



The Last Words of the Apostle Paul

Volume II

By

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Chapter Eight

Young Timothy was greatly blessed when he met the Apostle Paul. Paul became Timothy's mentor. They spent years traveling together, preaching together, planting churches, solving problems. Paul reminded Timothy of that in his last letter to the young minister –

But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which

are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2

Timothy 3:10-17

Living Godly

The words ‘living Godly’ have nice ring to them – don’t you think? That sounds like a nice, comfortable way of living, but there’s another side to it – “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” How does that sound? Live godly in Christ Jesus and ‘suffer persecution.’

Paul wrote something similar about ‘living godly’ to Titus a few years earlier –

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2:11-15

God has called us to live ‘godly’ lives. What does that mean and why would Christians who live godly in Christ Jesus suffer persecution? To ‘live godly’ (ζάω εὐσεβῶς) means to live out the experience as a follower of Jesus Christ in ‘devout’ fashion. To live that way in an unbelieving world will lead to ‘persecution’ (διώκω – chased aggressively, to be overtaken in a chase, to be hunted down, to be apprehended).

We should not be surprised by that. Jesus told His disciples on the night before He was crucified –

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.” John 15:18-21

Being hated and persecuted by the world is what we will face as Christians. There's no getting around that. The only way for you to avoid it is to compromise or run and hide. Unfortunately, in the Western world, Christians have chosen compromise rather than 'standing' for Christ. What position was Jesus in when He died on the Cross? He was 'standing.' Jesus stood for us and asks us to stand for Him. As Paul wrote in Ephesians –

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:10-13

The proper response to dealing with the devil is to ‘put on’ the whole armor of God. That’s how a believer facing ‘persecution’ can fight against ‘principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly realms.’ Putting on the whole armor of God does NOT mean we won’t be persecuted for our beliefs, but it does give us the ability to ‘stand’ for God.

Timothy's Example

Paul was Timothy's example of someone who faced persecution wearing the whole armor of God –

“But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

Notice that Timothy ‘carefully followed’ Paul’s example. The Greek word παρακολουθέω means ‘to investigate, to follow closely, to follow after closely to resemble.’ Paul wanted Timothy to ‘resemble’ him, not in the sense of being prideful but being an example. Paul said similar things to other believers –

“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.” Philippians 3:17

“For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone’s bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.” 1 Thessalonians 3:7-9

Paul put this succinctly in 1 Corinthians 11:1 – “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” The Greek word μιμητής (*mimétés*) means ‘imitate, follow.’ We get the English word ‘mimic’ from the Greek. Paul imitated Christ and asked Timothy to imitate him – follow his example. Christ is always our highest example, but godly people who imitate Christ are also examples for us to follow. Just be sure that the human example is really an ‘imitator’ of Christ. It’s easy to be deceived and misled, so be on your guard at all times.

Deceived

Speaking of being deceived and misled –

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

Paul again warned Timothy of what was to come. Evil men and imposters existed during the time that Paul wrote to Timothy, but Paul wanted the young minister to know that they would ‘grow worse and worse.’ That’s what we see in our world today. It reminds me of what we read about it Genesis 6 – the days of Noah. Jesus said He would return to the earth when – “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37).

So, what was Timothy to do? What should we do?

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Timothy 3:14-15

Paul pointed Timothy back to his childhood and how his mother and grandmother had taught him the Scriptures. It's interesting that Paul wrote that the 'Holy Scriptures,' which would have been the Hebrew Bible at the time, were able to make Timothy 'wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.' Paul could say that because he knew that the Old Testament Scriptures pointed directly to the coming of Christ from Heaven to die for sin and rise from the dead to give His followers eternal life.

The Answer to Deception

The answer to deception is always the same – dependence on the power of God's Word. That's because –

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Holy Spirit of God inspired ‘all Scripture.’ The Greek word translated ‘inspired’ is θεόπνευστος and means ‘God-breathed.’ Scripture is ‘**profitable**’ (ὠφέλιμος – useful, beneficial, advantageous) for ‘**doctrine**’ (διδασκαλία – teaching, instruction), for ‘**reproof**’ (ἔλεγχος – a proof test, persuasion, conviction), for ‘**correction**’ (ἐπανόρθωσις – setting straight, setting right, straightening out, restored to original and proper condition), and for ‘**instruction in righteousness**’ (παιδεία – discipline used in raising and

educating a child, to train someone to maturity – δικαιοσύνη – righteousness, justice, judicial approval).

What is the purpose of this commitment to following Christ and the Scriptures? That the man of God –

- may be complete (ἄρτιος – fitted, ready, prepared)
- thoroughly equipped for every good work (ἐξαρτίζω – equipped fully, furnished, supplied – ἀγαθός – intrinsically good, inherently good – ἔργον – task, employment, deed, action, worker who is accomplished)

Paul wanted Timothy and those who he discipled to be ‘complete, thoroughly equipped for every good word.’ Paul knew that Timothy and other believers would need to cling to the inspired Word of God and depend on His Words to accomplish the work God had given them to do.

Chapter Nine

The Apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy has four chapters and 22 verses. However, Paul's letter was a 'letter.' It did not contain chapters and verses. Those were added centuries later for the convenience of readers and teachers.

Whether you read 2 Timothy with or without chapters and verses, you will realize that Paul was turning a corner at this point in his letter. He had written so many important things to Timothy that would help him in his ministry after Paul's death. The time had come for Paul to present a strong 'finish' to his letter and call Timothy to the highest point of responsibility one can imagine in the Lord's 'Church.' Paul called Timothy his "beloved and faithful son in the Lord" and "a true son in the faith." They had a shared ministry for 20+ years and Paul was handing the responsibility for continuing that ministry to Timothy, Titus, and a few other trusted ministers of the Gospel.

Let's see how Paul ends his letter – his final words on earth.

Paul's Charge to Timothy

"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: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:1-5

Paul's 'charge' to Timothy is 'charged' with powerful action verbs –

- Preach
- Be ready
- Convince
- Rebuke
- Exhort
- Be watchful
- Endure afflictions
- Do the work of an evangelist
- Fulfill your ministry

This is how simple, and how challenging ministry really is at any time, anywhere in the world. Preachers need to ‘Preach the word!’ How many preachers do you know who actually preach the Word of God today? The majority of preachers I see on television or online or listen to on the radio or on podcasts do NOT preach the Word of God. They preach Neo-Paganism. They preach New Age. They preach New Thought. They preach ‘myths.’ They preach ‘lies.’ They preach ‘themselves.’ However, they do not preach God’s Word ‘rightly divided’ Paul focused on that important aspect of preaching and teaching in 2 Timothy 2:15. You can read about that in the eBook that I’ll link to at the end of this eBook.

“Be ready in season and out of season.” That means be ready ALL THE TIME. There is never a moment when a preacher of God’s Word should let down his guard. The enemy never sleeps, never slumbers. The enemy is looking for every possible way to bring down preachers and teachers. Why? Because that’s how you capture the ‘flock’ of God. Get the shepherds distracted and deceived. That plan

has worked well since the beginning (Genesis 3), so why change now? We know the enemy's plan, so 'be ready.'

The preacher of God's Word has a lot of work to do because of the enemy's continual attacks. They have to 'convince' (ἐλέγχω – expose, reprove, rebuke, convict, show to be guilty), 'rebuke' (ἐπιτιμάω – admonish, chide, warn), and 'exhort' (παρακαλέω – encourage, make call from close beside, entreat, beg, comfort). All of that is part of being a preacher of God's Word – a 'shepherd' of God's people. How many pastors actually do that? The number is slowly falling year after year after year. I say that as someone who has been involved in ministry for more than 55 years. A majority of today's pastors are not the types of pastors I knew decades ago. Many are 'wolves in sheep's clothing.' Others are just deceived.

Will this type of ministry – the type Paul called Timothy and all preachers to practice – be easy? Absolutely not! That’s why Paul wrote – “with all longsuffering and teaching.” Preachers who want to please God will have to be like Christ. They will have to ‘suffer long’ with people and ‘teach’ them in the power of God’s Spirit.

Why is this important? For several reasons. First, Jesus Christ will return to the earth to “judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” Consider that for a moment. Jesus is coming back. His coming to judge the earth is closer now than it’s ever been. Second, “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; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

We see that going on right before our eyes every week in churches across the world. People are leaving the solid preaching of God's Word for teachers and preachers who make them 'feel good' about themselves. Most of their 'preaching' time is taken up with stories about themselves and what great things they have accomplished because of their many 'spiritual' gifts. People love that kind of preaching! They 'heap up for themselves teachers' like that. They 'turn their ears away from the truth,' and are 'turned aside to fables.'

They will not 'endure sound doctrine.' They are not enduring sound doctrine at this very moment. Millions of people are running toward the Neo-Paganism, secular humanism of so-called 'Christian' preachers and teachers they see on television, online, or in 'mega' churches that are anything but Christian congregations. They are about perverting the truth and receiving glory for it. Well, as Paul wrote, Jesus is coming back to 'judge the living and the dead.' False preachers and teachers will face Christ at His judgment, then all will be made clear.

I know many good pastors who are laboring for Christ across this country and throughout the world who are faithfully preaching God's Word as they watch their people leave their churches. Some are going to preachers who can 'tickle' their ears with lies and nonsense. Others are just leaving. They are turning from God to believe only in themselves and their thoughts. Do they really believe they can save themselves from the consequences of sin? Jesus is coming back to earth and will judge them guilty. Then, sadly, they will know how the enemy misled them (e.g. read the Lord's Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13 for more about that).

This is why Paul told Timothy that he would have to '**be watchful**' (νήφω – be sober, be circumspect, be clear-minded, be calm), '**endure afflictions**' (κακοπαθέω – suffer evil, experience painful hardship), '**do the work of an evangelist**' (ἔργον ποιήσον εὐαγγελιστοῦ – preach the good news, be a missionary carrying forth good tidings), and '**fulfill your ministry**' (τὴν διακονίαν σου πληροφόρησον – to bring in full measure their service to God, to satisfy fully the One

they serve, to carry through and finish the work of serving God).

Chapter Ten

Paul's last letter is coming to an end. He has told Timothy what the young minister will need to know to carry on with the ministry God gave him after the apostle's martyrdom. Paul turned next to a more personal part of the letter where he told Timothy what was ahead for him.

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 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. Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the

parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.” 2 Timothy 4:6-16

Poured Out

Paul referred to a Jewish concept that Timothy would have recognized given his Jewish background. Paul was ‘already being poured out as a drink offering.’ The purpose of the ‘drink offering’ goes back thousands of years –

“So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.” Genesis 35:14

The idea of ‘offerings’ made to God go back to Genesis 4 when Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel made offerings to God after He thrust Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden for disobeying Him –

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord.” Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of

the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.” Genesis 4:1-5

We see at the very earliest days of people making ‘offerings’ (מִנְחָה, minchah – ‘a gift, tribute, offering’) to God that He ‘respected’ (שָׁחָה, shaah – ‘gaze, have regard’) some, but did not ‘respect’ others. Whether God ‘respects’ an offering is always His decision because the offerings are presented to Him.

Offerings to God were well known in the centuries before the Flood because Adam taught his sons about them and we see how men began calling on the name of the Lord again after Seth and Enosh were born (Genesis 4:26). We see that Noah, who was a bridge between the world that existed before and after the Flood, “built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Genesis 8:20).

The offerings listed in the early chapters of Genesis were all ‘burnt’ offerings. The ‘drink’ offering mentioned in Genesis 35 is the first time we see it in Scripture. The Bible goes on to refer to ‘drink offerings’ more than 60 times – mostly in the Old Testament. The drink offering was usually wine and was ‘poured out’ on a sacrifice –

“With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering. And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you.” Exodus 29:40-42

“Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin.” Leviticus 23:13

Paul used the ‘drink offering’ to refer to his upcoming martyrdom – “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Paul had given his life in sacrificial service to God and being poured out as a drink offering helped Timothy understand what Paul was doing and what was ahead for him. The Greek word is σπένδω (spendó) and meant a ‘drink, libation,’ that was poured out to symbolize complete surrender. Paul had surrendered himself to Christ in Damascus and was completing that surrender years later in Rome.

Fight, Finish, Faith

Paul went on to write that he had “fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” Those are three important points for any Christian to understand, but especially to someone who dedicates their life to teaching and preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is a fight that should be fought well. It is a race that should be finished. And it is a faith that should be kept. How many of today’s preachers and teachers could say what Paul had said and be truthful in saying it?

- Fight the good fight – καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἡγώνισμαι (contend for a prize in a beautiful struggle)
- Finished the race – δρόμον τετέλεκα (complete a course)
- Kept the faith – πίστιν τετήρηκα (watch over, guard, the faith)

There is a reward for surrendering oneself to Christ –

“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.” 2 Timothy 4:8

- Crown of righteousness – στέφανος δικαιοσύνης (crown, that which surrounds, justice, righteousness)
- Loved His appearing – ἠγαπηκόσι αὐτοῦ ἐπιφάνειαν (loving His manifestation, appearing)

Paul offered that up for Timothy's consideration and as a reminder of the importance of fighting the good fight, finishing the race, and keeping the faith.

Paul Abandoned

“Be diligent to come to me quickly; for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica—Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry. And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come—and the books, especially the parchments. Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.” 2 Timothy 4:9-16

It's interesting that Paul wanted Timothy to know that people Timothy knew had abandoned him. Demas, who Paul lauded in Colossians, had 'forsaken' (ἐγκατέλιπεν – deserted, to leave behind, leave in the lurch) him. Pause on that for a moment. A close associate of the apostle 'deserted' him. Why? "... having loved this present world." Oooh. That had to hurt to hear that. Loving this present world is the opposite of what any Christian leader should do.

Paul was prophetic. He knew that many Christian leaders would forsake the Gospel because of their love for the 'present world.' Demas is one example. You can find thousands (maybe hundreds of thousands or millions) during the last two thousand years of the life of the Church who have deserted Christ.

Paul also brought up Alexander the coppersmith and warned Timothy – “You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.” It may be that this Alexander is the same person mentioned in Act 19 or 1 Timothy 1:20. We don’t know, but Timothy most likely did. There are many people that Christian leaders need to ‘beware’ of for a variety of reasons.

Paul also pointed out how some people had abandoned him

–

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

Paul understood how difficult it is to face opposition from government power. Many people abandoned him when he began his defense. Rather than ‘stand with’ Paul, they ‘forsook’ him. The Greek word is ἐγκατέλιπον (deserted, left behind). It’s the same word Paul used for what Demas had done to him. Demas was not the only one who had deserted Paul.

Paul Supported

“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. 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!” 2 Timothy 4:17-18

One of the great messages Paul had for Timothy and anyone who wants to serve Christ is that God ‘has your back.’ Even when everyone else abandons or attacks you, God will stand with you and strengthen you. He will support you as you serve Him. Paul thanked God for delivering him ‘from every evil work’ and preserving him ‘for His heavenly kingdom.’

“To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”

Chapter Eleven

“Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.” 2 Timothy 4:19-22

These are the very last words we have in the New Testament record from the Apostle Paul. I find it interesting that even though he was facing martyrdom and intent on communicating important values and ideas to Timothy about how the Church should function after he was gone, Paul was focused on people.

The People

Paul cared deeply about ‘the people’ God had sent him to serve. Yes, Paul served God first – but he also served people. Even as Jesus said years before –

“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:29-31

Jesus also said –

“Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:9-10

Jesus chose Paul for a unique mission and Paul had ‘caught’ the Lord’s love for people. It was that love for people that closed Paul’s letter to the church in Rome (Romans 16), and people were on his mind at the end of his life.

Paul had a deep love for Prisca and Aquila. They had ministered together through many difficult times to reach people with the Gospel of Christ and to plant churches. Paul loved the household of Onesiphorus. He deeply cared for Erastus, Trophimus, Miletus, Tubules, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, ‘and all the brethren.’ Though Demas had forsaken Paul, he mentioned Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, and Carpus as those who continued with him. All of these people were precious to him. Paul’s love for God and people stands out to me as it should for anyone in Gospel ministry.

I want to say a word about Mark. You may remember that Mark abandoned his missionary travel with Paul and Barnabas many years earlier. That caused a deep rift between Paul and Barnabas to the point that Paul took Silas with him and Barnabas took Mark with him (Acts 15:36-41). That could have been the end of that disagreement never to be mentioned again, but Paul was a people person. He practiced what he preached. At some point Paul and Mark must have talked and worked through their differences. Maybe Paul better understood why Mark decided not to continue on the missionary journey and forgave him. Whatever the reason, it is a wonderful reminder of the importance of people in our ministry – even those with whom we have had strong disagreements.

As we learn in Peter's first letter, Mark was an important part of his ministry as well. The early Church fathers wrote that Mark traveled with Peter and wrote what he heard Peter preach about his time with the Lord Jesus. Those notes that Mark wrote became what we know today as the Gospel of Mark. We also know from Acts 15 that Mark accompanied Barnabas on a mission trip to Cypress after separating from Paul.

Mark may have made a mistake as a young man, but it appears Mark had a good heart and a love for Christ. He didn't give up and Paul knew that. Paul acknowledged Mark's importance when he wrote – "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11). Think about the Apostle Paul writing that you were 'useful' to him for ministry. How precious was that to be on Paul's heart at the end of his earthly journey.

The Lord's calling of Saul of Tarsus to become the 'apostle to the Gentiles' was certainly unusual. Saul played a vital role in the murder of Stephen. Saul persecuted the early Christians and threw many of them in prison before the Lord called him to be His servant. Paul was greatly humbled by what Jesus did for him. He referenced that in his first letter to Timothy –

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” 1 Timothy 1:15-16

I think that's one of the reasons Paul loved people so much. He knew how much Jesus had loved him and forgiven him. Paul understood the greatness of God's love and grace.

Paul's final letter to Timothy is fairly simple to understand – love God, love people – more than anything in this world. May we follow his example until we finish our race and join Paul and all of the other wonderful people living in Heaven forever and ever with Christ.

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