

MARCH 9, 2020

The Good Fight of Faith

2 Timothy Chapter 4

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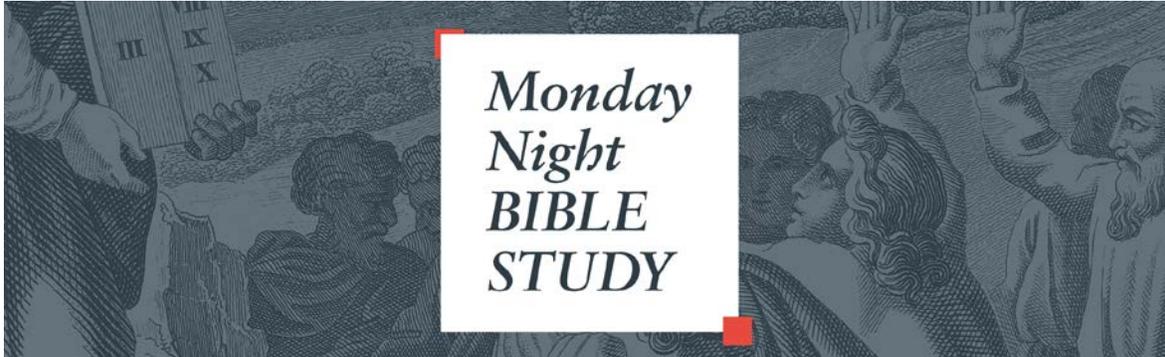
In this last chapter of 2 Timothy, we'll explore what Paul is facing during this time in his apostleship. Paul is imprisoned and near death. What does Paul have to say to Timothy that is of most importance and how can we apply them to our lives?

This is Paul's final and most personal letter. Things have gotten worse for Paul since he wrote his first letter to Timothy. Paul is in the middle of his court trial now and it is not going well. He seems sure that he's not going to survive and that he'll be executed for preaching Jesus. He asks Timothy if he can come visit him in prison so that he can pass on to him the church planting mission he started, and to remind him of the teachings he gave Timothy about Jesus.

This letter is laced with all kinds of emotions from sadness due to abandonment from close friends, to a deep concern of what will become of his churches and the gospel he preached once he dies. But there is also a feeling of hope and excitement that soon he'll see Jesus, the love of his life, if he is killed after this court trial.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 - "I give you this charge. Preach the word, correct, rebuke, encourage with great patience." Paul reminds Timothy of his challenge from Chapter 1 to stir up the gift within him. Paul tells Timothy that the Holy Spirit is not a spirit of fearfulness or timidity, but One that brings with it power, love and self-control. The first quality is power. But "power" here isn't really referring to power as it relates to miracles. Rather, it refers to power as we're most familiar with – being in charge of a group, or being in charge of others. Timothy needs to be able to gently lead others, direct others, instruct others in the things of God as Pastor of his church. Paul is telling Timothy that the Holy Spirit is giving the sort of power that will enable him to bring order, harmony, and direction to the church he is pastoring.

The Holy Spirit also gives self-discipline. This is the ability to think clearly about what needs to be done and how best to do it. The Spirit will help Timothy learn moderation and self-control so that he can, in turn, bring control and moderation to his community. He must be disciplined in order to raise up disciplined Christians in his church. Church leaders should allow the Holy Spirit to work within them self-control, so they can contribute to creating an ordered and harmonious community that reflects God into the world.



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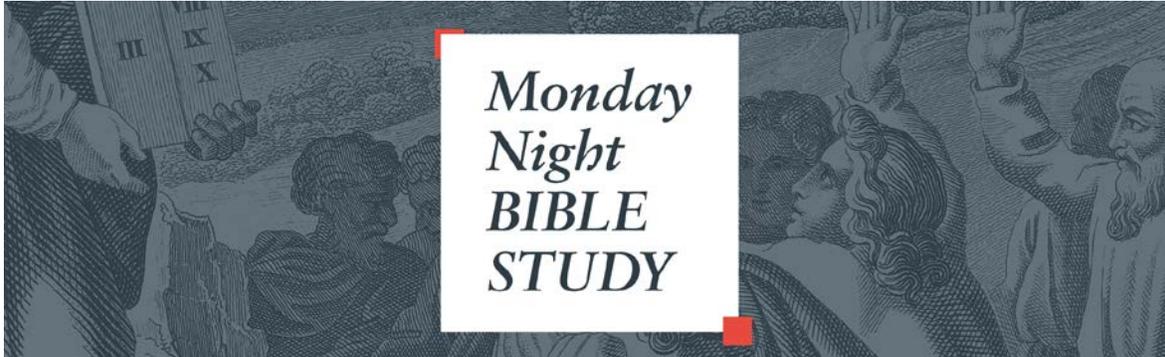
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But how will Timothy work to bring order? Preach the word, correct, rebuke and encourage. Since Timothy is called the pastor, his first commitment must be to preach and teach the word. You might say the word is the means by which Timothy will bring order to his church. Since the beginning of the church, when the first Christians gathered as believers, the word has always been the central part of the gathering. It strengthens the church in unity by giving the church a common way of thinking. The word is the revelation of Jesus. When the word is present in the community, the corporate mind of the community is transformed in such a way that together they reflect Jesus to the world more and more. The word that Paul is talking about here is the revelation of Jesus.

This revelation is, at its core, that Jesus died, but was raised again and now He is Lord over the world. This truth renews their minds, bring order to the church, and will help them reflect this Lord to the world. Paul says correct and rebuke. It is the truth of Jesus that people are corrected to. In other words, if Jesus has been raised, and He is Lord, then our lives are called to line up to that reality. We are corrected according to the truth of who Jesus is. The word not only tells us who Jesus is, but it actively works to renew our minds so that our lives line up to who He is. God has called Timothy to pastor this church, and God has given him power, love and self-control to do it. As a result, Timothy must keep going with the task of preaching the word – the message of Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 - What is the sound doctrine concerning Jesus's death and resurrection? In chapter 1 verses 9-10 Paul says that Jesus destroyed death, brought life and immortality, through the gospel. What does Paul mean by immortality? Immortality is to live bodily forever where death can't touch us again. Immortality isn't living forever as a spirit without a body. Paul preached that when Jesus returns (the Day of the Lord) we will be raised bodily and live in a new heaven and new earth.

Jesus destroyed death when He rose again bodily. He has achieved immortality and therefore promises to raise His church bodily when He returns in the future. Paul's message, his gospel, was simple. Jesus Christ is Lord. God raised Him from the dead. And if He defeated death, the world's greatest power – then all people should submit their allegiance to Him. And for those who do acknowledge Him as Lord, to those who believe He was raised from the dead, they too will also be raised from the dead when He returns. And if Jesus defeated death, then He must be now in the present and forevermore, superior over all things. This is what Paul preached. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar isn't. And someone preaching a message that says someone other than Caesar is the true king is treasonous and likely to be put to death.



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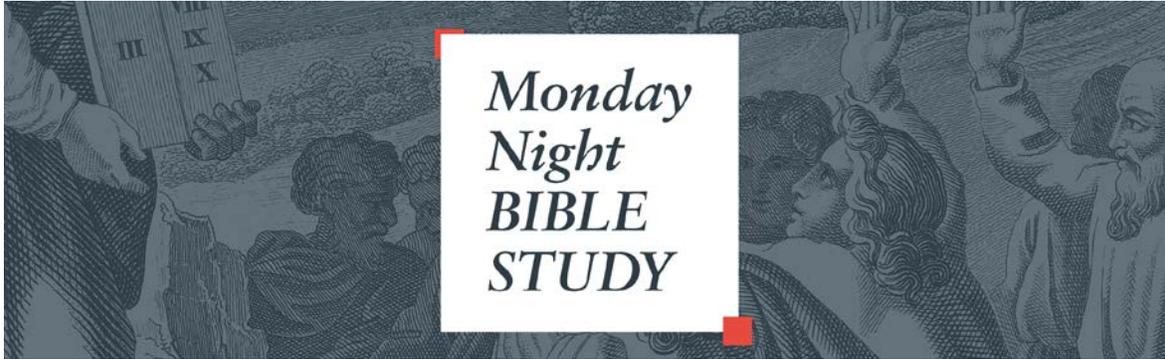
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That is the core of Paul's gospel. But what was the message of the false teachers that Paul is telling Timothy to deal with? If Paul preached that because Jesus was raised we'll be raised too, it's not surprising to hear that the false teachers were distorting Jesus's resurrection and our future resurrection. They were teaching that there would be no future bodily resurrection. In fact, they taught that there would only be a spiritual resurrection and that resurrection happens to believers at the moment they become Christians. That was a myth the false teachers were spreading and it attacked the core message of Jesus.

Paul says that he has kept to this truth – he has held on to the faith until the end. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Paul has kept the gospel pure from corruption. He didn't get into error the way the false teachers did. Paul looks back on his life and he can say that nothing influenced him to change the gospel that was first given to him by Jesus decades earlier. It also means that Paul wasn't ashamed of the gospel. Paul wasn't ashamed of the testimony that Jesus is Lord and even though he faced the stigma of being a criminal, it didn't sway him to alter the gospel like it did many others. And what is the result of his persevering in the faith – for not altering the message and not being ashamed of the testimony of Jesus? 2 Timothy 4:8 - And this is "for all" who long for his return. There is a special reward for those who long for Jesus to return.

2 Timothy 4:9-10 - "Demas has deserted me." Demas was one of Paul's closest coworkers. In the original language, it says, "Me, Demas has abandoned." They worked together for the gospel for several years – they were very close. Not only did Demas abandon him, but earlier in 1:15, two of his other friends and coworkers deserted him. Timothy probably wondered what is going to happen to Paul's ministry with so many abandoning him? What will happen to all of Paul's churches when he's gone if so many of his friends and co-workers have abandoned him?"

But through it all, Paul is confident because he knows he has run his race, he kept the faith, and as a result he had a life well lived. Although many have left him, he's not completely alone. Luke is still with him. Luke was also the author of the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. A few other of Paul's companions are on a different assignment and not with Paul. As a result, Paul needs Timothy to hurry and to bring along Mark (who wrote the gospel of Mark). Paul needed reinforcements and the workers are becoming much fewer since so many have abandoned him.



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Paul needed that reinforcement because in that day, when you were in prison, you weren't well taken care of. They didn't feed you or give you water or clothing. You needed friends and family present to provide those things for you each day. You can see why he's telling Timothy to hurry to him and to bring Mark for additional help. Also, Paul reminds Timothy in v.21 that winter is coming, so it will get quite cold and Paul will need his cloak to stay warm. And, in addition to his cloak, Paul tells Timothy to bring his scrolls and parchments. These are likely Paul's own personal notes and records. The point that we see here is that Paul remained a worker while in prison. He kept searching the scriptures, and kept writing letters to churches.

Paul now moves in v.15 to others who have abandoned him, but that God was faithful to remain with him during this difficult time. Paul describes Alexander as strongly opposing Paul's message. But look how different Paul's response is to others who have abandoned him. "May it not be held against them." Paul says to those who oppose the gospel, he will allow God to deal with them. But here, Paul has compassion on those who failed to defend him. Paul doesn't hold anything against those who have failed him. But concerning those who strongly oppose the message of Jesus – the message that saves – Paul allows God to deal with those people how He sees fit. God truly knows how to work out all things for the good for those who love Him.

"The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack...safely to His heavenly kingdom." v.18
He knows he will soon depart – he'll be martyred. But his hope is secure. He knows that because of Jesus, Paul will immediately be with him upon his death. His life and his death are secure in the hands of Jesus. As a result, Paul says... "to Him be glory forever and ever. Amen."