

THE CONDUCT OF A GOOD MINISTER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

Summary and Historical Background

This chapter is the last from the beloved apostle. In it he solemnly charged Timothy to perform his responsibilities in the ministry (**4:1**), which were clarified by five imperatives (4:2). The charge was given because many Christians would turn from the truth and seek after preachers to tickle their ears rather than touch their hearts (4:3-4). Therefore, Paul instructed Timothy how he should conduct his ministry (4:5) and used his own life as an example for him to follow (4:6-8).

Paul concluded this letter with a request for Timothy to come quickly to Rome (4:9, 21). Paul was lonesome for Christian fellowship since some had forsaken him (1:15; 4:10, 15), and others had been sent on various missions for the Lord. However, when Paul had to defend himself, the Lord stood with him, strengthened him, and delivered him; he still had a vital relationship with the Lord (4:16-18).

I. Timothy: Perform Your Responsibility — 4:1-8

A. Method of the Ministry: Preach the Word — 4:1-4

1. Solemnity of the charge — 4:1

4:1 — "Charge" - A very solemn and serious word as Paul is calling both God the Father and Jesus Christ as witnesses to Timothy's responsibilities. This is a much more serious word than that given in 1 Timothy 1:3.

"Shall judge" — Stress is placed on the imminence of Christ's appearance.

"The living and the dead" — Paul was certain of the resurrection and judgment for Christians (cf. 1 Thess 4:16ff; 1 Cor 3:11; 15:1ff; 2 Cor 5:10).

"At his appearing" — This would better be translated "by." It was a stimulus for Timothy to be faithful, because when Christ would return, all false teaching would be brought to light.

2. Substance of the charge — 4:2

4:2 — "Preach the Word" — This is a word picture of a herald publicly proclaiming the message given him by his king. This command should not be limited to preachers. Every believer is to herald the Scripture in its completeness (cf. Acts 20:27).

"In season and out of season" — Be ready at any time to give out the Gospel, whether the time is convenient or inconvenient.

"Reprove" — Convict, correct. By the preaching of the Word a person is to be corrected and brought under conviction for his sins. This is done in cooperation with the ministry of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16:7-11).

"Rebuke" — This is a stronger word than reprove. It is a sharp rebuke or censure for what is false.

"Exhort" — It carries the meaning of comfort or encouragement which would be needed after receiving a rebuke. The purpose of these three commands is to help the erring Christian, not harm him.

"With all longsuffering" — The leader must be patient with those who may never follow the truth.

"And doctrine" — Teaching. Careful teaching by the leader is also necessary for success in restoring a Christian.

3. Stimulus for the charge — 4:3-4

4:3 — "They will not endure sound doctrine" - There will be dissatisfaction with the truth. "They" refers to professing Christians who would become dissatisfied and would not "endure" (tolerate) "sound" (healthy) "doctrine" (teaching).

"After their own lusts" — They will seek to satisfy their own desires, not God's.

"Heap to themselves" — They will gather many false teachers around them - pile them up.

"Having itching ears" — It is the listeners who will have itching ears. They will want their ears "tickled" by the latest thought (cf. Acts 17:19-21). They will want teachers who give them some novel idea. They will want things said that will make them feel good, but will not want the truth of God's Word that would convict them.

4:4 — "Shall turn . . . from the truth" - There are two different words in this verse for "turn." This one indicates a willful refusal to listen to the truth.

"Shall be turned" — This word for "turn" is a medical term which indicates a wrenching out of joint. When these people in the church willfully refuse to hear the truth, they will be wrenched from the truth by Satan and given "fables" (myths).

B. Manner of the Ministry: Practice the Work — 4:5-8

1. Sum of Timothy's duties — 4:5

4:5 — "Watch" - Expect trouble. Timothy was to watch out for trouble from self-willed persons. He was to be sober, calm, and alert in all areas so that he might avoid the problems mentioned in 4:3-4.

"Endure" — Endure afflictions. Timothy was to suffer hardships - this is the same Greek word in 2:3, "endure hardness." Paul was not asking Timothy to do anything he had not done himself (cf. 2:9; 3:11).

"Do the work of an evangelist" — Evangelize the people. This is the same word used in Acts 21:8 and Eph 4:11. An evangelist was one who carried the good news of the Gospel. Paul wanted Timothy to realize that he also was to be evangelistic in his pastoral work.

"Make full proof of your ministry" — Excel in the ministry. Timothy was to carry out every detail of his ministry completely. He was not to fall prey to a mere professionalism in his duties, but he was to perform his duties fully.

2. Standard of Paul's life — 4:6-8

a. Calmness in the face of death — 4:6

4:6 — "Offered" - The idea is a pouring out of wine as the last act of a sacrifice (cf. Num 15:1-15). Paul was ready to pour out his blood as the last act of his sacrificial life for Christ (cf. Rom 12:1; Phil 2:17). His life was going to be a libation.

"Departure" — The word was often used of a ship when loosening its anchor. Paul pictured himself as loosening the anchors of this life and sailing to his heavenly home. His time of departure was at hand and he joyfully anticipated it (cf. Phil 1:23). His life was soon to enjoy liberation.

b. Conquest of his foes before death — 4:7

4:7 — "Fought a good fight" - This expression was not limited to a battle, but it was also used in all kinds of athletic contests (1 Cor 9:25). This word is "agony" in the Greek and was evident in much of Paul's life. He encouraged Timothy to "agonize" a good "agony." The same expression is used in 1 Tim 6:12. The idea of "good" is "honorable." Paul had been involved in the greatest, most honorable, contest in all of life. Paul's example was to be an encouragement to Timothy.

"Finished my course" — A figure of speech referring to the race course. It was a definite course marked out for the runner. Paul's life also was marked out by God. Paul had kept his eye upon the goal and could say that he had successfully completed the race (Heb 12:1-2).

"Kept the faith" — He followed the rules of faith set down for Christians in the race of life.

c. Crown for his faithfulness after death — 4:8

4:8 — "Henceforth" - As a result of his faithfulness Paul was awaiting the joy of reward, not the pain of execution.

"Laid up for me" — Laid away for me; reserved. Paul's reward was safe from the hands of all mortal men (cf. Mt 6:20; 1 Pet 1:4).

"Crown of righteousness" — This is the reward for which Paul had been striving (cf. Phil 3:14). The "crown" of a runner was a laurel wreath, awarded only to the victorious runner. The value was in the meaning of victory associated with it and not in the crown itself. The believer's "crown of righteousness" is based on the righteousness of Christ imputed to him. It has reference to the practical outworking of this righteousness in the believer's life. This is the victory it symbolizes.

"At that day" — This has reference to the judgment seat of Christ for rewards. It does not determine whether a person goes to Heaven or Hell. In the Grecian games, an impartial judge was assigned to judge the athletes in the contests and determine who had won fairly. So here, the picture is of Christ Who will judge the believers without favoritism and award the prizes to those deserving them. (For the judgments of God, see Rom 2:2, 6, 11, 16; for the judgment seat of Christ, see 1 Cor 3:11ff; 2 Cor 5:10.) Believers will use their rewards in the Kingdom of Christ. It will be a solemn experience to be judged by Christ.

"Unto all them also that love His appearing" — This same reward is promised to all Christians that live a godly life. They will love His appearing (cf. 1 Jn 3:2-3). Judgment day for the Christian does not have to be approached with fear, if he has faithfully obeyed his Master. Note: more than one can win in this race.

II. Timothy: Proceed to Rome — 4:9-22

A. The Motives for the Request — 4:9-15

1. Paul's Companions — 4:9-12

a. The requests — 4:9, 11

4:9 — "Do your diligence" - Paul wanted Timothy to earnestly endeavor (exert every effort) to come to Rome before winter, when sailing would be inadvisable (v. 21).

4:11 — "Take Mark." When he would come, Paul wanted Timothy to take Mark with him. Mark was the cousin of Barnabas. He had deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. In the meantime, he had proved himself in the ministry so now he was very useful to Paul (cf. Acts 12:25; Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 1 Pet 5:13).

b. The reasons — 4:10-12

4:10 — "Demas has forsaken me." Demas was once a faithful worker (cf. Col 4:14; Philemon 24). Now he had abandoned his companion in a crisis. It was an emotional blow to Paul. It staggered him, but it did not knock him out.

"Having loved this present world" — Demas loved the comforts and pleasures of this present age more than the struggles and suffering that Paul was enduring for the faith. He had not abandoned the faith and become an apostate, but he did not want to partake in the persecutions and sufferings which came with an open identification with Paul in Rome. This was dangerous.

4:11 — "Only Luke" - Luke was the only one still with Paul. Others had had been sent on mission assignments.

4:12 — Tychicus" - He was being sent to Ephesus with this epistle and would probably remain there to relieve Timothy, so he could go to Paul.

2. Paul's Needs — 4:13

4:13 — "The cloak" - It was a thick overcoat. It was at Troas and he wanted Timothy to bring it to him in Rome. Winter was approaching, and he needed it.

"The books" — Scrolls that were made of papyrus. They were distinguished from the parchments.

"The parchments" — A better quality roll, made from skins, which may have been Paul's Old Testament scrolls.

3. Paul's Opponent — 4:14-15

4:14 — "Alexander the Coppersmith" - Some identify him with the Alexander of 1 Tim 1:20, or of Acts 19:33-34. However, this was a common name, and it is highly unlikely, or else he would have been identified as such a person. This most likely referred to a citizen in Rome, who had opposed Paul.

"Did me much evil" — It may have been that he stirred up the Jews in Rome against Paul, or it may be that he brought slanderous words against Paul in one of his trials.

4:15 — "Beware" - Timothy was to beware of this man lest he also be hurt by him.

"Greatly withstood our words" — Possibly he refuted Paul's testimony at his trial by lies and false witnesses.

B. The Means of Paul's Strength — 4:16-18

1. The Occasion — 4:16

4:16 — At Paul's preliminary hearing no one came forward to help Paul. Instead, all forsook him. However, he did not charge them with sin. He realized why they feared and how their lives would be endangered.

2. The Purpose — 4:17

4:17 — Paul was strengthened (see notes on 2 Tim 2:1) by the Lord so that the Gospel might continue to be spread. He was more concerned about the spreading of the Gospel than the safety of his own life (cf. Phil 1:12-14).

"Delivered out of the mouth of a lion" — This is a figurative expression for "danger of death." In other words, his death, which seemed certain, was postponed for a time.

3. The Anticipation — 4:18

4:18 — Paul was not concerned about being destroyed by his persecutors, but instead, he anticipated being delivered from them forever. He knew God would bring him safely into His Kingdom and God would receive the glory for this.

C. The Mention of the Saints — 4:19-22

4:19 — "Priscilla and Aquila" - These were close friends of Paul since he met them in Corinth on his second missionary journey (cf. Acts 18:2, 18, 26; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19).

"Onesiphorus" — The faithful friend of Paul (cf. 1:16-18).

"Erastus" — There are two men by this name mentioned in the New Testament. One, the city treasurer at Corinth, but it is doubtful that he would be an itinerant missionary (cf. Rom 16:23). The other, an associate of Paul and perhaps the one mentioned here (cf. Acts 19:22).

"Trophimus" — An Ephesian who had traveled with Paul on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 20:4; 21:29). Why did Paul not heal him? Perhaps the healing powers of the apostles were being removed by God, as were the other apostolic powers (cf. 1 Cor 13: 8-12).

The rest of these people who were greeted are not mentioned in the New Testament, but they are mentioned in the early church writings.