

Lesson Ten

INTRODUCTION

In II Timothy, we have the last written words of the Apostle. This "last will and testament" was written to his son Timothy shortly before Paul's death (4:6) in 67 or 68 A.D., the last year of Nero's reign. As Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29), he was not crucified, but beheaded, a more dignified and merciful death. For further background, please reread the chronology in the introduction to I Timothy. Paul's first imprisonment described in Acts 28:30, 31 differs from this second one described in this epistle. Then he was freer; now he is in chains (1:8, 16; 2:9). Then he had friends, now he is alone (1:15; 4:11, 16). Then he was accessible; now he is hard to find (1:16, 17). Then he expected release as noted in the four "prison epistles" of Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, and Ephesians (Phil. 1:25, 26; 2:24; Phile. 22); now he foresees only death (4:6-8).

A man's final words center upon those things he holds most dear. This epistle, the one that reveals the tender heart of Paul more than any other save II Corinthians, revolves around three topics: Timothy (1:3 — 2:13), the church (2:14 — 4:5); and Paul himself (4:6-18). Lipscomb suggests we look for Paul's exhortations (1:6 — 2:26), warnings (3:1 — 4:5), and

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

testimony (4:6-18). Hendriksen sees each chapter focusing on sound doctrine with Timothy exhorted to: I. Hold to it; II. Teach it; III. Live it; IV. Preach it!

GUARD THE FAITH! 1:1-18

GREETINGS

SECTION ONE 1:1, 2

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus,
2 To Timothy, my beloved child:
Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

This typical Pauline greeting differs from the first epistle only by the addition of the adjective **beloved**, setting the tenor of the whole epistle — that of a loving father trying to extend last-minute advice to a son whom he deeply loves!

A PRAYER FOR TIMOTHY

SECTION TWO 1:3-7

3 I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers. **4** As I remember your tears, I long night and day to see you, that I may be filled with joy. **5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you. **6** Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; **7** for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.

V. 3 Paul in almost every epistle thanks God for fellow Christians (Rom. 1:8, 9; I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15, 16; Phil. 1:3, 4; Col. 1:3; I Thess. 1:2; II Thess. 1:3; Phile. 4). As he looks upon the face of death, Paul has no stain on his **conscience** (see comments, I, 1:19) and rejoices in the godly heritage he has received from Abraham, Jacob, and others of lesser fame (Acts 24:14, 15). We often forget those in past ages who, not knowing us, have prayed for us, sacrificed for us, and laid a strong foundation for us. The family of God transcends all ages, all cultures, all barriers (Eph. 2:6-22). We do not tread a lonely path but are surrounded by a concerned family (Heb. 12:1). After looking back to his heritage, Paul turns his mind to those who shall follow after him, especially Timothy, who take part in this great procession of faith.

V. 4 Some put **night and day** with **prayers** in v. 3 (KJV), while others place it with **longing** in v. 4 (ASV, RSV). Either rendering is acceptable grammatically, theologically, and practically and both ideas blend into one for if we devoutly long for another, we breathe his name in prayer constantly.

Timothy's **tears** probably came at their last parting (cf. Acts 20:37) showing the young man's love and devotion to his "father." But at reunion, tears will become **joy** (4:20). This type of contrast is typical of Paul's writing style.

Much of life's happiness depends upon the presence of others. Isn't that also much of heaven's joy?

V. 5 **Remember** (lit., "having been reminded") suggests that something special had brought Timothy's character into Paul's mind. A letter from Timothy? A young man who resembled Timothy? A treasured memento Paul fingered? Whatever the cause, Paul remembers Timothy in four special ways: (1) As a person to be thankful for (3); (2) As a loving son who shed tears (4); (3) As a fellow helper with un hypocritical faith (5); (4) As one who possesses a gift God can use (6). How do people remember you?

The **sincere faith** ("hypocrite" or "play actor" is a form of this word) Timothy possessed came from his early home environment (3:15). Faith is better caught than taught. Too many wear a "false faith," but not this young man! His father is evidently dead, has left, or was of little influence in Timothy's spiritual development (cf. Acts 16:1). This young man, like Paul, had also been nurtured on O.T. truths which gave him a firm foundation upon which to build the Gospel faith preached by Paul.

Dwells is literally "makes its home in you," certainly more than a Sunday-only faith.

V. 6 Again Paul plays on words. I was reminded of you (v. 3) and now I remind you. **Rekindle** refers to the stirring up of smoldering embers to produce a blazing fire. Was Timothy not making full use of God's **gift**?

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

This gift (cf. comments on I, 4:14) has been identified as miraculous power (Acts 8:17; 19:6), natural inborn gifts such as the ability to preach (Rom. 12:8), or his ordination as an evangelist or fellow missionary with Paul (Acts 13:3). Whichever it was, and I prefer the first suggestion, Timothy knew that it was given to help him minister and he dare not be slack in using it.

V. 7 Timothy appears to have been somewhat intimidated by the problems at Ephesus (cf. I Cor. 16:10) perhaps due to a quiet and retiring nature. Paul reminds him that God's presence and message enables him to have **power** ("dynamite," Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 4:20) which conquers, and **love** which drives out fear (I Jn. 4:18), and **self-control** which enables us to perform deeds which otherwise paralyze us (Mk. 14:36). Power, not tempered by love and controlled by the possessor, is dangerous. God's Spirit gives us blessings here and now (Gal. 5:22, 23).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Read the references in v. 3 and see for what things in various congregations Paul gives thanks. How would he characterize yours?
2. How can we "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17) as did Paul?
3. Who is responsible for teaching faith to our children?
4. Is it possible to have a faith that is not "sincere"?
5. In what ways is faith "caught" by others?
6. Can God use a shy, retiring person in a bold, forceful ministry?

AN EXHORTATION TO TIMOTHY

SECTION THREE 1:8-14

8 Do not be ashamed of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God, 9 who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not in virtue of our works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace which he gave us in Christ Jesus ages ago, 10 and now has manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 For this gospel I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, 12 and therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. 13 Follow the

pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; 14 guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

V. 8 Many would be **ashamed** of Paul and his chains and fear lest they be classified criminals because of association with him. So, echoing Peter's denial, "I know not the man," they deserted. But Paul is not a prisoner of Rome, but of Christ (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; Phile. 1, 9). **Shame** is the key word of this section as Paul urges Timothy not to be ashamed (8), affirms his own lack of shame for Christ (12), disparages those who deserted him out of shame (15); and commends one who is unashamed to call him friend (16).

V. 9 Paul finds strength in Christ's example Who died the death of a criminal and was also deserted by most of His disciples at His time of testing. The Gospel is worth suffering for; however, let us not fall into the error of supposing salvation is by our suffering and **works**, but through **grace**.

Vs. 10, 11 This grace began in the mind of God before creation (Eph. 1:4), began to work itself out in the O.T. dispensation, and has come to a triumphant climax in that glorious act on Calvary's crest and in that empty tomb (I Cor. 15:55-58). Death is dead! Men die, but are no longer trapped in that dark cell (I Cor. 15:54; Jn. 5:24-29). A glorious message — one worth suffering for! Who can be ashamed of a God Who bestows such hope?

V. 12 Because Paul preached Jesus as the Author of Life, the Jews engineered the persecution resulting in his death. But no matter what trials come (II Cor. 6:5-10; 11:23-28), Paul doubts not the value of his efforts. Even if death comes, God will carry us through.

What has been entrusted to me is literally "keep my commitment," and can mean: (1) Paul has entrusted his life to Christ and will not lose it on judgment **day** (KJV, ASV); (2) Or Paul is guarding God's Gospel treasure in his life and nothing can destroy it nor stop it (RSV). Both ideas are true. Verse 14 restates this second idea. As Paul is fond of contrasts, this suggests that the KJV rendering may be the proper one.

Entrusted means "deposit, sacred trust, that given to another to keep."

V. 13 Timothy is to **follow** what Paul taught, **guard** it lest it be perverted (14), and **entrust** it to others (2:2). **Pattern** indicates a recognized body of teaching which made up the doctrine of the church. The emphasis in these last letters of Paul is not on using gifts (cf. I Cor. 12) or discovering new truths, but on practicing, defending, and teaching what has already been revealed through the apostles — the New Testament. This same idea appears in Jude 3, Eph. 4:4; II Pet. 2:2; Gal. 1:8, 9;

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

etc.). "True theology is not new theology and new theology is not true theology." Our task is not to discern new truth (Acts 17:21), but to proclaim revealed truth without perversion (II Pet. 3:15, 16).

V. 14 The enemy is strong; we are weak. The only hope we have of defending God's truth is with the help of God's **Spirit** within us. He was given to us at baptism (Acts 2:38), assumes a greater control as we yield our lives to Him (Acts 5:32), and makes our bodies temples (I Cor. 6:19) as He cleanses us from moral filth (I Cor. 6:11; Rom. 8:13, 14) and **dwells** in us. He helps us pray (Rom. 8:26, 27), revives our spirits (II Cor. 3:6, 18), and makes us fruitful (Gal. 5:22, 23). He indwells every Christian but must "move out" when we will not follow His leading, and practice instead works of the flesh (I Thess. 5:19; Gal. 5:19-21). Today many claim the promise given to the apostles to guide them "into all truth" (Jn. 16:13). This was needful for them as they were writing the N.T. Today God guides by His revealed Word. Those who claim to be Spirit-led show by teaching doctrines that contradict Scripture or others making similar claims that their "truth" is certainly not from God.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Why would anyone be "ashamed" of his faith? How can we overcome this shame?
2. In what sense is death abolished? Should we fear death?
3. Is there a "pattern" we are to teach?
4. How does the Holy Spirit lead today? Are the promises in John 14-16 for all Christians or just the apostles?

AN EXAMPLE FOR TIMOTHY

SECTION FOUR 1:15-18

15 You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, 17 but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me — 18 may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day — and you well know all the service he rendered at Ephesus.

V. 15 Paul uses a negative example — those who deserted him, and a positive example — Onesiphorus who befriended him, as lessons for Timothy. Ephesus was in **Asia** and probably had sent a delegation to minister to Paul or to appear at his trial. These two are mentioned by name because they were the leaders of the desertion or because Paul was amazed that “even Phil and Herm” would desert him. Many talk Christianity, but wilt when it costs time, money, or social position.

V. 16 Paul continues his “one-line epitaphs” as he praises **Onesiphorus** whose name means “profit bringer” or “profitable.” He came not once, but **oft** at great danger to himself to **refresh** Paul. A simple visit or word of encouragement means more than we know to one with an aching heart. And God also takes notice and will **grant mercy** in time to us (Mt. 5:7; 25:31-46).

V. 17 As a political prisoner, Paul was somewhat inaccessible to those who dared call him friend. The fire set by the crazed Nero and blamed on the Christians made believers cautious. A stranger in Rome would be viewed with suspicion by the Christians who feared him a spy, and with disfavor by the authorities who considered him to be another of the incendiaries. Can you detect the note of surprised joy as Paul exclaims, “He sought and **found me!**”

V. 18 The blessing on this friend is repeated as Paul marvels at his courageous faith. And Paul realized that this one had been “Profitable” to many in **Ephesus**. Timothy is to follow his example as a strong soldier of the cross.

SUMMARY: Please note in this chapter the various appeals made to Timothy to be strong. We use these same type of encouragements today. 1. His sincere faith (5a); 2. His family background (5b); 3. The gift God gave him (6a); 4. The “office” to which he had been ordained (6b); 5. The new spirit God gave him (7); 6. The importance of the task (8-10); 7. The example of Paul his “father” (8, 11-13); 8. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (14); 9. The negative example of the Asians — “don’t be like them” (15); 10. The courageous example of Onesiphorus (16-18).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. What are some reasons why friends often desert other friends in time of need?
2. If Paul wrote one line about your life, what would it say?
3. Aren’t those who are infirm, aged, or handicapped in “prison” too with few to refresh them? Does your congregation minister to them?
4. Which of Paul’s appeals to Timothy would best motivate you? Why?