

# BIBLE TEACHER

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His People Endure Forever

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In Galatians 2 Paul explained two very important incidents that happened in the early church. Both incidents in some way help us understand the social/religious/political environment in which the Bible teacher, Timothy, sought to be a teacher of the word of God to the community in which he lived.

## A. Religious / Political Opposition

**1. Opposition in Jerusalem:** The first incidents occurred on one of Paul's visits to Jerusalem many years before he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy. Fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem—this was after his baptism in Damascus, three-year mission to Arabia, and then journey back home to Tarsus—he went up to Jerusalem for the Acts 15 meeting. On this particular visit, he took Titus with him.

When he, Barnabas and Titus arrived in Jerusalem, there was tremendous politics going on with some

Jewish brethren in Jerusalem. They protested that Titus, a Gentile, should be circumcised. In fact, a few years after this encounter, Paul wrote: ***“But not even Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised”*** (Gl 2:3).

“Compelled” is a strong word. It seems that there was great pressure placed on Paul and company by some in the church that the Gentile, Titus, should be circumcised. It seems that there were some Jewish Christians in Jerusalem at this time who believed that if one were not circumcised, then he could not be saved (See At 15:1). This may seem ridiculous to us today, but it was a great “church issue” when Paul visited Jerusalem with a Gentile. Nevertheless, Paul stood firm with Titus, and would not allow him to succumb to the religious intimidation of some Jewish brethren that he should be circumcised. Such is the first lesson of a sincere Bible teacher. If the Bible teaches a certain subject, then there is no room for compromise.

**2. Opposition in Antioch:** Paul wrote in the Galatian letter of another incident that again focuses our attention on the intimidation of those who would seek to bind either religious or cultural practices on the consciences of the disciples. The problem was so severe in this incident in Antioch of Syria, the apostle Peter momentarily stood condemned because he succumbed to the intimidation of some Jewish brethren who came from Jerusalem.

Paul later wrote of the Antioch ordeal: ***“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned”*** (Gl 2:11). This seems quite strange in view of the fact that this was the same Peter to whom Jesus had earlier given the keys of the kingdom to teach the gospel on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30 (See Mt 16:18,19). This was the same Peter who stood up on the day of Pentecost and announced for the first time in history the activation of the eternal gospel that had been planned and hidden before the creation of the world (See At 2:14-39). This was the same Peter who in the face of possible beating, stood

against unbelieving religious leaders in Jerusalem. It was this Peter who said to these leaders, *“Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard”* (At 4:19,20). And this is the same Peter to whom God had opened a vision to go into the Gentile house of Cornelius (At 10–11). So why did this Bible teacher stand condemned in Antioch?

Paul explained. While in Antioch, Peter, Barnabas and the rest of the Jewish brethren in the city were happily fellowshiping the Gentile brethren (See Gl 2:12). However, when certain Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem, Peter *“withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision”* (Gl 2:12). Because of his actions, he stood condemned because he and others *“were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel”* (Gl 2:14).

Gospel living means that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile (See Gl 3:26-29). It is the gospel that brings all people together into one united fellowship. If we behave in any way contrary to this principle of the gospel, then we are not walking straightforward according to the truth of the gospel. **We therefore stand condemned.** For a moment, therefore, Peter and Barnabas, and the other Jewish brethren who followed them, allowed themselves to be intimidated to behave contrary to the unifying nature of the gospel. They all stood condemned in doing such a thing. A good Bible teacher, therefore, **should never allow the intimidation of the religious world in which they live motivate them from living the gospel.**

And now we come to the social situation in which we find Timothy in Asia at the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy around A.D. 66. We are not told the nature of the intimidation that faced Peter in Antioch. Nevertheless, it was strong enough to motivate him to behave contrary to the truth of the gospel. Likewise, we are not told specifically either the intimidation or opposition that faced Timothy. But the outcome was

similar to that of Peter. The difference, however, was that Peter behaved contrary to the truth of the gospel, whereas Timothy simply ceased fulfilling his ministry. He went idle. He ceased being a teaching of the word of God.

The lesson in both cases is that no matter how strong one may think he or she is spiritually, or what advantages he or she may have enjoyed as a disciple, one can still fall into either idleness or behavior that is contrary to the truth of the gospel. Paul's words then are true today: ***“Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”*** (1 Co 10:12). For some reason, or reasons, Timothy was intimidated to the point of being discouraged to continue teaching the word of God. **Paul wrote the letter of 2 Timothy in order to encourage Timothy to stir up His work to finish his commitment to be a teacher of the Bible.**

The social conditions in which Timothy found himself at the time were similar to those in which Peter and Barnabas found themselves in Antioch. There were both social and religious pressures placed on all three Bible teachers. Nevertheless, this disciple, Timothy, who joined with Paul on the second missionary journey, had by the time of the writing of 2 Timothy had been intimidated into forsaking his gift of teaching the word of God to the people. He was silenced by opposition. As Bible teachers, we must discover how to rise above any opposition that would cause us to terminate our teaching of the word of God in our communities.

## **B. Social / Political Opposition**

Other than problems among misguided religious people, there were more problems that confronted Timothy. During the first mission journey of Paul and Barnabas in A.D. 47,48, John Mark had his moment of discouragement and retreat from the work (See At 13:13; 15:38). And now, Timothy was in a similar predicament.

On the second missionary journey of Paul in A.D.

49-52, Timothy had previously proved himself an enthusiastic teacher, so Paul desired to have him continue with him on his second journey (See At 16:1-3). Timothy had personally witnessed in the life of Paul what could possibly happen to him in reference to standing up to preach the gospel (See 2 Tm 3:10-12). Because Timothy had previously witnessed the persecution of Paul, he knew what he was getting himself into when he signed up with Paul. However, the idealistic Timothy in his youth probably never believed that there would be times when he would become so discouraged that he would terminate his desire to teach. Nevertheless, the time would come. It would be a time when he did not have the personal companionship of Paul, but would be working alone as a teacher the word of God. In view of the fact that Timothy was an enthusiastic young man of strong character, we must assume that even though he had experience strong opposition against a teacher as Paul, he himself would suffer the same. He would become so discouraged that he would cease teaching.

The preceding explains that great opposition will often confront the one who does not conform to the accepted traditions of the religious establishment, or social conditions that are extremely unsettling. In the case of Titus, the tradition of many in the church in Jerusalem was that one had to be circumcised, regardless of whether he was a Jew or Gentile. In reference to Timothy in Asia, however, the challenge was far more intense than issues over circumcision. At the particular time of Timothy's residence in Asia, there was political upheaval in the Roman Empire against the "Jewish problem" in Jerusalem.

In Peter's case of intimidation there was racial discrimination in reference to Jews associating with Gentiles. For example, when Peter returned from entering in and eating with the Gentile household of Cornelius, Luke many years later wrote of the reaction of some of the Jewish brethren in Jerusalem, *"So when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were of the*

*circumcision disputed with him, saying, 'You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them'"* (At 11:2,3). This incident happened a little over ten years before Rome's move against the Jews in the latter part of the 60s to squash a Jewish insurrectionist movement. The radicalism of the Jews in Jerusalem had increased since the days the Jews confronted Peter. A little over a decade after Peter entered the house of the Gentile Cornelius, the Gentile Romans would enter the house of God (the temple) in Jerusalem and burn it to the ground.

Jewish opposition that was brought upon the Jewish Christians of Judea was very strong for many years after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30. It was so strong that those Jewish Christians who lived in Judea tried to live in harmony with the radical unbelieving Jews of the region. This at least explains why the elders of the church in Jerusalem asked Paul on his last trip to the city around A.D. 56,57 to honor the Jewish custom of paying taxes for the vows of four other men, and then enter the temple in a sanctified manner (See At 21:17-25).

When Paul was in Jerusalem for this last time, nationalistic Jews had spread the rumor that he was going throughout the Roman Empire teaching *"all the Jews that are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses"* (At 21:21). This was totally contrary to what the nationalistic Jews were teaching in order to build loyalty to a movement of insurrectionist against Rome on the foundation of loyalty to the law of Moses. If Paul actually taught against the rallying cry of the nationalistic Jesus, then he was considered a traitor by those of his Jewish heritage. Therefore, according to the nationalistic Jews, this instigator who taught submission to Rome had to be eliminated (See At 23:12,13).

The tension between Rome and the Jews was so strong in Judea that it had, before Paul's arrival in Jerusalem around A.D. 56,57, spread north to Antioch of Syria where Peter was previously moved to separate himself from the Gentile brethren. As a result, he stood condemned before God because of

his actions. But God knew all this would happen in the initial century of the establishment of the church. Nevertheless, the early Christians had to survive through this great opposition in order to preserve the truth of the gospel.

Because we know that God knew that all this would transpire, we can better appreciate how He prepared the early Christians for the onslaught of religious and political persecution that would eventually arise in the decades after the establishment of the church in A.D. 30. By knowing this historical background of events that occurred in the middle and last half of the first century, we also can better understand how God worked among the nations in order to bring the religion of Judaism to a conclusion in order that the reality of the kingdom reign of Jesus be revealed to the world. God would even work in history to bring the opposition of state persecution to an end so that the preaching of the gospel would continue throughout history.

### **C. Social / Political Conflict**

This brings us to the social/political environment in which Timothy and the early disciples were living at the time of Timothy's discouragement prior to A.D. 66. There arose in the early part of the decade of the 60s a great nationalistic movement among the Jews throughout the Roman Empire, even to Asia Minor where Timothy lived. The nationalistic fervor among the Jews spread over into many of the Jewish families of the church. Therefore, there was more to the difficulties that faced Timothy than the early attack of Judaism against Christianity. The hard times of the disciples in the decade of the 60s had moved far beyond the persecution of the unbelieving Jews that transpired in the early days of the church in Judea. It was now scattered throughout the Roman Empire (See At 18:4).

Some Roman history and background are in order here to understand better the social turmoil of the decade of the 60s that also made it difficult for the early Christians to survive in the societies in which



they lived throughout the Roman Empire.

We are assuming the traditional date of A.D. 66 as the date when Paul put pen to parchment in order to address Timothy concerning the social/civic turmoil of the times in which Timothy lived, and subsequently was discouraged. In this same year, there was a rebellion of the Jews in Palestine against Rome. Young Jewish men throughout the Roman Empire were encouraged to take up a sword, betray the faith of their Christian parents, and then make their way to fight the Romans. It was a time when a young son's love for his family grew cold (See Mt 24:10,12). The adventure of fighting the Romans in Judea was greater than a son's loyalty to his father and mother.

In answer to the insurrectionist's movement of the Jews in Palestine, the Roman general Vespasian was commissioned by Caesar Nero to put down this insurrection, which was considered the first Jewish/Roman War. The war lasted from A.D. 66 to A.D. 73. This was called the Great Revolt, or the first Jewish War. It was the first of three rebellions, two of which would occur in the second century.

Before the Roman military general Vespasian arrived in Galilee in A.D. 67, there was a great civil war going on in Palestine among the Jews themselves. Opposing sides under the leadership of different priests struggled to determine who was in control of the Jewish struggle for independence from Rome. Therefore, in his march to Jerusalem to subjugate the Jewish independent movement, Vespasian first overpowered the Jews in Galilee in A.D. 66. He then continued his march toward Jerusalem in order to strike at the heart of Jewish nationalism that plagued the Roman Empire. However, during this campaign against the Jews in Palestine, the psychopathic Nero committed suicide in Rome in A.D. 69 while Vespasian launched his vicious attack against the rebellious Jews in Palestine.

Because of Nero's suicide, Rome itself was plunged into a brief civil war. When Nero committed suicide, Galba succeeded him and was on the throne in Rome



when the Empire entered the turmoil of the year A.D. 69. However, in A.D. 69, after only a few months as Caesar, Galba was killed by the Praetorium Guard. Otho then claimed the throne of Rome after Galba, but he too in a short time committed suicide. And then came Vitellius in the same year of A.D. 69, but he was killed by Vespasian's men.

In order to terminate the chaos in Rome in A.D. 69, Roman legions in Egypt, Judea and Syria hailed Vespasian to be Caesar. Vespasian subsequently returned to Rome in the same year in order to settle the Empire of both civil and social unrest. The year of A.D. 69 became known as the "year of the Caesars."

Upon Vespasian's return to Rome, Titus, Vespasian's son, was placed in command of the Roman army in Judea to complete the subjugation of the Jewish rebellion. As a result of Titus' efforts, not one stone was left upon another in the city of Jerusalem (See Mt 24:1,2). Even the temple was destroyed.

In order to settle the social and civil chaos in the capital of the Empire, Vespasian continued as Caesar of Rome from A.D. 69 to 79. During this period, nationalistic Judaism suffered a crushing blow that began when Titus eventually finished the campaign against the Jews in Judea in A.D. 73 with the conquest of Masada.

The decade of the 60s, therefore, was a time of tremendous social and civil unrest throughout the Roman Empire. It was a time of treachery, betrayal, insurrection and civil war, both in Rome and in Palestine (See Mt 24:1-35). Christians struggled to keep their faith during these years of social chaos. We can only imagine the turmoil that was generated in the church as Jewish nationalists sought to recruit young Jewish sons from Jewish Christians families throughout the Empire. Whether a family was Christian or not, Jewish zealots swept through the Empire in order to recruit resistance fighters for the deliverance of national Israel from Roman occupation. The dream of an independent Israel as in the days of David and Solomon became the battle cry of fanatical

insurrectionists. But it was all a misguided hope. It was a delusion that became a fable.

Nevertheless, the insurrectionists' zeal to fight against the Romans was strong throughout the Empire. The spirit of adventure to fight the Romans in Palestine was overpowering for many Jewish sons who eventually, with their swords, slipped out the back widow of their parent's house in the middle of the night and headed for Jerusalem. The tensions among Christian families was undoubtedly overpowering as unbelieving Jewish zealots of Judaism campaigned throughout the Roman Empire in order to draw Jewish family members to Palestine and Jerusalem in order to make a final stand against Rome, and then proclaim the restored state of an independent Israel.

It would not have been pleasant during these years for those Christian families who were predominately Jewish. It may have been that even Timothy was intimidated by some Jewish zealots that he assert his Jewish heritage to defend Israel. Because we are two thousand years removed from the social/political conflict of those times, we have a difficult time placing ourselves in the turmoil of the days, and thus, understanding the chaos of the time. But we can gather from the book of 2 Timothy that the social/religious pressure was so great that Timothy terminated his teaching ministry in Asia Minor.

Timothy was possibly intimidated by some as those described by Paul who were in fellowship with the church in Jerusalem. There were ***“false brethren secretly brought in, who sneaked in to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ, that they might bring us into bondage”*** (Gl 2:4). Throughout the church in Asia Minor, we would assume that there were also false Jewish brethren who had “sneaked in” to confront Timothy. They were those who were ***“always learning [from the Old Testament Scriptures], and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”*** of the gospel about which the prophets spoke (2 Tm 3:7). They distorted “the hope of Israel.” They thought the hope would be a national restoration of the state of Israel.

But they misunderstood the point of what Jesus said to Pilate, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (Jn 18:36). Most of the Jews could not accept the fact that God was finished with national Israel.

All focus among Christians was now on the gospel reign of King Jesus. In fact, the more some Christian Jews focused on nationalistic Israel, the less they focused on the existing reign of King Jesus. The Holy Spirit subsequently wrote an entire document concerning this problem—**Hebrews**. Those today who are obsessed with some restoration of the state of Israel in Palestine need to meditate through the book of Hebrews. They forget that those they wish to be restored as a state in Palestine—the Jews—had thousand years before crucified the Son of God. (We can thus know those who are not disciples of King Jesus if they mention in their prayers that the Jews today be restored to the land of Palestine.)

#### D. Literature Conflict

The student of 1 & 2 Timothy, with Titus, might wonder why Paul was not specific in reference to the current social upheaval of the times in which both Timothy and Titus lived. We must not forget that when Paul wrote he was in the prison of the military power that was bringing judgment on the insurrectionist movement of the Jews. (This was evidently his second imprisonment.)

Paul was a Jew with Roman citizenship in prison at the time Rome was bringing the judgment of God down on those who had crucified the Son of God. **We would obviously conclude that Paul would not write anything in a letter that might be intercepted by officials, and thus be used in court as evidence against him.**

When the Roman state eventually unleashed her wrath upon Christians at the end of the first century, John was also in such a predicament. He was banished by the Roman state to the island of Patmos in the 90s. Therefore, he wrote in apocalyptic literary style in order to conceal from the adversaries of Christianity

the victory of the saints. He wrote of *“things that must shortly come to pass”* (Rv 1:1). Therefore, Jesus, through him, *“sent and signified”* a message to the saints in a figurative writing style with cryptic symbols (Rv 1:1). The message of encouragement was thus revealed to the saints, but concealed from the state adversaries.

Though Paul did not write in the style of apocalyptic literature, he still refrained from directly identifying the problems that caused the social chaos in which both Timothy and Titus labored. Nevertheless, from our history books we can assume the trying times of the decade of the late 60s, prior to the final destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The decade of the 60s, therefore, was the worst of times in reference to the climax of Jewish influence among the disciples. These were times of turmoil during which many prayers were being offered *“for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty”* (1 Tm 2:2). Those times were not peaceful.

Nevertheless, worse times would eventually come when the Roman State would eventually turn its attention toward the early Christians. But this persecution would not come until the latter part of the first century. In the book of **Revelation**, Jesus would prepare the church for those times.

But in the 60s, it was a trying time to be a Bible teacher for God’s family in the midst of Jewish national social upheaval. It was a time when the Holy Spirit knew that a letter needed to be written to a discouraged teacher, giving some advice as to what he should do in order to rise up again and teach matters concerning the gospel. The letter could be copied and circulated among the churches, and thus bring a great deal of encouragement to others who were in a similar situation as Timothy in Asia.

We better appreciate this letter, therefore, because the one to whom the letter was written would be an example for all teachers among the disciples in the centuries to come. We have the letter of 2 Timothy

for our own encouragement today when we fall into discouraging times as did Timothy when the religious and social environment of Rome seemed to be totally overpowering of His faith. And for the Jews' nationalistic dreams, God through Rome was making His statement that Israel was over, it was over seventy years before on a cross outside Jerusalem. While Jerusalem would be burning in a few years after the writing of 2 Timothy, Paul simply said to Timothy to stay focused: ***"Preach the Word!"*** (2 Tm 4:2).

## Chapter 1

### ENCOURAGING THE TEACHER

The words of this letter from the Holy Spirit through the hand of Paul are for every disciple who would arise to the challenge of being a Bible teacher through example and teaching. The letter was addressed to a specific individual, but the Spirit assumes that we will apply the encouragement of the message to all those Bible teachers who we seek to lead the people of God through their gospel living and teaching ministry.

#### A. An Affectionate Greeting (1:1,2)

These affectionate and final words of the aged mentor to his son in the faith are endearing. The writer identified himself that he was an apostle ***"by the will of God."*** As an apostle who was personally sent forth by Jesus, Paul knew his destiny from the time he was blinded on the Damascus road. While waiting in some residence in Damascus after personally encountering Jesus, he was sent on his way into Arabia and the rest of the Roman world to preach the gospel, as well as teach the prophets that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of all prophecies concerning the Messiah (See At 9:9).

He was one of the few, if not the only, apostle about whom it was said, ***"For I [Jesus] will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake"*** (At 9:16). When Paul responded to the call of Ananias to ***"arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"*** (At 22:16), he knew

all the hardships that he would eventually go through as an apostle *“of Christ Jesus.”* Nevertheless, he was willing to *“endure all things for the elects’ sake”* (2 Tm 2:10), knowing that anyone who would *“live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Tm 3:12). Timothy needed to recall all this that his mentor had endured for the name of the Lord in being a teacher.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see Paul address Timothy as *“a dearly beloved son.”* It was possibly on his first mission journey with Barnabas that he personally baptized Timothy in Lystra. On the second journey through the region of Lystra, Derbe and Iconium, Paul wanted Timothy to go with him throughout the remainder of the second journey (See At 16:3). And from that time to the writing of this letter, a lot of history had transpired as the two evangelists labored as soldiers in fellowship for the faith. In writing from a prison in Rome around A.D. 67, it was now time for the aged mentor to say farewell to his trusted companion.

Since Timothy’s father was undoubtedly an unbelieving Greek, we can understand why Timothy emotionally attached himself so strongly to Paul. This attachment was so endearing that Paul once wrote of his emotional attachment to Timothy: *“But you know of his [Timothy’s] proven worth, that as a son with his father, he has served with me in the gospel”* (Ph 2:22).

## B. The Power Of Faith (1:3-7)

Paul had always conscientiously worked in obedience to God. He was a man of great faith, even when persecuting the church as an unbeliever (See 1 Tm 1:13-16). He served God with *“a pure conscience.”* He could leave this earth without any guilt, though he had initially been in the bondage of the Jews’ religion (See Gl 1:13,14). But now it was time to move on from the one about whom he wrote, *“Without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day.”*

Though Timothy may at the time been in a state of discouragement, and thus temporarily feeling guilty

about the cessation of his own teaching ministry, he must remember that his mentor had previously in his life worked against the church of God prior to his obedience to the gospel. We view God's forgiveness of Paul's persecution of the early disciples as an example of grace in action. **No matter how far one might feel he or she is from God, God can come for us through His grace.** When we consider this awesome grace, it is a time to burst forth with a doxology: *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out"* (Rm 11:33).

Paul's prayers for Timothy were earnest because he sincerely desired to see Timothy for the last time. He remembered Timothy's tears when they last parted from one another some time before. If he could see Timothy again, then he would be *"filled with joy."* It is apparent that Paul knew that his journey on this earth was at an end. He would later say to Timothy, *"I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course"* (2 Tm 4:7).

Paul's appreciation for Timothy brought to remembrance *"the genuine faith"* that was in him. Timothy's faith was a spiritual inheritance from his *"grandmother Lois."* This faith was passed on to her daughter Eunice, and finally from Eunice, Timothy's mother, to Timothy himself. Eunice passed on this genuine faith by teaching Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul later wrote, *"From a child you have known the Holy Scriptures"* (2 Tm 3:15).

Since Timothy's father was undoubtedly an unbelieving Gentile. Therefore, we must give full credit to Timothy's mother for her dedicated persistence to pass on to her son a genuine faith through her Bible teaching of the Scriptures.

In his childhood, Timothy may have endured some conflict between his mother and father in matters of faith. But the statement here seems to indicate that the faith of the forefathers of Israel won the victory. Paul wrote, *"I am persuaded that it [the genuine faith] is in*



*you also.*” He could make this statement concerning Timothy’s faith because Timothy had proved himself through his faithful companionship with him in the ministry of teaching.

James challenged the faith of those who lacked to live and teach the word of God: *“Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works”* (Js 2:18). Timothy indeed showed his genuine faith by his committed years of teaching at Paul’s side. His was not a “church-house faith,” but a faith that drove him down the highways and byways of the Roman Empire teaching Jesus as the King of kings. Unless one’s faith is so demonstrated, it is as James reflected, **a dead faith** (Js 2:26).

Nevertheless, the occasion for the writing of this second letter to Timothy may have been that in the absence of the apostle, Timothy was somewhat discouraged because of the great opposition that had come against him and his teaching. For this reason, the apostle wrote, *“I remind you that you stir up the gift of God that is in you.”* This was possibly the gift of inspired teaching by the Holy Spirit, for there were no New Testament Scriptures at the time for Timothy to consult in reference to his teaching. There existed only the Old Testament Scriptures. Nevertheless, he knew the gospel by heart, and continued the edification of the church through teaching because of his gift of teaching that came to him through the laying on of Paul’s hands (See At 8:17,18).

We must not miss the imperative “stir up” in this statement. We must understand this from the directive of 1 Corinthians 14:32: *“Now the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”* There was nothing as that which is often proclaimed today, that one be “stricken by the Spirit.” Or, one must allow the Spirit to take control. Paul would not have encouraged Timothy to stir up the gift of the Spirit, if it were the responsibility of the Spirit to stir him into the action of teaching. **The gifts of the Holy Spirit never took control of the teacher.** The Spirit was in subjection to the teacher when the teacher was

to exercise his or her gift to teach. This situation with Timothy proves this point. Timothy had simply stopped the ministry of teaching.

Timothy's moment of discouragement may in part have been the result of his upbringing. Because he grew up in a divided family both in faith and culture—the father was an unbelieving Gentile—we could assume that Timothy may have allowed his lack of confidence as to who he was culturally to overcome momentarily his genuine faith that he received from his mother. At least we know that when one grows up in a culturally mixed family he often struggles for some time to determine his own cultural identity. Timothy may have allowed his struggle for identity in the past to discourage him in the present. At least he may have had some lack of confidence in himself because of his past mixed cultural childhood.

Therefore, Timothy needed to be reminded, ***“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”*** Timothy needed to remember that he did ***“not receive a spirit of bondage again to fear”*** (Rm 8:15). His fear originated from within himself. It was not from the Spirit of God. He also needed to remember the strength of the one who was writing this letter to him. Paul had also written to others, ***“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”*** (Ph 4:13). It was now time for Timothy to conquer his fears and get back to the work of teaching the Scriptures. He needed to do so regardless of the opposition that he faced, or his background in growing up in a culturally and spiritually mixed family.

We assume that Paul's point is that no disciple who is truly a disciple of Jesus can never blame his or her parents for any emotional dysfunctions that may have originated from one's childhood. There is no excuse for being dysfunctional in reference to living the gospel because one grew up in a culturally or spiritually dysfunctional family.

One must allow Jesus to transform him or her in order to overcome all emotional family dysfunctions

of the past. Everyone must be transformed into that which is appropriate for eternal dwelling (See Rm 12:1,2). Our confidence, therefore, **must always be in the power of God to transform us through the power of the gospel, and not in ourselves.** We must believe that God *“is able to do [with us] exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us”* (Ep 3:20). *“For this purpose I also labor,”* Paul wrote, *“striving according to His working that powerfully works in me”* (Cl 1:29).

We must allow the power of the gospel to transform us into those who are worthy of eternal dwelling. This is the power of the gospel in our lives, not the duty of the Holy Spirit. At least Timothy learned this great lesson by not casting on the Holy Spirit any complaints for his own discouragement. **Because he took ownership of his own discouragement, he could be encouraged by the Holy Spirit through the inspired words of Paul to get back to the work of teaching.** In this way, the Holy Spirit worked **indirectly** on his heart, not subjectively in moving him to stir up the gift of teaching.

### C. Standing On The Gospel (1:8-12)

Paul's use of the word “therefore” encourages Timothy to reflect on what he just wrote. And what he just wrote was that Timothy must remember four things: (1) Remember *“my prayers night and day”* that are for you; (2) Remember *“the genuine faith that is in you”*; (3) *“Stir up the gift of God that is in you”*; (4) *“God has not given us a spirit of fear.”* Because of these things, Paul encouraged Timothy, *“Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner.”*

We assume that Paul was in his second and last imprisonment in Rome at the time he wrote this letter. When Luke completed the book of Acts, Paul was in prison in Rome awaiting trial (See At 28:30,31). This first imprisonment was around A.D. 61,62. Paul was then released, and subsequently left Rome. At some

time after being released he made a hurried trip to the island of Crete where he left Titus (See Ti 1:5). From Crete he possibly went on to Achaia, and possibly Spain, then to Macedonia where he was arrested again around A.D. 67. He was again taken to Rome where he was eventually martyred for Jesus Christ. It is assumed that 2 Timothy and Titus were his last letters to his former associates. Realizing the finality of his life at the time he wrote 2 Timothy, he sought to encourage Timothy to *“share with me in the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.”*

Paul had formerly written to those in Rome, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel”* (Rm 1:16). And now he wrote to Timothy from Rome, *“Share with me in the afflictions of the gospel.”* In both statements he referred to the power of God through the gospel to both save and transform lives.

But the power of the gospel depends on a very important motivation. God *“has saved us and called us with a holy calling.”* This calling could never be according to God’s obligation to accept us through the performance of our own works. We must remember one very important fact: *“Now to him who works [in order to justify himself before God], the reward [of heaven] is not credited according to grace, but according to debt”* (Rm 4:4).

Heaven can never be a debt payment, **simply because we can never do enough good works to earn heaven.** Heaven must always be a free gift. In reference to God saving us, **God does not work on the basis of paying debts according to our works of merit.** He rewards according to grace. Therefore, our salvation *“is of faith that it might be by grace”* (Rm 4:16). We must walk by faith knowing that God will reward us because of the grace that was revealed on the cross. Therefore, if our salvation is *“by grace, then it is no more by works”* of merit (Rm 11:6). It is *“by grace you have been saved”* (Ep 2:5). We work in response to grace, realizing that our works, no matter how great or abundant, can never put God in debt to reward us with heaven. This is the meaning of what

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:15: *“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”*

Paul reminded Timothy that his salvational relationship with God was not based on any meritorious performance of his teaching. It was *“according to His own purpose and grace.”* Before the teacher would seek to sanctify himself through his powerful teaching, therefore, he must remember that he can find no justification for his sins through his performance of teaching. We must not seek to feel self-sanctified through our teaching performances. We must remember that we are already sanctified completely by the grace of God. The Christian works, not in order to earn salvation, but because he or she is **already** saved.

The Bible teacher cannot teach himself or herself into the grace of God. It should be that **one teaches because he or she has been saved by the grace of God**. It is often easy to identify a preacher who is seeking his own salvation through his performance of preaching. It is likewise easy to identify the one who is preaching in gratitude of the grace of God. One's life-style according to the gospel will reveal his motives.

Before the creation of the world, God determined that man whom He would create could never work himself into the grace of God (See Rm 16:25; Cl 1:26; 1 Pt 1:20). Therefore, **grace had to be free**. It had to be freely given, for no meritorious performance on the part of any person could qualify one to demand the saving grace of God. It was for this reason that God demonstrated *“His love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rm 5:8).

Timothy needed to remember that he had not fallen out of grace with God because of his momentary discouragement. If one feels that one has fallen out of grace with God, then he or she often feels that he or she must work themselves back into the grace of God. **This concept of behavior is nowhere taught in the**

**New Testament.** It is simply meritorious religiosity to think that one can perform himself back into the grace of God.

The preceding effort on the part of some is often embedded in the desire to have a “personal relationship” with Jesus. Meritorious religiosity is embedded in the desire to perform meritoriously in order to feel closer to Jesus. Unfortunately, this desire that we place on ourselves to establish a personal relationship with Jesus is often in contradiction to what God accomplished through Jesus.

God reached out to humanity in order to establish a “personal relationship” with us through His Son. This “personal relationship” has already been offered through grace that was poured forth at the cross. It is our responsibility to respond to God’s personal efforts where God extends to us through the cross. This is a response that He seeks to establish a relationship with us through our obedience to the gospel (See Rm 6:3-6). Once we accept this offer of a personal relationship with Him through our obedience to the gospel, then we are walking in the light (See 1 Jn 1:7).

**We do not marginalize the cross by our efforts to subsidize the atonement of the cross with our works.** We cannot subsidize God’s efforts to connect with us through Jesus. Likewise, we do not work our way into a personal relationship with Him when we are baptized into Christ. Our response to the gospel through baptism brings us into a relationship with God that He has already offered through His Son. When one is baptized into Christ, therefore, he or she is baptized into this relationship. This is the dynamic of being baptized *“into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt 28:19).

Those who are asking Jesus “to come into their hearts” may have misunderstood the plea of God through His only begotten Son. It is not that we ask God to come into our hearts. **God is asking us to come into His heart.** Every time the statement is made in the New Testament to “believe on Jesus,” it is

a request for those who hear the gospel to come into the realm of God's grace that is in Christ. God is *"not willing that any should perish"* (2 Pt 3:9). Therefore, He pleads through His Son, *"Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Mt 11:28). Jesus stands at the door of our hearts and continues to knock: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with Him, and he with Me"* (Rv 3:20). One should seek to "sup" with Jesus in a personal relationship.

God's plan to bring His creation into a personal relationship with Himself was determined before the creation of the world (See 1 Pt 1:20). In this predestined plan of reconciliation, God was righteous in creating humanity. If there were no plan through grace, then God would have been fiendish to create us without any chance of establishing a saved relationship with Him. Therefore, the fact that there was a predestined plan lies in the fact that the plan, Paul reminded Timothy, *"has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus."*

The cross, therefore, was not an afterthought. It was the predestined plan of God that was executed through the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God. We are humbled by the revelation of this mystery. Those who are outside this relationship with God should be looking for water in order to be baptized into Christ. It is only by joining with the crucified Christ in response to the gospel that we can enter into a personal relationship with God (See Rm 6:3-6).

Jesus was the creator of all things (See Cl 1:16). But before the first words were stated, "let there be" in reference to man, the Son of God already had in store what He would do. So eventually, *"the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"* (Jn 1:14). This was personal. This incarnation of the Son of God was predestined before the creation (See Jn 1:1,2). This was the gospel journey of the Son of God in order that He rescue us from this world in order to take us into eternity (See Ph 2:5-11). He came to establish a



salvational (personal) relationship with us because it was beyond our ability to perform perfectly in order to earn our salvation. We must, therefore, accept this opportunity through obedience to the gospel.

Some have proposed that when the Word was made flesh, the rejection of the Word by the Jews to whom He initially came somehow moved King Jesus to postpone His kingdom until His final coming (See Jn 1:11). But the foundation of this erroneous teaching is in the fact that the rejection of the Word, and subsequently the cross, **was always the eternal mystery of God to reconcile us to our Creator through Jesus**. God *“has reconciled us to Himself through Christ”* (2 Co 5:18). When we view the cross as the predestined plan of God to save sinners, we understand *“that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself”* (2 Co 5:19).

This is the message of reconciliation. If there were no reconciliation through Jesus, then our message of the gospel is empty. Therefore, before one attacks the gospel message with the teaching that the cross was an afterthought of God when the Jews rejected Jesus, he must consider again that the cross was the eternal predestined plan of God. It was predestined in order that the world be reconciled to God through the incarnate Son.

It was through the cross, Paul reminded Timothy, that the Son of God *“has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* This gospel was revealed as a mystery through the Old Testament prophets. After the event occurred, it was revealed through the apostles of Jesus Christ to the world (See Mk 16:15; Ep 3:3-5). The unveiling of the mystery was at the cross and resurrection of the One who created all those who through faith would respond to this good news. Paul had many years earlier written to the Christians in Rome, *“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?”* (Rm 6:3). And when this obedience of the gospel transpired in the lives of each disciple, it was then that *“life and*

*immortality*” were revealed. This is exactly why the Spirit was redundant to say again through John, *“This is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son”* (1 Jn 5:11).

So Paul reminded Timothy, *“To this gospel I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher.”* As a **preacher** of the gospel, Paul stood before unbelievers and announced the revealed mystery of the gospel. As an **apostle**, he was one who was sent forth by Jesus in order to announce the good news to unbelievers. As a **teacher**, he instructed believers in the specifics of the gospel. As a teacher he also instructed the believers in the wonders of the gospel that was a mystery to mankind before it was revealed through the incarnate Son of God (See Ep 3:3-5).

Timothy needed to rise up and continue to instruct the believers in living the gospel (See Rm 1:13-16). Timothy was initially a gospel preacher to the unbelievers. He was sent forth by the laying on of the elders’ hands in Lystra. And thus, as an apostle as Barnabas (See At 13:4), he went forth with Paul to preach the gospel to unbelievers. But in his local teaching at the time of the writing of this letter, Timothy needed to draw on the power of the gospel to renew his commitment to teach the saints.

Because the gospel worked powerfully in the life of Paul, he was willing to suffer for the gospel. So he encouraged Timothy that he was not alone in his suffering to teach gospel living to those who had obeyed the gospel. Paul wrote, *“For this reason I also suffer these things.”* When a teacher suffers in his efforts to lead the flock of God in being an example of gospel living, he must remember that Paul also suffered for the same reason. Paul had previously exhorted Timothy, *“You be an example to the believers”* (1 Tm 4:12).

In living and teaching others gospel living, Paul reminded Timothy, *“I am not ashamed.”* His statement is reminiscent of what he wrote to the disciples in Rome: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel”* (Rm 1:16). The reason he was not ashamed of the gospel was

that the gospel *“was the power of God unto salvation”* (Rm 1:16). If others would want to be saved, therefore, then there is no room to be ashamed of the message that will take them into eternal life. Our love for the lost must always overcome our apprehensions to stand up for the gospel. Our motivation to preach the gospel must always be that which drove Paul to conquer his fears: *“For the love of Christ compels us”* (2 Co 5:14). And so John would remind us, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear”* (1 Jn 4:18).

In the immediate text, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he was assured that Jesus Christ was truly the revealed Son of God who was incarnate in the flesh of man in order to go to the cross. He wrote: *“I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.”* Paul had committed his life to the Son of God, and thus he was assured that Jesus Christ would remember his sufferings as a preacher, apostle and teacher of the gospel. Peter essentially said the same: *“Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to Him in doing right, as to a faithful Creator”* (1 Pt 4:19).

#### **D. Standing Firm (1:13-18)**

Because of the power of the gospel that works in our lives, we can *“hold fast the pattern of sound words.”* We can do so *“in faith and love that is in Christ Jesus.”* This is the beauty of living and teaching the gospel. The gospel is not only about salvational matters, it is also about being motivated to live the holy life. In fact, and in another context, Paul exhorted, *“If you then were raised with Christ [in obedience to the gospel], seek those things that are above”* (Cl 3:1; see Cl 3:5-16). It is the grace of the gospel that causes *“thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God”* (2 Co 4:15). We stand firm as disciples of Jesus because we walk in gratitude of what He did for us at the cross, and what He will do for us when He is revealed from heaven.

We must not make the mistake of interpreting “*the pattern of sound words*” to refer to a legal document of law by which we can judge ourselves meritoriously performing correctly for our own justification. Such an interpretation would be entirely contrary to the grace that inherently defines the gospel. We would interpret what Paul said in this text according to his commentary of the thought that he wrote to the Corinthian Christians:

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached [with words] to you, which also you received [through words] and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast to that word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain* (1 Co 15:1,2).

Through the words of Paul, God had communicated the gospel to the Corinthians. If they continued to hold fast to his word by which he communicated the gospel to them, then their obedience to the gospel would not be in vain. The Corinthians must continue to **believe the word** by which Paul communicated the gospel to them. The solid foundation of the gospel upon which they stood, would be firm only if they continued to believe in his word.

In the text written to Timothy, the exhortation was to “*hold fast the pattern of sound words*” by which the gospel is communicated to all people. It was communicated “*in faith and love.*” Timothy was not to make any changes to the message. It was to be held as a “pattern,” for if the message was corrupted in any way, then it would become the “other gospel” about which Paul wrote to the Galatians (See Gl 1:6-9).

The gospel was “*the good thing that was committed*” to Timothy. If he doubted the pattern of the message of the gospel that was verbally committed to him, then his faith would be in vain. We assume, therefore, that Christians must continually be reminded with Scripture and hymns that speak of the old story of the cross.

*Tell me the old, old Story, Of unseen things above,  
Of Jesus and His glory, Of Jesus and His love;*

*Tell me the story simply, As to a little child,  
For I am weak and weary, And helpless and defiled.*

(George Bernard)

It is this story that we *“keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.”* It is not that the Holy Spirit keeps the story in us. It is “kept by the Holy Spirit.” “Keep” refers to guard, and thus because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, then we guard the gospel in our lives in order not to bring shame on the Son of God. It is the same as what the Holy Spirit said to some Jewish Christians who were falling away from the gospel: *“They crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame”* (Hb 6:6). But if *“God is not ashamed to be called”* our God (See Hb 11:16), then we must not shame Him by treading under foot the blood of His incarnate Son (See Hb 10:29). It was this Son who is *“the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame”* of the cross for us (Hb 12:2).

Nevertheless, Paul wrote to Timothy, *“All those who are in Asia turned away from me.”* It was not that all the Christians in Asia turned away from Paul while he was in Rome in prison. It was only that those of Asia who were in Rome at the time Paul was in prison who turned away. For example, *“of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.”* At the time of writing a second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, *“Only Luke is with me”* (2 Tm 4:11).

If Timothy was in Asia at the time of writing, then the *“house of Onesiphorus”* was also there (See 2 Tm 4:19). At the time of writing, Onesiphorus was in Rome with Paul in order to encourage him. Of him, Paul wrote that he *“was not ashamed of my chains.”* When Onesiphorus came to Rome, *“he eagerly sought me out and found me”* in the custody of a prison guard. Onesiphorus was not like some arrogant preachers who had forsaken Paul during his first imprisonment. Of these political opportunists Paul wrote, *“The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not with pure motives, supposing to add distress to my chains”* (Ph 1:16). He said this of those political preachers who

*“preach Christ even from envy and strife” (Ph 1:15).*

It seems that Onesiphorus had a long acquaintance with Paul. When Paul was in Ephesus, it was there that Onesiphorus *“ministered to me.”* And now when Onesiphorus found out that Paul was in distressing times in a Roman prison, he caught the first ship to Rome in order to encourage Paul in prison. Such is the character of love. Such defines true fellowship that we have in preaching the gospel to the world.

Ministry is our work for others in helping those who are in need. If one is in need of the message of the saving gospel, then we minister the gospel. If one is in distress, then we minister a message of comfort. Ministry, therefore, is always focused on others. When we keep our ministry focused on others, then we are worthy of the words that were written by Paul concerning Onesiphorus: *“The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy from the Lord in that day.”*

## Chapter 2

### LIVING THE TEACHING

In the context of this chapter, the Holy Spirit gives some very important instructions through Paul concerning those who would be both evangelists in preaching the gospel to unbelievers, as well as teachers of the word of God to the disciples. As Paul goes through this list of instructions, it is necessary that we note each point of instruction as a guideline for living according to the gospel. We must do so because it is the Holy Spirit who is writing these instructions in order that one be an effective teacher of the word of God.

#### A. Instructions For Teachers (2:1-13)

**1. “Be strong in the grace” (2:1):** The imperative in this statement assumes that one enjoys the effect that the grace of God has on his or her behavior. Paul’s statement in **2 Corinthians 4:15** may be the commentary that would give us some insight into the mandate that he here gives to Timothy: *“The grace that is reaching many people may cause*

***thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”***

Understanding that we are saved by grace is powerful in reassuring that as Bible teachers, we do not stand alone in our relationship with God. Too many people have revealed the frustration of living faithfully because of their inability to perform perfectly their self-imposed religious rites and rituals. In frustration, many have fled to the grace of God. This was the frustration that Paul expressed to Peter on the occasion when Peter momentarily withdrew from some legalistic brethren who came to Antioch from Jerusalem:

*We who are Jews by nature and not sinners among the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, not by the works of law, for by works of law no flesh will be justified* (Gl 2:15,16).

Grace causes grateful appreciation because we are encouraged to walk in gratitude of what we already have in Christ. **When one realizes that his walk in the merit of his own works leads only to frustration, then he is driven to grace.** This is what Jesus meant when He said, *“If I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me”* (Jn 12:32). He was the grace that was lifted up, and thus it is grace that draws us to Him.

We are made strong in the grace of God because we are encouraged to trust in God and not in ourselves. Grace is reassuring. It is confidence building because we trust in Him and not in our own performance of law. The more we understand the magnitude of the grace of God that was poured out for us through the faith of Christ going to the cross for us, the more we are inspired to walk in thanksgiving of God for all that He did for us through His Son.

**2. “Teach” (2:2):** The first thing that grace encourages is our own appreciation for what we have learned in Him. We are thus driven to share the



message of grace. This point was so important that Paul expanded on the subject in his letter to Titus:

*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age*** (Ti 2:12).

In this statement, Paul personified grace as the teacher. It is this “teacher” who encourages us to live godly. In appreciation for what God did for us through the offering of His only begotten Son, we are driven to *“live sensibly, righteously and godly in this present age.”*

Timothy had indeed learned from Paul the grace that God had extended to this former persecutor of the church. So the mandate to Timothy was to commit the same *“to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”* The more we understand the magnitude of the grace of God, the more we want to teach it to others. Gospel teachers, therefore, are such because they are highly motivated by the gospel of grace to teach the grace that comes to them through the gospel. It would be true, therefore, **that if we do not teach the gospel of grace, then we do not fully appreciate God’s grace.**

When we see others struggling with their meritorious religious works in order to self-sanctify themselves before God through law-keeping, **the more we are moved to deliver them from the bondage of religion by teaching grace.** However, if we go to those who are already struggling in religion with just another system of legalism that is cloaked in a “form of righteousness,” then we would be as the Pharisees about whom Jesus said, *“For they bind up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders”* (Mt 23:4). *“For you [scribes and Pharisees] travel sea and land to make one proselyte. And when he is made, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves”* (Mt 23:15).

Legal meritorious religiosity does not bring the freedom of grace to those who are in the bondage

of their own efforts to save themselves, even though the doctrinal outline of a legal religionist is punctuated with one law after another. Law is important, but we, as Paul, *“conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the [perfect] works of law”* (Rm 3:28).

Being a good religionists assumes that we are justified by our own efforts to keep law perfectly. But we must not forget that in reference to law-keeping, *“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Rm 3:10). This does not mean that we *“make void law through faith”* (Rm 3:31). *“On the contrary, we establish law”* by faith (Rm 3:31). We seek to live by the law of God because of our faith in the faith of Christ who went to the cross in order to deliver us from the necessity to keep law perfectly in an attempt to save ourselves (See Gl 2:16).

**3. “Endure hardship” (2:3):** If grace is preached in a world of meritorious religiosity, then Bible teachers of grace will incur the same persecution that came upon Jesus when He was the same teacher to His generation of religionists. When Jesus taught the preceding message of grace to the religious leaders of the Jews, they unleashed on Him nails and a cross.

In preparing His disciples for the same reaction from the religious leaders they would encounter, Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its works are evil”* (Jn 7:7). Therefore, Timothy must remember what Jesus said to His disciples: *“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you”* (Jn 15:18).

It was at this time in His earthly teaching ministry that Jesus revealed an axiomatic truth for those who would live according to the gospel that He introduced into the world: *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you”* (Jn 15:19).

Jesus would also remind all of us, *“He who hates Me hates My Father also”* (Jn 15:23). Timothy needed to

remember this when he was *“enduring hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus”* in teaching the gospel to others (See Mt 5:10-12). He needed to remember that as strict religionists hated Jesus, they would likewise hate him for teaching against their legal adherence to law.

**4. “Focus” (2:4-7):** In order to endure the hardship that will come upon the one who teaches the gospel of grace that the religious world hates, one must stay focused, *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross”* (Hb 12:2).

In order to stay focused in the warfare in which we have engaged Satan in this world, we must not entangle ourselves *“with the affairs of this life.”* In his first letter to Timothy, Paul cautioned the young Bible teacher with the words, *“For the love of money is the root of all evils”* (1 Tm 6:10). If one entangles himself with the love of money, then he must be reminded that *“some [Christians] coveting after [money] have strayed from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows”* (1 Tm 6:10). Therefore, in order to *“fight the good fight of the faith”* (1 Tm 6:12) in the war in which we are engaged against Satan in this world, **we must not entangle ourselves in that which will divert our attention away from our mission.** If we follow this directive as Bible teachers, then we will *“please him who enlisted”* us as soldiers of the cross.

*“If a man competes as an athlete,”* he does not receive the prize for the race unless he runs according to the rules. And so it is with our walk by faith. Unless we walk according to the gospel of grace, we will not receive the crown that is laid up for us at the end of our race on earth. We will not receive the crown unless we stay focused (See 2 Tm 4:8; Hb 12:1,2).

The objective of the gospel race is the crown. Receiving the crown is as the *“laboring farmer”* who expects to *“first partake of the fruits”* of his own labors. As he runs the race of farming, he remains faithful to

his duties in expectation of the food that he will enjoy when harvest comes.

When Paul reminded Timothy that *“the Lord will give you understanding in all things,”* we must reflect on the gift of understanding that came personally to Timothy as a result of the laying on of Paul’s hands. Reference here could be to the *“word of wisdom”* that Timothy may have received as a gift that was distributed to Timothy through Paul (See 1 Co 12:8). Since *“one and the same Spirit works all these things [gifts], distributing to every one individually as He wills,”* (1 Co 12:11), then we could assume that Paul here assumes that the Holy Spirit would bless Timothy with wisdom concerning these things about which he wrote. Timothy had no written New Testament to consult. He had only the gift of wisdom that he had received through the laying on of Paul’s hands.

(Some wonder why there is no great emphasis placed in the New Testament on the historical function of the miraculous gifts among the early Christians. The answer to this lack of focus on the gifts in the New Testament is in the fact that Jesus did not send forth this measure of the Spirit as something that would be permanent throughout the history of the church. **The miraculous gifts were given only to establish the early church in the faith in the absence of the written word of God.** After the written word was completed, the Holy Spirit expected it to carry the disciples throughout the centuries to come until the coming of Jesus.

In reference to the miraculous gifts, it was always according to what Paul wrote: *“For we know in part and we prophesy in part”* (1 Co 13:9). The miraculous gifts were always partial in reference to the complete revelation of the word of God that would, by the end of the first century, be complete. Therefore, while the early Christians experienced the benefit of the miraculous gifts in the absence of the written word of God, it was always as Paul metaphorically stated, *“When I was a child I spoke as a child. I understood as a child. I thought as a child”* (1 Co 13:11).

The early disciples were taught partially through the miraculous gifts. But they would eventually be able to grow into spiritual adulthood only through the complete revelation of the word of God in written form. Then at that time, Paul explained, *“But where there are prophecies, they will be abolished. Where there are languages, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will vanish away”* (1 Co 13:8).

The gifts were understood in the historical context that *“when that which is complete has come, then that which is in part [the miraculous gifts] will be done away”* (1 Co 13:10). For this reason the New Testament does not focus on the continuation of the miraculous gifts among the early disciples. We understand, however, that the gifts are in the background as they are noted occasionally in this and other letters of the New Testament. They are mentioned only in passing because the Holy Spirit, at the time, was preparing the writing of the New Testament for the time when the gifts would fade away, which thing happened by the end of the first century. That which was in part was to firmly establish the disciples. But the written word of God would continue for centuries after the last person died who had hands laid on him to receive a miraculous gift.)

**5. “Remember” (2:8,9):** The gospel is not only the incarnation and crucifixion, but also the resurrection of the Son of God from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God. Therefore, Timothy must gain strength through his remembrance *“that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead.”* This was the good news that Paul first preached in Timothy’s hometown of Lystra (Compare 1 Co 15:1,2). What Paul is calling on Timothy to do is to remember that he initially responded to this gospel message that he and Barnabas had preached in Lystra about twenty years before. It is thus good sometimes to remember that when we first obeyed the gospel we committed ourselves to live the gospel the rest of our lives.

The intensity of Paul’s belief in the gospel was

revealed in his willingness to suffer hardship for the gospel (See 2 Co 11:16-29). It was for the gospel, Paul reminded Timothy, that *“I suffer hardship even as an evildoer in bonds.”* Paul was under the same sentence of death as those who had committed crimes that were deserving of death. However, he wanted to remind Timothy and ourselves that *“the word of God is not bound.”* People can burn the Bible, but the message of the gospel will continue. Muslims consider the Quran to be sacred paper and ink, but it is the message of the Bible that is precious to Christians. The message of the gospel cannot be corrupted, even by the worst translation that may exist.

**6. “Live with Jesus” (2:10-13):** For the preceding reason, Paul continued to *“endure all things for the elects’ sake.”* He was focused on those who would eventually be elected out of this world for eternal glory. God had predestined before the creation that He would save all those who would individually and voluntarily respond to the sacrificial offering of His Son. In this way, He *“predestined us [the obedient] to the adoption of sons through Jesus Christ to Himself”* (Ep 1:5). Therefore, in Christ *“we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined [as the church] according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Ep 1:11).

In our individual response to the gospel, **we voluntarily make a choice to become a part of those whom God would eventually elect out of this world for eternal glory.** Christians are thus “the elect,” because when the final chapter of the gospel is revealed when Jesus comes again, **He will elect us out of this world for eternal dwelling.** After speaking of these things to those in Thessalonica, Paul concluded, *“Comfort one another with these words”* (1 Th 4:18; see 1 Th 4:13-17).

A committed teacher of the word of God is dedicated to those who will be elected out of this world for eternal glory. It is for this reason that there are those who

work among the disciples in order to look out for their souls (See Hb 13:17). Through their teaching, they are preparing the elect for eternal dwelling.

If one would live with Jesus now, then he must die to himself in order to be a part of those who will eventually be elected out of this world. Timothy knew exactly that to which Paul was referring in this text. He had heard the following message many times:

*Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, **even so we also might walk in newness of life*** (Rm 6:3,4).

There can be no “newness of life” if there is no death with Christ on the cross. If we would live with Him in the life to come, then we must have died and been buried with Him in this life.

Paul then expanded on his reference to our response to the gospel. *“If we suffer”* as he was suffering in a Roman prison, then *“we will also reign with Him.”* Paul was not diverting Timothy’s attention to something yet in the future. Timothy was being encouraged in the present to *“endure hardship as a good soldier.”* Paul’s emphasis, therefore, was encouragement of the young disciple in reference to his present situation. Jesus left an example of suffering with Him: *“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps”* (1 Pt 2:21). In following Jesus as a Bible teacher, one must be committed to suffer with Jesus. This is living the gospel.

Romans 5:17 is the commentary on what Paul meant:

*For if by one man’s offense death reigned through the One, much more they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **will reign in life** through the one, Jesus Christ.*

This promise to reign with Christ is something that is

experienced **in this life**. Walking in the newness of life after we are baptized is our reign over all trials and tribulation in this life (See 1 Co 10:13). We died with Christ in response to the gospel, and thus we now reign with Him who is our King of kings and Lord of lords.

There are some who are confused about this present reign of the saints with King Jesus. They rob the saints of this precious reality in life by forwarding the “reign” to some future fantasy of Jesus reigning on this earth. But the reign under consideration by Paul in Romans 5:17 is **spiritual**, not carnal. Those who postpone the reign to the future assume that there will eventually be some **carnal reign** of the saints over unbelievers. But this concept of a reign of the saints is earthly and carnal. It is a distraction from the spiritual reign of the saints with Christ who is now over *“all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named”* (Ep 1:21). Though we do not yet see that all things have been subjected to Jesus at this time (See Hb 2:8), we can be assured that He is head over all things for the sake of the saints (See Ep 1:22). **We must not allow our lack of understanding of His present kingship dethrone Him from His reign at the right hand of God.**

Since we have the victory through our obedience to Jesus’ gospel work at the cross, we too have conquered the spiritual forces of evil that war against us. Timothy needed to be reassured that as a good soldier who was engaging the enemy, he would eventually gain the victory. If John were writing to Timothy, he would have written, *“This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith”* (1 Jn 5:4).

Therefore, Paul said to Timothy in a time of discouragement, *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself.”* When we are in those times when we feel that Jesus is a long way from us, we need to remember that **we are reigning in this life with Him**. We may have a momentary slip off the throne with Him, but He is still there. Since we are subjects of His kingdom reign, He cannot ignore



His subjects. (This is a good time to sit back and read **Romans 8:28-39.**)

## **B. Instructions On Gospel living (2:14-26)**

In this context, Paul sought to encourage the young Bible teacher (See 2 Tm 3:15,16). In his encouragement, Paul reminded Timothy with a charge *“before the Lord that they [the disciples] do not strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.”* When Christians involve themselves in disputes over nonsense, they give themselves over to the Devil to work mischief among them. There are words (discussions) that have *“no profit.”* In other words, these are discussions that are not profitable for spiritual growth and unity of the body.

The one who knows his or her Bible can discern those “words” that are not profitable for spiritual growth. He or she can separate Bible from Baal by *“rightly dividing the word of truth.”* However, those who do not know their Bibles cannot discern those words that are of no profit.

Since Paul’s admonition came to Timothy as a “charge,” then he must *“be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed”* of those things that he teaches. One should never be apprehensive about teaching the word of God. The word that he or she teaches did not originate from the one who delivers the word. The word originated from God. If one is apprehensive about the word of God, therefore, he or she will not have confidence in teaching it to others. In fact, the teacher must know that if he or she does not teach, then those disciples who believe and propagate the words of no profit will do so *“to the ruin of the hearers.”* **A group of disciples, therefore, can be ruined if they are taught by one who does not know the Bible.**

Any group of people who call themselves after Christ, who do not open their Bibles and study, is not a true body of Christ. They are a religion that is being led astray by those who do not know their Bibles. Of such teachers Jesus admonished the dedicated, *“Let*

*them alone*” (Mt 15:14). Jesus explained why they should be left alone: *“They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch”* (Mt 15:14).

We have discovered that those religious groups that are determined to exist apart from the teaching of the word of God are driven by excited “blind guides,” who with great zeal, propagate exhilarating words that are sterile of the word of God. In their experiential excitement, the people leave the teaching of the teacher, being no wiser in the word of God than when they first showed up at the assembly. They are the blind who have itching ears to be led by blind teachers who do not know their Bibles (See 2 Tm 4:3).

Too many teachers propagate *“profane and empty babblings.”* These false prophets *“will increase to more ungodliness.”* In reference to the time when Paul wrote these words to Timothy, these babbling teachers were not far in the future in Asia. In the church of the city of Pergamum, and some of the other churches of Asia, Jesus judged,

*But I have a few things against you because you have there those who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication* (Rv 2:14; see Rv 2:20; 3:2).

Ungodliness is spread through words that either condone or encourage wicked behavior. It happens as Paul wrote, *“Their word will spread like gangrene.”* Paul’s example of two teachers, Hymenaeus and Philetus, proves that some will stray from the truth when they teach that which destroys the foundation of the gospel.

The foundation of the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus was that they taught *“that the resurrection is already past.”* When this fundamental fact of the gospel is denied, it opens the door to what Paul argued in 1 Corinthians 15: *“If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die”* (1 Co 15:32). If there is no resurrection to come, then the impetus

for living the gospel becomes meaningless. It is meaningless because the gospel cannot bring hope without the resurrection. There is no “good” news in the gospel if there is no resurrection in the future.

If this life is all there is, then we should live a life that satisfies every hedonistic desire in order to be happy. And such is the world in which we live today. When people take pride in their fornication, then we know that civilization as we know it is in demise. Fornication in a society is an attack against the family. It is an attack even against marriage. When marriage and family are destroyed within a particular society, then that society is on its way out. The society becomes as it was in the days before Noah when *“the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gn 6:5).

The only way to detour a society that is headed for doom is to teach the moral standards of the word of God. This principle is axiomatic. It is not within our own power to determine our own moral standard of living. For example, this is the problem with fornication. Fornication is the satisfaction of the sexual lust of people for their own selfish pleasure. If a society determines that there is no stigma attached to committing fornication, then the society as a whole establishes its own moral standard that fornication is acceptable between “two consenting adults.” But according to the moral standard of the word of God, fornication is sin. It is sin from which one must turn if he or she would be a disciple of Jesus (See 1 Co 6:9; Rv 21:8).

Though we may live in a morally digressed society, we must always remember that *“the firm foundation of God stands.”* The seal (signal) of this foundation is that *“the Lord knows those who are His.”* He knows those who are His because of their commitment to live the moral standards that He has communicated through His word. It is imperative, therefore, that the mandate of 2 Timothy 2:2 be carried out: *“The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses,*

*the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others.”*

Therefore, *“let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”* When one commits himself or herself to the Lord, **this means that he or she has committed themselves to a moral standard of authority that is based on the word of God.** Paul said the same in another context: *“If you then were raise with Christ,”* then put off those things that identify one with a world of iniquity (Read CI 3:1,8-11). At the same time, one must *“put on as the elect of God”* those behavioral standards that identify one to be living the holy life (Read CI 3:12-14).

In the house of God, it is as any physical house. In a physical house there are *“vessels of gold and of silver.”* But in the same house, and at the same time, there are vessels *“of wood and of earth”* that are always temporary. The vessels of gold and silver bring *“honor”* to the house. But the vessels of wood and earth bring *“dishonor.”* Only the vessels of honor are *“sanctified and useful for the Master”* for they do not perish with the using. Only these vessels are *“prepared for every good work.”* Those vessels of dishonor, however, bring disrepute on the house of God. They disgrace the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ because they lead to the ruin of the house of God.

Lest we think for a moment that such iniquity as fornication cannot invade the house of God, we must not forget the house of God in Corinth. *“It is actually reported,”* Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *“that there is fornication among you”* (1 Co 5:1). When there are those teachers among us who are weak in teaching against fornication, the practice will often come into the very family of God when such becomes an accepted moral behavior of society. The result of being weak in teaching against all forms of fornication is that the faith of many is ruined.

In reference to those in Corinth who condoned the satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh through fornication, Paul instructed the faithful to *“deliver such a one to*

*Satan for the destruction of the flesh*" (1 Co 5:5). The faithful were to *"purge out the old leaven"* of worldly living (See 1 Co 5:7). If a group of disciples is not willing to purge out those who seek to live according to the flesh, then they are doomed as those churches of Asia who did not repent of their iniquity. Jesus would say to every group of disciples who condone sexual immorality, *"Therefore, repent, or else I will come to you quickly. And I will fight against them with the sword of My mouth"* (Rv 2:16).

Paul's answer for keeping oneself pure of fornication can be encapsulated in one word: **Flee!** *"Flee also youthful lusts."* There are those lusts that are strong in youth, and from these the wise apostle encouraged Timothy to stay away from the presence thereof. Fleeing is defined in the text when we *"pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace"* with those who are fellow Christians (See 1 Tm 6:11). In other words, in order to keep oneself undefiled by the iniquity of the world, he or she as a young person must stay in the company of righteous people. Evil companions do corrupt one's thinking. **In order to keep one's heart and mind pure, then one must stay in the companionship of those who are godly.**

In this context of moral purity, Paul inserted an admonition: *"Avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they generate strife."* *"Unlearned questions"* are those questions that people **ask out of their own ignorance of a particular subject**. The fact that those who ask such question because they know little or nothing about what they ask **is evidence that they are trying to stir up strife**. The Bible teacher must know that senseless talk will lead to nonsense. Continual talking about issues of nonsense only digresses into strife. When the conversation turns to *"foolish and unlearned questions,"* it is time to move on to those subjects that generate *"righteousness, faith, love and peace."*

In order not to be misunderstood on this subject, Paul explicitly stated, *"The servant of the Lord must not quarrel."* If one finds himself in a quarrel with

another over questions of nonsense, then he knows that he has momentarily turned from the standard of *“righteousness, faith, love and peace.”*

The character and behavior of those who seek to live in response to the demeanor of the gospel is to *“be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves.”* If one would persist to engage in *“foolish and unlearned questions,”* then he or she will become one of *“those who oppose themselves.”* And if one finds himself or herself in such a situation, then it is time for repentance.

In this context of behavior, repentance is expressed with the **subjunctive**. If one adheres to the instructions herein given in reference to godly behavior, then it may be that God *“will grant them repentance leading to a full knowledge of the truth.”* And in this context, we would add that it is necessary that one be led into a *“full knowledge of the truth”* of the gospel (See Gl 2:5,14). If one is looking unto Jesus as his example of behavior, then he must *“let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation”* (Ph 2:5-7). If one would live after this gospel example of Jesus, then he too must make the gospel journey with Jesus.

If one would seek to live after the example of Jesus, it is then that Paul says, *“they may come to their senses out of the snare of the devil.”* In contrast to being *“held captive by him to do his will,”* the one who would obey the gospel has brought himself into the freedom that is in Christ (See Gl 5:1). In this freedom in Christ one should never allow himself or herself to be led into the captivity of any sin.

### Chapter 3

#### TEACHING THROUGH PERILOUS TIMES

Paul not only realized that the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies concerning the consummation of national Israel was now upon the Jews, he gave some final

statements to Timothy in order to prepare him for the imminent social upheaval that was coming. We have found that biblical interpreters traditionally pay little attention to this historical consummation in the existence of national Israel that transpired in the first century. The termination of national Israel through whom God had worked for centuries to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world was now beginning to transpire in the lifetime of Timothy.

We conclude that this letter was written around A.D. 66, prior to Paul's beheading in Rome in possibly A.D. 67. Therefore, we would logically view the context of Paul's statements to both Timothy and Titus—the last two letters that Paul wrote—that his thoughts would make some references to this catastrophic finality of national Israel. The wars of Rome against the Jews transpired over a period of about seven years in Judea, culminating in the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and Masada in A.D. 73. In A.D. 73 the finality of Rome's campaign in Palestine eventually came to a close in the conquest of Herod's getaway resort of Masada that was south of Jerusalem.

The consummation of national Israel was traumatic for the Jews. Over 1,500 years of history were coming to a close at the time Paul wrote to the two Bible teachers, Timothy and Titus. It had been **about thirty-five years before** when Jesus went into detail on this matter in **Matthew 24**. In the Matthew 24 discussion specifically with Peter, Andrew, James and John, Jesus prophesied for these Jewish believers what would transpire before they died. In writing to Timothy and Titus, Paul was stating that what Jesus prophesied was about to happen. The end was near (see also Lk 21).

The fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus was made about forty years before A.D. 70, and about thirty-five years before Paul wrote this letter. Jesus had personally said to His immediate disciples during His earthly ministry many years before, ***“Do you not see all these things [of Jerusalem and the temple]? Truly***

*I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down*" (Mt 24:2). He made this prophecy in reference to the temple and Jerusalem. And now, both Timothy and Titus were in those last days when the stones were still standing upon one another, but would soon be cast down.

Now suppose we were teachers of Matthew 24 during those times when a greater part of the church was composed of Jewish Christians. What instructions do we suppose the Holy Spirit would give to us concerning the finality of the Jewish heritage that had now come upon the Jewish nation? With this question in mind, we must come to the context of 2 Timothy and Titus. From chapter 3 in the 2 Timothy letter, Paul prepared Timothy to deal with both doctrinal and social problems that would threaten the body of Jewish believers during these final days of Israel.

The content of this chapter can be divided into two sections: **(1)** Paul reflects on Jesus' prophecy concerning the nature of a society that is fallen (3:1-9). **(2)** He then exhorts those teachers who must endure the fallen social environment in which they taught the disciples (3:10-17).

### **A. The Fallen Society (3:1-9)**

In the first letter Paul wrote to Timothy, he had prepared Timothy for these last times: *"Now the Spirit clearly says that in the latter times [of national Israel] some will depart from the faith"* (1 Tm 4:1). In this letter, the warning is *"that in the last days [of national Israel] perilous times will come."* The civil and social times before and after A.D. 66 were certainly trying. Timothy lived during these days of Jewish rebellion and Roman subjugation of the Jews. As a leader in the faith, it was Timothy's task to hold the people of God together and keep them encouraged. This was not a time in history to draw back from one's teaching responsibilities.

And then also, we must not become "prophecy thieves" by stealing these statements from Timothy



and others who were responsible for preparing the disciples to endure the troubling times that were upon them. Some modern-day prognosticators are quick to scurry through the Scriptures for some statements by which they can scare their immediate audiences into false hopes in the midst of perilous times. But doing such robs Timothy, and those to whom he personally ministered, of some encouraging preparatory instructions by the Holy Spirit that they endure the next few years of social turmoil. This would be particularly true in reference to the Jewish Christian families whose national heritage was going to be greatly disrupted. They must remember, therefore, that what was about to transpire in history was all in the working hand of God.

But with these statements of Paul to Timothy, those today who would steal them for ourselves have missed the fulfillment of Paul's statements by over two thousand years. **We sometimes twist the Scriptures to our own destruction when we steal Bible prophecies that were relevant to those in whose lifetime in the first century they were applied and fulfilled.** We would therefore caution those who would use these statements of the "end of times" to refer to times in our own generation.

One important point to keep in mind is that **the Bible nowhere teaches the imminent return of Jesus.** We need to be clear on this point. "Imminent" means "right now," in one's lifetime. **Nowhere in the New Testament is there a promise that Jesus would come in His final coming in the lifetime of the disciples of the first century.** The Holy Spirit simply did not lie to the immediate readers of the original autographs. For example, when James wrote, *"for the coming of the Lord is near,"* **He was not deceiving His readers into believing that Jesus was about to come in His final coming in the lifetime of his immediate readers** (See Js 5:8). If the Holy Spirit through James had prophesied such in this statement, then the Holy Spirit would have lied to the people, for Jesus has not yet come for over two

thousand years.

Therefore, if statements as “latter times,” “last days” and “near” do not refer to an imminent final coming of Jesus in the lifetime of the first recipients of the New Testament letters, **then there are no statements in the entire New Testament that teach Jesus’ imminent final coming in our lifetime.** If the New Testament did not teach the imminent return of Jesus in the first century when the words of prophecy were first written, **then it does not teach such today.** The “end-of-time” prognosticators need to take another look at their Bibles, especially to those passages as the one under consideration in our immediate text that speaks of the “last days.”

Paul prepared Timothy and the early disciples by stating *“that in the last days [of national Israel] perilous times will come.”* “Perilous times” refers to both social and civil conflict. Social unrest often produces civil conflict. And in the historical context in which Paul wrote, the Jewish insurrection had grown so strong in the Roman Empire that the Romans decided to terminate the source of the problem. Jerusalem, and national Israel, had to be subjugated.

In the text, Paul then went to the heart of the problem. And the heart was the chaotic social environment of the Jews at the time. When Paul said, *“For men will be,”* we assume that he takes his discussion outside the fellowship of the disciples, though the Jewish insurrection also affected the Jewish disciples. His primary focus, as Jesus in Matthew 24, was to identify the social upheaval of society that stirred the Romans into dealing with the Jewish problem in the civil society of the Roman Empire.

Jesus had touched on the social upheaval that would prevail until the final consummation of national Israel in A.D. 70. He prophesied that in the end of national Israel, *“many will be offended and will betray one another and will hate one another”* (Mt 24:10). *“Lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold”* (Mt 24:12).

Paul reiterated the meaning of these statements in

the contexts of his message to Timothy. In verses 2-5 he described the lawless society in which Timothy and the disciples lived at the time of writing:

*Men will be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

This description of a wretched society that prevailed at the time of Timothy underlines the social environment in which Timothy and Titus labored. Such social conditions prevailed in the decade leading up to the consummation of national Israel. We could assume that this description was relevant to the society of Jews at the time because it was the Jewish insurrection that Rome sought to put down. We make this application in view of the statement that some had *“a form of godliness.”* The statement is reminiscent of what Paul wrote of the Jews in Romans 10:3: *“For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”*

By establishing their own righteousness, they created religious behavior after their own desires. And in the context of the times, the Jews’ religious behavior was lawlessness in reference to Roman law (Compare Gn 6:5). In the statement that some *“will betray one another”* (Mt 24:10), we would assume that with the families of many Jewish Christians, there would be betrayals. Those who thought that they had a God-given destiny to deliver Israel from Roman oppression, imposed on all their Jewish relatives to take up the sword against Rome. In this social atmosphere **we would assume that there would be betrayals even within families.**

Peter likewise wrote 2 Peter in the middle 60s, about the same time that Paul penned his letter to Timothy. Peter reaffirmed what Paul wrote when he

described some apostate Jewish Christians:

*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, **they are again entangled in them and overcome ... it has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire”*** (2 Pt 2:20-22).

**We must not forget that Peter wrote to those of the area in which Timothy was living at the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy** (See 1 Pt 1:1). These words portray the very theme of Hebrews.

Paul was writing to Timothy concerning those who, according to Peter, were “wallowing in the mire” of sin from which they formerly had been delivered through their initial response to the gospel. However, whether he was speaking specifically of apostate Jewish Christians, or Jewish unbelievers in general, his instructions to Timothy were pointed: **“From such people turn away.”**

Timothy was to give the lawless insurrectionists over to the judgment that was coming upon them. If they wanted to give up their faith, take up a sword, and head to Jerusalem to fight the Romans, then Paul told Timothy to let them go to their own destruction.

(We believe that Paul wrote an entire book—**Hebrews**—to remind the recruited Jewish mercenaries who were Christians to remember King Jesus whom they were forsaking. In that document, he reminded his Jewish Christian readers, including himself and Timothy, that **“we are not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul”** - Hb 10:39).

Jude, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, quoted a statement that was initially made by Enoch who lived before the flood of Noah's day. **Enoch referred specifically to those who were destroyed in the flood.** Jude applied the same type of punishment to those of his generation. He also wrote in the middle 60s in reference to the judgment that was coming upon national Israel for their rejection of the Son of God:

*The Lord came with ten thousands of His saints [angels] to execute judgment on all, and to convict all who are **ungodly** among them of all their **ungodly** deeds that they have committed in an **ungodly** way, and of all the harsh things that **ungodly** sinners have spoken against Him* (Jd 14,15).

This prophecy was appropriate for the times in which Timothy, Titus, Peter, James and Jude lived. The description that Paul made in 2 Timothy concerning the social conditions of the times are exhausting to read. Nevertheless, they give us some idea of what God thinks of ungodly behavior, and especially of those who forsake Jesus and trod under foot His precious blood by which they were formerly cleansed (See Hb 10:29). Timothy, and the other leaders of the times, were to strike from their prayers those who lived an ungodly life that led to death and destruction. The apostle John specifically stated this in reference to such ungodly people, ***“There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he [the concerned teacher] should pray for this”*** (1 Jn 5:16). Tragic, but this is true in reference to some in their lives who have given up on Jesus and walked back into the vomit of sin and the mire in which pigs wallow.

The early disciples met in the homes of the members, and thus, Paul’s urgency here is in the fact that there were those who go from house to house with the heretical beliefs and conduct that he had previously described. So as Timothy possibly sat along in his house he needed to be reminded that there are ***“gullible women weighed down with sins”*** who were going from house to house with their social unrest and temptations. ***“Gullible women”*** are susceptible to being carried away by those who teach and practice lawlessness. In the first letter to Timothy, Paul described idle women who were ***“wandering about from house to house”*** (1 Tm 5:13). Here the focus is on those who are laden with sin and seek to propagate their ***“various lusts.”*** Paul knew that Timothy would be quite vulnerable in this state of discouragement as he sat in his house alone.

Because of the presence of ***“idle women”*** and

*“gullible women”* among the disciples, we can understand why both Paul and Peter focused on women being in subjection to the men of the body of Christ (See 1 Tm 2:11-15; 1 Pt 3:1-6). The marriage and family were tested in the social upheaval that prevailed in those times. In order to help prevent the disruption of the body of Christ, the two apostles deemed it necessary to remind the women not to become a part of the problem.

It is in this context of house to house wandering that Paul identified those who had difficulty in living the gospel that they obeyed. As he probably sat alone in his house in discouragement, Timothy needed to remember that there are those who are *“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”* of the gospel. We must attach the gospel to the phrase *“the truth.”* *“The truth”* in this context **is not a catechism of legal rules**. It is easy to learn a catechism of law. But this meaning **does not** fit the context of these about whom Paul spoke.

In Ephesians 1:13 Paul wrote a commentary on what he meant by *“the truth”*: *“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation.”* When the Holy Spirit used Paul’s hand to refer to the truth, He assumed that in this one word we would understand that He was referring to **the truth of the gospel**.

There were those who went from house to house speaking those things that were contrary to the truth of the gospel. As previously mentioned, there were two brothers who denied the truth of the resurrection. And as another example, Peter and Barnabas, with some faithful Jews in Antioch, experienced some of these false brethren who came up from Jerusalem to the disciples in Antioch (See Gl 2:11-13). These who denied the truth of the gospel came up from Jerusalem with “another gospel” of circumcision, which thing they considered to be part of “the truth” (See At 15:1). Even to the disciples in Philippi Paul wrote that such Jewish teachers were as “dogs.” So he warned, *“Beware of the dogs. Beware of the evil*

*workers. Beware of the false circumcision*" (Ph 3:2). False teachers often establish catechisms of law that they consider to be "the truth." They then set out across the world to teach their "truth." But in teaching their "truth," they have denied the truth of the gospel. They are teaching "another gospel."

It could have been such "dogs" about whom Paul warned Timothy, that would arise in the last times of national Israel in which both of them were living. These were those who were continually learning from and quoting their Old Testaments, **but they were never able to discover the gospel about which Moses and all the prophets directed Israel to accept.**

It was even difficult during the earthly ministry of Jesus for the disciples to connect all the dots in reference to Jesus fulfilling all the prophecies concerning His Messiahship. After His resurrection, and prior to His ascension, Jesus said to the disciples,

*These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled that were written in the law of Moses, and the Prophets and the Psalms, concerning Me* (Lk 24:44).

Nevertheless, just before the ascension the apostles asked Jesus, *"Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (At 1:6). They still did not understand the spiritual nature of His gospel reign of Jesus in heaven. We can understand, therefore, those to whom Paul wrote the following statement: They were *"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"* of the gospel.

At least the Ethiopian eunuch was honest enough to confess to Philip that he needed a teacher to help him connect the dots between the prophecies of Isaiah, and Jesus about whom he was taught while in Jerusalem (See At 5:42). When Philip asked the eunuch, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* (At 8:30), the eunuch was honest enough to confess that he could not connect the dots between prophecy and fulfillment: *"How can I except someone guides me?"* (At 8:31). And subsequently, Philip open his

mouth and proclaimed Jesus to him (At 8:35).

The Jews knew their Old Testament Scriptures. However, because of extreme nationalistic motives at the time, they were behaving as insurrectionists of the Roman Empire. They were blinded. **They could not understand that King Jesus was on His throne in heaven just as was prophesied by prophets** (See 2 Sm 7; Ps 16:8-11; 110:1). All those prophecies of the law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had been fulfilled. Jesus was at the time King of kings and Lord of lords (See 1 Tm 6:15). If the insurrectionist Jews would have accepted this kingdom reign of Jesus, then they would have cared less who was Emperor in Rome. Their nationalism would have been dissolved and their faithfulness transferred unto the spiritual kingdom of Jesus (See Gl 3:26-29; Cl 1:13). Unfortunately, their nationalistic and earthly view of the prophesied Messiah distorted their understanding of the prophecies.

Paul then explained to Timothy **why some were never able to come to a knowledge of the truth of the gospel**. They are *“men of corrupt minds.”* Such were men as Jannes and Jambres who *“withstood Moses”* (Ex 7:11,12,22; 8:7). They were as those about whom the Spirit described who lived before the flood of Noah’s day: *“They did not like to retain God in their knowledge”* (Rm 1:28). Therefore, *“God gave them over to a depraved mind to do those things that are not proper”* (Rm 1:28; see Gn 6:5). And thus they were *“rejected concerning the faith.”*

Those with “depraved minds” would be exposed, and thus rejected by God. As Jannes and Jambres were exposed before Pharaoh, so will these be exposed among all the Jews (See Ex 7:11,12; 8:18; 9:11). *“Their folly will be manifested to all men.”*

At the conclusion of the parable of the tares, Jesus spoke of the same exposure, but in reference to those who would remain obedient subjects of His kingdom reign. After the destruction of national Israel in A.D. 70, it would be then that *“the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Mt



13:43). After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the unbelieving Jews were exposed to have been rejected by God. The believing Jews were exposed to be the righteous of God.

### **B. Teaching During Social Chaos (3:10-17)**

Timothy was not unfamiliar with the beliefs and behavior of his mentor. The statement, “*you have fully known,*” indicates that there were no secrets between Paul and Timothy. Timothy’s knowledge of Paul’s persecutions began over fifteen years before when Timothy personally witnessed the stoning of Paul on his first mission journey (See At 14:19,20). He had personally witnessed this stoning in Lystra (See At 14:8-20). In Timothy’s present situation, Paul wanted Timothy to know that “*out of them all the Lord delivered me.*” We are not told how the Lord delivered Paul from all his persecutions, but the fact that he walked away from his persecutors proves that in some way God is able to deliver us out of great persecution.

We must be assured that “*the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations*” (2 Pt 2:9). He knows how to “*deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hb 2:15). Paul was so confident in the deliverance of God that in his last penned words he stated, “*The Lord will deliver me from every evil work*” (2 Tm 4:18). Sometime and somewhere in Asia before Paul wrote these words, the sentence of death was upon him. But he wrote of that experience, the Lord “*delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver*” (2 Co 1:9,10).

We would qualify Paul’s deliverance from death by the fact that he was specifically in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra for the purpose of preaching the gospel. His was not a passive persecution, that is suffering persecution for simply being a Christian. He was specifically on a mission to preach the gospel to the lost in order to fulfill his Christ-given destiny as “*a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel*” (At 9:15).

Though he suffered persecution specifically for preaching the gospel, Paul added here a truth that is relevant to all who would live the gospel: *“Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”* David wrote, *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous. But the Lord delivers him out of them all”* (Ps 34:19). Jesus certainly had this principle in mind when He stated in the Sermon on the Mount, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”* (Mt 5:10).

Nevertheless, until that last time before the fall of national Israel in A.D. 70, *“evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse.”* These impostors, because they are deceived into believing that Israel would gain her independence from Rome, sought to deceive others into joining in the ranks of Jewish resistance to free Palestine from Roman occupation.

More is in this context than doctrine. There is Jewish nationalism involved for Timothy would have to endure a doomed social order that was headed for the “last times.” Paul was leaving life, but he wanted Timothy to prepare both himself and the Jewish Christians for the final hour.

He exhorted Timothy to *“continue in the things that you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.”* It may have been that Paul knew what would transpire in the coming few years that would eventually lead to the defeat of the Jews in Palestine. They would be very trying years, and thus Timothy needed to be reassured that what he had learned from his mentor must not be forgotten. In the face of persecution in Iconium, Antioch, and Lystra, Paul did not back down, nor did he turn back from his Christ-given destiny. He wanted Timothy to maintain the same vigilance in standing for the truth of the gospel in the midst of numerous deceivers who would be wandering from house to house.

In this context, it seems that Paul was assured that Timothy would connect the dots between prophecy and fulfillment in reference to the last times of national

Israel in which he now lived. He could do this because *“from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures that are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus.”* Timothy knew his Old Testament Bible. He knew the prophecies about which Paul spoke, prophecies of both Jesus as the Messiah and the end of national Israel about which both Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied (See Dn 10—12).

As a point of reassurance of Timothy’s faith in the Holy Scriptures that he had been taught from childhood, Paul reminded Timothy that these Scriptures were breathed out from God by the Holy Spirit (inspired). They were *“given by inspiration of God,”* and thus, Timothy must conclude that the events that were about to transpire in Palestine were not outside the plan of God for national Israel. Everything that would happen with the Jews in the near future was in the predestined plan of God.

Because the Old Testament Scriptures have come from God, they are *“profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”* These instructions from God *“were written for our learning”* (Rm 15:4). And in reference to the historical context in which Timothy lived, *“they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come”* (1 Co 10:11). The many centuries of the existence of Israel were about to come to a close.

The end of the ages for national Israel had come. **It was the last times. It was the last days.** If Timothy had any doubt concerning what was about to transpire in the next few years, Paul knew that he needed to be reassured that God had planned the end of Israel many centuries before.

**God never intended that the vehicle through which He would bring the Messiah and Savior into the world would exist throughout history.** The Christians prior to A.D. 70 needed to know that it was now the last hour for Israel. So James would say to Timothy, and that generation of Christians with whom he was a participant in society as a Christian, *“You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming*

***of the Lord is near***" (Js 5:8). And indeed it was near. The ink had not yet dried on Paul's letter to Timothy and Titus when Rome put down the Jews of Galilee in A.D. 66, and were now headed for Jerusalem.

During this time of social turmoil, therefore, the ***"man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"*** for the age in which Timothy lived. It was an age similar to those ages in the history of Israel when the nation formerly faced the captivities of Assyria and Babylonia. For the age in which Timothy lived, the encouragement of the prophets in those days would be appropriate. And if these prophecies prepared Timothy to face the trials that were coming, then we suppose that we too should not throw away our Old Testament Scriptures. These Scriptures are still profitable ***"for our learning,"*** especially in times of social and civil chaos (Rm 15:4).

## Chapter 4

### **FINALITIES IN DIFFICULT TIMES**

Whenever one is in the final years of his or her life, and at the point when there is a sense of death, the natural feeling is to bring one's friends and family near. This seems to be part of the reason behind what Paul wrote in these final words to Timothy.

However, there were more reasons for these final words than simply the sentiments of a gospel teacher who had finished his destiny. The reason for these final words is Paul's last call for others to complete his Christ-given mission, which was a reflection of the great commission that Jesus Christ left all His disciples upon His departure from this world (See Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16).

This mission was given personally by Jesus to Paul in the words that He spoke through Ananias: ***"Go your way, for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel"*** (At 9:15).

As a chosen vessel of Jesus, Paul had preached the truth of the gospel of salvation and reign of the Messiah throughout his life. He had stood before

the Gentiles, kings and the nation of Israel in order to proclaim that all the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in Jesus as Lord and Christ. These prophecies had been fulfilled even to the gospel reign of King Jesus at the time he wrote these words.

And now he sees the continuation of his calling in those as Timothy who must rise up out of the ashes of social chaos among the Jews in order to preach the truth of the gospel. The reason that the proclamation of the gospel reign of King Jesus was so important at this time in history was in the fact that all the world of the Roman Empire was in chaos in Rome with the changing of Caesars, and in Palestine with the Jewish wars.

There was coming an open door in the midst of all this chaos. After the military campaign in Palestine was completed, it would be a time to reach the disheartened Jews. The Jews' insurrection to produce an independent state in Palestine had pushed the Romans to a breaking point. But after Rome broke the Jews, then disillusioned Jews would be a receptive field for the preaching of the gospel reign of King Jesus.

The Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah of Israel had now reached its finality. The rebellious Jews needed to know that there would be no national Israel as in the days of David and Solomon. They had rejected and crucified the Messiah who was at that time sitting on the throne of David (See At 2:22-34). They had rejected King Jesus. And because of their rejection, the fruit of their rejection was now ripe and ready to be spoiled by Rome.

Jesus ***"came to His own [race of people, the Jews], and His own did not receive Him"*** (Jn 1:11). When Paul penned his final words to Timothy, the consequences of this rejection had now reached its climax. Because the Jews rejected the Son of God as the Messiah of Israel, God was now bringing down judgment upon them. All the conflict that prevailed throughout Palestine was the consequence of the Jews' rejection of the incarnate Son of God as the

fulfillment of all prophecies concerning His atoning sacrifice on the cross and His existing kingdom reign in heaven at the right hand of God. The last hour for national Israel had now come.

All the social stress of the time resulted from the Jews' false hope that their messiah would reign on this earth. This was their "hope of Israel" (See At 1:6). Their hope was that their king would lead Israel in an independence movement against all nations that had occupied their land since the last captivity of the Babylonians. When Jesus did not conform to their hope of an earthly king who would reign in Jerusalem on a literal throne of David, they crucified Him, and then sought to rebel against Rome. They sought to prepare the way in order that their messiah would come and reign on earth.

Does this sound familiar with some who have the same false hope today? Such carnal and earthly thinking of the Jews was not much different than those today who have a false hope that world events are presently aligning national Israel for the coming of a messiah. But they forget that the Messiah has already come. He is already reigning as King over all things. It was never God's intention to establish another earthly kingdom to replace Israel. If such were to transpire in the future, then Jesus must give up His present galactic reign in order to reign on a speck of dust (the earth) of the universe (See Mt 28:18; Ep 1:21-23; Hb 1:3; 8:1).

Because the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah and rightful heir to reign on David's throne, the world in Timothy's day was in chaos. Their rejection of Jesus was the very reason why there was political turmoil throughout the Roman Empire, which turmoil was caused by the Jews. We must not forget this.

The Roman wars against the Jews had already begun in A.D. 66 by the time the first word was written in the 2 Timothy letter. The Roman army had already arrived in Palestine and was on its way to Jerusalem to administer the final blow to Jewish nationalism.

We can only imagine the stressful times in which the early Jewish members of the church struggled. This is especially true in reference to those Jewish families who had sons who were being tempted to go to Jerusalem in order to defend Israel.

The book of Hebrews was written to these Jewish Christians. In the book, the writer—undoubtedly Paul—argued persuasively that apostate Jewish Christians who took up their swords to war against Rome would not escape the destruction that Jesus had pronounced on the city in Matthew 24. The Hebrew writer wrote in reference to those who would turn back to Judaism in order to fight Rome for an independent nation: *“How will we [who fall back to national Judaism] escape if we neglect such a great salvation [of the gospel], which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard”* (Hb 2:3). The fact would be that by the end of the decade of the 60s they would not escape if they headed for the doomed city of Jerusalem to fight for an independent Israel.

In view of the struggles that were going on throughout the Roman Empire at the time, we would certainly approach the context of the words of 2 Timothy as a document of exhortation to all Bible teachers who labor in trying times. These were the words of exhortation to one individual who represented many of those Bible teachers who labored during years of social chaos. Through these words, Paul sought to stir up Timothy to assume the task of reminding the Jewish brethren that the truth of the gospel still stands. Jesus was still the Messiah and Savior of the world. As he had reminded Timothy in his first letter, he wanted to remind Timothy that Jesus was still King Jesus (See 1 Tm 6:15). This truth of the gospel must prevail in the minds of those to whom Timothy preached.

### **A. Charge In Times Of Turmoil (4:1-5)**

When Paul wrote to Timothy a charge, we assume that Timothy stood at attention before God whom he served. What is communicated to Timothy as a military

charge is serious business because of the social and civil chaos that was prevailing in the religious and civil environment at the time Paul wrote. A military “charge” was used by Paul in order to get Timothy’s attention in the midst of his personal discouragement concerning current events.

This was a charge *“before God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* It does not get more serious than this. This was a charge that was based on the One who would *“judge the living”* at the time of His final coming (2 Co 5:10). King Jesus would also judge those who had died (See 1 Th 4:13-17). He had been appointed by the Father to be the judge of all who lived on the face of the earth (See At 17:30,31).

The validation upon which Jesus was given the right to judge was in the fact of both His gospel incarnation from heaven and His authority as King of kings (Mt 28:18). John used a metaphorical picture in order to explain a reality that now exists in the heavenly realm. He pictured in Revelation that the *“living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him [Jesus] who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever”* (Rv 4:9). *“The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him”* (Rv 4:10). They proclaim the following concerning King Jesus who now has authority over the universe:

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power [authority], for You created all things, and because of Your will they were created and have their existence* (Rv 4:11).

John revealed the primary reason why Jesus had the right to judge all humanity. He was the creator of all things, and thus, He has the authority and right to judge all His creation (See Cl 1:16). As the reigning God on the throne of David, He has the right to call all creation before Him in judgment. He only, because of His incarnational journey into this world (See Ph 2:5-11), is worthy to judge the world. John revealed this truth:

*You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You*



*were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and language and people and nation* (Rv 5:9).

In the next few years Timothy needed to understand that regardless of the turnover of Caesars in Rome—and there would be many—and the crushing of the independence movement of national Israel, **there was still one King of kings and Lord of lords** (See 1 Tm 6:15). In times of war, Christians must never forget this. There is only one judge in which the Father *“has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man [Jesus] whom He has ordained”* (At 17:31).

In view of the Son’s right to judge *“the living and the dead,”* Paul personally ordered a mandate to Timothy, which mandate extended to every Bible teacher during those times of social chaos: **“Preach the word!”** This mandate takes us back over thirty years to the early preaching of the word of the gospel. As a result of the preaching of the early Christians, *“many of those who heard the word [of the gospel of Jesus] believed”* (At 4:4). When persecution arose in Jerusalem in those years, *“those who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word”* of the gospel of grace (At 8:4).

After his conversion, Paul himself eventually ended up in the Roman province of Achaia. He later reminded those in Achaia to whom he preached the word of the gospel not to forget the word of what he had preached. His use of the word “word” in the text under consideration explains what he meant when he wrote, **“Preach the word!”**

*I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you [with words], which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast to **that word** which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain* (1 Co 15:1,2).

In the preceding statement, Paul did not refer to an outline of legal doctrines that he preached to those in Corinth on his initial visit. He explained in the following two verses what he had communicated in

words in Corinth and throughout Achaia: *“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day”* (1 Co 15:3,4).

This is the “word” of the gospel. This was the word that Timothy was to be persistent in preaching to all those unbelieving Jews who wanted to take up their swords and go to Jerusalem to fight against the Romans. In his commentary on the word of the gospel that he preached to those in Corinth, Paul’s exhortation to the Christians in all Achaia was that they continue to believe the word by which he had communicated the gospel to them. If they did not, then their faith would be in vain (See 1 Co 15:2).

The same situation had developed in reference to the faith of many Jewish Christians in Asia at the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy. Their faith was becoming vain. In their apostasy from the blood of the sacrificed Lamb of God in a senseless effort to defend national Israel, their faith was becoming useless in reference to their salvation. They were refusing to heed the Hebrew writer’s exhortation, *“Let us hold firm to the confession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful who promised”* (Hb 10:23).

If we willfully turn from King Jesus and His kingdom reign, then *“there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”* (Hb 10:26). If those Jewish Christians to whom Timothy ministered the gospel, chose rather to willfully turn from King Jesus, then all they would have in the eyes of God is *“a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation that will devour the adversaries”* (Hb 10:27). In the fiery judgment that was coming upon Jerusalem, they would experience the same. They would not have been without warning, for Jesus spoke many times of the fiery indignation that would come upon Israel because the Jews rejected Him as the only begotten Son (See Book 3, *The Sovereignty of Deity*, in the Biblical Research Catalog, [www.roger-e-dickson.org](http://www.roger-e-dickson.org)).

When we understand the immediate social and civil environment in which Timothy lived, then we can

understand better the urgency by which Paul issued the mandate, *“Preach the word!”* In other words, **Paul was encouraging Timothy to preach the gospel in order to save lives.** If the patriotism of some Jewish sons overcame their faith in King Jesus, then they could possibly have been caught up in the political radicalism of the day to fight for the independence of Israel. If teaching the gospel of Jesus’ kingship could detour them from heading for Jerusalem, **then those who would be detoured would save their lives.**

Timothy’s preaching the word of the gospel to the believers, therefore, was as Paul’s reminder that he wrote to the Corinthians. It was one reason why he formerly wanted to visit the Christians in Rome (See Rm 1:13-16). If those to whom Timothy ministered the word of the gospel throughout Asia Minor forsook their faith in King Jesus, and headed for Jerusalem, then their faith was in vain. They would subsequently be caught up in the fiery indignation that God was about to pour out on unbelieving Jews because they rejected the incarnational offering of the Son of God (See Ph 2:5-11). If they rejected the blood of Jesus, then they would have rejected their only hope of surviving this world, which itself was headed for termination.

If one would take ownership of being a disciple of Jesus, then he or she too has no option but to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom reign of Jesus and His coming at the appointed time to judge the world. It is interesting to note that the Greek word that is used by Paul in this text is *kerusso* (preach). It is the word that is used to enjoin on all disciples the responsibility to announce, or proclaim, the gospel. It is the same word that Jesus used in Mark 16:15: *“Go into all the world and preach [kerusso] the gospel to every creature”* (See also Rm 16:25; 1 Co 1:21; 2:4; Ti 1:3).

Paul was not invoking Timothy to be a professional preacher, but to *kerusso* (announce, proclaim) the good news to the world. This is exactly what the early Christians did when they went into all the world (See At 8:4). This is the function of every disciple in

reference to making the gospel known to the world.

In this text, as in other texts where the word *kerusso* is used, reference is to proclaim the good news of King Jesus. It is not a word that is used in reference to teaching an outline of legal ceremonies or teachings. The word is always used in the New Testament in reference to the proclaiming, or affirmation of the truth of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and kingdom reign of the Son of God.

In the face of the social unrest of his day, Timothy was here encouraged by Paul to rise up and remind the disciples of the gospel of Jesus. He was to remind the believers that Jesus was still King of kings and Lord of lords. Nothing had changed in heaven where Jesus was seated at the right hand of God *“far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named”* (Ep 1:21). Though all these “principalities,” “powers,” as well as all the mighty Caesars may change on earth, such changes will not unseat King Jesus. **Jesus’ kingdom reign has never been and will never be determined by any activities of or conflicts between the nations of the world.**

However, in the midst of the transitions among world kingdoms, one should pray for opportunities to proclaim the gospel. Therefore, it is assumed that one will *“be ready in season and out of season”* when the opportunity presents itself to preach the word of the gospel. What was important for the first century Christians to remember is that after the collapse of national Israel in A.D. 70, there would be a great open door to preach the gospel to disillusioned Jews.

It is often in the midst of civil war that opportunities are presented to preach the gospel. This is especially true within the few years following a civil war. It is then that the pendulum swings from the carnality of the civil war to the spiritual side of those citizens who are now repugnant of war. This is the season for the gospel teacher to be ready.

Paul knew that after the A.D. 70 crushing of the aspirations of the Jews, there would be thousands

of religiously disoriented Jews who finally realized that God had rejected national Israel. It would be a season of great receptivity to preach the gospel once again to a very receptive audience of Jews. Peter reflected on this opportunity when he wrote:

*But sanctify Christ as Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear* (1 Pt 3:15).

Since Peter wrote these words in the early 60s, we believe that he wrote them in view of the fact that after the decade of discouragement for the Jews, there would be a tremendous opportunity for Christians to share the gospel with thousands of disheartened Jews. Christians, therefore, were to keep themselves pure (sanctify) by continuing to keep Jesus as their only Lord God. In order to do this, they must resist the temptation of joining those who were bent on fighting the Romans for Jewish independence.

In their discussions with patriotic Jews, the early disciples should give no opportunity for the unbelieving Jews to think that they were questioning their own faith. This answers why the Hebrew writer was so stern in denouncing those Jewish Christians who were in the process of betraying King Jesus in their apostasy to restore national Israel. In doing such, they were bringing shame on their King.

The message of the gospel is not complex, and thus, being ready to preach the gospel to others does not assume that one must have a great knowledge of the Bible. When we preach the gospel, the focus is on the message of the Bible, not the Bible itself. If we say that we are to “preach the Bible,” then we must understand that in reference to the gospel, the Bible is the “newspaper.” **It is the newspaper that reports to us the message of the gospel.** It is the authority upon which our knowledge of the gospel is founded. Therefore, we preach the gospel with the Bible being our library of research material. We must not forget that the Bible is not primarily about us, but about

reminding us how God brought His only begotten Son into the world. It is how He will also send Him back for us.

If one is not announcing the gospel, it is assumed that he or she is not fully motivated by the gospel. And if one is not motivated by the gospel, then it is assumed that one is not studying the gospel as it is revealed in the Bible. In the case of Timothy, it was not his lack of knowledge of the prophecies and fulfillment in reference to the gospel. He had known the sacred Scriptures since the time of his youth (See 2 Tm 3:15,16). His apprehension about preaching the word of the gospel was because of the circumstances in which he found himself in Asia Minor. The difficult times in which he lived caused him to withdraw from his responsibility as a disciple of Jesus to teach all things in reference to the gospel.

Paul moved on in the text to the responsibility of all Bible teachers. He charged, *“Reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.”* Herein is when the teacher must know the Bible. It is the word of God that informs us with information to accomplish these mandates. In other words, one is to “reprove” the disciples with the word of God when people are moving away from the truth of the gospel. One is to “rebuke” the wayward with the authority of the word of God in order to turn the wayward back to the right way. And one is to “exhort” the discouraged by teaching the encouragement that the gospel offers. The persistence of the teacher must be characterized by his or her “longsuffering” (patience) with those to whom the word of God is communicated through teaching.

The reason for the urgency of Timothy to carry on with his calling as a Bible teacher was in the fact that *“the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching.”* And that time was soon upon Timothy.

The teacher of the word of God always teaches in the present with his mind focused on the future. In Timothy’s historical situation, it would come in his near future that the radicalism of the nationalistic Jews

would permeate the Jewish families of the Roman society. Sometimes, it would influence even the spirit of the faithful. The Jews' call for independence from Roman occupation of Palestine would overpower the senses of many of those with whom Timothy and other teachers ministered.

Those whom Timothy was to influence through healthy (sound) teaching would be influenced by the wayward hopes of those who believed that Israel would gain her independence through insurrection against Rome. Therefore, Timothy's ministry of teaching was urgent because the time of civil upheaval was imminent in Judea. The foundation of the church needed to be thoroughly based on the truth of the gospel in order to discourage as many Jews as possible not to be entangled in the political affairs of the times.

The statement, *"for the time will come,"* was not a reference to something that would transpire over two thousand years later. It was a "time" that was imminent. The time was "at hand." We assume from the context, therefore, that it was urgent that Timothy remind the people of the truth of the gospel reign of King Jesus. It was urgent because there would be those radical Jews coming through town who would announce "another gospel," the gospel of being loyal to one's Jewish heritage. And because people would be stirred into Jewish patriotism, some Jewish Christians would *"not endure sound [healthy] doctrine [teaching]."* They would forsake the kingship of King Jesus for the vain hope of another messiah.

The Jewish Christians, specifically, would have the *"itching ears."* It would be them who would be seeking for "signs of the times," and information from Palestine about the "Jewish wars" against Rome. And because they were obsessed with the independence movement among the nationalistic Jews that was transpiring among those in Palestine, they would *"surround themselves"* with *"teachers who will agree with their own desires"* to fight against Rome.

In the historical context of Paul's use of the term *"itching ears,"* we must assume that the "news media"

of the day was constantly sending out reports on wars in Palestine. They were obsessed with reports concerning **“wars and rumors of wars”** (Mt 24:6). But many years before, Jesus forewarned His faithful disciples, **“See that you are not troubled, for these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet”** (Mt 24:6). Timothy’s immediate audience was living in the time of the rumors of wars. But the end of Israel did not come until A.D. 70. It was after that date that the reports of the wars by the news media ceased.

The interpreter must keep in mind the historical context of the 60s when Paul penned these urgent words. There were certainly doctrinal matters involved in Paul’s exhortation, but there were traumatic things taking place in the political environment of the times, specifically in Palestine. These were events that surrounded those New Testament letters that were written in the 60s.

In reference to “doctrinal” matters, there were certainly no matters under discussion concerning the “right church,” **for there was only one church**. And it would be senseless to assume that Timothy was charged to teach matters on the Lord’s Supper, assemblies, or some legal outline that defined the “true church.” To assume that such was in the mind of Paul when he penned these words is certainly shallow. We must not allow our obsession with matters of opinion today to twist our understanding of those matters in which Timothy, and the other first century teachers, labored when there were brethren forsaking their faith in King Jesus and running off to Jerusalem to fight the Romans. Bible teachers then labored diligently in teaching in order to preserve the faith of those who were on the verge of being faithless as the Hebrew writer stated: **“Now the just will live by faith. But if any man draws back, My soul will have no pleasure in him”** (Hb 10:38).

After the Hebrew writer explained all the arguments for the present kingdom reign of King Jesus and His priesthood, he assumed that his readers would join him in remaining faithful to Jesus. He wrote, **“We are**



*not of those who draw back to destruction, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul*" (Hb 10:39). This was the task that Paul was instructing Timothy to follow in his leadership to take faithful disciples through troubling times.

In those troubling days in which Timothy and others were messengers of the gospel, something tragic was happening within the fellowship of the disciples. Timothy was cautioned that in the last times of national Israel, even some of the disciples *"will turn away their ears from the truth [of the gospel] and will be turned to fables."* The fables that were being broadcast throughout society was the restoration of national Israel. Those who had itching ears were looking for someone other than Jesus to be the messiah and king. They sought for any news from Palestine in reference to the possible successes of the "independent movement."

Their obsession on political matters diverted their attention from the reign of Jesus who was *"upholding all things by the word of His power"* (Hb 1:3). It is an axiomatic truth in reference to spiritual matters that **whenever one becomes obsessed with political matters on earth, his mind is often distracted concerning spiritual matters.** This is why Paul wrote, *"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth"* (Cl 3:2).

The "truth" about which Paul wrote was not an outline of catechisms. If this were the subject under discussion, then certainly this would place every Bible teacher in the precarious predicament of having to determine what the details of the "truth" of the catechism should be.

In the historical context of the times, the truth that was being forsaken was the truth of any aspect of the gospel. This was the truth that Peter momentarily forsook in Antioch of Syria (See Gl 2:11). If he *"stood condemned"* because he was not behaving straightforwardly concerning the truth of the gospel, then those who would forsake the truth of the gospel reign of Jesus would certainly stand condemned if

they joined the resistance movement to free Palestine of Roman occupation.

Timothy was living in the times about which the Hebrew writer wrote: *“How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him”* (Hb 2:3). The Hebrew writer then gave a commentary on the precarious times in which Timothy was to reaffirm the word of the truth of the gospel:

*For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame* (Hb 6:4-6).

This was the historical environment in which Timothy and others labored. It was in the midst of such apostasy that Timothy was exhorted by Paul to preach and teach the truth of the gospel.

Those with itching ears were being tempted to take up a sword and make their way to Jerusalem. These were those who were *“once enlightened”* by their obedience to the gospel. They were now treading under their feet the blood of Jesus with every step they took toward Palestine in order to fulfill their nationalistic desires to restore national Israel. It was impossible to turn them back to be *“partakers of the Holy Spirit”* because their patriotism for the Jewish independence movement was more important to them than their former deliverance from the bondage of sin. They crucified (betrayed) the Son of God on their way to a carnal war that God had destined to happen. They forsook their faith in Jesus for the fable of the supposed rejuvenation of the people who had crucified the Son of God over thirty years before. They were thus headed for destruction (See Hb 10:39).

Paul, therefore, enjoins on Timothy what he must do to prevent the apostasy that was occurring even at the time he wrote. He was to be watchful for those

who would lead in the apostasy. He must *“endure afflictions,”* realizing that *“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”* (2 Tm 3:12). He was to rise up and *“do the work of an evangelist.”* Regardless of persecution, he must continue to be one who proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ. He must do the work of evangelizing the unbelieving Jews in order to save their lives from Roman destruction.

It is not that Paul was here assigning a title to Timothy as an “evangelist.” He was reminding Timothy of the function of a faithful disciple. That function was that he continue to proclaim the good news of King Jesus. If he did this, then he would be fulfilling his ministry to which he had committed himself many years before. He would also possibly be sparing the lives of those who sought for another king on earth to lead the supposed restored national Israel.

We must not forget that the Jews’ independence movement of the times was a total denial of the gospel. If the Jews were right in their insurrection against Rome, then Jesus was a fraud. He was not who He claimed to be. There was no reign of the ascended Jesus at the right hand of God. If He were not who He said He was, then the unbelieving Jews were right in their rejection of Him as their Lord and Christ. All such things were against the gospel of the incarnate God who came in the flesh of man, but ended up at the right hand of God with authority over all things. All the unbelieving Jews should submit to Him, but they did not (Ph 2:10,11).

### **B. Personal Farewell (4:6-8)**

The year is A.D. 66, and possibly into 67. At least we know that Paul realized that his ministry and life were about to be terminated with his beheading in Rome. *“The time of my departure is at hand,”* he revealed to Timothy. About six years before he had written in reference to his death while in the same prison in Rome, *“For I am torn between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is much better”* (Ph 1:23). Though Paul was released from

that first imprisonment of A.D. 61,62, God was going to grant his desire to depart this world at the conclusion of this second imprisonment. From traditional history we learn that Paul was probably beheaded in Rome in A.D. 67.

The reason Paul was ready to move on from this life is discovered in his final words: ***"I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course."*** There is a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in these words. There were no regrets or unfinished business. The course that Jesus had personally given to him many years before in Damascus had by now been completed (See At 9:15).

Contrary to those who had itching ears, and subsequently forsook their faith in Jesus, Paul had ***"kept the faith."*** He had not turned from his destiny. He had not turned back to destruction (See Hb 10:39). When he exhorted Timothy to ***"fulfill your ministry,"*** he was expecting the same from Timothy.

There is no doubt on the part of Paul in his final words: ***"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."*** Paul's life was all about that which James wrote: ***"Blessed is the man who endures temptation [trial], for when he is tried, he will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him"*** (Js 1:12). Paul was an example of a faithful disciple who was to be blessed with the crown of life. He was to be blessed because he had remained faithful in the midst of great persecution and trials.

The crown was not reserved for a select few among the faithful. On the contrary, because the Lord is righteous, He will give the crown ***"also to all those who have loved His appearing."*** Again, Paul reflects on the gospel of the incarnate Son of God when such was first announced to some shepherds at the time of Jesus' birth (See Lk 2:10,11). Those who loved His appearing in the flesh would be blessed because they were motivated by this gospel revelation to submit their lives to preach the gospel to the world. Unfortunately, Timothy and the other New Testament teachers had preached to a Jewish audience, many of whom had

rejected Jesus (See Jn 1:11). There was continued rejection even as Paul wrote these words.

We do not miss the **past tense** in the verb in the statement, “*have loved His appearing.*” Reference to this “appearing” **was not something yet in the future**. The statement is in reference to the revelation of the Son of God in the flesh **in the past** (See Jn 1:14; Ph 2:5-11). Those who loved and responded to the appearing of the Son of God in the flesh were those who would be blessed in this life, but also with the crown that will be given to the faithful after life.

But in the historical setting of the statement, there were those who did not love His appearing in the flesh, and subsequently rebelled (See Rm 9:1-3). They did not accept the fact that Jesus fulfilled all prophecies concerning the Redeemer. And in the historical context of this letter, they did not accept Him as the Messiah of Israel. These were those unbelieving Jews who were about to receive the fiery indignation of God in the destruction of national Israel. Their punishment for rejecting Jesus was imminent.

### C. Personal Farewell Greetings (4:9-22)

Paul knew that his end was near, and so to Timothy there was urgency in his last words, “*Be diligent to come to me soon.*” No one likes to die alone, and at the time when one knows he or she is facing death, family and friends are called upon to be close.

However, in reference to the call to the ministry of the word of the gospel, Paul wrote, “*Demas has forsaken me.*” It seems that Demas “*loved this present world,*” and thus headed back to Thessalonica where there were some wealthy women in the church (See At 17:1-4). If this statement could have been written at the time of the apostle John’s writings, then Demas should have read John’s note on this matter: “*Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 Jn 2:15).

We are not told why Crescens left for Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia. We would assume that because

of Titus' faithfulness, both went from Paul to preach the gospel, or to reassure the saints that the end of the world was not at stake. They were to remind the Jewish disciples that it was the end of national Israel. Because Paul did not mention any negative comments in reference to Crescens and Titus, we assume they were sent forth to prepare the Jewish disciples for the end of national Israel, and thus reassure the disciples that the end of Israel was all in the plan of God. The disciples must remain faithful in view of the end of Paul's ministry, as well as the end of the independence movement of national Israel. They were to remind people that the prophecy of Jesus in Matthew 24 was being fulfilled. So, *"only Luke is with me."* And what would we expect of the great physician? When everyone was concerned about the Jews, a Gentile doctor remained with Paul.

Timothy was evidently acquainted with Mark, and thus, possibly knew where he was living at the time Paul wrote. *"Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is profitable to me for the ministry."* Paul called for one who had formerly turned back from the work in his younger years, but now was profitable for the work (See At 15:37,38). Paul now needed Mark for the ministry of teaching, not to minister unto him, but possibly to be directed to another field in order to prepare the Jewish disciples for the defeat of national Israel in Palestine, Mark's original home.

Mark had previously had his momentary time of withdrawing from the ministry of the word, but now he had grown spiritually to be willing to join with Paul in a Roman prison environment. Mark had the example of his life as a witness to others that though one may fall from the work, he or she can pick one's self up in order to be profitable for Jesus. **We must remember that no matter how far down we fall, God, through His grace, can come and fetch us for His benefit.** We are thankful that the Holy Spirit deemed it wise to include the example of John Mark in the Holy Scriptures in order to encourage us.

But then there may possibly have been another

reason why Paul called for Mark. It may have been that Paul wanted to send him hurriedly on to Jerusalem in order to get his relatives, and particularly his mother—if she were still alive—out of the city of Jerusalem.

Mark had grown up in Jerusalem. We assume, therefore, that he had many friends and relatives who may have still been in the city. As Paul personally sent Crescens to Galatia and Titus to Dalmatia, he wanted to send Mark urgently to Judea. Mark's mission was one of extraction. Paul wanted to reassure Mark, and then send him on to Judea in order to extract his family and friends out of the doomed city.

Once the companion of Paul on his journeys, Tychicus was sent to Ephesus (See At 20:4). We assume, therefore, that the wording of the statement infers that Timothy was not in Ephesus at the time of writing. For this reason, we affirm that Timothy was somewhere in Asia Minor, but not specifically in the city of Ephesus. And we might assume that Tychicus went to Ephesus for the same reason that Paul possibly would send Mark to Judea.

And so it was cold in a dungeon in Rome. Timothy was encouraged, therefore, to bring the *“cloak that I left in Troas with Carpus.”* Wherever Timothy was in Asia Minor, he had to come through Troas on his way to Rome.

Ever the student, Paul also requested that Timothy bring *“the scrolls, especially the parchments.”* We have no idea what the scrolls and parchments were in reference to reading or study material. We can only assume that they were some Old Testament scrolls, or possibly some copies of New Testament letters. Since Paul was close to death, we would assume that he wanted Timothy to bring this research material in order that it be left for the church in Rome.

It is interesting that the Holy Spirit would direct the hand of Paul to mention Alexander the coppersmith who did him much evil. We are not told whether this was a brother, or simply one in the community who persecuted Paul. But if this is the same Alexander as 1 Timothy 1:20, then he and Hymenaeus shipwrecked

their own faith and the faith of others. Subsequently, Paul wrote, *“I have delivered [them] to Satan so that they might learn not to blaspheme”* (1 Tm 1:20). And when one was delivered to Satan by a Christ-sent apostle, something bad was going to happen.

If indeed this Alexander was the same Alexander of 1 Timothy 1:20, then this Alexander did Paul harm by assigning to Satan the message of the gospel that Paul preached. Paul’s delivering of Alexander to Satan was for the purpose that he might be taught not to blaspheme the message of the gospel. In other words, one was not to mess with a Christ-sent apostle, for such an apostle had the authority of the rod of discipline (See 1 Co 4:21).

Alexander suffered the destruction of the flesh in life, so Paul requested, *“May the Lord reward him according to his works”* in the final judgment. Wherever Timothy was at the time, Paul warned him to be on guard against the blasphemy of Alexander. It seems that Alexander never learned his lesson, and thus the Lord would have to finish what Paul started in reference to Alexander reaping what he sowed.

It may have been that Alexander was not able to connect his ailment in the flesh with his blasphemy against the message of the gospel. His evil was a personal attack against Paul. In some way, he may have seen Paul as a personal threat to his power and position. As Paul had at one time during his ministry blinded an individual for working against the preaching of the gospel, so Alexander also did the same, but in doing so he personally attacked Paul (See At 13:11).

If one would be a Bible teacher for Jesus, then there will be times when one has to stand alone in the midst of many “Alexanders.” *“At my first defense,”* Paul wanted Timothy to know, *“no one stood with me, but all men forsook me.”* We must remember that Paul was possibly in prison as a supposed Jewish *“ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,”* for rumors were spread abroad that he was such (See At 24:5). To the Romans, all such Jewish ringleaders, regardless of what sect of the Jews they may have



led, were to be eliminated. And for this reason, Paul was facing his final day. Therefore, if one were a Jew, he certainly did not want to be identified with Paul, especially when Paul went before the Roman court of Nero. Nevertheless, Paul was forgiving and understanding: *“May it not be counted against them.”*

*“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.”* This one statement of Paul should answer the question we have all asked. When we are in times of great trial—in Paul’s case it was literally a trial for his life—we ask for strength and deliverance from the trial. God does both. This one statement of Paul is reassuring in that we may not know how God gives strength and deliverance in times of trial, but He does (See At 23:11). Paul reminded those in Corinth,

*No temptation [trial] has overtaken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [tried] beyond what you are able to endure, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape so that you may be able to endure* (1 Co 10:13).

One of the missions that was given specifically to Paul when Jesus called him was that he would stand before kings (See At 9:15). So we deduct from the circumstances of this trial in Rome that God was using Paul to bear witness to the gospel before the highest court in the world at the time. He was standing in Nero’s court.

We could suppose that Paul’s arrest and extradition to Rome at this time in history **was the direct result of God’s work in the affairs of man**. We know this was the case for his first imprisonment (See At 23:11). The year of Paul’s second imprisonment and trial was A.D. 66. This was a critical time in the history of Rome. God needed a Christian in Rome at this time while Rome’s army was already in Palestine and marching toward Jerusalem. God needed a witness before the Roman court in Rome **to testify why Christians were in no way responsible for the Jewish insurrection**. God needed a witness before Rome to testify that the independence movement among the Jews resulted

from the Jews' rejection of Jesus as the Messiah. Christians had accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but Jesus never intended to establish a kingdom on this earth. The kingdom of the Christians was not of this world, just as Jesus had testified before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate thirty-five years before (See Jn 18:36).

The Lord stood with Paul in order *“that through me the preaching [of the gospel] might be fully accomplished.”* His mission for the gospel would be fully accomplished in his testimony of the gospel before the Roman court. In this case, his witness before the court was for the purpose *“that all the Gentiles might hear.”*

In this case of the personal strengthening by the Lord, Paul *“was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”* Paul may have been delivered from condemnation at his first trial. The Lord will deliver those who trust in His deliverance. *“The Lord will preserve you from all evil. He will preserve your soul”* (Ps 121:7). Being preserved by the Lord does not necessarily mean being spared from death. In the case of Paul, he was not spared from death, but preserved *“unto the heavenly kingdom.”* This is all that is important for the Christian to remember. Regardless of his initial deliverance from death, the psychopathic Nero may have simply commanded Paul to be released, but later arrested and beheaded him prior to his suicide in A.D. 68.

Death is simply a transition to a better state of existence. It is as Paul wrote to the Philippians, *“For I am torn between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is much better”* (Ph 1:23). And because it is “much better,” then *“to Him be glory forever and ever”* because He made such possible through the incarnational offering of His Son.

Since the days when Paul first encountered Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth, they had been fellow workers with him in preaching the gospel (See At 18:1-3). Paul, Priscilla and Aquila labored together in Corinth and in Ephesus. And at this time after many years

of working together in kingdom business, Paul now referred to Priscilla with the endearing short name, “Prisca.”

Timothy was also to salute for Paul the “*household of Onesiphorus*.” Onesiphorus was not ashamed to visit Paul in his first imprisonment. He “*often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains*” (2 Tm 1:16). Onesiphorus had obeyed the admonition of Jesus to visit those who were in prison for the sake of the gospel (See Mt 25:36). It seems that Onesiphorus was back home by the time this letter to Timothy was written, and thus, Paul asks Timothy to salute him.

When Paul was released from the first imprisonment of A.D. 61,62, he made a hurried trip through Crete where he left Titus (See Ti 1:5). He evidently went through Corinth where he left Erastus, and then on to Miletus.

Paul leaves us with an interesting incident in reference to healing. “*Trophimus I have left at Miletus sick*.” We have found that those who persist in claiming that “confirming miracles” continue today, are often left without words in reference to this incident. This is especially true of those false prophets who seek to sell miracles for money. If one does not have a correct understanding of the miraculous work of God, then he or she will have difficulty with this statement of Paul.

In answer to our prayers, God is able to heal the sick today, as He did in the first century (See Js 5:14). God does work today through our sincere prayers to bring healing. However, **this healing is not as the confirming miracles of the first century that even the unbelievers could not deny** (See At 4:16). The nature of the confirming miracles of the first century was different than the healing in answer to prayer today.

The confirming miracles were **immediate** and **visibly displayed before all**, even unbelievers. The purpose of the confirming miracles was also different. Confirming miracles **were worked in order to validate both the message and messenger of the gospel**

(See Mk 16:20). When the message was confirmed, there was no longer a need for confirming miracles (See 1 Co 13:8-10). But God's healing within our bodies is not for the purpose of confirming the gospel. His bodily healing is neither openly manifested, nor instantaneous, which makes such healing different from the confirming miracles of the first century.

But we still have not answered the dilemma that is posed by Paul leaving Trophimus sick in Miletus. There are three things to consider in this case. **(1)** Miraculous healing was instantaneous, whereas prayer for healing is gradual. In the case of Trophimus, Paul evidently prayed for his healing, but then understood that it would take time for him to heal completely. Trophimus was thus left in a state of healing while Paul traveled on. It was simply understood by this time in the history of the early church that "prayer healing" occurred over time. It was not instantaneous as in the raising of a cripple or the dead.

**(2)** We could also conclude that the age of confirming miracles was coming to a close by the time this incident occurred, if they had not already concluded. We must keep in mind that events of history were coming to the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which was God's last evidence that Israel was consummated and that Jesus was alive. **No more confirming miracles were needed to witness to the message and messengers of the gospel.** The gospel had already been confirmed (See Mk 16:20). It had been preached and confirmed throughout the world of the Roman Empire (See Cl 1:23).

The Hebrew writer placed such confirming miracles in the **past tense** in the Hebrew letter. The writer wrote that the message of the gospel, *"first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him"* (Hb 2:3). God bore *"witness with them [disciples], both with signs and wonders and with various powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit"* (Hb 2:4).

There is a reason why the Hebrew writer placed the confirming miracles of the gospel in the past tense

when he wrote the Hebrew letter. The reason was what those to whom the letter was addressed were turning from the confirmed gospel of Jesus' atoning death and His current gospel reign and priesthood. **The recipients of the letter were admonished to focus on who Jesus was, not on confirming miracles that had already proved who Jesus was.**

The Hebrew writer wrote on the basis of the power of the word of God (See Hb 4:12). He **did not** seek to prove his arguments on the power of miracles. **The miracles had already proved the message.** The readers, as we, must focus on the power of the fulfilled prophecies, not on the continuation of confirming miracles. The more we would focus on the miraculous, the less we focus on the gospel of Jesus.

By the time Hebrews was written, and at the time Paul left Trophimus sick, the miraculous witness of the gospel was spoken of as something that had happened in the past. **It may have been, therefore, that Paul left Trophimus sick in Melitus because he could not miraculously heal him.** We must reach this conclusion because Paul said that he left him sick, and thus had not healed him.

At least we arrive at this conclusion because Paul also did not directly heal Epaphroditus in A.D. 61,62 when Epaphroditus was nigh unto death in Paul's presence in Rome. Around A.D. 61,62 Paul wrote to the Philippians of Epaphroditus' situation, ***"For indeed he was sick to the point of death"*** (Ph 2:27). **But God healed him directly. *"God had mercy on him"*** (Ph 2:27). It was not the work of Paul to heal him, so through his prayers God healed Epaphroditus for the sake of Paul: ***"God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow"*** (Ph 2:27).

**(3)** We find few miracles in the New Testament that affected the saints directly. **Miraculous healing was not for the benefit of the saints.** If they were, then everyone would sign up to be a part of the body of disciples, among whom there would be no sicknesses or lame people. If one were cursed with headaches,

all he or she had to do was to be baptized into Christ, where there was continual healing. But confirming miracles were never poured out in order to keep the saved saved.

If the Spirit healed everyone physically who came out of the waters of baptism, then there would be no sick people among the disciples. People would thus be drawn to obedience for selfish reasons and not in response to the gospel of the grace of God. If people were healed upon obedience to the gospel, **then the gospel would have had little appeal to the hearts of infirmed people.** It is for this reason that direct and instantaneous miraculous healing was never for the benefit of Christians. And because of this, Paul had to make a healing prayer for Trophimus, as he undoubtedly did for Epaphroditus. After the prayer for Trophimus, Paul then left him on his sick bed in Melitus and moved on.

Paul then closes this touching letter to Timothy with an urgent appeal that Timothy come before winter. Paul needed the cloak that he asked Timothy to bring. At the time Paul signs his farewell in this letter, it seems that several brethren were with him, brethren whom Timothy knew.

What better way could a letter as this have been concluded than with the words, ***"The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen."***



## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**