

## **MONDAY, 5/29**

Read 2 Timothy 4:1-2.

This week we will be working through 2 Timothy 4. These are not only Paul's parting words to Timothy, but they are also the final words Paul wrote in the New Testament. We will find how they are indeed fitting words given Paul will soon find himself in the glorious presence of his Savior.

In verse 1, Paul leads into a charge that he is giving the young pastor, Timothy. Paul leads into it by loading it with "the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His Kingdom." Wow, talk about applying some pressure! Paul is trying to make the point that Timothy is now responsible for Paul's ministry and that Timothy is accountable to Jesus for living into this commission just as Paul was. Paul wanted Timothy to know that he was under the Lord's authority.

Here is Paul's charge to Timothy: "Preach the Word." Notice that Paul uses a different word here than he did in 2 Timothy 3:16. In verse 16, he used "scriptures", or we call the Old Testament. Here, Paul uses the term "word", which referred to the message and teachings of Jesus. Paul is imploring Timothy to preach Jesus, to give witness to His life, death, and resurrection. It is a call to proclaim the Good News of God's Kingdom that Jesus announced. That is Timothy's work now.

Timothy is to be ready at all times to preach or teach about Jesus. The Greeks often looked for appropriate times for speech and debates. Paul urges Timothy to be ready whenever he is called upon. Again, Paul holds the need to preach and teach as Jesus did His own disciples. This includes correcting, rebuking, and encouraging others with the teachings and message of Jesus. As Paul stated so well in chapter 3, Timothy is to do this with great patience and care. Timothy, like us, must always remember that the aim of being a witness for Christ isn't to be right, but to love others well in the hope that God will lead them to repentance (2:25).

So, what is our takeaway from these verses? While we may not have the same calling as Timothy, we are all called to be witnesses for Jesus. As those who share in a new life with Him, we are to share in His work. Like Timothy, we are accountable to Jesus for being a part of what He is doing in the world. This, however, shouldn't be viewed as a threat or obligation. It should be for us a source of joy. Jesus, our Savior and King, has invited us to join His mission. We have the opportunity to bless Him and others through this work.

There is also something to say about our readiness to serve. In Acts 1: 8, Jesus said that His followers will be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. Are we prepared at all times and in all circumstances to share why we have hope in Christ? Can we do so with the patience and care that reflect how Jesus reached out to those who did not yet believe?

Praying Together:

"Father, I want to be ready at all times and in any circumstances to serve You. I want to be a witness to the world around me that You are good. I want my life to embody the Good News of Jesus in all I do and say. Amen.

## **TUESDAY, 5/30**

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

In these verses, Paul is looking toward the future. He is scanning the horizons and warning Timothy about the troubles he will face in the days to come.

One of the symptoms of a spiritually broken people is that they do not want truth. Paul says the people will reject sound doctrine--they will turn what they have heard about Jesus into something different altogether. The people would rather hear what they want to hear than face reality.

We must stop for a moment to acknowledge that this is part of the human condition. Everyone wants to hear what they want to hear. We all like being affirmed in our beliefs. The real question is this: When we encounter truth, are we willing to separate from our own ideas to embrace it?

Let's be honest with ourselves--we all have beliefs and ideas that need to be reimagined in light of the truth. There is only One who is full of both grace and truth, and His name is Jesus. We must always remain open to embracing the truth of who Jesus is and of His vision for God's Kingdom.

The alternative is to remain closed to anything but your own ideas and beliefs. The best way to do that is to surround yourselves with people whom you know will say what you want to hear. Their words will become a kind of fodder that will lull you to a spiritual stupor. You will, no doubt, be pleased, but you will also be in danger of being lost, further from the truth.

We live in a day where we have access to more people and beliefs than ever before in the history of the world. We have to decide whom and what we give the authority to speak into our lives. Paul tells Timothy that it is the scriptures and the message of Jesus that show us truth. We must be willing to allow Jesus to speak truth over our lives.

Praying Together:

"God, You are the One I trust. I allow You to speak into my life. Use Your Word to shape my mind and my heart. Transform me on the inside so the outside of my life will be changed as well. Lead me to embrace truth. Give me a discerning mind to know what the truth is, for I believe only You have a full knowledge of the truth. Amen."

### **WEDNESDAY, 5/31**

Read 2 Timothy 4:5.

After preparing Timothy for those who will turn from the message of Jesus, Paul refocuses Timothy's attention to his call. "But as for you," Paul begins. There is something to be said for this. Sometimes, it is easy to get caught up looking at everyone around us. Paul holds a healthy line here. Yes, we need to be aware of what is going on around us. Yes, Timothy needs to be aware of the troubles to come, but he doesn't need to invest all of his energy in that direction. He can't afford to just point fingers and complain when people turn away from Jesus' words to what they want to hear. No, Timothy must channel his energy into living out his calling. We can say from this that we must be aware of what is happening around us, but we must not get distracted by or stuck in it. Like Timothy, we have a responsibility, and it isn't to point fingers. It is to be about God's good work. In the end, we will be responsible before God for one person--ourselves.

Paul calls for composure amidst the pressures. Timothy is to "keep his head in all situations". You can see why this is important for a pastor. No one wants a pastor who loses their cool. The church needs consistent, steady leadership. The same is true for the church as well.

Christians need consistency in their witness. I almost typed that Christians need to "strive for consistency", but I corrected myself. That's not an accurate statement. Consistency comes from character. If we are walking and maturing in Christ, we will be consistent because it's who we are. When consistency is difficult for us, that is a sign we have much room to grow in our character.

Paul also goes back to Timothy's need to "endure hardship". This is a big one for Paul. He believed that hardship posed a challenge for the church. When people were squeezed by the pressures of hardships, the less mature Christians might crack. They flee the hardships to escape trouble. They do anything to get back to comfort and safety, even if that means abandoning their call, or even their faith.

That is not how Paul lived his life. Paul lived with his focus on his call and citizenship in heaven. He knew he belonged to Jesus, and no one would take that from him. Paul was willing to endure hardship for Jesus because he knew this life would soon pass away, but Jesus' promise of life was eternal. Any difficulty he faced, no matter how intense, was temporary. What lay ahead for him was only victory.

It's important that we understand what Paul is saying to Timothy. We never know when following Jesus will cost us. We have to be grounded in who Jesus is--who we are to Him, and what He has in store for us--if we want to stand.

Praying Together:

"Jesus, may You and Your example teach me how to walk with You in my life. I need Your patience and perseverance. I need You to form my character so that I am consistent like You were consistent. I want the ability to faithfully endure, and I need Your grace for that. Amen."

## **THURSDAY, 6/1**

Read 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

2 Timothy is a powerful letter. Unlike some of Paul's other letters, he knows that his earthly life is soon coming to an end. So, what does he say? Does he wallow in regret? Does he grieve over what has led him to this point? He doesn't do either of those things. Paul acknowledges his awareness of the end of his earthly life. He does so with great hope of what lies in store for him.

Paul's approach to this juncture of his life was due to the perspective he had about his life. Paul saw his life as a drink offering that was to be poured out for God. God had given Paul his life and Jesus had redeemed him. Paul's response was to empty his life in service to God as a thanksgiving offering back to God.

Paul uses two other images--that of a fighter and a runner. While our culture puts the most value on winning, their culture was about the pride of effort. Even if one didn't win, as long as they spent themselves well, they had reason to be proud. Paul uses this to say that he indeed fought like a tough fighter. He ran with everything he had.

We need to remember that for our own spiritual journey and service to God. We live in a society that values and expects results. We measure success in tangible terms and bottom lines. Oftentimes, though, the success of our service to God cannot be measured with such outcomes. You can run an amazing race and never convert 1,000 souls. Maybe your race was that you planted the seeds for a dozen people who came to faith in Christ. Maybe it was that you disciplined your family well and served the needs of others. All of our "fights" and "races" will be unique to us based on our God-given gifts and calling. The question is this: Will we take what we have been given, and, with God's help, do the most we can with it?

The Good News is that at the end of our participation in Jesus' work, there is a prize for us. That prize is a life with Him, lived in His glorious presence. It is a new life in a restored creation. No more death or decay or pain. Instead, we get to be with Him, to experience His fullness and glory. It is a life of unending joy and abundance.

This is what lies in store for all of those who long for Jesus. This is your story. And since this is our end, let us spend what life we have left here well.

Praying Together:

"Lord, I long for Your presence. I want to know You more deeply than I do now. I long to be with You, to experience Your fullness. Help me to be one who fights the good fight and finishes the race laid out for me. I can do this only with Your help and Your promise to be my help. Amen."

## **FRIDAY, 6/2**

Read 2 Timothy 4: 9-14.

Paul has been isolated in a jail cell for some time. During such times, he has had a lot of time to reflect on his ministry and on those who walked with him, even if for just a little while. For example, Demas was with Paul as referenced in his early letters. He was a fellow missionary before he went astray (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 24). Losing Demas after they walked together in faith made his absence even more painful. Some left Paul out of necessity, like Crescens and Titus. Still others left because Paul sent them away, like Tychicus.

Paul's second Roman imprisonment was not like the first. Ten years before, he received many visitors (Acts 15: 36-40). This time, almost everyone had abandoned him. But there were a few connections he managed to maintain, including a handful of the original disciples. Luke is still devoted to Paul and shares a passion for the

missionary cause. They worked well together. Though Paul may have been leery of Mark at first (Acts 15:36-42), there is some evidence that they were able to overcome their differences.

Nearing the end of his life, he laid claim to a cloak, several books, and his Old Testament parchments. Perhaps, they were the most significant things he owned that would help him move forward in ministry for as long as he could. He also brings with him a wealth of knowledge and experience living the message of Christ. He knew what Timothy needed to know to continue to build a Christian community. Paul also warned Timothy of people he had dealt with who had caused problems for the ministry, including Alexander the coppersmith. Alexander was believed to have been a witness against Paul at his first defense. Paul wanted Timothy to steer clear of him as he was not a supporter of the Christian message.

Paul sacrificed his life and all of his belongings to spread the Christian message to anyone who would listen, especially Gentiles. In what ways do you represent the Christian message to those who may have never heard of it before? What are you willing to do so that one more person might catch a glimpse of life with Jesus as our Savior?

Praying Together:

"Gracious God, teach me to walk boldly in my faith so that I can set a good example of what it looks like to be a disciple who is making disciples. How can I serve You better, Lord? What must I do to ensure that I am living by faith? Today, I invite you in, God. Walk with me. Guide my feet as I make my way to You. In the name of Jesus, AMEN."

### **SATURDAY, 6/3**

Read 2 Timothy 4:15-18.

Regardless of how lonely Paul felt, he continued to serve God faithfully. Instead of bitterness, Paul was filled with grace for those who had betrayed him. He does not blame them for the things they have done. He forgives them, saying, "May it [their sin-filled behavior] not be charged against them." (2 Timothy 4:16).

A similar example of sacrificial forgiveness was modeled by Jesus as he hung from the cross, when He said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34). In both cases, Paul and Jesus were betrayed in life-changing ways. And yet, they had the softness of heart and the ability to love others in sacrificial ways.

Both were intentional when inviting God into their circumstances. The recollection of Daniel's deliverance from the lions, a story no doubt well known in every Jewish household, implies that Paul's peril had been every bit as serious as Daniel's had been. And it was. Lives can be so easily lost when we lose sight of our faith.

How do we cherish our spirit, yet, at the same time, challenge it? How can we grow in our faith without the mistakes and missteps that call us out while deepening our understanding of the healing and merciful hand of God's grace?

Praying Together:

"God, I love You. Challenge me. Embolden me. Teach me to love deeper, to serve You and Your children better, and to pray more often. I recognize the honor of Your grace and the privilege of Your mercy. Show me how to love like You do. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Read 2 Timothy 4:16-18.

### **SUNDAY, 6/4**

Read 2 Timothy 4:19-22.

In these verses, Paul brings his second letter to Timothy to a close. Paul offers his greetings to both those with whom Timothy is in ministry within Ephesus as well as to those who stayed close to Paul during his imprisonment.

"The Lord be with your spirit," Paul said. It's worth noting that "your" in verse 22 is plural, meaning that Paul isn't offering a blessing to Timothy alone. Paul is offering his blessing to those serving in ministry alongside Timothy.

The aim of this blessing is for Timothy and his team of servants to be encouraged. As evidenced in the letter, the church was facing some difficult times. In the face of troubles, they needed God's sustaining grace to elevate their spirits. This is the same grace Paul holds in front of Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:1, saying that God's grace is able to make us strong. Paul said that this grace was what aided him while his hopes ebbed away in prison. While many would have given up, Paul remained confident in the Lord's goodness. He was sustained and strengthened by God's grace. Paul's hope was that the church would continue to rely upon God's life-giving grace for any and every challenge that came their way.

It is essential for us and for our church to be anchored in God's grace. God's grace is what fills us to overflowing. It is what keeps us engaged in His service. It is what draws others to Jesus. We must always seek to be a community of faith that is defined by and living out God's grace. His grace must be the lifeblood for our family.

Praying Together:

"Holy Spirit, pour out Your grace into my life and into the life of our church. We want to be grounded in grace. We want to be faithful and faith-filled servants. We want our life together to be marked by Your joy and love. Fill our spirits with Your presence and life. Amen."