

CHAPTER 37: Paul's Letters Part 2

Philippians thru Philemon

We will finish looking at the remaining 8 of the 13 Pauline Epistles, the Apostle Paul's hand-written letters. Of the eight letters, four are to churches – Philippians, Colossians, First and Second Thessalonians. Four of the letters are to individuals – First and Second Timothy, Titus and Philemon. So then, why exactly is Paul taking the time to write all of these letters? There were many problems that he felt compelled to address. Sin issues, divisions in the Church, a need for encouragement in troubled times, persecution, questions and misunderstandings that had been raised. One of the biggest problems facing the Early Church was the introduction of false teachings. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit sets his readers straight and clearly defines his own theology.

PHILIPPIANS

This letter is the second of Paul's Prison Epistles, written while he was a prisoner in Rome awaiting his hearing before Caesar. The church at Philippi was the first church established by Paul on the European continent (Acts 16). In Philippi Paul was beaten, thrown into prison, and forced to leave. But he always remained on good terms with the church there. They were a great source of encouragement to him through the years. This was one of the very few churches that Paul allowed to support him financially.

There arose a division in this church over the validity of Paul's doctrine of imputed righteousness. His teaching ran counter to what the Jewish false teachers were saying. They claimed that keeping the Law WAS necessary for salvation (debunked by the Jerusalem Council). This stirred up a debate as to whether or not the church would continue supporting Paul's ministry. Some viewed Paul's imprisonment in Rome as God's judgment on him for preaching a false theology. Tied to the church's division over Paul's teachings was the decision whether or not to send Paul a financial gift. If his theology was wrong then they shouldn't continue supporting him. So that was going on.

One man, Epaphroditus, stood up on behalf of Paul in the church. Ignoring the threat of the Jewish false teachers, he personally carried the church's financial gift to Paul. Paul calls Epaphroditus, "**my brother, coworker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to me in my need.**" (Philippians 2:25) While Epaphroditus was visiting Paul in Rome he came down with a very serious illness. Paul feared that the Jewish false teachers back in Philippi would interpret this as God's judgment on him. They would then use this as confirmation that they were right and Paul was wrong

and turn the church against Paul. So Paul feels compelled to write this letter to refute all that and to clarify his own theology. He also updates the church on his situation in Rome and the condition of Epaphroditus. Let's take a look at some of the highlights.

Right from the start we can see that the church at Philippi is very near and dear to Paul's heart. **I thank my God every time I remember you. I always pray with joy in my every prayer for all of you because of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am sure of this very thing, that the One who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 1:3-6) In other words, God is not finished with you yet.

Paul gives an update on his current situation which the church views as being bad. Paul says that God is using him there in Rome. He has had opportunities to witness to the imperial guard. They've all heard him share his testimony about Jesus and how He changed Paul's life. The believers that Paul is with have become bolder and less fearful about sharing their faith. The result is that the church in Rome is growing.

As he writes this letter Paul is still awaiting his hearing before Caesar. At this point he doesn't know how things will turn out and he is not concerned one way or the other. **My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.** (Philippians 1:20-21) Paul is not sure which outcome he prefers. On one hand he knows that if he dies he will be with his Lord, which is a strong desire of his. But on the other hand he knows the importance that his presence would be for the dear believers in Philippi.

No matter what happens, Paul, urges them: **Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that – whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent – I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel.** (Philippians 1:27) Stay focused on the task at hand. Don't fear opposition.

Paul tells them to adopt the same attitude that Jesus had and then describes it eloquently... **[Jesus], though He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. He humbled Himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross! As a result, God exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow - in heaven and on earth and under the earth – and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.** (Philippians 2:6-11)

Paul knows that all of his hard work in Philippi was worthwhile. He says, “**I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.**” (Philippians 2:16) He rejoices that he had a part to play in the believers there coming to faith. Every time Paul thinks of the Christians in Philippi his heart is filled with joy. And he knows that they feel the same way about him. So there is a special relationship he has with these believers.

Paul offers some words of warning about the false teachers who are among them: **Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh.** (Philippians 3:2) These dogs, these dangerous wolves tell you that you must be circumcised to be saved. They insist that the Gentile believers follow the Law of Moses. Paul says, “Don’t listen to them! Instead, listen to me.” Circumcision of the flesh will not save you, but only the circumcision of the heart which God does through the Holy Spirit.

The Jewish false teachers apparently had impressed many of the Philippian believers with their so-called credentials. Paul says, “OK, you want to hear some credentials? Listen to mine.” **I was circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. In my zeal for God I persecuted the church. According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless.** (Philippians 3:5-6) But then Paul says, when I came to Christ I abandoned that Jewish works-righteousness doctrine. None of it places me in right standing before God. None of it makes me truly righteous. All those things I just mentioned about myself that I once took so much personal pride in, I now count as rubbish – some translations say “as dung” – compared to knowing Christ and His life-transforming power. My righteousness does not come by keeping the Law but only in Jesus Christ.

Paul realizes that he is not perfect, not even close, and he certainly doesn’t know everything. But he has vowed to try for the rest of his life to become all that Christ wants him to be. That is all he can do. He refuses to dwell on his past failures (such as when he persecuted the Church). Instead Paul focuses on what lies ahead. **I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 3:14) Paul urges his readers to do the same. **Be imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and watch carefully those who are living this way, just as you have us as an example. For many live, about whom I have often told you, and now, with tears, I tell you that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.** (Philippians 3:17-18) For all those false teachers and persecutors out there, things will not end well for them.

Paul saves some of his best comments for last. They are familiar to us.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Let everyone see your gentleness. The Lord is near! Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to

God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4-7)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

For I have learned to be content in any circumstance... I am able to do all things through the One [Christ] who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:11 and 13)
Remember, this was written by a guy in prison!

And my God will supply your every need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Philippians is a very uplifting letter. You can tell what a special relationship Paul has with this church.

COLOSSIANS

This is the third of Paul's Prison Epistles. He did not start the church at Colossae and there is no evidence that he ever visited that city. But Paul was acquainted with some of the believers in Colossae and the church in nearby Laodicea with whom this letter was shared.

Epaphras who is named in the letter was a convert of Paul's. He played a major role in the evangelism and growth of the Colossian Christians and later became the pastor of the church in Colossae. He was in Rome with Paul at the time this letter was written.

Here's the issue. These churches had begun to embrace many wrong beliefs and heresies. Some of the believers attempted to combine elements of pagan religions and secular philosophy with Christian doctrine. That sounds familiar. Other false teachings were being propagated by Jewish legalists. As with the church at Philippi and other places the Jewish false teachers opposed Paul's gospel of grace and were persuading many in these churches to reject Paul's message. Wrong thinking had led many believers to engage in unholy lifestyles. They were acting selfishly toward each other and there was disunity in the church. This letter was written to combat the many errors that the Colossian and Laodicean believers were being taught.

There is some doubt among the believers in these churches about who Jesus is, so Paul tells them clearly who he believes Jesus is. **He [Jesus] is the image of the**

invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for all things in heaven and on earth were created by Him – all things, whether visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions, whether principalities or powers – all things were created through Him and for Him. He Himself is before all things and all things are held together in Him. (Colossians 1:15-17) It sure sounds from these verses like Paul views Jesus as Creator God.

He is the Head of the body, the church, as well as the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that He Himself may become first in all things. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in the Son and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross – through Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Colossians 1:18-20)
The supremacy of Jesus Christ!

In Jesus no matter who you are, Jew or Gentile, even a heathen, you have the hope of heaven – **Christ in you, the hope of glory.** (Colossians 1:27) What a deep thought that is. Jesus Christ living in US!

Paul addresses individuals in their church who are trying to deceive them with the elementary ideas from this world. He says, “Don’t listen to such people! They don’t possess a superior knowledge of God. They are basing everything they say on human wisdom rather than on the wisdom of God that Jesus Christ taught. Here is the truth about Jesus... **For in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of deity lives in bodily form.** (Colossians 2:9). Jesus was both fully God and fully man. Today He reigns supreme over every human power and government on earth.

Paul clarifies a point of confusion for these believers. He says that the Christian life is not about keeping the Law or performing other religious practices. These may be good and profitable, but they do NOT save us; likewise for baptism. The practice of water baptism is merely a picture of what Jesus did for us – His death for our sins on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection from the tomb. **Having been buried with Him in baptism, you also have been raised with Him through your faith in the power of God who raised Him from the dead.** (Colossians 2:12)

In Colossians 2 and 3 Paul states his theology clearly. Let me summarize it for you. As believers in Jesus Christ we are no longer required to keep the Law. Jesus’s death on the cross effectively paid our sin debt. Even though we were dead spiritually, lost in our sinful state, Christ made us alive with Him and forgave us of all our sins. We are no longer under a curse. His work on the cross wiped our slate clean before a holy God. Jesus triumphed over sin, death, hell and the grave by His resurrection! He has already accomplished for us everything that needed to be done so that we could be made right with God. We don’t need to do anything else. There is no need for us to subject

ourselves to the trappings of the various religions, worldly philosophies and human wisdom that are out there. Truly then, **Christ is all in all.** (Colossians 3:11)

Paul concludes that this should change the way we live. He says in effect, “Let us determine to allow our new life in Christ to govern the way we think, the way we speak, and the actions we take. Let us resolve to become like Jesus Christ, taking on His character.” As you can see in this letter, Paul has a very, very high view of Jesus.

As Christians we are to make no distinction between a person’s nationality, race, education, social status, wealth or power. There is a message for people in today’s world! Here is why – Jesus has broken down ALL human barriers. The life of Christ is our model for living. We are to exhibit His love, His forgiveness and His mercy to those we come in contact with, no matter who they are. **Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also forgive others.** (Colossians 3:12-13)

FIRST THESSALONIANS

Paul came to Thessalonica with Silas and Timothy on his second missionary journey (Acts 17). Unfortunately his time there was cut short when city magistrates ordered him to leave. He did not get to spend the time he wanted nurturing the new Thessalonian believers. He wrote two letters of encouragement to them from Corinth shortly after being forced to leave Thessalonica. This letter offers instruction and encouragement to the young and growing, body of believers.

It clears up some wrong ideas that had permeated the church body and caused them to become very discouraged. They had come under persecution from their countrymen for their holy living. This ran counter to the culture. Based on Paul’s preaching about the Lord’s return and the coming judgment the Thessalonian believers had hoped that Jesus would return soon. But He hasn’t returned and they are beginning to wonder if He will ever come back. They are thinking that if Jesus is not coming back any time soon then why not just enjoy this life? Why continue to suffer persecution? The widely held pagan view of their day was that this life is everything and that death is the final end and a judgment. Paul wrote to counter this wrong thinking.

Paul has a very high opinion of this church. He has been told that they are a hard working body laboring in faith, love, and hope. He says... **We know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that He has chosen you, in that our gospel did not come to you merely in words, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction**

(surely you recall the character we displayed when we came among you to help you). (1 Thessalonians 1:4-5) Paul not only preached the truth to them. He lived it out.

When Paul first presented the Gospel to the Thessalonians, they welcomed it with open arms. It made an impact on their lives because they then began to spread the good news about Jesus in Thessalonica and the surrounding regions. They continue to do this even under some very trying circumstances.

Paul knows that the saints in Thessalonica are facing persecution from their own countrymen. **“You too suffered the same things...”** (1 Thessalonians 2:14). They suffered the same things as Jesus; and as the Old Testament prophets (like Jeremiah); and as Paul himself. They are in good company.

Paul wants very much to return to Thessalonica but Satan has thwarted his plans. This group of believers is special to Paul. He says: **For who is our hope or joy or crown to boast of before our Lord Jesus at His coming? Is it not of course you? For you are our glory and joy!** (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). You are our crown – YOU Thessalonians!

Though Paul had not been able to visit them at that time, so he had sent Timothy to check on them and to encourage and to strengthen them. Now Timothy has returned to Paul and given him a good report... **of your faith and love and that you always think of us with affection and long to see us just as we also long to see you! So in all our distress and affliction, we were reassured about you, brothers and sisters, through your faith.** (1 Thessalonians 3:6-7)

Paul urges the believers to hang in there and stay the course. **Finally then, brothers and sisters, we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received instruction from us about how you must live and please God (as you are in fact living) that you do so more and more.** (1 Thessalonians 4:1)

In Chapters 4 and 5 Paul addresses in great detail a question that the believers in Thessalonica had raised regarding the resurrection of the dead and the return of Jesus. What I stated before about the 1 Corinthians 15 passage on the resurrection of the dead applies here. We will cover this later in the story.

Paul closes this letter with practical advice that will help the Thessalonian believers to live the Christian life more effectively. Here’s a summary of what he tells them: (1) avoid quarreling; (2) warn those who are living undisciplined lives what could happen to them; (3) comfort and encourage the fearful; (4) care for the weak among you; (5) practice patience; (6) do not seek revenge. Paul then adds these familiar words: **Always rejoice, constantly pray, in everything give thanks. For this is God's will**

for you in Christ Jesus. Stay away from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, 22) This is good sound advice for a church wanting to grow!

SECOND THESSALONIANS

Just a few months after Paul sent this first letter to the Thessalonian believers, he felt compelled to write this follow up letter. The driving issue this time was that there were unbelieving pagans in Thessalonica claiming to be believers. They said that all men are saved (the idea of universalism). They had convinced some in the church that they had been suffering unnecessarily for their faith in Christ. These men claimed that there will be no rapture and no judgment. Finally they said that any rewards or punishment that one deserves, they will receive those in this life. Apparently some in the church bought into these wrong ideas. This began to create a spirit of laziness and apathy among many of the believers. So, like he did in the first letter, Paul writes to clarify the truth.

Paul says, “Let me get to my main reason for writing a second time. It has been reported to me that some of you in the church believe that the Day of the Lord has already begun. But it HAS NOT.” The present tribulation they are experiencing is NOT the beginning of the Day of the Lord. **Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lessness is revealed, the son of destruction.** (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Though evil most certainly is at work in our world, its full unhindered expression is being restrained for now. But the time will come when Satan’s man (the man of lawlessness) will be unleashed to do Satan’s work. This has not happened yet. We’ll talk more about who this guy when he shows up later in the story.

Although we are living in difficult times, we can rejoice in our salvation and know that whenever Jesus comes back, we will share His glory. **Therefore, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the traditions that we taught you, whether by speech or by letter.** (2 Thessalonians 2:15) Remember what we apostles taught you. These teachings they are to remember later become part of the New Testament.

Until the Lord returns, Paul says, “We need to pray for each other.” **Finally, pray for us, brothers and sisters, that the Lord's message may spread quickly and be honored as in fact it was among you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil people. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.** (2 Thessalonians 3:2-3). Pray specifically for God’s much-needed protection.

Paul closes by admonishing the Thessalonian Christians to live a disciplined life and to avoid those who do not. **But if anyone does not obey our message through this letter, take note of him and do not associate closely with him, so that he may be ashamed. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.** (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

FIRST TIMOTHY

This first of Paul's pastoral letters and is addressed to Timothy, a loyal and trusted ministry companion. Timothy accompanied Paul on parts of his second and third missionary journeys. Many of the churches were acquainted with Timothy. Early on Timothy had been left behind in Berea and Thessalonica to follow up on Paul's work in those places. He also helped disciple the new believers. Later Timothy was sent to the church at Corinth when Paul heard about all of their issues. That, of course, was no easy assignment. As Paul writes this letter, Timothy is in Ephesus and serving as that church's pastor. Paul has been released from prison in Rome and is writing from Macedonia. He wants to go to Ephesus and meet up with Timothy, but has been delayed. Paul is quite concerned about Timothy and for the well-being of the Ephesian believers. This prompts him to write this letter.

In the church at Ephesus there are individuals teaching that a person must keep the Law of Moses in order to achieve God's righteousness. Timothy is faced with the task of countering this false teaching with the true gospel of grace – that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and that salvation is through faith in Him alone. This is the same gospel, the same grace that Paul has been preaching. So again we see this conflict between the doctrines of Law and Grace. Law basically says, "Get to work" while Grace declares "It is finished!"

Like a true father in the faith, Paul is concerned that his young protégé Timothy might be led astray by the convincing words of the Jewish false teachers. Paul encourages Timothy and gives him some practical advice to help him in his ministry.

There are a few key takeaways from Paul's letter to this young pastor. The first one is to make prayer a priority. **I urge that requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanks be offered on behalf of all people, even for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. Such prayer for all is good and welcomed before God our Savior, since He wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.** (1 Timothy 2:1-4) Prayer was a vital part of both Jesus's and Paul's life and it should be in ours.

The second one is to teach the truth. This is a point he stresses to Timothy. **By pointing out such things to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, having nourished yourself on the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed... Command and teach these things... Until I come, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.** (1 Timothy 4:6, 11 and 13)

The third is to pursue right living. **For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains. But you, as a person dedicated to God, keep away from all that. Instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness.** (1 Timothy 6:10-11) Have the right priorities.

Fourthly, stay the course and finish well. **Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession for in the presence of many witnesses... to obey this command without fault or failure until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (1 Timothy 6:12, 14)

TITUS

Paul wrote this pastoral letter to another young church leader by the name of Titus. Like Timothy, he is a young pastor. Paul writes to encourage and instruct Titus in his ministry. Titus was a Gentile convert of Paul's from Antioch. He joined Paul's mission team some time prior to Paul's second missionary journey. He accompanied the apostle to the Jerusalem Council. He eventually became one of Paul's loyal co-workers and closest friends. Paul sent Titus out on several occasions to deal with difficult situations in various churches. Titus was instrumental in helping reduce the tension between Paul and the Corinthian church.

The church on the island of Crete, where Titus pastors, was not started by Paul. It was started by Jewish believers. After Paul's release from Rome, he and Titus visited the believers around the island of Crete. Paul left Titus there to organize house churches. Paul wrote this letter to Titus about a year or two later while he was in Macedonia. Crete was no easy place to minister. It had once been a center of a great culture, but the Cretans had become known as a depraved and unruly people. One of their own, a well-known Greek poet named Epimenides once characterized Cretans as **"liars, evil beasts and idle gluttons."** (Titus 1:12) Despite their less than stellar reputation, Titus has good success ministering to them.

The chief problem that Paul addresses is the same as many other places – false teachers. They seem to be in every church! They oppose Paul's gospel of grace, his

message that salvation is through faith alone in Jesus Christ. What Jesus did on the cross is enough. It's amazing how many false teachers insist that you have to work for salvation, such as keeping the Old Testament Law. Titus should expose such heresies. Paul suggests that Titus appoint elders and teachers to teach the church sound doctrine. Titus is to observe and correct any behavior that is not in keeping with what Paul had taught him.

One part of this letter stands out. It is Paul's wonderful statement about the impact of God's grace upon our lives. **For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, as we wait for the happy fulfillment of our hope in the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people who are truly His, who are eager to do good.** (Titus 2:11-14)

PHILEMON

This is the shortest of Paul's letters – one chapter – and the fourth of his Prison Epistles written from Rome. It is addressed to a wealthy and prominent man named Philemon. He is a convert of Paul's and a leader in the church at Colossae. We covered Paul's letter to the Colossians earlier. A group of believers in that city regularly met in Philemon's home.

Paul writes to Philemon on behalf of his slave, Onesimus, who had stolen some money and run away to Rome. While in Rome Onesimus came in contact with Paul, who led him to faith in Christ. Paul came to love Onesimus as his own child, but he was Philemon's legal property. Paul persuaded Onesimus to voluntarily return to his master's home where he risked being subjected to harsh punishment and hard labor. Paul pleads with Philemon to be lenient with Onesimus. He is no longer just a slave, but is now his brother in Christ. Paul wants Philemon to welcome him back as such.

Just listen to Paul's heartfelt appeal to Philemon... **Therefore if you regard me [Paul] as a partner, accept him [Onesimus] as you would me. Now if he has defrauded you of anything or owes you anything, charge what he owes to me. I, Paul, have written this letter with my own hand: I will repay it. I could also mention that you owe me your very self. Yes, brother, let me have some benefit from you in the Lord. Refresh my heart in Christ. Since I was confident that you would obey, I wrote to you, because I knew that you would do even more than what I am asking you to do.** (Philemon 17-21). As you can see, the real theme of this letter is Christian forgiveness.

SECOND TIMOTHY

I am covering this letter out of its biblical order for a good reason. Historically it is the last letter that Paul wrote. By far it is Paul's most personal and intimate letter. He writes this second letter to Timothy about 5 years after he wrote his first letter. A whole lot has changed since then! After a lifetime of service and suffering for Christ, Paul has again been arrested and imprisoned. His death is imminent. Paul is depressed and lonely – **Only Luke is with me.** (2 Timothy 4:11) He longs to see his friend Timothy again. Paul has reached the end of his life. He has no fear, no doubt and no regret.

Paul tells Timothy... **Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who does not need to be ashamed, teaching the message of truth accurately.** (2 Timothy 2:15) Other translations say "rightly dividing the word of truth."

This letter reveals Paul's heart and his priorities: sound doctrine, steadfast faith, confident endurance, and love. His final message for this young preacher Timothy is to... **continue in the things you have learned and are confident about. You know who taught you and how from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to give you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.** (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

As for Paul, he knows that for him the end is near. **For I am already being poured out as an offering, and the time for me to depart is at hand. I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith! Finally the crown of righteousness is reserved for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will award it to me in that day – and not to me only, but also to all who have set their affection on His appearing.** (2 Timothy 4:6-8) As his race ends Paul hands the baton off to Timothy who will carry on the work that Paul started. Paul's exhorts Timothy to "run well and finish strong!"

Shortly after writing these words the Apostle Paul is executed by the Roman government. He had a truly amazing life and ministry. Paul was a man who invested his time and talents well. Thankfully for us, his words have been preserved in the New Testament. I picture the scene as Paul leaves this world and enters into the portals of . There he is welcomed by His Lord. He hears Jesus declare these words to him: "WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. WELCOME HOME!"