

2nd Timothy Ch 4:9-22

“Failure Or Faithfulness; It’s Up To You”

As we overview and sort of survey this concluding portion of scripture in the book of 2nd Timothy, we have what we might refer to as, “Paul’s final farewell.” and As with anyone when it’s the last time your voice may be heard you want to remember certain people, let them know that they’re on your heart and on your mind even in your last moments. You want to maybe leave some last minute instructions as to what things may be *helpful* or what things may be *harmful* and need to be avoided, just some practical things, last minute details (if you will). and Because of the fact that so much of the text that lies before us seems to be just so plainly practical in it’s instructions to the locals of that time and in that day (some specific friends and all), there are those who want to just sort of gloss over this section, not really seeing any practical application for you and me today.

I disagree, I believe that upon even just a little bit of close observation we can find with in this portion of scripture some profoundly practical insight that can be woven right into our lives in this present hour in which we live. You remember that earlier on in this letter we learned that, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” 2 Tim 3:16-17 Because times and cultures may change, but human nature never does, and the Word of God deals with human nature, and so the implications and instructions, and the various nuances found in a given passage, even passages that deal with apparently irrelevant subject matter to you and me are written for our admonition, for our learning.

So I pray that as we go through this passage God will cause us to pull out of it those things that He would cause us to ponder upon, that we might learn *from*, and be exhorted *by*, or encouraged *through*, and comforted *in*.

Now for the sake of refreshing our memories, and bringing us up to speed in our basic outline of this ch, Paul has charged Timothy with the *exhortation* to preach the Word. Because the natural *inclination* of man is to gravitate towards the things of the flesh, and all the more as the end approaches, the world’s not going to get better and better until one day the Kingdom will be ushered it. It’s going to get worse and worse, as the church grows more and more anemic and spiritually apathetic. and So the call has gone out in vs 5 as unto *duration*, that regardless of what others may or may not do, you’re to *fulfill* your ministry, to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and the precepts and principals to the Word of God. and Paul was passing that baton of faithful ministry on to Timothy, the next generation because it was time for him to depart to his final *destination*. None of us are going to live forever on the topside of this earth; we all have an appointment with death. That’s why it’s so critical that we make our calling and election sure, that we safeguard that 1st love relationship with Jesus Christ So that our testimony in the end can be “Faithful” not “Failure”, that we might be able to say even as we read in vs 7 here (read).

Which kinda brings us up to speed for our present text. Paul the apostle was quite possibly the biggest spiritual giant (obviously outside of Christ) of this NT age in which we live. He had an intimacy with God that has probably been unparalleled, and sometimes because of the magnitude by which God used his life we sometimes want to ascribe superhuman characteristics to Paul's life. But he was very human, and in the present hour of which he penned this letter, he found himself lonely, and in *isolation*, there in prison. He knows his hour has come, and he longs to see his son in the faith (Timothy) one last time, so we read in vs 9.

Vs9-13

So on a practical scale, Paul wants to see Timothy again, he's cold and all alone in this dungeon in Rome. The bible says, "*Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.*" Prov 27:9 True friendship is an invaluable asset in life, to have those people whom we can turn to in our time of need, that we might bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Obviously if you're married, your spouse is to be your best friend. But Paul was a single fella, and so in these his final hours he called out to his best friend and son in the faith, Timothy. Notice he didn't call for Lydia, or some woman to come and comfort him, he stayed blameless till the end. We're not to be confiding, or seeking solace in people of the opposite gender. Guys, find a guy you can trust, gals, find a gal you can trust, and make sure you can trust them. Some people just (under the guise of compassion) like to be in everybody's business, that's why the bible calls them "Busybodies" because they're busy being into everyone's business and not minding their own. So Paul desires to have Timothy's companionship in the practical.

But also in the realm of the spiritual he realizes that the work there in Rome is too big for just one man, he's confined to prison, Luke alone is with him, and there's just no such thing as a "One man ministry." Paul was a team player, and we see that all throughout his life, he knew the authority and calling that God had placed upon his life, yet he was always delegating the responsibilities of the ministry, and sharing the work that God had committed to his trust. and So, "Demas has forsaken me, only Luke is with me, so come quickly and on the way pick up Mark because there's much work to be done and it's too much for Luke to tackle alone."

In vs 10 we have our 1st primary lesson of this portion of scripture, Paul calls for Timothy to come to him in part because (notice again) "Demas has forsaken me." Now most of you are no doubt familiar with Demas. Mentioned only 3 times in the bible, yet the details of his life that unfold in the scriptures reveal a sad story. The "Diary of Demas" (so to speak) carries with it a warning to every child of God, and it's one of disintegration, degradation, and ultimately abandonment, as he seems to slide down the slippery slopes of distorted priorities. He was no doubt one of those men who were in Paul's tight nit circle whom he would work with and invest himself into. Teaching him the do's and don'ts of ministry, counseling him, encouraging him, trusting him to be one of those such as Luke, or Titus, or even Timothy who would carry on the work of the ministry. Demas is another one of those tragic tales who had begun so well, but unfortunately didn't finish well.

I suppose that for all intents and purposes he may've repented at some point in his life and came full circle, but the bible gives us no indications of that. and In the end his life is recorded in the scriptures as a warning to you and me of the importance of fighting the good fight and not losing heart. Of making sure that we're careful to keep our priorities proper, that we seek 1st the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and from there allow God to meet the practical needs that we have in this world. and I feel like a broken record sometimes because I seem to always be speaking of the need to finish well, beginning well is good, critical in fact, but we just seem to be coming across the pages of scripture lately that emphasize how we end, how important it is to finish well. The epitaph of Saul was, "*Indeed I have played the fool and erred exceedingly.*" 1 Sam 26:21 He didn't finish well, began well, but didn't finish well, and such seems to be the case with Demas, we read in Philem 23-24 where Paul wrote and said, "*Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers.*" So at one point in his life he was recognized as a laborer in the gospel of Jesus Christ He wasn't a side stand spectator; he was diligent about laying hold of that for which Christ laid hold of his life.

He was pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God that's in Christ Jesus. He was on fire for Jesus Christ and passionate towards the things of God, he was a down in the dirt, hands on the plow kinda guy, a "Fellow laborer" with Paul the apostle. Now Paul was a laboring kinda guy, and so by the time he places you on that par of being a fellow laborer you're pretty intense when it comes to the ministry. But when he wrote the Colossians Paul said, "*Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you.*" Col 4:14 He's still careful to use a term of endearment concerning Luke, but Demas is just mentioned as saying "Hey." It's as though there's something different now about what's going on in Demas' life, and Paul doesn't draw any attention to it, but he doesn't ascribe any real positive allusions to him either. and I wonder if he's not at this point just observing his life to see how things are going to turn out. People always give off warning signs when unhealthy things are brewing in their hearts, I can't say that I with out fail always see those things, but they're there nonetheless. and Paul is possibly alerted to the fact that something is happening in this man's heart, and "Though I'm not willing to speak it out openly yet lest I judge the situation prematurely, there's something going on." and By the time 2nd Timothy is written it's become clear, he's given priority to the things of this present world and they've squelched out his eternal priorities. "Demas has forsaken me" why? For what purpose? "Having loved this present world." Or more literally "Having loved the now age", as opposed to keeping his eyes fixated on the age which is to come. He fell into the trap of Ps 73 where we read; "*I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*" Ps 73:3 But he never lifted up his eyes, he never regained the eternal perspective as the Psalmist did.

This word “Forsaken” here is a strong verb which means, “To leave someone helpless is a dire situation.” You’ve no doubt seen some movie where there’s an intense happening that needs to take place, and these 2 guys are depending on one another, but secretly one of them has received a higher pay off if in the thick of the battle, or when he’s need the most, he’ll just leave the other fella hanging to his own destruction. and So their fighting away and right when the pivotal point of the fight is to be somehow deployed the one guy cries out to the other and the guy just sort of stands there looking at him, and the other fella looks at him with this total sense of abandonment like, “How could you do this?” and The other guy just sort of walks away and leaves him stranded. That’s the picture we have here, right in the heat of the battle Demas walked away.

What was his pay off? The things of this world, of the now age, you guys this is a major error to avoid, loving the things of this present world, making the material things of this world your master consuming passion. What does the bible say, “*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*” 1 John 2:15 Jesus said, “*No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*” Luke 16:13 and He’s talking there about money, materialism, the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in and choking the effects of the Word of God out of your life so that you become unfruitful. Again Jesus issued the warning, “*Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*” Luke 17:32-33 What’s the story of Lot’s wife? When they were being led out of Sodom she longingly looked back to the city, and that desire for the things of this world destroyed her life. That’s why Jesus said, “*No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*” Luke 9:62

Demas *looked back*, we’re to *look up*, we’re to maintain the eternal perspective and priorities, as Paul told the Colossians, “*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*” Col 3:2 Jesus said, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” Matt 6:20 We’re to invest our time, our energy, and our resources in the things of God. In eternal matters, and again it’s not that it’s wrong to have nice things, big houses, or new cars.

But be careful to maintain a balance, Demas placed his passion for the things of this world above his passion for the things of God, and that’s the warning we’re to receive from his life.

Vs 11

So as to where Demas was in many respects a failure, Luke was faithful. He stayed with Paul till the very end; this is the same Luke that wrote the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. and You can see as the events of the book of Acts are chronicled how he was often at Paul’s side, he goes from using words like “they” to words like “we.” When you read the word “we” in the narrative aspects of the book of Acts, it means Luke was present on that scene.

There were some pretty radical events that he went through with Paul including that dreadful shipwreck outside off the shores of Malta following weeks of fighting through a tempest that they were in there on the sea. He was there ministering to him during his 1st imprisonment and is still there during his 2nd and last imprisonment. He stayed faithful to the ministry God committed to his trust, which seemed in part to be the physical care of Paul the apostle. Luke was a physician, and Paul is believed to have had his share of physical ailments, and so no doubt Luke in part felt commissioned by God to do what he could when he could to make Paul's life as physically comfortable as possible so that he could continue in the ministry unencumbered by physical hindrances. So Luke is a testimony of faithfulness, and of finishing well.

We also see Mark here in this vs. and Of course this is John Mark who wrote the gospel of Mark (which many believe to be basically the gospel of Peter since he was sort of Marks mentor). and The word that describes Paul's relationship to Mark is "reconciliation." Most of you are no doubt familiar with the great falling out that happened between Paul and Mark and if not you can read of it in the book of Acts in ch 15 beginning in vs 36. Paul had taken him along with Barnabas on a missionary journey and something along the way took place and in ch 13 you see where John Mark bailed out. and So when it came time to go again Barnabas wanted to take Mark but Paul said, "No way." "When the going got tough, he got going, and I'm not going to take people with me who aren't in for the long haul, people who quit rather than commit." and It was no small dispute, and it got so heated that Paul just grabbed Silas and went his way, and Barnabas took Mark and went the other way. Mark had failed, now when you read Peter's epistles you find that he refers to Mark as his "son" in much the same way that Paul refers to Timothy. and I imagine that Peter had a bit of a soft spot for Mark because he'd failed to, he'd denied the Lord and knew what it was like to fail on the follow through. and So apparently he took it upon himself along with Barnabas to come alongside Mark and really work with him and restore him even as the Lord had restored him. and Now that years have gone by we see that reconciliation has taken place between Paul and Mark, Mark had no doubt matured greatly, bore fruits worthy of repentance and he and Paul reconciled. The bible says we've been given the ministry of reconciliation, and "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*" Rom 12:18 It's not always possible, some people refuse to be at peace with you, but as for your part, don't let the fault lie with you. and It's good to point out here something that I've said to you before and that we see in this example, and that is that failure is not fatal. It can be, but it doesn't have to be, we serve a God who's full of compassion and is eager to refresh us, and restore us, and if we're willing to repent, He's willing to restore. So though Paul once considered Mark *useless* for the ministry, now he says, "Make sure you find Mark and bring him along, for he is *useful* to me for ministry."

Vs12-13

We never arrive, and we're never to stop learning, even facing execution Paul wanted to study the word of God. He was preparing for his final exam, but we need never to believe we can finally rest in our pursuit of the understanding of the heart and mind of God. Paul (the apostle of God) was studying God's Word till the very end.

Vs14-16

This is the portion of text we've labeled "compensation" not for Paul, but for Alexander. and How it was he harmed Paul we don't know, whether it means being a key witness against him, or being the primary plaintiff that somehow got Paul arrested. But what we need to see in this is how Paul entrusted that situation into God's hands. He didn't say, "Man if I get out of here I'm going to put the hurt on that guy." He didn't seek personal vengeance, he knew the scripture, had taught it himself. He exhorted the Romans, "*Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*" Rom 12:19 and So here he just says, "Hey, God knows what's happened and He'll take care of the situation." and Whatever's happening in your life you can rest assured that God knows about it, be it good, or be it bad, and He'll take care of the situation in His time. People will harm you, but God will take care of you.

To the Philippians Paul mentioned wanting to be conformed the fellowship of our Lord's sufferings, and here even as with the Lord, when he was trial for his life no one stood with him. But we see here how effectively the Lord was working through him in this his spirit of forgiveness. "May it not be charged against them." So a 2-fold example to follow here in the apostle, #1 Be willing to stand alone for Jesus if you have to, there was no one who physically stood at his side, but that didn't deter him from being faithful to the Lord. Like the hymn says, "Though none go with me, still I will follow." and It's easy to get our feelings hurt when we feel like those closest to us have somehow let us down, but these guys weren't like Demas, they just vacillated in a moment of weakness. and Paul knew that and he says, "May it not be imputed to their account."

Vs 17-18

This is the portion we've labeled "Preservation" and there's 3 points and a purpose that I want to quickly draw to your attention here. Because in these 2 vs I see a 3-fold ministry of the Lord that applies to each of our lives as believers and the purpose for which he ministers to us in such a way. and I believe it's important that you see it if you don't already. If you take notes you might want to jot these things down. Apart from all the other wonderful ways in which the Lord will minister to you, there is the bear minimum of these 3 things that He does both for you and through you and they are #1 He will "Stand with you", #2 He will "Strengthen you, and #3 He will "Sustain you." and These are promises you can claim, the Lord will stand with you when no one else will, He will strengthen you in time of need, and He will sustain you through that time.

Paul says, “No one stood with me, but the *Lord* stood with me.” The Lord will never leave you, and never forsake you, others may forsake you, but Jesus never will. and Paul was all too familiar with that place of perils whereby he found himself in need of the Lords reassuring presence and the Lord was faithful to meet him in his hour of need. When he was in the city of Corinth there was apparently something that was troubling him and threatening him inwardly to keep silent about the message of the gospel. and We read, “*Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."* Acts 18:9-10 and Again after a courtroom defense in the book of Acts 23:11 we read, “*The following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.'*” and Of course the angel of the Lord visited him before that shipwreck we spoke of earlier assuring him that none of them would die. and So the Lord stood by him, and He’ll stand by you, and He’ll strengthen you even as He did Paul in the inner man by His Holy Spirit, and He’ll sustain you till the day He’s finished with your life and then you’re free to come home.

This mention of the mouth of the lion means that the Lord kept him from fatal harms way. and Paul had every confidence that he would keep him from (notice vs 18) “every” evil work and preserve him, or sustain him for His Heavenly Kingdom.

In other words, “*No weapon formed against you shall prosper...This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their righteousness is from Me, Says the LORD.*” Isa 54:17 and Paul believed it, until *God* was finished with his life nothing was going to take his life. Now he wasn’t foolish, or tempting the Lord by placing himself in compromising positions, but it’s as when Pilate was trying Jesus and he said to Him, “*Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?*” “*Jesus answered*”, “*You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.*” John 19:10-11 Paul led his life with that understanding, no one had any power against him at all unless it had been given to them from above and in that he had perfect peace knowing God was in control.

Which brings us to our purpose and then we’re all but finished. What’s the purpose in the Lord standing by you, strengthening you, and sustaining you? Though it’s a comfort to you, it’s not primarily for you, or your benefit that the Lord ministers to you in these ways. Notice back in vs 17, “That the message might be preached (not partially being choked out through fear but) fully through me that all the Gentiles might hear.” Much like when a celebrity is on trial today the courtrooms are packed out, when Paul was on trial before Nero, this man who was turning the world upside down for Christ, the place was packed you can guarantee it. and It would be full of non-believers and God wanted everyone of them to hear the message of the gospel. and He would stand by Paul, strengthen Paul and sustain him that he might use that platform as an opportunity to share the gospel. How God had commissioned him to proclaim the message of forgiveness and reconciliation to God through the cross of Jesus Christ and that’s why he was in prison, so his defense was an evangelical outreach.

The reason that the Lord will stand by you, and strengthen you, and sustain you, is that the work, and the Word that He's committed to your trust might be carried out in full that He might be glorified in your life. Notice vs 18b (read).

Vs 19-21

Again it's possible his execution date had been set for sometime in the winter and so he urges Timothy to come quickly. But it's interesting that this apostle whom God had worked miraculous feats through, even raising the dead along with the healing of the sick, left Trophimus in Miletus sick. and For the sake of time just let the point be seen that sickness is not a sign of weak faith, physical healing just isn't always God's perfect will. There are times that we're afflicted through physical ailments, welcome to this fallen world, we're all apart of it.

Vs 22

Thank God that where sin abounds, grace abounds still more, it's by grace that we're saved, it's by grace we're sanctified, the marvelous ministry of the grace of God. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

If you're here and you've never confessed Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you've never invited Him into your heart or asked His forgiveness of your sin, let me encourage you today. The Lord wants to stand by you, He wants to give you strength for today, He wants to sustain you through life, He wants to be with your spirit and lavish His grace and forgiveness upon your life. He who has the Son has life, but he who doesn't have the Son doesn't have life, that is, everlasting life. Jesus Christ hung on a cross in open humiliation, shedding His blood because He loves you so much, and if you'll just open the door of your heart and allow Him to come inside, as far as the east is from the west, He'll cast your sin from you. You can leave here forgiven, all you have to do is believe, but I can't make you do that, but if you're willing to come to Him, He's willing to receive you. It's up to you.