v. 5) was Jewish, but apparently her father was not very orthodox: he violated one of the clear commands of the Law in arranging a match for his daughter with a Gentile (Acts 16:1). Later, when Timothy was born, he wasn't circumcised (16:3). So it seems that neither Eunice's father nor husband were observant of Judaism. But Eunice was. Paul praised her for her "genuine faith," which she shared in common with Lois, her mother (2 Timothy 1:5). Eunice imparted that faith to her son, Timothy, and more than anyone else equipped him for a lifetime of usefulness for God. Eunice is an encouragement for every woman faced with the daunting task of nurturing the spiritual life of her children, especially if she can't count on the help of a strong male. Eunice may have had no formal religious education and little encouragement from her family, except for Lois. But she had two crucial things going for her that offer hope for mothers today—the inherent power of being a mother and the dynamic power of a loving God. (*The Word in Life Study Bible*, p. 746)

7. **To Live Faithfully:** What are you doing to impart a spiritual legacy, or heritage, to your children (grandchildren, nieces/nephews etc.)? Is this process a “team effort” in your family? Explain.

### Day Two Study

8. Read 2 Timothy 1:1-7. According to verse 5, we know that Timothy possessed sincere faith, which is a precious treasure in a church leader. Because of this faith, what was Paul encouraging Timothy to do with his God given gift (his ability for ministry and leadership)?
9. **To Live Faithfully:** Paul is encouraging you to use the gifts God has given you also. How are you using your abilities and experience for serving Christ?
10. Read 2 Timothy 1:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:10. Describe Timothy’s weakness. Of what does Paul remind him in verse 7? (See also Romans 8:15.)

11. Discuss the nature of God's spirit within us. Using any cross references or commentaries available, define these aspects of the Spirit's work within us:

- Power—
  
- Love—
  
- Discipline [self discipline (NIV) or self-control (NET)]—

12. Why are these qualities so important for those who want to serve Christ with their lives?

13. If God's spirit within us is one of power, love, and discipline, what should (or could) characterize our response towards life's hardships? Glean the following verses for your answer:

- 2 Corinthians 12:9-10—
  
- Philippians 4:13, 19—

***Think About It:***  
"Craving, cringing, panicky fear is one of the devil's greatest weapons. I have a better chance of solving problems if I deal with them in a spirit of power, love and a sound mind." (Tim Stevenson, *Mind Games* sermon, November 14, 1999)

- Hebrews 4:15-16—

14. **To Live Faithfully:** What specific fears or inabilities tend to get in the way of your service to Christ? How can you apply 2 Timothy 1:7 to your life?



## Lesson 3: Battling for the Truth

### *2 Timothy 1:7-18*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 1:7-18. What is the earnest counsel Paul gives Timothy in verse 8?
2. What pressures might pull at Timothy to be ashamed of the Gospel or of Paul?
3. What kept Paul from being ashamed of himself? (See v. 12 and Romans 1:16).
4. In 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Paul outlines the gospel he has received from God and entrusted to Timothy. Timothy was not to be ashamed of this gospel and was to take his share of suffering for it. What key words and phrases describe this gospel?





8. What motivated Paul to endure suffering as awful as imprisonment (v.12)?
9. **To Live Faithfully:** Think of a time in your life that tested your physical or emotional endurance. What kept you going?

10. According to verse 14, what “treasure” is Timothy supposed to guard/protect? (See 1 Timothy 1:11 and Titus 1:3).

11. How can we guard/protect the Gospel today?

12. Read 2 Timothy 1:15-18. In what ways did Paul’s friends from the province of Asia react to his imprisonment?

**Scriptural Insight:** In 2 Timothy 1:12, the phrase “what I have entrusted to Him” literally means “my deposit.” What deposit of Paul’s is God supposed to guard or protect? Commentators differ on this. Some understand this to mean that, because Paul was in prison and facing death, (1) God would protect the teaching of Jesus Christ through others such as Timothy. Or, (2) that God would guard Paul’s deposit of faith in Christ until His second coming. The deposit could also be (3) the souls of those converted through Paul’s preaching. Whatever Paul meant, we are sure of his absolute conviction that God was in total control.

**Think About It:** This was one of the saddest things in Paul's life. In Ephesus, where he had done his greatest work, and almost turned the whole city to Christ, the false teachers had so gotten the upper hand that they were able to make capital of Paul's arrest to turn the church against him, at the time of all times when he needed their love and sympathy. (*Halley's Bible Handbook*, p.585)

13. Why do you think there was such a difference in how people responded?
14. What examples do you see of people like Onesiphorus, Phygelus and Hermogenes in today's Christianity?
15. **To Live Faithfully:** Choose one missionary (someone you know or someone your church supports) and pray this week that the grace of God will sustain them. Pray also for all others who are suffering for the sake of Jesus Christ in the world.

## Lesson 4: Standing Up for the Gospel

### *2 Timothy 2:1-13*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:1-13. In verse 1, what is Paul urging Timothy to do?
2. Why do you think Paul tells Timothy to be strong in “grace,” rather than something like knowledge?
3. How could God’s grace help Timothy pass on the gospel of Jesus Christ?
4. To whom is Timothy supposed to entrust the gospel?
5. Why do you think faithfulness (or reliability) is more important to Paul than position or influence?
6. **To Live Faithfully:** Do you consider yourself a faithful or reliable person who can “guard” the truth of Jesus Christ and teach it to others? If so, what steps will you take or opportunities will you seek to do this in your life?

Read 2 Timothy 2:3-7. As Timothy preached and taught, he would face suffering, but he should also be able to endure (verse 3). In verses 4-6, Paul uses 3 vivid examples to motivate his beloved son Timothy, illustrating the attitude that Christ's followers must have through suffering. The first example is that of a soldier.

### ***The Soldier***

7. What are the characteristics of a good soldier?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. In what ways does a believer “endure” or “suffer” hardship in the same manner as a soldier?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. “Civilian affairs” (verse 4) is also translated “affairs of everyday life”. Give some examples of these. How can such affairs “entangle” a Christian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How can we avoid such entanglement?

### ***The Athlete***

11. Paul then turned to the image of the competitor in the Greek games (verse 5). How does being an athlete relate to being a Christian?

## Day Two Study

Read 2 Timothy 2:3-7. Paul continues his analogy of the Christian life with contemporary examples.

### ***The Farmer***

12. The third example is that of a farmer. What does laboring have to do with being a Christian worker?

13. ***To Live Faithfully:*** Read the following paragraph.

***Focus on the Meaning:*** John Stott, in his Bible study guide, states that by these first three metaphors that illustrate the duties of the Christian worker, Paul isolated three aspects of wholeheartedness that should be found in Timothy and in us: The *dedication* of a good soldier, the law-abiding *obedience* of a good athlete and the painstaking *labor* of a good farmer. Without these we cannot expect results. There will be no victory for the soldier unless he gives himself to his soldiering, no wreath for the athlete unless he keeps the rules and no harvest for the farmer unless he toils at his farming.

Considering this, how would you describe:

- Your dedication to Jesus Christ? What gets in the way?
  
- Your obedience to Christ? What tempts you *not* to obey?
  
- Your laboring for Christ? What sidetracks you?

Pray that God will help you live out the standards for a Christian worker you have just studied.

14. Read 2 Timothy 2:8-13. Paul's own example should also motivate Timothy. How would you describe Paul's attitude towards his circumstances in verses 9-13?

15. What convictions enable and motivate Paul to have such an attitude? (See also 2 Corinthians 4:15).

16. **To Live Faithfully:** What are you learning about the cost of following Jesus? Are your expectations of the Christian life different now than when you first became a believer? How so?

**Think About It:** "...Paul could confidently endure everything knowing that God remained in control...A woman endures the pains of childbirth for the sake of her child. We must never think of suffering as some form of work of merit to earn our salvation or to work off our guilt, nor as some form of punishment from God. Although Paul experienced very real pain as he spread the gospel, he focused on the results of his suffering—others were finding salvation in Christ." (*Life Application Bible Commentary*)

**Think About It:** God is faithful to his children, and although we may suffer great hardships in this life, God promises that someday we will live eternally with Him. What will this involve? It means believers will live in Christ's kingdom, and that we will share in the administration of that kingdom. This truth comforted Paul as he went through suffering and death. Are you facing hardships? Don't turn away from God—focus on your wonderful future with Him. (*Life Application Bible Commentary*)

## Lesson 5: Watch Your Words

### *2 Timothy 2:14-26*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26. In these verses, Paul continues to deal with the issue of false teachers. These people caused strife and division within the new church by their meaningless quarreling over unimportant details that focused not on Scripture, but on their own ideas. Paul reemphasizes to Timothy not to be “drawn in” to debates with these people. In the following verse, discuss Paul’s instruction to Timothy regarding wise and productive speech—what to avoid and why:
  - Verse 14—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Verse 16—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Verse 23—
2. Quarreling about words is still a major problem today. Churches split over nonessentials, and many innocent people are attacked verbally. Why do you think some Christians engage so readily, perhaps even eagerly, in such negative talk?
3. What is the difference between quarreling about words and standing up to false teaching?

4. Although Paul instructs Timothy not to engage in quarrelsome talk, he realizes that it will surface within the church. In verses 24-26, what attitude is Timothy to have towards those who oppose him, and what actions should he take?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why is having such an attitude so important, according to verses 25-26?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. In verse 26, Paul uses the phrase, “come to their senses,” which could also be translated “return to soberness.”
  - Under whose influence are quarrelsome people operating?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Do you think they realize this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - What is God’s desire for them? (See also 1 Timothy 2:3-4 and Titus 2:14.)

**Think About It:** Satan is at the root of all false teaching and division in the church. He knows the strength of a unified church and fears it. So he creates a “trap”—money, fame, pride of feeling intellectual—to draw people away from the faith and to false teaching. But there is hope—escape is possible. (*Life Application Bible Commentary*)

7. **To Live Faithfully:** Consider your words and actions (in general). Do you think they promote unity or division within your church? Ask someone you love and trust to help you evaluate this. Pray with that person that God will continue to bring you into a knowledge of Him, that your words and actions would bring encouragement to those around you.



## Day Two Study

8. In 2 Timothy 2:15, how are we to present ourselves to God?
  
9. How can we handle God's Word correctly? Incorrectly? What does Paul's use of the term "diligent (NIV)" or "make every effort (NET)" imply?
  
10. **To Live Faithfully:** Think of someone you know who knows how to correctly handle the Word of Truth. How did he/she cultivate this ability? (If you don't know, you might ask.) Discuss at least one step you can take to bring you closer to the goal of correctly handling God's Word.
  
11. Read 2 Timothy 2:20. What types of "vessels" or "articles" are present together in a large house? What purposes do they serve?

**Scriptural Insight:** The identification of the vessels Paul mentions is a source of debate among commentators. Some believe Paul is clearly referring to true and false teachers within the church, while others believe they are persons within the church at various stages of spiritual development. Whatever Paul specifically meant, we know God can use every "vessel" within his church to accomplish His will.

12. Paul emphasized to Timothy that “cleansed” vessels (commentators disagree on exactly what the vessels are cleansed of—false teaching, godless chatter, moral impurity are all possibilities) will be used by God for honor and for noble purposes. According to verse 21, what three qualities characterize such a “vessel”?

13. ***To Live Faithfully:***

- How can you be a vessel that Jesus can “set apart” and use for his noblest purposes?
  
- If your life has NOT been one used for God’s noble purposes, God still welcomes you with open, loving arms. If you haven’t already, repent (turn away) from your independence from God and offer Him your life. He will take your willing heart and renew you through the Holy Spirit, redirect your life, and use it for His glory and honor!

## Lesson 6: In the Last Days

### 2 Timothy 3:1-9

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-9. What does 2 Timothy 3:1 say the last days will be like?

Read the information below then answer the questions that follow.

**Scriptural Insight:** As in his previous letter, Paul warned Timothy about the collapse predicted for the last days (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3), a term which includes the entire period between the first century and Christ's return. During this interim, according to the prediction, the world will see terrible times of societal degeneration. Paul gave an extraordinary list (cf. Romans 1:28-32) of 19 general characteristics believers should expect. Though these characteristics are cataloged under the auspices of a prediction about "the last days", it is clear that Paul considered them to be already present in Ephesus. Though they would intensify with time, Timothy had to beware of such people and have nothing to do with them. No doubt Paul had in mind here Timothy's official associations, since he has already instructed Timothy to be kind to everyone (cf. 1 Timothy 2:24). (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 756)

2. Imagine for a few moments that you are a person who has been transported to America from a foreign country, and you've only had information from TV news to tell you about the people here. What kind of impression would you have of "our days"?
3. Read 2 Timothy 3:2-5. Do you think that our days could be considered difficult? Why or why not?

It would be easy to skim over the list of negative behaviors in 2 Timothy 3:2-5, assuming that Paul is describing an especially depraved person, certainly not any one of us. However, we can learn a lot about what we ourselves are like, and what God desires us to be, if we take time to evaluate these negative behaviors.

4. Choose several from the selected ones listed below (drawn from the NIV), consider what would be the opposite of this behavior. Read the verses provided to gain insight from God's Word about this behavior. Add other verses that apply.

<b>Negative Behavior</b>	<b>Opposite of This</b>	<b>What God's Word Says</b>
Boastful		James 4:14-16—
Proud		1 Peter 5:5—
Disobedient to parents		Ephesians 6:1—
Unthankful		1 Thess. 5:18—
Unforgiving		Luke 11:4—
Without self-control		Galatians 5:22,23—
Malicious gossips		Proverbs 16:23-24—
Slanderers		Proverbs 17:27—

5. Reread 2 Timothy 3:2-5. The first two vices and the last one of verse 4 all point to wrong love corrupting potentially good things.
  - What should people love (verse 4)?
  
  - What do these people love (verses 2, 4)?
  
6. Read 2 Timothy 3:5-7. How do these people seek to influence others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. Certainly television wasn't even any kind of possibility in Paul's time, but how might TV or radio programs, etc, fit this description (from 2 Timothy 3:6-7)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. **To Live Faithfully:** How then can we deal with the temptation of immoral television or radio programming, both for our children and for ourselves?

## Day Two Study

9. How are the women in 2 Timothy 3:6-7 described? Write out the descriptions using your own words.
10. In what kind of situations do you think people are “always learning but never able to acknowledge, or come to the knowledge of, the truth”?
11. **To Live Faithfully:** How might you be able to come alongside another woman, who has some or all of the tendencies described above, and help her to be stronger? What can you do if she doesn't want to change?
12. Read 2 Timothy 3:8-9. According to 2 Timothy 3:9, what 2 things will be evident in the lives of those who oppose the truth?

**Scriptural Insight:** Wherever people accept the truth of God and begin practicing it, counterfeits soon surface. That's what Paul found at Ephesus, and what he warns Timothy about (v. 8-9). He mentions two characters, Jannes and Jambres, whose names mean “he who seduces” and “he who is rebellious”. Neither name is in the Old Testament, but Jewish legend held that these were the names of 2 Egyptian magicians







## Lesson 7: An Example of Godliness

### *2 Timothy 3:10-17*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Looking first at 2 Timothy 3:10-11, list the areas of life in which Timothy “followed” Paul.
  
2. In light of verses 10-13, why do you think Paul might be reminding Timothy of how he had followed Paul in the past (verses 14-15)?
  
3. **To Live Faithfully:**
  - Who would you say you “follow” in their teaching? In their conduct?
  
  - Why have you chosen that person (or persons) to follow?
  
  - Whom in your life are you currently intentionally discipling or modeling the Christian life through example? Explain.

4. The last two areas in 2 Timothy 3:10-11 are “persecutions” and “sufferings.” According to verse 11, what does Paul say God did for him during this time of trouble?

**Scriptural Insight:** Paul refers to what he endured in his early days as a missionary. Timothy probably met Paul when the apostle first arrived in Lystra (Acts 14:8-23). Some Jews had already run Paul and Barnabas out of Pisidian Antioch and Iconium for preaching about Jesus (Acts 13:13-14:7), but Lystra warmly welcomed the missionaries until Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrived. The Jews persuaded the Lystrians to turn against Paul and Barnabas. Then the crowd stoned (Paul) and dragged Paul’s body outside the city, presuming he was dead. But Paul survived, and after spending some time in Derbe he returned to strengthen the disciples in Lystra. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” Paul reminded the Lystrian believers (Acts 14:22). These memories of when Timothy and Paul first met must have been fond and vivid for both men. (*2 Timothy Life Change Bible Study*, pg.60)

5. Read 2 Timothy 3:12. Who does this verse say will be persecuted?
6. Why is this so? Look up the following verses to help you answer this question.
- 2 Timothy 3:13—
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - John 15:18-25—

7. **To Live Faithfully:** Have you experienced persecution in any form for your faith? Explain.

8. **To Live Faithfully:** How can we best respond to persecution or difficulties in our Christian walk? Read the following verses and write out in your own words what these verses are saying to you. Summarize what you learn for yourself and your life.

- James 1:2-4—
  
- 1 Peter 1:6-7—
  
- Romans 5:3-5—

*Summary:*

### Day Two Study

9. Read 2 Timothy 3:14. Paul also wants Timothy to draw strength from what he has “learned and become convinced of,” according to this verse. What do you think is the difference between what you have “learned” and what you have “become convinced of”? Refer back to 2 Timothy 3:6-7 from last week’s study as well as looking at James 1:5-6 to help you think about your answer to this question.

10. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

- Read the information below.

**From the Greek:** “Inspired by God” in NASB, RSV. The Greek word *theopneustos* is composed of *theo*, meaning “God”, and *pneustos*, which refers to “breathing, blowing, or sending forth one’s spirit”. In the Bible, the breath, wind, or Spirit of God is closely connected with His creative Word and inspired speaking. (Geneses 1:2-3, 1 Kings 19:11-13, Acts 2:1-4). When God breathed His Spirit into men so that they might be His spokesmen (prophets, writers of Scripture), He did not take over their minds or wills but somehow guided them to speak His truth as they gave Him their attention. (*2 Timothy Life Change Bible Study*, p. 63)

- Read 1 Kings 19:11-13 for just one illustration of *theopneustos*. What happens in this passage?

11. According to 2 Timothy 3:16-17, how is “God-breathed” Scripture useful or profitable to us? List the ways given in these verses, and explain them in your own words.

12. From verse 17, what is the ultimate goal of using God’s Word for these purposes?





## Lesson 8: No Regrets

### *2 Timothy 4:1-8*

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Paul's final words to Timothy in this letter carried a particularly solemn charge (command or injunction). According to verse 1, who is witnessing this charge?
2. What key facts does Paul cite about Christ?
3. How would reading these facts motivate Timothy to carry out Paul's charge?
4. The content of Paul's charge represents the central thrust of every minister's task. First and foremost, what was Timothy to do? When was Timothy to do this?
5. As he preached the gospel message, Timothy would undoubtedly come up against false teaching, believers who are willingly sinning, and those sincerely trying to grow in the faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. How is a minister of Christ to deal with all of these people, and what should characterize his interaction with them?

6. **To Live Faithfully:**

- What responsibilities and tasks do you administer that require great patience and instruction?
  
- What happens when you carry them out in anger and frustration?
  
- How does Galatians 5:22-23 apply here?

Reread 2 Timothy 4:1-8. Paul's continuing concern about false teaching was a catalyst in issuing such a charge (v. 1-2) to Timothy. When Paul spoke about false teaching, he usually focused on the evil intentions of the false teachers. However, false teachers could not flourish if they had no audience.

7. This time, who was Paul faulting? How were they willing participants in their own deception?

8. Why is it so important to maintain sound doctrine and refute false teachings?

9. In your opinion, what is it about the truth (sound doctrine) that propels people away from it?



10. In what way do people take comfort in their “own doctrine”?

11. **To Live Faithfully:** Do you personally know anyone like those described in verses 3-4? Or, on a deeper level, was this ever a portrait of you? If so, how have you changed? To what do you attribute this change?

### Day Two Study

12. Read 2 Timothy 4:1-8 again. Paul follows his discussion of wayward people (v.3-4) with a strong contrasting “but you” for his disciple Timothy. What earnest instruction does Paul give Timothy in verse 5?

13. Why do you think Paul felt it necessary at this point to give such instruction to Timothy?

14. After exhorting Timothy once again to be faithful and strong (v.5), Paul reflects on his life, which he viewed as a sacrifice to God (v.6). Paul knew he would be executed soon. The time for his departure had come. What had he accomplished in order to claim that he had fought the good fight and finished the race?

**Scriptural Insight:** A drink offering consisted of wine poured out on an altar as a sacrifice to God (see Genesis 35:14; Exodus 29:41; Numbers 28:24). (*Life Application Bible Commentary*)

15. What do you think it means to “keep the faith”?

16. In Whose strength was he able to “keep the faith”? (See also 2 Timothy 1:7, 2:1.)

17. Why do you think Paul compared the task of “keeping the faith” to a “good fight” and a “race”?

18. Looking at verse 8:

- What reward is Paul anticipating?
- Who will bestow this reward?
- To whom will this reward be given?

19. **To Live Faithfully:** As he neared the end of his life, Paul could confidently say he had been faithful to God’s call. Thus he faced death calmly, knowing that he would be rewarded by Christ. Is your life preparing you for death? Do you share Paul’s confident expectation of meeting Christ? How do Paul’s words challenge your life?

## Lesson 9: Stand Firm to the End

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

#### Day One Study

1. Read 2 Timothy 4:9-22. In Paul's final words we get an intimate glimpse of his character, needs, and humanity. Although Paul had the assurance of eternal life and confidence in Christ, loneliness and isolation had hit him with devastating impact. What seems to be a major catalyst of Paul's loneliness in prison?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Demas (v. 10) was one of Paul's close associates. Read Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24.
  - Why did Demas abandon Paul?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - What could the world have to offer Demas that would cause him to neglect Paul in his time of need?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Looking at verses 14-15:
  - How had Alexander the metalworker affected Paul and his ministry?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - What is Paul's exhortation to Timothy regarding this man?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. **To Live Faithfully:** Describe a time when you felt abandoned by your family and/or friends. What caused them to desert you? How did their neglect affect you?

**Historical Insight:** In 2 Timothy 4:16 Paul talks about his “first defense.” This was most likely a preliminary hearing (leading up to his present trial) at which advocates for the accused person were usually heard. The Roman legal system allowed for several steps in the prosecution of an accused criminal. But in Paul’s case, no one came to speak in his defense or to stand by in support; everyone had deserted him (see also 2 Timothy 1:15). Under emperor Nero, it was dangerous to be a Christian in Rome. Identifying themselves with the courageous and outspoken apostle Paul would almost certainly result in agonizing death.

5. Paul seemed to understand the fear which gripped the Roman Christians. What was his response towards these friends and companions who abandoned him as well as those who opposed him (verses 14, 16)? Compare this to Jesus’ words as He agonized during his crucifixion (Luke 23:34).

6. **To Live Faithfully:** Paul exemplified one of the toughest tasks a Christian may have to do—to leave his/her hurt with the Lord. When others oppose you and undercut your authority, leadership, or even your friendship, what is your natural response? How could this natural response damage you more than the person inflicting such pain?

7. **To Live Faithfully:** Read Psalms 62:12 and Romans 12:17-20.

- What do these scriptures tell us about the response we should have towards those who hurt us?

- To whom are all people accountable at the end of our lives for our actions on this earth?
- How does this motivate you to bring your emotions in line with Biblical truth (i.e., following Paul's example) when you've been deeply wounded by someone?

### Day Two Study

8. Read verse 2 Timothy 4:16-18. During that hour of darkness, Who stood with Paul and strengthened him? For what reason did the Lord infuse Paul with strength?

***From the Greek:***  
"Strengthened" comes from the Greek word *endunamai* which literally means to "infuse with strength."

9. How did Jesus both warn and encourage his apostles about such times? Read these verse:
- Matthew 10:17-20—
  - Mark 13:9-11—
  - Acts 18:9-10—
  - Acts 23:11—

10. What was the temporary outcome for Paul after this hearing?

**Focus on the Meaning:** “Delivered out of the lion’s mouth (v.18)” Some have seen this as a reference to Nero throwing Christians to the lions in the Coliseum, or perhaps to Satan (for a parallel, see 1 Peter 5:8). More likely, Paul used a common biblical metaphor describing deliverance from extreme danger (see, for example, Psalm 22:2; Daniel 6:22). Paul knew he wouldn’t get out of prison alive, though he was experiencing a temporary reprieve due to a delay in the Roman judicial system. (*Life Application Bible Commentary*)

11. According to verse 18:

- How does Paul view his impending death?
- Where will the Lord bring Paul?
- How will He bring him? What do you think this means?

12. Paul’s confidence in and appreciation of God is absolute, despite the cruelest of circumstances. Just as Paul praised God in life, what does he write in the face of death?

13. **To Live Faithfully:** When adversity strikes, what is your “proclamation” towards God? Do you ever search for God’s purpose amidst your pain, or do you usually try and get out of the situation on your terms? Pray that God will continually help you to respond more like Paul: to be aware of His presence, draw from His strength, and be yielded to His purpose for you.

**Think About It:** Every time God allows us to be in difficulty, it is a marvelous opportunity to give witness and testimony. The most powerful witness is from people in pain, still walking in faith with Jesus Christ...theirs is the kind of stalwart, courageous witness that shouts and proclaims God is real. (Charles Stanley)

### The Rest of the Story...

Here is more information about Paul’s associates mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:9-21:

- Crescens: Nothing is known about him, except he was dispatched elsewhere by Paul for God’s service.
- Titus: Close friend who aided Paul in two crises and pastored the church at Crete.
- Luke: The “beloved physician”, accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys and had shared the first Roman imprisonment with him (Colossians 4:14; Philippians 24). He wrote the books of Acts and Luke.
- Mark: Although Mark had been a deserter on the first missionary journey, he was later restored. Once considered untrustworthy (Acts 15:36-40), he was now helpful to Paul in his ministry.
- Tychicus: A close companion of Paul (Acts 20:4) he carried Paul’s letters to the Ephesians, the Colossians, and Titus (see Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7 and Titus 3:12).
- Alexander the metalworker (or coppersmith-NAS): May be the same man named in Acts 19:33-34, or the person in 1 Timothy 1:20. But since the name Alexander was common, no one can be certain.
- Priscilla and Aquila: The well-known couple who were fellow Christian leaders with whom Paul had lived and worked (see Acts 18:2-3, 18, 26; Romans 16:3; 1

Corinthians 16:19). While in Corinth, they had made tents together with Paul. They used the freedom and the money garnered from their tentmaking to carry out a ministry of hospitality and teaching in various places. They taught Apollos in Ephesus.

- Onesiphorus: Philemon's slave whom Paul had met and led to the Lord when he ran away from Rome. He had visited and encouraged Paul in jail during this final imprisonment.
- Erastus: The city treasurer of Corinth whom Paul sent with Timothy into Macedonia. He was one of Paul's trusted companions and Timothy's close friend (Acts 19:22).
- Trophimus: Another companion and friend of Paul and Timothy (Acts 20:4; 21:29). he accompanied Paul during his third missionary journey.
- Linus: May have been the first bishop of Rome following the martyrdom of Peter and Paul.



## Paul's Second Letter to Timothy

*The following is the New International Version of 2 Timothy.*

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thank God, whom I serve, as my forefathers did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes.

May the Lord show mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. On the contrary, when he was in Rome, he searched hard for me until he found me. May the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! You know very well in how many ways he helped me in Ephesus.

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying,

for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.

Here is a trustworthy saying:

If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us; if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.

Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some. Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble. If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.

Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith,

patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry. I sent Tychicus to Ephesus. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.

Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Greet Priscilla and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus. Do your best to get here before winter. Eubulus greets you, and so do Pudens, Linus, Claudia and all the brothers.

The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.



## The World of the Apostle Paul

*Rick Wade, Probe Ministries*

### Religion

The purpose of this essay is to take a look at the Greco-Roman world in which the Apostle Paul lived so that we can better comprehend his ministry. Understanding the historical context helps us to gain such a perspective. We'll discuss religion, philosophy, the family unit, and the social morality of the Hellenistic culture with a concluding look at the conflict Christians faced.

Let's begin with the religion of the first century. Two episodes in the book of Acts provide insight into the religious beliefs and practices of that time.

In Acts 19 we read about the trouble Paul's companions got into over His ministry in Ephesus. Craftsmen who made miniature shrines of Artemis, the local deity, objected to Paul's teaching that "man-made gods are no gods at all" (Acts 19:26). In Paul's world, religion was an integral part of everyone's life. State-sponsored civic cults were one religious expression participated in by everybody. Historian Everett Ferguson notes that "the most deeply ingrained religious beliefs and practice in both Greece and Rome...were associated with the traditional civic cult."<sup>(1)</sup> The state both funded and profited by these cults.

Each city had its patron deity. The city of Ephesus honored Artemis, the goddess of nature and of childbirth. The statue of Artemis stood in a magnificent temple, four times as large as the Parthenon in Athens. Deities such as Artemis were honored with festivals, prayers, and sacrifices. Annual festivals included banquets, entertainment, sacrifices, processions, athletic contests, and the performance of mystery rites. Prayers included invocation, praise, and petition with the goal of receiving the favor of the goddess. Sacrifices were offered for praise, thanksgiving, or supplication.

The riot in Ephesus that resulted from Paul's teaching was prompted partly by monetary concerns; the craftsmen were afraid of losing business. But the chant, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" which went on for two hours--by people who didn't even know what the specific problem was--shows that money was not the only issue. The strength of religious devotion to the civic cults was such that Roman emperors saw the advantage of identifying with them instead of fighting them. We'll talk more about that later in this essay.

Ephesus was also a major center of magical activity, another part of the religious practice of the first century. In Acts 19 we read about practitioners of magic or sorcery forsaking their practices and burning their scrolls as they publicly declared their new faith.

The Ephesians' scrolls contained secret words and formulas which were used to force the gods to do one's bidding. The precise formula was critical. Practitioners sought wealth, healing, or power; they even used magic in an attempt to gain another person's

love. Because it was also believed that to know someone's true name was to have power over that person, names and formulas were blended to produce strong magic.

Paul carried his message to a world with a multitude of religious beliefs, and the message he proclaimed showed its power over them. As we look at our culture with its increasingly pluralistic religious spectrum, we must remember that we, too, carry the same gospel with the same power.

## Philosophy

When the Apostle Paul visited Athens, he took the message of Christ to the marketplace where a wide variety of people could be encountered. Among those he talked to were Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. We read about his encounter with them in Acts 17.

Who were these Epicureans and Stoics? I'd like to give a thumbnail sketch of their ideas about God, man, and the world which will help us understand why Paul what he did.

Stoicism and Epicureanism were philosophies which were developed to free people from the concerns of the present life.

Stoicism was materialistic and pantheistic. That is, Stoics believed that everything was composed of matter. The higher form of matter was of a divine nature, and it pervaded the universe. They called it various things: fire, Zeus, or even God. They believed that this divine "fire," or God, generated the universe and would one day take the universe back into itself through a great conflagration. This cycle of creation and conflagration is repeated eternally.

Stoicism was thus deterministic. Things are the way they are and can't be changed. To find true happiness, they believed one should understand the course of nature through reason and simply accept things the way they are.

In contrast to the Stoics, Paul taught that God is personal and not a part of this universe. He also taught that there would be a judgment to come, not a giant conflagration leading to another cycle.

Epicureans focused on the individual's happiness, also, but they went in a completely different direction than the Stoics. They believed that the way to happiness was through maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. Tranquility was sought through a quiet, contemplative life lived among a community of friends.

Epicureans were materialists, also, but they weren't pantheists. They believed the universe was formed from atoms falling through space which occasionally bumped into each other accidentally, eventually forming the stars and planets and us. When we die, we simply become dissolved into atoms again. Epicureans believed in the gods, but thought they were like men, only of a higher order. The gods resided out in space somewhere, enjoying a life of quiet pleasure like that of the Epicureans. They had nothing to do with men. Apart from participation in sacrifices and religious rituals for aesthetic purposes, Epicureans believed humans needn't worry about the gods.

Against the Epicureans, Paul taught that God *is* involved in the affairs of His creation

and created us specifically to search for Him. Of course, Paul's doctrine of a future judgment didn't fit with their thinking either.

As Paul evangelized the Greek world, he sometimes used their terminology and concepts; he even quoted their poets. But he preached a very different message. Maybe we, too, can find common ground with our culture by knowing what people believe and by putting the gospel into terms they understand. Without modifying the message itself, we must phrase it in a way that it can be understood. If we don't, we'll have a hard time getting people to listen.

## The Family Unit

We've given some attention to the religion and philosophy of Paul's day, but what about the social structures of the Greco-Roman world? More specifically, what was the family like in the first century?

By the first century A.D., marriage was mostly by mutual consent. Historian Everett Ferguson describes marriage this way: "Consent to live together constituted marriage in all societies, and the procreation of children was its explicit object. Marriages were registered in order to make the children legitimate."<sup>(2)</sup> Although marriages were mostly monogamous, adultery was common. Divorce required only oral or written notice.

Men had the dominant role in the family. They had absolute authority over their children and slaves. Wives remained under their fathers' authority. Men occupied their time with business interests and such social outlets as banquets, and the gymnasias which included exercise facilities, pools, and lecture halls. These functioned as community centers.

In the husband's absence the wife might conduct his business for him. However, managing the home was the wife's primary responsibility. Ferguson quotes the Greek writer Apollodorus who said, "We have courtesans for pleasure, handmaidens for the day-to-day care of the body, wives to bear legitimate children and to be a trusted guardian of things in the home."<sup>(3)</sup>

Women weren't necessarily confined to the home, however. Some engaged in occupations as diverse as music, medicine, and commerce. Many held civic office, and some held leadership positions in the religious cults.

Children were not considered a part of the family until acknowledged by the father. They could be sold or exposed if not wanted.

Parents were on their own to find suitable education for their children. Girls could go to the elementary schools, but that was rare. They mostly learned household skills at home. Although most boys learned a trade at home or through an apprenticeship, they could go through a series of primary, secondary, and advanced schooling depending on their class status. Rote memorization was a key element in primary education. Rhetoric was the most important subject in advanced education.

Slaves were a part of the family unit in the Roman Empire. They might be obtained through a number of means including war, child exposure, and the sale of persons to pay debts. Slaves might work in the mines, in temples, in homes as teachers, or in industry; they even held high positions as administrators in civil bureaucracy. Slaves

often earned enough money to buy their own freedom, although they had to continue working for their former owners.

Into this society the apostles brought new ideas about the value of the individual and about family relationships. Husbands were to be faithful to their own wives and to love them as their own bodies. Children were to be seen as much more than economic assets or liabilities. Masters were told to treat slaves with justice and fairness. People today who revile Christianity as being "oppressive" probably have no idea how much it elevated people in the Hellenistic world.

## Social Morality

Moral instruction in the Hellenistic world was found more in philosophy and custom than in religion. Religion was largely external; that is, it was a matter of ritual more than of inner transformation. Philosophy sought to teach people how to live. Philosophers gave much attention to such matters as virtue, friendship, and civic responsibility.(4)

Historian Everett Ferguson notes that evidence from the Greco-Roman era indicates that many people lived quite virtuous lives. Inscriptions on grave stones, for example, include praises for husbands and wives for kindness and faithfulness.(5)

In spite of all this, history reveals a morally debased culture in the first century. One example is sexual immorality. "The numerous words in the Greek language for sexual relations," says Ferguson, "suggest a preoccupation with this aspect of life."(6) As I noted earlier, adultery was common. Men often had courtesans for physical pleasure. Homosexuality between young men or between an older and a younger man was openly accepted. Temple prostitution was part of some religious cults.

A low estimate of human worth was exhibited in the Hellenistic world. Earlier I mentioned child exposure as a way of getting rid of children. Unwanted babies--more often girls--were put on the garbage pile or left in some isolated area to die. They might be picked up to be used, to be sold as slaves, or to serve as prostitutes.

The brutality of the day was seen most clearly in the games in the Roman amphitheaters. Ferguson notes that, "The amphitheaters of the west testify to the lust for blood under the empire. The spectacles of gladiatorial combat--man against man, man against animal, and animal against animal--drew huge crowds and replaced Greek drama and athletics in popularity."(7) Executions were considered less exciting than mortal combat. Consequently, when executions were included in the day's program, they were typically carried out during the lunch break. One of the ways criminals were disposed of was by dressing them in animal skins and throwing them to wild animals.

Such brutality was extended to the Christians in the days of persecutions. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* records that Nero had Christians thrown to the wild animals. He also had them dipped in wax, mounted on trees, and burned like giant torches in his gardens.(8)

Into this world of immorality and brutality came the message of love and righteousness found in Jesus. As with Judaism before, Christianity put religion and morality together. It revealed God's standard of goodness and the sacrificial love of Christ, and it provided the power to attain that standard through the regenerating work



of the Spirit based on Christ's work on the cross.

Today, ethics and religion are again separate. And the results are being seen. But as in the first century, Christians today have a message of grace for our society: God not only tells us what *is* good, He also enables us to *be* good.

## Christians' Conflict with the Culture

In the early church, the character of Christians was very important for gaining a hearing and for winning converts as they boldly gave testimony of their new faith.

What were these Christians like? The writer of the *Epistle to Diognetus*, written probably in the early second century, said this about them: "They marry as do all; they beget children, but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all."(9)

If their lives were of such an exemplary nature, what was it that got Christians into so much trouble? Two of the most important factors were their unwillingness to participate in religious rituals and their refusal to bow before the images of the emperors.

Earlier I mentioned the importance of the civic religious cults in the Hellenistic world. The people believed that the gods required their sacrifices and other observances; otherwise, they would be angry and take their wrath out on the people as a whole. For the Christians to refuse to participate was to risk angering the gods.

The other factor was the matter of emperor worship. When Rome conquered the Western world, the rulers saw how important religion was to the people. Rather than fight against this, they took advantage of it by putting images of the Roman emperors in places of worship with the other deities. This wasn't a big problem for the Greeks. Apart from the fact that the Romans were their rulers, Greeks weren't exclusive in their worship. To worship one deity didn't preclude worshiping others as well.

For the Christians, however, Jesus was *Lord*; there could be no other gods besides Him, and they couldn't bow before anyone who claimed divine authority, including the emperor. However, since in the minds of the Romans the emperor represented the state, to refuse to bow before his image was to be an enemy of the state.

Thus, because of their refusal to participate in these activities, Christians were called atheists and enemies of the state. Their behavior was baffling to their neighbors. Why couldn't they just go through the motions? As I already noted, religion was non-exclusive. The people didn't necessarily *believe* in the gods to whom they made sacrifice, anyway. And since there was little or no connection between religion and ethics, one's religious activities didn't normally affect one's moral life. So, why couldn't the Christians just play along? The reason they couldn't was that to bow before the emperors or the gods would be to commit idolatry which was *the* fundamental sin in the early church.

Christians in the early church had to decide where they could conform to their society and where they couldn't. There was a difference of opinion as to what was

appropriate and what wasn't. But it was clear that anyone who would be identified as a Christian had to draw the line here: Jesus is Lord, and there is no other.

### Notes

1. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 188.
  2. *Ibid.*, 68.
  3. *Ibid.*, 70-71.
  4. *Ibid.*, 303.
  5. *Ibid.*, 64.
  6. *Ibid.*
  7. *Ibid.*, 94.
  8. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Spire Books, 1968), 13.
  9. Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1970), 136.
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4. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, John Foxe
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