

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

2 TIMOTHY

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PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus*- Paul begins by saying he has been called to be a sent out one, and then a few verses later backs it up by repeating that he was appointed to be an apostle (1:11). The same pattern is to be seen in 1 Timothy; the opening verse speaks likewise of how he is an apostle (1 Tim. 1:1), and then 1 Tim. 2:7 says he was indeed appointed as an apostle. Perhaps Timothy was beginning to doubt Paul's credentials, and this was a factor in Timothy's lack of full devotion to his ministry? Or perhaps Paul is urging Timothy to follow his own example of commitment to the calling he had received. For the letters to Timothy suggest that Timothy needed to be stirred up to continue responding to the calling received.

Through the will of God- Paul often begins his letters by saying this. But "the will of God" should not be understood by us as it is by Islam, where the will of God is understood as fulfilling anyway in a deterministic sense. The word carries the idea of the intention, the wish or pleasure of God. Paul could have turned down the call to be an apostle. He was not forced into obedience by an omnipotent Divine manipulator. All things were created for God's "pleasure" or will [s.w. Rev. 4:11], but clearly enough "all things" do not all perform God's wish. We pray for the Kingdom age when God's will shall be done on earth- for it is now generally not done. We are best therefore to understand the idea of God's wish, His desire,

which of course He labours to see fulfilled. But He does not force or impose; He too deeply respects the freewill of His creatures. The art of Christian life is to willingly align ourselves with His will.

According to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus- The promise of life is referred to in 1 Tim. 4:8 as concerning both life in Christ now, and the eternal form of that same life which is yet to come. Likewise in John's writings, eternal life is the promise we have (1 Jn. 2:25), and also our present experience. We have the eternal life in that we through the spirit of Christ can live now the kind of life which we shall eternally live.

1:2 *To Timothy, my beloved child. Grace, mercy, peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord-* Although Paul had not converted nor baptized Timothy, he had played a huge formative part in his spiritual life, to the extent he could address him as his child in the faith. This is the significance of the relationships we can build up now through our spiritual interaction with and efforts for each other. Paul's increasing perception of sinfulness is shown by the way in which in his earlier letters he uses the greeting "Grace and peace"; but in Timothy and Titus, his last letters: "Grace, *mercy*, and peace...". He saw the overriding, crucial importance of God's grace and mercy, and he wished this on all his brethren.

1:3- see on Rom. 8:16; 1 Jn. 3:18.

I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of you in my prayers, night and day- How could Paul "thank God" that he remembered Timothy in prayer? "Thank" here translates *charis*, the usual word for gift or grace. Paul expresses his thanks in this way because he wishes to acknowledge that his feelings for Timothy are maintained by God's grace, the gift of the Spirit within. Perhaps Paul is here alluding to Anna as his model for continual thanksgiving (Lk. 2:37 = 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3). The language of constant prayer cannot mean that we are literally on our knees 24/7. It refers rather to how our spirit and His are united. It speaks of an incredible personal bonding in prayer between the Creator and each, specific one of His creatures. Only through our will, our essential person and spirit, becoming united with God's can it be possible to live a life of prayer, whereby we are praying without ceasing, constantly, every moment (Rom. 1:9; 12:12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 5:17; 2 Thess. 1:11; 2:13; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3). Our life, our person, our spirit, our being, is read as a prayer to God.

Paul claims that the Jewish forefathers served God with a pure conscience (2 Tim. 1:3 NIV). Yet the Jewish fathers, dear Jacob particularly, must have had plenty of twinges of guilt over their years. Indeed, all the Jewish fathers had a bad 'conscience' because of their sins (Heb. 9:9; 10:2). Surely Paul must mean that they had such a firm faith in forgiveness that *in God's eyes* they had a pure conscience.

1:4 *Longing to see you, remembering your tears, wanting to be filled with joy for you-* The tear stained cheeks of Timothy were such a haunting memory for Paul because he perceived Timothy's weakness and his heart bled for his protégé. Timothy had not attained the Christian joy which Paul knew was potentially possible for him; and he so wished the spiritual growth of Timothy in this respect. We too should long for the spiritual maturity of others; to not feel that way is to be spiritually selfish. Being "filled with joy" is an expression used specifically about the filling of a believer with joy as a result of the indwelling of the Spirit (Jn. 15:11; 16:24; Acts 13:52; Rom. 15:13). Paul wished for Timothy to open himself up more to the work of the Spirit, and this would lead to Paul feeling that fullness of joy in Timothy within himself. As explained more fully on 1 Cor. 5:4, the Spirit in Paul found connection with the Spirit in other believers, thereby creating "the fellowship of the Spirit". In this way, the joy of Timothy would be Paul's joy, just as the joy of Titus was his joy (see on 2 Cor. 7:13).

1:5 *I am often reminded of the sincere faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded dwells in you also-* Faith can become just vague hope for something better, rather than a "confident assurance", a seeing of the unseen. Paul's reference to "unfeigned faith" (1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 1:5 AV) as the goal of personal and ecclesial life would suggest that he realized the temptation to have a fake, feigned faith. See on Jn. 8:30. The faith "in [within] you" connects with the gift "in you" (:6).

1:6 *Because of this I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands-* Because Paul knew that Timothy had faith (:5), he encouraged him to use the gift of the Spirit within him to greater potential. That same gift had been given to the Corinthians, as they are often reminded, but they were still "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). Likewise Timothy is being urged to use to the full the potential created by the Spirit gift within him. That gift or *charisma* was "in you", within Timothy, and refers to the same Spirit gift in the heart which is given to all believers. Yet that gift could be given multiple times; not just at baptism, but also through the laying on of hands of believers like Paul.

1:7 *For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and a disciplined mind-* The "us" suggests this is a general reference to the gift of the Spirit to all believers, and doesn't reference any specific gift given only to Timothy. Likewise :14 speaks of the gift of the Spirit "which dwells in us". The reference is to an internal gift, within us, and not to miraculous gifts. See notes to this effect on :4,5 and 6. The same words for 'giving' and 'Spirit' are found in describing the gift of the Spirit given at baptism (Acts 5:32; 8:18). They are likewise found in Rom. 5:5, which speaks of God's love being "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us". The domain of operation of this Spirit gift is clearly within the human heart or mind. Likewise the same words for gift and Spirit are found in 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5: "Who has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit *in our hearts*". This gift can be given at points after baptism- hence Paul prayed for the baptized Ephesians that God would "Give you... to be strengthened with might by His Spirit *in the inner man*" (Eph. 3:16). The gift of the Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8) results in our internal awareness, *within us*, that the Father and Son are abiding with us and we in them (1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13).

"Because you are sons (already born again through response to the Gospel), God has *sent forth* the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). We become sons of God by birth of the Spirit as promised in the word of the Gospel (1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18), and therefore God sends this Spirit of Sonship into our hearts. Notice that the prerogative in this is with God, not us. Likewise Paul prayed that God "may *give* unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:17,18). The gift of the Spirit didn't mean that Timothy would not be fearful, or be loving and disciplined. But he, as all of us, had been given that Spirit. It is for us to allow the path of the Spirit in transforming our spirit; and Timothy's fearfulness and lack of mental power meant that he had not let the Spirit act as he could have done. Likewise the Corinthians were given these Spirit gifts but remained "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1); they failed to allow the Spirit gift to work within them.

1:8- see on Rom. 1:16.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but suffer hardship for the gospel according to the power of God- The possession of the Spirit within us is an earnest or guarantee of the Lord's abiding with us and of our future salvation. Therefore Timothy was to be unashamed of testifying for the Lord Jesus and suffering because of it. According to the power / spirit of God, the gift within, Timothy was to not be ashamed but "suffer hardship". His weak nature seems to have found "hardship" hard to endure, for the word is used repeatedly (2:3,9; 4:5). Clearly the Lord chooses those who are least humanly qualified for the job required; but the example of Timothy is that he was

strengthened through the Spirit to achieve what was so hard for him. His sense of 'shame' was surely before the church- for he was called to take in hand a belligerent and forceful opposition in the Ephesian church. So being ashamed of Christ's words doesn't just apply to not speaking up for the Truth when someone invites us to a topless bar after work. It's equally true, and the punishment for it just the same, in the context of not speaking out Christ's word in the ecclesia, to our very own brethren (Mk. 8:38 = 2 Tim. 1:8).

Paul was clearly frustrated by imprisonment, and laments his bonds and limitations. But he saw himself as the Lord's prisoner; even the most oppressive of circumstances are under His control and can be endured 'as unto Him'.

1:9- see on Eph. 2:6.

Who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal- The allusion is to the salvation of Israel out of Egypt- although they were still able to fall from that 'saved' position. Natural Israel was called out of Egypt by their Red Sea baptism to be "a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). After our baptism, the members of spiritual Israel likewise receive "a holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9). After baptism we "become slaves of... holiness" (Rom. 6:19,22 and context). Our calling is according to God's purpose- the same words and argument as used in Rom. 8:28; 9:11. Paul there cites the whole concept of calling as the great example of grace. The fact God's "purpose" means some are called and some aren't is a parade of grace (Rom. 9:11). Instead of getting caught up on the imponderables about those who are not called, the fact we have been called and are in God's purpose should be read as His grace being poured out upon us. We know we are called because without doubt we have heard the call to the Kingdom. But this calling was in fact given to us in Christ from infinity- "before times eternal". This is mind-blowing- that God's plan to save us was given for us not just at the creation of the world, but from some infinite point before time existed. To say 'from the beginning' would be to miss the wonder of it.

1:10 *But has now been manifested by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel-* The plan to save us which was made from infinity 'back' (see on :9) was actualized by the death of the Lord Jesus. What had been for so long in God's mind for us has now been revealed to us. It would be tragic indeed to shrug it all off as unimportant or exaggerated in wonder. There is no immortality for any of us apart from "through the Gospel"; it was the Lord Jesus who brought our immortality to the light of real possibility. This not only means that there is no immortal soul; our immortality, on a personal level, is the context of :9. And this plan from infinite time (:9) had as it were been in the dark, but in Christ, it was brought out into the light of day. The "appearing of our Saviour" refers both to His appearing to abolish death on the cross, and also to His appearance in glory at the last day, when in reality death shall be abolished. This is the "that day" referenced in :12.

Paul says that Jesus has "abolished death" in that death as the world has to face it, final and total death, does not happen to us in Christ. This is why those who truly follow the Lord will never taste of death (Jn. 8:51,52); everyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die (Jn. 11:26). It really is but a sleep. I know the hard reality of the loss still hurts, still registers. But in the end, because He abolished death in Himself, so has He done already for all those in Him.

1:11 *Of which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher-* The wonder of extending the grace of God's calling to others is compelling. All who hear are surely called, and despite the masses of those not called [and all our curious questions about them], the

wonder is that all those called had a wonderful eternity planned for them from before infinity (see on :9). These reflections are a great motivation to preach and teach these things to others.

1:12 *For which cause I suffer also these things. Yet I am not ashamed-* Paul is asking Timothy to copy his example of suffering hardship and not being ashamed. The wonder of being saved, and knowing that all our witness work is extending the calling to others and bringing them to the real possibility of eternal life and glory to God... all this empowers us to suffer and not be ashamed for the sake of the Gospel.

For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard what I have committed to him against that day- As we along with Paul have committed our "all things" to Him, so He commits the "all things" of the Gospel to us (2 Tim. 1:12 cp. 14; 1 Tim. 6:20). There is a mutuality here between us. But some manuscripts offer an alternative, to the effect that He is able to guard what *He* has committed unto *me*. The gift of the Spirit, through which God's power / ability ["is able"] operates, will enable us to hold on to the ministry we have received from Him. And Timothy is then urged in :14 to use the power of the Spirit to maintain the ministry which *he* had received.

"I know Him" clearly speaks of relationship, rather than mere theological awareness, no matter how pure. It is the knowledge of Jesus, the mutual relationship with Him, knowing His presence in the Spirit, which makes us not ashamed. "That day" is the appearing of the Lord Jesus at His return, when death shall be abolished (see on :10). Paul's persuasion that he would be 'guarded' until that last day is another way of saying that he knew that he really now had the Spirit as an earnest / guarantee of future salvation. For His 'ability', *dunatos* ("able"), is through the *dunamis* of the Spirit which we have been given.

1:13 *Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus-* The "pattern of sound words" could refer to some defined body of teaching which Paul had passed on to Timothy. The problem with any such 'statement of teaching / faith' is that it tends to be held in anything other than love or faith. As soon as definitions and boundaries are potentially established, there arise disputes, lack of love and an associated loss of faith. Hence the urge to hold this form of sound teaching in faith and love.

1:14 *That good thing which was committed to you guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us-* See on :7. The "good thing" may refer to the prophecies committed upon Timothy to "war a good warfare" (1 Tim. 1:18). The reference may be simply to his calling to the ministry at Ephesus. Just as Paul had been given a ministry which the Spirit empowered him to fulfil (see on :12). The only other time we read of the Spirit dwelling in us with tis Greek phrase is in Rom. 8:11 "His Spirit that dwells in you". As here, the Spirit is operative *within* the human mind and person. No reference to the miraculous gifts, but to the internal gift of the Spirit which is promised to all believers for all time. The Spirit likewise distributes to each believer a ministry, a role or part within the body of Christ; and the same Spirit empowers us to maintain it.

1:15 *This you know, that all that are in Asia turned away from me. Of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes-* Paul lamented on his deathbed that all the believers in Asia had turned away (2 Tim. 1:15; Gk. *apostropho*, to apostasize). But at roughly the same time, the Lord Jesus wrote to seven ecclesias in Asia, commending some of their members for holding on to the Truth. Paul was a man of great love, who really tried to see the best in his brethren, having been touched by the grace of God. He even would have given up his eternal life, so that the Jews would be saved (Rom. 9:3 cp. Ex. 32:32). But even Paul, in the time of his greatest spiritual maturity, thought that all the Asian Christians were apostate; when in the Lord's eyes, this wasn't the case. As noted on Galatians 1, it would seem that Paul over personalized issues; their turning away from him he took as a turning away from the Lord, when the letters of Rev. 2 and 3 show this was not the case. We too can take the lesson, that

personal fall out with ourselves doesn't mean that a believer is no longer with the Lord. The names Phygelus ["fugitive"] and Hermogenes ["born of Hermes"] may be code words, nick names created so as not to allow the naming of specific individuals for reasons of security. Perhaps Phygelus was seen as a fugitive slave on the run from the Lord Jesus; and Hermogenes had returned to the worship of Hermes.

1:16- see on Mt. 5:7.

The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain- The family [or house church?] of one faithful individual were blessed for his singular kindness and grace shown to Paul. Blessing [and the reverse] often comes upon third parties as a result of the spiritual position of another. Thus the paralyzed man was forgiven his sins for the sake of the faith of his friends (Mk. 2:5). Association with prisoners has never been an easy thing to do, and Onesiphorus was unashamed of association with Paul. The implication could be that the Rome ecclesia generally were ashamed of such association. This brother's example was cited as an encouragement to Timothy whose sensitive, timid spirit was concerned at being ashamed for the Gospel and of Paul personally (:8).

2 Tim. 1:16 records Paul praying that the Lord would *give mercy* to the house of Onesiphorus; yet the same phrase is used in :18 about receiving mercy at judgment day. Here it seems that the whole household of Onesiphorus is to be granted mercy, at that day, because of his faithfulness. Does this imply that some will be in the Kingdom only due to the efforts of a third party?

1:17 *But, when he was in Rome, he diligently searched for me and found me-* This diligent searching and finding surely takes us to the Lord as the good shepherd doing just the same for the lost sheep. Perhaps Paul means to imply that he was spiritually weak and needed the refreshment and 'finding' due to the efforts of this brother.

1:18 *(The Lord grant to him that he find the mercy of the Lord in that day); and in how many things he gave service to me at Ephesus, you know very well-* Paul obviously thought that his prayers and wishes for Onesiphorus could affect the outcome of the judgment seat "in that day" for him. If we really can affect the eternal destiny of each other, and Paul's letters, prayers and example show that we surely can- then we should like Paul be constantly in prayer and concern for each others' path towards the Kingdom.

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 2

2:1 *You therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus-* Having exhorted Timothy to be strengthened in the Lord, Paul speaks of how the Lord has strengthened *him* in his last court appearance (2 Tim. 2:1; 4:17). "Grace", *charis*, often refers in the New Testament to the internal gift of the Spirit which is given to all believers. It was given to the Corinthians, but they were "not spiritual" (1 Cor. 3:1). We must allow that gift to work. Paul has urged Timothy about this elsewhere- see on 1:14. And here Paul is stating it explicitly; Timothy [as all of us] is to allow the strengthening process. We lack the iron in our soul to force change to any significant extent; but the way to progress is an opening to the superhuman strengthening of the Spirit which is already potentially at work in us. It's tragic that so many are so nearly there- but will not allow the Spirit to work. This can be due to pride in their own strength, and because of theological denial of the work of the Spirit.

2:2 *And the things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, you are to commit the same to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also-* Paul

wanted Timothy to fulfil his ministry, and that required more than Timothy personally remaining strong to the end. If we take seriously our calling, we realize we have goals to achieve which are beyond us personally. We need to think ahead to a future generation, to rope in others to help achieve the goals. The Lord's later letter to Ephesus, where Timothy had his ministry, would indicate that for all his timidity and weakness, Timothy did actually achieve his goals. For in a later generation, there were still "faithful men" in that church.

2:3 Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus- Paul tells Timothy to "endure hardness" and "endure afflictions" in the Gospel's work, and then goes on to use the same Greek word to describe how he himself 'suffered trouble' in the same work (2 Tim. 2:3,9; 4:5). He sets himself up as a role model for Timothy, his child in the faith (:1). He seeks to draw a parallel between himself in a Roman prison, and Timothy doing his ministry in Ephesus.

2:4 No soldier in service entangles himself in the affairs of this life, so that he may please whoever enrolled him as a soldier- There is nothing morally wrong with the pragmatic things of this life; but they can so easily entangle us and take us away from our focus on the Lord Jesus and His service. This is to be paramount. Problems with a leaking roof can take us far away from the Lord's service... The one who enrolled Timothy as a soldier could refer to God who called him to the service of His Son. But we suspect Paul has himself in view, as the one who introduced Timothy to ministry. And again we see Paul's tendency to over personalize things, as noted on 1:15. Personal loyalty to Paul meant, it seems, far too much for him. Much of his *angst* in dealing with the Corinthians, especially in 2 Corinthians, hinged around this issue of expecting personal loyalty.

2:5 And if also a man competes in the games, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules- We can have an appearance of spiritual progress towards the crown, as did the man who quickly built his house on the sand. But it was the man who perhaps didn't finish his house (we are left to imagine) but who had hacked away at the rock of his own heart, striving to seriously obey the *essence* of his Lord's words, who was accepted in the end. We can deduce that Timothy was tempted to take short cuts in his ministry; and Paul urges him to see his ministry at Ephesus as a work which had to be done according to principles, rather than meeting each issue *ad hoc*. "According to the rules" is literally 'according to the law', and Paul consistently argues against keeping any legal code as the basis for salvation. I suggest that he is putting a simple riddle to Timothy, and he gives another in :6, concluding in :7 that Timothy should "consider" these things and the Lord will give him understanding as to Paul's sense. He may be saying that although we are no longer under law, this doesn't mean that we are without principle in any sense; and likewise in :6, Paul wishes Timothy to understand that "labour" is still required- but as a response to grace and faith in the fact we shall be saved by grace. So he is inviting him to not go too far in thinking that freedom from the Mosaic law means no guiding principles or labour at all. Hence he urges Timothy to the disciplined life of a soldier (:3,4). Maybe Timothy had gone too far in not having any principles at all guiding him.

2:6 The husbandman that labours must be the first to partake of the fruits- I suggested on :5 that this and :5 are riddles Paul is putting to Timothy, with the invitation in :7 to consider them and let the Lord guide him to understanding. The ending of the Mosaic law didn't mean that labour is not required- although in response to grace. If Timothy laboured in trying to help spiritual fruit to develop in Ephesus, he

would partake in the fruits of it. We too receive blessing from trying to help others towards spiritual fruitfulness. But the riddle includes the obvious connection with the fact that according to 1 Cor. 15, the Lord Jesus partakes of the firstfruits first. And Mt. 21 is clear that the Jewish leadership were the husbandmen who had been fired and replaced with new husbandmen; timid Timothy was therefore invited to see himself as directly replacing the Jewish rabbis and synagogue leadership, who were behind the effort to undermine the Christian mission in Ephesus. Yet "My father is the husbandman" (Jn. 15:1). God works through our efforts in bringing forth spiritual fruit in others. And the Lord Jesus clearly identified Himself with the husbandman in His parable of Lk. 13:8. His labour involved spreading manure around the tree of Israel. This humbling work was required of Timothy, and he would be manifesting the Lord Jesus in such work.

2:7 Consider what I say. And may the Lord give you understanding in all things- As noted on :5 and :6, this applies to the two riddles Paul has given Timothy to think about in the preceding two verses. Our obedience leads to greater obedience, in an upward spiral. The dynamic in this spiral is God's spirit. It is through the Spirit that God draws near to us if we draw near to Him (James 4:7,8). This is neatly summarized in 2 Tim. 2:7: "Consider what I say: and the Lord give thee understanding in all things". Thus our freewill 'considering' will result in the Lord adding to our understanding even more that we could ever achieve unaided. 'Considering', literally 'exercising the mind', is one thing; but the Lord will act directly on the human heart to bring about greater "understanding". And that is taught in Col. 1:9; 2:2, where the ministry of the Spirit leads to a filling of believers with "understanding". Clearly the Lord is prepared and eager to act directly upon the mind of believers. Yet too many in conservative circles have left things at just 'considering' Scripture, resistant to the extra element of the Lord adding understanding to their mental gymnastics with Scripture.

2:8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to the gospel I preached- Paul appeals for Timothy to take a Christ-centered approach. Knowing that he is under attack as a charlatan, he emphasizes that his Gospel was what as it were resurrected Christ from the dead. In our hearts, the Lord remains dead until the Gospel reveals His resurrection to us. "Remember" is a similar idea in Greek to the word used for "Consider" in :7; it implies the exercise of the mind. The most basic truths of the Gospel and their implications can easily be forgotten or become swamped in significance by all the *angst* which goes with grappling with church politics.

2:9- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

Because of this I suffer hardship, even to bonds, as a criminal; but the word of God is not bound- "Suffer hardship" is the same word as used in encouraging Timothy to do the same in :3. Paul is encouraging Timothy to take himself as a pattern to himself. "A criminal" is the word only elsewhere used about the criminals crucified with the Lord, and "bonds" is used of the binding of the Lord at that time, both immediately before and after His crucifixion (Mt. 27:2; Jn. 19:40); Paul sees in all his sufferings a fellowship with the Lord in His time of dying. He deeply resented his "bonds" and, by implication, the limitations of freedom they imposed upon him. He realized however that he was "bound in the Spirit"; his bonds were of the Spirit rather than simply of men (Acts 20:22). And yet through his prison experience, he came to write the letters which have had such major significance. Our limitations likewise can

be used by God for far wider things than we can ever realize at the time. Paul never once hints that he perceived that his letters were going to have significance for millennia to come; and that is the wonder of the lesson to us. What we experience as a limitation of freedom, as intense frustration, can be used by the Lord for eternal significance in ways we can never understand at the time. The word of God, the basic Gospel of :8, is unbound- perhaps Paul perceived that his bonds, his limitations, were playing a part in a wider unbound experience. In Col. 4:3, Paul had asked for prayers that he could be given an opportunity to spread the Gospel despite being in bonds. Perhaps he is saying here at the end of his life that in fact this had worked out; for in chapter 4 he writes of how the Gospel had spread and become "fully known" through his bonds (4:17). If we pray for opportunities to preach we will be granted them. Let's pray daily for meetings with people whom we can witness to successfully.

2:10 *Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, so that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory-* Their salvation was dependent upon *his* enduring. And therefore he endured for their sakes. Paul as noted above has been seeing his sufferings as part of the Lord's sufferings; and His suffering led to our salvation, just as our sufferings likewise play a part in the salvation of others, if we are suffering in and with Him. Salvation is "in Christ"; not in any particular ecclesia or fellowship, but through being an active part of His body in the Biblical sense. See on Eph. 2:6. Paul "endured", he held on himself, for the sake of the elect. And likewise the Lord Himself died above all *for us*, His desire for *our* salvation lead Him to endure for Himself. And on a mundane level; the husband who does his Bible readings a second time for the sake of his wife or children or because a brother has paid an unexpected visit... this kind of spiritual effort for others keeps us going ourselves. See on 1 Thess. 3:8. All this opens up a fuller understanding of 2 Cor. 4:17- our sufferings lead to an eternal weight of glory "for us", in the plural.

2:11 *Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him-* "The saying" would refer to one of the pithy "faithful sayings" which the New Testament church committed to memory. These would have been especially valuable for the illiterate. Paul has explained that our sufferings for others can play a part in their salvation, if our sufferings are part of the Lord's crucifixion sufferings. So he is giving another dimension to the well known truth that we are to die with Him; our death is not isolated from His death, and our sufferings are not isolated from His- if we are baptized believers "in Him". And so it shall come to pass that because He lives, we in Him shall live also; His life becomes ours, both now and eternally. The tense of "we died with Him" surely alludes to baptism, the one-time moment when we died with Him.

2:12- see on Mt. 26:70.

If we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he also will deny us- The allusion to death with the Lord in baptism in :11 must be tempered by the fact that we must also "endure". Paul has just written of enduring all things for the sake of the chosen (:10), so that they may be saved. By writing here that thereby *we* shall also reign with Him, Paul has his mind on the fact that our endurance in Him can lead to "we", others, not just himself, reigning with the Lord in glory. On the other hand, our denial of Him can lead to Him denying us- not just us personally, but our failure can lead to others likewise being denied at the last day, for we all have more influence upon others than we realize. Paul was clearly alluding to Peter's denials- and the grace shown by the Lord. For He will not automatically deny those who deny Him, but

works instead for their restoration. This could however be read as a question- if we deny Him, will He deny us? And the answer is no, according to :13.

2:13 *If we are faithless, he abides faithful. For he cannot deny himself-* "Faithless" in Greek more suggests a loss of faith. This was and is at the root of denying Him; for losing faith is here paralleled with denial. The faithfulness of God is hard to understand unless we understand it as faithfulness towards us. Unlike the tendency in human relationships, God will not break His hope, faith and love toward us in response to our withdrawal of them toward Him. He does not mirror our behaviour towards Him; and we should seek to be like Him when we encounter withdrawal of relationship towards us from others. 'He', "Himself", stands for total commitment to His people throughout their lives, and He will not deny His fundamental self.

2:14 *Of these things put them in remembrance, instructing them in the sight of the Lord, that they do not fight about words, to no profit, to the catastrophic destruction of those that hear them-* The "them" in view appear to be the teachers at Ephesus. The fact the Lord later commends this church in his letter to them indicates that Timothy successfully obeyed Paul's command here. The teachers were to be redirected towards the basic issues of the Gospel and the implications which arise from it, rather than using their teaching ministry to provoke profitless arguments about words and meanings. Such teachers would lead to the eternal destruction of those who heard them. And this is a profound warning to those right wing groups whose teachers have filled them with third hand garbled stories about "the original Hebrew actually means..." whatever, and demanding everyone accepts their particular peculiar take on a matter of semantics. This warning was especially required in Ephesus, which was under attack from Judaizers who would have insisted that they had superior knowledge of the Hebrew language, and would easily have dominated the Gentile audience with various arguments about Hebrew words. The wicked will be "overthrown" in the final condemnation (2 Pet. 2:6)- but this is the very same word used for 'apostasy' or 'subversion' (AV) or "catastrophic destruction". If we apostatize, we are overthrowing or condemning ourselves and others ahead of time. Israel in the wilderness "rejected" the land- and so they didn't enter it (Num. 14:31 RV).

2:15- see on Mt. 7:24.

Exert yourself, to prove you are pleasing to God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling correctly the word of truth- The AV "Study to show thyself..." has been tragically misunderstood as meaning that Bible study makes us pleasing to God. But that is a result of misreading "study"- in the days of King James it means 'to try', and that is the idea of the Greek. For not all are Bible students nor have the apparatus to be that. The context of :14 is specific commandment to the teachers within the church. They were workmen, working on the church of God, and their work with others would be examined at the last day. And they would be ashamed if those under their teaching are given the shame of condemnation. Effort must consciously be made to build up others. We must 'rightly divide', or cut straight, the word of truth in our preaching of it. The LXX uses the same word in Prov. 3:6: "He will make straight your paths". We are to offer people a clear, straight way to the Kingdom; to span that gulf between the word of God and the mind of man. "The word of truth" refers to the basic Gospel, according to the context, which Paul has redirected their attention to. By involving their audience in strife about semantics and words, they were not using the

word of truth correctly. The whole of Paul's exhortation to zealous service in the ecclesia in 2 Tim. 2:15-20 is based on the returned exiles, confirming that they are indeed 'types of us'; and the teachers are the manual workers, slaving away to build up Zion:

2 Tim. 2

"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master's use" (:21)

"A workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (:15)

"The foundation of God standeth sure" (:19)

"The Lord knoweth them that are his" (:19)

"A great house" (:20)

"Vessels of gold and of silver" (:20)

Nehemiah

"I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates... thus cleansed I them from all strangers" (Neh. 13:22,30). Also a reference to the cleansing of the Jews from mixed marriages.

The workmen rebuilding Zion

The laying of the foundation stone

The spirit of Is. 44:5- that although at the time of the restoration not all knew their genealogy, they were accepted in any case, being surnamed with the Name of Jehovah and that of Jacob

The temple (1 Chron. 22:5)

"Vessels of gold and silver" (Ezra 5:14)

2:16- see on 1 Tim. 6:21.

But shun profane babblings of false teachers; for they will result in progressive ungodliness- The preceding verses have taught Timothy how to teach the teachers; so the shunning would mean not allowing the false teachers to teach. Their "babblings" referred to the endless striving about the meaning of original Hebrew words, profitless arguments about semantics, words and meanings (:14). It's simply not true that just teaching something about the Bible or Biblical words will lead to spiritual growth; these teachers with their emphasis upon semantic games actually elicited increasing ungodliness in the behaviour of the flock. This is because the need to act and think in a Christ-like way, denying the flesh, is excused by instead focusing upon semantics and hyper interpretation of original words and phrases. And this has been witnessed in so many groups, who have focused upon 'doctrine' and supposed intellectual purity of interpretation- whilst in private life being so far from the spirit of Christ in daily thought and living.

2:17 *And their word will eat away like a cancer. An example would be Hymenaeus and Philetus-* The "progressive" nature of ungodliness (:16) elicited by their wrong usage of "the word of truth" is likened to the spreading of cancer. Teaching has a real effect upon listeners; we may assume that everyone dozes through Bible studies and teaching, but in fact something- a lot- goes in. Especially in illiterate societies, the word preached by the teacher is their only access to God's word. The

Greek *gangraina* refers to gangrene, leading to the loss of limbs, and spreading from one infected limb to damage the whole body. Paul surely had in mind the overall damage to the body of Christ by losing some who had been taken away from the body by the gangrene of false teaching. Hymenaeus had been "delivered to satan" for blasphemy in 1 Tim. 1:20- but had not been corrected, apparently. The orthodox view of Satan as a cosmic being falls right down in the light of this. The Lord's commendation of Ephesus in His later letter indicates that Timothy did indeed save the body of the church by cutting out this gangrene. But we note that what is being taught here is not guilt by association, nor a call to excommunicate individuals who believe the wrong things. The context is instruction to Timothy regarding who he allowed onto the platform to teach.

Hymenaeus had destroyed his own faith, and as such often do, wanted to destroy that of others (see on 1 Tim. 1:20). Despite having been "delivered unto satan" he was now back in the teaching ministry. Perhaps Timothy had not fully supported Paul's discipline of Hymenaeus, and this was the fruit of that.

2:18 *Men who concerning the truth have erred, in saying that the resurrection is past already; and they ruin the faith of some-* "The truth" may refer specifically to the Lord Jesus. These men may have been influenced by the kind of incipient Gnosticism which was pushed by the Judaizers, coming to term in the teachings of the kabbala which deny the significance of the body and of bodily resurrection. The denial of bodily resurrection was associated with "unGodliness" in practice (:16). If we are living only for today, and bodily resurrection [both of the Lord and ourselves] is minimalized to the point of denial, then there will be "ungodliness" in practice. And this is the danger of preterism. Faith is 'ruined' if the bodily aspect of resurrection is minimized or removed. "Ruin the faith" is a Greek word only elsewhere used in Tit. 1:11, where the motive for such false teaching was money. If we do not need to face a future judgment for the things "done in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10), then the flesh can be pleased just as we wish. And this was so attractive that some were even prepared to pay money for that to be true. We see here how the root of much doctrinal, theological heresy is psychologically based; a desire to justify the flesh.

2:19- see on Mt. 7:23.

However the firm foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: The Lord knows those that are his. And: Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness- The implication is that despite false teachers, those known by the Lord [Jesus?] are on God's firm foundation and will not be shifted from it. But that firm foundation, as Paul uses the metaphor in Corinthians, is a living relationship with the Lord Jesus. Those who know Him, and are known by Him, are thereby in relationship with Him. And having named His Name, calling it upon themselves in baptism, they will "depart from unrighteousness". Any teaching which leads them to unrighteous behaviour will be intuitively rejected by them. In expounding 1 Timothy 2, I noted there were many allusions there to the idol temples of Ephesus, especially the temple of Artemis. The reference to firm foundations likewise refers to that same temple. The two "seals" quoted are likely "faithful sayings" popular amongst the illiterate of the first century Christian community. The seal of God is in the mind, "in the forehead" (Rev. 9:4), likely a reference to the gift of the Holy Spirit in the heart / mind of every believer. This is what knowing the Lord and being known by Him is all about- living relationship with the Lord Jesus through the gift of His Spirit. And the function of that Spirit in practice will be a departure from unrighteousness. The term "depart from" usually refers to departing from persons; and this is the context of this

verse- an appeal to depart from false teachers and their teachings. The same word has been used in 1 Tim. 6:5 about withdrawing from those who taught like this.

2:20 *Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour*- As noted on :19 and earlier, the context here is of separation from false teachers and their teachings; not allowing them to teach, and not giving heed to their teachings. Those who teach rightly from God's word will not be ashamed (:15); whereas those who do not shall be ashamed. The honourable vessels here refer to the true teachers, and the dishonourable vessels to the false teachers. This is why :21 will go on to speak of separation from the dishonourable. Gold, silver and wood are listed in 1 Cor. 3:12 as the kinds of building which a teacher makes in his or her pastoral work. We note that the existence of dishonourable vessels within the "great house" of the church is taken as something inevitable; there is significantly no call for them to be excommunicated, but rather they should not be given a platform nor their ideas given credence.

2:21 *If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, fulfilling the use intended by the master, prepared to do every good work*- As noted on :20, the context is about separation from false teaching and not allowing false teachers the platform. The purging from the dishonourable vessels [= false teachers, see on :20] therefore doesn't speak of excommunication but of not allowing God's house to have such people teaching within it. The Master of the great house (:20) is surely the Lord Jesus; and He has a use intended for all the apparatus ["vessels"] within the large household. There were good works intended for us from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10). We need to pray to God to reveal to us what those works are, and which uses He has in mind for us. The language in :20 and :21 is alluding to Is. 22:20-24 about the temple. "Prepared to do every good work" must link with 2 Tim. 3:16,17, which says that the word of God enables the man of God to be "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works". Thus the sanctifying and purging power is the word (as Jn. 17:17; Eph. 5:26).

2:22 *Enthuse about righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart*- Some manuscripts, followed by the AV, add: "Flee youthful lusts". It is possible that Timothy went through a mid-life crisis, as Hezekiah did. Paul's warning to middle aged Timothy to "flee youthful lusts" was a sure reference back to Joseph fleeing from the advances of Potiphar's wife. If indeed Timothy was now middle aged, Paul would be reasoning that his sexual crushes were the immaturity of youth which by this stage he ought to have left behind. I noted on 1 Tim. 3 that Timothy was the bishop at Ephesus, and the commands concerning bishops and their relationships with their wives were therefore being spoken directly to Timothy. We can assume he was therefore married. And yet Paul sensed Timothy needed exhortation about "youthful lusts". The antidote to these lusts was positive- the energy should instead go into enthusing about spiritual things, not consorting with women in questionable relationships, but taking strength instead from others who "call on the Lord out of a pure [sexually pure?] heart". This rechannelling of energy from sin to righteousness is a common Biblical theme (e.g. "Not coarse joking but rather giving of thanks", Eph. 5:4); and Paul's redirection from persecutor of Christ to ambassador for Him would be the parade example. And so here, *pheugo* ["flee"] lusts, and instead *dioko* ["enthuse about"] righteousness. *Dioko* is the standard term for persecution, used about Paul's persecution of the Christians. His energy for persecution was redirected into a chasing after of righteousness.

Those with a pure or purified heart / mind are those who have allowed the sanctifying / purifying of the Spirit to cleanse their minds, conscience and thinking (1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 10:22). We must be *made* clean by the Lord Jesus, it is not of ourselves (Jn. 15:3; 13:10,11). Paul recognizes that not all in the church will have allowed this purifying work of the Spirit, even though all believers have potentially been given the Spirit gift at baptism. But he urges Timothy to associate with those who have.

2:23 But foolish and ignorant questions refuse, knowing that they only cause strife- The command to Timothy to "refuse" surely means in line with :14 and :16 not allowing the platform to teachers who "babble" with issues of semantics, words and meanings. These issues cause strife- the same word used in Tit. 3:9 of how the Judaist false teachers caused "strivings about the law". Teaching with a view to helping others towards spiritual fruitfulness does not leave the hearers with a mass of questions with no answers. This is destabilizing, and such teachers aren't aiming to help anyone towards God's Kingdom; all they will do is cause tension between persons, because different answers will be presented to the questions raised. The style of teaching which throws out a mass of questions was clearly the style of the Judaizers, in their program of destabilizing the Pauline churches. This is not an appeal for simplistic attitudes; rather for direct guidance of the flock, especially the illiterate, towards true spirituality. And this may involve ignoring certain questions, just as the Lord often avoided giving direct answers to leading questions and replied in terms of mega principles.

2:24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel but be gentle towards all, eager to teach, patient of ills and wrongs- As noted on :23, a minister / teacher will be eager to teach, and not simply present a mass of questions to an illiterate, newly baptized audience which will only destabilize. This was the style of the Judaizers. Such presentation of questions was not teaching, being didactic, as the term means. The new converts needed a didactic approach, instructing them, rather than destabilizing them with endless questions and provoking quarrels. The Judaist false teachers were apparently not gentle, nor patient with disagreement. This dogmatism is somehow attractive to some audiences; Catholic and Orthodox priests were [at least in the past] renowned for their aggressive attitude to their flock. And many like it that way- to be made to feel unworthy and weak, because that is how they feel themselves, and to trust that a firm leadership might somehow lead them to salvation at the end of the day; although they have no firm hope in salvation for that would demand too much of them in mental and secular life. This attitude was prevalent in Judaism and amongst the false teachers. 2 Cor. 11:20 suggests the false teachers beloved of the Corinthians demanded money from them and even hit them on the face.

All teaching must be after the pattern of the Lord Jesus, who taught "as His manner was", i.e. He was "eager to teach". When Paul wrote that "the servant of the Lord must not strive" in his preaching ministry (2 Tim. 2:24 AV), he was alluding back to how the servant song described the Lord Jesus in His preaching as not striving or lifting up His voice in proud argument (Is. 42:2 cp. Mt. 12:19). And Paul goes on: "...but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing...". This is all a pen picture of the Lord's witness to men in Galilee. And yet it is applied to *us*. "Apt to teach" is surely an allusion to the way in which the Lord taught the people "as he was wont" (Mk. 10:1). So it's not just that we should witness because the Lord, in whom we are, was the "faithful and true witness" (Rev. 1:5; 3:14); because we are in Him, we must witness *as He did*, with something of that same ineffable mixture of candour, meekness and Divine earnestness for man's salvation

Paul in 2 Tim. 2:24,25 makes a series of allusions to Moses, which climax in an invitation to pray like Moses for the salvation of others: "The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

2:25- see on Acts 18:6; 2 Tim. 3:7; Tit. 1:1.

In meekness correcting those that contradict themselves, so that God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth- Arrogance is so easily companion of holding a superior understanding about something. To realize we have the correct position and to correct with humility- is really the supreme qualification of a teacher. And the context here is about teachers. If the contradictions can be corrected in humility, *then* God may give them repentance. He is prepared to confirm the efforts of a sincere teacher, by acting on the mind of the person being corrected. Repentance is a gift, as stated clearly in Acts 5:31. This is more than forgiveness. Repentance itself is a psychological gift, a direct operation upon the human heart. And the text here says that God will grant this when a teacher has humbly corrected a person; so He works with our teaching of others. Repentance is an outcome of having corrected someone who is contradicting themselves; the contradiction is therefore a moral issue, a way of life being lived in contradiction to principles espoused. There is no reference here to simply correcting someone whose theology or intellectual process is self contradictory or logically twisted. That has for too long passed as 'evangelism' or 'preaching'. The issue here is essentially *moral*, because the resolved contradictions are confirmed by the Lord granting repentance. And a fair case can be made for "contradict themselves" really meaning 'contradict' in the sense of those who contradict the teachers; the same group are mentioned with a similar word in 1 Tim. 6:20 and Tit. 1:9. "Correcting" is a word used about training of children; it is to the spiritual elders / fathers / teachers that these words are addressed.

"The acknowledging of the truth" doesn't mean 'I accept you are right and I am wrong'. This is the stuff of Socratean debate which has been so attractive to conservative Protestants, whereby "Bible truth" becomes a battleground upon which one side strives to win the victory of 'truth' in intellectual, expository terms; as if Bible study is a concourse with only one glorious winner and many eternal losers. I have demonstrated above that "repentance" means that moral issues are in view. The repentance granted by the Lord leads to "the knowledge of the truth";

"acknowledging" is an unfortunate translation, because it suggests that the contradicting side acknowledges logical defeat. But it is the same word used as in Eph. 1:17 and 4:13, speaking of the effect of having the gift of the Spirit, leading to "the knowledge of Him". Repentance leads to relationship, a knowledge of the Lord Jesus who is "the truth". The very phrase "the knowledge of the truth" is used in 1 Tim. 2:4 [see note there] as meaning 'being saved'. Repentance results finally in salvation, when we shall know the final truth- which is of God's grace in Christ for eternity. Indeed 2 Tim. 3:7 contrasts "ever learning" with "coming to the knowledge of the truth". It is all a moral dimension, rather than an intellectual one of learned intellectual knowledge.

2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will- As noted throughout this chapter, the problem Timothy faced was from Judaizing false teachers, whom Paul was urging him to ban from the platform at Ephesus. Already the "Devil", the Jewish opposition to the Pauline Christian churches, had gained some converts and taken captive some of the converts. But good teaching, with the Lord's additional help, could lead to some of these lost ones being recovered. The parallel is with how the false teachers "overthrow the faith of some" (:18). "Overthrow" is the same word translated "subvert". Nearly every other time it occurs it is in the context of the Judaizers subverting the Christians - Titus 1:11; 3:9-11 (an equivalent word); Acts 15:24 (the Judaizers "subvert your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law"). The Jewish satan, the great adversary to true Christian mission in the first century, was seeking to make converts. The only other usage of the word for "taken captive" is in Lk. 5:10 about 'catching men' i.e. making converts.

For a critique of the standard view of the Devil in this verse, see <http://www.realdevil.info/5-26.htm>.

The RV reflects an alternative manuscript reading: "Having been taken captive by the Lord's servant unto the will of God". It seems to me that whilst on one hand preaching can be likened to a warfare, a tearing down of the bastion of unbelief, the Lord's servant taking people captive unto the will of God, this is only one facet of the picture. Taken too far, we can become motivated perhaps by a fear of failure, we try harder and only get into a verbal battle, a jousting match, or worse. We will often 'lose' these exchanges, because we were unable to convince our 'adversary'. Thus such exchanges become like a court battle of who's right and who's wrong, one-upmanship and point scoring. We will then end up feeling that the person has rejected the calling of the Father simply because my argument wasn't good enough. This need to win, this fear of failure, is the way of the world not the way of God, it is not "reasoning together". There is too much ego involved. Preaching, though it might seem otherwise at times, is not a competitive sport. If we failed it's not because we did not try hard enough, nor is it because we did not know enough, perhaps it's because we tried too hard driven by a fear of failure, or perhaps we have thought too highly of ourselves, thinking we speak for our God?

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 3

3:1 But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come- As noted on 1 Tim. 4:1, Timothy was called to stem what seemed an inevitable tide. Men were going to fall away from the faith, but his ministry was to stop this happening. And according to the Lord's view of the Ephesian church in Rev. 2, he succeeded against

all odds, despite his own weaknesses. The Holy Spirit had said that grievous wolves would destroy the flock at Ephesus (Acts 20:30)- but just as God's word had stated that within 40 days, Nineveh would be destroyed. In the gap between God's statement and its fulfilment, there can be repentance and the human effort to change. And as Jeremiah makes clear, in this case, the predicted judgments will not happen.

3:2 *For men shall be lovers of self*- These "men" were within the church, for :5 speaks of them having the form of Godliness. The list of sins here recalls that in Rom. 1:29, which appears to be about the spirit of the unbelieving world. The point being that the spirit of the age shall affect the church. We note that these bad characteristics all arose from the false teachings which Timothy had been called upon to stamp out in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3,4). False teaching without doubt brings forth bad fruit, and thus a teacher or teaching is to be known by its fruit. Perhaps Paul is telling Timothy that such things will be found within the church because Timothy was somehow shocked and disappointed that they were present. We note that he was not called to isolate the guilty individuals and cast them out by some formal process of disfellowship; but rather to always seek to turn things around.

We note the words connected with "love"; lovers of money, lovers of themselves, lovers of pleasure, not lovers of the good, not lovers of God. Clearly the idea is that humans are wired to "love" either self, or God. And conversion is all about the fundamental psychological restructuring of the mind, putting our "love" into God rather than ourselves.

Lovers of money, boastful, proud, argumentative, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy- "Argumentative" is really "blasphemers". Paul himself had been one of them (see on 1 Tim. 1:13) but had turned around; likewise the predictions here are not to be read as an inevitable tide. Timothy was called to fight against them; just as Nineveh was to be destroyed after 40 days, and yet that prophetic word was annulled by their repentance. The wonder of it all is that someone as weak as timid Timothy actually did turn it all around, at least doctrinally.

It's possible to understand 3:1-3 as specifically talking about our last days: "In the last days, fierce (Gk.) times shall come. For men (in an ecclesial context) shall be lovers of their own selves... proud... without natural affection... despisers of those that are good, traitors (cp. Mt. 24:10)... highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (implying they *do* love God); having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof". The spirit of fierce aggressiveness which is increasingly seen in the world will enter the ecclesias; brethren will become proud, argumentative, materialistic, despising the truly righteous, disregarding the needs of the household. And there are other NT passages which suggest that this was indeed the ecclesial situation in the prelude to AD70. The increasing bitterness and subdivision amongst us indicates this will all be seen in the latter day body. Ultimately, human relationships within the ecclesia will go crazy; brethren will hate and betray each other. There will be little real spiritual mindedness; the power of Godliness, the spirit / mind of Christ, will be denied, and only the outward form of Godliness remain (cp. Eph. 3:20; 6:10; Col. 1:11). The abounding wickedness of the world will so permeate the ecclesia that true agape-love will grow cold amongst us (Mt. 24:12). The antidote to this is offered in 2 Tim. 3:14 - 4:3: Love the word, hold on to the doctrine you were taught by faithful brethren, study the word, make it your life, challenge the apostate majority of the ecclesia with no fear of the result, preach to the world, look to the blessed day of Christ's coming.

The Old Testament as well as New is written in such a way as to encourage memorization, although this is often masked by the translation. There are several devices commonly used to assist in this. Not least is alliteration, i.e. similarly sounding syllables. In 2 Tim. 3:2,3 nearly all words end in (-oi), the masculine plural case termination- when it would surely have been possible to construct the sentence in another way.

3:3 *Without natural affection, implacable, slanderers* - There were such within the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:11 s.w.)

Without self-control, fierce, not lovers of good- AV "despisers of those that are good". Timothy had been despised by some within the church (1 Tim. 4:12); these people were within the church (see on :2).

3:4 *Traitors, headstrong*- Both words used about Judas, a member of the ecclesia (Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:18 "falling headlong"), who typified these Christians in the church at Ephesus.

Puffed up- The word is only elsewhere used in 1 Tim. 3:6; 6:4 about the proud within the church at Ephesus.

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God- "Rather than" is better "more than" (AV). These people had a love of God, but their love of pleasure was greater. They were within the ecclesia, having the form of Godliness (:5).

3:5 *Holding a form of reverence towards God, but having denied the power of it*- Paul notes that the opposition to Timothy within the church had a "form of Godliness [possibly referring to their upholding some kind of statement of faith] but [were] denying the power [*dunamis*]" of that form of Godliness, i.e. the doctrines of the Gospel (2 Tim. 3:5). Paul has spoken of the "form of sound words" as referring to some kind of corpus of Gospel teaching in 2 Tim. 1:13. This has unpleasant similarities with those of our day who loudly profess their Biblicism, their holding of some "form of Godliness" in the Gospel; but who deny the operation of the power / *dunamis* which is associated with it, in that those who accept the Gospel shall be given the Spirit. They were likely associated with Jewish thinking or mentality- "having the form [s.w.] of knowledge and of the truth in the law" (Rom. 2:20). "Form" in Greek refers to the formation of an image; Paul writes of Christ being formed within the Galatians. But the association is also with the carving and forming of idols. Biblicism without the Spirit, the "power thereof", is of itself mere idolatry. The outward form of religion becomes an idol, to be worshipped for its own sake. But it is without spirit. And this element within the church of today deny this, insisting that the Spirit is not given in response to belief of the Gospel, and that the days of Spirit operation ceased in the first century. It is this *dunamis*, this power from the Lord, which provides us with all things required for spiritual life and Godliness, and keeps us unto salvation (1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3). See on 1 Tim. 1:14 *And the grace...* Paul has spoken much to Timothy about the "power" / *dunamis* which can strengthen him as it did Paul. He wishes Timothy to make use of the same strengthening: "Be strong in the grace [Gk. 'the gift'] that is in [that comes from being in] Christ" (2 Tim. 2:1). And at the end of his days, Paul could reflect that the Lord Jesus stood with him at his final trial and strengthened him (2 Tim. 4:17). The same word is used of how weak believers like us were strengthened out of their weakness to be strong in faith- again a reference to psychological strengthening (Heb. 11:34), just as Abraham's

weak faith was strengthened (Rom. 4:20 s.w.). The same power strengthens believers [s.w.] unto internal characteristics such as endurance, patience and joy (Col. 1:11), the "power" in view being the spirit of Christ. This same power / *dunamis* is referred to in Rom. 15:13 as the source of these same internal, mental attributes: God fills us with "all joy and peace... that you may abound in hope, through the power / *dunamis* of the Holy Spirit". To deny the operation of power is not simply a matter of missing out on so much; it is a denial of the essence of the transforming Gospel. A related word is found in Eph. 3:16- we are "strengthened with might [*dunamis*] by His spirit in the inner man". This is where the gift of the Spirit operates; the reference is to "the inner man" and not the public display of the Spirit in special miracles etc. Paul's whole ministry, like ours, is a result of "the operation of His power / *dunamis*" (Eph. 1:19,21; 3:7). On this basis, Paul urges timid Timothy to allow the spirit / *dunamis* of love and a sound mind to work in him [again, internal attributes, not referring to any ability to perform miracles]; and this would drive out his "spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7). It was this *dunamis* which would enable Timothy to endure "the afflictions of the Gospel" which were clearly making Timothy balk (2 Tim. 1:8).

It may be that those who have "a [the] form of Godliness" but deny its power are those who merely accept the propositions as outlined, e.g., in a statement of faith, but deny their living power in practice. And let us note that Paul lists this as an especial temptation of the last days. 2 Tim. 3:5-8 has some telling parallels:

Having a form of Godliness	denying [Gk. 'contradicting', 'going against', the power thereof
Ever learning [Gk. Studying]	but never acknowledging the truth [the 'form of Godliness']
Resisting the truth	

All this implies that there is a power in the "form of Godliness", perhaps the basic "form" of doctrinal teaching delivered to baptism candidates. This power can be resisted in that lives remain unchanged; yet acknowledging the true implications of the Gospel will radically transform life. One can 'hold the truth' and study it academically, yet not acknowledge its power. Thus one can hold to a statement of faith and regularly study Scripture, and yet live the life outlined in 2 Tim. 3:1-3, of lying, deceit, boasting, dividing etc.- all because we do not acknowledge the power of the demands of the doctrines which we study. Hence, there is an urgent need to discern and accept the practical, lifestyle demands of each of the doctrines which are fundamental to the Gospel. If we do not see the connection between doctrine and practice, if we don't perceive how doctrine and practice are linked, then the life of thought without action reduces our faith to mere intellectualism and endless theological debate, with all the resultant division this creates.

In 1 Tim. 4:1, Paul warns of a coming apostasy in the last days. 2 Tim. 3 repeats this theme by saying that in the last days, men will be "lovers of their own selves, covetous" etc.; these men / brethren will be "holding a form of godliness but denying the power thereof" (3:5 RV). Their keeping the faith was meaningless. This "form" of teaching which they held is that of Rom. 6:17- the form of doctrine which they accepted at baptism. They will 'hold the truth' but deny its real power. "From such

turn away" (3:5) is the equivalent of the command in 2:21 to separate from those vessels unto dishonour which exist in the house of God, the ecclesia. So the problem of 'holding the faith' but denying its practical meaning is going to be *the* major apostasy of the last days, Paul reasons. Continuing in and keeping the Faith is parallel with running the gruelling marathon of struggle against ourselves, wrestling not with flesh and blood in the fight for real spirituality (2 Tim. 4:7). There have been theologians at times who have argued that 'God did not command certain things because they are right, but certain things are right because God commanded them'. I sense this attitude at times amongst us too. But the Father doesn't seek obedience just for the sake of it. There is reason and purpose to His commands- hence David so praises them for this in Ps. 119. And so it is with all 'doctrine'.

The parallel in Tit. 1:16 uses the same Greek word for "deny": "They profess [Gk. to publically praise] that they know God, but in works they deny Him". The denial of the power of 'knowing God' was therefore shown in their works. Works, life lived, is to be lived "in the power thereof". Otherwise, our Godliness is mere religion, a form of Godliness which we craft into a mere idol. So much in the Christian experience must be analyzed as to whether it is religion, the outward form- or works done and lived in the power / *dunamis* of the Gospel. Attending meetings, going home feeling "It was good for us to have been here", performing rituals, mixing with the same group in church life... this is all the stuff of mere religion, and so easily it can give a false impression of spirituality. It may 'feel right', but life in the *dunamis* of knowing God is unshakeable and is no mere religious feeling.

From such people- turn away- Timothy as the bishop of the church could not just personally ignore some church members. His commission at Ephesus had been to stamp out false teaching and inculcate a culture of good works (1 Tim. 1:3,4). So I would read this as meaning that he was to turn away such people- from the platform. The next verse goes on to speak about the same group of [largely female] false teachers in the church who were the burden of 1 Timothy.

3:6 *For of these are they that creep into houses and take captive weak minded women laden with sins-* This entering the house churches which comprised the larger Ephesian church and creating havoc is exactly the scene we found in 1 Tim. 5:13. There, according to the reconstruction offered in our notes there, we encountered a group of young widows, the same group of gaudily dressed prostitutes within the church who were slammed in 1 Tim. 2, "going about from house to house". These women were getting more adherents in the house groups which comprised the church at Ephesus. Note how Tit. 1:13 speaks of a similar scenario, whereby the church at Crete suffered whole 'houses' being subverted; i.e. house groups were taken over by the false teachers. The G.N.B. does well in translating "weak women who are burdened by the guilt of their sins". Most of the Gentile converts had come from the Diana cult, and perhaps these women had been part of the thousands of Ephesian women involved in the cult prostitution of the Diana cult. The false teaching women kidded these other women that actually they need not feel bad about it, and could join them in essentially the same behaviour under a Christian guise. The 'creeping in' to the house churches is very much the language of Jewish false teachers in Gal. 2:4; Jude 4 and 2 Pet. 2:1. Yet in our reconstruction, these female false teachers were Gentiles who had once been involved in the Diana cult. But we have noted repeatedly that there was a heady mix of Jewish myth and Gentile paganism at Ephesus. The constant fear that 'Satan', the adversary, would use the situation refers to the organized Jewish campaign to undermine Christianity. And they would be eager to use the women who were involved in this false teaching.

Led away by various lusts- This along with the "sins" earlier in the verse are fairly obviously sexual in character. The false teaching sisters of 1 Tim. 5, who feature here too, were therefore offering some kind of justification for sexual misbehaviour. We note that by the time the Lord wrote His letter to Ephesus in Rev. 2, the problem had been resolved. But it was not resolved immediately, for between the first and second letters to Timothy, the problem was still present. Timothy himself needed warning to 'flee sexual lusts' and commandment to deal with the younger women in the church "with all purity". He seems, at first blush, exactly the wrong person to have to deal with these kinds of women within the church. But he was willing to be used, and he was used. He succeeded, in the way the unqualified succeed at doing a job requiring high qualification- by the power of the Spirit. And we too can achieve, in God's strength, that which is far beyond our natural personality.

3:7 *Ever learning-* I have shown in commentary so far in this chapter that the persons referred to were within the church. They continued learning, attending teaching sessions; but could never acknowledge "the truth". The reference is not to people who hear the Gospel but fail to come to "the truth" by some intellectual refusal to accept it. Rather the "learning" must refer to Timothy's teaching of the church, and the fact that some 'learned' but never came to the repentance which is signified by "the knowledge of the truth". This would have been comfort to Timothy lest he get discouraged by the apparent failure of his teaching ministry with these individuals. Here we clearly see the difference between 'learning' and 'knowing truth'. They are not the same. The Hebraic idea of knowing in the sense of relationship is clearly in view. This is a point that we "come" to. Perhaps this is in fact part of every man's path- to come from learning to knowing. But those in Ephesus appeared not to have got there.

And never able to come to the knowledge of the truth- Jer. 5:1 says that "if ye can find a man... that seeketh the truth... I will pardon it". To seek truth is therefore to repent. Those moments of realization of our sinfulness, of accurately perceiving the gap between the personas we act out and the real, Christ-self within us- in those moments, we have come to truth. And this is the repentance that leads to true, authentic pardon. There is a moral link between any falsehood and an unspiritual life. And so repentance is an acknowledgment of the truth (2 Tim. 2:25). A person can learn the theory of God's truth but never come to acknowledge it- i.e. to repent and live the life of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7), never being transparent before God and brutally honest with oneself. However, as noted on 1 Tim. 2:4, "the knowledge of the truth" is a phrase also used there, but referring to final salvation. God wills "all men" to come to this "knowledge of the truth". Their inability to "learn" is therefore a wilful rejection of God's attempts to bring them to His great salvation. Their inability to convert 'learning' to "the knowledge of the truth" is therefore due to their own moral failure, and not simply some intellectual barrier, an honest failure to connect ideas together as they should be.

The parallel is with those having the form of Godliness [cp. "ever learning"] but denying the power thereof [cp. "never able to come to the knowledge of the truth"] (3:5). I explained that "the power thereof" referred to internal strengthening by the Holy Spirit. It could be argued that the 'true knowledge' here also refers to the knowing of God, in terms of relationship, which is made possible by correct response to the gift of the Spirit in human hearts. For this is how "knowledge" is used in Eph. 1:17; 4:13; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9,10; 2:2; 3:10).

3:8 *Just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses-* Some Jewish fables claimed that these two magicians of Pharaoh were converted to support Moses. But Paul

makes it clear that they "*withstood* Moses". Jewish fables were a major problem at Ephesus, according to several passages in 1 Timothy. Paul is often weaving into his argument inspired corrections of the Jewish myths.

So do these also withstand the truth- The same word is used in 4:15 about the false teacher who "withstood our words". Resisting Moses, "the truth" and "our words" are thus all paralleled. It was an incredible calling for weak minded, self doubting, half Jewish Timothy to realize that he was being put on the level of the revered Moses. But speaking forth God's word does that.

Men corrupted in mind- Used in 1 Tim. 6:5 about believers in the Ephesus church.

Reprobate concerning the faith- GNB "failures in the faith". The idea is that these are not random people from the world but those who had been "in the faith".

3:9- see on Rev. 16:15.

But they shall proceed no further- Does Paul refer to his certainty that the Lord's coming will be experienced by that generation, and declare their folly at the day of judgment? Or is he certain in faith that the Lord through Timothy is going to turn around the Ephesian church and expose these people? Or is he hopeful that they will in fact repent, realizing their folly and confessing it to others? He may have in view the idea that the false teaching is not going to proceed- Timothy is going to put it down, which according to Rev. 2 he succeeded in doing. Paul notes that evil men in the world will proceed in their evil- for :13 uses the same word: "[they] shall grow worse and worse [s.w. "proceed"]".

For their folly shall be made evident to all men, as theirs also came to be- Not least, their folly will be made evident to themselves at the very end. Parables like that of the rich *fool*, the *foolish* virgins... they will all be crystal clear to them. *Then* the Kingdom of Heaven will be likened to wise and foolish virgins (Mt. 25:1), after the judgment experience. The materialist "at his end [rejection at the judgment] shall be a fool" (Jer. 17:11). The utter *folly* of the rejected is a major theme (Prov. 14:8,18; Ps. 5:5; 49:13; Mt. 7:26; 25:8). Rejected Israel were made to drink the wine of astonishment (Ps. 60:3), and the rejected in like manner will gape: "When saw we thee...?". They will be turned back from the Kingdom "in dismay... clothed with shame and confusion" (Ps. 35:5,26). Confusion will then give way to panic and then to a level of agitated dementia well beyond the paradigms of present psychiatry. Often the Spirit points out that the sinner is only harming himself by his actions- and yet he earnestly pursues his course, in the name of self-interest and self-benefit (Num. 16:38; Prov. 19:8; 20:2; Hab. 2:20; Lk. 7:30). Sin is therefore associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. "This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah (pause to meditate)" (Ps. 49:13). The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God.

3:10 *But you, follow my teaching*- Paul could only write such things without pride because of his deep sense of what he wrote at the beginning of 1 Timothy; because of his serious sins and the depth of grace shown to him, he had been set up as a parade example to other Christians. The idea could equally be [as in AV] that Timothy had "fully known" Paul's teaching etc.- by reason of having travelled so much with him.

Conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience- Paul could say that Timothy had fully known his "purpose" (2 Tim. 3:10). The Greek *prothesis* is the same used in the New Testament about the shewbread- the bread openly on display

before God. Paul is saying that his essential and real self was transparent, openly shown to both God and man. To say 'You've fully known how open and transparent I am' is really quite something. Who Paul showed himself to be was who he really was.

As he prepared to die for his Lord, Paul's openness increased yet more. He tried to motivate Timothy to resist apostasy in the ecclesia by reminding Timothy of how well he knew Paul's example: "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, patience" (2 Tim. 3:10). The sense of *purpose* and *determination* in Paul comes over so often (e.g. Acts 19:21). The constant energy of his mind comes over in the record (e.g. Acts 28:23), and also in his letters (note the urgency of "today" in Heb. 3:7,13,15; 4:7; 2 Cor. 6:2). It makes a good exercise to read through the record of Paul in Acts and highlight words like "reasoned", "persuaded", "convinced", "purposed", "disputing" (e.g. 18:4,5,11,19; 19:8,9,21). And he really is our example, not just a historical figure to be admired.

3:11 *Persecutions, sufferings*- I suggest the "sufferings" refer to the mental and spiritual temptations which arise from the literal, physical persecutions. The same word is translated "sinful passions" (Rom. 7:5; Gal. 5:24). The rest of the verse goes on to talk about the Lord's spiritual deliverance of Paul from these spiritual temptations (see commentary).

Think of what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra- Timothy had been with Paul and was being asked to model himself on Paul. Timothy was from Lystra (Acts 16:1,2) and would have well known Paul's sufferings in the area.

What persecutions I endured- Paul uses the same word for "endured" in explaining that we can only bear or endure our trials because a way of escape is made for us out of them (1 Cor. 10:13). And so the Lord's deliverance of Paul was through making ways of escape every time. The comment that the Lord had 'delivered' Paul from those persecutions therefore refers to not suffering him to spiritually collapse as a result of them. Paul seems to constantly feel that Timothy is on the verge of spiritual collapse; the fact he fulfilled his ministry at Ephesus, according to the Lord's judgment of the church in Rev. 2, shows that despite so much teetering on the edge, the Spirit finally made Timothy strong out of weakness. Timothy was being encouraged that despite all the trauma that Paul had endured, the Lord had delivered him from spiritually stumbling as a result of them; and Paul is consciously setting himself as Timothy's example.

And out of them all, the Lord delivered me- I noted above that this deliverance was more in spiritual terms than deliverance from literal hardship. The bad experiences were not allowed to make Paul stumble. We find the same word in the Lord's prayer, regarding deliverance from temptation (Mt. 6:13); and of our deliverance from spiritual temptation (2 Pet. 2:9). Paul's confidence that he would always be "delivered" (4:18) surely refers to his confidence that he would be delivered from spiritually falling; for in the same breath he recognizes that the time of his death is near, and he did not expect any last minute reprieve from it. This is huge encouragement for us all; we shall be delivered from spiritual temptation if this is our true desire. Truly "The sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil" (Ps. 125:3).

3:12 *Yes, and all who would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*- Paul sees himself as being set up as a model for all believers, not just for Timothy (1 Tim. 1:13). And we will likewise be delivered from the spiritual temptations which go along with those persecutions- if that is our dominant desire.

3:13 *But evil men and impostors shall grow worse and worse*- As noted on 1 Tim.

4:1, Timothy was called to fight what seemed an inevitable tide of declension from the faith. As were the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20. And just as Moses succeeded in changing Israel's destiny, it seems they succeeded. For the Lord's letter to Ephesus commends the church for keeping out false teaching and excelling in good works. The problem was that they lacked *agape* love.

Deceiving and being deceived- This is surely a pointer to Jacob. Allusions to Jacob in later Scripture often comment on his negative side.

3:14 *But you, grow in the things which you have learned-* The downward spiral of :13 is matched by this upward spiral language. We can never stand still in spiritual life; there are forces propelling us either downwards or upwards. The command is not simply to retain what we learned before baptism; but to grow in those things, ever seeing new and wondrous implications in those basic truths.

Knowing from whom you have learned them- The integrity and manner of life of those who converted us is what inspires us to carry on. Thus Paul urges Timothy to "continue" because he knew "of what persons" he had been taught them (2 Tim. 3:14 RVmg.). The reference would be not only to Paul, but to his mother and grandmother who first taught him the Gospel. Paul is writing from the psychological viewpoint of Timothy; the integrity of the teacher was and is associated with the truth of the message taught. This is basic human psychology. And it explains why there is so much emphasis in Timothy's ministry upon not allowing immoral people to teach. Because especially with illiterate audiences, the power of the message will be compromised by the integrity of the messenger. It is too easy to take the high ground that people should believe the message despite the messenger, because it is ultimately from God. That may be true on a theoretical level, but reality is that people do associate the message with the messenger. Hence Paul's request that Timothy reflect on the integrity of those who brought him the message, so that he might continue believing the message.

3:15 *And that from a child-* This continues the argument of the preceding phrase in :14; because Timothy had been taught the scriptures from childhood by his mother and grandmother who were of integrity (2 Tim. 1:5)- therefore he should continue to reverence the scriptures. See on :14 *Knowing from whom*.

You have known the sacred writings- Literally, 'the holy letters' (s.w. 2 Cor. 3:7; Gal. 6:11), as if referring to how his mother and grandmother taught him to read letter by letter from the Scriptures. Considering the low literacy rate in the Roman empire of the first century, we can assume that Timothy's background was of reasonable wealth. This would explain much of his weakness of character and personality which we have noted elsewhere; the weaknesses are typical of a 'rich kid'.

Which are able to make you wise to salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus- Paul is not saying that Bible reading will save us. It is faith in Christ which saves us, and we are made wise to that fact by the content of the entire Scriptures. The Old Testament scriptures were opened up by faith in Christ; that is what provided the key to interpretation which made them useful.

3:16- see on 2 Tim. 4:2,3.

Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness- The Hebrew Bible was split up into small sections, such as "The Bush", referring to Moses and the burning bush. Each section was Divinely inspired, and this is probably the reference of "Every scripture".

A comparison of 2 Tim. 3:16 with 4:2,3 makes it clear that because the inspired word is profitable:

for doctrine *therefore*
preach the word; be instant in season, out of season (i.e. whether
you naturally feel in the preaching mood or not)
for reproof *therefore*
reprove
for correction *therefore*
rebuke
for instruction in righteousness *therefore*
exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.

3:17 *So that the man of God may be complete*- Note how Peter says that the prophet was a 'man of God' who was moved by God's Spirit to write Scripture; whereas Paul says that the Spirit-inspired Scriptures are what makes a 'man of God'- us- who he is (2 Tim. 3:17 cp. 2 Pet. 1:21). There is a mutuality here, in which even we in this age can have a part.

Completely empowered to every good work- Yet we so often blame our lack of good works on a lack of resources or abilities. But the Scriptures speak to us, if we let them and read them in faith, and thus inspire us to good works. The Lord later commended the Ephesus ecclesia on their "good works", so it would seem that Timothy really obeyed the spirit of all this. He pursued the teaching ministry he had been given, even if it was initially against the grain of his character. And it did indeed empower others to good works. Sadly, this was all done without *agape*, and this was the Lord's serious criticism of the later Ephesian church.

2 TIMOTHY CHAPTER 4

4:1 *I charge you in the sight of God and of Christ Jesus*- Paul several times writes this to Timothy. Paul always seemed so worried as to whether Timothy was going to hold on, and we could dynamically translate him as meaning 'Get a grip!'. But it may be that Paul had been given charges by the Lord which he was duty bound to soberly pass on to Timothy- hence the reference here to the charge being given in the presence of the Father and Son.

Who shall judge the living and the dead- The charge to preach to others is made in the light of judgment to come. We shall be judged according to whether we have shared the light with others or not. This is not to say that our acceptance is determined by our works; but the final judgment shall in some form take into account the life we lived now.

And by his appearing and his kingdom- Because there really will be a Kingdom of God on earth and people really can eternally live there because of their response to the Gospel- therefore we should preach.

4:2 *To preach the word. Preach it urgently, whether the occasion seems appropriate or not*- Our task of witness may seem hopeless. But we are to be prepared to preach "in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2 AV). Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus, and his language in 2 Timothy has many allusions to his own behaviour whilst at Ephesus. He spoke at Ephesus of how he had preached the word "at all seasons" (Acts 20:18)- and he tells Timothy to do likewise (2 Tim. 4:2 AV); Paul had taught what was profitable to others (Acts 20:20); and this was to be Timothy's pattern (2 Tim. 3:16 RV). "Out of season" translates a Greek word only elsewhere rendered 'lacking opportunity' (Phil. 4:10). Whether there is apparent opportunity or not, we must still witness- not just wait until someone asks us if we are religious. This is a common

fallacy we all fall into at times. By contrast, there is to be a sense of urgency to our witness. Several times the Lord invites us to “go” and preach- we are all to feel a spirit of outgoing witness, rather than the defensive, tell-them-if-they-ask attitude which has dominated so many of us for so long. We need the same spirit of heroism in our witness which Jeremiah and Ezekiel had, as they reflected the indomitable Spirit of God in this matter of human salvation. Our unbelieving families, our workmates, our neighbours, seem to be stony ground to the point that it just isn’t worth bothering. But we need a positive spirit.

Reprove, rebuke, exhort, as you patiently teach- The patience or *makrothumia* which God has is intended to be had by us too (2 Pet. 3:9,15; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 4:2). And especially is the preacher encouraged to have this *makrothumia* (2 Tim. 4:2; 3:10). God waits / is patient for repentance, amazingly so (we recall His waiting 120 years before the flood came)... and we are to have it in this same way too.

4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching- See on :4 *Will turn away.*

But having itching ears, will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own lusts- "Lusts" in Timothy refer to lusts for illicit wealth and sex (1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:6), of the type justified and indulged in by the group of female false teachers whom Timothy had struggled with in Ephesus. We have noted that there were sinful Christian women of 3:6 who were led astray by female false teachers seeking to justify their lusts. But those women were led astray because they subconsciously wanted to have such teaching. The whole theme of the Timothy letters is that Timothy has been given a charge to teach true doctrine and stop false teaching in Ephesus. Paul is warning him about these particular false teachers, and helping Timothy understand that false teaching is actually a psychological function of the desires of the audience, ever seeking self-justification. Paul may be saying that even although Timothy has sorted out the immediate problem in Ephesus, it will recur- because that is the way of human nature.

4:4 And will turn away their ears from the truth- Paul had told the Ephesian elders the same (Acts 20:29,32). It is the more impressive, therefore, to read the Lord's judgment that the church at Ephesus had maintained the faith and driven out false teaching. Timothy had fulfilled his ministry against incredible odds, and had changed, at least for a generation, the direction which the Spirit had foretold.

The phrase “the truth” is used in Scripture as a summary of the Godly life, rather than a set of particular theologies; for truth telling, and being truthful with oneself and God, is the epitome of the life which God intends. All too often it has been assumed that because we know and believe true propositions about the Gospel, therefore we are somehow automatically ‘of the truth’. The following passages make clear enough that “the truth” refers not so much to intellectual purity of understanding as to a righteous way of life. If someone understands a matter of Biblical interpretation differently to how we do, e.g. over matters of prophecy, this doesn’t mean they have ‘left the truth’. Yet if we [e.g.] lie, then we have ‘left the truth’ despite holding a correct understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel. Sinners turn away from truth (2 Tim. 4:4; Tit. 1:14). They are bereft of the truth (1 Tim. 6:5). God has revealed the truth, indeed has sent his Son to live it and to proclaim it, but sinful people have refused to listen.

And turn aside to fables- Gk. 'be turned aside'. As men turn away their ears (of their

own volition) from the truth, so God will turn their ears to fables. If you turn away your ears from truth, Paul says that you are turned unto what is untrue. He doesn't say that a person turns their ears away from truth and then turns their ears to untruth. By turning away from truth, God confirms the person in that- and He turns them towards untruth. He sends strong delusion upon those who love and want to believe in lies (2 Thess. 2:11). The fables in view are those which Timothy had been asked to stamp out in 1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7. According to the Lord's estimation in Rev. 2, he succeeded in stamping them out. But Paul is saying that there will always be a desire for people to believe in them, and God will even turn people towards them if they do not want to hear truth.

4:5- see on 2 Tim. 2:3.

But you, be sober in all things- The word means literally to be sober as in not being drunk. Every time it is used, it is in the context of being prepared for the Lord's second coming and not being caught off guard (1 Thess. 5:6,8; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8). The reference is surely to the Lord's parable about the household servants who are to remain sober and care for the others in the household (Mt. 24:45-50). Timothy had been set over the church at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and thus that parable spoke to him directly as one "whom his lord has set over his household". The soberness or awareness was therefore in relation to looking out for the needs of the household.

Suffer hardship- The same words used about Paul himself, and his earlier encouragement to Timothy to endure hardship (2:3,9). Paul so consciously sets himself up as Timothy's pattern (1 Tim. 1:13-16).

Do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry- Paul encouraged Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" *despite* all the doctrinal and pastoral problems and needs at Ephesus. These are never to be an excuse for not evangelizing. This was in addition to "fulfil your ministry"- which according to 1 Tim. 1:3,4 was to stamp out false teaching and encourage good works. In other words, his pastoral calling should not mean that he overlooked evangelizing fresh blood for the church. So often evangelism has been overlooked because of pastoral concerns, and yet it is fresh blood which is so helpful in moving beyond the pastoral problems.

4:6 *For I am already being offered-* Paul has in view his imminent death, but he sees it as an ongoing death. Alternatively we can read this as GNB "the hour has come for me to be sacrificed". But there is the idea as reflected in the AV that "I am now *ready* to be offered". It seems that Paul wrote 2 Tim. 4 when news of his imminent death had just been broken to him. As Paul faced his death, there was a deep self-knowledge within him that he was ready, that he was "there". As we face the imminent return of the Lord, it should be possible for us to have a similar sense: "I am now ready...". If we don't know that we are "in the faith" and that "Christ is in you", then we are "reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:5). All those who will be accepted *must*, therefore, *will*, therefore, have a measure of self-knowledge and appreciation of how far they've grown in Christ. Growth is a natural process, it's impossible to feel it happening. But by looking back on our lives and attitudes and comparing them with the experience of successful believers, it *is* possible to get some idea of our readiness for the judgment.

And the time of my departure comes- Paul had earlier spoken of his "departure" (Phil. 1:23), he had told Timothy and the Ephesian elders that he must finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24); and he knew his time had come; he could speak of having reached "the time of my *departure*" (2 Tim. 4:6). The level of self-knowledge he had as he faced the end is remarkable. Yet it really is possible for each of us; for

his glorious race to the finish is our pattern. Despite his surface sadness and depression, Paul was finishing his course *with joy*.

As Paul's sense of his own sinfulness grew, so did his confidence of salvation. These two elements, meshed together within the very texture of human personality, are what surely give credibility and power to our witness to others. On one hand, a genuine humility, that we are sinners, that we are the last people who should be saved; and yet on the other, a definite confidence in God's saving grace and the achievement of Jesus to save sinners. Paul at the very end had a wonderful confidence in the outcome of the day of judgment. He had spoken earlier of running the race (1 Cor. 9:24-26; 1 Tim. 6:12). Now he says that he has finished it, in victory. His final words consciously allude back to what he wrote to the Philippians a few years earlier:

Philippians

What I should like is to depart
(1:23)

If my life-blood is to crown the
sacrifice (2:17)

I have not yet reached
perfection [finishing] but I press on
(3:12)

I press toward the goal to win
the prize (3:14)

2 Timothy 4

The hour for my departure [s.w.] is
come (4:6)

Already my life blood is being
poured out on the altar of sacrifice [s.w.]
(4:6)

I have run the great race, I have
finished [s.w. perfected] the course (4:7)

Now the prize awaits me (4:8)

Paul felt that he had attained the maturity which he had earlier aimed for. To have the self-knowledge to say that is of itself quite something. May it be our ultimate end too. These parallels and Paul's commentary becomes all the more poignant if we accept the view that actually, Paul did not die soon after 2 Tim. 4 was written- rather was he released, did much work for the Lord, and died under Nero at a later date. In this case his commentary in 2 Tim. 4 is a reflection not so much of a dying man's last words and hopes, but of a mature, reasoned conviction that in fact he had arrived at a point of believing in salvation.

4:7- see on Lk. 13:24.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course- Paul has used the metaphors of a soldier and athlete in challenging Timothy to a disciplined life. And now he says that he has himself fulfilled those images, yet again setting himself up as Timothy's pattern. In nearly all his letters, Paul asks his readers to pray for him. But not in these final letters to Timothy. "I am now ready to be offered". He knew he had finished the fight (2 Tim. 4:7). The Greek for "fight" occurs in Phil. 1:29,30 concerning the struggle we have to truly take up the cross of Christ, and also in 1 Cor. 9:25 regarding the battle we have for total self-control. Paul knew these were the aims his Lord had hoped to achieve in him. And Paul knew that he was through, he'd finished and achieved them. He had achieved self-control. He knew his Lord, he had been made conformable to the dying Lord Jesus on the cross, he *knew* the fellowship of his sufferings. He had filled up the whole measure of Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10).

Paul felt very clearly his sense of mission. He speaks in Troas of how "none of these things move [deflect] me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24). Some years later at the end of his life

he could write that “I have finished my course” (2 Tim. 4:7). He didn’t let anything distract him- and our age perhaps more than any other is so full of distractions. In his time of dying (at which he wrote 2 Tim.), John his hero was still in Paul’s mind. Paul speaks of finishing his course (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7), using a word only used elsewhere concerning John finishing *his* course (Acts 13:25).

On a series of long Russian train journeys, I read through the Gospels and epistles, noting down all the times Paul makes a direct or indirect allusion to the Gospels. I then worked out how many times in each epistle he alludes, on average, to the Gospels. I found that on average, he did it once every six verses. But when you list his epistles chronologically, the general trend suggests that in his writing, Paul *increasingly* alluded to the Gospels. And in his time of dying (in which he wrote 2 Timothy), the intensity of his allusions to the Gospels reaches an all time high. In 2 Timothy he is referring to the Gospels at least once every 3.9 verses- and almost certainly more than that, seeing that my analysis is incomplete. As he faced death in 2 Tim. 4, he more intensely modelled his words (probably unconsciously) upon those of Christ. Thus when he speaks of how he is about to *finish* his course (2 Tim. 4:7), he is combining allusions to Mt. 26:58; Lk. 12:50; 18:31; 22:37 and Jn. 13:1. He speaks of how he wished that “all the gentiles might hear” (2 Tim. 4:17) in the language of his Lord, also facing death, in Jn. 17- where He spoke of His desire that all “the world might know”.

I have kept the faith- Paul breathes a sigh of relief at the end of his life when he says that he has “fought a good fight... finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). To keep believing true doctrine (“the faith”) is likened to a lifelong struggle, a grueling race. It hardly appears like this when we first learn the basic doctrines and are baptized. That it will be a struggle to continue believing them properly hardly seems possible in those innocent days. But living out true doctrine is a pre-requisite for acceptance into the Kingdom: “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truths (AV mg.) may enter in” (Is. 26:2).

Paul at his bitter end could say that he had kept the Faith; but he brackets this together with finishing the race and fighting a good fight (2 Tim. 4:7; Eph. 6:12). These ideas of running the marathon and wrestling through the fight he uses elsewhere; but in the sense of striving for spiritual mastery over ourselves. It is *this* which is keeping the Faith. The need to remain in the Faith, to hold onto it, is one of the classic themes of the NT (Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 16:13; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9; 2 Tim. 4:7). Jude begins by appealing for his readers to be keeping the faith, to contend for the faith; and concludes by asking them to build up each other in that faith. To preserve it is in order to build up; for our growth is on the basis of the pure Gospel which we believe. It is this which leads us on “from faith to faith” in an upward spiral of growth (Rom. 1:17). These passages do not mean that we must religiously hold on to our understanding of the doctrines of a ‘Statement of Faith’, *and nothing more*. It is true that the need to maintain doctrinal purity *is* taught in these passages; but those doctrines are not just things which have been delivered to us to ‘keep’ in the sense of maintaining a correct understanding of them. If this were the case, God would be rather like the Roman slave owner who endlessly dropped a spoon and asked his slave to pick it up, then he dropped it again, asked him to pick it up... There was no *purpose* in the exercise itself, it was simply a test of the slave’s obedience. But God is not like this. He has commanded us to keep the faith, to preserve the doctrines of the Faith, but there is a reason for this. Those doctrines are not just arbitrary statements which God invented as part of the boundless theological

fantasy of an omnipotent being. They are intended to produce *behaviour*, and *this* is why they must be defended; because without the understanding of true doctrine, true spiritual behaviour is impossible. To simply hold on to the same doctrines we learnt before baptism, e.g. that God is one not three, is not holding the Faith in the sense the NT requires. This is simply clinging on to what we have always believed, just as most human beings cling on to their belief systems, especially as they grow older.

4:8 From this time forward- This references "that day" later in the verse when Paul would be immortalized at the day of judgment. But he sees it was "this time forward", another example of how he understood his death as effectively being the Lord's coming for him. Hence his desire to depart and "be with Christ" expressed to the Philippians. Was Paul given some special assurance that he would be saved at the last day? Otherwise it is hard to understand the force of him saying that he is sure of his salvation "from this time forward".

There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness- It could be that the reward is to be made righteous. Or that the reward / crown is the reward for righteousness. Yet Paul elsewhere is very aware of "our unrighteousness" (Rom. 3:5), and how righteousness is imputed to us, final salvation not being any function of "works of righteousness which we have done" (Tit. 3:5). Perhaps he means that he now finally believed in practice what he had so eloquently explained to the Romans in theory- that he was righteous by faith. And he saw that there was indeed a crown for that faith.

Which the Lord, the righteous judge- This title is to be connected with the way that He will give us "the crown of righteousness". The 'justness' or 'rightness' of His judgment is not to be measured in human terms; for it shall involve counting us righteous who are not- if we have believed it. But this is *His* rightness / justice.

Shall give to me at that day; and not to me alone, but also to all those that have loved his appearing- The Lord said that all those whom he finds *watching* will be welcomed into the marriage feast (Lk. 12:37). And 2 Tim. 4:8 is plain enough: "All them also that love his appearing" will be rewarded along with Paul. Paul's own confidence in salvation was because he knew the earnestness of his desire to be "present with the Lord" Jesus (2 Cor. 5:8), such was the closeness of his relationship with him. Is this really our attitude too? Can we feel like Simeon, that we are quite happy to die after we have just seen our Lord with our own eyes (Lk. 2:29)? Is there really much *love* between us and our Lord? The faithful are described as "those that seek (God)... such as love thy salvation" (Ps. 40:16). None truly seek God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: "Unto them that look for (Christ) shall he appear the second time... unto salvation". Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation. People from all over the world, the living responsible, will see the sign of the son of man, will know His return is imminent, and wail with the knowledge that they have crucified Him afresh and must now meet Him (Mt. 24:30,31 cp. Rev. 1:7; Zech. 12:10). Their response to the certain knowledge that His return is imminent will in that moment effectively be their judgment. See on Lk. 12:37. The idea that whoever truly loves the Lord's coming will therefore be accepted by Him can easily be abused by those who reason that anyone who has the emotion of love towards Christ will be rewarded by him. We know that true love involves both having and keeping his commands. But for those of us in Christ, these verses are still a major challenge. If we truly "look for" Christ's second coming, if we "love his

appearing", this will lead us to acceptance with him. So the point is surely clinched: our attitude towards the second coming is an indicator of whether we will be saved. Time and again in the Psalms, David expresses his good conscience in terms of asking God to come and judge him (e.g. Ps. 35:24). Was this not some reference to the future theophany which David knew some day would come?

As Job's emphasis on the coming of Christ and judgment increased, so his concentration on his present sufferings decreased. His heart was consumed within him with desire for that day (Job 19:27 AVmg.). 2 Tim. 4 can be regarded as Paul's most mature spiritual statement, written as it was just prior to his death. In 2 Tim. 4:1,8, Paul's mind was clearly on the second coming and the certainty of judgment. He realized, in that time of undoubted maturity, that the common characteristic of all the faithful would be that they all *loved* the appearing of Christ. This isn't, of course, to say that anyone who loves the idea of Christ's coming will thereby be saved. A true love of His appearing is only possible with a correct doctrinal understanding, and also a certain level of moral readiness for His appearing. But do we *love* the appearing of Christ as Job did? Is it *really* all we have in life? Is our conscience, our faith in the grace of God, our real belief in the blood of the cross, so deep that we *love* the idea of the coming of judgment, that we would fain *hasten* the day of His coming? The graph constructed above shows how Job's *love* of the Lord's coming grew very rapidly. Before, he was too caught up with bitterness about his unspiritual fellow 'believers', effectively justifying himself in the eyes of his ecclesia and his world, full of passive complaints about his own sufferings... and so he didn't *love* that day as he later came to.

4:9 *Make an effort to come to me soon*- "Make an effort" again seems to reflect Paul's knowledge of Timothy's tendency to inaction and laziness, and the need to 'stir himself up'. By inviting him to Rome, Paul clearly believed that Timothy did not have to be permanently in Ephesus, but must have been confident that Timothy could pass over his duties to faithful brethren there for a time.

4:10- see on Mt. 13:22; Lk. 13:27.

For Demas- In Col. 4:14, Demas is a fellow prisoner with Paul, or at least with Paul in Rome. Either he fell away, or the difference is evidence of a second imprisonment. Demas was certainly within Paul's inner circle to have been with him in Rome, and a great loss.

Forsook me- Paul does take things rather personally, although that is just a function of being human. We would rather expect him to speak of forsaking the Lord. There are so many references to "I" and "me" in these final words that we can assume that Paul was in deep depression as he faced death alone and deserted. "Only Luke is *with me*... profitable *unto me* (:11)... did *me* much evil (:14)... no man stood with me, but all forsook me (:16)... that *through me* the message might be fully proclaimed" (:17).

Having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia- Translated to Hebrew, the *olahm hazzeh* ["present world"] is the term used by Judaism for the Jewish system. So it seems that Demas went off to Judaism, another casualty of the Jewish plot and machinations against Paul and his work.

4:11 *Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with you*- As Paul in his time of dying remembered his fallout with Mark, so awareness of sinfulness is a sign of spiritual maturity in us all. Paul must surely have had twinges of guilt over his behaviour at times (not least over the bust up with Barnabas and Mark, Acts 15:39);

and yet he insists that he always had a good conscience; so convinced was he of forgiveness. It seems Paul was aware of his error of years before in pushing Mark away. We have seen that he alluded to it in his letters. And now, right at the very end, the memory of his earlier pride and brashness to his brethren stayed with him. Every, every one of us has done the same thing to our brethren, countless times. Will we remember them on our deathbeds? Will our sensitivity to sin be that great? Paul in his time of dying was a man who had reached a spiritual peak, the love which was the bond of spiritual completion and maturity. Yet this didn't stop him being depressed, or from so desperately wanting his brethren, or from meditating upon past mistakes.

For his service is profitable to me- AV "Profitable to me for the ministry". Paul at his last gasp was still thinking about fulfilling his ministry / service of the Lord. And he saw that the fulfilment of his ministry required others, including those whom previously he had considered unhelpful. We all go through this path, coming to realize that we ourselves desperately need our weak brethren, that no man is an island, not even me. The term has just been used by Paul in saying that if a man separate himself from the vessels which are to dishonour, then he can be "profitable" in ministry (2 Tim. 2:21). It could be that Paul considered the vessels unto dishonour to be the Judaists, for he uses similar language about those under the Mosaic law in Romans. Perhaps he was satisfied that Mark had now separated himself from those Judaistic influences which had limited his service previously. Or perhaps Paul in his desperation to fulfil his ministry, simply lowered the bar and accepted the likes of Mark, even though he disagreed with those with whom Mark fellowshiped. Again, this path has been trodden by so many of the Lord's servants as they come towards the end of their service.

4:12 *But Tychicus I sent to Ephesus-* Timothy was the bishop at Ephesus, and Paul has charged him about how to lead the church there. But really wanting Timothy to personally come to him, he had arranged for Tychicus to go to Ephesus to temporarily relieve Timothy. We see here how intensely valuable and encouraging Paul found Timothy's presence. And yet there is probably no other single individual over whom Paul worried so much, and feared his weakness and possible spiritual collapse. Such fears are evident throughout the letters to Timothy. But it is a mark of Paul's final maturity that he took such encouragement from a brother whose weaknesses he so clearly perceived.

4:13 *When you come, bring the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus-* Paul's situation is very different from that presented at the end of Acts, where he lives in a large rented home capable of accommodating many visitors. He is presumably cold and needed the cloak. There are many links between Paul's time of dying (as recorded in 2 Tim. 4) and the death of the Lord Jesus. Paul felt that he had at last approximated to the fellowship of his Lord's sufferings, and therefore he looked ahead with confidence to the day of resurrection. His awareness of his cloak, as his one treasured worldly possession, was maybe fuelled by a realization that this too was the only significant worldly possession of his Lord, at the end (2 Tim. 4:13).

And the books, especially the parchments- He wanted to have his own copies of the Scriptures, which implies his relationship with the Jews in Rome had soured to the point where nobody would provide copies of the Scriptures to him. His desire for parchment reflects how he had no local source of them, even though Luke was with him, they perhaps had no money to buy parchment. Whereas previously Paul had the funds to rent his own accommodation in the prison. His desire for parchment suggests

he wanted to write more letters; and yet 2 Timothy appear to be his final letter preserved. Perhaps his intention never came to anything; but he surely desired to serve his Lord until his last breath, and he realized that letter writing was a significant ministry.

4:14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil; may the Lord render to him according to his works- The individual was clearly known to both Paul and Timothy, and it seems he was present with Timothy in Ephesus. He is the Alexander who had left the faith in 1 Tim. 1:20. It cannot surely be coincidence that Acts 19:33 records that there was a friend of Paul's called Alexander in Ephesus who attempted to defend him when the crowd of silversmiths called for Paul's destruction, angry that the collapse of the Diana cult had put them out of business. We can reconstruct that Alexander as a metalworker likewise depended upon the Diana cult for his livelihood. He initially converted and stood with Paul- but the pull of the Diana cult and the love of wealth and his former status had meant that he had turned against Paul. To regain his credibility in Ephesus, he had started a campaign against the Christians in Ephesus which affected Timothy and also led to Paul's suffering from him even in prison in Rome. This is fairly commonly seen amongst once zealous converts who fall away, and contributes towards the picture of Paul feeling so forsaken at the end.

4:15 You also need to be on guard about him, for he greatly withstood our words- The same word in 3:8 about the men of corrupt minds within the Ephesian church who resisted the Truth. There the parallel is drawn between them and Jannes and Jambres, the magicians who did false miracles to withstand the teaching of Moses. Perhaps Alexander repeated the false miracles claimed by the Diana cult; and the parallel would put Paul and timid Timothy in the place of Moses, who was seen as someone way above all other human spiritual endeavour. Paul often alludes to Moses as an example who is to be realistically followed, rather than admired as an icon from a distance.

4:16 At my first defence no man stood with me, but all forsook me- Paul was obviously deeply hurt by this. His call for Timothy to join him in Rome was therefore an invitation to persecution; for people didn't stand with Paul for fear of guilt by association and persecution. "All forsook me" obviously recalls the Lord in Gethsemane and Paul continues this allusion further. This is how 'Jesus is with us', in that life situations are clearly designed to be repetitions of what He experienced.

May it not be held against them- Paul saw that his own tribunal appearance was nothing compared to the appearance we shall all make before the judgment seat of Christ. Things like not standing up for a brother in court will perhaps be raised. But Paul understood that his forgiveness and prayer in this life, regardless of their repentance, could influence the nature of their judgment experience. His forgiveness of them could mean that the issue would not be raised with them then (AV "laid to their charge"). Whilst Paul doesn't speak with absolute certainty ["May it not..."], this possibility opens up huge issues for us. It gives eternal weight to our decisions regarding forgiveness, and our need to implore others to forgive us when we have sinned against them.

4:17- see on 2 Tim. 2:1; 4:7; 4:13.

But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me- There in the empty witness box, Paul sensed the Lord Jesus standing. The 'strengthening' is that spoken of in the notes

on 3:5. It was psychological strengthening, against the pain of being left alone there, against bitterness, against unforgiveness. The Lord had such a wide experience of human life and suffering so that not one of us could ever complain that He does not know in essence what we are going through. This is my simple answer to the question of why, exactly why, did Jesus have to suffer so much and in the ways that He did. Take one example of how His earthly experiences were the basis of how He later administered "grace to help in time of need" for a believer. The Lord's one time close friend Judas is described as "standing with" those who ultimately crucified Jesus in Jn. 18:5. Paul says that none of the brethren 'stood with' him when he was on trial, but "the Lord [Jesus] stood with me". It seems to me that the Lord knew exactly what it felt like to be left alone by your brethren, as happened to Him in Gethsemane and at His trials; and so at Paul's trial He could 'stand with' him, based on His earthly experience of being left to stand alone. In our lives likewise, the Lord acts to help us based on His earthly experiences; He knows how we feel, because He in essence went through it all. John maybe has the image of Judas and Peter standing with the Lord's enemies in mind when he writes that the redeemed shall stand with Jesus on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1), facing the hostile world.

That through me the message might be fully proclaimed- Paul's intention of going to Rome in order to make a public witness for the Gospel was therefore fulfilled. His trial was presumably high profile, so that many Gentiles heard the Gospel.

And so all the Gentiles might hear- As he faced death, Paul more intensely modelled his words upon those of Christ (see on :7). And yet despite this, perhaps because of his increasing identification with Christ and sense of Christ's supremacy, Paul's concern was constantly for doctrine; he pounded away, time and again, at the danger of apostasy. As he got older, this was a bigger and bigger theme with him. His last words just before his death are full of this theme, more than any other of his writings. And yet that same letter has more reference (relatively) to the Gospels and to the Lordship of Christ than anything else he wrote. On average, Paul refers to Christ as "the Lord" once every 26 verses in his letters. But in 2 Timothy, he calls Christ "Lord" once every six verses; and in his very last words in 2 Tim. 4, once every 3 verses, nine times more than average! His appreciation of the *excellency* and the supremacy of Christ, of the height of His Lordship, grew and grew. Paul seems to have seen in Christ's prophecy that the Gospel would be fully known world-wide in the last days as being a specific, personal command to him (Mt. 24:14 = 2 Tim. 4:17). The Gospel is to be preached; Paul realized this in these his very last words, as even then, he makes one of his last plays on words: "... that through me the proclamation might be fully proclaimed" (2 Tim. 4:17 RVmg.). The Gospel, the proclamation of the Kingdom, is to be proclaimed. We cannot possess a proclamation, designed to be proclaimed, without proclaiming it.

And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion- As a Roman citizen, Paul's death would have been by execution. So he may be expressing gratitude that the form of his death was not going to be so awful as death in the arena. But he may also mean that he was spared the death penalty. But in this case, why does he write with urgency to Timothy as if he is about to die shortly? Perhaps he realized he had a terminal illness? Surely such language would be inappropriate if he had just been acquitted from a death penalty. This is why I take him here to be simply grateful for the form of death which had been decreed for him. We must also factor in the historical records of Paul's execution at the time of Nero's persecution. The reference to salvation from the

lion was alluding to the Lord's experience on the cross, as described in Ps. 22:13,21. He felt forsaken by his disciples, just as Christ had been at His arrest and judgment (2 Tim. 4:16). The Lord's deliverance from the lion was through resurrection- and not through temporary release from its power. And it seems Paul understood that. But maybe he was also alluding to Daniel, who was literally saved from the mouth of the lion.

Whatever, Paul's mind was full of allusions to John the Baptist, Daniel, Moses and above all his Lord. All his years, his hours and minutes, of sustained meditation, of bringing the mind back from its natural wandering, were now paying their glorious reward. The picture of Paul in prison, having reached this spiritual pinnacle, fired the minds and living of "many of the brethren in the Lord" (Phil. 1:21). And for me too, the old and brave Paul in that cell is the man I fain would be. Nero is reported as having said that the time would come, when men would call their sons Nero and their dogs Paul, as veiled with all the pomp and the power and the pride of this life, he watched Paul led out to his death. And yet that Paul is the man we fain must be; and doubtless he had in his mind words he had penned years before: "... those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things... and be found in him... being made conformable unto *his* death; if by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead... forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth... I press toward the mark for the prize" (Phil. 3). This is a far cry from the Paul who just a few years earlier had 'refused to die', who wanted to fight for his life (Acts 25:11). Now he felt ready to be offered, to be poured out as a drink offering upon the lives of his brethren (Phil. 2:17 Gk.); he held nothing back, but *gave* his life rather than have it forced from him by the inevitable death that must come to all men. What he had once counted gain- and the Greek suggests material, financial gain- he now counted loss. He came to despise the materialism of the world, as did Jacob in his maturity. The power of all this is not just in its relevance to the elderly or terminally ill. We are all old men now, we are all on borrowed time. We believe the Lord's return, the end, *the ultimate end*, is imminent. If we are living expecting the imminent second coming; *are we ready?* Have we reached the completeness?

4:18 *The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me to his heavenly kingdom; to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen-* Paul writes to Timothy as if he is shortly to die. So I don't take this as meaning that he was confident of deliverance from death at the hands of the Romans. Rather is this confidence that despite the "evil work" of his execution, he would be delivered from that through resurrection of the body at the Lord's return. He was using the very words of the Lord's payer, "Deliver us from evil, for Yours is the Kingdom..." (Mt. 6:13). He understood this as ultimately a prayer for deliverance from death into the Kingdom of God on earth at the Lord's return. Admittedly he has spoken of past deliverance from his persecutions (3:11), but here he speaks of deliverance as a 'saving me to His heavenly Kingdom', the Kingdom of Heaven to come on earth at the Lord's return. The Greek term for "evil work" however may well not refer to the 'evil work' of his execution. The plural "every evil work" suggests many evil works. And the phrase is consistently used in the NT of sins (Col. 1:21; 1 Jn. 3:12; 2 Jn. 11; 3 Jn. 10), specifically those committed by Judaism against Jesus (Jn. 3:19; 7:7). At the end of his life, faced with death, Paul's mind was inevitably on the serious sins he had committed against Jesus under the influence of Judaism. And as he surveys his future, he is confident that he will be delivered from them, and accepted into God's Kingdom. And that is enough for him to face death

calmly. And it is with this issue of forgiveness and subsequent salvation in view that he can comment: "to him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen". This language is more appropriate to the triumph of Divine forgiveness and salvation than it is to Paul's being delivered from Roman punishment and released from prison.

4:19 *Greet Prisca and Aquila and the house of Onesiphorus*- His old friends Priscilla and Aquila were now at Ephesus.

4:20- see on Acts 20:25 *I know*.

Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left at Miletus sick- Perhaps this is a lament of loneliness. Instead of coming to Paul, Erastus had remained at Corinth. Hence Paul's urging of *Timothy* to not be like the rest and find excuses not to come to him.

4:21 *Try by all means*- At the bitter end, the way Paul begs nervous, spiritually and physically weak Timothy to try to get to him before he dies has something pathetic about it: "Do thy diligence to come... do thy diligence to come", he repeats twice over (2 Tim. 4:9,21 AV). The spiritual weakness of Timothy and his need for Paul's encouragement is quite a theme (1 Cor. 16:10; 1 Tim. 4:12,14; 2 Tim. 1:6-8; 4:2).

To come before winter- The urgency may be because without the cloak he would have frozen in his cell (:13). But he knows that the time of his departure is near. He knows that travelling to Rome by sea in Winter is dangerous- as he had experienced. So he wished Timothy to come immediately and not miss the shipping season.

Eubulus greets you, and Pudens and Linus and Claudia, and all the brothers- We note his grace in passing on these greetings; because these would have been amongst those who sadly did not stand with Paul in support at his trial (:16).

4:22 *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you*- As noted on 1:14 and elsewhere, Paul was very conscious of the work of the Spirit as an internal strengthening within Timothy's spirit. "Grace" or 'gift', *charis*, refers to the gift of the Spirit; so we see here the way Lord's Spirit intertwines with the human spirit. This is Paul's closing wish to Timothy, because he realized the supreme importance of having the mind or spirit of Christ. We should give it a like importance.