

- ***READ II Timothy 4:6-8*** Throughout the Bible we have a number of different examples of the last words of different individuals. The book of Deuteronomy is the account of the last words of Moses to the people of Israel before he passes from this life. Stephen uttered words of forgiveness towards those who were murdering him. (**Acts 7:56-60**) The penitent thief on the cross begged for mercy from Jesus when He entered into His kingdom. (**Luke 23:42,43**) And of course we can read two occasions of the last words of Jesus. The first as He died on the cross asking His Father to receive His spirit, and then after the resurrection as He prepared to ascend into heaven to be beside His Father.
- I have heard it said and even said it myself that the last words of a person seem to carry more weight than his or her previous words, and I say that based upon the fact that these words must be carefully considered seeing as how they will be the last words that are said. As I read through Paul's second letter to Timothy, it occurred to me that we are reading the last words that Paul believes he would be writing to his son in the faith. It would stand to reason that everything Paul includes within this letter would carry significant weight behind it because these are his last words to a man that he loves deeply. Our considerations this evening will focus on the what Paul focused on as he penned this second and final letter to the preacher Timothy. What was on Paul's heart? What did he feel compelled to focus on and address during this last correspondence with his beloved son, Timothy?

What did Paul focus on at the end of his life?

I. He focused on encouraging Timothy.

- A. Paul begins this letter by encouraging Timothy in the *"sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and you mother Eunice and now, I am convinced, is in you also."* (**1:5**) Paul had spent many years instructing Timothy in the faith that they shared, and Paul now knows that Timothy is going to have to rely on this faith more and more with him no longer going to be around to serve as that constant source of encouragement. Paul follows this up by stating that Timothy needed to embrace *"the gift of God that is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgement."* (**1:6,7**) We are not certain at all concerning what this gift was, but whether it be miraculous or not the point is that Paul wanted for Timothy to fully embrace this gift so that he wouldn't be overcome by fear or inaction. Paul had seen Timothy hard at work for the sake of the Gospel, and he wanted nothing more than for that work to continue on.
- B. In fact, Paul goes on from here to encourage Timothy in a number of different areas.
 1. Firstly, Paul encourages Timothy **to not "be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in the suffering for the Gospel, relying on the power of God."** (**1:8**) Though Timothy would surely face his own persecutions and hardships for the faith, Paul encourages the younger preacher to remember Paul's attitude that helped him to overcome the difficulties that he faced. *"But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day."* (**1:12**) Paul would go on to say that any sufferings were just a part of the work of ministry. (**2:3-7**)
 2. Secondly, Paul encourages Timothy to **"Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit (treasure NASB) through the Holy Spirit who lives in us."** (**1:13,14**) As Timothy moved forward in his ministry, he would certainly encounter situations where he would be pushed towards the twisting of the teachings and Gospel that he had been taught in order to appease those who would hear. But Paul strongly encourages him to hold fast the teachings and strongly guard the message of the Gospel so that it would never be altered. This is most notably seen within this letter in **4:1-5**.

3. Thirdly, Paul encourages Timothy to *"You, therefore, my son, **be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.**" (2:1)* Timothy was to show appreciation for that grace by being willing to share and teach the good news of Jesus with others who themselves would turn around and teach others.
 4. Lastly, Paul encourages Timothy to himself *"**Be diligent to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.**" (2:15)* This encouragement was necessary because there would be those who would waste all of their time arguing over useless words and offering up irreverent and empty speech. Paul expected better of Timothy, and he knew that this man was capable of following the instructions of **2:22-26** to the benefit of not only himself but also those who Timothy himself was giving effort to teach and encourage.
- C. It is extremely clear from this text that Paul expected much of Timothy, but he also knew that these expectations would only serve him well in his ministry for the Lord. Additionally, Paul knew that there would be things coming down the line that would push and test Timothy's faith, and therefore it was good to prepare him for such by encouraging him in these ways and also encouraging him to lean all the more upon God's Word.

II. He focused on the importance of the Word of God.

- A. In chapter 3 of II Timothy, Paul takes time to warn Timothy about difficult days that he would no doubt face in his ministry. Paul's words are extremely clear because he had surely already begun to see such things present within his own work in the Gospel.
- "But know this: Hard times will come in the last days. 2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, demeaning, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, without love for what is good, 4 traitors, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to the form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people. 6 For among them are those who worm their way into households and deceive gullible women overwhelmed by sins and led astray by a variety of passions, 7 always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8 Just as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so these also resist the truth. They are men who are corrupt in mind and worthless in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be clear to all, as was the foolishness of Jannes and Jambres."* (II Timothy 3:1-9)
- B. Anyone reading a description of coming days such as these would rightfully be worried as to how they could be overcome, but Paul's solution to these hard days is laid out in **II Timothy 3:10-17**.
- "But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, 11 along with the persecutions and sufferings that came to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured—and yet the Lord rescued me from them all. 12 In fact, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 Evil people and impostors will become worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But as for you, **continue in what you have learned and firmly believed.** You know those who taught you, 15 and you know that **from infancy you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.**"*
- C. There is no denying that there were difficult days ahead for Timothy in regards for what he would have to face as he gave effort to teach and spread the Gospel, but he is reassured by Paul that he had everything that he needed in order to overcome the challenges that faced him. He had the sacred Scriptures that were breathed out by God and useful in every beneficial way for Timothy to be equipped to overcome what faced him. If Timothy would embrace the Scriptures the he would

not only be able to carry out the desires of Paul that we stated from the first point, but he would also have everything he needed in order to stand strong against the hard days that were ahead.

III. He focused on those who had helped him along the way.

- A. I also want to point out that Paul took time within this letter to recognize people who had been instrumental in helping him along the way in his time serving the Kingdom of God.
1. We first find Lois and Eunice listed as people who had been instrumental in Timothy being the man of faith that he was. **(1:5)** Paul acknowledges that Timothy's grandmother and mother had been strong spiritual influences within his life while his Greek father seems to have not had an influence at all. **(Acts 16:1-3)** What we just read in **3:14,15** also speaks to the importance of the Scriptures that had been impressed upon Timothy from a very young age. This should serve as a strong lesson to us all concerning the importance of teaching our children about God from the earliest of ages. Their work had been to Paul's great benefit, and they were worthy of commendation.
 2. Onesiphorus and his household are also mentioned as being people that had helped Paul out greatly along the way during his ministry. This man's name is only mentioned here in **II Timothy 1:16-18; 4:19**, but from what is written we can infer that Onesiphorus was from Ephesus, his family were believers, and he had greatly aided Paul and the Christians who were in Ephesus. For the work that he had done, Paul offers up a prayer of blessing that he and his household would be granted mercy from God as they faced the difficulties that came with ministry.
 3. Right at the end of the letter **(4:10-12)**, Paul also mentions people like Crescens, Titus, Luke, and Tychicus as being people who had been with him and supporting him in one way or another.
- B. However, Paul mentions one person as being someone who had truly stuck with him through the most difficult times of his ministry, the Lord God. *"At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that I might fully preach the word and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen."* **(4:16-18)** Paul certainly was not going to let this opportunity to be wasted by not taking time to give thanks to God and the great servants He had used to serve the Apostle Paul in his times of need.

IV. He focused on those who were in need of repentance.

- A. I'd like to lastly point out that Paul took time within this letter to not only commend those who had lovingly served him in his ministry, but he also took time to name and rebuke those who had either left the faith or done him wrong during his work of ministry.
1. *"You know that all those in the province of Asia have deserted me, including Phygelus & Hermogenes."* **(1:15)**
 2. *"Avoid irreverent and empty speech, since those who engage in it will produce even more godlessness, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Hymenaeus and Philetus are among them. They have departed from the truth, saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and are ruining the faith of some."* **(2:16-18)**
 3. *"Make every effort to come to me soon, because Demas has deserted me, since he loved this present world, and has gone to Thessalonica."* **(4:9,10)**
 4. *"Alexander the coppersmith did great harm to me. The Lord will repay him according to his works. Watch out for him yourself because he strongly opposed our words."* **(4:14,15)**
- B. Some might take Paul listing these people as a sign of a bitter old man who just wanted to get the last word against these individuals, but I would rather take these men being listed as a sign that Paul desire for their repentance. I say this based upon **4:16**, *"At my first defense, no one stood by me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be counted against them."* Paul wasn't bitter, but he simply desired for all of these men to repent and now Timothy had opportunity to pray for them.

Concluding Thoughts

I. **Paul's last words were a reflection of the person that he had been up to that point.**

- While the person reading Paul for the first time might think that Paul was really stepping up his game since his time was close, good Bible students know that this was simply the type of man that Paul was. He was constantly looking to encourage brethren, point them towards the Scriptures, commend those who had been greatly faithful, and admonish those who had been unfaithful to repent. This wasn't Paul making things right at the very end, but it was him simply continuing to be the type of man that he had been throughout his life in Christ.

II. **Who we want to be at the end of our lives will be determined by who we choose to be leading up to that point.**

- From this I want us to take away the lesson that our ability to approach the end of death with dignity and continued faith is to live this way while we still have the ability. Very rarely will anyone live like a heathen and then die as a saint. Sure there are exceptions to nearly everything, but the odds are that the way we live this life will determine the way that we go out of it. If we want to be able to approach our own deaths with this type of faithful mindset that seems to encourage others then we would do well to begin living in this manner today while God blesses us with time in this life.

While we might look at the letter of Second Timothy with a bit of a heavy heart recognizing that it is more than likely Paul's last letter that we have recorded and persevered for us, we can also look at it as a great example of how we ought to approach the latter stages of our lives. We should also be seeking to encourage others to greater faithfulness and dependance upon the Word of God, thank and commend those who have shown us great love and service, and admonish those who are in need of repentance. If we want to be able to do this well at the end, then our best chance at doing so will be to live this way now. May we using each day God blesses us with as an opportunity to bless others as the Apostle Paul was so very capable of doing himself. In life or in death, Paul sought to bless others because he recognized just how blessed he had been in Christ. May we recognize that those same blessings have continued to be experienced in our lives, and may we live in such a way that God continues to be glorified and others are blessed by our actions in faith.