2 Timothy - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:1-5: Exposition of 2 Timothy

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2 Timothy 1:1-5

There is a great and felt difference between the first and second epistles to Timothy. The former contemplates the assembly in its pristine order, with everything regulated by the divine word; the latter deals with the path of the faithful in a time of confusion and departure from the truth. There are two verses which express this difference. In the first, the Apostle writes of the “house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15); whereas in the second, he has to speak of some “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure,” and so forth (2 Tim. 2:18-19).

This was now the consolation that, if confusion reigned in the house of God, if vessels to dishonor had become mingled with the vessels to honor, the foundation, laid of God Himself, was immovable. Still it must have been an unspeakable sorrow to the Apostle to behold the outward decay and corruption of Christianity, the almost open departure of the Church from the holy ground on which he, by the grace of God, had been enabled to plant it. In truth it was an exhibition of what has been seen in every age and in every dispensation; namely, the failure of that which had been entrusted to the responsible hands of men. For if Christ, on the one hand, builds the Church, and builds that, as He surely does, which is imperishable and indestructible, He, on the other hand, permits His servants to build also; and many of these as surely build up upon the foundation wood, hay, stubble (1 Cor. 3), and thereby the outward form and presentation of the house of God are corrupted. This, as we have said, had already taken place in the days of the Apostle; and in this epistle he not only expresses the feelings of his own heart with respect to this sorrowful state of things, but he is also led to give such directions as avail for the guidance and conduct of exercised souls in the midst of the prevalent disorders.

The first two verses contain the address and the greeting. “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” In other epistles he presented himself as a “servant” (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:1); but here he views himself in his apostolic character, as one sent and commissioned by the Lord Himself, and, as such, having authority which no unfaithfulness on the part of others could nullify. He might be, as indeed he was, forsaken, if not refused, by many; but the authority entrusted to him survived. It is the same now as to gift. Wherever this is found, the privilege and responsibility to use it abide, even though it may not be acknowledged by the saints. The Head of the Church who bestows it counts upon, and holds the person on whom it is bestowed responsible for, its faithful employment. (Compare Matt. 25:14-30.)

He was, moreover, Apostle by the will of God. This, and nothing less than this, was the ground and source of his office. Called by the Lord Himself, he was called by the will of God; and this certainty in his soul was the secret of his courage and devotedness in the Lord’s service. (Compare Josh. 1:9.) And if by the will of God, it was “according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus.” The truth may be departed from, and the testimony be consequently surrendered, but the life which is in Christ Jesus—eternal life—is indestructible, as it is also outside of and above all question of failure or corruption.

The Apostle therefore takes this ground in this inspired communication to Timothy; for grievous as it must have been to him to see the light of the golden candlestick (Rev. 1) dimmed if not extinguished, the thought of the immutable character of life, secured in Christ Jesus by the unchangeable promise of God, could not fail to minister powerful consolation to his soul. It is well to keep these two things distinct. As to life and salvation, every believer will be kept through faith by the power of God (see 1 Pet. 1:3-5); but the place of testimony, whether corporately or individually, may be, and often is, forfeited through unfaithfulness, or through succumbing to the influences of this present evil age.

“To Timothy, my dearly beloved son,” more exactly, “[my] beloved child.” In the first epistle, Paul names him, “[my] true child in the faith” (J.N.D. Trans.), thus pointing him out as one that walked in his own footsteps in regard to the truth; here it is the expression of his own heart for the one who, as a son with his father, had served with Paul in the gospel. In truth, the heart of the Apostle clung to Timothy at such a moment of sorrow; and his pouring out his heart in this way became the basis of the appeals and exhortations he was about to address to his beloved child. This is divine in its method, for it is ever God’s way to reveal the depth of His affections for the saints before giving to them words of guidance or admonition. (See 1 Cor. 1, and Col. 3:12-17.)

“Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.” It has often been noticed that, when writing to assemblies, the Apostle, in his salutation, says grace and peace, but in the epistles to individuals, he says mercy. The reason is that as individuals we need mercy, because of our weakness and infirmities every step of the road (see Heb. 4:14-16); whereas the Church is regarded as on the perfect ground of redemption before God, without any consideration of weakness or even failure. It is, as another has written, “The perfect grace of God by Christ, the perfect peace of man, and that with God; it was this which he (the Apostle) brought in the gospel and in his heart. These are the true conditions of God’s relationship with man, and that of man with God, by the gospel — the ground on which Christianity places man. The grace, as well as the truth, came by, and was perfectly expressed in, Jesus Christ.” “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son”—this is pure and sovereign grace. And the first announcement the Lord made to His assembled disciples, on the evening of the first day of the week, was, “Peace be unto you.” In this salutation therefore we find the revelation of the heart of God, and the effect of the finished work of Christ, together with the provision of mercy, secured by the present ministration of Christ on high, for the pathway through this scene while awaiting His return.

Verses 3-5. First, in thanking God, the Apostle makes the remarkable statement, “Whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience.” He had said the same thing in effect when standing before the sanhedrin (Acts 23:1; see also 24:16); and it is necessary to seize the true import of these words. That his forefathers had been godly persons is manifest, as also that they had been distinguished by a conscientious

observance of the law, walking according to the light they had received, being governed by the Word as far as they comprehended it. And this, as we understand, is what Paul here affirms of himself, that while he was in Judaism he maintained a good conscience, did not permit himself any known violations of the law, being even then, as “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. 3:6). But this has nothing to say as to the state of his heart when a Jew; only he insists that he preserved, until of course the light flashed into his soul when on his way to Damascus, an upright conscientious course; and also that this characterized his service after his conversion as an apostle. He ever pressed this point as of the utmost importance (see 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9; 4:2; Titus 1:15; Heb. 13:18); and we would do well to remember it, for nothing more exposes the Lord’s servant, and Christians indeed generally, to the darts of Satan than a bad conscience. It is to lack the breastplate of righteousness, without which our most vital parts are laid bare to his weapons.

The subject of the Apostle’s thanksgiving is, “that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.” It is a striking way to put it, one that would not ordinarily be adopted by saints, because perhaps we are less mindful than he was, that we are entirely indebted to the grace of God for power to remember anyone incessantly in prayer. Paul therefore gives thanks that he had been able to bear up Timothy before the Lord—a sure sign, too, it may be added, inasmuch as he penned these words under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that Timothy needed his prayers, and thus that Paul was in communion as to him with the mind of God.

Then follow expressions which reveal the Apostle’s fervent affection for his beloved child in the faith; “Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy” (2 Tim. 1:4). Recalling Timothy’s affection inflames his own; and while expressing it, consolation is doubtless ministered to his own heart. The occasion of Timothy’s tears is not revealed; but it was probably at the time of some separation, bidding him farewell, it may be, when leaving him in captivity, as he departed to his own service. Whenever it might have been, it plainly shows that the affection of Paul was fully reciprocated, and that it was no common tie that knit together the hearts of these two servants of the Lord. It was the recollection of this parting, combined with his own ardent love that led him to desire to see Timothy that he might be filled with joy; for to him the Apostle could unburden his heart, and be refreshed in the enjoyment of Timothy’s love and fellowship. Many a servant, in times of declension, has thus learned the sweetness and encouragement of real heart fellowship concerning the work of the Lord.

Then, putting Timothy in this respect in a similar position to his own in relation to his ancestors, he adds, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded in thee also” (2 Tim. 1:5). The position is similar, but it is not, as in Paul’s case, a good conscience, but “unfeigned faith”; for Timothy had no Jewish ancestry, for his father was a Greek. And hence, though his mother was a Jewess, he was unclean according to the Jewish law. He is thus traced back only to the commencement of the Christian faith in his family, which dated from his grandmother.

It is a beautiful picture, drawn for our instruction; for we learn from this same epistle that Timothy from a child had known (and who can doubt, through the teaching of these pious women, or at least his mother) the Holy Scriptures. Both the grandmother and mother, as well as Timothy, had embraced the Christian faith; and the Apostle seems to regard this fact as proving the greater reality of “the faith” in Timothy’s soul, and as laying him, as will afterward be seen, under all the more solemn obligation of faithfulness to the Lord in this loose and corrupt epoch of the Church. The reflection cannot but be evoked from the mind of every reader, that it is a priceless blessing to have godly parents, and such godly parents as seek to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The judgment seat of Christ alone will reveal how much Timothy was indebted, in the grace of God, to the instructions of his mother Eunice. May such parents ever abound in the Church of God!

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:6-7: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timorhy 1:6-7

The expression of the Apostle’s heart to Timothy, as well as his longing desire to see him, is but preparatory to the appeal contained in verses 6-8. It is indeed the groundwork on which he builds up his exhortations. He thus drew the heart of Timothy to himself, to prepare him to receive his message. “Wherefore,” he says, “I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim. 1:6).

By the light of the first epistle we may understand the whole history of Timothy’s gift. In chapter 1 we find that he had been pointed out as a chosen vessel of gift by prophecies (of course, in the assembly), and that Paul accordingly committed to him a “charge.” 1 Timothy 4:14 further teaches that the bestowment of the gift, “given thee by prophecy,” was accompanied by “the laying on of the hands of the presbytery”; and now we learn that it was the Apostle himself, “the presbytery” being associated with him, who was the instrument or channel appointed by the Head of the Church for the actual communication of the gift to Timothy. It is the ascended Christ who, having led captivity captive, gave, and still gives, gifts to men, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. And Timothy was honored, in the sovereign favor of God, in being made a vessel for the blessing of the saints. It is of this he is reminded by the Apostle, and charged at the same time to “stir up” the gift of God.

Previously he had been warned not to “neglect” it (1 Tim. 4:14); now he is more urgently exhorted on the same subject. This points to a common danger. When there is a real action of the Spirit of God among the saints, when His power is demonstrated in edification and restoration, or in conversion, the ministry of the Word is welcomed and appreciated. But in times of coldness, indifference, and apostasy, the saints will not endure sound teaching, but after their own lusts they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they will turn away from the truth (1 Tim. 4:3-4).

Then comes the danger to the servant of the Lord. Seeing that his ministry is no longer received, he is tempted to retire, to lapse into silence, or to resolve with Jeremiah not to speak any more in the Lord’s name to the people (Jer. 20:9). As knowing the heart and the tendency of Timothy, Paul provides against this snare by urging; him to rouse himself, and to stir up by constant use the gift he had received for the correction and edification of the Lord’s people. The greater the confusion and departure from the truth, the greater the need for a real and living ministry; but in order to maintain this, the servant must learn to draw his strength and courage, not from the faces of the people, but

from abiding and secret communion with the Lord.

If the Lord, through His Apostle, summons Timothy to more diligent service, He also draws his attention to the source of his power. “For,” continues the Apostle, “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1:7). The first clause, which might be rendered the spirit of “cowardice,” reveals Timothy’s especial weakness. He evidently was a man, like Jeremiah, of a timid, shrinking spirit — one who only with difficulty, unless under the sway of the Holy Spirit, could face dangers and opponents. But while the servant of the Lord “must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient” (2 Tim. 2:24), he must be also as bold as a lion in the defense of the truth, and in maintaining the honor of his Lord. Timothy is therefore taught that the spirit God gives is not one of fear or cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

These are three remarkable words, and they require a little examination. First, it is a spirit of power; for if God bestows gift, He gives also the power to exercise it; that is, it should be added, if there is the state of soul for its use.

It is indeed of the last importance to remember the connection between state of soul and the power of the Spirit. The gift may abide even in one who is unfaithful or indifferent; but the power to use it will not be present unless its possessor is walking in dependence upon God, unless he lives in the acknowledgment that power is outside of himself, and in the realization of his own utter weakness. This is the apostle’s point: “God,” he says, “hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power.” If therefore the servant, and Timothy was to learn it, is animated with fear or timidity, he should know that this is not the spirit God gives, for His Spirit is one of power.

These two things are to be noted — the source of the power, and the character of the spirit given. Moreover, the spirit is also “of love.” The Apostle follows in this the same order as in 1 Corinthians. In chapter 12 he speaks of spiritual manifestations in the assembly; and, at the end of the chapter, of workers of miracles, gifts of healing, and speaking with tongues — all of which are connected with displays of power.

And then in the next chapter, he proceeds to speak of love, teaching that if anyone spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had not love, he would become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; for in truth divine power can only be wielded by the Spirit, through a divine nature; for of this it is that love is the expression. The flesh, man’s sinful nature, can never be used in the Lord’s service; and thus power and love — divine, holy love — can never be dissociated. There will also be, as a consequence of love, a sound mind, or, as it has been translated, “a wise discretion”; for when governed by the Spirit of God, the servant will always exhibit divine wisdom in his work, and be kept in quiet control and subduedness in the presence of God. He will know when to speak and when to be silent, when to be in season and when to be out of season; for he will be maintained in communion with the mind of his Lord.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:8-11: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:8-11

Such being the characteristics of the spirit God gives to His servants, the Apostle proceeds to exhortation: “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” (2 Tim. 1:8).

There is, perhaps, an implied contrast in this exhortation; thus, many are becoming ashamed of the testimony (see 2 Tim 1:15), but be not thou ashamed. And the danger, as before indicated, might have beset Timothy at this moment when almost all were turning aside, and when the elect vessel of the testimony was a poor despised prisoner. It is a remarkable fact that, so early in the history of the Church, as once before indeed at Antioch when Paul withstood Peter to the face, the maintenance of the truth of God depended upon the faithfulness of one man, and he a captive. Courage, and such courage as God alone could give, was requisite at such a crisis, that the spirit of power which alone could enable Timothy to stem the adverse currents that were sweeping by him on every side with such velocity and force. Did he waver at this time in his allegiance to the testimony of the Lord? God only knows; but we may be sure that this fervent, pleading exhortation reached him at the needed moment.

Mark, too, that the vessel of the testimony is identified with the testimony; for the Apostle adds, “nor of me His prisoner.” Many profess to hold and to love the truth, while they would fain stand apart from those to whom the testimony is committed. But this can never be, as our passage shows, according to the mind of God; and hence it would have been as displeasing to Him, if Timothy had been ashamed of Paul, as if he had been ashamed of the testimony. Or to put it still more strongly, to have been ashamed of Paul, being what he was, would have been to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord.

There is however more: not only was he not to be ashamed either of the message or the messenger, but he was also to be fully and openly identified with both. “Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” Another translation will bring out more clearly the Apostle’s meaning: “Suffer evil along with the gospel.” The gospel is in a way personified, and Timothy is urged to cast in his lot with it fully and entirely, at whatever cost, that the reproaches which might fall upon it might also be borne by him (compare Rom. 15:3); and the significant words are added, to encourage him in this course, “according to the power of God,” the power which God bestows upon His servants to sustain them in the presence of the adversary, and to maintain His truth in the face of all danger; for no human energy, no steadfastness of purpose, nothing short of divine power, will avail in the conflicts of service in the gospel.

The mention of the power of God leads the Apostle back and upward to the source of all the blessing which was flowing out through the gospel; namely, to God’s purpose and grace, as the immutable foundation on which God was working, and as the assurance that no efforts of the enemy could frustrate the accomplishment of the thoughts of God. “Who hath saved us,” he says, “and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality [incorruptibility, it should be rendered] to light through the gospel.” (2 Tim 1:9-10).

What a comprehensive statement! What a sweep of vision! —first, back into eternity, and then onward to the time when death will be swallowed up in victory! For what is it the Apostle here brings before us? First, that if God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, it is

not because of anything we are or have done, but according to His own eternal counsels of grace, and grace given to us (let the reader mark the language — “given to us”) in Christ Jesus before the world began. Then he points out that the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, was in pursuance of God’s purposes, and that by His death and resurrection death has been abolished; and life and incorruptibility, the resurrection of the body, have been brought to light through the glad tidings which were now being proclaimed. As has been written, “It is a counsel of God, formed and established in Christ before the world existed, which has its place in the ways of God, outside and above the world, in union with the Person of His Son, and in order to manifest a people united with Him in glory. Thus it is a grace which was given us in Him before the world was. Hidden in the counsels of God, this purpose of God was manifested in the manifestation of Him in whom it had its accomplishment. It was not merely blessings and dealings of God with regard to men—it was life, eternal life in the soul, and incorruptibility in the body. Thus Paul was an apostle according to the promise of life.”

There are several distinct steps in the unfolding or realization of these blessings. After the purpose of God there was the appearing of Christ in this world; there were His death and resurrection, the means of the accomplishment of the divine counsels; there was, together with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, the proclamation of the glorious message of the gospel; then, those who by grace received the message were saved and called with a holy calling, and made to know, at the same time, that all was of grace; and last, there was the possession of life, eternal life,1 along with the prospect of the resurrection of the body—incorruptibility. It was Paul’s mission to unfold these things in his preaching, as he says, “Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” (2 Tim. 1:11); see also 1 Timothy 2:7. The solemnity of the times led the Apostle, it might be said, to magnify his office, to insist upon the fact that he had been divinely appointed as a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles; and, by the grace of God, his life was consecrated to his work, so that no adversities, no hindrances, could daunt his courage or extinguish his zeal; for he was able to say, as we find in another epistle, “To me to live is Christ.”

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:12-18: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:12-18

In the preceding verse the Apostle explains that he had been appointed (not of man, as he informs the Galatians, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead) as the herald and apostle of the gospel; and now he speaks of the consequences of his mission as to himself, together with his sustainment and consolation: “For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” His present sufferings were those resulting from his captivity (2 Tim. 1:8), and from the opposition now everywhere encountered by the gospel, as also from being deserted by so many professed believers, and perhaps teachers (2 Tim. 1:15). And he regards these sufferings as flowing out from the position he occupied in reference to the gospel (2 Tim. 2:9); that is to say, the faithful prosecution of his mission entailed upon him these sorrows and persecutions.

Nor could it be otherwise at such a moment, nor indeed at any moment. For wherever a servant of the Lord seeks to serve Him alone, and to cling to His Word in spite of all opposition, against that man will be arrayed all the forces of the enemy. It was so with Paul, so that (as he tells us in the next chapter) he suffered trouble in the work of the gospel as an evildoer, even unto bonds, therein following, if at a distance, the footsteps of his Master, who suffered unto death, and that the death of the cross, because of His fidelity, perfect fidelity, as God’s witness on the earth.

But if the Apostle was in his service encompassed by suffering, he knew where to turn for comfort and strength. On man’s part it was trouble and persecution, but when he looked up, all was assurance and confidence; and hence he could say, “Nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed”; and he could leave himself and his circumstances entirely in His hands. Moreover, man was powerless as to the eternal issue before his soul. He might apparently succeed in hindering the testimony by shutting up the Apostle in prison; he might, as the tool of Satan, drive away many of his companions; he might even be permitted to make a martyr of Paul; but if so, he would have to learn that he had but been yoked to the chariot wheels of God’s purposes, and that he had not been able to touch that which was most precious as to Paul, so also to Christ. Man may kill the body, but can do no more; and knowing this, the Apostle was confident that the Lord could and would keep that which he had committed unto Him against that day — the day when all things will be made manifest, when the Lord will come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed. It is to that period the Apostle looks; and meanwhile he was able to trust the Lord, not only for his own salvation and eternal happiness, but also for the recompense of his service. The enemy could do nothing with such a man, because his hopes and joys were outside of the scene through which he moved.

Having given the ground of his own confidence in the midst of his present circumstances, he turns again to exhortation. “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.” (2 Tim. 1:13-14). These are very important exhortations, and require careful attention. The form of sound words is rather an outline — an outline of the truth in the inspired words which Timothy had heard from the Apostle. Elsewhere Paul affirms that his teaching was “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which [in the words which] the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). He thus claimed inspiration, not only for the matter, but also for the words in which his apostolic communications were made; and hence it is, as another has said, that we are never sure we have the truth unless we have the very language which contains it.

In a day when rationalism and infidelity (both springing from the same root, the latter being but the full development of man’s reason) are seeking to pervert the foundations of God’s revelation to man in the Scriptures, it is necessary to reassert the truth which the Apostle affirms; for the infallible certainty of the Word of God is the only rock on which the soul can securely repose amid the changing sea of the speculations of man’s wandering mind.

It is for this reason that Paul exhorts Timothy to have an outline of Scripture teaching in inspired words, that he might ever be prepared to authoritatively instruct the enquirer, or to confute the adversary. The difference between this that Paul pressed on Timothy and creed lies in this: Timothy’s outline was to be in divine words, whereas the creeds of Christendom are expressed in human language; and on this very account they fail, even when “orthodox,” to express the full truth of revelation. Timothy’s outline was inspired without any human admixture; the creeds are composed by human minds, taking Scripture, as far as their authors understood it, as the basis, and given in the words of

man’s wisdom.

Paul had taught Timothy, as already said, in divine words; and these words were to be used by him in the way directed, forming a compendium in scriptural language of Christian doctrine, as there were but few New Testament scriptures at that time in existence. Timothy then was to have and to hold fast the form of sound words; but if he was enjoined to do this, the manner in which it was to be done is also given. It was to be “in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” Dissociate even the truth from Christ, and it will become a dead thing; use it apart from faith and love, and it will be a powerless weapon.

The Apostle therefore guards his “son” Timothy in his service by reminding him of his need of using nothing but the truth in his conflicts, of holding the truth in the living activities of his soul, and as flowing from and being the expression of the glory of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the Word; but if it is produced by it, in its presentation of a God of grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, it leads back to it, not only as the foundation on which it is based, but also as containing the sources of all divine knowledge. Faith, moreover, in attaching itself to its object, Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, works by love, or rather, apprehending the divine and infinite love unfolded in Christ; love also is immediately begotten in the soul, for we love Him who first loved us. And faith and love are necessarily in Christ Jesus—in Him, for He is the source, Object, and sphere of both alike. (Compare 1 Tim. 1:14.)

If Timothy was to hold fast the objective truth, there was also another thing he was to keep; namely, “that good thing... committed unto thee.” In verse 12 the Apostle had said that he was persuaded that the One whom he had believed was able to keep that which he had committed to Him against that day. Literally, it is “my deposit”; and in verse 14 the rendering should be “the good deposit keep.” If on the the one hand we have a “deposit” (all our hopes of glory) with Christ, He on the other hand entrusts His servants with a deposit. The question then is, What is this good deposit? It cannot be eternal life, or salvation; for the keeping of this belongs to Christ Himself, and hence it is probably the truth —the truth as committed to the stewardship of His servants— to be maintained by them in all fidelity while serving in the prospect of that day. (Compare 1 Tim. 6:13-14.)

Timothy’s gift was also a deposit, and that, as we have seen, he was to hold and use in the service of his Master; but the connection here points rather to the interpretation we have given. And, indeed, unless we guard, and carefully guard, the truth in our own souls, we shall never be able to use it rightly in service. It is thus the first thing, in connection with the whole armor of God that the loins should be girt about with truth (Eph. 4). If, therefore, we would be faithful witnesses for Christ in a day of declension, the truth must first have its rightful place over our own hearts and consciences, and must be jealously watched over and guarded if the witness—bearing is to be continued. The Apostle reminds Timothy that the only power for this is the Holy Spirit, and also that he already possessed that power. “Keep,” he says, “by the Holy Ghost which dwells in us, the good deposit” (JND Trans.). It is well to remember that if the Lord send us on any service, or if He set us for the defense of the truth in a day of difficulty, He has given us a power that is equal to all the demands that can be made upon us. We are too often occupied with the sense of our own feebleness, instead of with the power possessed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostle turns again to his own circumstances; but if he does so, it is but to bring out into bright relief the contrast between unfaithfulness and fidelity, as also to teach us how precious the latter is to God. First, we have the dark side: “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” (2 Tim 1:15). It was through Paul’s preaching that “all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks” (Acts 19:10); and thus they were, in no small degree, his debtors. But now, together with the aged and devoted Apostle’s being in prison, they had lost their first love; the fervency of their zeal had cooled, and they had become ashamed of God’s chosen vessel of the truth. It was not that they were not really Christians, nor, perhaps, that they had become open backsliders, much less apostates; but they were not prepared to suffer from identification with the rejected servant. They had undoubtedly fallen in with the course of this age, and would thus be tempted to regard Paul as an extreme man, as too exclusive, as an enthusiast, as one who imperiled the progress of Christianity by his fanaticism. They thus turned away from him, seeking smoother paths, where the cross would be lighter.

Two names of those who forsook Paul are given—Phygellus and Hermogenes—and the fact that their names are given shows that they were well known, probably leaders among the saints—those, therefore, who would lend a sanction to this unfaithful course. It may be that the teaching of these men had adapted itself to the currents of the moment; for the tendencies of any age always find expression through some who claim the place of teachers. Be this as it may, it was a sad spectacle—public Christianity, that is, the outward form of it in this world, severing itself from the chosen vessel of the truth! On the other hand, there is no grander sight than that of Paul—deserted, alone, in captivity—retaining through grace his confidence in the Lord, and in the truth committed to his charge. If faint, he was still pursuing; and if he were weary in his lonely conflict, his hand still clave to his sword (see 2 Sam. 23:10).

There was one ray of light amid the gloom of the moment, one rill of consolation flowing into the heart of the Apostle from the heart of God, through His servant Onesiphorus. This godly man, so far from being ashamed of Paul or his chain, being in Rome, sought him out very diligently, and rested not until he had found him, and was used of the Lord to minister refreshment to the captive Apostle. Precious privilege vouchsafed to Onesiphorus! Precious also to the weary soul of Paul were these cups of cold water which Onesiphorus put to his thirsty lips! And the Lord saw this blessed service, and esteemed it as rendered unto Himself. “I was in prison, and ye came unto Me” (Matt. 25:36).

The gratitude of the Apostle’s heart turned into a prayer for Onesiphorus. “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well” (2 Tim. 1:16-18).

The Apostle’s prayer embraces a present and a future blessing. He desires present mercy for the house of Onesiphorus; that is, he prays for the members of Onesiphorus’ family, of his household indeed, and also that the Lord would grant Onesiphorus himself to find mercy from “the Lord in that day.” “That day” refers to the Lord’s appearing (see 2 Tim. 1:12), when He will display His own in glory, and when the recompense, in grace, of each of His servants will likewise be exhibited. Onesiphorus had already been the object of mercy in his salvation; but, as passing through the wilderness, he was “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 21). And it is this, mercy in its full fruit and consummation, that Paul prays he may find in that day.

The closing statement shows that it was not the first time Onesiphorus had been of service to Paul. In Ephesus too he had ministered in many things to the Apostle, and the Spirit of God has caused it to be recorded here, as it is also recorded in heaven, to teach us that He marks and

appreciates the slightest kindness shown to His servants in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:1-7: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:1-7)

The connection of this chapter with that which precedes it is both intimate and striking. The Apostle was led to depict his circumstances and his situation in the darkest colors; for in truth nothing could be gloomier to the outward eye than the outlook at that moment. He himself was a prisoner, and “all they which are in Asia” had turned away from him. It was therefore a grave crisis in the history of Christianity, and one in which divine wisdom was required to guide aright the feet of the faithful. What then are the counsels which, at such a time, the Apostle gives to his “son” Timothy? First, he says, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 2:1). It is not what most would have expected. At a time when so many were turning their backs upon God’s chosen vessel of the truth, surely some degree of severity, some little sharpness, would be advisable to recall the saints to a sense of their responsibility before God in acknowledging the authority of His servant. Such might have been the thoughts of man; the thoughts of God were of another kind. Timothy was to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus —the grace given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began —that grace of which Christ in His incarnation and death, was and is the expression, and which is stored up in Him (see 2 Cor. 8:9). This is full of instruction.

But how was Timothy to be strong in grace? The word is the same, for example, as that found in Philippians 4:13, and this will supply the key to its interpretation. It means that he was to be strengthened inwardly by this grace, so that he would be best prepared to stand in an evil day, and to cope with its prevailing evils. There is no weapon we are so often tempted to lay aside as grace; but we learn here that it is in proportion to outward decay, unfaithfulness, and corruption, that we need to be built up, fortified by it, in order to deal effectually with the difficulties of the path. The man of God himself therefore must be continually established in grace, as well as be unfailing in its presentation as the mightiest means, in the power of the Holy Spirit, both to confirm the wavering and to recover the backslider.

In the next place, he says, “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (2 Tim 2:2). This remarkable instruction is very significant. It shows clearly that no further revelation was to be expected, and that the provision contemplated, as a barrier against the inroads of false doctrines and pernicious errors, was the transmission of the truth as it had been received of the Apostle (and certified to be apostolic teaching by many witnesses) to faithful men who should be competent to hand it on unadulterated to others.

Not a hint is given of any successors of the apostles, or of any authority whatever in the Church, to whom an appeal might be made to define the truth and to expose false doctrines. The Apostle’s confidence is in God and the word of His grace (see Acts 20:32); only he would have Timothy to be diligent in imparting the truth to such as would be thereby qualified to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The waves of error were already rolling in from every quarter, and the inspired Apostle urges his beloved Timothy to raise up in this manner breakwaters to intercept their force, and to guard the saints from their destructive power. So now our safety is to be found first in building ourselves up on our most holy faith, and then in diligently instructing the saints, that they may know how to discern between truth and error, and thus to detect the artifices of the adversary.

The Apostle proceeds to insist upon some necessary personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called: “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth, himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who bath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits.” 2 Tim 2:3-6). Every servant of the Lord should ponder, and ponder again and again in the presence of God, these grave and weighty words—words which will never lose their solemn force as long as laborers are found in the Lord’s work. First then the servant must know how to endure hardness1, for such must be expected by every “good soldier of Jesus Christ.” None knew this better than he who penned these words, who, after recounting his persecutions and dangers, adds, “In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness” (2 Cor. 11:27). If therefore he exhorted Timothy to take his share in suffering, he had himself trodden the path, and thus does but encourage him to follow in the same steps. And where is the servant, it may be inquired, who does not need this admonition? To shun the cross is a common temptation, and it is only when we are under the power of the constraining love of Christ, with a single eye to His glory, that we are impelled to a joyful identification with the sorrows and sufferings of His interests here upon the earth.

The figure employed institutes a comparison. A soldier on service expects to endure “hardness,” and so also should the soldiers of Christ. The Apostle therefore adds, that no man that warreth entangles himself with the affairs of this life. He makes arrangements, on the other hand, to lay aside all his business responsibilities that he may be absolutely free from all other claims so as to be at the absolute disposal of his commander. Are the soldiers of Christ to be on any lower level? Are they to seek to serve two masters? Are they to engage only in the conflict when they can spare time from other engagements? Most blessed is it when busy men devote their leisure to the Lord’s work, preferring His interests to their own ease and comfort; but the Apostle speaks here of another class of servants who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, disengage themselves from every human claim because they desire to please, to be under the absolute control of, the Captain of their salvation. It will be a sad day for the Church and for the saints when such are no longer found, and a sure sign of the decay of the energy of the Holy Spirit in their midst.

Another figure is next introduced for further instruction. In the olden games and contests, those who strove were bound to observe the rules, if they would obtain the prize. So likewise those who engage in the Lord’s conflicts have to remember that they must “strive lawfully,” be in subjection to His conditions of service, which must be carried on in conformity to His will and His Word. This is of the utmost importance; for many a right thing is done, even by otherwise good soldiers of Jesus Christ, in a wrong manner or at a wrong moment, whereby the end is defeated. The Lord’s servants must wait entirely upon the Lord’s will, both for the time and the mode of their warfare, or they will not gain the crown of His approval. Nowhere is this more plainly taught than in the siege of Jericho. To human eyes the manner of conducting it, the method of warfare, was nothing but folly; but it was the Lord’s way (and “the foolishness of God is wiser than men”), and the victory was assured.

In addition, the husbandman (and this introduces yet another comparison) must first labor before he can partake of the fruits2. Our Lord reminded His disciples of the same principle when He said, “He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together” (John 4:36). It is indeed a universal law, that labor must be expended before the harvest can be enjoyed; and it is this which Paul recalled to the mind of Timothy. The tendency of all, and especially of the Lord’s servants, is to forget this salutary truth in the intense desire to gather in and feast upon the fruit. It should therefore be remembered, and thereby we should be saved from many disappointments, that now is the time of labor, and that it will be the time of labor until the Lord’s return, and hence that our only concern should be to be found diligent and faithful in our service. The time of partaking of the fruit is future, and the knowledge of this will encourage our hearts to persevere in service, and all the more in that our enjoyment of the fruit will be in communion with the Lord. “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6).

The Apostle, having placed these things before Timothy, urges them upon his attention: “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.” (2 Tim. 2:7). If we take these words as they stand, they contain an exhortation and a prayer, or at least the expression of a strong desire, which directs Timothy at the same time to the Lord as the source of the power to understand divine things. It would seem, however, as stated below, that the better reading is, “The Lord shall give thee understanding in all things.” This gives a slightly different, though very important, meaning. While equally reminding Timothy of his dependence on the Lord for power to apprehend His mind, it gives also a connection between considering, or thinking upon, the apostolic communications, and the action of the Lord in opening his mind to understand Paul’s inspired words. And this connection always subsists. The more we consider, weigh, meditate upon the Scriptures, the greater will be the activity of the Holy Spirit in unfolding their teachings to our souls. It is indeed when we are occupied with the Word of God in calm and peace, in the presence of God, that the Lord draws near and gives us understanding; and hence this exhortation to Timothy. It is therefore not by the application of the mind, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit, that divine things are entered into and understood— a lesson much needed in a day of mental activity and intellectual research.

This exhortation would seem to be a connecting link between verses 6 and 8, and applies therefore to that which precedes as well as to that which follows.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:8-13: Exposition of 2 Timothy

Chapter 2:8-13

The transition from a consideration of the needed personal qualifications for the work to which Timothy was called to the motives which would sustain him is in the highest degree significant. In one word, the Apostle sets Timothy down in the presence of the Lord — “Remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel” (I believe this to be a more accurate translation). The difference is important; for, taking them as they stand in the original, it is at once perceived that “Jesus Christ raised from the dead” is the prominent thought, and also more especially connected with the words, “according to my gospel.” For it was indeed the gospel of the glory of Christ, “who is the image of God,” that was committed to Paul (2 Cor. 3:4), the gospel that proclaimed that Jesus Christ, the Christ who had been here and was crucified, had been raised from the dead and glorified as man at the right hand of God, having the glory of God displayed in His face. The expression, “of the seed of David,” tells us that Christ was true man, and what He was on earth in His presentation to the Jews.

In the epistle to the Romans the same two things, if not in the same order, are linked together. Giving them as they really stand, we read, “The gospel of God,... concerning His Son,... which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead,” “Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 1:1-4).

As to the force of the combination of these two aspects in Timothy — Jesus Christ raised from the dead, and His being of the seed of David — we may give the language of another:

“The truth of the gospel (dogma is not the subject here) was divided into two parts,... the fulfillment of the promises, and the power of God in resurrection. These, in fact, are, as it were, the two pivots of the truth — God faithful to His promises (shown especially in connection with the Jews), and God mighty to produce an entirely new thing by His creative and quickening power as manifested in the resurrection, which also put the seal of God upon the ‘Person and work of Christ.” It was Jesus Christ, therefore, in all this wide-embracing character, as born into this world of the seed of David, but as having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, that Timothy was to remember to have ever before his soul, as containing the whole truth of his message, and as supplying him with an all-powerful motive for fidelity and endurance in his work.

This was, as we have seen, Paul’s gospel; and now we learn once again (see 2 Tim. 1:8-12) that its proclamation entailed persecution. He thus continues: “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.” (2 Tim. 2:9). This was true at the moment of the Apostle’s writing, and we have only to read the record of his activity in The Acts to discover, as indeed was testified to him by the Holy Spirit, that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city. Bearing the precious message of the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation, and, as an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech by him, entreating men everywhere to be reconciled to God, not only was his message constantly refused, but he himself was looked upon as a disturber of the world’s peace, and, finally, was shut up in prison as a malefactor! So completely, however, did the Apostle lose sight of himself in his concern for the interests of God in the gospel, that he found his consolation in the recollection that, if he were in captivity, the word of God could not be confined. A like contrast is often found in The Acts. In Acts 12 Herod puts James the brother of John to death, and “proceeded further to take Peter also.” But this very activity of the enemy brought in the interposition of God. Peter is delivered from his captivity, Herod is smitten, and then the significant statement is added, “But the word of God grew and multiplied.” (Acts 12:24). In such ways, when the enemy deals proudly, God steps in and shows that He is above him.

Paul has even a deeper consolation: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Tim 2:10). It has often been remarked that the Lord Himself might have used these words, and hence only one in the enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord’s own heart as to His people could employ such language; for, in truth, the object of the

Lord's own sufferings was the salvation of His people. He suffered, as we all know, as no other could, because He made expiation for our sins; but the point of the Apostle's statement is not the character but the object of his sufferings.

By the grace of God, therefore, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to suffer all that came upon him, in connection with his testimony, for the elect's sake. He was made willing, nay more; with something of the love of Christ for His people animating his soul, he even desired to endure persecution if so be they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with all that was connected with it, even eternal glory. And it should be ever remembered that the same path is opened to every servant of the Lord. If smaller vessels than the Apostle, they may yet have the same desires, aims, and objects; and they will have them just in proportion as the affections of Christ fill their hearts.

Intense love for His people, because they are His people, is one of the most essential qualifications for service; for this will become, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the spring of unwearying devotedness to Christ for their eternal welfare.

In verses 9 and 10 the Apostle seeks to encourage Timothy in an evil day by a reference to his own path, and by the exhibition of the motives which, through grace, governed his own soul. He now proceeds to remind him of certain divine principles, or of certain infallible consequences resulting both from identification with, and from unfaithfulness to, Christ in His rejection.

"It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim 2:11-13).1

The exact significance of "It is a faithful saying," or, literally, "faithful is the word," is not at once perceived. It may be the solemn asseveration of the truth of the following sentences; or it might mean that these truths were current among the saints, and that the Apostle takes them up to apply them to the matter in hand. To Timothy they would, at such a moment, have great force and solemnity. Tempted at least to shrink from the cross involved in his service, nothing could be more seasonable than to be recalled to the truth, that if we have died with Christ, we shall also live with Him.

Now death with Christ lies at the very foundation of our Christian position; but blessed as it is in delivering us from all that would enslave us in this scene, it involves certain responsibilities. The Apostle thus wrote to the Colossians: "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (Col. 2:20). Having been associated with Christ in His death involved their acceptance of the place of death in this world. So with Timothy, with us all. If we take the place of being dead, no persecutions, no dangers, could turn us aside from the path of service. It will moreover encourage us always to consider ourselves dead, and to bear about in the body the dying of Jesus, to remember that our living together with Him is the divine consequence of association with Him in death. For, as the Apostle says elsewhere, "If we have been planted together in [identified with] the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

It is the same with the next statement: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). Not that our reigning with Christ is in any way dependent upon our present suffering, but rather it is that suffering here is the appointed path for those who will be associated with Christ in His kingdom. This was shown out in type in the direction that the purple cloth was to be spread upon the altar before it, with its vessels, and was covered with badgers' skins for its transport through the wilderness. In like manner we read that "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17.

Being what we are, and the world, the flesh, and the devil being what they are, suffering with Christ is a necessity, and especially in the path of service; but if it is so, He sustains us by the prospect of association with Himself in the glories of the kingdom.

These are encouragements, but there are also warnings. Should we, alas! deny Him (and denying Him here has its full force of absolute apostasy), He will deny us. (See Luke 12:9.) If, moreover, we believe not, the Lord will not fail to accomplish all the purposes of His heart, all the thoughts of His love; for He cannot deny Himself. He is in no way dependent upon our fidelity or service, though He may be pleased to bestow upon us the privilege of being His servants, of laboring in His vineyard.

Daunted by constant opposition, we may be disheartened, fall into despondency, be tempted to think that the light of the testimony is altogether extinguished, and thus come under the power of doubt and unbelief. But the Lord will work on, in spite of all our faithlessness, in the accomplishment of His will, and in His own time will infallibly present the Church to Himself, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

The knowledge then that God is faithful, and that He cannot deny Himself, is assuredly a rock on which the feeblest and most timid of His servants may repose in the darkest moments; and it affords also an encouragement to look beyond the confusion and the ruin, to that blessed future when every thought of the heart of God for His Church and for His people will have its perfect and eternal realization in the glory.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:14-19: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 2:14-19

The following exhortations are for Timothy's own guidance as a teacher, and consequently for the instruction of all who, divinely qualified, may seek to edify the people of God. "Of these things," the Apostle says, "put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." (2 Tim. 2:14). The "these things" will refer to verses 11-13, the divine truths which abide through all changes and all phases of the condition of the Church, inasmuch as they are bound up with the Lord's moral nature, and therefore with the very essence of Christianity. They can therefore never be forgotten without damage, and unless indeed there is an open departure from the faith. It is on this account that Timothy is urged to keep them continually before the minds of the saints; and at the same time he was to charge them to testify earnestly before the Lord that they should avoid all word contentions (logomachy), which, instead of edification, tended to the subversion of the hearers.

Jewish believers were under great temptation to this kind of discussion, for they had been accustomed to hear their rabbis exhibit their argumentative skill in reasonings upon the value even of the letters that composed the words of Scripture. And whenever spiritual life and

energy decline, Christian teachers fall also into the snare of entertaining their hearers with ingenious and fanciful interpretations, drawn from historical details, or from types and figures, instead of ministering Christ. Let it then be observed that such discussions are not only “to no profit,” but they also actually turn aside those that listen. Alas! when believers, like the Israelites, become weary of the heaven-sent manna, there are always those at hand who will seek to gratify the palate of nature.

It is in contrast to all this that Paul proceeds: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15). There are two things in this exhortation. First, Timothy is to use diligence to commend himself, not to his hearers, but to God. This principle is the safeguard of all who are engaged in public service. As the Apostle says elsewhere, “If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10). And again, “As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:4). Nothing else will keep the servants of God but to have Him before their souls, for then they will remember in all their service that it is His verdict of approval alone they have to seek. (Compare 2 Cor. 2:17.)

Second, Timothy is to approve himself to God by being a good workman. It would be possible for a servant to really strive to commend himself to God, and yet, through ignorance of the truth, to be a bad workman. How many godly, devoted men, for example, have had their eyes opened to perceive (and with what sorrow has the discovery been made!) that they had been misleading souls for years! It is not only necessary therefore to be godly, to have a single eye, but there must be also that knowledge of the Lord’s mind, as revealed in the Scriptures, which will enable those who are in the place of teachers to rightly divide, to cut in a straight line, the word of truth. Diligence is requisite for this—diligence in the prayerful study of the Word—and it is this which is really enjoined upon Timothy. Ability to teach is a divine gift; to be a good workman is the result of study, training, and practice, in dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

He was to be occupied with the Word. “But” he is told to “shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2 Tim 2:16-18). There is no more successful snare of Satan than the seduction of the Lord’s servants into foolish controversies. To contend for the truth in a day of departure from it is one of their first responsibilities; but this is a very different thing from turning aside to verbal discussions and “doubtful disputations,” or, as the Apostle here expresses it, “empty voices”—words or sounds without significance for the believer. It can never indeed be too often asserted that the best way to refute error is by the statement of the truth; and controversy conducted in this way will edify both speaker and hearers, while profane and vain babblings will only tend to produce more impiety, because they harden both the heart and conscience.

Not only so, but their word—that is, the word of those who fall into these babblings—will eat as doth a canker, or, more exactly, spread as a gangrene. A gangrene is an eating sore which, gradually spreading, almost always ends in mortification. No more striking figure to set forth the danger of “vain babblings” could possibly be employed.

That Timothy might not be left in doubt as to his meaning, the Apostle cites the illustrative cases of Hymenaeus and Philetus. These had, it would seem, the place of teachers, and had fallen into the grievous error, not of denying the resurrection, but of declaring that it was already past. It may be well to call special attention to this subtle form of false teaching, for there are many believers of the present day who are liable to be betrayed by the speciousness of a seeming super-spirituality. And the teaching of Hymenaeus and Philetus had this pretentious character, for they made the resurrection a spiritual thing:1 and it is quite possible that they based their contention on Ephesians 2, where we read that God has quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and so forth. But “concerning the truth” they erred (literally, “missed the mark”) and the effect was to overthrow the faith of some. “The faith” here is used for the thing believed; and thus these false teachers really turned souls aside from the truth, led them away from what they had previously professed to believe. It is not a question of salvation; but for the time, at least, these misguided ones surrendered the truth, becoming the prey of their deluded leaders. Can anything be more sad than to be used of Satan to lead the Lord’s people astray? The Lord Himself said, “Whoso shall offend” (that is, “be a snare to”) “one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). Hymenaeus and Philetus—and how many, alas! since their day! —were a snare to some of the Lord’s little ones; and the fact is recorded for the admonition and warning of all who have, or take, the place of teachers in the Church of God.

The Apostle turns from the sad effects of heretical doctrine, and finds consolation in that which is firm and indestructible: “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (2 Tim 2:19). In the form of this pregnant statement there is doubtless, as we have elsewhere shown, an allusion to Zechariah 3:9; but in this place it is the meaning of it that must occupy our attention. And this is to be sought, first of all, in the contrast to what the Apostle had just written.

Hymenaeus and Philetus had been instrumental in overturning the foundations of the faith in some of the saints; but, in spite of all that Satan had succeeded in doing by their means, the foundation of God stood, and was immovable. This is no small consolation in a day of confusion and ruin. The enemy may be permitted to wreck the public form of Christianity, and to turn its teachers into advocates of rationalistic or superstitious imaginations; but there still remains for faith this sure foundation of God on which souls may repose, whatever the fury of the storm, in perfect peace. It is not the question here what the foundation is—though there be but one, namely, Christ—but it is rather the fact that there is a foundation of God, which is absolutely beyond the reach and the power of all Satan’s artifices.

The further significance of this statement is discovered in the twofold seal, or inscription, which the foundation bears. (Compare Zech. 3:7; Rev. 22:14.) First, “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Time was when men also knew who were the Lord’s (see Acts 5:12-14); and the Apostle himself had often sent letters—as, for example, “To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse”—assured that his epistle would reach the known company of believers in the place. But now all was changed. All they which were in Asia had turned away from the Apostle; and the profession of Christianity, so widespread, had become so merged in the world and worldly things that it was impossible for the outward eye to distinguish the true saints of God.

As in the days of Israel’s apostasy under Ahab, Jehovah alone knew the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, so now the Lord alone could with unerring certainty recognize His people amid the mass of professors that had crowded into the Church on earth. It is the same now in Christendom. Nations call themselves Christians, and their “temples” and “churches” are filled with so-called worshipers; but, while we may be certain that in the case of large numbers it is nothing but profession, it is a great consolation to remember that the Lord

discerns in every place who are His, that not one real saint is unnoticed by His eye. I “know My sheep, and am known of Mine”; and this still holds true for the comfort of those who have heard His voice. There is, however, more: “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ” (it should be “the Lord”) “depart from iniquity.” The Lord, on His side, knew, and knows, who are His; and His people, on their side, in the ruin in which they are found, are under the responsibility of departing from iniquity. It belongs to them, if they name the name of the Lord, as being under His authority, to depart from everything, every association, every habit, and practice, which could not be attached to His name.

How different is this teaching from that which is now current, to the effect that in a day of confusion like the present it is impossible to walk in the path of separation from evil! This word of the Apostle’s is the answer to all such reasonings, and sets forth, at the same time, the abiding responsibility of every child of God to depart from evil; and we thus learn that any association whatever with iniquity is contrary to the Lord’s mind.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 2:20-26: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothhy 2:20-26

The next thing that comes before us is the state into which Christianity, in its outward form in the world, has fallen: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” (2 Tim 2:20-21).

It will be observed that the Apostle does not exactly say that the house of God contains vessels to honor and to dishonor, though this be true when we speak of the house of God as built by man under responsibility, according to its presentation in 1 Corinthians 3. It is a comparison rather that he uses; and hence he says, “in a great house.” At the same time, it must not be forgotten that this is what the house of God on earth has become a sphere in which believers and mere professors, good and faithful servants and evil servants, have become so mixed that vessels of gold and silver are mingled everywhere with those of wood and earth.

When the house of God was formed on the day of Pentecost, it contained only those who were really believers; for the Lord then added “such as should be saved.” But very soon, as Jude writes, certain men crept in unawares; and thenceforward that which called itself Christian was a mixed, corrupt thing.

Such was the state of things which had arisen even in Paul’s days, and from which the Spirit of God takes occasion to lay down principles for individual guidance, both at that time and in succeeding days, when the confusion and corruption indicated should become more pronounced. We say “principles for individual guidance”; for it is of moment to remark that, to quote the words of another, “Discipline for individual faults is not the subject here, nor the restoration of souls in an assembly that has in part lost its spirituality, but a line of conduct for the individual Christian in respect of that which, in any way, dishonors the Lord.” To apply this language indeed to the separate assemblies of the saints would be to falsify the teaching of the Apostle in other scriptures, and to justify the tolerance of almost any and every kind of evil in the midst of the saints. On this account it cannot be too earnestly insisted that the Apostle is dealing with the external form of Christianity, of which the believer himself forms part; “for he calls himself a Christian, and the great house is all that calls itself Christian.” In these circumstances, what the Holy Spirit here affirms is the individual responsibility to be in separation from evil, according to what has been seen in the previous verse —”Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ [the Lord] depart from iniquity.” In verse 22, we have the nature of this individual responsibility more precisely described.

The Apostle then says, “If a man” (rather “any one”) “therefore purge himself from these,” and the language is very strong; literally it is, “purge out himself from.” The word “purge out” is only found in one other place, where it is, “Purge out therefore the old leaven” (1 Cor. 5:7), which was to be done by the Corinthians in putting “away from among yourselves that wicked person.” But here — and it is in the contrast the teaching lies — we are to purge ourselves out from the vessels of dishonor. The Corinthians had to put away evil from their midst, because it was sin in the assembly; we have to separate ourselves from evil (because it is instruction for the individual, and not, as in their case, for the assembly), in order to be approved for the Lord’s service.

Such then is the Lord’s mind for His people in a day of confusion and evil. Two questions, however, remain to be answered. The first is, What are the vessels to dishonor? and, second, Has the Apostle the Lord’s servants only in view? To take the latter first, it is abundantly clear, we judge, from the words, “If a man [any man] therefore purge himself,” that all Christians are contemplated. If this be so, as we cannot doubt it is, the vessels to dishonor will mean not a class, but those, whether Christians or simply professors, who are defiled with evil of any kind, or engaged in anything that dishonors the Lord’s name. And let the reader observe, that the responsibility is not to judge the personal state and condition of such vessels, but to purge himself from them, because he is under the obligation as naming the name of the Lord, to depart from iniquity.

The consequence of separating from such vessels is, that we shall be vessels unto honor (and this will explain the meaning of the vessels of gold and of silver in the preceding verse), sanctified, set apart, and holy as so set apart, and meet, or serviceable, for the Master’s use — prepared unto every good work. This is a solemn word for believers, and never more so than at the present moment. Do any then desire to be used of the Lord? Here is His own qualification for service; and be it remembered that the qualification is within our own reach and attainment, in dependence on Him who reveals it to us, and through the power which He will bestow. Then, when once qualified, it is His to take us up and use us how, where, and when He will; for by it we are “prepared unto every good work.”

There is, however, also the positive side of separation; and hence the Apostle adds, “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Tim 2:22). This word is more especially addressed to Timothy, but its significance lies in the connection, following as it does upon the verses just considered. All the temptations that appealed to such as were young, or rather the desires to which the temptations were addressed, were to be shunned; and while, on the one hand, he was to “flee” from these, he was, on the other hand, to “pursue” after the things here indicated. Purpose of heart will be needed both for the one and the other; and nothing will beget this save having the heart occupied with Christ, and thus brought into communion with His mind, and, as a

consequence, having the single eye. Righteousness, practical righteousness comes first — that righteousness which is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), and which is displayed in holiness of life and ways. Then faith — that faith which is a fruit of the Spirit, and which distinguished so many of the saints of old, as recorded in Hebrews 11, and was exhibited in their confidence in God under all circumstances of trial, adversity, and the manifested power of the enemy. Also “charity” — that is, love — which in its essence is the divine nature, and which is described, as it is seen in saints, by the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 13. And finally, peace — peace as between the saints, as a consequence of enjoyed peace with God in the soul, but which can only be pursued where the graces just named are previously found. (Compare Isa. 32:17; Jas. 3:17-18.)

Note, moreover, that these things are to be “pursued” in company with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is often contended that separation from evil would, in a day like the present, lead to a path of isolation. This scripture is a complete answer to such a contention; and indeed it is evident that those who recognize their individual responsibility to depart from iniquity, and to follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, must find themselves in the same path, and be drawn together in the same company.

It should also be observed that the believer is expected to distinguish those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, as well as those who are vessels to dishonor, and that it is as much the Lord’s mind for him to be in company with the former, as to purge himself out from the latter. The confusion is undoubted, but, wherever there is a single eye, there will be little difficulty in discerning the Lord’s path through it; and it is no small consolation to know that there will never be wanting, even in the darker days yet to come, those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, or guidance for those who seek to do the Lord’s will, to direct to the place where such are to be found.

Once more the Apostle warns Timothy to beware of controversies: “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing: that they do gender strifes.” (2 Tim 2:23; compare 2 Tim. 2:16). It is, literally, foolish and “undisciplined” questions; and it has been pointed out by another that the word “undisciplined” is often used for a “mind not subject to God, a man following his own mind and will.” This will explain the kind of questioning referred to — those which spring from man’s own thoughts and reasonings, and which therefore could not fail to produce strifes.

The introduction of this last word, “strifes,” furnishes the opportunity for a beautiful description of what should be the character and conduct of a true servant. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will(2 Tim 2:24-26).

The word translated “strive,” as that also in the preceding verse rendered “strifes,” should be rather “contend,” and “contend” in the sense of fighting, coming into conflict in an evil way. While therefore the servant of the Lord must maintain the truth in spite of all opposition, withstand his fellow servant to the face if need be, as Paul did Peter when the truth of grace was in question, and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, he must never descend from the platform of the truth, as a positive revelation from God, and as entrusted to him as a witness, to engage in conflict with those who raise foolish and unlearned questions. He, on his part, should come out from the presence of God with the authority of the truth established in his own soul, and thus enabled to proclaim it dogmatically in the midst of all the uncertainties of human contentions, from entering into which he will also carefully guard himself. With a message for all, he ranges himself on the side of none in their conflicts, for he should speak to all alike in the name of the Lord.

Moreover, as to his own spirit, he is to be gentle unto all; undisturbed by the passions which govern men in their party contests; calm, as in the enjoyment of the presence of God; governed in all his thoughts and feelings by that mighty grace of which he has been made the subject, and thus, strengthened through the operation of the Spirit of God, enabled to present the gentleness of Christ to all to whom he is sent, and with whom he may have to deal. He is also to be “apt to teach”; for with questions raised on all sides affecting the Word of God, he should be ever ready to explain and affirm its meaning.

Next, he is to be patient, or rather “forbearing,” in the sense of suffering any and everything that may come in the path of service, from the hands of opponents. It still refers to the spirit of the servant, as may be seen from the use of the word in the exhortation, “Forbearing [or bearing with] one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). And hence the Apostle proceeds, “In meekness instructing [or setting right] those that oppose themselves”; that is, who oppose themselves to the truth of God. And to sustain the servant in such a spirit, he is ever to remember the possibility of the recovery of opponents. The enemy of today may, in the grace of God, be the friend of tomorrow; and never losing sight of this, he is to go on meekly instructing, and looking to God to give the opposers repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil.

The last clause of this verse (2 Tim 2:26) has occasioned considerable discussion. The point raised is, whether “his will” is God’s will or Satan’s. If the former, the meaning is, “that they may recover themselves” (or come to their senses) “out of the snare of the devil” (who are taken captive by him) for His will — that is, for the will of God — the object of their recovery being that they might for the future be governed by the will of God. If the latter, it must be taken as it stands, and then it means that these opposers are taken captive by Satan to do his will. Whichever view may be adopted, the solemn teaching of the scripture cannot be resisted, that those who oppose the truth are the instruments as being in the snare of Satan, and that as such they have been taken captive by him as his prey.

Such is the revelation here made — that all who resist the truth of God, who refuse it, however eminent they may be in the world of intellect or science, are nothing more than the poor slaves of Satan, led of, if not inspired by, him, even as the servants of the Lord are led and taught by the Spirit of God.

Christian Truth: Volume 36, In a Great House

"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." 2 Tim. 2:20, 21.

The difficulty which is often felt by many as to this scripture would be at once removed by giving attention to the exact language employed by the Apostle. He does not say, "In the house of God," but "In a great house there are not only vessels," etc. In fact, he uses an illustration to set

forth what professing Christianity-the house of God, indeed, as built by man (1 Cor. 3)-has become; that is, it has become a mixed thing like a great house with vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor in it. The question therefore whether the vessels are teachers or saints proceeds upon a misconception, inasmuch as they only illustrate the facts pointed out, that the professing church has become so mixed and corrupt that separation is now necessary within its own borders. Whether converted or unconverted is not the point, for all are, on that ground as professors, and all, whether converted or otherwise, must be separated from it if, like the vessels to dishonor, they are polluted by unholy associations or employments.

If a man therefore purge himself from these- the vessels to dishonor-he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. The next verse (22) points out that there must also be moral separation, and fellowship with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:1-9: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothhy 3:1-9

Having dealt with the evils that were already prevalent in his own time, the Apostle passes onward to the eve of the close of the dispensation: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1). In the first epistle he had spoken of “the latter times” (1 Tim. 4:1); but now he is more precise, and speaks of the end of “the latter times,” the closing days of this present interval.

We learn then that perilous (or difficult) times will distinguish the last days. How different is the future of Christianity in this world from the representations of its popular advocates! These love to sketch the gradual conversion of the world by the preaching of the gospel, and the consequent gradual subjection of men and things, human governments and institutions, to an absent Christ and Lord. The inspired revelation here given of the course of Christianity dispels at once this illusion, and convicts its propagators of ignorance of the very scriptures they profess to preach. For what is the truth? In chapter 1, as already seen, all that were in Asia had “turned away” from the Apostle of the Gentiles; in chapter 2 he tells us that the Church had become like a great house, in which were found side by side vessels to honor, and vessels to dishonor; and now he lifts the veil and permits us to see that evil and corruption will increase, and hence that as the end approaches, perilous times, accompanied by the corruption here named, must be expected. The path of Christianity in this world is not therefore like that of the just, shining brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, but it will be one of increasing gloom and darkness; for “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” It is no small consolation to remember that He who has forewarned us of these things is Himself all-sufficient to sustain, and to enable us to walk in His ways in the midst of surrounding and growing dangers.

We have, in the next place, both the cause and the features of the “perilous times.” “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.” (2 Tim. 3:2-5). It would scarcely be for edification to enter in these pages upon a minute explanation of all these terms; but the reader himself should solemnly weigh them in the presence of God, as he will then be able to compare them with the moral features of the present day. We cannot, however, forbear to add the following striking remarks of another: “If we compare the list of sins and abominations which Paul gives at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans, as characterizing heathen life, and the moral degradation of men during those times of darkness and demon-worship, with the catalog of sins that characterize those who have the form of godliness, we shall find that it is nearly the same, and morally quite the same, only that some of the open sins which mark the man who has no outward restraint are wanting here, the form of godliness precluding them and taking their place. It is a solemn thought, that the same degradation which existed among heathens is reproduced under Christianity, covering itself with that name, and even assuming the form of godliness. But in fact it is the same nature, the same passions, the same power of the enemy, with but the addition of hypocrisy.1

“From such” Timothy is exhorted to “turn away.” If the last days refer to the end of the day of grace, why, it may be inquired, is this direction given to Timothy? The answer is, that these moral features were already beginning to appear; and they will appear with increasing distinctness, while the Lord Jesus tarries, until at last they will culminate in the full blown sins and corruptions here described. When, therefore, the Apostle adds, “from such turn away,” he gives a direction which is applicable to every age, and indicates that it is the Lord’s mind for His people to be in entire separation from all this moral corruption. Once more, as will be seen, it is the responsibility of the believer to discern the evil, indeed the persons involved in it, and to walk apart from them, whatever their pretensions or forms of godliness.

The means of detection are also supplied. “For,” the Apostle proceeds, “of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:6-7). Several things should be noticed in this comprehensive description, a description which covers both the seducers and their followers. First, the manner of their procedure is given. They are of the kind “which creep into houses.” It is noteworthy that almost all false teaching, or at least that which claims a superior spirituality, begins in secret, and thus forms a school before it is manifested. Some of the saddest heresies that have ever disturbed the Church of God commenced in this way—either by private visits, or by the circulation of “notes” among a chosen sympathizing few. This method carries with it its own condemnation; for whatever will not bear the light cannot be of God, and whatever is given of Him is for the Church. Second, the prey of these false teachers are “silly women, laden with sins.” It is in this last phrase that the explanation of the power of these corrupters of the truth lies. The foolish women are a class who, having many sins on their conscience, and thus made to feel them as a burden, would be peculiarly susceptible to any teaching which promised both relief and liberty; for they were not only burdened with their sins, but they were also led away with “divers lusts,” or many and various desires. It is what the flesh ever craves—deliverance from past sins, and indulgence for present gratifications; and inasmuch as these “silly women” hoped to obtain both from this new teaching, they became the willing slaves of their evil instructors. Then, last, we read that such— that is, the silly women—were ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. This again is another characteristic of a false system of doctrine. Those who accept it are always deluded by the prospect of a fuller knowledge, for it is ever surrounded by mystery; and thus they are enslaved at the will of their teachers.

But, it may be urged, the corruptions here named are so unblushing that no sincere souls could ever be deceived and entangled. It should therefore be observed that all these abominations are concealed under a form of godliness, and that it is the Spirit of God who, through the Apostle, drags them here out into the light for our warning and guidance. Under such a cloak these men might outwardly pass, as the Pharisees of old did, for pious and devoted men; for they would be sure to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, while within they might be full of extortion and excess (see Matt. 23:25).

The next two verses give further instruction on the subject. “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith, but they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.” (2 Tim. 3:8-9). Jannes and Jambres were the magicians of Egypt who withstood Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, as the Lord had commanded, and it became a serpent, the magicians “also did in like manner with their enchantments” (Exod. 7:10-11). They thus resisted the truth by imitating the action of the Lord’s servants; and it is in this way the truth will be, and is being, opposed in the perilous times. It is precisely in this character of opposition that the danger lies for unwary souls. Thus at the present moment all the false systems of men claim that they present all the characteristic truths of Christianity, or that these truths are only expounded in accordance with modern ideas. Satan is too subtle to commence by denying the truth of God; and hence he seeks first of all to insinuate that which seems like the truth, but which, under the expansion of which it is capable, finally ripens into anti-Christian error. This is why the name of Christ is attached, for example, to many soul-destroying systems, and why men, who really ignore every fundamental truth of Christianity, claim to be Christians.

The outward garb then of these resisters of the truth will be Christian in appearance, but the opened eye will detect that it is not the real thing, but an imitation. More than this—for the Holy Spirit exposes their true character—they are men of corrupt minds, and reprobate, tried and found worthless, concerning the faith. Inwardly they were evil men, and, tested by the Christian faith, they were to be rejected.

Great, however, as may be the power of the enemy as thus displayed, there is a limit fixed. It might seem for the moment as if Satan were about to gain, through his servants, a complete victory. But, as we read in the prophet, when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him; so here it is declared that these corrupters “shall proceed no further”; they shall be arrested in their wicked work, and their folly shall be publicly exposed. It was so with Jannes and Jambres. For a long time they withstood Moses; but at length, when God stepped in and created life at the word of Moses, they were baffled, and were constrained to confess that it was “the finger of God.” Whatever, therefore, the apparent success of Satan’s servants, confidence in God should never be lessened, for the believer may surely count upon Him to vindicate His own truth in His own way and in His own time. This is the consolation of the godly in times of corruption and apostasy; and together with this the assurance may ever be entertained that, though the Church, like Israel, may be sifted by these false teachers, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. The power of the enemy, whatever his malice, is thus only an instrumentality in the hands of God for testing and purifying His people.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 3:10-17: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 3:10-17

The walk of Paul is a close approximation to that of Christ, and it is on this account that he is often led of the Holy Spirit to refer to himself as an example to others. This is the case here. He has been depicting the moral corruptions that will mark the perilous times of the last days; and then, mindful of the difficulties of those who may desire to be faithful to the Lord, as exemplified in Timothy, he exhibits himself as a pattern to all who may be found in these circumstances: “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.” (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

It is of great importance to observe that “my doctrine,” or teaching, comes first. His teaching was the truth committed to his trust; and we thus learn that nothing will preserve the saints in a time of abounding error but the possession of divine truth, and also that a walk according to God—for “manner of life,” or conduct, comes next in the list—can only flow out from a knowledge of the truth. (Compare Col. 1:9-10.) Nothing either edifies or sanctifies but the truth (see John 17:17-19); and it lies therefore at the basis of all steadfastness; and it forms, at the same time, a walk worthy of the Lord. Thereon follows “purpose.” He will not say “fidelity,” for the Lord alone pronounces judgment upon the faithfulness of His servants; but he says “purpose,” because, through grace, it was the one desire of his heart to follow the Lord in all circumstances and at all costs. (See Phil. 3:9-11.)

Besides this, he can mention faith, for confidence in God distinguished this devoted servant in all his trials. It was this alone that sustained him amid the corruption that seemed to be flowing in from every quarter; and it was this alone also that enabled him to be “long-suffering” in the midst of all that was taking place, and even toward the adversaries of the truth; to exhibit divine “love” in the presence of the evil, even though the more he loved the less he was loved; and also to be “patient,” to endure as knowing, in spite of all appearances, what would be the final issue of the conflict.

But there was more to be added. Such teaching and such a life, in the face of the enemy’s power, could not escape trials and sorrows; and hence the Apostle recalls to Timothy’s mind the “persecutions” and “afflictions” which he had undergone in his service at the places with which Timothy was conversant. (Compare Acts 16:1-2 with Acts 13 and 14.) If, however, he recounts his sufferings in his service and testimony, it is but to magnify the Lord’s faithfulness; for he adds, “But out of them all the Lord delivered me.” There might have been persecutions; but while, like the psalmist, he had to say, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” he could also unite in his testimony, “But the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

The experience of the Apostle was to be no uncommon one; for he says, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12). It will be perceived that it is not said that all Christians, nor that all who live godly, but it is all that will live godly in Christ Jesus who must be persecuted. Stress is to be laid upon the word “will,” for it means that there is a real desire, purpose of heart, even, to live in this manner; and also upon “in Christ Jesus,” because it shows that it is the life in which Christ Himself is both magnified and displayed. Those then whose hearts are set, through divine grace, to follow Christ fully, like Caleb of old, to own no authority but His over the

heart and conscience, to have no guide but Himself and His Word, and thus to be apart from all that dishonors His name, cannot, in the difficult times of which the Apostle speaks, escape persecutions. If any who call themselves Christians do avoid the hostility of the world or the enmity of Satan they can only do so at the expense of faithfulness to Christ. May this truly sink deeply into our hearts!

In contrast with those who will live in godly in Christ Jesus, and as giving force to what he has just said, as well as to cast Timothy more completely upon the divine safeguards for such a perilous path, the Apostle says, “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Tim. 3:13). These evil men and seducers, it should be well noted, are not men of the world, but those who are inside the professing church, claiming to be Christians, having a form of godliness if they deny the power thereof. This fact once more shows that there is no hope for Christianity, in its public form, in this world—that there is no prospect of its recovery or purification —but that, on the other hand, it will go from bad to worse until, as we learn elsewhere, assuming its final phase of Laodicea, it will be spewed out of the Lord’s mouth as a nauseous and abhorrent thing.

The power of the enemy is seen in the fact that, while these evil men will deceive, they will themselves be deceived, a foreshadowing of those in the future, after the Church is caught away to be with the Lord, on whom God will send “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” What an immense comfort to remember, while gazing on such a picture, that the Lord will deliver all His faithful ones out of all the afflictions and persecutions which they may have to suffer!

In the next place, Paul points Timothy to the source of all guidance and strength for his own path, and he thereby teaches how believers in all ages may be fortified and preserved, both from evil and from the power of the enemy, in a difficult day. “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

This significant instruction demands the most careful attention. It will at once be observed that the apostolic communications are put on a level with the written Word, the Old Testament scriptures, with which Timothy had been acquainted from a child. (See 2 Tim. 1:5.) These communications have since been committed to writing, and are now found in the epistles of the New Testament; but at that time they were conveyed to the Church through inspired men, such as the Apostle Paul. And it is of the utmost moment to observe that Paul claims for them divine authority, and can thus exhort his child in the faith to continue in the things he had learned and believed, knowing, as he did, from whom he had learned them; that is, in his case, from the Apostle.

And Timothy’s safety amid surrounding corruptions was to be found in continuing in what he had already received. As another has said, “Security rests upon the certainty of the immediate origin of the doctrine which he had received; and upon the Scriptures, received as authentic and inspired documents, which announced the will, the acts, the counsels, and even the nature of God. We abide in that which we have learned, because we know from whom we learned it. The principle is simple and very important. We advance in divine knowledge; but, so far as we are taught of God, we never give up for new opinions that which we have learned from an immediately divine source, knowing that it is so.”

The Apostle indeed guards Timothy, and all, from two common and pressing dangers: first, from the snare of resting our confidence, of having the foundation of our faith, in anything short of the divine Word; and, second, from being decoyed from off this foundation by pretended developments, or by the progress of modern thought. We are to abide in that which we have received from the Word of God, and thus to refuse to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines; and for this reason we are to accept nothing short of God’s own Word—no human opinions, however venerated, or however commended by the sanctity of their authors—as the basis of our beliefs. The Apostle John in like manner writes to the babes of the family of God: “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning” (1 John 2:24). And there never was a day when this lesson was more needed. Confronted as we are on the one side by a boastful and superstitious religion which grounds its claims, traditions, and practices upon the writings of men, and on the other by a daring infidelity which appeals from the Scriptures to human reasonings, we learn that our only safety lies in cleaving to the sure and infallible Word; and that, resting in it, we shall be impregnable against the attacks both of the one and the other. To continue therefore in what we have learned from the Scriptures is our blessed resource in the perilous times in which our lot is cast.

Coming to details, it will be perceived that the Apostle refers Timothy to two things — the means of preservation from the attacks of the enemy; namely, by continuing in the things he had been certified of by the Apostle; and, second, the certainty and the consequent enjoyment of salvation through the written Word, and faith which is in Christ Jesus. We are always most courageous in the presence of difficulties or enemies when in the personal enjoyment of salvation, and on this account the two things are here combined. (Compare John 20:21; Eph. 6:17.)

The introduction of the Word of God leads the Apostle to state the character and uses of all Scripture. He says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works [or, “every good work”]”. (2 Tim. 3:16-17). All or every scripture is then divinely inspired, given by the operation of the Holy Spirit through human vessels as a revelation of the divine mind (see 2 Peter 1:21), and the Apostle in another place claims this inspiration for the words in which he delivered his message: “Which things also we speak,” he says, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which [in those which] the Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor. 2:13). It is not only therefore that the Scriptures contain, but they also are the truth; and they are thus absolutely infallible and, as such, have attached to them God’s authority because they are the expression of His own mind. They are therefore to be received, unquestioningly received, as the voice of the living God to our souls; and thus the only proper attitude to be taken up when they are read is that of Samuel, who said, “Speak, for thy servant heareth.”

The uses of the Scriptures are next given. First and foremost they are “profitable” for teaching, being, as we have seen, the revelation of God’s mind for His people; also for “reproof,” or conviction, for, inasmuch as they are the divine standard, the character of our conduct or actions is at once discerned by their application; for “correction,” since they not only convict of sin and failure, but they also point out the right path for God’s people; for “instruction in righteousness,” because they contain precepts and exhortations applicable to all the relationships and responsibilities, whether toward God, one another, or toward men in general, in which the believer can possibly be found. The Word of God is thus the only, and the all-sufficient, source of instruction for His people.

Finally, the object of a true knowledge of the Scriptures is added; it is “That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Attention to the extra force of the words “perfect” and “thoroughly furnished” will guide us into the Apostle’s meaning. The former—found only in this place—might be rendered “complete,” “suitable,” or “exactly fitted”; the latter, used only twice, might be given as “fully equipped.”

In 2 Timothy 2, as we have seen, it is said that if a man shall purge himself out from among the vessels to dishonor, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, “prepared unto all good works.” If now these two passages are combined, their teaching will be the more clearly seen. The preparation unto every good work then, in 2 Timothy 2, refers rather to the requisite personal state for service; while that in the scripture before us points out that divine knowledge, and divine knowledge gleaned from the Scriptures is also necessary to make the man of God suitable for service, to furnish or equip him for every good work.

In 2 Timothy 2 we learn that the vessel must be sanctified, and in 2 Timothy 3 that, so far from being empty, it must be filled with the knowledge of the Word of God, if it would be in a condition to be used in the Master’s service. If therefore the man of God would be “complete,” he must resort to the Scriptures, and, as Timothy was exhorted in the first epistle, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all”; for the only weapon that can be used in service and conflict is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:1-8: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 4:1-8

There is a manifest connection between this section and the close of the preceding chapter. The Apostle had shown how the man of God might be thoroughly furnished, or entirely equipped, for every good work; and he thereon founds an appeal to Timothy to be diligent in his service. He says, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

These are solemn and weighty words, and need to be devoutly weighed in the divine presence, and especially by the Lord’s servants; for they set Timothy, and with him the laborer in every age, in full view of his responsibility, while, at the same time, they remind him of the tribunal before which the character of all service will be ultimately tested. It is, in fact, a searching appeal to the conscience; for “the appearing of Christ is always in connection with responsibility; His coming is with the object of calling us to Himself in connection with our privileges. Here it is the first of these two cases; not the assembly, or the Father’s house, but God, the appearing, and the kingdom. All that is in relation to responsibility, government, judgment, is gathered together in one point of view.

Coming to details it may be observed that Timothy is charged, first, “before God,” the Apostle thereby calling forth a present exercise of conscience (compare 1 Thess. 1:3), as he teaches him that all his service is carried on under God’s eye. Next, it is, “and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead.” As he writes in another place, “We labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of [acceptable to] Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:9-10). All judgment has been committed to His hands, and although no believer will ever be judged for sins, the character of his works and service will be manifested and declared before the tribunal of Christ. To have this before the soul is therefore, on the one hand, a blessed encouragement, and on the other hand, an energetic motive to fidelity. The servant who really waits for his Lord cannot but keep his loins girded and his light burning.

Having supplied Timothy with such an assemblage of motives for perseverance and fidelity, the Apostle indicates the character of his work. He sums it up at the outset in one pregnant exhortation: “Preach the word.” This was his one responsibility, whatever the state of things around. Indifference, decay, and corruption were increasing, and would increase; but instead of being disheartened and using this as a reason for inactivity, Timothy was all the more, on this account, to proclaim the Word. He was, as God’s watchman, to keep the trumpet of testimony to his lips, and to give forth no uncertain sound, whether men would or would not hear. He was not responsible for the effect of the testimony; he was not to be influenced by signs of blessing or the absence of it. His sole concern was to be faithful, and in order to do this he must continue to proclaim the message entrusted to his stewardship.

The urgency of the need is shown by the next clause: “Be instant in season, out of season.” All times were to be alike to Timothy; his work must never be intermitted; he must be ever on the watch for an opportunity to fulfill his vocation. To one who had a “burden of the LORD” resting on his soul, no time would be unseasonable; but, like Jeremiah, he would find that the Word was in his heart as a burning fire, and he would be weary with forbearing, and he would not be able to stay (Jer. 23:38; 20:9). He was thus bidden by the Apostle to be “instant” (urgent) in season and out of season.

We come next to the special forms of his ministry. Proclaiming the Word in general, but to convict, rebuke, is more specific, pointing out the various needs of souls, especially at such a moment. “Convict” is the same word as “rebuke” in 1 Timothy 5:20, and signifies to convict of sin by demonstration to the conscience. “Rebuke” has here its proper force, as may be seen from its use, for example, in Mark 8:33, where the Lord rebuked Peter. It is a word therefore that would seem to contemplate opponents to the truth, false or Jewish teachers, unless indeed open backsliders be in view, such as were turning grace into licentiousness.

Last, he was to “exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine,” or teaching. “Exhort” is a large word, as is shown by its being translated sometimes “comfort,” and sometimes “encourage.” Here, however, “exhort,” as we judge, expresses more nearly the Apostle’s idea; for he adds, “with all longsuffering and doctrine” (teaching). There would therefore be much to encounter in apathy, if not in active opposition, in the service of exhortation; but Timothy was to continue in it in spite of all, and to maintain in this path a meek and unruffled spirit—only to be done in the presence of God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The reason given for unwearied assiduity in his work is most striking: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It was not therefore in the prospect of large results that Timothy was to proclaim the Word so earnestly

and zealously; but he was to use the present moment as knowing that the opportunity was brief for such a ministry, that teachers would speedily arise who would adapt themselves to the desires of the natural heart, men who would please the fancy and flatter the imagination of their hearers, under the pretext too of having discovered new and striking things in the Scriptures.

It should be observed, however, that this species of corruption commences with the hearers. It is they who “will not endure sound doctrine” (teaching), and who “after their own lusts... heap to themselves teachers” to satisfy a diseased and itching ear. This class can be traced all down the path of church history, and the reader will have no difficulty in identifying it at the present moment. Plain scriptural teaching that teaching which merely explains and applies the mind of God as contained in the Scriptures—does not suffice for such hearers, nor the teachers whom the Lord sends, as they prefer to “heap” up, to choose, their own; and, when listening, their heart and conscience are never exposed to the action of that Word which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, for they only bring with them “itching ears.” The issue could but be one; they turn away from the truth, and they turn to fables; for these alone could minister to their unhealthy appetites.

In contrast with all this, the Apostle, turning again to Timothy, exhorts him: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ‘ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:5). To watch is, in this place, rather to be sober—”that sober clearness of mind resulting from exemption from false influences,” and which can only be acquired and maintained by walking before God and in communion with His mind. To endure afflictions points to the character of the path of the servant in an evil day (see 2 Tim. 1:7). He was moreover to do the work of an evangelist. He is thus directed to preach the gospel as well as teach and preach the Word. Apart from the apostles, and cases like Timothy and Titus, the gift of an evangelist would never seem to have been combined with that of a teacher. The only two combined, as may be learned from the fact that one article is prefixed to the two nouns, are pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11). Then summing up all together, Timothy is to make full proof of his ministry, or his service, and in the way here shown; that is, by his whole life being devoted in the energy of the Spirit to the work to which he had been called.

Another motive is supplied as an incentive to Timothy’s zeal—the prospect of the Apostle’s speedy departure. “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:6-8). “The absence therefore of apostolic ministry, so serious a fact with regard to the assembly’s position, makes the duty of the man of God the more urgent.

“As Paul’s absence was a motive for working out our own salvation with fear and trembling, so is it also a motive for him who is engaged in the work of the gospel to devote himself more than ever to his ministry, in order to supply as far as possible the lack of apostolic service by earnest care for souls, and by instructing them in the truth that he has learned.” For with the apostles passing off the scene, apostolic authority and, it may be added, apostolic inspiration ceased. The Word of God, then completed (see Col. 1:25, reading “complete” instead of “fulfill”), remained; and it abides for the consolation and guidance of the saints; and as it was Timothy’s, so it is every true servant’s, responsibility to “preach the word,” and that alone, for the instruction and edification of the Church. We are commended to God and to the word of His grace (Acts 20:32).

The Apostle, in the expectation of his departure, reviews his course and, as led by the Holy Spirit, he is able to affirm his fidelity. Precious grace of God to His devoted servant, to permit him to write such words with the unerring pen of inspiration! The fight he had fought, or the conflict he had waged, he knew was a good one. It should be noted that he only speaks of the character of the conflict, and not of the manner in which he had carried it on. His course was now ended, and he had kept the faith. Many had departed from it; but he by grace had kept it, maintained the truth, and had indeed transmitted it exactly as he had received it.

He turns, in the next place, to the future, to the prospect that awaited him; and he tells us that there was for him a crown of righteousness. “The crown of righteousness, that is to say, the one bestowed by the righteous Judge, who acknowledged his (Paul’s) faithfulness, was laid up and kept for him. It was not till the day of retribution that he would receive it. We see plainly that it is reward for labor and for faithfulness that is here meant. This, or its opposite, characterizes the whole epistle, and not the privileges of grace. The work of the Spirit through us is rewarded by the crown of righteousness, and every one will have a reward according to his labors.”1 This last sentence affords the key to the next clause. “All them also that love His appearing” describes all believers, but not all will have the same crown. All alike, as subjects of grace, will be conformed to Christ in glory; but there will be differences of rewards, and these will be apportioned by the righteous Judge, and according therefore to His infallible judgment. And hence the Apostle can say, “not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” This too is of grace, for if Paul labored more than the other apostles, it was by the grace of God. And whatever service is rendered by any, it is only grace that produces and acknowledges it.

What a motive, then, is here furnished to devotedness! The Lord gives power for His service, and then “at that day” He will award the recompense, even for a cup of cold water which has been given in His name. The reader will remember that the appearing is always the goal for the servant, and the expression “that day” is here connected with the same period.

Exposition of 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy 4:9-22: Exposition of 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 4:9-22

In this closing section of the epistle, there are several interesting personal references, besides an allusion to the Apostle’s appearance before the authorities, not elsewhere recorded. First, however, Paul desires to have Timothy with him: “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me.” (2 Tim. 4:9). He longed for the presence of his child in the faith, one to whom he could freely unbosom his mind and thoughts, now that there were but few to attach themselves to the Lord’s prisoner. Indeed, he would seem to have been alone, with the exception of Luke (2 Tim 4:11). Timothy was thus not to delay, but to come before the storms of winter made traveling difficult, if not impossible.

Besides, the Apostle had just been passing through trial; “for,” he adds, “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world [age], and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.” (2 Tim. 4:10). The two latter, Crescens and Titus, had gone; but they

had not, like Demas, forsaken Paul. They had undoubtedly gone on the Lord's service; but Demas had become cold, yielding to the influences of the age; and, caring no longer to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," or to be identified with God's vessel of testimony, now a poor despised prisoner, he had, under some pretext or other, abandoned the Apostle and departed to Thessalonica. He loved this present age. What an epitaph! For he now passes out of Scripture history, and is no more seen. Once Paul had mentioned him conjointly with others as a fellow laborer; again, he sends a salutation in his name, in conjunction with "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14); and now he has abandoned the testimony. This is not to say that he was not a Christian; but he was one who not only could not endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, but one also whose heart had been decoyed by the world. Alas! how many Demases the Church has seen since that day!

Then, after stating that Luke only remained with him, Paul gives a direction which contains in it a very precious instance of restoring grace: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). It will be remembered that Mark had once departed from Paul and Barnabas, from Pamphylia, "and went not with them to the work," on which account Paul did not think it good to take him with them on a subsequent journey (Acts 15:37-38). After an interval the Apostle wrote that Mark was to be received, that he was now serviceable for ministry. (See Col. 4:10.) Mark, once unfaithful, was thus restored. Grace wrought, and it is interesting to trace the stages of his restoration. Like Demas, he is mentioned three times; but what a difference! Mark is recovered, and the Spirit of God records it; Demas becomes a backslider, unfaithful to the testimony, and disappears as such from our view.

The next notice relates to a laborer in whom Paul had nothing but cause for gratitude: "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." (2 Tim. 4:12). Writing to the saints at Ephesus, he describes Tychicus as "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (see also Col. 4:7) — no mean verdict, especially when we remember that it is one inspired by the Holy Spirit. And it was a singular mercy to the aged Apostle to have, at this moment, such a servant to send on his behalf to Ephesus.

The following verse contains a commission for Timothy, concerning a cloak that the Apostle had left at Troas, and books and parchments. In captivity these might be useful, and Timothy was to bring them with him. The Apostle then refers to "Alexander the coppersmith," whether the same mentioned in Acts 19:33 cannot now be ascertained. He is here stamped with the unenviable notoriety of having been an uncompromising opponent of the truth, and in particular of the Apostle. He "did me much evil," Paul writes; and he adds, "The Lord reward ["will reward" is the more accurate reading] him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14). He thus left him in the hands of his Lord, who one day will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, when everyone will receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). But he takes the occasion also to warn Timothy of the true character of this adversary; "for," he says, "he hath, greatly withstood our words" (2 Tim. 4:15). A successful disputant he may have been, and thereby he might have secured the applause of his hearers; but he was a tool of Satan to his own destruction, unless indeed he afterward repented.

We come now to the account of the Apostle's appearance before his earthly judge or judges. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work; and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (2 Tim. 4:16-18). The reference is undoubtedly to the trial of Paul and, as we should say, to his first hearing (for it is more accurately rendered, "my first defense"); and we learn that not one was found to accompany him to the court. All men "forsook" him, and the word "forsook" is the same as is used of Demas, showing that these, as well as he, had yielded to the power of the enemy. But if they were wrought upon by their fears, grace was still operative in the heart of Paul, and, raising him above the sense of their unfaithfulness and his own desertion, enabled him to pray that the sin might not be laid to their charge.

How closely had Paul to follow in the steps of his Master! And how manifestly was he led by the same Spirit, whatever the difference in the degree of power! We thus read that, when the Lord suffered Himself to be apprehended, "all the disciples forsook Him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56); and that before His death He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Blessed correspondence! But how few are prepared for the sufferings of such a privilege!

If, however, he was forsaken of man, yet not of the Lord. And may we not say that it is precisely when any in the Lord's service, and for His name, have to experience the solitariness of the path of a faithful witness, that the Lord comes and manifests Himself in a special way? And thus, at this moment of trial, the Lord stood by Paul and strengthened him—strengthened him inwardly (compare Phil. 4:13) —so that the effort of the enemy might be turned into an occasion for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles that filled the court of trial.

The enemy had sought to silence this devoted witness by stirring up the public authorities against him to secure his condemnation; but the Lord came in, and used the opportunity for a testimony through Paul to Satan's instruments and slaves. In this way the machinations of the foe were exposed and defeated. The Apostle tells us, moreover, that he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. Satan, indeed, had now opened his mouth as a roaring lion against Paul; and if Paul had been unfaithful, Satan would have gained a victory. But the Lord preserved His servant, and he was delivered.1

This deliverance vouchsafed to the Apostle becomes the pledge to him of continual deliverance from every evil work (compare 2 Cor. 1:9-10), as well as the guarantee that the Lord would preserve him unto His heavenly kingdom; that is, until he departed to be with Christ (for the time of his departure was at hand) in heaven, ere the Lord should return for His saints, and before therefore He should appear with His saints to establish His kingdom on the earth. This will explain the term "heavenly kingdom." The thought of all the blessedness thus in prospect fills the heart of the Apostle with praise; and he breaks forth with the ascription, "To whom be glory forever and ever" (unto the ages of the ages). "Amen" (2 Tim. 4:18).

Having told of his deliverance to the Lord's praise, he concludes the epistle with a few more personal references— "Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." (2 Tim. 4:19). It will be remembered that the Apostle "abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers)" (Acts 18:2-3). And he terms them elsewhere, "my helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down" (or hazarded) "their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Rom. 6:3-4).

Onesiphorus has already been mentioned in this epistle chapter 1:16-18. After introducing the name of Erastus (see Acts 19:22; Rom. 16:23, but whether the same person is not known), he says, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick" (2 Tim. 4:20). "We learn here," says another,

“that the miraculous power granted to the apostles was exercised in the Lord’s service, and not for their private interests, nor as their personal affection might suggest.” This should be borne in mind a day when “faith-healing” is being so urgently pressed ignorance of dispensational truth, as well as of the teaching of the scripture concerning the object of miraculous gifts. Timothy is again exhorted to come, and to use diligence come, to the Apostle before winter. The salutations of the other saints—Eubulus, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren—are added.

The epistle then concludes with the beautiful benediction, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you” (2 Tim. 4:22). What higher blessing could the Apostle desire for his beloved Timothy? The presence of Him who is the Lord Jesus Christ, all that He is as expressed in these names, to be with Timothy’s spirit, and also grace. May this same blessing be the portion of the beloved reader!

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