

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 TIMOTHY 4 (PART 2)

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8 - FINISHING WELL

PAUL'S LIFE IS ENDING. YOU CAN HEAR HIS HEART IN HIS WRITINGS. YET, AS HE FACES THE END HE MAKES A FEW OBSERVATIONS:

1 - HE GAVE HIS ALL - HE COMPARES HIS LIFE TO A DRINK OFFERING BEING POURED OUT BEFORE THE LORD AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP AND SACRIFICE. PAUL GAVE EVERYTHING HE HAD.

2 - HE NEVER GAVE UP - FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, FINISHED THE COURSE, KEPT THE FAITH

3 - HE WILL BE REWARDED - HIS LIFE WAS NOT IN VAIN.

HE REMINDS US THAT THIS HOPE AND REWARD IS NOT JUST FOR THE SUPER APOSTLES, BUT FOR ALL WHO FINISH THEIR COURSE AS WELL. HERE HE ESPECIALLY MENTIONS THAT THIS REWARD IS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO HAVE "LOVED HIS APPEARING", IN OTHER WORDS HAVE LIVED THEIR LIVES BY FAITH.

2 TIMOTHY 4:9-15 - CURRENT SITUATION

PAUL'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED, AND YET HE LONGS TO SEE TIMOTHY AGAIN. IN FACT HE MENTIONS THIS TWICE IN THIS FINAL SECTION (V. 9, 21). TIMOTHY'S RELATIONSHIP TO PAUL, WHICH WE LOOKED AT WHEN WE FIRST STARTED 1 TIMOTHY IS PRECIOUS TO PAUL. IF PAUL'S LIFE IS GOING TO END SOON, HE WANTS TO BE WITH HIS FRIEND.

THIS IS ESPECIALLY POIGNANT BECAUSE PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER MEN IS VARIED. SOME OF HIS FELLOW LABORERS HAVE ABANDONED HIM (DEMAS, ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH), SOME ARE ON OTHER GOSPEL MISSIONS (CRESCENS, TITUS AND TYCHISU), AND OTHERS ARE CLOSE OR LONGED TO SEE (LUKE, MARK). AT THE END OF THE LETTER ADDITIONAL CHRISTIANS WILL BE NAMED INDICATING PAUL IS IN PRISON, BUT NOT WITHOUT OCCASIONAL FELLOWSHIP.

THESE NAMES AND INSTANCES REPRESENT THE UPS AND DOWNS OF CHRISTIAN LIFE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH. SOME BROTHERS AND SISTERS YOU JOURNEY WITH FOR A LIFETIME, OTHERS FOR ONLY A SEASON. SOME YOU BREAK WITH WHILE OTHERS HURT AND ABANDON YOU.

DEMAS IS MENTIONED IN COLOSSIANS 4:14 AS SENDING HIS GREETINGS TO THE CHURCH ALONG WITH LUKE - AND NOW PAUL CITES DEMAS HAS HAVING DESERTING HIM DUE TO LOVE OF "THIS PRESENT WORLD" (V. 10). AS FOR ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH, IT'S UNCLEAR IF HE WAS A CHRISTIAN AT ANY POINT. HERE IS WHAT THE ESV STUDY BIBLE SAYS:

"THE **ALEXANDER** MENTIONED HERE CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED WITH CERTAINTY. HE MAY OR MAY NOT BE THE SAME ALEXANDER THAT PAUL MENTIONS IN 1 TIM. 1:20 AS ONE WHO HAS BEEN EXCOMMUNICATED. IF HE IS THE SAME PERSON, HE MAY STILL HAVE BEEN IN EPHEBUS CAUSING TROUBLE. HOWEVER, SINCE HE IS IDENTIFIED AS A **COPPERSMITH** AND THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A GUILD OF COPPERSMITHS IN TROAS, THIS MAY BE A DIFFERENT MAN LIVING IN TROAS. THIS WOULD EXPLAIN HIS MENTION HERE AFTER PAUL HAS ASKED TIMOTHY TO COLLECT HIS CLOAK IN TROAS (2 TIM. 4:13)."

WHOEVER HE MIGHT BE, TIMOTHY IS WARNED ABOUT HIM SPECIFICALLY AND IS CONVINCED THE LORD IS GOING TO JUDGE HIM FOR THE HARM HE HAS DONE.

2 TIMOTHY 4:16-18 - CAN I GET A WITNESS?

AS YOU KNOW, PAUL IS IN PRISON, AWAITING TRIAL AND SENTENCING. THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE HE HAS BEEN ARRESTED AND TRANSPORTED AS A PRISONER. MUCH OF THE LATER PART OF THE BOOK OF ACTS TELLS OF PAUL'S JOURNEY TO ROME AS A PRISONER - DUE TO ACCUSATIONS AGAINST HIM BY THE JEWS OF JERUSALEM. HE WAS UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN ROME FOR SOME TIME DURING WHICH HE WROTE HIS LETTERS. AT SOME POINT, UNRECORDED IN ACTS, PAUL WAS RELEASED FROM HOUSE ARREST AND EMBARKED ON ANOTHER MISSIONARY JOURNEY. IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT NERO WAS EMPEROR AND A WIDESPREAD PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS BEGAN. DURING THIS TIME, SOMEWHERE AROUND 66 AD, PAUL IS ARRESTED AGAIN - AND THAT IS THE MOMENT WE HAVE BEEN READING IN 2 TIMOTHY. AS A ROMAN CITIZEN, ROMAN LAW WOULD ALLOW FOR A TRIAL WHICH WOULD INCLUDE AN ADVOCATE (LAWYER) AS WELL AS WITNESSES RELATED TO THE CHARGES.

"WE ARE NOT TOLD WHAT CHARGES HAD BEEN LAID AGAINST HIM. WE KNOW FROM (EARLY CHURCH HISTORIANS) THE KIND OF ALLEGATIONS WHICH WERE BEING MADE AGAINST CHRISTIANS AT THAT TIME. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE GUILTY OF HORRID CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE AND AGAINST CIVILIZED SOCIETY. THEY WERE ACCUSED OF "ATHEISM" (BECAUSE THEY SHUNNED IDOLATRY AND EMPEROR-WORSHIP), OF CANNIBALISM (BECAUSE THEY SPOKE OF EATING CHRIST'S BODY), AND EVEN OF A GENERAL "HATRED OF THE HUMAN RACE" (BECAUSE OF THEIR SUPPOSED DISLOYALTY TO CAESAR AND PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY HAD RENOUNCED THE POPULAR PLEASURES OF SIN). IT MAY BE THAT SOME OF THESE CHARGES WERE BEING LEVELED AGAINST PAUL. WHATEVER THE CASE FOR HIS PROSECUTION, HE HAD NO-ONE TO DEFEND HIM BUT HIMSELF. EITHER BECAUSE CHRISTIAN FRIENDS COULD NOT OR WOULD NOT, HE WAS UNSUPPORTED AND ALONE. THIS MOMENT, ONE MIGHT CAUTIOUSLY SAY, WAS PAUL'S GETHSAMANIE. OF COURSE HIS AGONY WAS DIFFERENT FROM CHRIST'S. YET LIKE HIS MASTER BEFORE HIM HE HAD TO FACE HIS ORDEAL ALONE, FOR AT THE TIME OF HIS GREATEST NEED HE COULD SAY "EVERYONE HAS DESERTED ME", AS IT IS WRITTEN OF CHRIST "EVERYONE DESERTED HIM AND FLED (MARK 14:50)." (JOHN STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF 2 TIMOTHY" PAGE 97-98)

AND YET, PAUL IS NOT ALONE FOR "THE LORD STOOD WITH ME AND STRENGTHENED ME" (V. 17). IS THIS NOT THE THE GREAT PROMISE OF JESUS TO ALL THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW AND STAND FOR HIM? - "I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS..."

PAUL HAS MODELED HIS LORD IN SO MANY WAYS, PERHAPS NONE MORE STRIKINGLY THAN IN THIS HOUR. COMMENTING ON THE FACT NO ONE SUPPORTED HIM, HE WRITES "MAY IT NOT BE COUNTED AGAINST THEM" (V. 16). WHO DOES THIS SOUND LIKE? JESUS - ABANDONED AND FORSAKEN - YET SAYS: "FATHER FORGIVE THEM..." (LUKE 23:34).

PAUL WAS SPARED FROM DEATH (V. 17, "RESCUED FROM THE LION'S MOUTH") FOR THE MOMENT, ALLOWING HIM TO CONTINUE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL AND FINISH HIS MINISTRY.

NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, PAUL IS CONFIDENT THAT "THE LORD WILL RESCUE ME FROM EVERY EVIL DEED AND BRING HIM SAFELY INTO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM (V. 18)." BE SURE, PAUL'S CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD'S RESCUE IS IN SPITE OF HIS OWN COMING SUFFERING OR DEATH. HIS EYES ARE FIXED ON THE KINGDOM TO COME.

2 TIMOTHY 4:19-22 - FINAL WORDS

FROM A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE, WE REACHED THE CRESCENDO OF PAUL'S LETTER IN VERSE 18, BUT ACCORDING TO PAUL'S MANNER, THERE ARE HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS TO TIE UP BEFORE THE LETTER REALLY ENDS. HE SENDS HIS GREETINGS TO PRISCILLA AND AQUILA, TWO OF HIS EARLY

MINISTRY PARTNERS (WHO ARE STILL FAITHFUL), AS WELL AS THE HOUSEHOLD OF ONESIPHORUS, WHO HE HAS ALREADY REFERENCED AS CARING FOR HIM IN EPHEBUS AND AGAIN DURING HIS ROMAN IMPRISONMENT (2 TIMOTHY 1:16-18). HE ALSO MENTIONS OTHER FELLOW LABORERS WHO HAVE APPEARED PREVIOUSLY IN SCRIPTURE - ERASTUS (ACTS 19:22, ROMANS 16:23) AND TROPHIMUS (ACTS 20:4, ACTS 21:29). LASTLY HE LISTS SOME OF THE FAITHFUL WHO ARE WITH HIM IN ROME WHO SEND THEIR LOVE TO TIMOTHY (EUBULUS, PUDENS, LINUS, CLAUDIA AND OTHERS). PAUL MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE HEADLINER, BUT THERE WERE (AND ARE) MANY FAITHFUL MEN AND WOMEN BEHIND THE SCENES HELPING TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

AND THEN PAUL ENDS HIS FINAL LETTER THE WAY HE ENDS MOST OF HIS LETTERS - BY ENTRUSTING THE READER INTO THE LORD'S CARE, SUSTAINED BY THE GRACE OF GOD (V. 22).

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

THE BIBLE ITSELF DOES NOT CONTAIN THE RECORD OF THE FINAL DAYS OF PAUL. CHURCH HISTORY AND TRADITION TELL US THAT PAUL WAS BEHEADED AROUND THE YEAR 67 AD UNDER THE ORDER OF EMPEROR NERO. AS A ROMAN CITIZEN HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TORTURED (PETER FOR EXAMPLE WAS CRUCIFIED AND OTHERS KILLED FOR SPORT IN THE COLISEUM). AT THE TIME OF PAUL'S DEATH, CHRISTIANITY AND THE WAY OF JESUS WAS NO LONGER A SMALL SECT OF JUDAISM. IT HAS SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND INTENSE PERSECUTION HAS HEATED UP AS A RESULT. HOW WONDERFUL OF GOD TO INSPIRE PAUL TO WRITE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES TO PRESERVE THE GOSPEL AND HIS TEACHINGS AND HIS EXAMPLE AFTER HIS DEATH!

UNLIKE OTHER MOVEMENTS THOUGH - CHRISTIANITY DID NOT STOP OR SLOW BECAUSE OF PAUL'S DEATH. IN FACT, THE OPPOSITE USUALLY OCCURS! PAUL'S DEATH, AS WITH THE DEATH OF EVERY MARTYR, IS NOT A SAD END, IT IS A SEED - A GOSPEL SEED THAT GETS PLANTED WHICH PRODUCES COUNTLESS OTHER GOSPEL PROCLAIMERS. WE ONLY HAVE ONE APOSTLE PAUL - BUT THERE WAS ONLY A NEED FOR ONE APOSTLE PAUL. THERE WAS A NEED FOR TIMOTHY, NOT TO BE PAUL BUT TO BE TIMOTHY. AND TIMOTHY'S APPRENTICE NEEDED TO BE WHO HE WAS. AND THE SAME IS TRUE OF YOU AND I.

REMEMBER, PAUL WAS TRANSFORMED AND EMPOWERED BY GOD'S SPIRIT - AND THAT WAS THE PLAN ALL ALONG. JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES IT WAS TO THEIR ADVANTAGE THAT HE LEFT - FOR THEN, WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME, THE POWER, MESSAGE AND LOVE OF JESUS WOULD BE MULTIPLIED EXPONENTIALLY THROUGH EACH SPIRIT FILLED CHRISTIAN. PAUL BROUGHT THE GOSPEL TO PLACES FAR AND WIDE IN THE ROMAN WORLD - GENERATIONS OF CHRISTIANS OWE A DEBT TO THE APOSTLE PAUL. BUT IF WE HAD THE CHANCE TO THANK HIM, I WONDER IF HE WOULD WELCOME IT.

YOU SEE, IT WASN'T PAUL, IT WAS JESUS. AND IT WASN'T TIMOTHY, IT WAS JESUS AND IT ISN'T YOU, IT'S JESUS. THAT IS WHY THE FINAL WORDS EVER RECORDED OF PAUL ARE "THE LORD BE WITH YOUR SPIRIT AND GRACE BE WITH YOU." PAUL IS DEAD, WAITING FOR THE RESURRECTION - HE SPEAKS NOW ONLY THROUGH HIS LETTERS - BUT JESUS CHRIST IS **ALIVE** AND SPEAKING AND WORKING TODAY!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THE LORD AND HIS GRACE ARE WITH US AS THEY WERE WITH PAUL AND AS THEY WERE WITH TIMOTHY. POUR YOURSELF OUT FOR HIM. FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT FOR HIM. FINISH YOUR RACE FOR HIM. LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR THE ONE WHO DIED FOR YOU. FOR THERE IS NO OTHER REASON TO LIVE. THE REWARD AND REWARDER OF OUR BROTHER PAUL AWAITS US IN GLORY.

2 TIMOTHY 4:18 - TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN