

NT Reading Plan 2020

Living Hope Fellowship

2 Timothy

Last Words

2 Timothy is the last of Paul's letters before he dies; "the time of [his] departure has come" (4:6). Paul wasn't deathly sick; he was imprisoned for his faith (1:8; 2:8), awaiting execution which he knew was imminent.

Pastors

Paul takes up his pen for the last time to write to his younger disciple Timothy, now the pastor in Ephesus, a church Paul had originally planted (Acts 20:31).

Acts 20:17-38 serves to highlight many of the main themes that we find in 2 Timothy and it's very helpful to read that now. In that passage, Paul reminded the Ephesian elders some years prior to writing this letter to Timothy that he had not shrunk from declaring *the truth* of God to them including the need for repentance from sins (*holiness*) and *salvation by faith* in Christ, even if that meant *suffering persecution*. He warned them of *false teachers* who would rise from within their ranks and the need to be on the alert. Paul was concerned about raising up a *new generation* of faithful saints and especially pastor-elders who would be able to pass the faith along to others and guard the faith from abuses of lifestyle and doctrine.

1. From Acts 20:17-38, identify one thing that was important to Paul in ministry (there are many). Ask yourself if you share that urgency and priority that Paul had?

The Primacy of the Word

Understanding and teaching Scripture was a continuous staple of Paul's ministry. As he instructs his disciple for potentially the last time, Paul was sure to emphasize that Timothy must place the utmost priority on the teaching and preaching of God's Word. With the preaching of the Bible comes Salvation, Sanctification, and Persecution (see 1:8-9 for example), equipping (3:16-17), the opposition of False Teaching, and the rejection of False Living as we'll see below.

2. How many different words and phrases can you find in this letter that act as synonyms for the Bible (hint, they're spread through every chapter).

Salvation

The pastoral epistles (Paul's letters to pastors, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus) are filled with the Savior. The salvation word group (like save, saved, salvation, etc.) is found in these books more than anywhere else in the NT. God has saved us through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1:8-14), Paul continues to preach the word of God despite persecution that God's elect obtain salvation in Christ (2:8-13), and all of Scripture (including the OT!) is able to bring one to salvation by faith in Christ (3:14-17). Not only must the Word take priority in ministry, the Word's preeminent focus is on Christ.

3. What comes to mind when you first think of salvation, the past, the present, or the future? In what sense(s) does Paul use the salvation words here?

Sanctification

Sanctification is both a present status for the believer (you have been set apart as saints, called to be holy) but it is also a progressive growing in Christ-likeness. The gospel is not only for entering into salvation but also for gaining in sanctification. Those who have actually responded in faith to the message of Christ and repented of sin will continue to repent of sin. But those who do not believe continue to show their nature by rebelling against calls to pursue holiness, live patterns of unholy lifestyles, and seek false teachings in order to confirm their wicked ways.

4. Read 2:14-26. What role does the Word of God have in your own pursuit of holiness? How do unbelievers react to the truth? Is there any relation to how much you are reading the Bible and how much you desire to be more like Christ?

Persecution

With the preaching of the Bible comes opposition. Paul was no stranger to this! We should want ministries that bear fruit but do we want ministries which bring suffering? Not really. But "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12). This calls for an abundance of endurance (2:10, 12; 4:3, 5) and patience (3:10; 4:2).

5. What are some ways that Christians can be persecuted besides physical violence?

False Teaching & Living

Contrasted with faithful preaching, many deceivers are also in the world, leading people astray with false teaching (2:16-19; 3:7-9; 4:3-4). Worldly lifestyles always seek false teachings (3:1-9). It makes it easier that way because you don't have to change! Paul gives the Christian response to these scenes in 2:22-26; 3:10-17; 4:1-2, 5).

6. What is the consistent counter attack to false teaching in each of the three Christian response passages above?

Leadership Training

Key to the preservation of the truth and the further promotion of it worldwide is raising up new generations of leaders who are competent in the Scriptures and able to disciple others under them (2:1-2).

7. How many generations can you spot in 2:2? What are you doing to be part of the leadership development process in this church? Do you even know how this church is developing leaders and disciples?

Naming Names

Paul is not afraid to name people who have defected from the gospel, opposed the gospel, or taught contrary to the gospel. It is not wrong to call out certain people publicly for their sins and to let the church know about false teachers or professing Christians who have departed from the faith but need our prayers.

8. How many people can you find whom Paul names as opponents or defectors of the faith?