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**Comments on
the 2nd Epistle to Timothy**

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Introduction

We have no certain knowledge of how many years elapsed between the writing of the 1st and 2nd epistles to Timothy but evidently there had been sufficient time for the development of a big down-grade movement in the church of God. The diverse characters stamped upon the two Epistles make this quite plain. In the first epistle Timothy is instructed as to good order in the church and exhorted to maintain it in the presence of disorders that threatened it. In the second we find that, while there is still disorder, serious defection has developed and that in some quarters even the foundations of the faith are in danger; consequently that which is official is not mentioned and the appeal is to individual faithfulness. This we shall see as we pursue our way through the epistle.

Chapter 1

In his opening words, presenting his apostleship, Paul strikes a note which is prominent all through this epistle. He is an apostle, not only "by the will of God" — that gave him his authority — but also "according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" — that conferred upon his apostleship an uncon-

querable character. Nature furnishes us with many illustrations of the extraordinary power of life. Here is a green sapling so tender that an infant could crush it in its tiny fist yet under certain conditions the life that is in it will force it through pavements or cause it to displace great stones weighing hundred-weights. Here again is life of a certain order with its distinguishing characteristics. From these characteristics no one can divert it try as they will. Neither training nor cajoling nor whip will make a dog express its pleasure by purring nor a cat do so by wagging its tail. The life of the animal with its innate characteristics will conquer all your efforts.

In nature life is an immense force, but the life in Christ Jesus is unconquerable. The life of nature in all its forms, the life of Adam — which is human life — included, ultimately meets its match and is conquered by DEATH. The life in Christ is beyond the reach of death, for it was as having died and risen again that He became the Fountain-head of life to others. That life was promised before the world began (See, Titus 1:2) and brought to light in the Gospel (See, verse 10 of our chapter). Its fruition will be seen in ages yet to come. Hence it is spoken of as a promise here.

We start the epistle therefore with that which will survive all the failures and defections of believers and all the other ravages of time. How good to be connected with a sheet-anchor which never moves before we face the storms indicated in the epistle. Everything that is "in Christ Jesus" abides to eternity.

Having saluted Timothy the Apostle in verse 3 expresses his prayerful remembrance of him; in verses 4 and 5 he calls to mind the features in him which were to be commended, and then from verse 6 and onwards he exhorts and encourages him in the fear of God.

Both Paul and Timothy came of good stock. The former could speak of serving God from his forefathers with a pure conscience; that is, without defiling his conscience by doing that which he knew to be wrong. He was true up to his light, though, as he confesses elsewhere, once his light was so defective that he was found opposing Christ with conscientious zeal. Timothy was the third generation to be marked by faith. Indeed his faith is called "unfeigned," and faith of a very genuine order is a prime necessity when times of declension and testing set in. Moreover the Apostle can speak of his tears and these indic-

ated that he was a man of deep feeling and of spiritual exercises.

The very remembrance of Timothy's tears filled Paul with joy. How would he feel about us? Would he turn from us sad and disappointed at our feeble faith and general shallowness of conviction and feeling? Depend upon it, unfeigned faith, the maintenance of a pure conscience and the deep spiritual feelings which express themselves in tears are immense assets wherewith to face the difficulties and perils of "the last days."

Timothy possessed in addition a special gift from God, which had been administered to him through Paul, and gift carries with it a responsibility to use it in a proper and adequate way. A person of quiet and retiring mind, as Timothy seems to have been, is sorely tempted to lay up his pound in a napkin when confronted by trying circumstances. On the contrary, difficult circumstances are really a trumpet call for the stirring up of any gift that may be possessed, and this is possible for God has given to us His Holy Spirit, and thereby we have a spirit of power and love and a sound mind and not a spirit of fear.

"Power" here does not mean "authority" but rather "might" or "force" We have the force but it needs to be controlled by love, and both force and love must be governed by "a sound mind" or "wise discretion" if the energy that we have by the Holy Spirit is to be rightly employed. We are not therefore to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.

There was no danger of Timothy being ashamed of the testimony in earlier days when as recorded in Acts 14-19, it was triumphing in spite of bitter opposition. Now however it was in reproach, believers even were growing cold and Paul, the chiefest of its heralds, was in prison with no hope of release. There is nothing more trying than to come into a movement when it is on a rising tide of prosperity and then to see it pass its crest and a heavy ebb tide set in. This is the thing to test one's mettle.

Timothy's mettle was being tested, but the Apostle's call to him was that he should now partake of the afflictions of the Gospel. We are all glad to partake of the blessings of the Gospel, and many of us are glad to have a share in the work of the Gospel so that we may partake of its successes, and finally of the rewards in the coming kingdom for faithful service in it, but to

partake of its afflictions is another matter. This is only possible "according to the power of God." Here as in Colossians 1:11, power is connected not with that which is active but with that which is passive — suffering.

Power is in itself a cold impersonal thing. In this passage however the warm personal touch is given to it by verses 9 and 10. The God, whose power it is, is known to us as the Author of both our salvation and our calling. These two things ever go together, for they give us what we may call the negative and positive sides of the matter. We are saved from that we may be called to. We are delivered from the misery and peril into which sin has plunged us in order that we might be designated to the place of favour and blessing which is to be ours according to the purpose of God.

What God does in saving and calling is always according to His purpose. It was so when He saved Israel out of Egypt, for He called them to bring them into the land that He had purposed for them. There is a great difference however between Israel's salvation and calling and ours. They were saved in a national way from foes of flesh and blood in this world. We are saved from every spiritual foe and in an individual way. They

were called to the Land of Promise with its attendant earthly blessings. We are called into heavenly relationships with their attendant spiritual and heavenly blessings. The kingdom, of which Israel will be the centre-piece was purposed by God "from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34), and their land was mapped out for them from the time when "the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance" (Deut. 32:8), that is, from the time of Babel. Our calling, as we are told here, is according to divine purpose which dates back "before the world began."

Moreover the calling which we enjoy as Christians is according to grace as well as purpose. In this too we see a contrast, for Israel brought out of Egypt was put under law, and being thus put on their own responsibility they very soon forfeited their inheritance. Our calling rests upon what God Himself is and does on our behalf, and therefore it can never pass away. Yet once again, both our salvation and our calling were given us "in Christ Jesus," and this could not be said of Israel in the Old Testament. The covenant established with them addressed them as natural men and all stood upon a natural basis, and hence did not stand for long. All that we have is ours not as natural men

having our standing in Adam, but as those who are before God in Christ Jesus.

Our holy calling was thus purposed before the world began, and its full blessedness will abide when the world has passed away. As yet we have not entered into its full blessedness, still it has been made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour, and we have a foretaste of it inasmuch as death has been annulled by His death and resurrection and life and incorruptibility have been brought to light in the Gospel. "Annulled" and not "abolished" is the right translation. Death most evidently is not yet abolished, but its power is annulled for those who believe in Jesus. Also "incorruptibility" is the word and not "immortality." The souls of the wicked are not subject to death, but we have the larger hope of being finally placed beyond corruption, where the last breath of it can never touch us.

Paul had been appointed a herald of this Gospel in the Gentile world and his diligent labours had brought him into all this suffering and reproach. Men were beginning to shrug their shoulders and say that his cause was a lost one. He himself began to see the glint of the executioner's axe as the termina-

tion of the dark tunnel of his imprisonment. How did he feel about it?

"Nevertheless I am not ashamed" were his words. Of course not! How could he be? The very Gospel he carried was the glad tidings of life in the present and a glorious state of incorruptibility to come, consequent upon the breaking of the power of death. Who is there that really believing and understanding such tidings as these will be ashamed of them? Moreover his mission and authority proceeded from One whom he knew and believed, and this knowledge gave him the persuasion that all was safe in His hands.

Paul had committed his all to Christ inasmuch as he was a man that had "hazarded" or "delivered up" his life "for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 15:26). He had "suffered the loss of all things" (Phil. 3:8). He had deposited his reputation and his cause in the hands of his Master, and he had the full assurance that in the day of Christ he would be fully vindicated and recompensed. With that blessed assurance in his heart how could he be ashamed?

All this has been mentioned by the Apostle in order to enforce his earlier exhortation to Timothy that he should not be ashamed of the testimony in days when reproach was increasing. In verse 13 he gives him a second exhortation of great moment. If the adversary cannot intimidate us into defection from the truth he may nevertheless succeed by filching away the truth from us.

Now the truth to be of any practical use to us must be stated in words, and in this the devil may find his opportunity. Timothy had heard the truth from the lips of Paul to whom it was first revealed. It was a good thing — a good deposit — entrusted to him and it was to be kept by the indwelling Holy Spirit, but it only could be preserved intact as he held fast the form, or outline, of sound words in which Paul had conveyed it to him. There are plenty of deceivers today who under cover of zeal for the "idea", the "conception," the "spirit" of the truth advocate extreme latitude as to the words used. They ridicule verbal accuracy and especially "verbal inspiration;" but this in order to make it very easy for them to abstract from the minds of their dupes the divine idea and substitute for it ideas of their own.

We have never heard Paul personally but we have the form of sound words in his inspired epistles.

He can say to us, as well as to Timothy "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me" — only we have received it not from his living voice but through his pen, which is after all the more reliable way. If held fast "in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus the truth will be operative in ourselves and effective in others.

Alas! it is very easy to turn away. All in Asia had already done so. The context would indicate that this turning away from Paul was in connection with his inspired unfolding of the truth, to which he had just referred. These Asians were evidently ashamed of Paul and of the testimony. On the other hand there was Onesiphorus who was not ashamed and for whom a bright reward is waiting in "that day."

Chapter 2

The first verse of our chapter brings before us a third thing that is needful if the truth of God is to be maintained. A good deposit had been entrusted to Timothy. It had been conveyed to

him by Paul in an outline of sound words, and was to be kept by the indwelling Holy Spirit, as 2 Tim. 1:13-14 have told us. Now to have the truth enshrined in an outline of sound words is good, and yet no such outline can in itself keep the truth alive; for this the Holy Ghost is needed. Apart from Him the sound words do but embalm the truth, as may be seen in some of the orthodox confessions where creed has become altogether divorced from practice. By the indwelling Spirit however the truth may be kept in its living power.

Even so, a third thing is necessary for the truth is not only to be kept but to be propagated: indeed it cannot be effectually kept if it be not propagated — and for this we must be "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." We must be kept in immediate and personal touch with Him that we may be partakers of His grace. The three then are these,

1. The form or outline of truth, which we have in the Holy Scriptures.
2. The indwelling Holy Spirit as life and power.
3. The grace of the risen Christ, as the fruit of communion with Him, strengthening the believer.

Not one of the three can be dispensed with. No two are sufficient without the third.

Thus strengthened Timothy was to diligently teach others, and especially to commit the truth to faithful men who would hand it on to others in their turn. We might almost be tempted to add "faithful men" as a fourth thing to the three already given, but of course a faithful man is one that is strong in the grace of Christ, so he really comes under point number three. We do well to remember all the same that the human element cannot be eliminated from the matter. When faithful men are wanting the grace of Christ remains unappropriated, the indwelling Spirit is grieved, and the light and safeguard of Scripture neglected.

Now anyone who is really identified in this way with the truth — be it an inspired apostle, as Paul, or an apostolic man, like Timothy, or faithful men, or even very ordinary believers, like ourselves — cannot expect to have an easy time of it in this world. Oppositions and tests of all kinds must be expected, and the rest of our chapter is occupied with instructions in view of such things, and we shall find emphasized the characteristics, which found in the believer will enable him to meet them.

First of all comes conflict. This is quite inevitable for we are in the enemy's land and the Christian is a soldier. Two qualities are called for in this connection: we must be prepared for "hardness," that is, we must not complain if we get plenty of hard knocks and suffer many inconveniences in serving the Lord; further we must hold ourselves absolutely at the disposal of the One whom we serve and hence be disentangled from the world. We handle the affairs of this life of course, perhaps we do so very largely, yet we must refuse to be entangled in them.

The Christian also wears the athlete character, he is like those who "strive for masteries." In this connection obedience is stressed. Except he strive lawfully, except he run according to the rules of the contest, he is not crowned even though he comes in first. Do we sufficiently bear this in mind when we serve the Lord? Except we serve according to His instructions and in obedience to His word we cannot expect a full reward.

Further, he is like the husbandman, the farmer. This, man's earliest occupation, is one that entails the maximum amount of real hard physical work. It means downright labour. So it is for the servant of the Lord. He must be prepared for real hard work, yet when the autumn fruits are garnered he has rightly

enough the very first claim upon them. We make a great mistake if we favoured British folk in this luxurious twentieth century imagine it is our special privilege to be exceptions to this rule and to be carried to heaven on downy beds of ease.

There is more in these simple illustrations than is apparent at first sight; hence we are bidden in verse 7 to give them a careful consideration, and if we do we may expect to receive understanding from the Lord.

In verse 8 the Apostle reminded Timothy of that which was the very key-note of the gospel which he preached. The verse should read "Remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David raised from the dead." We are to remember Him as the risen One, rather than merely to remember the fact that He is risen, important as that is. Being of the seed of David He has the legal title to God's throne on the earth, and He will in due time bring in all the blessing promised in connection with it, but as risen from the dead far wider regions of blessing are opened up to us. If we keep Him in view as the risen One we shall find it a preservative against innumerable perversions of the truth of the gospel.

Now it was just because Paul himself so firmly maintained the truth of the gospel that he suffered so much trouble culminating in imprisonment. Still even in his captivity he found consolation in three directions. First, the adversaries might bind him, the messenger of the word of God, but the word of God itself they could not bind for that was in the hand of the Holy Spirit who could raise up messengers to carry it as and where He would.

Second, his sufferings were not going to be in vain. They were for the sake of "the elect," i.e., of those who should receive the gospel, that salvation in Christ with eternal glory might be theirs. Paul suffered that the truth of the gospel might be established and propagated. The Lord Jesus suffered in atonement that there might be a gospel to preach. We must never allow any confusion in our thoughts between the sufferings of Christ and those of any of His servants, even the greatest of them.

Third, there was the sure working of the government of God, as expressed in verses 11 to 13. Those who are identified with the death of Christ in this world shall enjoy life together with Him. Those who suffer in His interests shall be identified with Him when He reigns in glory. Those who deny Him will be denied

by Him. God's government acts in both directions: there shall be approbation and reward for the faithful believer, such as Paul was, and how great must have been this encouragement for him. Equally there shall be disapprobation and retribution for the unfaithful, and this may be a very serious matter for some of us. There is however just one qualification introduced into the working out of the government of God, and that is that if we "are unfaithful" (that is a better rendering than "believe not") He remains faithful. Hence no act of His government can ever militate against or override His own purpose and grace. His government is necessary for our good and His glory, but His grace is founded upon what He is in Himself and, "He cannot deny Himself." A faint illustration of this is seen in the actions of any right-minded earthly father who disciplines his child but never allows it to obscure the fundamental relationship that exists between them.

In verse 14 Timothy is exhorted to put believers in remembrance of these solemn considerations that thereby they may be delivered from wasting their time over unprofitable matters that only breed contentions, and in this connection Paul appeals to him under the figure of a workman. He was to make it his ob-

ject to be approved of God, "rightly dividing," or "cutting in a straight line" the word of truth. It takes a skilled carpenter to cut a really straight line, and spiritual skilfulness is needed in dividing up the Word of God so as to set it forth in detail.

When the Scriptures are rightly handled what light and edification is the result! When, on the other hand, they are cut crookedly what confusion is introduced to the subverting of the hearers! Who can estimate the loss that has been suffered by believers in sitting under preaching which has hopelessly mixed up things Jewish and things Christian, confused law with grace, and failed to discern any difference between the work of Christ wrought for us and the work of the Spirit wrought in us? These are alas! but a few mild instances of the havoc that may be made in handling the Word of God.

To Timothy the Apostle proceeded to cite a glaring case which had arisen in these early days. Hymenaeus and Philetus had divided the word of truth so crookedly that they were found propagating the notion that, "the resurrection is past already." In so teaching they tampered with the very foundations of the faith of the gospel and they overthrew the individual faith of any who came under their power. They could not of course

overthrow the faith of Christianity for that was a divine foundation, and whatever God founds always stands firm as a rock. Nor could they overthrow anything which God had founded in the hearts of His people. That always remains come what may, and "the Lord knows them that are His" even if they became misled under false teaching and hence indistinguishable to others.

The twofold seal of verse 19 is almost certainly an allusion to Numbers 16:5, 26, and we shall do well to read and consider that incident at this point as an illustration of the matter before us. The two principles set before us are quite clear and distinct: first, God is sovereign in His mercy and actings, hence He always knows and finally extricates those that are His: second, man is nevertheless responsible, hence every one who takes upon his lips the acknowledgement of the Lord is under the solemn obligation to depart from iniquity. The Christian must never be found in complicity with evil of any kind, from that which is least to that which is greatest.

The case brought before us in these verses was one of great seriousness for it was error as to fundamental truth and also error of an infectious kind, for, says the Apostle, "their word will eat

[or, spread] as doth a canker." Instructions are therefore given us as to the course to be pursued by the saint who desires to be faithful to the Lord and His Word. These instructions evidently contemplate the error having spread like a canker to the point when the church is powerless to deal with it as the bad case of moral evil was dealt with at Corinth. (See, 1 Cor. 5; 2 Cor. 2:4-8). The evidence of other Scriptures, notably of 1 John 2:18-19, would show that these early onslaughts of error were repulsed by the church, so that for the moment there may have been no necessity for Timothy to act on the instructions; if so it only emphasizes the goodness of God in seizing the occasion presented by the dangerous situation that arose over this matter to give the instructions so badly needed by us today.

In this connection another figure is used, that of a vessel. Verse 20 is an illustration whereby the apostle makes clear and enforces his instructions. In a large establishment there are many vessels of different qualities, and put to different uses. Only those however that are set apart from dishonourable use are fit for the Master's use. Verse 21 applies this illustration to the case in point. A man must "purge himself from these," i.e., from men such as Hymenaeus and Philetus, and from the false

doctrines they teach, if he would be "a vessel to honour" and fit for the use of the Master.

Let us at this point recapitulate for a moment. Verses 17 and 18 of the second chapter have given us in few words the case of grave doctrinal error which was in question. Verse 19 states in general terms the responsibility that rests abidingly upon all those who name the Name of the Lord. Verse 20 enforces this responsibility by an illustration. Verse 21 applies the general principle of verse 19 to the case in point in a very definite and particular way.

The word in the original which is translated "purge" is a very strong one. It means not only to purge or cleanse but to cleanse out. The same word is used in 1 Corinthians 5:7, where it is rightly translated, "purge out." The evil was purged out by putting the wicked person away from amongst themselves, according to verse 13 of that chapter. Here the individual believer — "a man" — is to purge himself out from amongst the wicked persons and their teaching; thus he will depart from iniquity and be prepared for all that is good.

These instructions are very important, for experience, no less than Scripture, teaches us how impossible it is to maintain personal holiness and spiritual fitness in association with evil. Righteous Lot may form links with Sodom, God-fearing Jehoshaphat may strike up an alliance with Baal-worshipping Ahab, but both inevitably become lowered and defiled in the process. So it will be for us today. So let us be warned.

We are not however to expect complete isolation because we cut our links with evil for we are to find happy association with those that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, or, "a purged heart," for it is the same word used again only without the prefix signifying "out." In so doing we are to "flee youthful lusts," that is, be very careful as to purity and holiness of a personal sort, for without that all this care as to purity in one's associations would degenerate into mere hypocrisy. We are also to make the pursuit of "righteousness, faith, love, peace" our great concern. This will preserve us from becoming mere separatists in the spirit of, "stand by, for I am holier than thou!" We shall rather be actively and happily occupied with what is good and of eternal worth.

The four things we are to pursue are intimately connected. Righteousness is that which is right before God, and if we pursue it we shall certainly be marked by obedience to His truth and will. To pursue faith means following after those great spiritual realities made known to us in the Scriptures, for faith serves as the telescope of the soul and brings them into view. To pursue love is to follow that which is the very expression of the divine nature. Peace naturally follows the other three. Any peace apart from them would be no true peace at all.

Verse 23 indicates that, when Timothy or others have carried out the apostolic instructions we have been considering, they still have need to avoid pitfalls which the adversary will place in their way. He will still introduce, if he can, "foolish and unlearned questions" in order to create strife. The literal meaning of the word is not quite "unlearned" but "undisciplined," it indicates, "a mind not subject to God, a man following his own mind and will." There is nothing we ought to fear more than the working of our own minds and wills in the things of God.

The servant of the Lord must avoid strife at all costs. He cannot avoid conflict if he remains true to his Master, but he must not strive, i.e., he must avoid the contentious spirit, he must never

forget that though he stands for the Lord he is only a servant, and hence he must be marked by the meekness that befits that position. In reading the earlier part of the chapter we noticed that various figures are used to show the different characters that the believer wears. He is a soldier, an athlete, a husbandman, a workman, a vessel, and now we are reminded that he is a servant, and not only so but a servant of the Lord, and hence he must be careful not to belie the character of the Lord whom he serves.

We might have supposed that anyone obeying the instructions of verses 19-22 would be entirely removed from everybody who would be likely to oppose. Verses 24-26 show that this is not so. The Lord's servant will still come into contact with those who oppose and he must know how to meet them. He must be apt to teach and give himself to instructing his opponents rather than arguing with them. He must be armed with the love that will enable him to meet them in gentleness, patience and meekness; with the faith that will keep the truth clearly and steadily before his own mind and theirs; with the hope that counts on God to grant to them the mercy of repentance and recovery from the snare of Satan.

Chapter 3

With the opening of chapter 3 the Apostle turns from these instructions, which sprang out of the dangers which were threatening at that moment, to foretell the conditions which should prevail in the last days. The picture that he presents is a very dark one.

In the first verse he gives us the general character of the last days in two words — "perilous times." We shall do well to bear this warning continually in mind inasmuch as there can be but little doubt that we are now in the last days and spiritual perils are thick around us.

In verses 2 to 5 the characteristics of the men of the last days are brought before us. It is a terrible list, rivalling the list given us in Romans 1:28 to 31, when the sins of the ancient heathen world are described. The most fearful thing about the list of our chapter is that all this evil is covered under "a form of godliness," that is, the people who are thus described are Christian as far as their claims and outward appearance go. The real power of Christianity they utterly deny.

"Men shall be lovers of their own selves," this is the first item on the list. The second is, "covetous" or "lovers of money." The list ends. "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Love of self, love of money and love of pleasure are to mark the religious people of the last days, and as for all the evil things mentioned between they indicate the various ways in which the proud, self-sufficient, lawless spirit of fallen man expresses itself — and all this, remember, in people who call themselves followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. If we know anything of the present state of the so-called Christian nations we may well conclude that we have reached the last days.

The attitude of the faithful believer to such is very simple; from such he is enjoined to turn away, rather than go along with them in the hope of reclaiming them. Separation is enjoined for the sixth time in this short passage; the words used being, "shun," "depart," "purge out," "flee." "avoid," and now, "turn away." The present age being one which loves compromise the word, "separation" is naturally not at all popular, still here is that which the word stands for, urged upon us as the commandment of the Lord; and our business is not to reason about it but to obey.

The description of verses 2 to 5 applies generally to the men of the last days. In verse 6 two special classes come into view — first, those who are active deceivers, and second, those who fall an easy prey to their deceptions. The Apostle's word indicates that there were to be found in his day examples of both these classes. The deceivers, he says, are "of this sort" i.e., of the kind described in verses 2 to 5, and their work is carried on in a semi-private way for they "creep into houses." In the light of this inspired word it is very significant what an amount of house to house propaganda, with considerable success in creeping into houses and beguiling unstable souls, is carried on by the agents of false religious cults, such as Mormons, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc.

Those deceived are spoken of here as "silly women," doubtless a term of contempt and applicable to that type of person who is always enquiring and yet never reaching any settled convictions, be they man or woman. The reason for their blindness and consequent lack of conviction is their sins and the lusts which bring forth sin. It is a striking fact that this "silly women" class is recruited quite as much from the ranks of the refined and learned as from the rude and illiterate. The rough

man of the street generally has pretty definite opinions of some sort; opinions which, right or wrong, he can express with vigour. It is frequently the highly educated who lose themselves in mazes of speculation and finish by accepting some pretentious nonsense which is the very opposite of the truth. Take, for instance, the way in which Christian Science captures its victims almost entirely from the rich and would-be intellectual folk.

We cannot however, shut out from all this the power of Satan, as verses 8 and 9 show us. Jannes and Jambres were evidently leaders of the band of magicians who influenced Pharaoh's court and withstood Moses, working their wonders in league with demons. The deceivers of the last days will be like them, resisting the truth as agents of the devil. God has however, set a limit to their power and ultimately their folly shall be manifest to all. This does not mean that this kind of evil is going to receive an immediate check for, as verse 13 tells us, evil men and seducers are going to wax worse and worse until the end of the age. We are not left in any uncertainty as to what we must expect.

Nor are we left in uncertainty as to our resources in the presence of the evil. They are set before us in our chapter from verse 10 and onwards. Over against the character of the men of the last days the Apostle was inspired to set the character which he bore and which Timothy well knew. What an extraordinary contrast to verses 2 to 5 is presented by verses 10 and 11! Self-love, pride, opposition to and persecution of those that are good, on the one hand; faith, love, patient endurance under persecution, on the other. The one is the full-blown spirit of the world; the other is the spirit of Christ; and it has always been the case that "he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit" (Gal. 4:29). Hence persecution must always be expected by those who "live godly in Christ Jesus," though the form that persecution takes may vary in different countries and in different ages. The type of godliness produced by the law of Moses might excite but little or no opposition whilst godliness "in Christ Jesus" is being hotly resisted.

Paul's "manner of life" was based upon his doctrine; it gave expression to it in practice; hence in verse 10 doctrine comes first. With that doctrine Timothy was well acquainted, and he had but to continue in the truth he had learned from such a

source. He also had the inestimable advantage of having known the Holy Scriptures — the Old Testament, of course — from a child. In these two things Timothy's resource lay.

In these two things lies our resource today, only for us the two practically coalesce into one. Timothy had Paul's doctrine from his own lips, expressed in a "form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13), exemplified and enforced by his wonderful manner of life. We have his doctrine in his inspired epistles preserved in the New Testament, and no form of sound words is more reliable than that. In the New Testament we have also an inspired account of Paul's wonderful life, and also the other apostolic writings. We have therefore in this respect a little more than Timothy had, and we have the Old Testament equally with him, though alas! we may not be nearly as fully acquainted with it or with Paul's doctrine as he was. For us then the great resource is the Holy Scripture in its entirety.

This being so the Holy Spirit seized the occasion to assure us of the inspiration of all Scripture. Its profitableness for various uses all depends upon this fact. Who can teach or reprove or correct or instruct in what is right, in any perfect and absolute

sense, but God? The reason why Scripture can do these things is that it is "inspired of God" or "God-breathed."

The claim here unquestionably is that the Book which we know as the Bible is a God-breathed book. Some of our readers might like to enquire — What about the Revised Version of this passage? Our reply is that the Authorized Version is right here and the Revised. is wrong. In the original, according to Greek idiom, the verb "is" does not appear, being understood though not expressed. In English it must appear and the question is as to where it should be? Remarkably enough there are eight other passages in the New Testament of exactly similar construction and every one of them but this the Revisers translated just as the Authorized has translated this. Why make an exception in this case?

{*The R.S.V. (1952) text is correct here.}

Hebrews 4:13 is one of the eight passages. Had the Revisers followed their rendering of 2 Timothy 3:16 they would have made it, "All things that are naked are also opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," which simply reduces the

solemn statement to a trivial absurdity; hardly more so however than the rendering they have given us of our passage.

The thing that Timothy needed was to be assured that he had in the Scriptures that which was of God and therefore wholly reliable — something on which he could safely take his stand when confronted with the dangers and seductions to be expected in the last days. This is exactly what we too want, and, God be thanked, we have it in the Bible.

In the Scriptures we have an infallible standard because they are God breathed. By that standard we may test all that is presented to us as truth and detect and expose all the deceits of "evil men and seducers" though they grow "worse and worse." We have however more than that in them as verses 15 and 17 show us. They can make us wise to salvation, though it be only a child who is in question. They can equally perfect the man of God and furnish him to all good works.

In reading verse 15 we must not confine our thoughts of salvation to that which reaches us at conversion. Salvation in that sense is of course included in the statement, but it reaches out to embrace also the daily salvation which we Christians need in

a multitude of ways. The whole Scripture — and particularly the Old Testament, which is here primarily in view — abounds with examples which expose before us the snares and pitfalls which beset us, and the workings of our own hearts, and which reveal to us the dealings of God's grace and government. If enlightened by faith in Christ and giving heed to these warnings, we are made wise to salvation from similar snares which exist in our day.

It is one thing to be preserved from danger; it is another to be thoroughly instructed in what is right. The most devoted of God's servants, the man of God, will find in Scripture that which equips him in the completest manner. By it he may be rendered "perfect" or "complete" and be "thoroughly furnished" or "fully fitted" to every good work. These statements make a tremendous claim for Scripture. They clearly infer that within its covers there is guidance in regard to every work that can be called good, and that the man of God, who of all believers most needs light from on high, needs no light outside that which Scripture affords.

We do not overlook the fact that we need the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit if we are to profit by the Scripture.

That is stated in other passages. Here we have the nature and power of the Scriptures brought before us. We may well rejoice and thank God that the Bible has been preserved to us and that the Spirit of God abides with us for ever.

Chapter 4

In view of all this Paul solemnly charges Timothy to preach "the word." He carries away his thoughts to the tremendous hour when the Lord Jesus shall appear in glory to judge the living and the dead, so that he should serve and speak in view of that moment, and not succumb to the temptation to speak so as to please the itching ears of men.

In the four striking verses which open chapter 4 the Apostle uses three expressions, all of which are intimately connected with the Scriptures, viz., "the word," "sound doctrine," "the truth." In contrast with them we find "fables," which are desired by those who merely want to hear those things which pander to their lusts. Timothy however was not merely to preach the word but he was to bring it to bear upon the consciences and hearts of his hearers, either for conviction or re-

buke or encouragement, and he was to be urgent about it both in season and out of season.

The word "lusts" simply means "desires." The time will come, says the Apostle, when men will insist upon hearing, not what is true but what pleases them, and they will "heap up" to themselves teachers who will give them what they want. That time is now arrived. Many features of the Apostle's doctrine, as recorded in the New Testament are quite repugnant to the "modern mind," therefore, we are told, they must be discarded by all progressive thinkers and preachers, who must learn to harmonize their utterances with the latest fashions in scientific thought and the latest crazes as to popular pleasures. Hence all that advanced modernistic preaching which the Apostle here dismisses in one word — FABLES!

The servant of the Lord, on the other hand, is to keep steadily on with his ministry. He is to "watch" or rather "be sober" in all things: the word used means, "that sober clearness of mind resulting from exemption from false influences — not muddled with the influence of what intoxicates." A very important word this for all of us, for there is nothing that so intoxicates the mind and muddles the perceptions as the false modernistic

teaching to which we have just alluded. Further he is to be prepared to suffer, for he cannot expect to be popular, either with the purveyors of fables who stand in the pulpit or with the consumers of fables who sit in the pew. Timothy was to do the work of an evangelist and so fill up the full measure of his ministry.

The Apostle's words here would indicate that to Timothy had been committed a ministry of an all-round character. He was not only gifted to teach and preach the word for the instruction, correction and exhortation of believers, but also to preach the gospel for the conversion of sinners; and he was not to neglect any part of this comprehensive work. Had he reasoned after a human sort he might have concluded that with so much evil threatening inside the church he must concentrate all his energies on inside work in order to meet the situation, and so abandon all effort to reach outsiders. This however was not to be, and we may learn a lesson from it today. It is evidently the will of God that, come what may in the history of the church, the work of evangelization is to go forward. The great Head of the church lives and He is well able to deal in due season with every situation that may arise, however disastrous it may ap-

pear to us; and meanwhile an all-round ministry of the truth to both saint and sinner is to be maintained.

Moreover it was to be a special incentive to Timothy that the hour of Paul's "departure" or "release" was just at hand. He knew full well that his martyrdom was imminent, when like a warrior he would leave the field of combat. All the more need then for Timothy to gird up his loins like a man and be fully engaged in the fight. The more difficult the situation, the fewer those who fight the good fight the louder the call to the true-hearted to engage in it. In exactly that way we should view things today.

The earth is filled with fightings as the fruit of sin, and perhaps none have been fiercer and worse than those that have been waged in the arena of "the church." What a tragic misuse of energy there has been all down the ages when brother has drawn the sword against brother over comparatively trivial and oft-times selfish matters, to the great delight and profit of the common foe! Alive to this and tired of it, we must not slip into the opposite error of thinking that there is really nothing worth fighting about. There is such a thing as "a good fight" as verse 7 makes manifest. The Apostle fought a good fight inasmuch as

his contentions were for God and His truth and not of any selfish sort, and further he used spiritual and not carnal weapons in his warfare (See, 2 Cor. 10:3-6). If we go to war for ourselves, or if warring for God we use carnal weapons, our fight is not a good fight.

Paul not only fought a good fight but he ran his race to the finish and he kept the faith. Having kept it, he could hand it on intact to those who were to follow him. The faith of Christianity is the great object of the adversary's attack. If he attacks us it is just in order that he may damage the faith. It would almost seem as if the Apostle in these verses had in his mind's eye a relay race. The baton of the faith had been placed in his hands and beating off the attacks of the foe he had raced through to the finish of his section and was now handing it on intact to another, with the assurance that at the day of Christ's appearing the crown of righteousness would be his; and not only awarded to him but also to all others who like him faithfully run their bit of the race with their eye on the goal. The rewards of faithfulness will be seen at the appearing of Christ and that moment will be loved by those who diligently seek His pleasure. To

those who seek their own pleasure His appearing will be an unwelcome thought.

It is an inspiring yet a searching thought for each believer who reads these lines, that we are now engaged in running our little section of the great relay race with the responsibility of carrying the baton of the faith and of preserving it and of handing it on intact to future runners, or of handing it over directly to the Lord Himself if He comes within our lifetime.

From verse 9 and onwards the Apostle mentions matters of a personal sort, that concerned himself or his acquaintances. Yet even these personal matters present points of much instruction and interest. Timothy was to endeavour to quickly rejoin Paul at Rome since only Luke was with him. Others had left, some evidently on the Lord's service, such as Crescens, Titus and Tychicus. With Demas the case was different. He had loved the present world and consequently had forsaken Paul, for Paul preached a Gospel that worked deliverance from this present world which it characterized as evil (See, Gal. 1:4). His action in forsaking Paul was therefore only the visible expression of the fact that he had forsaken in heart the real power of the Gospel.

Demas then stands as a warning beacon, illustrating the fact that backsliding may take place even in one who came under the influence of so great a servant as Paul. In happy contrast we have Mark, who is mentioned in verse 11. In earlier days he had been carried into a position which was beyond his faith and in consequence he had after a while retreated from it, as recorded in Acts 15:37-39. This act of his was not only to his own hurt but also furnished the cause of the estrangement which came in between such eminent servants of Christ as Paul and Barnabas. Now however we find him fully recovered and reinstated. Paul, the one who had objected to him previously, now declares him to be "profitable to me for the ministry." The case of Mark then is full of encouragement as showing how the backslidden may be recovered.

In Alexander we have an opponent of the Apostle and of the truth. whether an open enemy or a secret we have no means of determining. As to him only one thing is said, "The Lord will reward him according to his works." This seems to be the better attested rendering. Paul just left him in the hands of the Lord, who will deal with him in due season in perfect righteousness.

We all may well ask the Lord that we may be preserved from working any kind of evil against His servants or His interests.

Verse 16 shows us that there were others who had not opposed Paul like Alexander, nor definitely forsaken him like Demas, yet they had been guilty of a temporary forsaking, by failing to stand by him in the crisis of his trial. They could not face the stigma entailed by a full identification with this despised prisoner. Still their cowardice only made the faithfulness of the Lord to His servant the more conspicuous and such power was ministered to Paul in that trying hour that instead of summoning every ounce of wit that he possessed and straining every nerve to establish his own innocence, he concentrated upon rendering the fullest and plainest testimony to the Gospel. His trial became the occasion in which "the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Paul eagerly seized the occasion to fully set the Gospel forth before the most august assemblage that then could be found upon earth. There his words stood on record in the official report of the proceedings available for any and every Gentile.

For the moment the Apostle was delivered "out of the mouth of the lion." Just when his case looked hopeless he had been

snatched back from the jaws of death by the hand of God, acting it may have been through a sudden whim of the capricious and godless Nero. In verse 18 he looks right away from men altogether. No evil work of man could ultimately prevail against him. Come what may, and martyrdom under Nero did very soon come, he would be carried through in triumph to His heavenly kingdom. The coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus has a heavenly as well as an earthly side, and we as well as Paul are destined to the heavenly.

A few more greetings and the Epistle finishes. Verse 20 leads one to think that Paul was released from captivity after his trial since his first voyage to Rome was taken under the circumstances recorded in Acts 27 and 28, when there was no opportunity for his leaving Trophimus at Miletum. The fact that he left him there sick shows that it is not always God's way to heal sick believers directly, as is asserted by some. In just the same way verse 13 shows us that the highest spirituality goes quite consistently with carefulness over quite small and humble details of daily life This is a thing that we do well to remember.

