

Mid Week • 2 Timothy 4

INTRODUCTION

We've already covered two of the passages in this chapter over the last two Sundays so if it seems like we're going in great depth in some verse but not others, that's why.

What I want to ask you to take special note of as we read through tonight's text, is the incredibly *intimate* and *intense* things Paul says here.

He knows these words may very well be the last he ever speaks to Timothy.

He hopes to see his young friend once more before he is executed, but knows the order for the carrying out of his sentence could come at any moment.

If you could write one last letter – if you knew you were to die on a particular day, and had the chance to share the last moments with your loved ones and friends – what would your last words be? Whatever you would say, they would be choked with emotion. And you would be sure to pass on whatever important message you felt you had to impart.

Listen to Paul as he moves his quill from the parchment to the ink well and back again for his last pen strokes.

CHAPTER 4

- 1 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:**
- 2 Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.**
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;**

4 and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

We need to remove the chapter division between 3 & 4 if we are to glean the full weight of Paul's charge to Timothy.

Look at the last two verses of ch. 3 – they are that classic declaration of the Bible's divine inspiration . . .

16 All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Because all of scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, is God-breathed and is profitable to make the people of God complete and fully prepared to live lives pleasing to God, Paul moves to lay a solemn charge on Timothy.

That charge, is to *Preach the Word!*

Paul had spent years disciplining Timothy.

Throughout his ministry, Paul had laid the emphasis on keeping the main thing, the main thing – and that was to study, teach, and preach the Word of God.

In his farewell speech to the Ephesians Elders, Paul reminded them how for three years he had not neglected to give them a steady diet of God's Word – all of it!

So Paul is confident he's left Timothy a good model.

But as he now passes from the scene and it is time to pass the leadership of the church over to a new generation of Christian leaders, Paul wants to make sure Timothy realizes he is not to be an innovator and creator of new means.

His mandate, as a pastor and leader of the Church is to do what? Preach the Word!

So Paul phrases his charge in the most solemn language . . .

1 I charge *you* therefore

Because of what he says in ch. 3:16-17 – because all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable to make the people of God

complete.

before God and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Paul is purposely calling Timothy to see himself standing before him as he lays his hands on the young man's shoulders.

But both of them are standing before God the Father and God the Son.

Paul had been commissioned years before to be an Apostle to the Gentiles.

That mantle had been placed on his shoulders.

Now, just as Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle as it fell to the ground when his older friend and mentor had been carried away in a fiery chariot, Paul places his mantle over the shoulders of his friend and protégé.

In 2 Tim 2:2, Paul told Tim to find and train up young men who would be able to carry on the work.

Paul is taking Timothy into the final step of his training – his final commissioning and release from mentoring.

God raises up a generation of men and women who love and serve Him.

They grow and go deep in the things of God.

We delight to sit at their feet and listen to them break the bread of the word to our hungry hearts.

We love to sit and hold out our cups as they pour the living water from a never ending pitcher.

And as the years go by, we watch the lines form in their face, the hair grays, the fingers curl with age.

Like fine wine, age makes their words sweeter and more potent.

But time waits for no one, and our mentors, our teachers, the one's who break bread and pour water, our visible examples of godliness grow weak and feeble and can no longer sit in the chair at the table.

And then, the day comes, when we put on the black suit or dress, and join the motorcade as it makes it's way to the cemetery where we say our last good-byes to people who have been as dear to us as our own mother or father.

On the way home, we turn on the radio and hear someone reading scripture.

As we listen, though the voice is different, the words sound amazingly familiar.

And we realize, the Spirit who ministered through the friend we just said goodbye to, lives on in a new generation of men and women who love and serve God.

Paul was purposeful about raising up others to take his place.

He knew he wouldn't live forever and was careful to train up men who would duplicate his ministry.

I don't think it is my time to go yet – I think I have a few years to go.

But I do not pretend to know the Mind of God.

If I should be suddenly taken home, provisions have been made for my family, and for CCO.

We have a wonderful staff and board of elders here who will take good care of the church.

So here Paul is commissioning Timothy with a solemn and serious charge.

They stand before God and the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:

This is why the charge Paul lays on him is so serious – because all history, all mankind, will one day stand before God and give a final reckoning.

Timothy will have to answer for how he has discharged the charge.

This reminds us of the story Jesus told of the master who dealt to three servants three different amounts and told them to invest it while he went on a trip.

When he returned, he called for all three servants to come and explain what they had done with what he had entrusted to them.

Paul is laying a trust on Timothy – that trust was the word of God and his office as pastor of the Church at Ephesus.

One day, he would stand before the Lord and give account for how he had performed his role and what he had done with the precious treasure of the Scripture.

All of us will one day stand before the judgment seat of Christ – not for judgment for our sins, but for rewards.

The believer's sins were judged at the Cross, so the judgment we will face is not one that determines our eternal destiny – that is

already settled in Christ.

But we *will* face a judgment for rewards.

Paul describes this judgment this way in 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 . . .

- 9 We make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.**
- 10 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.**

Then in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 Paul gives a description of what this judgment will be like

- 11 No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**
- 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,**
- 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.**
- 14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.**
- 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

While everyone will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and give account for how they have lived and used the gifts and resources He's entrusted to them, pastors will face an especially strict judgment.

In Luke 12:48 we read these words . . .

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

James says . . . [3:1]

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers,

knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

In light of this stricter judgment, Paul says this to Timothy . . .

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

The best thing Timothy can do as a pastor and leader of the flock is to Preach the Word!

The safest course to being able to stand before God on that day when he will give account is to Preach the Word!

Realizing this, I marvel at why so many pastors today do anything other than Preach the Word.

Paul is absolutely clear here. There is no obscurity or uncertainty about his charge.

This needs no interpretation – only application!

Timothy must give himself and his ministry to the faithful and consistent study, preaching and teaching of the Scriptures.

He must be ready at all times, when he feels like it and when he doesn't, to minister to people with the Word of God.

He must become so well versed with the scripture that when it comes time to persuade people of the truth, he can convince them.

When dealing with people who are in error, he needs to be able to bring forth a word from The Word that will challenge their error.

When someone is downcast and in need of encouragement, when they are weak and need strength, he must carry the word to them.

And he must be consistent in his ministry in the Word – even when it seems no one gets it.

Like the farmer who sows seed and doesn't see any evidence of life for weeks -

Still he goes out and waters and tends the soil, knowing the life is there in the seed in the ground and in due time, it will burst forth into a rich harvest.

The story is told about an old American Indian who attended a church service one Sunday morning.

The preacher's message lacked real spiritual food, so he did a lot

of shouting and pulpit pounding to cover up his lack of preparation.

In fact, as it's sometimes said, he "preached up quite a storm." After the service, someone asked the Indian, who was a Christian, what he thought of the minister's message.

Thinking for a moment, he summed up his opinion in six words:

"High wind. Big thunder. No rain."

When the Scriptures are neglected, there is "no rain", not life-giving virtue in the message.

It is not the words of man, spoken in the greatest eloquence possible which make a difference.

Only when preaching is based on God's Word are His people blessed and refreshed.

One of the reasons why the good pastor, the faithful church leader will keep the ministry centered on the study, preaching, and teaching of the Word of God is because . . .

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

By the phrase, "**the time will come**" many Bible students understand Paul to be forecasting a specific period of history characterized by wholesale apostasy, such as he describes in 2 Thess. 2 when he talks about the great falling away and a time of delusion so thick there has been nothing like it before.

Paul is certainly speaking prophetically here.

But history shows that what he says here has seen a sorry fulfillment again and again in the history of the Church.

The Church seems to go through long cycles where it wanders from the Truth to the enticing words of false teachers.

The Church is thus corrupted, and when people grow weary enough of the corruption, there's a reform movement that sees a return to Biblical teaching and preaching.

But after a while, the reform becomes institutionalized and once more people turn from Truth.

We see this in the development of Roman Catholicism and the many reform movements that occurred during the Middle Ages.

Then we have the Reformation and the birth of Protestantism.

That reform degenerated into rationalism and the rise of liberalism.

Then there was the Modern Evangelical reform movement.

But now it seems the Evangelical church is being co-opted by the philosophy of religious humanism.

Paul sees these cycles of corruption and reform turning like a massive wheel until the time would come when the wheel of corruption would grind to a halt in the end times.

“Then, most people would not want the “healthy doctrine” of the Word of God.

They would have base carnal desires for religious novelties.

Because of their “itching ears” they would accumulate teachers who would satisfy their cravings for things that disagree with God’s truths.

The fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he is preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he is tickling people’s “itching ears” and giving them what they *want* to hear instead of what they *need* to hear.” [Wiersbe]

Several years ago, I worked with a guy who loved one of the TV preachers who was a rank heretic.

This preacher had a huge church and because of that, the guy I worked with thought that was proof of God’s blessing.

He asked, “If he’s a false teacher, why does he have such a big church?”

The answer is simple – his message tickled the itching ears of his congregation.

Note what Paul says – the time will come when people will not put up with good, solid bible teaching – instead, because of their own inner lusts, and yet because they have a deep-seated religious stirring, they will find for themselves people who will tell them what they want to hear.

It’s a rule of economy – if there’s a market, someone will provide

the service.

And so it is that when people who realize the need to believe in something bigger than themselves but who don't want to submit to God, look for someone to scratch their religious itch, they will find a ready supply of those who will tell them what they want to hear, and make it sound religious all at the same time.

So today, we have the health and wealth message which is tailor made for our secular, materialistic society.

It's a short step from "itching ears" to turning one's ears away from the truth.

Once people have rejected the truth, they turn to fables; to wild stories about trips to heaven or hell or seeing a 90 ft. tall Jesus. These fables are exciting and sensational, but they aren't likely to convict them of sin or make them want to repent!

The result is a congregation of comfortable, professing Christians, listening to a comfortable, religious talk that contains no Bible doctrine.

These people become the prey of every cult because their lives lack a foundation in the Word of God.

It is a recognized fact that most cultists were formerly members of churches. [Wiersbe]

Paul's emphasis on the ministry of the Word of God is the predominant theme of the pastoral epistles of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus.

Here he says that *because* this time of apostasy is coming, Timothy ought to give himself to the task of preaching and teaching.

If that was true for Timothy's day, how much more *now* when it seems that what Paul forecasted is coming to pass?

What I rejoice to see is that while there may be many who have itching ears and are heaping up false teachers to tell them what they want to hear, there's a solid and devoted group of people here at Calvary and other good churches around the county who not only *endure* sound doctrine, but *crave* it!

5 But you

Paul tells Tim -

be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

And what was his ministry? To lead, feed, and protect the flock!

So the first thing he needed to do was be *watchful* – awake and aware of what was going on and what potential threats there were to the peace and safety of the flock.

He was to be watchful over the flock to make sure none of those wolves who had dressed up in sheep's clothing had snuck into the flock and were doing damage from within.

He was to set up a watch on the borders of the flock to make sure no predator attacked from without.

He was to investigate the religious and philosophical environment and make sure no intellectual diseases had made the place unhealthy.

And whenever and where ever he discovered such threats, he was to deal with them as a good shepherd.

I hope you understand that it's part of the pastor's duty to *warn* the flock of danger.

In this time in which *we* live more and more we're being told that it's *intolerant* to disagree with differing ideas, lifestyles, and beliefs.

Because truth is no longer an absolute, it's determined by whatever works and no one's truth has nay more merit than anyone else's.

It seems the only intolerance that's acceptable today is the rejection of the Christian faith.

What's interesting is that many non-Christian social observers have noticed and remarked on this very thing.

It seems anything goes accept Biblical Christianity.

Unfortunately, many well meaning Christians have bought into the idea of an uncritical tolerance.

When a caring and watchful pastor dares to warn the congregation about a false teacher or errant teaching, he is often rebuked for being intolerant.

“Can't we all just get along” has become the rallying cry for many.

The answer to that is a resounding – Yes! We can all get along, in fact, we all ought to get along, if by “all” we mean genuine believers.

The Unity that God desires for His people is a Unity under truth. We must never sacrifice truth on the altar of unity.

If it isn't true, if it doesn't conform to the Will of God, then there is no unity – on the contrary, the Lord calls us to separate ourselves from error.

Because there will always be error and false teaching, the pastor must constantly watch and warn.

There's a remarkable account of the destruction of an ancient town.

The watchmen on the walls were in the habit of calling out a warning whenever they thought they saw a foe approaching.

Because there were many warring tribes in the area, they often sent out the alarm – more often than not a false alarm.

Sensing that the people had begun to resent them for giving these false alarms, the watchmen decided to remain quiet.

No one likes being disliked, so they held their peace.

Not long afterward the enemy actually did come and attacked the city.

Nothing was left but smoking ruins.

Later someone erected a memorial in the midst of the ruins inscribed with the epitaph: "Here stood a town that was destroyed by silence."

The pastor is a watchman.

Timothy has to endure afflictions and hardship, just as we read in ch. 2.

Anyone who's tended sheep will tell you it is anything but a glamorous existence.

You live outdoors, sheep don't exactly smell great, specially when it rains.

They are exceedingly stupid animals and are in constant trouble due to their own silly choices.

No – a shepherd lives a life marked more by affliction and hardship than by comfort and ease.

The shepherd who angles for comfort will not spend much time tending sheep.

Timothy has to do the work of an evangelist.

Even though he is a pastor, a shepherd, every so often he also has to play the role of mid-wife.

Shepherds regularly had to assist the sheep in giving birth.

That's the image Paul is getting at here.

As Timothy went about his ministry as pastor, he needed to remember that a fundamental part of the shepherd's task was to *increase* the flock.

A good shepherd knows the best way to increase the size of his flock is to pour his attention and time in to the flock he has.

Why? Because healthy sheep make lambs!!!!!!

By the way – if there are no lambs, that's a sign the flock isn't healthy.

So as the pastor pours his life into leading, feeding, and protecting the flock he has rather than trying to minister to all those who AREN'T there, then the flock will get healthy and strong and will in turn lead others to Christ.

The pastor fulfills the role of evangelist by preaching the gospel and giving people an opportunity to repent and receive Christ via an invitation.

I am a pastor – not an evangelist.

But I have a passion to see the lost come to faith in Christ.

I've discovered something over the few years I've been in ministry

–

As I go about my task of leading, feeding, and protecting the flock, people grow spiritually.

They get excited about discovering the relevance of the Bible to their lives.

God becomes much more than a religious entity – He becomes real to them and they actually start looking forward to *worship*.

All this translates over into their daily lives and people notice.

Pretty soon, these other people start accepting invitations to go to church, where they come and see the reality of people loving God and being loved by Him.

Then, they watch while Christians sit down to a feast in the Word and it makes them hungry.

The pastor does the work of the evangelist right here – as he lays out the meat for the believers, he makes sure there's

milk on the table for the lost.

He includes the basic elements of the gospel the Holy Spirit can take and apply to those who sit one seat removed from the table.

Then, he invites them to take a seat at the table by offering them an opportunity to respond.

This is why you will usually hear me weave certain words into virtually every message and study – that Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead to give us new life.

That's the basic gospel – and God uses it to win the lost.

The point is this – healthy sheep beget sheep.

So as a pastor, I pour my life in to the sheep, and do the work of an evangelist by providing birthing opportunities for new sheep.

And now we come to a passage we looked at two Sundays ago . . .

6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Paul knew there would be no release from prison save the release of death.

Don't you love the way he refers to his death here – as a drink offering being poured out next to the altar as a sign of thankfulness and fellowship with God.

He calls it his “departure.”

The word was used of untying the ropes that held a ship to the dock, or of loosing an ox from it's yoke at the end of a long day of hard labor.

Paul sees himself as having accomplished his task and ready to slip the bonds of this life and enter his heavenly rest.

And now he just wants to go home and enjoy his reward for a fight well fought, a race finished well, and a Trust well kept.

In v. 9, Paul speaks of his reward in terms of a crown.

At several other places in the NT we read about the saints being rewarded with crowns.

In Revelation, we see the 24 elders who sit before the throne of God, falling off their seats and casting their crowns before the King of kings in humble and awe-filled worship.

Whether these crowns are literal or merely symbolic, the point seems to be that part of the joy of heaven will be the receiving of rewards for our faithfulness here on earth.

In v. 9, one of the rewards that is potentially ours is a crown of righteousness given to all those who are hungry for the Return of Christ and who long to SEE Him.

9 Be diligent to come to me quickly;

Paul now turns and becomes intensely personal with Timothy.

If Tim wants to see Paul again, he'd better act quickly.

Tychicus, who carried this letter to Ephesus could take Tim's place as he went to see Paul one last time.

But Tim has to hurry because word could come at any moment to carry out his execution.

And not only that, but Paul's list of companions has shrunk dramatically.

10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

Demas is mentioned three times in Paul's letters.

He was one of Paul's traveling companions and appears to have been an assistant to Paul on earlier missionary trips.

But when Paul fell into disfavor in Rome, Demas split.

Paul says that he traded in his Love of God for the Love of the World.

How could a man who spent many days, if not months and probably even years with someone as devoted and deep as the Apostle Paul – ever fall away?

Most of us probably think that if we could just sit and talk with Paul for an hour, it forever seal our complete devotion to the Lord and we'd become dynamic witnesses of Christ.

No it wouldn't!

Demas bailed and left for Thessalonica – he even turned his back on God in his affection for the world.

But even worse, the disciples spent three years, virtually night and day with Jesus, and yet in the end, they all forsook him and ran when trouble came.

A vision of Jesus or an hour long interview with Paul would *not* be the magic bullet that would slay spiritual apathy and turn us in to super saints.

We would face the same struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil we do now.

Friends, we have at our disposal today the very same resources every generation of the people of God have had – the Word and the Spirit of God!

In fact, in some ways, we are even better off - because of modern technology we have complete Bibles we can carry around with us.

The advances in archaeology have discovered a wealth of information about the culture and languages of Bible times that add depth to our understanding of the text.

I remember as a young boy praying that Jesus would appear in my bedroom.

I just knew that if he did, I would be the next Billy Graham!

I realize now how foolish that kind of thinking is.

Our obedience and the depth of our devotion to the Lord is not about externals – it's about our heart!

Do we love the world or God? It's one or the other – it cannot be both.

As James says in 4:4 . . .

Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

Demas loved the world, and so forsook Paul when being identified with him might cost him what the world has to offer.

Crescens & Titus are not held under the same rebuke that Demas was.

It seems they both had to return to their ministries in Galatia & Dalmatia.

11 Only Luke is with me.

That was when Paul wrote this, only Luke was there.

Earlier, Onesiphorous had been there too, but he had to return to his home and business in Ephesus some time before.

Now it's just Luke and Paul.

Luke is of course the same one who wrote the Gospel and the book of Acts.

Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

This Mark is none other than John Mark, the cousin of Peter and the writer of the gospel.

IN the book of Acts we read that Mark had gone with Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey but it seems Mark had gotten homesick quickly and turned back.

Paul was furious about this as they had come to depend on Mark as a vital part of their ministry team.

The next time Barnabas and Paul prepared to set out, Barnabas wanted to take Mark along again, but Paul balked.

Paul thought Mark was disqualified because of his prior failure. The issue became so heated between Barnabas and Paul, they split up.

Barnabas took Mark and Paul hitched up with Silas.

That's the last we hear of Mark till this – and it seems by this time, Paul has had a change of heart about Mark.

Now, of all the people he could have told Timothy to seek out and bring, he mentions Mark.

It seems Paul wants to finally close the door on any past failures before he departs this shore and sets sail for heaven.

But I think that the Holy Spirit has a vital lesson in all this for us as well.

You see, in their earlier feud, Barnabas was willing to give Mark another chance – Paul wasn't.

Barnabas looked at what was best for Mark – Paul looked at what was best for the success of the mission.

Neither was right and neither was wrong – they just had two different perspectives.

One was task-oriented, the other was people oriented.

The name Barnabas means “Son of Encouragement” and it seems that name perfectly summed up Barnabas’ character.

It was Barnabas who originally found Paul after his conversion and encouraged him to go to the church leaders in Jerusalem with the good news of his salvation.

Barnabas was Paul’s first real friend and Christian companion – that’s what Barnabas was about, finding outsiders, and people who are hurt and bringing them in and making them a part of the Body.

Barnabas’ giving Mark a second chance seems to have been the ticket.

Yes Mark failed on his first venture of faith – but Barnabas knew God is a god of forgiveness and that he calls His people to be forgiving.

He demonstrated that in a practical way and restored Mark, offering him the challenge of ministry once more.

Mark responded to the mercy and grace Barnabas showed, and became a profitable servant once again.

So much so, that Paul now asks for Mark to come and be with him during his last days.

I see Paul’s own growth in this.

He wants to reconcile with Mark.

Friends – as we go about our lives and ministry in the church, because we are people who are imperfect, we are going to hurt and fail one another.

These hurts and failures can lead to giant rifts as they did for Paul and Barnabas, or they can be opportunities for us to demonstrate the tough-minded love we see Barnabas demonstrated to Mark, and later Paul showed to Mark.

The only question for us is – will we be quick to forgive, like Barnabas, or will it take years like Paul?

12 And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.

13 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments.

Timothy would pass through Troas on his way to Rome – just as we will if we take the alternative trip in November.

Paul had left a cloak there and since the weather has turned and is getting cooler, he needs it now and desires that Tim would pick it up on his way.

He also asks for some study materials.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.

15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

Just as Paul told Timothy to be watchful and warn the flock under his care, Paul now warns Timothy to watch out for one particular man in Ephesus.

His name was Alexander – the head of the metal workers guild in Ephesus whose speech in the theater had incited the anger of the population of Ephesus against Paul and the emerging church there.

Alexander was still acting as the point man for opposition and Paul warns him to keep an eye on him.

If anyone needs biblical support for the idea of naming names and pointing out trouble-makers, here's one.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve *me* for His heavenly kingdom. To Him *be* glory forever and ever. Amen!

Since we covered these verses last Sunday, I'll be very brief in my comments tonight.

In the first phase of his trial, when he would have brought forth witnesses to vouch for his integrity and answer the charges of treason against him, there was no one to call – he had not

supporters.

People like Demas had fled because they didn't want to fall under the suspicion of the Imperial eye.

Anti-Christian hatred was already running high under Nero's insane persecutions.

And though Paul was accused of preaching the gospel, that is what he goes ahead and declares to the judges who were trying his case.

Gotta' love that kind of boldness!

Paul was confident in Jesus presence and power and fulfilled his ministry to the very end.

He's confident that God will give him courage all the way to the executioner's block.

19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

21 Do your utmost to come before winter.

Winter in the Mamartine Prison, if that's where Paul was, would be brutal.

It was cold and damp and without the warmth of that cloak and the companionship of others who could cheer him and make sure he got decent food to eat, the elements themselves could kill him.

Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

CONCLUSION

And so we have the conclusion of the last letter the Apostle Paul wrote.

It ends with touching personal notes and a final committing into the hands and grace of God.