The Epistle of 2nd Timothy

Chapter 2

As we begin this chapter of a letter to Timothy, from an imprisoned Paul, we will keep in mind the situation Paul is in. This is, for all we know, the last missive we have from Paul to anybody, and his situation now, being really imprisoned probably in the upper cell room, but in all probability fully chained, and Nero’s hot breath just waiting to take him out, is dire, and Paul knows he is not getting out of this one. Death is soon, and the time is grim.

The next point is most of the aides and helpers have deserted Paul, and few loyal to the ministry linger, and Luke as physician is actually the only close aide there. Some have been sent out in the fields, but most, I am sure, are afraid of the consequences for hanging around Paul, have left the ministry, and Paul wants Timothy to remain strong and loyal to the cause. That seems to be the primary reason for this letter. And friends this is a letter, Paul did not write in chapters and verses, so when you get the chance, read this slowly as a letter, and feel what Paul is feeling.

We do not know Timothy’s where-a-bouts at this point, but even though Tychicus may be pastoring the Ephesian Church, I am sure Timothy is nearby and probably administrating and preaching in the local sister Churches.

A] 2 Timothy 2: 1 through 7; (read)

1] “*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,”*

This is continuing on from the last sentence of the first chapter where Paul complains of those who deserted him but also extolling Onesiphorus who has looked him up and been able to minister aid to Paul in his chains. Paul exhorts Timothy don’t be like Phrygellus and Hermogenes who ran from the ministry, but be like Onesiphorus, who, despite the danger of being seen with Paul, stayed to tend to Paul’s needs. Oh, to have a friend like that! Too many ‘friends’ or associates are essentially ‘fairweather’ friends who run from the pressures of the job or the inherent dangers presented in this ministry.

2] “*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

Who will teach the next generation of preachers and teachers? Today we have seminaries all across the world, that prepare men and women for Christian service, but as this fledgling Church is getting its feet set in the soil like roots of the tree, that tree must be nurtured to give off fruit from which the seeds of that fruit prospect the next generation of fruiting trees. So must this generation of believers, with their roots firmly planted, brings forth fruit, so that the inherent seeds can be planted for the succeeding generations of believers.

3] “*You therefore, must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”*

*“*Okay, Timmy, you know the inherent dangers we all face, but for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you must be that strong, brave little soldier, as you face the wrath of the Jews and more so the wrath of Nero and the Romans”. These are, no doubt, heart withering fears, and how many of us today, might be tempted to say, “I’ll keep my faith but find a safer way to continue my ministry”? “I’ll just keep a very low profile.”

Then Paul goes on, “let’s not look at what the dangers the world is offering, but put on the blinders to the world and fully concentrate on the ministry and the task at hand.” Do we follow this? Concentrating on the job to be done and not seeing what could be the hinderances out there, helps to forget the dangers presented. And when I am free from the fears, I am better able to do my job properly and as the dutiful soldier gets the appreciation from his commander for the job well done, so do we when we are able to accomplish our tasks please our Father who is in heaven. When I worked on farms years ago, the day was extremely hot, but the corn had to be harvested, so I was told to ignore the heat and just concentrate on operating that two-row corn picker and the job got finished pleasing the farmer who hired me.

4] “*And if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”*

As a couple of scholars have said, there are no ‘shortcuts’ in Christianity. And there are no shortcuts in teaching about Christianity. The Gospel or Good News about the redeeming sacrifice of God and His Love, is the message to be spread and we must be diligent and tenacious in the task to be done.

5] “*The hardworking farmer must be the first to partake of the crops. Remember what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.”*

As we look at the examples Paul brings out, we note diligence, hard work, and a single-minded purpose to the task at hand. Paul had been persevering and fully diligent, enduring all kinds of hardships during his ministry, and he is telling Timothy through these examples, that like the farmer who toiled through the plowing in the baked ground, through planting season, through nurturing the young plants into maturity, and the harvesting all under the hot sun and heavy rains, and he is the first to partake or gain the rewards of the hard work, just as Timothy will gain the rewards of diligent work through the harshest of environments.

Paul adds, that he hopes as Timothy, in his diligence, see the examples and that God gives him the understanding to what Paul is trying to explain. How many times were we given instructions, and how long did it take before we fully grasped what those instructions meant? For that matter how many times do we actually follow written directions, until we screw up what we were doing?

B] 2 Timothy 2: 8 through 13; (read)

1] “*Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the Word of God is not chained.*

We all must remember this, that despite all the trials we are facing or going to face, we remember Jesus Christ! The word ‘that’ is implied, Paul says remember Jesus Christ who is of the seed of David, in other words he was born of flesh and blood, He was man and as a man was killed and raised from the dead, which implies he was far more than a man, and it is through this life we then, have life in Him. This is the gospel Paul preaches or the ‘Good News’ he has been preaching, and Timothy must now ‘suck it up’ and continue preaching. Paul continues on, it is because of this gospel, I was arrested as an evildoer, that is acting against Jewish Law and Roman law, but always preaching the Truth of God, which is for all peoples. Man cannot chain God, and Logos is God, therefore that Truth or Word cannot be chained. Does that make sense as Paul is writing it?

2] “*Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Paul is confident that his ministry is not just a one-time thing but a ministry that is to be carried on until the Lord comes again. Paul endures all these things the scourging and the rods, even death, full well knowing that the elect, or all those whom God has already appointed to be the believers will come to salvation based on the ministry Paul has already started. Remember God knows already, from the beginning of Time He has created, who will make what decision, these are the elect, and He knows who will not. However, Paul has set the standard for the ministry of patience, forbearance and endurance, that the good news was not a one-time thing but a forever thing.

3] “*This is a faithful saying: for if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”*

After bringing the comment of the new believers gaining their salvation and eternal life, Paul offers this truism: For if we died with Him or we assume His death when we take Him on as savior, we will also live with Him as He has been made alive, or another way of putting this is, we then have eternal life with Him in Glory. Are we getting this? Continuing on with this; as we have taken up our cross to follow Him, and we endure the journey through this world, we then shall assume our rightful place in eternity with Him.

However, friends; if we deny Jesus Christ, if the going gets so difficult we turn our backs on this savior, He will deny us to the Father, because when we deny Him, that is saying, ‘I have no relationship with you’, and God will honor that. Now finishing this up, if those who claimed belief yet have fallen away, this next passage does not mean God still holds on to them, on the contrary, God cannot change His faithfulness, He must be true to Himself, and since sin cannot abide in His presence the faithless lose.

C] 2 Timothy 2:14 through 19; (read)

1] “*Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord, not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.”*

One of the major stumbling blocks All of Christianity has faced and still faces today, is ‘semantics’. Parsing out words and striving to find deeper meanings of those words, or taking a little understood word and presenting it with a new meaning.

Paul is now changing his thoughts from encouraging Timothy through the hardships he will face, to exhorting Timothy to let the members of the Church know and understand that facing these trials now only brings them greater glory with Christ. And then making a serious charge regarding the semantics of Scripture and of the Good News Paul has brought to them. How easy it is when one takes a word or phrase and twists it to mean whatever the teacher wants it to. And what does this do? But to change the message away from Salvation.

2] “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”*

So after encouraging Timothy to stand strong, now Paul tells him to be diligent in standing firm to the truth of God’s Word; that a worker who stays true to his calling and honest in the work he does, can present himself in front of the overseer without fear or worry.

3] “*But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness, and their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection has already past, and they overthrow the faith of some.”*

This is a problem in every age it seems, where some purported preacher or teacher will take the Word of God, and in the twisting of it, lead people away from the truth. In our present age there are those who wrongly divine that Christ is coming back at such and such a day and time, and when this doesn’t happen, many people are turned away from the faith because they were caught up in lies.

Paul mentions two names one of whom we have met before, Hymenaeus from 1 Timothy 1: 20; and apparently after these couple of years this guy is still spouting perverted text and is disrupting the ministry. Little is known of him and of Philetus, but Timothy is warned to stay clear of these two, and keep them from the Church, because people sometimes seek simplistic messages and end up following the wrong teacher. Like Jim Jones.

4] “*Never-the-less the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His.” And, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”*

Paul paints quite a picture here. This solid foundation of God, as stated according to Bishop Ellicott, is the Church with Christ as the cornerstone. There are a couple of real meanings regarding the seal, one is , in Deuteronomy 6: 8 & 9 the people are to take the Word of God, and put it on the door posts and place it on their wrists or between the eyes, which we know as Phylacteries, or in ancient times and with Roman, Greek and Egyptian cultures, when they built great buildings they placed a plaque or carved the description of the building and what it was used for into the building. In this case the inscription was, God knows whose are His, and this is a response to those who were led astray from false teachings, and the second, was Everyone who calls in the name of Christ will depart from their sinful ways.

D] 2 Timothy 2: 20 through 26; (read)

1] “*But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel marked for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”*

We come to a great metaphor now, with the Church, the Foundation of God. We have the invisible Church where it is comprised of all who have a true bonded faith in Jesus and are the brothers and sisters of the Savior. The Visible Church is that which houses the invisible Church or as Paul puts it the Great House. In this great house are vessels, both of metal which lasts forever and also wood and clay which are perishable. And friends the Church today has both. We are these vessels, are we the unperishable or the perishable, the honorable or dishonorable. Remembering those wood and clay bowls when clean are most useable, but if they are not, they are useless.

But what vessel is Paul actually talking about, ‘the latter’? This is a toughie; but the vessels could represent the Christian and those pretending to be Christian, (and they are in the Church) and we should ‘purge or cleanse ourselves’ from those impure vessels, and be presented before the Master as clean and purified. Useful for the Master’s use.

2] “*Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes knowing that they will generate strife.”*

There is the continuation, as we are that cleansed vessel, we must strive to be even more than just a drinking cup, the cup of honor, we must strive to be what God has gifted us to be. Timothy we are mature now, and as the adult we grow into loving righteous, peaceful and faithful servants staying out of the fray of argumentative know-nothings that love to generate verbal fights wherever they go.

3] “*And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God, perhaps, will grant them repentance, so they may know the truth and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.”*

This covers an interesting ministry for Timothy, regarding the blasphemer or that person who made a profession but was lured away by false messages, and operated to the point of being against the Word of God. If Timothy comes across them, first have your whole act together, and then reopen the witness to them, and God, if it is in His will, will open their hearts again to the truth. Regardless as to who we come across, we should have the fruits of the Spirit, as well as the gifts of the Spirit, and our witness should not be selective, but to all those who God places in the road before us, regardless of their condition.