

Lesson Thirteen

PREACH THE WORD!

II Timothy 4:1-22

A CHARGE TO TIMOTHY

SECTION ONE 4:1-5

4 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: 2 preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. 5 As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Paul's last written words center on two subjects — his charge to his son to be strong in testing and his own personal testimony concerning his strength in testing.

V.1 Timothy has been **charged** ("give solemn testimony") before (I, 5:21). Notice the courtroom atmosphere as his commission is given

in the presence of witnesses with a final judgment in view. Jesus is pictured as **judge** of those who are alive at His coming as well as those who have died. Jesus came once to save; now He comes to judge (Rom. 2:16; I Cor. 4:5; II Cor. 4:5; II Thess. 1:7-9; Acts 17:31). He is also presented as an **appearing** conqueror (II Thess. 2:8). This word is transliterated "epiphany" and means "manifestation." II Tim. 1:10 refers to His first manifestation which is completed by this second. Thirdly, He is seen as a King reigning in His **kingdom**. Paul could hardly have used stronger images to stir Timothy.

V. 2 **Preach** means to "herald or proclaim" as the king's messenger. Certainly it suggests the authority and soberness with which we deliver the message. The "pardon-me-please" preaching that is so common today is not contemplated here! Some times seem more **in season** or favorable for our message, but even when the time seems unfavorable, God wants us to witness. The "sermon" Christ preached on Calvary was at a very unseasonable time, but His words and actions have brought many to God.

A good sermon has three basic elements. We must: (1) **Convince** ("reprove, convict") the mind of the truth so that the sinner might see his error; (2) **Rebuke**, as the truth is applied in a practical way to convert the will; (3) **Exhort** ("encourage") the heart to respond. In Acts 2, Peter convinced the Jews that they had crucified the Son of God (14-36), rebuked them for their actions producing a changed will (37-39), and exhorted them to respond (40).

Modifying these three imperatives is the phrase **in patience and in teaching** (cf. II Tim. 2:24). Concern must be given to method as well as content. Many false teachings have been accepted because of the good spirit of the teacher; often truth is rejected because he who carries it lacks kindness in speech.

V. 3 For a third time (I, 4:1; II, 3:1) Paul warns about apostasy. The figure of people having **itching ears** came from animals who enjoy this type of petting. This type of person is not concerned about truth, but wants a message that "makes me feel good." (cf. I Kings 22:8). They prefer the new to the true (Acts 17:21). When one abandons revealed truth, he "apostasizes" into **myths** (cf. I, 1:4).

V. 5 But Timothy is to be **sober** ("temperate, circumspect, alert," I, 3:2), not distracted by these conditions. He is to **endure suffering** as a good soldier (2:3). And he must **do the work of an evangelist** ("one who brings good news") to the lost. He needs to **fulfill his ministry** ("make a full proof") before the conquering Judge-King comes. These things urged upon Timothy have already been performed in Paul's life; in verses 6-8, he will use himself as an example of true service.

THIRTEEN LESSONS ON I, II TIMOTHY & TITUS

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Will our ministry be judged by the Lord? On what basis?
2. Is the preacher the only one who is to "preach the word"?
3. Have you heard sermons that contain only one of the three elements in v. 2?
4. Name some "unseasonable" times for the Gospel.
5. Do we sometimes blame the preacher when it is the message that has condemned us?

AN EXAMPLE TO TIMOTHY

SECTION TWO 4:6-8

6 For I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

V. 6 Paul compares himself to a drink offering (Num. 15:1-10) being gradually poured out (cf. Phil. 2:17 for same word and idea). "A living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1) being offered every day is a true picture of a dedicated Christian. The trouble with a living sacrifice is that it keeps crawling off the altar! Paul did not think of his coming death as something *being taken* from him, but as did his Lord (Jn. 10:18) he saw his life *being given* to God as a sacrifice.

Departure ("loosing") is the word used for a ship slipping its mooring rope to set sail for a new harbor, or for a soldier pulling his tent pegs that he might set forth on a new campaign, or for unyoking animals at the end of a long, weary trip. Death to Paul was not fearful, but the entry-way to a new adventure (Phil. 1:21-23). Reread his triumphal words in I Cor. 15:55-58.

V. 7 Shakespeare wrote, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." But Paul's conscience was clear for he had done what God had commanded, so fear was absent. He had **fought the good fight** (I, 6:12; Eph. 6:10-18) and was now ready to pass on the sword of the Spirit to Timothy. Paul's body bore the scars of many battles for the Lord (II Cor. 11:22-33), and he regretted not a one. He had **finished the race**, or the work God

had entrusted him to do (Acts 20:24; II Cor. 10:13; cf. Jn. 17:4). What sadness to look back over sixty years of life and see little of lasting value; what satisfaction to see individuals and churches enriched because we lived! Many reach life's end after battling a lifetime for the Lord and seeing great works done for Him, without a trusting faith. Somehow it has been lost along the way. To them, life's but an empty dream, "A tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing." But to have done all Paul had done and to have **kept the faith**, what glory! (cf. Jn. 16:33)

V. 8 Paul's efforts will be rewarded with a **crown of righteousness** (I Cor. 9:25), a crown of life (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10) given to those who have lived righteously. The fastest runner in the Greek games received a laurel leaf crown to symbolize his victory, but the Lord's crown is not given only to him who comes in first, but to **all** who run in faith to the finish of life's race. And the Lord's judgment is not perverted by money or power as was the judgment of those before whom Paul had been tried, but He is a **righteous judge**. The early church longed and prayed for **that day** to come (I Cor. 16:22; Rev. 22:20). We too often get so caught up with running the race that we forget the finish and Him Who awaits us there (Heb. 12:1, 2).

His appearing may refer to His first coming; those who love Him and follow His message will rejoice on that Day. But contextually it refers to His second coming as seen from its completion. For those who are not ready, it is a day of unspeakable terror (Rev. 6:15-17); for the Christian, it is a day of wonderful promise (Jn. 14:3; Rev. 22:20).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. In what way is the Christian life a "living sacrifice"?
2. Use your concordance and see what the N.T. says about death. Study the various images of death (such as sleep) and see what they suggest.
3. Does God have certain tasks He wants us to complete?
4. How does one win the race of life?
5. If you had it in your power, would you have Jesus come today? Why or why not?

AN EXHORTATION TO TIMOTHY

SECTION THREE 4:9-18

9 Do your best to come to me soon. 10 For Demas, in love with this

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present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. 12 Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will requite him for his deeds. 15 Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message. 16 At my first defense no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! 17 But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the word fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This section is one of the saddest in Scripture. This grand old man of faith who has comforted so many others is now forsaken in his hour of need. He longs to see his son and old friends just one more time.

Vs. 9, 10 **Demas**, whose name means "popular," has yielded to the siren call of the world and **deserted**. He had stood with Paul in the first imprisonment (Phile. 24), but had grown tired or disillusioned. Now this world was more important to him than to the one which was to come. Many yet have the Demas-spirit.

Crescens and **Titus** evidently have been sent by Paul to do mission work; but their departure robs him of their companionship.

V. 11 Doctor **Luke** is still there, perhaps in an official capacity. Places of imprisonment did little to strengthen a man's health, being cold and damp, and Paul's strenuous life certainly provided him with a measure of aches and pains. Paul would love to see **John Mark** again. This young man had deserted Paul on the first missionary journey and, at that time, Paul did not feel too kindly toward one who had so jeopardized his ministry (Acts 15:36-40). But Mark had grown. A Gospel now bore his name. Mark's heart must have warmed as he read that Paul now found him **useful**. When we stumble, we bring a tear to God's eye; when we rise above that mistake, we make Him smile.

Vs. 12, 13 **Tychicus** (see on Tit. 3:12) was to relieve Timothy at Ephesus so he might come. As he would be passing by Troas on his way to Rome, Paul asks that he bring his **cloak** he had left there on an earlier trip. This warm garment would be welcome in a cold, damp dungeon. The **books** were membrane skins used for writing important messages as they were more durable (and more expensive) than the **parchments** or scroll paper. Were these blank, needed by Paul to write more letters? Did they contain

some important reading he wanted to do? Certainly not his Bible for Paul would not leave that behind! I like to think Paul loved his books and wanted to reread some of his favorites for one last time.

Vs. 14, 15 Five **Alexanders** are mentioned in Scripture (Mk. 15:21; Acts 4:6; II, 4:14). The word **coppersmith** seems to differentiate him from the one in I Tim. 1:19, 20, perhaps identifying him with one of the craftsmen employed at the temple of Diana (Acts 19:33, 34). Timothy knew him and would trust him without Paul's warning. Perhaps he brought damaging testimony against Paul at the first hearing of his trial. Even though his friends deserted him, Paul harbors no ill will.

Vs. 17, 18 A triumphant statement of faith — men may desert me but God will not! And Paul even uses this time of testing to glorify God. He evidently preached a sermon at his trial (Acts 26:1-32). The **lion** may be: (1) literal, as Christians were placed into the amphitheatre; (2) a reference to Nero, the Roman emperor before whom Paul stood; (3) Satan, who is called a lion (I Pet. 5:8); (4) or, most likely, a personification of evil (Psa. 22:21). Notice the similarity of verses 16:18 to Psalm 22, the Messianic Prophecy of Christ's death on the cross as seen from the crucified's viewpoint. (Compare 22:1 to 4:16; 11 to 16; 21 to 17; 27 to 17; 28 to 18.) Paul found comfort in this Psalm that reflected his Lord's suffering and loneliness. Jesus could understand his heartache for He had undergone a similar experience.

Paul does not ask for nor expect deliverance from death; he knows it is coming (4:6). He prays to be saved from the evil one and his power, and to be taken to his eternal home. God does not always save us from our trials, but in our trials (II Cor. 12:9, 10).

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Why do so many, like Demas, slip back into the world?
2. Are we, like Paul, willing to forgive those who have failed us?
3. Did an inspired apostle need to read books?
4. Does God always deliver us from the fiery furnace?

FINAL WORDS

SECTION FOUR 4:19-22

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.
20 Erastus remained at Corinth; Trophimus I left ill at Miletus. 21 Do

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your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren.

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

This last section reveals something of the great heart of this apostle. In spite of his miseries, he still thinks of others and glorifies God. May God so help us to rise above self interest.

Prisca ("earnest") is the name of Paul's dear tent-maker friend (Acts 18:2) who is usually called by the affectionate, diminutive form of her name, Priscilla ("little earnest"). In four of the six times Paul mentions this couple, he places her name before that of husband **Aquila** ("eagle") suggesting she was the more dominant or outgoing of the two. They traveled a lot — Rome, Corinth (Acts 18:2), Ephesus (18:18, 19), Rome (Rom. 16:3), and Ephesus again (II, 4:19). A church met in their house (I Cor. 16:19). They knew their Bible better than some preachers (Acts 18:26). What a wonderful couple!

Onesiphorus (1:16) is to be greeted. **Erastus** also helped Paul (Acts 19:22) and was the city treasurer of Corinth (Rom. 16:23) showing that some important people had become Christians. **Trophimus** was the Gentile traveling with Paul who stirred the riot in Jerusalem (Acts 21:29). His illness must have taken place recently during the interprison travels as there is no way to correlate this with the Acts account.

Timothy should come **before winter** for the weather shut down ship travel and Paul might not be there when the *spring thaw* came. Besides, he needed the warm coat and his books. The others mentioned are unknown to us.

As Paul pens his last known words, they are typical. **Grace be with you.** Grace had brought him safe thus far, and "grace would take him home." What joy it will be to visit with this wonderful man as we share eternity with him at the throne of our Lord.

DISCUSSION STARTERS:

1. Do you have "a church" in your house? Just what is a church?
2. Were all the early Christians poor?
3. Do you think Timothy got to Rome before Paul was beheaded?