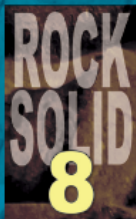


THE SECOND LETTER TO TIMOTHY



An Explanation of This Letter
Especially for You

Ger de Koning



The Second Letter to Timothy

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Especially for You

Rock Solid #8 (Part II)

Ger de Koning

The original Dutch version is available at
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Contents

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible	6
Old Testament	6
New Testament	7
Explanation of general format	8
The Second Letter to Timothy	9
Introduction	9
2 Timothy 1	11
2Tim 1:1-2 The Promise of Life and Blessing	11
2Tim 1:3-8 Thanks, Power, Love and Discipline	13
2Tim 1:9-12 God's Own Purpose	18
2Tim 1:13-18 Word, Spirit and Mercy	23
2 Timothy 2	28
2Tim 2:1-6 A Good Servant	28
2Tim 2:7-12 Understanding In Everything	33
2Tim 2:13-19 The Solid Foundation of God	38
2Tim 2:20-21 A Vessel for Honor	42
2Tim 2:22-26 Flee, Pursue, Correct	46
2 Timothy 3	49
2Tim 3:1-7 Last Days and Difficult Times	49
2Tim 3:8-15 You, However	53
2Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture	58
2 Timothy 4	63
2Tim 4:1-6 Preach the Word	63
2Tim 4:7-15 Personal Circumstances	68
2Tim 4:16-22 Assistance From the Lord and Salutations	73
Other Publications	78

Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When ASTERISKS * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Second Letter to Timothy

Introduction

After Paul was released from his first imprisonment (cf. Phil 1:23-26; 2:19-24; Phlm 1:22), he wrote the first letter to Timothy and the letter to Titus. Paul has written this second letter to his young friend during his second imprisonment. His second imprisonment is much heavier than his first one. He also knows that he will not be released again, but that he will be sentenced and will suffer the martyr's death.

If you bear this background in mind you will experience the power of the letter while reading. The bold witness and the confidence in God in hard times come from a man who is willing to die for what has been entrusted to him by God. Therefore this letter is a warning and an encouragement for the man of God in the last days.

You may call this letter a farewell message of Paul, like the farewell (or last) words we have from Jacob (Gen 49:1-33), from Moses (Deu 33:1-25) and from Samuel (1Sam 12:1-25). Maybe it is still better to speak of the spiritual testament of the apostle. In a testament a person declares what he wants to be done with his properties after his death. Paul knows that his earthly life will soon end. He leaves a spiritual inheritance behind: the truth that God has committed to his trust. How are the believers supposed to deal with it when he is not there anymore? In this letter he will exhibit it.

Paul has established and built the church of God on earth through the gospel. His work is finished. But as it happened to everything that God has given into the hands of man, it will also happen to the church on earth. Paul foresees its deviation and decay. At the same time, he also keenly sees the condition the church will end up to after his death (cf. Acts 20:29). He sees that it will increase after his death. The instructions he writes down in this spiritual testament are therefore of great importance for the church through the time from the death of the great apostle.

You encounter much passion and emotion in the letter. Paul was a man with a nature like ours. He looks back at his life work and sees what has

become of it. He doesn't do that as an emotionless analyst who looks at cold statistics. He again experiences his work and he also has a presentiment of how things will develop. From those feelings he passes on guidelines for a time that all things will deteriorate even more and that the origin of the church will be hardly recognizable.

When you read the letter you hear him sharing the concerns of his heart with a (young) man who is concerned about that, just like him. He does that in a way that makes the letter important for all times. Therefore, it is clearly a Holy Spirit-inspired letter and therefore part of the Bible. Through this letter the Spirit teaches us about the deviation of the church from its original state.

The letter also informs about the way of security for those who seek God and desire to live to His honor. That way of security rests on two principles from which everyone in the midst of mixture and confusion can find consolation, as the apostle did. These two principles are:

1. the firm foundation of God and
2. to abstain from wickedness.

What that means will become clear when we discuss chapter 2.

Beside the warning and encouraging character of this letter, it is also combative, because despite all decay you should not despair. The greater the decay, the greater the challenge to be a man of God (M/F). A man of God is someone who shows Who God is in an environment that does not consider the rights of God. We do not have the power in ourselves to do that, but in the Spirit of God Who is working in a man of God, even when professing Christianity is full of complacency. I hope you want to be a man of God.

2 Timothy 1

2Tim 1:1-2 | The Promise of Life and Blessing

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus, 2 to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

V1. Although the tone of the letter is confidential and amicable Paul starts with determining his apostleship and in that way his apostolic authority. He connects his apostleship with some things that are of great importance for the authority with which he writes down the guidelines in this letter for the time of decay. In the first place the Person of “Christ Jesus” arises behind his apostleship. Christ Jesus has sent him and determines the content of his ministry. What Paul is saying is in His Name.

In the second place he has not arrogated this apostleship to himself nor has he received it from men. No, he is an apostle “by the will of God”. The apostleship is a part of the plan of God with his life.

In the third place his apostleship is connected with “the promise of life in Christ Jesus”. That makes the ministry he performs as an apostle inviolable to death. Although Paul has died, the ministry of his apostleship remains through this letter. His apostleship is in fact connected with spiritual, heavenly and eternal things. Those are things that are beyond the earth and the decay of the church. Therefore this letter continues to keep its full meaning for the church in each time.

The life that is in Christ Jesus, is from before the ages. The Father has promised in eternity to the Son to give this life (Tit 1:2). To whom? To all who believe in the Son (Jn 3:36; 1Jn 5:11-12). Do you believe in the Son? Then that may be the anchor from which the storms you hear about in this letter that threaten your life of faith cannot tear you away.

V2. Therefore it is wonderful and encouraging that Paul shows you first what remains unchangeably and eternally true for each child of God personally. Only then he speaks about the decay of the church. That will have done Timothy good, too. Paul says even more that will do him good. He

calls him “my beloved son” to make him feel the warmth of the heart of a father toward his son.

In his first letter he calls Timothy a “true son”. But because the spiritual climate is getting colder it is more necessary to emphasize the warm love to one another. Especially at a time when many oppose or turn away from you, expressions of love are the best basis for encouraging someone to do a service. Not only toward Timothy is this expression of love important. You also notice in this expression that Paul in his nearing end even more realizes how precious Timothy is to him.

For the exercise of the tasks of Timothy there is no better wish to be thought of than what Paul speaks of here. Also in his first letter to him Paul wishes him these things. That shows that for your personal life you always need the “grace, mercy [and] peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”. It also proves that that is sufficient for all imaginable circumstances where you may find yourself in.

Just ponder on the rich content of the separate words ‘grace’, ‘mercy’ and ‘peace’ for a moment. ‘Grace’ is God’s love for men who are not worthy of it because they are evil. ‘Mercy’ is God’s love for men who are weak and incapable, who have no capability to do something good. With grace and mercy God has fulfilled in love what you as a weak and sinful man needed. Then you realized that He also granted you His ‘peace’. Now you are a child of God you need that same grace and mercy to live as a child of God. When you are aware of this, you will experience the peace of God in your heart.

Think also for a moment about their origin, the Persons from Whom they come: ‘God the Father’ and ‘Christ Jesus, our Lord’. I assume you have learnt to know the Father and the Lord Jesus better since your conversion. You surely have found more and more reasons to thank the Father and the Lord Jesus for these rich gifts of grace, mercy and peace. It is also the first thing that Paul does here.

Now read 2 Timothy 1:1-2 again.

Reflection: Which encouragements have you found in these verses? Thank the Lord for that.

2Tim 1:3-8 | Thanks, Power, Love and Discipline

3 I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience the way my forefathers did, as I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day, 4 longing to see you, even as I recall your tears, so that I may be filled with joy. 5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that [it is] in you as well. 6 For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with [me] in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,

V3. Paul doesn't give thanks to God because of the special ministry he was given and which he had now almost accomplished. No, he gives thanks to God because of Whom God is. Could the reason be that he had experienced much of the grace and mercy of God and that with the peace of God in his heart he was able to go through all hardships?

Of course he has known God for a long time now. He served God with a clear conscience the way his forefathers did. In their footsteps he has been serving God. They enabled him to serve God. He doesn't make any judgment about their inward condition, he only writes down what characterized them. He acknowledges what was in them for God. With gratefulness he looks back at his relationship with his parents and forefathers at the end of his life. Those relationships are not nullified when we come to conversion. Also now it is of great importance that the Lord is being served in the families and generations.

Paul already knew and served God before he converted. He did that to the best of his knowledge and with a clear conscience. That doesn't mean that his service had the consent or blessing of God. It only means that what he did, he did in ignorance (1Tim 1:12-14). He was sincerely convinced that with everything he was doing he was serving God (cf. Jn 16:2-3). That's why his conscience did not accuse him for anything he did. His conscience remained clean; he never fought against his conscience. Herein also lies an exhortation for Timothy to keep a clean conscience.

He always remembers Timothy in his prayers. Timothy may know that and that must have encouraged him. How nice it is if others tell you that they pray for you. It is also nice if you can tell others that you pray for them. Through prayer the remembrance you have of others for whom you pray, remains vivid. In that way you still feel the connection between you and them. As a result, they and you do not stand alone.

V4. That doesn't mean they don't need to see one another. Paul has a strong desire to see Timothy. He needs company, especially that of Timothy (cf. 2Tim 4:9). He certainly has the company of the Lord (2Tim 4:17), but that doesn't mean that he despises the relationships given by God. On the contrary, he, the great apostle, needs them. He is being encouraged by them (Acts 28:15; 1Thes 2:17; 3:10). It is not a proof of a spiritual mind if believers experience their faith individually. That's not according to the purpose of the Lord.

The tears of Timothy have moved the apostle. These are tears of sadness he saw when Timothy said goodbye to him, his older friend. The tears are the proof of true friendship. That is precisely what makes it so precious for Paul if Timothy would come to him. The joy that it would give him will be a full joy, probably again with tears, but then of joy. The tears of Timothy remain, as it were, fresh in his memory. He always remembers them.

V5. And there is something else that Paul calls to remembrance and that is the sincere faith of his young friend. The word 'sincere' or 'unfeigned' comes from the Greek word 'hypocrite'. A Greek actor was called 'hypocritis'. An actor always plays the role of another person. He is not himself, but he pretends to be someone else (cf. 2Sam 14:2). Timothy certainly doesn't pretend, he is not characterized by counterfeit, but he is true. That's also the reason why Paul wants to see him. You also love to be accompanied by sincere believers, by people who truly live with the Lord, don't you?

The faith dwells in him, it has its home there. Faith is not a side matter to him, something for special occasions. Besides, he has had good examples of faith. Paul reminds him of his grandmother and mother. This is an example of the working grace of God in the generations. There are many changes, the apostasy is continuing, but there are also things that remain. There are always people who have a sincere faith in Him.

Paul doesn't remind him of heroes of faith from a far past, of long-ago-days but of very close examples, his mother and grandmother. That should mean to you: Look around and you will surely find examples in your neighborhood in whom the faith dwells. The touch stone is faithfulness and obedience to God's Word.

V6. If a sincere faith dwells in you, then there is a reason to remind you that you have received a "gift of God" and which you therefore ought to use. Things may probably be quite difficult in the church, but that should be a challenge to your faith. Timothy has to be reminded of it. That may be the case with you. We all tend to avoid difficulties, don't we?

Paul gives Timothy an extra stimulus "to kindle afresh" his gift. He reminds him of the way he received the gift. That is through the laying on of Paul's hands. In his first letter to him Paul also encouraged him in his ministry. That encouragement is the reminder that others already had announced that there was a ministry ready for him (1Tim 1:18). Then the elders also laid their hands on him (1Tim 4:14) and in that way they made themselves one with him in his ministry. If in a weak moment he thinks he just imagines all this, he can recall this again. And now he adds a third remembrance in order to encourage Timothy. Paul personally has granted him that gift. Timothy will undoubtedly remember that event.

V7. After all Paul has not acted at his own discretion, but by God's commission. Each gift comes from God; it is 'the gift of God'. What is said here to Timothy is therefore an encouragement for you too. Like Timothy you may know what God has given to you.

If you focus on the circumstances you might become afraid. All kinds of arguments may arise in you that can cause you not to use the gift given to you. You could probably think that it all makes no sense after all or you may fear for the adversary that your performance may stir up. This timidity, or cowardice, is a kind of fear of loss of face or to be ridiculed. Paul points out that this "spirit of timidity" is not from God (cf. Jn 14:27; 1Jn 4:18).

What certainly is from God is His Holy Spirit, Who wants to prove Himself in you as a Spirit "of power and love and discipline".

1. You may know that God with the gift He makes sure that for the exercise of it He gives through His Holy Spirit the necessary power and ability.
2. The exercise of a gift also demands self-sacrifice, for the gift is not meant to edify yourself but to serve others with it. Therefore the Holy Spirit will give you love as the true motive to serve.
3. Finally, it is also important that in the exercise of your gift you act with discipline or self-control. This happens if your spirit acts in harmony with the Holy Spirit, so that you know that He is guiding you and that you do not act from uncontrolled impulsiveness (cf. 1Cor 14:32). The Holy Spirit leads you to well-balanced actions and thoughtful words. It doesn't show a work of the Spirit when a person says: 'I couldn't help, it was the Spirit Who urged me to.'

Still a remark about the order of these three aspects in which the work of the Holy Spirit can be recognized. 'Love' stands between 'power' and 'discipline'. Love is in the center. It is about love. Love is the oil between power and discipline, through which both aspects 'run' well.

You see that also in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Chapter 12 summarizes the gifts and in chapter 14 it is about the exercise of it. The chapter in between, chapter 13, is about love. The gifts of chapter 12 can only be exercised as they are described in chapter 14, if the motive for the exercise is the love that is described in chapter 13.

V8. God has given us His Spirit to testify through the Spirit boldly of the Lord Jesus. Like Peter who was first ashamed for his Lord and denied Him (Mk 14:66-72), but witnessed through the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost with great boldness of his Lord (Acts 2:14,36). The power of the Holy Spirit has been given to us to testify of our Lord and not to perform all kinds of spectacular signs and works of power in order to stir up people's attention. That is precisely what happens if spectacular things happen and not if someone in all simplicity gives a clear testimony about the Lord Jesus.

We all need these words so that we will not be discouraged. Unfortunately it happens often that we as Christians testify in a way we should be ashamed of. If believers become lukewarm and worldly minded and

if committed witnesses are being silenced, it requires a lot of courage to persevere.

Paul connects himself to the testimony of the Lord Jesus. That is not boasting, but reality. After all, he is imprisoned because of the testimony he gave of his Lord. As a matter of fact, he doesn't see himself as a prisoner of Nero, but of his Lord. His testimony has caused him tribulation.

Timothy is, and you are too, called to consciously accept the tribulation that goes together with the gospel and not to avoid it. Preaching the gospel and tribulation go together. But it is the power of God that enables you to go through that tribulation, not as a fate, but as a privilege (Acts 5:41).

Now read 2 Timothy 1:3-8 again.

Reflection: In what way could you stir up your gift?

2Tim 1:9-12 | God's Own Purpose

9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, 10 but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, 11 for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. 12 For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.

V9. After the command that Paul gave his young friend Timothy, and through which he also exhorted you, two verses with a great content follow. What is written in these verses is great because its content is fully about what God has done to you in Christ Jesus. It is not about you and your feebleness or failures. Nor is it about the decay that could discourage you that much and neither about the hostility that may frighten you to testify. No, these verses lift you up above all hardships and tell you about the purpose that God already had before the world existed, “from all eternity”. His purpose stands therefore apart from the whole problem of sin and its consequences that exist only after the worlds were created.

In His purpose He also thought of you. He had the purpose to “save” you. And it did not stop with a purpose. He also carried it out. When we plan to do something we often have to admit afterwards that it didn’t stand or that something is still missing. That is impossible with God. He has saved you. This is a deed of God that was perfectly accomplished (Eph 2:5) and cannot possibly be undone (Jn 10:28-29). He has performed that deed by calling you. By saving you God completely redeemed you from all your sins and the power of sin and from the power of the world (Gal 1:4).

He also has a goal with your life. He has given you a “holy calling”. He has called you to live holy for Him, separated from everything He has saved you from and to be fully consecrated to Him. Indeed a powerful change has happened in both your position and the goal of your life. Regarding your position, you have changed from someone who was under the wrath of God into someone who is saved. You do not have to fear God’s judgment anymore. Regarding the goal of your life, you have changed from

someone who lived only for himself and whose prospect was to end up in hell into someone who lives for God and who will live forever with Him.

You understand that this happened without any contribution from your side. God also didn't ask you too, for you were absolutely not able to. Your works only asked for judgment on you. No, that great change you owe to God's "own purpose" alone. And you have received part of it through "the grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus". Grace reminds you that you couldn't apply any right from your side on these blessings. It points at God's sovereign plan. For the execution of His purpose and to make you able to partake of that grace, God, to His great joy, has in Christ Jesus an unshakable foundation. In Him He could also realize His counsel to you.

The reason for each blessing that God gives to whomsoever, is in no way because of who that person is, but because of Who Christ Jesus is. In His purpose He was led by Whom Christ Jesus is. God values His Person so highly that He has connected His whole purpose to Him. The only way that you could partake of His purpose was because He saw you in Christ Jesus.

Can you understand that you have taken part of that? As for me, I cannot. But it doesn't depend on your or my understanding whether it is true. It is true because God has done that and as it is said already, "from all eternity". That at the same time guarantees that nothing that has happened since creation, can change anything, even the slightest thing, on this purpose of God.

V10. Still we would not have been able to know anything of God's plan if He had not revealed it through the appearance of our Savior Christ Jesus. The purpose of God was hidden in His counsel, but God revealed His purpose when Christ Jesus appeared in Whom He could give you that great grace to partake of His purpose. But take note! It was not without a reason that Paul precedes the name 'Christ Jesus' by the name 'Savior'. It is about His appearance at His first coming to earth. Then He came as 'Savior'.

Do you see through Whom God was able to save you? The name 'Savior' reminds us of His work on the cross. The work He accomplished there was the way for God to carry out His purpose, in order to save you and to call you with a holy calling. The only way for you to be able to partake of

that was if the Savior would abolish death. Death, the wages of sin (Rom 6:23), formed the barrier against the carrying out of God's purpose. That hindrance was robbed from its power by our Savior by going into death Himself and rising from it again.

In His resurrection He "brought life and immortality to light". The power of 'life' that characterized Him was proven by His resurrection. His life has triumphed over death. Not death but life is conqueror. You wouldn't have known that if the Lord had not died and risen. You have received eternal life, for the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, is eternal life. He who has the Son has life (1Jn 5:12). The Son is the true God and eternal life (1Jn 5:20). You believe in the Lord Jesus; you have the Son as your life.

Something else that was brought to light was 'immortality'. That refers to the body. The body you now have is not immortal. The older you get the more you notice how it is declining, how its power dilutes and how it loses its youthful beauty. But when the Lord Jesus comes you will receive a body that will not be affected by the test of time. That body remains in all its freshness and purity through all eternity. That is also the result of the victory that the Lord Jesus has achieved over death. You see that they all are truths, facts of the faith that has been established completely outside of you. That goes for both the purpose of God and what the Lord Jesus has done when He appeared on earth.

Now there is still a question that has to be answered and that is: What did God do to enable you to see His purpose and that you would accept the work of the Lord Jesus as being accomplished for you? He did that "through the gospel". The gospel is the means through which you have heard about God and what the Lord Jesus has accomplished and how necessary His work has been for you. When you accepted the gospel you got saved by it and you could partake of all these awesome things.

V11. God has appointed Paul to preach this gospel. He not only preached this good news (that is the meaning of the word 'gospel') to the Jews. This purpose of God dates back from before the foundation of the world and stands apart from the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The ministry of Paul in the gospel extends to all people from all nations.

For this ministry as “a preacher” he obtained an appointment from God. You can hereby think of a herald, a messenger who is clothed with a formal authority, in order to pass on formal messages from e.g. kings or city councils, without changing anything about the message. This is how Paul preaches the gospel.

God also appointed him “an apostle”. That has got more to do with a certain position. God has sent him and he who rejects him rejects God, his Sender.

Finally he is also “a teacher”. He teaches the content of the gospel. That content is Christ Jesus. Paul explains Who He is and what He has done.

V12. Paul wholeheartedly believes in the gospel. When he preaches he puts his whole heart in it. That’s not what people, and particularly the Jews, are waiting for. This zealotry of Paul in the gospel is the reason of the suffering he is going through. But that doesn’t cause any change in his conviction.

He has exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed (verse 8). He can do that because he himself is not ashamed. No adversity can confuse him. That’s because he doesn’t believe in a dogma, a doctrine, but in a Person. He knows “whom” he has believed. He lives from a living relationship with that Person.

He knows the power of that Person. He has already had so many experiences with that God that it caused him to now have a deep-rooted conviction about Him. He has experienced many times what God is able to do. God has not been pushed away from the throne but He has all power. To Him Paul has entrusted what he had received, namely, the gospel that God had entrusted him (cf. verse 14; 1Tim 6:20). He is imprisoned and is not able to freely travel around anymore and to work with that what was entrusted to him, but God remains and Paul knows that He will continue to work with what was entrusted to him.

In that way the gospel is still being preached and also his letter is still being read as you are doing now. Just like Paul is laying the results of his ministry in the hands of the Lord you can do that also. We do not have to keep the developments in our control. It is not our case, it is the church of

God. We can be sure that whatever we give Him to guard will be safe with Him. Robbery or loss is impossible.

The certainty of this 'guarding' has a validity "until that day", which is the day of the appearance of the Lord Jesus. It is the day that the Lord Jesus will reward everything. For the measurement of the reward the Lord doesn't consider the success you have achieved, but whether you have been faithful to what He has ordered you to do. Then you will, like Paul, find back with Him everything that you have entrusted Him to guard for you. This is the attitude you can only get if you know in Whom you have believed.

Now read 2 Timothy 1:9-12 again.

Reflection: What do you learn in these verses about the purpose and the grace of God?

2Tim 1:13-18 | Word, Spirit and Mercy

13 Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to [you]. 15 You are aware of the fact that all who are in Asia turned away from me, among whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. 16 The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; 17 but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me — 18 the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.

V13. In the previous verses Paul spoke out his absolute confidence in the Lord Jesus. That is for Timothy, and also for you, of course a great encouragement to do the same. But still there is another reliable hold in a time of decay. That hold you have in the “sound words”. Paul points Timothy out that he should “retain” the ‘sound words’ he heard from him as “the standard”.

The word ‘standard’ is a ‘concept’ or ‘model’ or ‘draft’ of a set-up, composition, design. Paul speaks about the inspired Word of God. That ought to be kept completely. You are not to neglect or drop anything of it. Not only the content of the message is important, but also the words and their ranking are given by God with the purpose for us to hold on to that.

With creeds people may try to explain God’s Word in human words, but they still remain to be words of men and therefore imperfect. They also cannot protect us against the most trivial false doctrine. Only God’s Word is perfect and gives a full guarantee against deviation if we keep it as the standard. Each word of it stands on the right place where God purposed it to be. God’s Word cannot to be improved. Don’t let yourself to be confused by sayings as: ‘It not about the word choice, but about the message.’ It is certainly about the word choice too.

Here a warning against modern translations of the Bible is justified. I do not mean that a translation in the most possible old English language is the most faithful. The use of nowadays English certainly doesn’t exclude a good translation from the original text. No, the point is that only people

with a living faith in the Lord Jesus and with great esteem for God's Word are able to faithfully translate the Bible.

The making of a faithful translation is not dependent on technology or science, but on skills connected with the right approach of God's Word. That right approach consists of the deep awareness of the holiness and authority of each word that God had let write down in His Word. If that is the mind you also have of reading God's Word you will experience the saving power the Word has. The chance that you fall prey to false teachings is then excluded.

The original word for 'sound' has to do with hygiene and can therefore also be translated with 'healthy making'. The words of Paul that were inspired have therefore the purpose to improve the spiritual health. Paul adds something to it, namely, that the example of the sound words has to be retained "in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus". If God's Word is not connected to the Person of Christ, faith in the letter of the Scripture becomes a dead form. You can only retain the truth if you approach the word in faith and love. These are the two aspects or activities of the new life of which Christ is the source.

It is about faith and love that are present and to be found in Him. It is only to be received from Him. From Him you learn how the daily confidence of faith focuses on God. You see that in His life on earth. From Him you also learn how the love of God focuses on men.

This addition is important because otherwise the standard would have become a template that causes the living faith life to sink and to become a dead orthodoxy. If faith and love in Christ are the active elements to retain the standard you will experience the support of the Word. Even if you couldn't find any support in the church as a whole, due to the decay that has entered, you will, even if you're alone, surely find help in God's Word.

V14. There is still another encouragement. After having pointed to the Lord Jesus and the Word of God, Paul speaks about "the Holy Spirit who dwells in us". Paul is about to die the martyr's death and to go to his Lord. Timothy still has to remain here and you also are still here. The circumstances will not become easier and you will surely agree with that. The decay has become even worse. The attacks on the ministry of Timothy will

become tougher. If you want to serve the Lord you will experience that too. Everything will cause such an increasing pressure on him, and on you, that you may want to give up “the treasure which has been entrusted to [you]”. But listen: you are urged to guard what has been entrusted to you.

Paul calls it a ‘treasure’, which means something beautiful, of Divine value. Also to you all the sound words of the Scripture have been entrusted as something of Divine value. That you must guard and not give up anything of it. You don’t have to do that in your own strength. It even is impossible to do that. It is being pointed out to you that the Holy Spirit dwells in you. He gives you the necessary power to guard what has been entrusted to you.

Each part of the truth that you have learnt to see and for which you have thanked God will be criticized by the enemy. But He Who dwells in you is greater than he who is in the world (1Jn 4:4). He enables you to resist any enemy attack on the truth. The important thing is that you make sure that in no way you hinder the Holy Spirit to have complete control over your life.

V15. You shouldn’t count much on the support of others in your fight “for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (Jude 1:3). Paul points Timothy to the believers in Asia. Timothy knew that all in Asia have turned away from the apostle, while he has intensively preached the gospel in that area. It was he who taught God’s thoughts to the many who had come to faith there.

You can for example read in the letters to the Thessalonians and in the letter to the Ephesians how he served the believers there. The elders of Ephesus were all in tears when he left them. What made them most sad was that they wouldn’t see him ever again (Acts 20:37-38). Now some years have passed. And how is the situation there? The good memories of Paul have faded. They have even turned away from him!

The man to whom they owe a lot is rejected by all of them and not only by an individual or a few. Why? They are possibly ashamed of him, the poor prisoner who fell into disgrace with the government. Of course they haven’t given up Christendom, but as far as they are concerned, Paul’s emphasis on being a Christian is too strong. You shouldn’t make efforts to

create enemies, should you? That is true, but a faithful witness cannot help but make enemies. He doesn't do that purposely, but being faithful to the Lord and His truth exposes hostility.

Paul is imprisoned for testifying to the truth. Therefore turning away from Paul is in fact turning away from the truth that Paul preaches. That has made his imprisonment much heavier. He mentions two of those who have turned away from him by their names. It must have been necessary to mention these names. It is not unlikely that these are leading brothers with great influence who are misusing their influence and the exclusion of Paul to deceive the church. By mentioning their names Paul exposes them.

V16. He also mentions another name, but with joy. The faithfulness of Onesiphorus and his house has been a blessing to him in the midst of all the unfaithfulness that he had experienced. This faithful believer has not been ashamed of God's faithful servant. Onesiphorus has "refreshed", a word that literally means 'to cool', the apostle in the heat of the persecution. This refreshment Paul experienced when in his imprisonment he unexpectedly saw the face of Onesiphorus appear.

V17. It must have done the lonesome prisoner good to be visited by someone who made an effort to come to him. It was not easy to find Paul, but it must have made Onesiphorus tremendously grateful to the Lord when he could finally embrace Paul. His efforts were not in vain. And how enormously grateful Paul must have been to the Lord. Have you also ever experienced refreshment when believers told you that they were praying for you or supporting you when you were in trouble?

Onesiphorus had no address of where to find Paul, but he must have prayed to the Lord Who could lead him to Paul. And the Lord did it, yet, not by bringing him through the shortest and quickest way to Paul. No, Onesiphorus had to ask the Lord time after time if he was on the right track. If you ask the guidance of the Lord to achieve something of which you know that He wants it, it doesn't mean that you will easily accomplish that goal. The Lord wants you to commit yourself to it. In that way He wants to teach you to depend on Him at every step you make.

V18. Paul wishes that the Lord will reward Onesiphorus because of the mercy he received from him (Mt 5:7). His 'house' (verse 16) – it seems that

he was married and had children and probably even his own domestic workers – fully supported the actions of Onesiphorus. They let him go and they must have sent their greetings and probably goods for Paul. What a great blessing it is if there are also houses today of which all the family members want to remain faithful to the truth and make efforts for those who preach it.

Then Paul also wishes that the Lord will grant to Onesiphorus that he may find mercy from the Lord “on that day” (cf. Jude 1:21). In this way Paul adds to his earlier wishes that the Lord will reward Onesiphorus for his efforts before the judgment seat. ‘That day’ is also the day that the Lord will appear with His reward (verse 12; Rev 22:12).

Onesiphorus is not a stranger to Timothy. He made the acquaintance of him at Ephesus and could tell, even better than Paul, how this man has made it a habit to serve the Lord and His matters. It is wonderful when there are people in a local church of whom can be said that they have performed many services. Wouldn’t it be a joy for the Lord and the church when this can also be said of you after some time?

Now read 2 Timothy 1:13-18 again.

Reflection: How do you manage to retain the standard of the sound words?

2 Timothy 2

2Tim 2:1-6 | A Good Servant

1 You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 3 Suffer hardship with [me], as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. 5 Also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

V1. It is not that it doesn't bother Paul that so many people have abandoned him. He is surely suffering because of that. Yet he is not discouraged. With the words "you therefore", by which the connection with the previous is indicated, Paul encourages his "son" Timothy not to be like the 'abandoners', but like Onesiphorus.

He doesn't say to Timothy that he shouldn't care at all about the circumstances and stoically perform his duty. He neither encourages him to introduce all kinds of commands or prohibitions for stopping the continuation of the decay. Legalistic prescriptions, rules and creeds give no power, but they on the contrary cause an increase of narrow-mindedness about being a Christian and do not prevent decay. No, he points out to Timothy what remains and where power is to be found.

Timothy doesn't need to be depressed or take his refuge in carnal remedies if he strengthens himself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. This is the grace of chapter 1 (2Tim 1:9). This implies that you are to look up to the other world that is outside the visible one, which has to do with eternal life. Christ has not changed, whatever may be the case with people. Also the power of His grace remains undiminished and great. You may also tap from that source of grace which always remains full. You can also go there to strengthen yourself in your spiritual fight. Only in the power of grace is it possible to resist evil.

V2. Then Paul points his spiritual child to the Word, the truth that he had passed on to him. The many testimonies that went together with it may confirm Timothy in his conviction about the truth. That gives him security about the truth. In that way he is able to recognize and reject everything as false teachings that deviates from the truth that he has heard. (What you must be careful of, however, is holding the truth in the way that suits you best. If so, depending on your tendencies, chances are you will fall into either legalism or liberalism.)

There are no new revelations. With the truths that God has revealed to Paul and which are passed on by him, God has said everything He wanted to make known in His Word (Col 1:25).

Timothy not only receives the confirmation that what he heard from Paul is the truth, he himself must also pass on that truth unchangeably. He has to make sure that the truth will be spread to others after him. That is the normal way to let the truth proceed. You see that Paul doesn't give Timothy a certain authority or consecrate him in a special way. The Bible is not familiar with such a thing like an official right to preach, something that is only allowed to do by men with a theological training. It is about committing the truth of God's Word to "faithful men" who in their turn also teach others this truth.

Paul mentions two necessary characteristics that a person should have to be able to teach the truth. A person should be "faithful" and "able". 'Faithful' means reliable, trustworthy in the way of dealing with what is entrusted (cf. 1Cor 4:1-2). He who is faithful has a good spiritual mind. All believers have to be faithful, but unfortunately, not all are (2Thes 3:2b).

In addition to that being 'able' is necessary to pass on what has been taught. Not all faithful believers have that ability. Herein you recognize the gift of being a teacher. To be able to practice this gift it is necessary for a person to be faithful himself, which means that he lives in accordance to the teaching he teaches to others (cf. 1Tim 4:12-16). The "others" are apparently also teachers that are taught about the truth.

This method of knowledge transfer differs from the manner knowledge is being transferred on theological faculties to which a diploma and an

official degree are often connected. There it is (mainly) about intellect, here it goes through the line of faithful people:

Paul – Timothy – people who are faithful and able – other people

It is about the transfer of the irreplaceable truths of the Word of God (definitely not about philosophies or ideas of men) to the next generations, that it may also characterize their lives. This ministry of teachers – and that goes for each ministry or gift of a believer – is not meant for the person himself, but always for others.

From their service you can benefit, for example by reading the commentaries they have written, by attending the Bible lectures they give or by attending conferences where God's Word is being explained by them. Of course listening to records of bible lectures and conferences is a wonderful possibility to obtain teachings by them from God's Word (e.g. the audio records of www.oudesporen.nl, 'Other languages'). And let's not forget the meetings of the local church. It is crucial for your spiritual growth to faithfully attend these meetings.

V3. From this verse some characteristics follow that are of great importance for Timothy in passing on the truth. They are also essential for you. These characteristics enable you to continue the work that the Lord has ordered you to do. They have to do with warfare and patience.

You find yourself on a hostile territory where powers are active that want to hinder you to pass on the truth. Therefore it is important that you endure and suffer (verse 3), that you are not engaged with the affairs of everyday life (verse 4), that you fight according to the rules (verse 5) and that you labor first before you enjoy the fruits (verse 6).

The first is "suffer hardship". In connection to the previous verse Paul asks to suffer with him for the truth and the gospel. You are a good soldier if you are aware of the enemy and you discover him before he discovers you. The soldier here is in active service and not in the barracks or on leave. He is in the front line and finds himself continually in a war situation. He receives his orders from his Superior, "Christ Jesus", and is therefore continuously in contact with Him.

V4. He doesn't have to worry about anything. His life is not entangled with or engaged in "the affairs of everyday life". This refers to civilian matters as opposed to the military's obligations.

This attitude goes for all who serve the Lord and it is not only for the so-called 'fulltime workers'. When you serve the Lord only one thing is important: how to live to His satisfaction. Demas lost sight of that and was attracted by the pleasure of the world (2Tim 4:10; cf. Lk 8:14). The Lord Jesus is the One Who has enlisted you as a soldier and into service and nobody else, no man or church. Be aware that if you want to satisfy men, you cannot be a soldier of Christ, let alone a good one (Gal 1:10).

V5. Another character you can't miss in your service is that of someone who "competes as an athlete". It literally means 'to fight as an athlete'. The fight of a soldier makes you think of a war situation. The fight of an athlete is about winning the prize, the medal or, as it is here, the crown. The picture of the athlete is derived from a person who participated in the national sports matches of the Greeks. If someone won, he received a crown (2Tim 4:8; 1Cor 9:25; 1Pet 5:4). This crown consisted of a garland, made of branches and leaves of possibly an olive tree. The material value of the crown was nil. But the other side was that the fame this crown represented was extraordinary great (Heb 2:7,9). If you wanted to receive that you had to win.

Yet, the victory could only be claimed when the athlete considered the rules connected to the match. One of the conditions was for example that the athletes had to be Greeks. They also had to have trained. They had to swear before Zeus that they had trained for ten months and that they would consider the rules of the branch of sports they had subscribed themselves for.

In the same way the servant of the Lord Jesus has to fight according to the rules. That means that he ought to know the rules and that he obeys them. This doesn't mean obedient to the law but to the Lord and His Word. He may not act on his own discretion.

V6. The last character that Paul mentions is that of a farmer, literally 'worker of the land or field' (cf. 1Cor 3:9; 9:7). A farmer is the whole year engaged in the production of the fruit. He is not able to accelerate the growth, but he

is able to make sure that there are no hindrances for the growth. Therefore he will spud out weeds, trim, nourish, water and protect the plants. Only if that work has been done well and unceasingly, he will see the results of his labor. Then he will see that his efforts are being rewarded and he will be the first to enjoy the fruit. If he gets lazy and impatient and stops halfway he will destroy all the work he has done earlier and will stand with empty hands when the harvest time comes (Pro 20:4; 24:30-31).

Sometimes you get to see some results of your service already on earth. Yet the true enjoyment of all fruits of your service will be only when you are with the Lord.

Therefore you should remember: the Lord takes care of you (verses 3-4), you are to make sure that you act according to God's Word (verse 5) and you can look forward to the coming enjoyment of everything you have done here for the Lord (verse 6).

Now read 2 Timothy 2:1-6 again.

Reflection: What are the characteristics of a good servant? Which characteristics are not so evident with you? What could you do about that?

2Tim 2:7-12 | Understanding In Everything

7 Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. 10 For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus [and] with [it] eternal glory. 11 It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us;

V7. It appears to me that the examples in the previous verses are in plain language. Nevertheless Paul points out emphatically to Timothy that he has to bear in mind what he just said. “Consider” means to grasp with the mind, to ponder on it, to think it over. Paul admonishes Timothy here in the sense of an order. He wants Timothy to understand the true meaning of the examples he used by considering them. This attitude is of course important when reading the whole Word of God. You obtain insight from the Lord if you consider His Word. You will learn to understand His thoughts.

Here you see, like often in the Scripture, the connection between what you should do and what the Lord does. The more you ponder the Scripture and consider them in your heart, the more the activity of the Holy Spirit grows to clarify the teaching of it. If you are restfully and peacefully engaged in His Word in God’s presence, the Lord will come to you and give you understanding. Not by using your intellect – although it is not separated from it – but by the working of the Holy Spirit you dig into the Divine matters and understand them.

V8. With all considering what the Scripture says, it is important that you “remember Jesus Christ”. It is all about Him, He is the center of all God’s thoughts. Understanding in everything is first of all understanding in Who Jesus Christ is and what He has done.

Paul also helps you on the way by mentioning two main points of the truth that are connected to Christ (cf. Rom 1:3). In the first place you ought to remember Him as “risen from the dead”. What do you think of when you consider Him as the One Who is risen from the dead? Then you think of God, Who is able to establish something completely new by His creating

and life giving power. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the proof and the beginning of it. God has got nothing to do with the world, sin and death. On that He must bring judgment. What Christ has done opens a new world with new people where everything is in accordance with God and where Christ is the Center.

There is another thing that you should remember in connection to Jesus Christ and that is that He is “descendant of David”. That determines you that God is faithful to the promises He made to His people Israel. He will fulfill all those promises. In the future Israel will live again in the land that God has given them. In that land the Lord Jesus will be seated as the true Son of David, as the promised Messiah on the throne of His father David in the city of His father David. Then from Jerusalem He will rule the world in peace and righteousness.

Again, as ‘risen from the dead’ He is now the living Lord in heaven. He lives there to always intercede for you before God (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). He knows how difficult it is to remain faithful to God’s Word as a loner. Regarding the phrase ‘descendant of David’ you may remember that suffering will come to an end when He comes to reign. Then the things on earth will be like they are in heaven: totally in accordance with God. By remembering Him in this way it will strengthen you to live to His honor in these last days.

What Paul says doesn’t deviate from what he calls “my gospel”. That means that he has proclaimed this in his preaching of the gospel and he himself has kept it in remembrance. That is why he has persevered up till now and has not given up. Therefore he is also still powerful in the faith and is able to encourage Timothy by that. What he writes now applies to all ages, also to now and also to you.

V9. On the basis of the preaching of the gospel and his commitment to it he endures these things. He is no criminal, he has not committed any punishable offence. Paul receives the same treatment as the two crucified people next to the Lord Jesus, who are also called criminals (Lk 23:32,39). It makes clear what society thinks of them and of him. People bracket them in the same category as such people. Above all he is here in the footstep of his Master Who “was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12).

He was so impressed by the gospel that he would do anything for it. He may be imprisoned, but the Word of God cannot possibly be imprisoned. His faith in its power is maintained unbroken. The power of God's Word cannot possibly be limited or abolished by anything from man. Its advancement will move on. It will convince hearts and consciences and will deliver people from spiritual imprisonment. The Word of God will conquer any adversary.

Man is like grass that fades, but the Word of God lasts forever, it remains to eternity (Isa 40:6-8; 1Pet 1:24-25). If an instrument is being hindered to actively spread the gospel by imprisonment or death, God will deploy new instruments. Are you deployable?

V10. Despite the fact that Paul is deactivated regarding the preaching, he is not deactivated regarding his involvement. His imprisonment and suffering are a part of it. Paul knows that God is using his imprisonment and hardships to reach and bless "those who are chosen". That's why he is happy to put up with it. He doesn't think of his own pain and hardships, but he thinks of those who are chosen. For their sake he endures everything.

In this way, too, he resembles his Lord. The Lord Jesus has also endured all things for the sake of those who are chosen. In His atoning work for each of those who are chosen He is of course unique. Regarding this no one is able to follow Him or share it with Him. You are indeed able to share in His commitment and suffering that was caused by men. That is a privilege.

Paul's heart goes out to all who will be saved by the preaching of the gospel. The more are saved, the greater is the glory of the Lord Jesus (Pro 14:28a). God has people in mind whom He wants to save. In His counsel He has also decided that they will be saved. You didn't know that before the gospel reached you and you came to faith. You have also no idea whom God has taken into His counsel to be saved. That is totally God's business and not yours.

What you are to keep in mind is that God wants all people to be saved. Therefore the gospel is to be preached to all people. God's love goes out to all people (Jn 3:16). That's how it should also be with us (2Cor 5:14). That those who are chosen will accept it is another encouragement to endure

all adversary and rejection. It is because of them. It is presented here as if it depends on your commitment that those who are chosen will indeed be saved. After that salvation an eternal glory follows. That is also the part of those who are chosen. Paul is not satisfied with less than that. Are you?

V11. For the fourth time Paul points out that it is a trustworthy statement (1Tim 1:15; 3:1; 4:9). In the next letter he repeats it one more time (Tit 3:8). It refers to what he just has said, you can count on it. It also applies to what follows after that. He confirms again that the Word remains, although he is not able to continue his service. You find everything in it that you need to find out how God wants you to live and what His plans with you, the church, Israel and the world are.

The starting point is that you died with Christ. You ought not to take the word “if” as a doubt or insecurity, but in the sense of ‘because it is so’. Because it is so that you have “died with Him”, then living for yourself has ended, a life that you lived without considering God. You have acknowledged that you have lived in sin as a sinner and that God had to throw you into hell for that. The answer of God to that confession was His gospel. Therein He made known to you that Christ has gone through the judgment and that He judged you in Him. When Christ died, you died with Him.

But Christ did not remain in death. He rose. And therefore you also rose and live. Only you do not live for yourself anymore, but for Him (Gal 2:20). If that would mean that you like Christ would have to die the martyr’s death, then like Christ you will still live and do so with Him.

V12. To die the martyr’s death is not for everyone. Surely, everyone who testifies of the Lord Jesus will experience a form of suffering. In return for enduring that, you will reign with Him. The coming kingdom is connected here with suffering (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom 8:17; 2Thes 1:4-5). Having some insight in that great future where you will reign together with the Lord Jesus, gives strength today to endure slander and rejection. Reigning soon with Him is a reward for enduring now.

You know and see that reigning with Him still doesn’t occur yet. Our task now is not to reign but to endure. Earlier Paul already told that to the Corinthians too, who also wanted to take some advance on reigning in the

millennial kingdom of peace because they didn't want to endure slander (1Cor 4:8-13). The Lord Jesus has given the perfect example when He was being abused and said to Pilate: "But as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm" (Jn 18:36).

After having used several times a positive 'if' with the corresponding promise, from verse 12b several times a negative 'if' follows with a corresponding result. To "deny" Christ means to deny against better judgment to know Him. That happens when people confess to be in connection with Christ but deny that connection before other people.

A clear example you have in the denial by Peter (Mt 26:69-74). Of Peter we know that he is a believer, for he has confessed this sin and the Lord has forgiven him. This sin can be committed by any believer. If that happens the Lord has to deny that believer, as He had to deny Peter too. From the moment that Peter denied the Lord Jesus, the Lord said to His Father that He did not know Peter.

That doesn't mean that the Lord did not keep an eye on Peter and didn't bring him to repentance (Lk 22:61). But until the moment of repentance the Lord denied before His Father that He knew Peter. This denial by the Lord also implies that Peter lost the blessing and reward that he received if he had not denied the Lord. The denying of the Lord has therefore a consequence for today and for the future.

Also people who only confess with their lips that they know the Lord, addressing Him as "Lord, Lord" (Mt 7:21), will find themselves in situations that they deny Him. The Lord will deny them too, but the consequences will then be endlessly worse. They will be denied by Him forever (Mt 10:33; 7:22-23).

Now read 2 Timothy 2:7-12 again.

Reflection: What do you learn here about the Lord Jesus and your relation to Him?

2Tim 2:13-19 | The Solid Foundation of God

13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. 14 Remind [them] of these things, and solemnly charge [them] in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless [and leads] to the ruin of the hearers. 15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 16 But avoid worldly [and] empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, 17 and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, 18 [men] who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and they upset the faith of some. 19 Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

V13. With the denying you could speak about a denying that happens by men and a denying that happens by the Lord (even though it is with a difference in meaning). That is not possible regarding being faithless. We people can be faithless, but the Lord cannot possibly be faithless. He can deny people who deny Him, but He cannot deny Himself. He cannot possibly become faithless to Himself. He cannot act in contrast to Whom He is as the Holy and Righteous. He cannot be with us if we are faithless.

If we are faithless He will encounter us with proper measures to bring us back on the way of obedience to Him. That can be painful measures. In any case they are measures that humble us because God wants to bring us to repentance and confession. Then He can bless us again in that same faithfulness to Himself, for that is what He has in mind for us.

V14. What Paul said in the previous verses Timothy must remind the believers of. He has to impress these particular aspects of the truth unto his hearers and not only once, but again and again. Furthermore, Timothy must strongly warn the believers to carefully pay attention to their words. He has to empower his warning by pointing out to them that all of their words are indeed spoken out to one another, but also in the presence of God.

The consciousness that God is Witness of what we say, will make us cautious in our words. Then we will not be quickly tempted to strive about

words. Words are important in clearly explaining the truth. But if it causes a strife about words the result will be the ruin of the hearers. The goal of every service is that the hearers will benefit and profit by it and not that it will cause damage to them or even destroy their whole faith life.

V15. To maintain yourself and not to be dragged into a strife about words for example, you must be “diligent to present yourself approved to God”. The point is that God can see you as someone who despite continuous trials, has remained faithful to Him. That doesn’t come naturally to you, but it demands of you that you discipline yourself and carefully make efforts for it.

If the only important thing for you is what the Lord thinks of you, you will be “a workman who does not need to be ashamed”. The word ‘workman’ doesn’t indicate a particular position. It is about people who make efforts and great sacrifices to serve the believers. If you also want to make efforts for that you will have no reason to be ashamed, for your labor will not be in vain or worthless.

“The word of the truth” is the total of the revelation given by God in His Word. The “accurately handling” of the word of truth means that in explaining the truth a right course through the Scripture is followed, that the explanation of the truth may be well-balanced. The expression ‘accurately handling’ was used for example by architects at designing a building. Each part was put in the right place, where the ground parts had to be in the right proportion to the walls.

This shows how important it is that each part of the Word of God is given its right context and place. The highlighting of the one truth will not be at the expense of the other truths, but the harmony between the different parts of the truth will be proven. If law and grace are mixed together or if Jewish rituals are being introduced in the Christian worship service there is not an accurately handling of the word of truth.

V16. If you deal with God’s Word in this way you will have no difficulty with recognizing “worldly [and] empty chatter” and with avoiding this. It is not expected of you that you try to make them change their mind. That is wasted energy and you will also expose yourself to their depraved chatter. It is not unthinkable that you will be influenced by it.

V17. These people will not repent, but on the contrary, they will make things worse. They cannot be stopped. “Their talk will spread like gangrene.” The word ‘spread’ literally means ‘find pasture’, like in John 10 (Jn 10:9). Their message refers not only to their doctrine as a false doctrine, but their total speech reveals their evil thinking. What they say works like leaven: it affects everything that comes into contact with it. In that way this virus of their evil words spreads around them and extends itself unstoppably. Therefore you are ordered to avoid it and not to have anything to do with it.

Again Paul names two names. In chapter 1 he named two names of persons who turned their back on him (2Tim 1:15).

V18. The names he now mentions regards persons “who have gone astray from the truth”. Their error is that they say that the resurrection has already taken place. They do not deny the resurrection, but declare that as something that had happened already and therefore not something that is still to take place. That would mean that you are made perfect already, that you cannot sin anymore and that you can claim the world for yourself. It also means that when you die everything stops there. The resurrection had taken place already after all, had it not?

To avoid any possibility to be caught in the snare of any error, it is essential for you to read and know God’s Word. You are not to have anything to do with men who proclaim things that mutilate the work of the Lord Jesus and its results by attaching their own reasoning to it. They make themselves instruments of the devil who always seeks to distort God’s Word and in that way deprive it from its true meaning. Those are people who “upset the faith” of unstable souls, people who do not read the Bible themselves in a praying attitude in order to experience in that way their fellowship with God.

V19. These servants of the devil who are among Christians are not always directly recognizable. Sometimes you may wonder: Is it a child of God whom I am dealing with, or not? Much of what is said sounds so familiar, so biblical, that you love to accept it as an enrichment of your faith life. It often also sounds wonderful.

Still they also say things or teach things that make you sense that something is wrong or of which you must admit that they are not in accordance with the Bible. You observe a certain mixture. You hear beautiful things and you hear strange or even wrong things. This confusion has entered professing Christianity because Christians have not remained alert, which gave the devil the opportunity to introduce wrong elements (Mt 13:24-25,37-39).

How should you deal with that? You do not want to accuse anyone falsely, but you especially do not want to expose yourself to false doctrines. You want to learn from others, but you also want to be able to recognize the other person as a true child of God who is sound in teaching God's Word. You want to have fellowship with believers, but you do not want to have fellowship with the evil. Fellowship with the Lord means everything to you and therefore you want to be on your guard against doctrines that cause you to turn away from the Lord.

Paul uses the word "nevertheless" or 'however' in his response to all these arguments as an introductory to a holdfast for circumstances where everything is in confusion. There indeed is "the firm foundation of God" to which a seal is attached. This seal is a security with two aspects. The one aspect of this security is the side of God, what He sees. Even though it may sometimes be difficult or nearly impossible for you to discover whether a person is a true believer or not, that is no problem to the Lord. He knows exactly who belongs to Him. It is out of the question that He can be confused. He knows exactly who has new life, because He Himself has given it.

The other aspect of this security is the side of man, what you see. You can judge someone's life, just as others can judge yours, as a matter of fact. You see if a person "who names the name of the Lord", who confesses to know Him, this also shows in his life. With someone who has new life you will notice that he doesn't want to participate in anything that gives a wrong presentation of the Lord Jesus or His work and that he willingly gives the Word of God full authority over his life.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:13-19 again.

Reflection: Which contrasts do you encounter in this portion?

2Tim 2:20-21 | A Vessel for Honor

20 Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.

21 Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these [things], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

You may say that the verses that appear to you in this section are very up to date. The confusion in professing Christianity is increasing. How are you supposed to find your way there? Fortunately the Lord has foreseen the situation that the circumstances will not be any more like at the beginning of the church. In those days no one of the unbelievers dared to associate with the believers (Acts 5:12-14). That is not the case anymore. Nowadays there is much chaff among the wheat.

You read in the previous section that the Lord knows who belongs to Him (cf. Jn 10:14), although you are not always able to see that. You also saw the side of your responsibility that you are to abstain from what is in contrast to God's holiness and righteousness. The measure of that is Christ, His Person and His work and the Word of God. If the perfection of Christ or His work or the Word of God is being questioned, or wrongly presented or if aspects of these truths are being denied, you do not need to ask yourself whether you have to do with a believer or not. You can leave that to the Lord. Your task is to abstain from everyone who does that and from every Christian congregation that tolerates that.

V20. To clarify Paul uses the example of a large house. You may remember that he also spoke about a house in his first letter (1Tim 3:15). There he calls the church of the living God "the household of God". He means by that, that all true believers form that house. Here he doesn't speak about 'the house of God', but about 'a large house'. To find out what he means by that you should look at the things that are in it, the 'vessels'.

Just like the large house represents something these vessels also represent something. First, a vessel is an indication for a person (cf. Acts 9:15; 1Thes 4:4). Furthermore, two things stand out when you read the description of the vessels:

1. there is a distinction in material: "gold and silver ..., but also ... of wood and of earthenware" and

2. there is a distinction in use: “some to honor and some to dishonor”.

We first look at the distinction in material. It is also important what these materials do represent. You learn more about that in 1 Corinthians 3 (1Cor 3:12-13). You read there that the fire makes the distinction clear. The fire doesn't change anything about the gold and silver, but it consumes the wood and earthenware. The fire represents the righteousness of God by which all things are tested and examined.

‘Gold and silver vessels’ represent the believers. When God puts them to the test and examines them in His righteousness, it will become clear that they possess God's righteousness in Christ.

‘Vessels of wood and earthenware’ represent the unbelievers. When God in His righteousness puts them to the test and examines them they will be consumed, for they do not have Christ as their righteousness. Thinking back to the seal (verse 19), then you have here the side of the seal that says that the Lord knows those who are His. To say it metaphorically like Paul does here: the Lord knows who the vessels of gold and silver are and who the vessels of wood and clay are, although we are not always able to see that.

But also your side is being dealt with in the metaphor. Often you are not able to judge the distinction in material because of the confusion that prevails in professing Christianity. What you certainly are able to do and should do is judging whether a person is a vessel to honor or a vessel to dishonor. Here you have the other side of the seal. A vessel to honor is a person who names the Name of the Lord and demonstrates that by abstaining from wickedness.

V21. Up till now it seems that it is only about judging what others do, but the important question is of course whether you want to be a vessel for honor. The answer to that question can be ‘yes’. But there is a condition attached to that. To be a vessel for honor you are to cleanse yourself from the vessels to dishonor. And who are the vessels to dishonor? People who do not want to abstain from wickedness.

What does that mean: to abstain from wickedness? This abstaining has two aspects. It means to abstain from people who bring the wrong doctrine. It also means abstaining from people who do not bring the wrong doctrine

themselves, but still consciously remain associated with those who bring the wrong doctrine. They don't do anything about it if things are being taught that are directly in contrast with the Scripture. You have an example in Christian congregations where liberal theologians are allowed to freely bring their depraved doctrines or where unbiblical ways of life e.g. unmarried cohabitation or homosexual relationships are being accepted, while according to God's Word discipline has to be exercised by the local church.

I would like to point out emphatically that in this portion it is about your personal faithfulness and your personal responsibility. It is important for you to keep seeing the context of this section. Then you will see that abstaining from wickedness is something you do yourself. God's Word doesn't say here that you must demand that of others. Each person must deal for his own sake accordingly this Scriptural word. You are to cleanse yourself from sin in your own life and from sin in the congregation you are. If the congregation doesn't 'clean out' (1Cor 5:7,13) the leaven (a metaphor of sin), you have here the instruction to 'cleanse' yourself from these things.

I would also like to point out emphatically that it is about doctrines or practices that violate the foundations of the Christian faith, namely Christ and His Word. It definitely is not about a distinction of insight in certain truths of the Scripture. Unfortunately, there are a lot of differences among Christians about e.g. the future or about the church. But that's not the point here. I don't say that it is not important what the Scripture says about the future or about the church. Everything in the Scripture is important, for the Scripture is totally God's Word. Nevertheless, you are not supposed to put the different understanding of a truth from the Scripture on the same level with the violation of the Person of the Lord Jesus or the violation of the foundation of our faith. The latter is what this section is about, because it is about Him and His work. Regarding that there may not be any difference of understanding.

The reason why I also separate from other believers when it is about how to be a local church, has nothing to do with the call to abstain from wickedness. I also do not join congregations where there is no evil in the sense of fundamentally false teachings, but where the form of being a church is

not according to what I have discovered about it in God's Word. When I for example look at Acts 2 or 1 Corinthians 14 (Acts 2:42; 1Cor 14:26-40), I really want to be there where people desire to practice that.

I have gone into more details regarding this section because many believers were caused and are still being caused much injustice on the occasion of this section. That happens by speaking about them as 'vessels to dishonor', while those believers also reject everything that violate Christ and His work and Word. Even though their idea of fulfilling the conditions of 'being a church' is different from what my conviction is, they will stand up for the honor of the Lord. They resist against wrong teachings and do not tolerate living in sin. Such Christians also want, like I do, to "be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master".

Fortunately there are all over the world committed Christians to be found who honor the Lord with their life. They are true vessels for honor. They live a holy life and they therefore often experience slander and persecution by the world, more often than we do. They not only confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus to be their "Master", a name that indicates the absolute authority of Christ over their life, but their whole life testifies of that.

I hope that it also applies to you. Then you are "prepared for every good work", that means that you are ready to do a service that is 'good'. That is what you want too, and that is only to be welcomed.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:20-21 again.

Reflection: How could you be a vessel for honor?

2Tim 2:22-26 | Flee, Pursue, Correct

22 Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love [and] peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. 23 But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. 24 The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 25 with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 26 and they may come to their senses [and escape] from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

V22. Before you rush out to “pursue ...”, it is being made clear to you what you should really be aware of: you have to deal with “youthful lusts”. You may think that this refers to sexual lusts. That surely have to do with it, but that is certainly not limited to it and I also do not think that that’s the main point. It is the lusts that are characteristic to youth. Here you have to think about assertiveness, wanting to be heard, desiring to be of importance.

One of the clear marks with young zealous believers is a sharp eye for other people’s faults, while they themselves have only a very limited knowledge of their own heart. If you notice that assertiveness determines your actions you must flee, leave the situation before you make mistakes (cf. Gen 39:12; 1Tim 6:11; 1Cor 6:18; 10:14). Recognize that you do not yet know yourself very well and that you do not have the spiritual maturity to say or do something in certain cases, even if you should have the right view in a situation.

With this mind you may do something positive. To abstain on the one hand is essential, but negative. Therefore you should on the other hand pursue what is in accordance with the Lord:

1. In the first place that is “righteousness”, that is a way of doing what is right before God and men.
2. Also “faith” or confidence of faith is a crucial characteristic when everything around you is in confusion and the only hold are the Lord and His Word.
3. To this is added “love”. Without love in your heart righteousness and faith become expressions of a legalistic spirit.

4. Finally it is said that you should pursue “peace”. You do not seek to quarrel, but you want to be a peace maker.

And in case you may think that you have to do all this by yourself alone, then you hear at the end of verse 22 that that is a mistake. You will never in Scripture find the command to be a Christian on your own. Abstaining from vessels to dishonor is essential. If you limit yourself to that, it will lead you to Pharisee-ism, an attitude of ‘I am holier than you are’. Therefore you should join “those who call on the Lord from a pure heart”.

With the help of the Lord you will be able to discern whether the other person has a pure heart, just like the other is to discern whether that is also the case with you. Therefore you should talk with one another. Let Christ and His work and Word be the subject and it will become clear whether He is being called on from a pure heart.

V23. After having spoken about calling on the Lord from a pure heart you can certainly sense that “foolish and ignorant speculations” are clearly the opposite of that. Discussions and disputes are being organized for amusing of audiences that even chose a winner for that. Most of the time that doesn’t bring people closer together, but makes the gap even bigger. The disputes are not settled, division only increases more and more. These disputes are often about nothing. It is just useless, undisciplined squabbling.

Such questions do not come from a pure heart, but from someone who follows his own thoughts and will. Don’t expose yourself to them, don’t even listen to them, but “refuse” them. If you enter into disputes you will participate in producing quarrels.

V24. Producing quarrels and quarrelling yourself is just something you as a bond-servant of the Lord ought not to do. Instead of feeding an arguing spirit you ought to be “kind” and meek to all without distinction. If you are kind you will not repulse people, but on the contrary attract them. Kindness is an attitude that arouses confidence.

It is also important that a bond-servant of the Lord in a position like that of Timothy is able to teach others. A bond-servant of the Lord gives clear teachings, it is not difficult to understand him and he doesn’t use fuzzy or mysterious words. Another significant characteristic of a bond-servant of

the Lord is his 'patience'. He endures the wrong that people cause him or speak about him, without becoming impatient or rebellious.

V25. That he rejects quarrels doesn't mean that he rejects the person. The opponent of the truth is a person that is to be won for the Lord. Therefore he will not want to correct the opponents in a snappy tone, but "with gentleness". This is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus (Mt 11:29) and therefore has nothing to do with softness or weakness, but on the contrary with steadfastness. The important means through which people come to conversion is definitely through this characteristic. He who is gentle resembles the Lord Jesus.

God grants people repentance "leading to the knowledge of the truth", by bringing them into connection with His Son. Paul uses the expression "if perhaps", because he knows that only God can grant repentance and is sovereign in it. He leaves the result to God. Again you see that the responsibility of the servant and the sovereignty of God don't exclude one another.

In the Lord Jesus, Who is the truth (Jn 14:6), it is seen what the truth is about both God and man. He who gains insight into Him, gains insight into the truth.

V26. By bringing Him to attention the opponents may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil. Here it is not about unbelieving people in general, but about those who profess to know God, but have been taken captive in the snare of the devil. They participate in distorting God's Word and teach wrong things about the Lord Jesus. As captives of the devil they do his will. They seek to proclaim the lie. They are blinded by the devil in such a way that they think are telling the truth (cf. Jn 16:2).

Here it is about the conversion of professing Christians. Only when they repent they will acknowledge the full truth and reject the verisimilitude that they have preached. Up till that moment they live in an infatuation, an illusion, while they think that they bring the right doctrine. Through repentance they will "come to their senses", so that they may see and think clearly to do the will of God.

Now read 2 Timothy 2:22-26 again.

Reflection: Which positive and which negative orders do you receive here?

2 Timothy 3

2Tim 3:1-7 | Last Days and Difficult Times

1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

V1. To do the will of God the circumstances are not particularly favorable. Paul wants you to realize that we live in the “last days” and that the times in these days will be “difficult”. With ‘last days’ is indicated that we have come to the closing stages of the era of the church as a testimony on earth. With “difficult times” it is indicated that you do not see any more directly a clear distinction between true Christians and those who are that only by name. The devil will do everything to make as many Christians as possible to become unfaithful to the Lord. He will as he always did tempt Christians to sin, but he will make maximum efforts to introduce worldly elements into Christian living.

V2-4. That appears from the list of characteristics that Paul summarizes after this. If you compare this list with the list in Romans 1 (Rom 1:29-32) you will see a great similarity. Only in Romans 1 it is about characteristics of people who live without God, while here the characteristics are written of people who profess to be in relationship with God. In that way you see that the devil seeks to undermine the Christian testimony by introducing worldly elements in order to make it nothing more than an empty case. In that way the same degeneration that existed among the Gentiles will appear again under the cloak of Christendom. The result of this is that to the sins of Romans 1 the sin of hypocrisy is added.

Going down the list, you can see how numerous the forms are in which evil comes to expression among religious people. We don't need to dwell too long on each expression. Do try to be honest with yourself and confess before the Lord the things you recognize in your own life and ask His help to stop doing or being that way.

1. The list starts tellingly with "lovers of self".
2. The next is "lovers of money", materialism.
3. When they open their mouth they appear to be "boastful".
4. What they say shows that they are "arrogant".
5. "Revilers" speak evil, bad things about others to harm them.
6. They have no respect for their father and mother but are "disobedient to parents". It demonstrates the degeneration of the family life.
7. These people are also "ungrateful", an attitude that takes everything for granted and demands to be served any time. It is the blown up feeling of being entitled to anything I want and don't need to thank anyone for it.
8. Such people often live an "unholy" life, a life that is filled with uncleanness and ungodliness.
9. They are "unloving". There is no mention of love with them. They even lack natural love, which can lead to homosexual relationships.
10. They are also "irreconcilable". They cannot tolerate anyone else and are not willing to forgive anybody.
11. They love to put other people in a bad light which they show by "malicious gossips".
12. "Self-control" is a strange matter to them, there is no self-restraint,
13. whereby they do not shun "brutal" behavior in words and deeds.
14. That's because in their life they show to be "haters of good". They have no eye and no taste for the good. They act almost like robots. There is almost nothing really human in their performance.
15. "Treacherous" people are willing to commit treason. Judas is an example of that (Lk 6:16; cf. Acts 7:52).

16. Without considering the consequences they speak and act “reckless”. It is no use to warn them.

17. “Conceited” as they are they are themselves the center of their thinking.

18. It is therefore not surprising that the list concludes with the absolutely lowest point: “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”. The love for God has totally been driven out by the love for pleasure.

The whole list describes a life that only consists of the pursuit of selfish goals, whereby the rights of God are totally ignored.

V5. It is all about instruments of the enemy that give the appearance that they live in fear for God. But it is only a form (Mt 23:25). Their life does not radiate the power of a life with God. They even deny that God is able to give them some strength. They keep the Word of God that is living and powerful closed. They have their own ideas about God. God is for them Someone Who supplies their need, while they count on themselves when it comes to the fulfillment of those needs. In fact they are God themselves. You cannot afford to remain in contact with such people. You are not to argue with them, but you ought to obey God and avoid them.

V6. Such a company is an ideal place for those who creep in, people who say and teach wrong things to undermine the testimony of God. It is often women by whom the false teachings are spread. Generally speaking, women are more emotional by nature than men. There is nothing wrong about that and that doesn’t automatically have to lead to a way of acting as it is described here. It is not surprising that John writes his second letter, concerning false teachings, to a woman (2Jn 1:1). She is supposed to recognize a false teacher.

But if emotion rules a woman and if she also lives in sin – driven therein by a depraved heart – false teachers will find in her a willing tool. The false teacher only needs to flatter her to win her for himself. He can then manipulate her in such a way that she becomes a propagator of his false teachings.

V7. They are women who indeed want to learn. They always hunger for new teachings. But instead of “to come to the knowledge of truth” they deviate further and further away from the truth. They are always search-

ing, but never come to a firm conviction. Nowadays there are many new teachings that respond and adapt to the desire after a spiritual life. These teachings consist of a gospel without the cross, without a crucified and risen Christ.

The cause that a person cannot come to the knowledge of the truth often is due to the fact that one does not subject oneself to the truth, but wants to subject the truth to oneself, to set it to one's own will and feelings.. Then the emotion determines the standard of truth. When it feels good, it is true. But to come to the knowledge of the truth there must first be a living relation with the Lord Jesus.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:1-7 again.

Reflection: Which warnings do you find for yourself in this section?

2Tim 3:8-15 | You, However

8 Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these [men] also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. 9 But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes's and Jambres's folly was also. 10 Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, [and] sufferings, such as happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium [and] at Lystra; what persecutions I endured, and out of them all the Lord rescued me! 12 Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. 13 But evil men and impostors will proceed [from bad] to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned [them], 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

V8. We are still in the section that describes the time where many people act outwardly as if they are Christians, but they are not inwardly. This is the result of the distortion of the truth. The truth is being imitated, but there is no inward relation with Christ Who is the truth. Imitation is possibly the strongest weapon of the devil. Paul quotes the example of two Egyptian magicians, of whom he seems to know the names, who were imitating Moses (Exo 7:11,22; 8:7). This performance of these magicians happened right before the departing of the people of God from Egypt.

That's what is happening now also. We live in the last days, right before the rapture of the church out of the world where imitation Christians are being manifest more and more. The Lord Jesus has also warned us for people who will say that they are the Christ (Mt 24:5,23-24). In the last times signs and false wonders will happen that have the appearance that they come from God, but they come from the liar (2Thes 2:9; cf. Acts 2:22). John warns us: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see, whether they are from God" (1Jn 4:1). Testing the spirits is possible by taking Christ as touchstone. Ask them what they think about Him and test whether it is according to the Word.

The strategy of the devil is not new. Already in the time of Moses he used imitation. It even appeared as if he could claim some success. Indeed the

magicians did imitate Moses, didn't they? They didn't fail, did they? No, but they practiced their magical acts out of resistance against Moses. Their goal was to keep the people of God in bondage. In the same way nowadays 'Jannesses and Jambresses' oppose the truth. They also respond with mockery to every reference of a soon rapture of the church out of the world (2Pet 3:2-3).

That they are "men of depraved mind" is the result of opening their hearts for the devil and his evil powers. What they preach as faith comes from this source. It is only worth to be rejected, thrown away, without paying any further attention to it. It doesn't offer any hope for today and no hope for the future.

V9. Sometimes it seems that these evil people can unstoppably go their way. Then you read here that God has determined a limit to their wicked performance, both in duration and in their deeds. The magicians in the days of Moses were exposed at the crucial moment of bringing forth life out of death (Exo 8:18). Seeming Christians may boast on theological discoveries, but that has never made them able to give new life to a person. The scope of their deeds is limited. For faith, this makes the nonsensicality of these magicians completely obvious.

Also the end of their performance is approaching. You do not need to expect that the performance of 'Christian magicians' will slowly diminish. It will only become worse. But the end of the current age, the age of the church, is approaching. The folly of the deceivers and unbelievers will become completely clear when the Lord Jesus is revealed in glory.

V10. As long as we are on earth the Lord Jesus provides us with remedies to remain kept with Him. How that works you see in the example that Paul presents to Timothy of himself. The contrast between the 'Christian magicians' and what you see in Paul is enormous.

Paul addresses Timothy and points him to his own example, like the old Elijah took Elisha with him along several places to teach him (2Kgs 2:1-10). Elijah took Elisha by the hand and gave him understanding in the situation of the people. Therefore Elisha was able to approach the people in the spirit and strength of Elijah, with a double part of that of Elijah's. Timothy is able to minister the church in the spirit and strength of Paul by observing

how he did everything. Not that Paul says anything new to Timothy. He only reminds him of that, for Timothy has already followed or examined it. He did not follow Paul for no reason.

1. First of all Paul points at “my teaching”. Only he, the apostle, can say that. The teaching is the basis. Without teaching there can be no practice.

2. But Paul didn’t only teach, he can also point at his “conduct”. He consistently practiced what he was passing on through his teaching. His life is based on his teaching.

3. Also in his “purpose” he was clear. He had no hidden purposes. He had a clear goal in mind which was not vague to Timothy. His purpose was to glorify God in everything whatever the cost was.

4. From what he taught, in how he did and in his purpose his “faith” in and his faithfulness to the Lord appeared. With full confidence in Him Paul fulfilled his service. In doing so, he met hostility and was put to the test.

5. But precisely in that situation Timothy saw his “patience”. He didn’t respond irritated and didn’t repay evil for evil.

6. The hostility of the enemy revealed his “love” for the Lord and for those who are His.

7. Also his “perseverance” or “steadfastness” was remarkable. All adversary and the fact that he was left alone didn’t make him depressed. He did not collapse because of the pressure, but he continued with what the Lord ordered him to do.

8. V11. Everyone who opens his mouth with proclaiming the truth will suffer “persecutions”. That indicates the insecurity of freedom, having no place of rest because they are chasing you.

9. He also lost his freedom several times. His enemies did not spare him, but made him “suffer” (2Cor 11:24-25a). He speaks particularly about three places he visited during his first mission trip (Acts 13:14-52; 14:1-20).

Paul has suffered all those persecutions, but he doesn’t boast about that as if he has achieved something. The Lord receives the honor, for it was He Who rescued him “out of them all” (Psa 34:19). ‘Out of them all’ shows that there is nothing that could stop Paul, no matter how severe the opposition

was. 'Out of them all' also shows that Paul indeed endured it all and was not spared it.

V12. What is mentioned previously does not only apply to Paul but to all Christians "who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus". If you live your life with reverence for God in fellowship with Christ Jesus you will also share in persecution. Persecution is not only literally being opposed and persecuted, but also not to be understood and to be despised. You experience that in any way you testify of the Lord. It doesn't apply to all Christians. If you do not want to suffer reproach you simply should not make clear that you know the Lord. You should "desire" that. Persecution is only the part of faithful Christians.

V13. This persecution will not diminish, for "evil men and imposters will proceed [from] bad to worse". The word 'imposters' is literally 'magicians'. That may probably indicate the increase of occultism. You may have heard of Christians who seek their luck with magnetizers. They say that these people claim to have received this gift from God. In that way they deceive even Christians, while these people are being deceived themselves by the devil.

Mind you that these are 'evil men'. They are instruments of the devil to whom they have delivered themselves. With all their nice talks they do not seek your luck, but your destruction.

V14. Then here comes a "you, however" (cf. verse 10). This indicates the contrast with the previous verse. In that verse the environment where you find yourself is depicted, an environment that fully opposes God and His Word. To remain protected against that influence Paul gives Timothy an assurance. Timothy can trust in this assurance to remain steadfast in the truth and in the enjoyment of the salvation of God. He must continue in the things which he has learned and must not be involved with new teachings. There is nothing missing in what he has learned; for that reason there is also nothing to be improved.

He is also fully convinced of this because he has learned it from someone to whom it was directly made known through Divine inspiration and who has the authority of God to communicate it. Paul is a unique servant. What he has taught we have in God's Word.

The teachers whom the Lord has given as a gift to His church do not bring new truths. They explain the truths of the apostles: truths that are written in God's Word. Our source is not Calvin or Darby, but the Word of God. It is not necessary to empower your words by referring to certain teachers, however much you ought to appreciate them and how gifted they were or are.

V15. The second reason for Timothy to remain in the things which he had learned, are "the sacred writings" he has known "from childhood". The words of the apostle are in no way in contrast to the writings of the Old Testament – those are 'the sacred writings' –, but are perfectly consistent with them. Timothy was taught by his mother and grandmother in them. This is an important instruction for parents to make their children known and familiar with the Scripture as early as possible in their childhood.

The Word has been put in writings so in that way God can use it as a permanent authority. Everything that is permanently of profit for the church has been written down in the Scriptures. It is also permanently profitable for your personal life of faith. You find everything you need in the Scripture "to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation".

Without God's Word you led a lost life. Through God's Word you have come to faith in Christ Jesus. You have been saved for eternity. If you as a Christian lead a life without consulting God's Word in everything, you will lead a lost life. Listening to the Scripture makes you wise to avoid all the traps of life and to arrive safely with the Lord.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:8-15 again.

Reflection: Which contrasts do you find in this portion?

2Tim 3:16-17 | All Scripture

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

These two verses are worthy of paying attention to in a particular section. They deliver you a description that surpasses every expression concerning the importance of the Scripture. It is necessary to stress that because the attacks on the inspiration and the content of the Scripture will ceaselessly go on and on in its intensity. One of these attacks is that we have God's Word in the Bible. This formulation opens the opportunity that we also have words in the Bible that do not come from God. It is of great importance to hold on to the verbal, word-for-word inspiration of Scripture.

V16. "All" means that there are no parts or portions that are less or more inspired than other ones. The inspiration does not focus on the Bible authors, but it focuses on what is written in God's Word. God has inspired the Bible authors what they had to write down. "Inspired" does not refer to the message, as if the Bible writers could phrase them afterward in their own words, as if only the contents but not the form has been inspired.

The words were given by inspiration to them to write those words down, so that also the words of the unbelievers and even of the devil have been written down. God wanted to have those words of unbelievers and the devil in His Word that are important for us to know. That all Scripture is "inspired by God" means that each word that is written in the Bible has been written in it because God has inspired the Bible author to precisely write down that word. When Paul speaks here about "Scripture" (and not 'Scriptures') it underlines the unity of all Bible books as one whole, "and the Scripture cannot be broken" (Jn 10:35).

In the original language in which the New Testament is written, the Greek language, 'inspired by God' is one word. Literally it says 'God breathed'. That may refer to 'breathed out by God', but also 'breathed in by God'. They are both true. When we say that God has 'breathed out' the words of the Scripture it lays the emphasis on the fact that the words of the Scripture are His words. Those are words that come out of Him and are written down the way He wanted them to be written down. When we say that He

has ‘breathed in’ them, then we emphasize the fact that He breathed them in people and that He had His words to be recorded in the Scripture by human instruments.

The fact that God inspired the books Himself gives Divine authority to the Bible books. The inspiration coheres with faithfulness, infallibility or inerrancy and the absolute authority of the Bible.

God has given His Word because of its profit for you. The word “profitable” has the meaning of ‘support’, ‘help’, ‘benefit’. The Word helps you, it supports you in your activities as a man of God. It equips you to do every good work. Every good work is each work in which the rights of God become visible in a Christianity that for a greater part does not consider those rights.

To do that correctly God’s Word is given in the first place “for teaching”. The Scripture teaches you Who God is, Who the Lord Jesus is and who man is. The Scripture teaches us about a lot of truths like sin, redemption, the value of the blood of Christ, the church, sanctification, the future. It is important to read the Scripture, in order to learn to know about these truths. Studying the Scripture in order to know ‘the teaching’, has the side-effect that you will not easily be dragged by your emotions. Within Christianity there are quite a lot of groups or movements that focus on emotions. These movements are focusing more on what you experience than on what you read in the Bible.

There is another danger that you should be beware of if you want to know the teaching of the Scripture. The danger is that you limit yourself to a doctrinal understanding of the Scripture without surrendering yourself to its living power. Then you can be compared to someone who pours water from a flowing stream in a cistern, causing it to come to a complete stop. That can be the result of attending all kinds of gatherings and eagerly reading Bible commentaries without absorbing the Word in your heart. Then it remains limited to intellectual knowledge. The opposite danger is to say that those Bible studies are just nothing and that practical Christendom is the only important thing. But how is practical Christendom thinkable if you do not know what you are supposed to be practicing?

The first effect of sound Bible study will be that you thank God for everything that you were able to learn from the Scripture. Praise and worship Him for every teaching. Sound Bible study also implies that everything you were able to learn from the Scripture will have influence on the practice of your life.

The second profit of the Scripture is that it offers you a mighty weapon in your hand “for reproof” false allegations. You see in Matthew 4 how the Lord Jesus reproves the allegations of the devil by quotations from the Scripture (Mt 4:1-10).

The devil may for example approach you in the image of your biblically critical Bible teacher or of a person who comes to your house or of a prominent person in Christianity. They can, like the devil, also say: ‘It is written.’ Then you need to know how to reprove them. Pay attention to how the Lord Jesus goes to work when He is being tempted by the devil. He simply responds to every challenge with: “It is written” (Mt 4:4,7,10). After the Lord cited three times from the Scripture the devil runs off.

The way the Lord Jesus goes to work is an example for us to follow. He did not chase the devil away by Divine power, but by using the means that is also available to you. Therefore you need to have some Bible verses ready. You need to exercise in using them. Have you ever heard about ‘memorizing’? That means learning Bible verses by heart. Do that with as many Bible verses as you possibly can. It does not come down to win a dispute. You will always lose a dispute with the devil. You ought not to argue, but to let the Word speak itself.

Each Christian needs correction. That is the third profit of the Scripture, “for correction”. Sometimes you want to go a way that is not good or do things that are not well without being aware of that. Through prayerful reading of Scripture, you will discover that. You after all want to do the will of God, don’t you? God speaks to you in the Scripture and helps you in that way to find the right way or to do the right thing. It is perilous to be content with yourself as if nothing is to be corrected. In the mirror of the Word you always see things that need to be corrected.

The exhortation for correction is not meant to discourage you, but on the contrary to encourage you. The purpose is not to make you performance

centered but 'Christ centered'. And whom of all those who are focused on Him, dares to say that there is nothing to be corrected anymore?

The fourth profit is the "training in righteousness". That does not imply the doctrine of the righteousness of God. Of course it connects to that and it coheres with that, but righteousness is seen here with a view to the practice. The point here is that you live in accordance to your position. Therefore you need to be taught. You ought to be 'trained' or 'educated' in righteousness.

You undergo that training or education when you read the Bible. Then you receive instruction on how your behavior is supposed to be toward God and men. You are being trained to give to God to what He is entitled. You also obtain instruction on how you suppose to give to your fellow man to what he is entitled. In the word 'righteousness' the whole Christian life is embedded.

V17. God has given His Word, the Scripture, with a purpose. This purpose, indicated by the words "so that", is that "the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work". Less than that will not do when you read the Bible. The Scripture wants to shape you into a 'man of God'. It is worthy to examine once who in the Bible are being called 'man of God'. You will discover that those are all people who defended God's interests in spiritually dark times. They represented Him toward people who turned away from Him.

If reverence for God in society and also in Christianity is diminishing, a 'man of God' shows in his or her life that God is there and how He is. In such a man the features of God become visible. God reveals Himself through him or her. God uses people who lean on nothing else than the Scripture alone for that purpose. 'Man of God' is an honorary title. The eternal, almighty God connects Himself to a weak, mortal human being when he is willing to be shaped by the Scripture.

The Scripture makes a 'man of God' "adequate", which means that he is brought to full maturity by the Scripture. That is regarding the person. The Scripture also gives 'the man of God' everything that is needed for him to be able to do "every good work". That is regarding his work. If you want to be a 'man of God' you will not be made equipped for your task by an

academic education. You find the equipment for the work which you are ordered to do in the Scripture.

I sincerely hope that you desire to be a 'man of God'. Then you will find everything in the Scripture that meets your desires.

The true Man of God on earth was the Lord Jesus. As Man He showed all features of God in a perfect way in the midst of a nation that had turned its back on God. You become like Him as Scripture gains a foothold in your heart. Scripture shapes you after His model.

Now read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again.

Reflection: Do you want to be a man of God? What should you do for that?

2 Timothy 4

2Tim 4:1-6 | Preach the Word

1 I solemnly charge [you] in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season [and] out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but [wanting] to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.

V1. In the previous verses Paul pointed out to Timothy the situation in professing Christianity where there is no improvement to be expected, but on the contrary deterioration. In the meantime, after many ages of church history that also appeared. But he also pointed out to Timothy resources for difficult times. He did that in a way from which you also may profit.

Now Timothy is able and has to get down to work. In a penetrating way Paul places Timothy “in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus”, a presence that is reality to Paul himself. He lives before the face of God and of Christ Jesus and not before the face of men. In that way he is like Elijah, who, while he stood before king Ahab, said: “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand” (1Kgs 17:1). He wants to give that awareness both to Timothy and to you.

The way Paul connects Christ Jesus and God with each other indicates that Christ is God. Then three things of Christ are said that have to do with the fact that He became Man. First of all He “is to judge the living and the dead”. That judgment is given to Him because He is the Son of Man (Jn 5:27). Then He will visibly appear as Man. Finally He will establish His kingdom.

He will execute the judgment on the living and the dead at different times and at different occasions. He will judge the living when He has appeared on earth and is seated on the throne of His glory. The nations living on earth will appear before Him and be judged by Him (Mt 25:31-46). He will judge the dead when He is seated on the great white throne, after His millennial kingdom (Rev 20:11-12).

Just for the record, the sequence of events listed in this verse:

1. First the Lord Jesus will appear on earth;
2. then He will judge the living, while He is seated on the throne of His glory;
3. then He will establish His kingdom and will reign for thousand years;
4. after which He, being seated on the great white throne, will judge the dead.

For the sake of completeness, I mention another judgment that takes place earlier than the two just mentioned, namely immediately after the rapture of the church (2Cor 5:10). There the reward is being given to the believer according to the measure of faithfulness with which He served the Lord on earth.

As it is said, the charging in the presence of two Divine Persons and the three events to come, underline the gravity of the order that must be fulfilled. But it also includes a great encouragement and that is that you may know that the hard times will come to an end when the Lord Jesus, Who is still being rejected, will return in power and majesty. The thought of His coming to judge makes you free from people and frees you from the fear of men.

V2. Against the background of verse 1 the command follows in verse 2. The thought of His appearance will not paralyze you, but will make you more diligent. When Christ returns He will come with His reward that is determined before the judgment seat. That reward is to be gained by you on earth by using all your efforts and diligence in full dedication to the Lord and to do what He asks of you.

In measured terms Paul tells Timothy what is expected of him. The whole point is: "Preach the word." After the Word of God has become apparent

as the equipment of the man of God in the concluding verses of chapter 3 (2Tim 3:16-17), the next step is that it has to be preached. That is a great duty in all times, but certainly when the church has fallen into decay.

‘Preach’ here means openly proclaim, like the imperial herald did. The message to be brought was not made up by the herald himself. Not listening to the message of a herald was a serious matter.

Timothy must always “be ready”. He is supposed to be inwardly always ready to transmit the Word, that is the whole revealed truth of God. He is supposed to be always ready (cf. 1Pet 3:15), “in season [and] out of season”, which means whether it is convenient for him or not, or whether the circumstances are favorable or not. He is also supposed to ‘reprove’, that is to deliver the convincing proof of the wrong in doctrine or life (cf. Jn 16:8). When that proof has been delivered then ‘rebuke’ should follow. The rebuking or denouncing, the openly indicating, makes clear how wrong the person has spoken or acted.

Not only courage is needed for that, but also the right mindset. Acting against evil and “exhort” to prevent evil must happen “with great patience”, that is with long-suffering and self-control and not with a quick temper. That must also be accompanied by “instruction” or education. Both with reproofing and rebuking and with teaching the doctrine of the Scripture has to be applied. All these actions are to be explained from the Scripture.

Acting on the basis of the Scripture has always been of the greatest importance. As time goes by the importance increases more and more. I hope you are well aware of that or become aware of that. In any case Paul is not to be blamed if you do not consider this.

V3. He warns us that a time will come that people and especially nominal Christians “will not endure sound doctrine”. We have definitely arrived in that time right now. Just tell nominal Christians about ‘the sound doctrine’ of marriage for instance. There is a great chance that they will laugh at you and label you as old-fashioned and that your ideas are outdated. In that way they reject the doctrine that is sound in itself and in its effect.

They choose for a free experience of sexuality. They do not want to realize that this has been the cause and the spread of a disease like aids. They

prefer to hold a 'Day for aids' to focus the attention on the problem and they give money in order to overcome this disease themselves. Getting to the root of the problem and living a healthy life in this regard, that is, in accordance with sound doctrine, they have no ears for that.

On the contrary, they listen to teachers who say things they love to hear; who bring a message that smoothly enter into their ears. They have no lack of variation. A church may then chose or appoint a preacher who has a nice way of preaching. The truth content is not important to them, as long as it offers spiritual amusement and it caresses the spiritual feelings. The same happens with people who follow preachers whom they like, without asking themselves whether the preaching is biblical.

V4. The result of this all will be that such people turn away their heads when once they really are confronted with the truth. They don't want to hear the truth at all, but consciously turn their ear away from it time and time again.

The automatic consequence is that they turn aside under the influence of "myths". It is ironic if you think that modern, liberal theologians are now trying to 'demythologize' the Bible, which means that they indicate the myths in the Bible in order to rob the Bible from its power. They label the wonders of the Bible as myths and they even consider them as fairy tales. But they take refuge in the myths themselves by turning away from the truth.

Paul rejects all expressions of modern thinkers and preachers, who base their allegations on science, with one word: fables. A quite recent example of a fable, a myth, is the Da Vinci Code, a book that is full of ridiculous religious mysteries, distortions of the truth and blasphemous allegations about the Lord Jesus. This book, out of which they also made a movie, has captivated millions. It has been sold more than thirty six million times and has already been translated into more than forty languages. Isn't it shocking that such a huge number of people turn aside to myths? It is preparation for embracing the antichrist when he reveals himself.

V5. Again you hear "but you". Paul is warning you not to let yourself be dragged down by this strong antichristian movement. "Be sober in all things." Be sure to remain free from false influences, for these will hinder

you to keep a sober, biblical view on all things. Don't be gullible and don't let people encourage you for ideas that have no basis in the truth. Make well-considered decisions. Submit your plans to the Lord in prayer and always consult His Word.

Be willing to carry the consequences of such a way of life and "endure hardship". People will not thank and welcome you for your witness to the truth. Remain merciful to the lost people and "do the work of an evangelist". Don't hide behind the thought that you possibly don't have the gift of an evangelist. That is not what it is about. The point is that whenever you have the opportunity to point to the Savior you must do that.

The ministry of Timothy is extensive. He is supposed to fully accomplish each aspect of it, that nothing will be left undone. The Lord also expects of you to fully fulfill what He has ordered you to do. Thereby you may be sure that if the Lord commands you to do something He also gives you the strength and the means to do it.

V6. Paul calls on Timothy's attention for all these things, because he himself will soon disappear from the earthly scene. His departure is another exhortation for Timothy to fully fulfill his ministry. Now he has to work hard himself. But he can build on the foundation that the apostle himself has laid.

Paul compares his departure with the outpouring of a "drink offering" (Phil 2:17). In the offering service of Israel a drink offering was added to the burnt offering, which was the main offering (Num 28:7-15,24,31; 29:39). His whole life in service to the Lord has been a life of full dedication and in that sense a burnt offering. Now he is close to pass away he sees his "departure" as a drink offering. A drink offering consists of wine and speaks of joy. He knows that he will enter into the joy of his Lord (Mt 25:21).

The word 'depart' has the meaning of 'to unloose' (Phil 1:23) and refers to the loosening of a connection. Paul doesn't see the execution, but the liberation! That that moment has come, means joy to him.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:1-6 again.

Reflection: Do you do the work of an evangelist?

2Tim 4:7-15 | Personal Circumstances

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 9 Make every effort to come to me soon; 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens [has gone] to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. 12 But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

V7. Paul looks back on his ministry. There is nothing that he regrets. What he did in the past still has its full value. He doesn't speak like a worn out warrior who is glad he made it to the end. It is the acclamation of joy from a winner. When he says that he has "fought the good fight" he doesn't emphasize the hardships and efforts and the sufferings that went hand in hand with it. For him the emphasis is on the privilege that he had by partaking of such an excellent fight. The fight here is the fight of a wrestler.

Also "the course" is a sports term. It is about a race here. The race has been finished. He has reached the finish with full conviction. In Acts 20 he also speaks about a 'course' (Acts 20:24; cf. Phil 3:13-14). There he looks forward, while here he looks back and sees the goal that he had set before him and which he indeed had reached. At the finish he notes that on his way he has defended and "kept the faith", that is the whole truth of faith, against the countless attacks on it. He did not lose anything of all that the Lord has entrusted to him.

V8. The only thing that's left for him is to receive the crown. He looks like a wrestler here who has won and looks at the victory podium where he may go to receive the award. That will be given to him by the Lord, the perfectly righteous Judge, Who perfectly knows all his motives and efforts and Who is able to correctly recognize and reward everything.

The reward consists of a public recognition of the Lord Jesus that Paul has lived as a righteous one in the midst of so much unrighteousness. In his life he had, by following his Master, suffered as an unrighteous one.

“That day” is the day that the Lord Jesus will be seated on the judgment seat and will reveal all things (1Cor 4:4; 2Cor 5:10). This great perspective didn’t only keep Paul going, but he eagerly looked forward to it.

And he also says that this doesn’t apply to himself alone, but also to you if you at least love the appearance of the Lord Jesus and eagerly look forward to that. Don’t you find it also wonderful that Paul, despite his miserable circumstances and the prospect of the martyr’s death, thinks of other people?

When Christ appears He will be revealed to the world (cf. verse 1). It is absolutely great to know that He will come first to catch up the church. But the world will sink down further into godlessness. When He appears He will make an end to that by judging all godlessness. Then He will carry out His plan with the earth, which is the territory of His kingdom. What a joy that will be to Him to reign on earth where He was rejected and killed and where He is still being rejected. He will then take the earth into possession for God, that God may be honored. You certainly look forward to that, don’t you?

V9. The desire for the appearance of the Lord Jesus doesn’t make Paul insensitive for the help of other people. He is looking forward to see Timothy and he asks him to come as soon as possible and to do everything in his power to indeed come. He needed someone whom he could share the feelings of his heart with and who would surely understand him.

V10. Demas is the first of seventeen names Paul mentions in this chapter. Although his days are numbered he thinks of others. With pain in his heart he mentions Demas. In two earlier letters he wrote during his first imprisonment, he also mentions Demas (Col 4:14; Phlm 1:24). There he appears to be someone who is close to Paul and who helps him. Nevertheless his heart was apparently not undividedly focused on the Lord.

It is not said that Demas is no longer a Christian and that he openly rejected the Lord. But it was not in his heart to bear the cross with the apostle. He started to love the world and forsook Paul. If you are not willing to pay

the price of hardship and suffering, you will forsake the work of the Lord in favor of this present world.

It doesn't directly mean that Demas submitted himself to lawlessness, but that he searched his future in the world. Probably he chose for an honorable job that absorbed all his attention, however. He traveled to Thessalonica. The church there was a sound church. However, he was not interested. He searched the world there and not the brothers and sisters. His love for the world was in sharp contrast to the love for the appearance of the Lord Jesus in verse 8.

What is said of Demas implies the warning not to let yourself be dragged down by the love for the present, but by the love for the coming. If you are perfectly comfortable in the present time, you will not look forward to the future time of Christ's reign.

Especially young believers are highly attracted to the world. John particularly warns them not to love the world nor the things in the world (1Jn 2:15). The world is not only all kinds of lawlessness, lusts and desires. It is the world as it has become because of the fall of man, where men are in control, who live a life without reverence for God. It also includes hard working people, who pursue a career or who do researches and make discoveries that improve the quality of life. They receive a lot of respect. However, if there is no place for God, it is the world.

Paul mentions two other ones, Crescens and Titus. They also left him. Of those it is not said that they have forsaken him. Most probably they went to another place in order to serve the Lord there. Of Crescens we do not know more than what is written here. Of Titus we know more, because Paul wrote him a letter that directly follows after this second letter to Timothy in the Bible.

V11. Although these two have not forsaken him like Demas did, Paul feels very alone. Not only that he was left to his fate by most Christians (2Tim 1:15), but also his companions in the work have left. Fortunately there is someone with him, Luke. Luke has made the departure of the others, for whatever reason, easier for him.

It would make Paul also happy if Timothy took Mark along with him. Probably Timothy could pick up Mark somewhere on his way. What Paul

says about Mark indicates that he has seen a restoration with Mark in his relation to the Lord. Also Mark has left Paul once after he first went together with him (Acts 12:25; 13:13). The price for following the Lord together with Paul had become too high. Due to his attitude he even causes a distance between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-39).

Fortunately there has been a moment that Mark became aware of his wrong choice. He chose again for the Lord. In that way the disturbed relationship has been restored and therefore he became useful again for the service. The way Paul writes about him, suggests that Mark wants to be useful with more diligence and dedication. And isn't it an amazing proof of the grace of the Lord that this failed servant has been allowed to describe the service of the perfect Servant in the Gospel according to Mark? The Lord always gives a failing servant the chance for a new start.

V12. The three brethren of verse 10 have left the apostle on the basis of their own decision. It was different with Tychicus, who was sent to Ephesus by the apostle. This Tychicus is a wonderful brother who is called by Paul a "beloved brother and faithful servant" (Col 4:7). He has delivered some letters that Paul has written during his first imprisonment: the letter to the Ephesians and the letter to the Colossians (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7-8).

V13. His request to bring his cloak and the books shows once more that Paul is an ordinary man. He cares for both his body and his spirit. It is a real human letter from someone who is just a man like we are with his needs and desires. In the place where he is imprisoned it could be cold and his cloak would be useful. With winter approaching (verse 21) his desire for his cloak is greater.

Paul would also be grateful to have the books and the parchments. Those are not necessarily the inspired Scriptures. He may have asked for scrolls of books and parchments (made of animal skins) with data that are valuable to him. He wants to refresh his spirit with those. It will not have been novels, as those today often filled with unbiblical fantasies of the writer from a vague memory of the Bible.

V14. Paul is also not indifferent about the harm that other people do to him, like Alexander the coppersmith. You can fight physical cold with a cloak, but from this man comes a spiritual cold that is not to be fought. It

is not said in what way this man caused Paul harm. Any way it is “much harm”. Nevertheless Paul doesn’t call for revenge, but leaves the judgment to the Lord.

V15. While Paul puts this matter concerning himself into the hands of the Lord, he warns Timothy of this man. Timothy must keep on going; he is still in the midst of battle. We need to warn each other sometimes of people who oppose the Word. He is a dangerous man, who finds his own words more important than those of the Scripture. At the same time it is a test for ourselves, how we stand and how we respond. Such people teach us lessons on patience.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:7-15 again.

Reflection: Do you love the appearance of the Lord?

2Tim 4:16-22 | Assistance From the Lord and Salutations

16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him [be] the glory forever and ever. Amen. 19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. 21 Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. 22 The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.

V16. This second and also last imprisonment of Paul has been extremely harsh. During his first imprisonment he had a certain liberty to receive people and he could preach and teach unhindered (Acts 28:23,30-31). Now he is alone, imprisoned in a place for which you had to make great efforts to find it (2Tim 1:17).

There was no one with him at his first interrogation, no one who defended him and spoke in his favor. He could defend himself, but still he was in need of some support. But everyone was afraid to be identified with him. That could be damaging, for then other people will know that you are also such a Christian. Paul feels deserted by them, as he did by Demas.

Still he does not blame anyone for anything. He is not filled with resentment and doesn't ask Timothy what he had asked with regard to Alexander the coppersmith (verse 15). He doesn't see them as opponents, although he cannot recognize them as supporters either. They have made his imprisonment more difficult by deserting him. Nevertheless he follows the example of the Lord Jesus, Who prayed: "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34). Also like Stephen who also followed the example of the Lord Jesus (Acts 7:60). Here you have examples of how to respond when people do not like you anymore because you testify of the Lord Jesus.

V17. Even if you feel left alone, just like Paul here, you are not alone, just like Paul is not alone here. The Lord wants to assist you and strengthen you. That is what Paul is experiencing. Even though everyone has deserted

him, the Lord stands with him (cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11). The personal presence of the Lord is the special experience in situations when you lose everything around you because you want to remain faithful to Him. He has “strengthened me” literally means ‘He has poured out strength in me’ or ‘He has given me a power transfusion’ (Phil 4:13). You feel your power being renewed when His presence is a living reality to you, when you expect everything from Him (Isa 40:31).

The Lord does that to make His work to be fully achieved by His servant. As far as Paul is concerned, it refers to his testimony in the courtroom and down to the palace of Caesar. He appealed to Caesar and he was going there. That he was going to make himself to be heard in the palace, regarding his testimony of the Lord Jesus, is a symbol for a testimony toward the whole Western world of which the palace of Caesar is the center.

Only when someone’s duty has come to an end the Lord will allow His servant to be killed by the enemy (cf. Lk 22:53; Jn 7:30; 8:20). At Paul’s conversion the Lord announced his duty (Acts 9:15). That’s why He allowed that Paul was being imprisoned. Now he will bear the Name of the Lord Jesus before Gentiles and kings. Everything that the enemy meant evil becomes a testimony, so that the rulers of the earth, they who otherwise would be unreachable, may hear the Word of truth.

That’s why for that moment he “was rescued out of the lion’s mouth”. We are reminded of Daniel in the lions’ den (Dan 6:23). Satan who is rampaging as a roaring lion against Paul to devour him (1Pet 5:8), still does not get the opportunity for that. He is still being controlled by the Lord, through which Paul has been saved from a premature death.

V18. Paul is well aware of the tremendous threat of the lion and his anger to tear him up. But he looks beyond the lion to the Lord. He is assured that as the Lord delivered him from the mouth of the lion, He also will rescue him “from every evil work”.

Satan not only appears like a roaring lion. He can also transform himself into an angel of light (2Cor 11:14). With ‘every evil work’ you may also think of everything that satan wants to whisper to Paul to bring him to a denial of what he has so far held so fearlessly. To achieve that satan may be giving those well intentioned advices through people who find themselves

good Christians. Of course these people are sober and do not exacerbate matters like Paul does according to their 'humble opinion'. Paul is more afraid for such whisperings than for death.

He knows that he is not resistant to that in his own power, but that the Lord will deliver him from it and will preserve him. "Rescue" here means to take out of the danger zone. The Lord takes him out of an area that is full of dangers and then brings him safely to an area where he is fully safe. That area is "His heavenly kingdom".

His strong and simple faith counts on the Lord until the end. Even if he would fall asleep instead of being changed, he will always continue to look forward to the appearance of the Lord. Paul is looking forward to the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus. That is not the same as what the evangelist Matthew so often calls 'the kingdom of heaven'. The kingdom of heaven concerns the government of the Lord Jesus over heaven and earth according to heavenly measures. That kingdom consists of a heavenly part and an earthly part. The 'heavenly kingdom' is the heavenly part.

Paul looks forward to come together with the Lord Jesus when He will appear to the world. Then he will be one of those saints in whom the Lord Jesus will be glorified and one of those believers in whom the Lord Jesus will be marveled at (2Thes 1:10). He will be like one of those righteous, who "will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43), another name for this 'heavenly kingdom'. To shine forth as the sun means to shine forth as the Lord Jesus, for He is the Sun (Mal 4:2). It is all about Him. Remembering Him a praise arises out of a cold and stinking prison cell in Rome to the honor of Him Who is worthy of "glory forever and ever". With a profound 'amen' (= that's true) Paul confirms his trust in the Lord and his praise.

V19. Paul wants Timothy to convey his greetings to Prisca and Aquila, his good friends whom he got acquainted with at Corinth (Acts 18:2). This faithful couple is now at Ephesus. Paul mentions them with feelings of particular gratitude, not only because they are faithful in the service of the Lord (Acts 18:26; 1Cor 16:19), but also because they had made great efforts for him, putting their own lives at risk (Rom 16:3-4). Timothy must also greet the household of Onesiphorus (2Tim 1:16).

V20. Then Paul mentions two names of brothers to inform Timothy about their circumstances. We may presume that Timothy was curious about them. Together with Erastus he has done a service there in Macedonia on Paul's request (Acts 19:22). In that way Timothy has got the chance to know Erastus better and a relationship may have come into existence. Erastus had a high position as steward in the city of Corinth (Rom 16:23). Apparently because of the responsibilities of his work he was not allowed to spend more time with Paul.

Trophimus comes from Ephesus (Acts 21:29). He traveled along with Paul from Ephesus (Acts 20:4) but got sick soon. Paul left him behind in Miletus because his sickness made it impossible for him to travel further. You see that Paul didn't heal him just like that, although he was able to. He actually had the gift of healing. Paul and Trophimus accepted this sickness from the hand of God. It was not a sickness that had to be punished or something like that. There also is no mention of lack of faith at all with Trophimus to become healthy.

If a believer falls sick he can see the hand of the Lord in it and not the hand of the devil. Similarly Job did not accept his disasters and sickness out of the hand of satan, but out of God's hand (Job 2:10).

It is possible that a believer falls sick, due to his own fault, incautiousness, possibly even because of a sin (Jam 5:14-16). Then a confession has to be made, so that God can give recovery. Believers may also fall sick due to their efforts on behalf of the work of the Lord, like Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30).

The Lord Jesus identifies with His sick brethren, as He identifies with them when they are hungry or thirsty or in prison (Mt 25:35-40). Here you clearly see that sickness is not supposed to be automatically associated with sin. The Lord will never identify Himself with sin. He did that once for all on the cross in the three hours of darkness. After that, He never had anything to do with sin, any more than He had anything to do with it before. Therefore don't ever let yourself be fooled by extremely charismatic Christians that sickness has to be eliminated as a sin.

V21. Paul would love to see Timothy once more before the Lord calls him to be with Him and his earthly service has ended. That he would like to

see him before winter also has a practical reason, namely because of his cloak (verse 13).

Then he greets Timothy on behalf of three men and a woman who had visited him and who also know Timothy. Without expressing feelings of disappointment at the attitude of the brethren in Rome, he sends greetings to Timothy from them as well..

V22. He closes his letter with a personal wish for Timothy and a collective wish for all believers with whom Timothy was together. It is wonderful that the letter ends like that. He wishes Timothy that the Lord will be with his spirit. I hope that also for myself and for you.

It implies that you in your life and service for God will continually experience the presence of Christ, the Lord. Don't let your spirit be occupied with the world and its thinking, not even when you see how the decay is increasing more and more in professing Christianity and you want to do something about it.

When we see this then there is nothing more left than wishing one another the awareness of grace. But how great is that! Grace triumphs over each difficulty.

Now read 2 Timothy 4:16-22 again.

Reflection: What could you learn from the attitude of Paul?

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