

Place: Lurgan Baptist 25:10:2016

## A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: 2 Timothy 4:1-8

### 56. THE BOOK OF 2 TIMOTHY

If you knew you were about to die, what do you think you would say ? The last words of dying people have always fascinated me. They are so revealing of a person's heart and soul. P.T. Barnham the famous circus showman said, “ *How were the receipts today at Madison Square Garden ?*” For two months the dying infidel Voltaire cried out, “ *I must die abandoned of God and of men.*” Napoleon said, “ *Chief of the army.*” D.L. Moody the American evangelist said, “ *Earth is receding, heaven is opening, God is calling I must go.*” Some of the last words of the Cornish evangelist Billy Bray were “ *Glory, glory I'm going to heaven. Incidentally Doctor will you meet me there ?*” The great Baptist preached Charles Spurgeon said as his last words, “ *Jesus died for me.*” And John Wesley the founder of Methodism said, “ *the best of all is, God is for me.*”

The great Bohemian reformer John Huss, was burned at the stake as a heretic, in Constance, Germany. He said “ *You may cook the goose today, ( Hus in Bohemian means “ goose,” ) but God shall raise up a gander and him you'll never roast.*” Did you know that the name Luther is derived in German form from the word gander ? Martin Luther had not even been born at the time.

I believe however, that some of the greatest words ever uttered by a mortal man about to die came from the lips of the apostle Paul. The year was about A.D. 68 and Paul was in what is known as the Mammertine Prison in Rome. This man who once travelled the world telling thousands of people how to know the Lord is now confined in a dingy space about twenty feet in diameter. This place was known as “ *the sepulchre,*” for many in it were slowly eaten alive by rats. So here is Paul in this small space which is filled with sewage, vermin and rats. He knows that he will soon be with the Lord and he wants to pass the torch of the gospel to this young man Timothy. He says, “ *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course I have kept the faith.*” ( 4:7 ) His race was finished, his warfare was accomplished. But the work of God must go on. When Moses died God had to raise up a Joshua. When Elijah was caught up to heaven, God had to raise up an Elisha, and when Paul died God had to raise up a Timothy.

Now this says Dr. Alan Cairns “ *is the great burden of this epistle. I think of this epistle as the changing of the guard. Paul was dying and Timothy was rising up to stand in his place at least in some measure.*” Truly, this great servant of God is at the end of the road. Here as it were Paul was “ *laying down his arms that Timothy might take them up.*” So these last words of Paul breathe an atmosphere of great solemnity. I find it impossible to read them without being profoundly stirred. Now in order for us to get a handle on this book I want you to notice,

#### 1. THE WHERE OF THIS LETTER:

As I have intimidated this letter was written from a Roman prison shortly before Paul's death. Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus. The Book of Titus tells us that Paul visited Nicopolis ( 3:12 ) He must have departed there and gone to Troas where he abode in the home of Carpus. ( 4:13 ) During the period of Paul's release a great fire destroyed more than half of the city of Rome. *It is said that the Emperor Nero started the fire, but he falsely accused the Christians thus began a most terrible persecution of the Christian church.* It's possible that Paul the leading figure among the believers was arrested at Troas where in " a quick exit," he had left his cloak, books and parchments with his host Carpus. He was now a hated prisoner in a Roman prison.

Mind you this second imprisonment was far different from his first. He was then a political prisoner awaiting trial, he is now a condemned criminal awaiting death. In his first detention he lived in his own hired house, now he cuddles in a cold, dark, damp dungeon. During his first imprisonment he was visited by many, now he is forsaken by all. My .... as we read this final letter from Paul's heart we can sense his loneliness and heartache as he faced trial and certain martyrdom. 1.

## **2. THE WHY OF THIS LETTER:**

This is the last letter ever penned by Paul and its therefore a kind of last will and testament. There are Personal Wishes here: as Paul requests Timothy to come

to him without delay. He says " *Come before winter,*" come before the time for sailing is past. Do you see how he refers to Timothy ? " *My dearly beloved son.*" ( 1:2 ) It seems that Timothy was the nearest thing that Paul ever had to having a family of his own. There was a relationship with Timothy that was special and its probable that Paul saw Timothy as his deputy in spite of the difference in temperament and background. There are Pastoral Warnings here: Paul aware that the end was near exhorted Timothy to continue faithful in his duties: ( 1:6 ) hold on to sound doctrine: ( 13-14 ) avoid error: ( 2:15-18 ) accept persecution for the gospel: ( 3:10-12 ) and put his confidence in the Scripture and preach it fearlessly. ( 3:15-4:5 ) There are also Parting Words here: As Paul's says goodbye to his son in the faith and encourages him to take up the baton of truth and wield it fearlessly in a godless world. Indeed that is,

## **3. THE WHAT OF THIS LETTER:**

That's what this letter is all about. The message of 2 Timothy is " *guard the gospel.*" Paul sees defeat and apostasy all around him so he says to Timothy " *O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy trust,*" ( 1 Tim 6:20 ) The word " *keep,*" means " *guard that which is committed to thy trust.*" What was committed to Timothy's trust ? What was the deposit ? The gospel. ( 1 Tim 1:11 ) The time of Paul's own departure is now at hand, and as he looks back over the years he can say, " *I have fought as good fight, I have finished the course I have kept ( held intact ) the faith.*" But what of the

future ? Well, now he gives this solemn charge to his dearest son in the faith. With a new sense of responsibility Timothy is now to guard this priceless vital “ *deposit*,” of Christian truth he is to preserve it, protect it and proclaim it. Now there are four chapters in this book and I have divided it thus. Paul it seems says to Timothy four things.

### **(1)FUNCTION WELL: 1:1-18**

Fulfil your role, your ministry. Now do you recall what Timothy’s name means ? “ *One who honours God.*” And one can almost hear Paul saying, “ *My dearly beloved son live up to your name.*” You see, Timothy was indeed a son to Paul. If Paul had been blessed with a son he would have wanted a son like Timothy, and Timothy whose father seems to have died when he was young found in Paul the finest father that any young man could ever have. Now Timothy was totally different from Paul. Timothy was a young man seeking to pastor older people ( 1 Tim 4:12 5:1-2 ) and this was not easy to do. Timothy greatly missed Paul and wanted to quit. ( 1:3 2 Tim 1:4 ) Timothy had to deal with false teachers and they are not easy to be silenced. ( 1 Tim 1:3 )

Also Timothy had physical problems ( 1 Tim 5:23 ) and you get the impression that some of the church members were not giving their pastor the proper respect as God’s servant. ( 1 Tim 4:12 2 Tim 2:6-8 ) All of these things can have a demoralizing effect so Paul is saying to Timothy “ function well.” He wants Timothy,

### **(a)TO DEVELOP HIS FAITH: 1:3-6**

This man who was facing martyrdom took time to pray for Timothy. Paul who was now facing death, was thinking about “ *the promise of life in Christ Jesus.*” He reminds Timothy that there is a lot to be thankful for in spite of the problems he was facing. When Paul came to Lystra on his first missionary journey Timothy was saved. ( Acts 14:1 ) When he returned on his second missionary journey Timothy was enlisted for service. ( Acts 16:3 ) Paul had watched Timothy’s life and service during the years they were together and he was sure that Timothy’s faith was genuine. But while he expresses thanks for Timothy faith he seeks to strengthen that faith by reminding him of the faith of his mother and grandmother. You see, there is not only faith for salvation but there is faith for daily living and Christian service. We need to develop our faith.

### **(b)TO DISPEL HIS FEARS: 1:7-12**

One of Timothy’s problems was cowardice, a timidity about facing problems and doing God’s work. Timothy was neglecting the gift that God had given him ( 1 Tim 4:14 ) and he needed to stir it up as a man would fan into flame the embers of a dying fire. Many of you to whom I preach are immensely gifted, tremendously blessed, but have fears stifled you and kept you from receiving all that God has in store for you ? Like Timothy are you losing your zeal for the Lord and His work ? Do you recall where Paul was when he wrote this letter ? In prison, waiting to be executed. But he says, “ *Timothy don’t be*

*ashamed of me or the gospel.*” ( 1:8 ) Are there fears that are handling you right now ? Is it the fear of ill-health ? The fear of loneliness ? The fear of failure ? The fear of your children turning out wrong ? The fear of not finding the right partner in life ? The fear of failure in your Christian life ? Zig Ziglar says that fear, *F-E-A-R*, is often “ *False Evidence which Appears Real.*” Do you know what you need to do with your fears ? Appropriate the Resources of God: The Holy Spirit ( 1:7 ) does not generate fear in us but rather power, love and discipline. Acknowledge the Purpose of God: for suffering is all part of our heavenly calling ( 1-8-9 ) and Appreciate the Son of God: For Christ is faithful and able to keep His own. Do you see ( 1:12 ) ? Paul does not say “ *I know what I have believed,*” though no-one knew better than Paul the glorious truths of the gospel. He says “ *I know whom.*”

Warren Wiersbe says there is a contrast here worth noting. In ( 1:12 ) Paul says Christ in glory is able to keep that what we give to Him. In ( 1:14 ) Paul says the Holy Spirit on earth helps us to keep what Christ gives to us. My .... why are you fearful ? You have the Spirit of God to enable you: the Purpose of God to enlighten you: and the Son of God to keep you. So Paul wants Timothy,

**(c) TO DISPLAY HIS FAITHFULNESS: 1:13-18**

**Doctrinally:** ( 1:14 ) The word “ *form,*” in ( 1:13 ) means “ *outline.*” The early church had an outline of sound healthy doctrine. The Lord had given this deposit of spiritual truth to Paul ( 2 Tim 1:11 ) and he had given it to Timothy ( 1 Tim 6:20 ) It was now Timothy’s solemn

responsibility to “ *hold fast,*” “ *to guard,*” the precious deposit of Christian truth and pass it on to others. ( 2:2 ) Do you see what Paul is saying ? “ *Timothy I am dying. My generation of preacher is overs. Now it’s time for you to step forward. It is time for you to be on the front line, to take up the torch of truth for the cause of Christ.*” What a challenge this is for us **locally** ? Time will bring changes in our church shortly, the old guard is passing, but where are the young men, who know the book, live the book, preach the book, will not compromise on the Word of God. Where are the young men who will not just be office-bearers in name but in nature ? What a challenge this is for us **nationally** ? One generation of preachers passes, men who blazed a trail for God but are now passing away, hence the need for faithful pastors is great.

**Practically:** Dr. Sidlow Baxter points out that the “ *some,*” of 1 Timothy has become the “ *all,*” in 2 Timothy. In his first letter Paul says “ *some have made shipwreck,*” ( 1:19 ) “ *Some have been led astray,*” ( 6:10 ) But look at ( 1:15 ) Do you see the “ *all,*” ? In ( 4:16 ) Paul says “ *All men forsook me.*” You would think that the Asian believers ( Acts 19:20,31 Rev 1:4, 11 ) would have stood by Paul but instead they forsook him. But one man came to Rome sought Paul, and served him without fear or shame. The name Onesiphorus means “ *profit-bearing,*” and what a profitable friend he was to Paul. What did he do ? “ *He oft refreshed me,*” do you know any believer like that ? I know Christians and I could say of them “ *he often rebuked me, reproached me,*

*rejected me,*” do you “*refresh,*” others ? The Greek word means “*to cool again.*” The Amplified Bible says, “*Bracing me like fresh air.*” Do you know Christians like that ? In midst of their trials they minister to you and they are breath of fresh air ? (1)

## **(2) FOCUS WELL 2:-1-26**

I heard about a man who was attending a convention and he was wearing two badges. When asked why he said “*Oh I’m having an identity crisis.*” Well, Paul did not want Timothy to have an identity crisis so he explained what a pastor, elder, teacher, believer is and does. Timothy was,

### **(a) TO BE A STEWARD: 2:1-2**

The word “*commit,*” means “*deposit,*” and of course refers to the treasure of gospel truth that God had committed to Paul ( 1 Tim 1:11 ) that Paul had committed to Timothy ( 1 Tim 6:20 ) and that Timothy was to commit to others. Do you see here the four stages in the handling on off the truth that Paul envisages ? From Christ to Paul, from Paul to Timothy, from Timothy to faithful men, from faithful men to others also. Is this not the responsibility of elders ? Handling on the torch of truth ? Training faithful men to reach others. There are two things that every pastor/elder must face at the end of his ministry. Did I keep the faith ? Did I pass that gospel on to others in its undiluted purity ?

### **(b) TO BE A SOLDIER: 2:3-4**

Do you recall Timothy’s call to service ? “*Him would Paul have to go forth with him,*” ( Acts 16:3 ) The words “*go forth,*” literally mean “*to take to the field as a soldier.*” This was Timothy’s enlistment and of course every Christian is a soldier in God’s army it is just that some troops are loyal and some are not. Was Timothy discouraged because of the opposition he was facing ? Did he forget that the Christian life is not a playground but a battleground ? My .... we are in a battle and we must be willing to concentrate as well as too suffer. Where would every army be if every soldier had part time work that took him away from his military duties ? Pastors, elders, and missionaries who spend more time on their business ventures rather on the work of the Lord are dividing their interests and weakening their ministries.

### **(c) TO BE A SUCCESS: 2:5-7**

He was to develop the *persistence of the athlete* ( 2:5 ) and the *patience of the farmer.* ( 2:6-7 ) The phrase “*to strive lawfully,*” comes from a Greek phrase ( *athlein nomimos* ) used to describe the professional athlete the man whose struggle was no part time affair. You know, from a human standpoint Paul was a loser for there was no-one in the grandstands cheering him. ( 1:15 ) yet Paul was a winner for he had kept the rules laid down in the Word of God and one day he would get his reward from Jesus Christ. As for the farmer, of all occupations his calls for patience. My .... there are no quick results. Timothy was not to be discouraged if the harvest failed to come immediately. Do you recall James words ? “*Be patient therefore brethren unto the coming of the Lord.*”

*Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and latter rain.*" ( James 5:7 ) One pastor wisely said, " *the harvest is not the end of the meeting it is the end of the age.*" So do you see what Timothy is to be ?

**(d) TO BE A SUFFERER: 2:8-13**

Paul talks here about the experience of Christ ( 2:8 ) then of himself as an apostle ( 2:9-10 ) and then of Christian believers. ( 2:11-13 ) What an encouragement the Lord Jesus is to a suffering Christian soldier. For He died and rose again proving that suffering leads to glory and that seeming defeat leads to victory. My .... many believers around the world suffer persecution and danger. More Christians were tortured and put to death for Christ's sake in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in any other time in history, and the 21<sup>st</sup> century is shaping up to be even worse. The suffering you face may not be physical, but is it mental, emotional or spiritual ? Is your faith being ridiculed ? Are you being excluded because of your moral stand ? Then don't forget Christ's victorious conquest: ( 2:8 ) God's unfettered Word: ( 2:9 ) and God's dependable promises: ( 2:11-13 )

Many scholars say ( 2:11-13 ) may have been an early Christian hymn or confession of faith. It stresses the Christian's oneness with Christ, when He died, we died with Him as members of His body, we arose with Him and we shall reign with Him. You see, our unbelief will not cancel the faithfulness of God. An unsaved person

asked an old Christian " *Are you not afraid that you will slip through His fingers ?*" " *How can I ?*" she replied. " *I am one of His fingers.*" (a) (b) (c) (d)

**(e) TO BE A STUDENT: 2:14-19**

As a student he is to study the Word of God ( 2:15 ) and as a student he is to shun the words of men. ( 2:16-19 ) The word " *study*," means to be diligent. The pastor, teacher, or elder is to be a workman in God's Word. Now how is he to handle " *the word of truth, ?*" Diligently: That's what the word " *study*," means. Many pastors are so involved in administration, committee's, etc; they have little time left for study. Yet the ministry demands total commitment, everything that a man has to give. Dr. Graham Scroggie said to the elders of a church where he just commenced his ministry. " *What do you want ? My feet or my head ? For you cannot have both.*"

Most churches in Northern Ireland want both, to the detriment of a man's marriage and family. How are we to handle the Word of Truth ? Carefully: " *rightly dividing*," it implies cutting through the Word carefully, the way an engineer builds a road. How are we to handle the Word of Truth ? Accurately: not like bad workmen like Hymenaeus and Philetus who taught that the resurrection had already taken place. Listen, every local church should be a Bible school where the Word of God is taught accurately.

**(f) TO BE A SERVANT: 2:20-26**

Here Paul describes the local church as a house with a solid foundation and containing vessels of different kinds. Some are vessels of high honour, others have much more mundane uses but all are important. Paul was “*a chosen vessel*,” ( Acts 9:15 ) Timothy could never be a Paul but in his own sphere with his own gift, he was to be just as much a vessel “*meet for the master’s use*.” ( 2:21 ) You see, we all don’t have the same capacity or gifts but we can all be useful to the Saviour. The important thing is that we be clean vessels. Do you want to serve the Lord acceptably ? Are you clean ? Are you dedicated unto God ? Are you marked by purity, gentleness, patience and meekness ? Are you focused on what God has called you to be ? (1 (2)

### **(3) FIGHT WELL: 3:1-17**

Generally that phrase “*the last days*,” began with the ministry of Christ on earth. ( Heb 1:1-2 ) but specifically “*the last days*,” seem to refer to the state of the church before the coming of Christ. The word “*perilous*,” means “*difficult, hard to deal with*.” This is the same word used in ( Matt 8:28 ) to describe the two demoniacs who met Christ when He visited the country of the Gergesenes. The demoniacs are described as “*exceeding fierce*.” Paul is pointing to that time when wickedness will come to full flower and fruit and we can see the beginning of that age today. Do you see what Paul saw here ?

#### **(a) THE PERIL OF APOSTASY: 3:1-9**

Paul’s description of self-loving ( 3:2 ) rather than God-loving humanity is tragically illustrated in the columns of our daily newspapers. “*Having a form of godliness*,” suggests an outward appearance of religion not true Christian faith, for they have never experienced the power of God in their lives. This is form without force, this is religion without reality, and Paul issues a warning “*From such turn away*.” ( 3:5 ) My .... do we put a distance between ourselves and superficial professors of Christianity ? Here’s my question. How are to deal with opposition to the truth from without and a departure from the faith within ? Well, do you see here,

#### **(b) THE PROTECTION FROM APOSTASY: 3:10-17**

Paul urges Timothy to be patient in suffering ( 3:10-14 ) and persistent in truth. ( 3:15-17 ) “*Timothy remember the way I behaved. You’ve seen how I endured all the trials that came my way. Remember that if you’re patient in suffering and you continue holding to the truth of God’s Word you’ll find your safely through all the perils and pitfalls of this collapsing world*.” My .... what do we need in age of apostasy ? We need a return to the Word of God. The only answer to Satan’s lies is God’s truth. If every local church would go back to the Word of God, and every pastor and Sunday School teacher would teach the Word of God Satan’s disciples would be defeated. The answer for our age, for our day, for our generation, for our country is the Word of God. What a testimony to the origin of the Bible is given in ( 3:16-17 ) “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*.”

The Greek term for inspiration here ( theopneustos ) means “ *God breathed.*” Literally, the verse says, “ *All Scripture is God breathed.*” It means that the words of the Bible are the words of God Himself. Every Scripture was breathed out by God. You see, when the Scripture speaks, God speaks, when God speaks the Scripture speaks. Do you want to know how you fight apostasy ? Let the Scripture loose. Charles Spurgeon said “ ***Truth is like a lion. Whoever of defending a lion. Turn it loose and it will defend itself.***” Now do you see what Paul is saying to this young pastor and preacher ? (1) (2) (3) and,

#### (4) FINISH WELL: 4:1-22

Didn't Paul finish well ? I mean here is the great apostle writing these words to his son in the faith. He is writing within weeks perhaps days of his martyrdom. According to a fairly reliable tradition Paul was beheaded on the Ostian Way in Rome. He is saying, “ *I am dying. My day is over. Follow my example.*” You see Paul wants Timothy to finish well,

#### (a) DOCTRINALLY: 4:1-5

He says “ *Preach the Word,*” not merely preach around the Word and about the Word. Expound the Word. Get to the heart of the Word of God. *Preach it Clearly:* the word “ *preach,*” here means “ *to preach like a herald.*” The herald was commissioned by the ruler to make his announcements in a loud clear voice so everyone could hear. *Preach it Urgently:* “ *be instant,*” means to be urgent especially in giving the gospel to sinners. *Preach it*

*Relevantly:* “ *reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.*” Why must we preach the Word ? Look at ( 4:3-5 ) My .... that time is already here. Many church attenders do not want “ *healthy,*” sound doctrine, they want religious entertainment. They want a string of little stories to make folk laugh or cry at the right time. But Paul says “ *Preach the Word.*” My .... does this generation not need a new race of godly preachers ? Alan Cairns says “ **the old guard is passing, our need is for new men of the old school mean of the apostolic mould who will ‘ guard the deposit.’**” (a)

#### (b) EMOTIONALLY: 4:6-8

For he says, “ *For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand,*” ( 4:6 ) Paul knows that his days are numbered by the hours and his hours by the minutes. But he is not ashamed and he is not afraid. There is no fear of the shadow of death just faith in the Shepherd of life. The word “ *departure,*” means “ *a loosing from,*” or “ *a release.*” This is what death is for the Christian. It's a release, it's a laying down of the burden to rest, its striking camp in order to go home, it's a setting sail for glory, it's the answer to all life's queries. It would appear that for the believer the very best thing that can happen to him is to die. ( Phil 1:23 ) Do you fear death ? Will think of it as a departure, a setting sail for glory, a release from the burdens of life, a going home to Father's house, faith turning to sight, when you see His face.

#### (c) PERSONALLY: 4:10-16



Why was this ? Well, look at ( 4:10 ) You see, some in Paul's circle were not faithful and he could not depend on them. Demas had forsaken him, Alexander had persecuted him. The believers in Rome and at Ephesus who could have stood with Paul had failed him. ( 4:16 ) But Paul knew that Timothy would not fail him. So he says to Timothy “ *Come before winter,*” before the shipping season would end, or Paul would be dead. My .... If you want to finish well personally, don't be disappointed at the failure of others and thank God for the encouragement of others.

**(d) SPIRITUALLY: 4:17-22**

How do you finish well spiritually ? *Rest in the Presence of God: “ Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me,”*

( 4:17 ) *Continue with the Work of God:* Paul wanted to preach the Word so that the Gentiles might be saved.

( 4:17 ) *Live to the Glory of God:* Paul's greatest fear was not death, it was that might do something that would dishonor God's name. ( 4:18 ) Old Vance Havner said

“ *I'd like to get home before dark because although you're saved you're never safe as far your testimony's concerned until you get home.*” Paul finished well. Was Timothy able to visit him before he died ? We are not sure but tradition has it that Timothy was in Ephesus for many years as the pastor of the church.

Late in the first century during the reign of emperor Nerva ( A.D. 96-98 ) a public demonstration for the god Dionysius was held in Ephesus. This event included public sinful activity. Timothy was so torn of heart by the

events that he stood up and started shouting in opposition to this public frenzy. When he did that, the mob became enraged, picked up clubs and stones, and beat Timothy until he died. He finished well. In 1904, William Borden, a member of the Borden dairy family, finished high school in Chicago and was given a world cruise as a graduation present. While traveling through the Near East and the Far East, he became greatly burdened for the lost. After returning home he spend seven years at Princeton University, the first four in undergraduate work and the last three in seminary. While in school, he penned these words in the back of his Bible. “ **No reserves.**” Although his family pleaded with him to take control of the business, which was struggling, he insisted that God's call to the mission field had priority.

After disposing of his wealth, he added, “ **No retreat,**” after the words “ **No reserves.**” On his way to China to witness to Muslims there he contracted cerebral meningitis in Egypt and died within a month. After his death someone, looking through his Bible discovered these final words, “ **No regrets.**” He knew that the Lord does not require success, only faithfulness. **Finishing Well.** How will you finish ? “ **No reserves, no retreat, no regrets ?**”

