In the previous three chapters, Paul has encouraged Timothy to remain strong against false teachers who have invaded the church in Ephesus. Paul has reminded Timothy of the importance of his spiritual heritage and exhorted him to remain true to the sound doctrine he had been taught by Paul. In this chapter, Paul will give one final charge to his young protégé and conclude in a matter typical of letters during the first century (greetings to and from friends and a benediction). As you read, pay close attention to what Paul has to say in this chapter. Most believe these are the last words he wrote before being put to death in Rome.

Outline

1. Paul’s Final Charge to Timothy (4:1–8)
   a. Preaching and Ministry (4:1–5)
   b. Paul Reflects (4:6–8)
2. Conclusion (4:9–22)
   a. Paul’s Circumstances (4:9–18)
   b. Greetings to and from Friends (4:19–21)
   c. Benediction (4:22)

Discovering the text

Read verses 1–5.

To what does Paul refer in verse 1 to denote the seriousness of his charge to Timothy? What informs you of its severity?

Christian tradition teaches there will be comprehensive judgment in the future. From different biblical passages we learn: it will result in life or death (Revelation 20:11–15); the church will be judged before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:9–10); and how beneficial each of us has been to the church will be evaluated (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

Paul gives five commands to Timothy in verse 2. What are they?

1) ________________________ the Word;
2) ________________________ in season and out of season;
3) ________________________
4) ________________________
5) ________________________ —with great patience and careful instruction.

Notice how Paul uses the two unrelated terms patience and instruction. One reflects an attitude and the other content. According to verse 3, why are these five commands so important?

In verse 3, Paul returns to the activity of the false teachers. He notes that these teachers are not teachers of truth. What is the basis of their teaching? What are they intending to do? Why is this so dangerous?

According to verse 4, what will people do as a result of listening to false teachers? What does the term “myths” imply to you?

The modern connotation of myths generally refers to folk myths: ways of expressing the origin of certain customs or beliefs. The kind of myth referred to in the New Testament is not harmless or sacred, but is contrary to truth, and slyly concocted, without a true basis (see 1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 1:16).

What command does Paul give Timothy in verse 5 to confront false teaching? How can we follow this command as well?

The danger of false teaching is that it sounds good and is intended to please us. The phrase “keep your head” is translated from the Greek term “be sober”. That is, we are not to allow persuasive teaching to affect us. Instead, we need to remember sound doctrine and be prepared to endure suffering when we refuse to follow the crowd. How can this admonition help you when you make a stand for the truth?

Read verses 6–8.

To what does Paul compare his life in verse 6? What is a drink offering?

The drink offering was a common form of sacrifice for the people of Israel. You can find instructions on how it was to be performed in Exodus 29:40–41; Leviticus 23:13; Numbers 15:4–10; and 28:7. Paul knows that his execution could come at any moment, so like the liquid being poured from the cup of sacrificial wine, Paul was preparing for death. What does this teach you about Paul’s dedication to the message of the Gospel?

What analogies does Paul use in verse 7–8 to describe his service to God? What is awaiting Paul as a result of his obedient service?
The idea of a “crown of righteousness” brings up an interesting point. Paul teaches elsewhere in the New Testament that the work of Christ has guaranteed right standing before God for the believer. However, we are still capable of sinning. This has been described as the difference between “positional” and “practical” righteousness. This means, that whereas our position before God is one of righteousness, we still need to practice righteous living! According to this chapter, who awards this crown?

Read verses 19–22.
What does Paul ask of Timothy in verses 9–13? What do you learn about others who have been involved in Paul’s ministry?

When Paul refers to Luke, he is referring to the writer of the Gospel and Acts. It helps us understand the nature of the Christian walk when we read these personal examples of friendship, desertion and betrayal. Paul struggled with the same relational issues that we do today!

According to verse 17, how was Paul strengthened when he faced these trials? How is this confidence restated in verse 18?

Discussing the text
Sound doctrine has been a common theme in this epistle. What have you learned about sound doctrine through your study of 2 Timothy? How can you increase your knowledge of it? Make a plan this week and implement it.

Paul has encouraged Timothy to deal forcefully with the false teachers who had invaded the church in Ephesus. One aspect of these false teachers we discovered in this chapter was the focus of their teaching “to please itching ears” (verse 3). Why is teaching what people want to hear so dangerous? What should be the basis of solid teaching? How can you prepare yourself to differentiate between solid and false teaching?

In this chapter, Paul stated that his life was “being poured out like a drink offering”. We also discovered this form of sacrifice was common in the Old Testament. What is Paul saying with this analogy? What is keeping you from allowing giving God all of you as a sacrifice? Read Romans 12:1–2 to see what kind of sacrifice God requires.

At the conclusion of this chapter, Paul articulates his confidence in God’s ability to save him from even the direst circumstances. What trials are you facing that Paul’s words in this chapter can help you to recognize God’s presence?

Bible Study Guide
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