



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

LAST WORDS...LAST LETTER! – 2 TIMOTHY

COLORADO

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Dan File, P.O. Box 1088, Lake City, CO 82135-1088/303-345-8830 / filefamily@centurytel.net

We begin this year committed to the study of God's Word once again, concentrating our time in the book of 2 Timothy. This is Paul's last letter written shortly before his death where he passes the baton of ministry to his son in the faith, Timothy. This is the second letter penned to Timothy, written in the midst of most difficult times when the penalty for faithfulness to Jesus Christ was death. What would you write to the ones you loved most if you knew you were about to die? You see, 2 Timothy is known as Paul's last will and testament. Within this short book, we will find a treasure of the most valuable words of encouragement and necessary exhortations from a faithful man to his son of how to persevere until the end. What we can learn from Paul's letter will offer us a lifetime of wisdom for not only is the baton of faith being passed on to Timothy, but to every faithful believer. God has given to us the gospel ministry of Jesus Christ as well.

I. PAUL...LAST WORDS...LAST LETTER! – 2 TIMOTHY

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

Paul, a faithful believer in Jesus Christ condemned for his faith, endured to the end. He lived a selfless and sacrificial life in order to share the most important thing in this life; the wonderful good news of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. And before he dies, he sums up the essentials of life and faith in his final letter to Timothy.

A. FROM PERSECUTOR TO PERSECUTED – ACTS

Paul was a high, ranking Jew of the Pharisee sect focused on the strict keeping of the Law. You will remember from Acts 7-8 that Paul hated believers and in his zeal for what he thought pleased God, he persecuted this new "religious" group called Christians. However, God had a plan for Paul's life, for one day while he was traveling to Damascus to persecute believers, Paul encountered Jesus Christ and his life was transformed forever. Paul became a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and was used in the proclamation of the gospel and growth of the church as recorded in Acts.

Paul spent his years serving Jesus Christ by preaching the Word of God and establishing churches all over the known world. Paul rarely talked about his hardships but in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 we are reminded of the adversity he faced. *"Are they servants of Christ? I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was*

shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches."

Persecution and adversity were a part of Paul's life as a believer which he willingly endured for the sake of the gospel. Somewhere between AD 60-62, Paul was imprisoned in Rome for the first time, under house arrest in Caesar's household, yet guarded by the Roman elite Praetorian soldiers. Acts 28 records how Paul had much interaction with people and ministry and it was during this time Paul wrote Philippians. Paul was released from this first prison term for just a short period before his final Roman imprisonment.

B. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Roman historians record for us how a new wave of persecution broke out against Christianity in AD 64 after the Roman emperor, Nero, set a large majority of Rome on fire and to divert any suspicion from himself, he blamed Christians and immediately ordered their imprisonment and execution. Many were put on poles alongside the highways and then, while still alive, set on fire to become human torches. As the prominent leader of Christianity, Paul would not escape the madness of Nero. And so, Paul is once again placed in prison, but it was different this time.

C. PRISON CONDITIONS – 2 TIMOTHY

As Paul wrote from Rome, 2 Timothy records his understanding that his death was eminent. In 2 Timothy 4:6, he writes, *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come."* Pastor John MacArthur visited this prison and had this to say, *"Some years ago I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting the magnificent and rather stunning city of Rome... But one thing in my visit to Rome stood out above all other things and that was visiting the ruins of what was known as the Mamortine Prison in the ancient city of Rome. What is now remaining of the Mamortine Prison is a dungeon in the ground, literally a circular pit about 30 feet in diameter with a hole at the top a little larger than that of a manhole in the street. That was the place of incarceration for the criminals of the time of the Apostle Paul. That prison today has on top of it a building and to see the prison you climb the stairs, enter the building and you're given a little bit of a tour. You look through the hole and you can see the pit underneath with its stone floor and stone walls in the shape of a circle. We were then allowed to go down into the pit and found there just a couple of things of interest...against one section of that circular pit there*

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

STAFF, LOBBYISTS, JOURNALISTS & SERGEANTS: TUESDAYS AT NOON, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

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was a door, a great large door that was able to be pulled up and then dropped back down in place. The guide...told us that the door basically was there for execution purposes, that it was common to place prisoners, dropping them through the hole into the dungeon, up to about 30 to 35 prisoners. And then in order to make room for the next group of criminals, the door would be pulled open and running alongside that cell was the city sewage system of Rome. As the door was pulled open, the cell or dungeon would fill with the sewage and drown all of the prisoners and wash them back out. The door would be shut, the place would be drained and ready for another 30 to 35 criminals. It was a moving experience not only because you could stand there and imagine what went on in that place without sanitation, without light, without any of the comforts that we might imagine to be absolutely necessary for existence. And you can imagine it jammed with 30 bitter, angry criminals about to be executed... And I was moved deep within my heart as I contemplated him in that place awaiting execution. In a very public display of hatred for the Christ he taught and the gospel he preached, he was not drowned in sewage, he was taken out of that place and his head was placed on a block and an axe cut it off his body. And publicly the Romans said, "We will not tolerate the teaching of Jesus Christ nor anyone who represents Him." And when you can think back and imagine the life of the Apostle Paul, a life of self-sacrifice on behalf of the spread of the gospel, the life of a man who lived literally to communicate the greatest message the world has ever heard in order that men might know joy and grace and mercy and forgiveness and peace, when you imagine that that's how he ended his life it seems like such a tragic and ungrateful expression of man's response. What an unjust reward for an innocent man. Not just an innocent man but a man who had brought the good news of salvation to the very people who took his life."

For Paul at the time of writing this book, death was imminent. He writes in 2 Timothy 4:13 requesting his coat for this was a cold, dark cell. We know he was chained and imprisoned with other criminals and there was no hope of deliverance. (2 Timothy 2:9) And Paul reveals that he was abandoned by almost all at his arrest. No one stood with him, only Luke. (2 Timothy 1:15, 4:9-12, 16) And so Paul, the Apostle who had been used by God to proclaim the gospel and start many churches across the known world now finds himself in a cold cell, chained with other criminals and condemned to die. He was alone, he was deserted and what does this man write about?

D. PAUL PENS HIS LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT- 2 TIMOTHY

Does Paul spend the last letter he ever writes complaining, disillusioned with his faith and his God because of his incredible harsh circumstances? Does he feel sorry for himself because of his lot after serving the Lord so faithfully? **NO!** What does he write about?

- ❖ "kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you..." 2 Tim. 1:6
- ❖ "do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..." 2 Tim. 1:8

- ❖ "join with me in suffering for the gospel..." 2 Tim. 1:8
- ❖ "Retain the standard of sound words..." 2 Tim. 1:13
- ❖ "Guard the treasure which has been entrusted to you..." 2 Tim. 1:14
- ❖ "my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus..." 2 Tim. 2:1
- ❖ "Remember Jesus Christ..." 2 Tim. 2:8
- ❖ "handle accurately the word of truth..." 2 Tim. 2:15
- ❖ "flee youthful lusts, pursue righteousness..." 2 Tim. 2:22
- ❖ "Realize this, in the last days difficult times will come..." 2 Tim. 3:1
- ❖ "all who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted..." 2 Tim. 3:12
- ❖ "continue in things learned..." 2 Tim. 3:14
- ❖ "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable..." 2 Tim. 3:16-17
- ❖ "preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with great patience and instruction..." 2 Tim. 4:2
- ❖ "be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Tim. 4:5
- ❖ "in the future, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness...and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." 2 Tim. 4:8
- ❖ "Make every effort to come..." 2 Tim. 4:9
- ❖ "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me..." 2 Tim. 4:9
- ❖ "The Lord will deliver me from every evil deed and bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom..." 2 Timothy 4:18
- ❖ "Grace be with you." 2 Tim. 4:22

This is the message of a faithful man who at the end of his life, in spite of all the adversity he endured, could say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." This is the life we have the privilege of studying.

II. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

In light of what we have just observed about Paul; his enduring faithfulness and exhorting words, take a moment to examine your life. What circumstances do you find yourself in? Are you facing another long, hard session with difficult challenges, discouraging opposition and seemingly overwhelming odds? Are you growing weary in this fight? Do you feel alone sometimes as you stay the course even when others don't? Does it really matter? What's keeping you from remaining faithful in the midst of adversity?

Could you say you have kept the faith regardless of the cost? That's a life of no regrets. That's a life of purpose. That's a journey of serving and pleasing God. He has a plan, a purpose and a course for your life. Fight the good fight for it is a noble one worth contending for, finish the course, though hard and painful, finish the race God has planned for you. Finish well. That's what this study is about. It's about Paul, his words and his life so that you too may be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" when God calls you home!