



Focus Points...2 Timothy 4

Listen To...

Paul's final words to Timothy, his faithful, trusted son in ministry.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, as I read Paul's final words to Timothy, enable me to be encouraged by Paul's words. Give me the character of faith to trust in You in every situation, even if I must face death. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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Commentary:

The primary purpose of Paul's Second Letter to Timothy is captured in II Timothy 4:1-2.

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."

Since Timothy was in the last times (cf. 3:1ff.), he could expect that people would not put up with sound doctrine (4:3-4). His response must be firm and unwavering. He must "keep his head." A more accurate rendering of the Greek original may be "to continually be self-controlled in everything" (4:5).

4:6ff. marks a shift in the letter...one of sorrow, sadness and mourning. "I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure," Paul wrote in 4:6. Having offered his life as a "living sacrifice" to God (Romans 12:1), he used the metaphor of worship and sacrifice to describe his final act on earth: his martyrdom.

Typical of those facing imminent death, Paul reflected on his life.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing." (4:7-8)

Amid that remarkable statement of confidence, Paul expressed his human side. "Do your best to come to me quickly." (4:9)

God was certainly with Paul. Paul knew that. But he also longed to have Timothy there at his side to encourage, strengthen and uplift him in his final moments. Like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, he longed for his closest friend to be with him as he faced his own demise.

As if his impending martyrdom was not enough of a burden to bear, the pain of Demas' desertion and his longing for others to be there was almost too much to bear. Luke, who in his Acts of the Apostles recorded his partnership with Paul, remained faithfully at Paul's side.

We are not sure what "my scrolls, especially the parchments" are (4:13). They may have been his own copy of Scripture, parts of his library or copies of some of his New Testament Letters. A.T. Robertson, in *Word Pictures of the New Testament*, noted that parchment was the more expensive writing material over papyrus.

If Robertson is correct, Paul's reference to "my parchments" (4:13) was a request that Timothy bring the more valuable writings from Paul's personal library. These parchments might include Paul's personal copy of the Old Testament Scripture or the words of Jesus recorded and used to compile the Gospels, especially Luke (cf. Luke 1:1-4).^{*} Of course, we cannot be sure.

Though deserted at his first defense, Paul did not harbor anger. He knew that God was with him and would rescue him.

"But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (4:18)

Paul's final written words serve as an epitaph of faith. In the face of death, he had confidence in the Lord. In the face of death, at the hands of an evil Roman regime, he gave praise to God.

This epitaph is one of the most telling indications of Paul's character. His faith was unshakeable. Though the world and all around had forsaken him, his faith remained firm. Nothing could keep him from praising God.

What kind of character does your faith have? Is it more like Paul's...or does it fall short, especially in times of suffering. It must have made an impression on Timothy. I pray that it will also have an impression on you.

"The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." (4:22).

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, by Your sufferings You demonstrated the character of Your faith in God, Your Father. As Paul imitated Your example as he faced his own death, help me to take on that same resolute character of faith. Give me confidence in every situation to trust You, rely on You and be strengthened by You. Above all, enable me, like Paul, to give You praise in every situation, for You will never abandon or forsake me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Thomas F. Fischer

* II Timothy 4:13 http://www.ccel.org/r/robertson_at/wordpictures/htm/2TI4.RWP.html

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