

Love Letters

Lesson 21: 2 Timothy 4

Paul's final charge to Timothy is a simple one: "Preach the Word!" He warned his young protégé that over time people would be less willing to listen to the truth but that Timothy must remain faithful to his calling and leave the ultimate results to God. Paul's method of motivating him was not to pump him up on positivity, but to remind him to remain faithful to his calling as pastor, and to honor God's Word. Paul offered himself as the example of devotion and perseverance, closing his letter with some personal remarks about his ministry coworkers.

Read 2 Timothy 4:1–22.

Day One: Preach the Word!

Paul had little time remaining, issuing to Timothy the command to preach God's Word as a man of integrity regardless of the outcome. He understood that people would ultimately try to refute the truth, dismiss it as irrelevant, compromise its message, and attempt to make it fit their own ideas. But the fact remains that God's Word provides the only plumb line of truth in this life and the only hope for eternity.

1. What was the powerful motive behind Paul's charge to Timothy to remain faithful (verse 1)?

Paul instructs that the pastor's commitment to ministry is a full time one: "in season and out of season." His words could also apply to any devoted servant of the Lord.

2. When Paul issued his charge to *preach the word*, he did so with clear instruction. Take a moment to look up the words that accompany his command and write a definition:
 - a. Convince
 - b. Rebuke
 - c. Exhort
 - d. Longsuffering

e. Teaching

3. Why was it so important to take Paul's words to heart and strongly emphasize the above methods when giving out God's Word (verses 3–4)?

Memory verse: 2 Timothy 4:2 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching.

Selah ~

Today in much of the world God is still unknown, and to some within the church God has become irreverently familiar. While there remains much work for the church to undertake, we may at the same time, be in danger of losing our respect for God—our wholesome fear of displeasing Him. Drawing close to God does not mean casually presuming on our relationship with Him; but to honor Him in His rightful place as Lord. As Paul prepares to close his letter, he reminds Timothy of the overriding factor that must motivate every servant: that the Lord Jesus Christ will appear to judge the living and the dead. To understand this a little more clearly, take a closer look at two passages of scripture that deal with Him as Judge: one having to do with salvation, the other with the believer's works. Jot down the similarities and differences you notice.

Judge of life and death: John 5:24–30

Judge of works and rewards: 1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Day Two:

The Personal Application of Truth

But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (verse 5).

God's Word is not only the revelation of who He is it is also extremely practical and applicable to every aspect of life. The Word influences your choices; your choices reflect your priorities; your priorities reveal your beliefs to a world that desperately needs the Lord!

Today's study is meant to be a personal evaluation of your absorption of what you are studying and how you are applying it. Hopefully you are able to say, like the Apostle Paul, *We make it our aim . . . to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad* (2 Corinthians 5:9–10 NKJV).

Using Paul's points in verse 5 above, consider your own ministry calling and effectiveness:

1. How are you able to remain watchful *in all things*?
2. What type of afflictions have *you* endured for the gospel's sake?
3. In what way are you proclaiming the Word of God in your sphere of influence?
4. How are you fulfilling *your* ministry? Be specific.

Selah~

Remember: It is the Word that confronts and convicts. We are only the instrument that shares it. Realize too that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. We fight a spiritual battle against the unseen forces of evil; our role is to offer peace in the name of Christ. Paul says the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine but will turn away from the truth (verses 3–4). For those who do receive it and respond, it becomes the power to live life the way God created it to be. Paul's encouragement to you in verse 5 is, "be watchful in all things"—in other words keep your head in all situations—it's not easy but it is possible because God's power enables you. Share your thoughts.

Day Three:

Paul's Example

Paul presented the reasons to remain faithful in the ministry; now he takes a look back and shares some of his own compelling testimony as an example to stay the course.

1. Paul compares his impending death to that of a willing sacrifice to God. What does he say (verse 6)?

According to Jewish tradition, a drink offering of wine was often presented along with a sacrificed animal or grain as a burnt offering, which was considered pleasing to the Lord (Numbers 15). And just as Christ, our sacrificial Lamb was sacrificed to remove our sin, so we are called to offer ourselves in service to God as living expressions of our worship (see Romans 12:1).

2. Next in verse 7, Paul offers three statements in review of his life, all intended to encourage Timothy to continued faithfulness. Consider each one, and how Paul may have wanted to make his point by offering them.
 - a. "I have fought the good fight"—Athletes in the ancient world were as committed to discipline and fitness as they are today. Paul employed the athlete's methods in order to fight the good fight of faith. Name some of the rigors and sacrifices necessary to receive the reward.
 - b. "I have finished the race"—Paul endured to the end, he saw the successful completion of his life before God. He remained true to the saving message of the gospel despite terrible treatment at the hands of others. He asked the very thing of Timothy. Jesus issued a similar statement in John 17:4; write it out below. Does it represent you?
 - c. "I have kept the faith"—in everything Paul had earlier described; in life and in doctrine, he completed his course with honesty, sincerity, virtue, unity, and honor. Finally (verse 8), what was he looking forward to and who does this reward include?

Selah~

The crown Paul speaks of here is the reward of righteousness that believers will receive when Christ returns. As children of God, we set our hopes on His appearing looking forward to the day, which forever unites us with the Lord.

Personal: Do you have this hope today? Are you living in anticipation of His return? You need only to pray and ask Him to forgive you of your sin based on His atoning sacrifice on the Cross for you. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and then begin to walk forward in your new life.

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2 NKJV).

Day Four:

Paul's Personal Remarks

Reread 2 Timothy 4:9–22.

In the final closing of Paul's letter he writes of his love, appreciation, and need for those ministry partners who served with him for the gospel's sake. Some had already deserted him, while others had remained faithful with him to the end. He expresses both his concern and his thankfulness for those who shared the miles of the ministry journey with him.

1. In his final days, who does Paul long to see and when (verses 9 and 21)?
2. Who else does Paul wish to see and why? Who is presently with him (verse 11)?
3. There were few personal needs important to Paul, but what of this world's items does he wish to have in the time remaining?
4. In retrospect, what did Paul wish for those who had personally caused him hurt or harm (verse 16)?

Paul's personal words were not meant as an indictment against those who deserted him; rather he chose to focus the reader on the sovereignty and sufficiency of Christ, who stood by his side and gave him much needed grace and strength.

5. It was not just a personal blessing to Paul that God strengthened him; why else did God stand with him (verse 17)?
6. Lastly, what confidence did Paul want to share with those he would leave behind (verse 18)?

Paul closed with these words: "The Lord be with your spirit" and "grace be with you." Paul desired more than anything that the torch of ministry would be safely, and securely passed to Timothy, and to all those who came after who would in turn fulfill their mission. The "you" is plural, referring to all who would read Paul's lasting words.

Selah ~

In retrospect as you pause and ponder your close-up study of these "love letters," what lasting gem of truth will you take away and purpose to apply in your life as a stone of remembrance?

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: What step of obedience will you purpose to take in your walk of faith this week?

Prayer Requests ~
