

Paul's final words to Timothy

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I'd like you to turn, please, to the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, and I want to read the closing parts of this letter. I'll begin at chapter 3, and verse 13.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto 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 perfect, truly furnished unto all good works.

[00:01:09] I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered, [00:02:05] and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me, for Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica. Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia, only Luke is with me. Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.

And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. [00:03:10] Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil, the Lord reward him according to his works. Of whom be thou aware also, for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men besook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, and by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear, that I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Salute

Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. [00:04:04] Rastus abode at Corinth, but Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick. Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren. The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.

Grace be with you. Amen.

The second epistle to Timothy has a different character about it than any of the rest of Paul's epistles. Several of the other epistles were written from Rome and from the prison. But in all those other letters, one will find that Paul has a certain amount of liberty still allowed to him.

[00:05:01] And he has thoughts about being set free from the prison.

And he has plans, which he thinks he may be able to fulfill.

But when one gets over to the second epistle to Timothy, one finds that the situation has changed. And it's changed for the worse. And the thought of moving around very much where he is now placed is gone.

And the thought of release from the prison is out of the question. There has been a change, and a change for the worse. And there is, of course, a good deal of pathos and sadness about this letter.

Because it is written to one whom he dearly loved and with whom he had worked over the years. [00:06:05] And the thought that he might not see him again was certainly present with the Apostle Paul. Though there was the hope that perhaps if Timothy moved quickly, he might get there in time to have a final word with that person with whom he had spent so much time in the service of the Lord. You would notice, as I read down through that last chapter, that it says, Do thy diligence to come shortly, quickly to me.

Not only does he say that once, but he says it again, verse 21. Do thy diligence to come before winter.

Paul knows that time is running out, and the time of his departure is at hand.

There had been a first hearing of his case, and the judgment had been deferred.

[00:07:05] But the ultimate outcome didn't seem to be in doubt as far as Paul was concerned.

He knew that the capital sentence was there very soon, and death was to be his end very soon.

And he was under no illusion about this. And so that these were his final words to this man, Timothy, this younger man, Timothy. And this letter is full of authority.

There's a lot that he says in quite an authoritative way to this younger man. But at the same time the letter is full of affection for this man. And he speaks tenderly, and yet he speaks firmly and strongly to Timothy.

[00:08:02] And there is advice for Timothy as to how to continue when he had gone.

He hopes to see him, but it's by no means certain that he will see him before he's passed on and passed out of this life. And there is that which concerns them both that is so important that should be sustained and should be continued. And so Paul writes on these lines, which are urgent lines, there's an urgency and there's a pathos, and yet there is a triumph about this letter.

We turn to this last chapter of all, these final words written by the Apostle Paul. Final words written in our Bibles anyway that he wrote.

And we turn to this and we find that in a sense things are going worse outside in the Christian sphere as well. [00:09:07] As far as the personal situation of the Apostle Paul was concerned. There was declension in the Christian profession. All those in Asia have turned away from me, and even in this chapter that I've read to, this fourth chapter. By no means everyone is still around that once was around in faithfulness and consistent testimony to the one that they had come to know as their Savior. Paul had a great deal that might have disappointed him as he wrote this letter. And there was a great deal that didn't disappoint him we can be sure. But there was a confidence in the sense of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that could be drawn on and would be sufficient. Whatever the picture might be and however much the declension might be.

[00:10:07] There was that in God that they both could draw from and stand on so to speak. And there was enough for them to be able to draw on in strength and in testimony for the one who had saved them and blessed them and shown such grace to them. Paul speaks with authority, he speaks with affection. He counsels Timothy in tender tones, but at the same time he counsels him to be strong.

Be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.

God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

That's what he says to Timothy.

Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[00:11:05] It might be tough and it would be tough and it might get tougher, but Timothy had reason to be strong and could draw on the grace that was in Christ Jesus. So that he might show himself as he ought to show himself in faithfulness and in strong testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is by no means completely downhearted here, though he is disappointed with many of the trends that are around. The old fire breaks out, so to speak, and this unbreakable spirit is still there. Paul is not disappointed, really.

I know whom I have believed, he says in the first chapter, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. [00:12:05] Paul has resources which will strengthen him, whatever the situation might be. Timothy has those same resources and can draw on them even when Paul has passed off the field, so to speak. Timothy has much to draw on, many assets, much in the way of resource and helpful things to draw on. And here Paul is counseling him to be strong and to be stirring himself up, stir up the gift of God that is in me, so he says in the first chapter.

Timothy is counseled to put a bold face on things and to draw on the grace that is certainly there to

help him in his career from this moment onward when Paul would be gone. Out of immediate contact from Timothy from this time onwards.

[00:13:05] Now, I think we ought to ask ourselves the question before we go any further, is this relevant for us to hear about and to think about in our day or not? And I would think that you would want to agree with me, I'm sure you must, that if things were going to the worse in Paul's day, things have gone very much worse still in our day. And we have a great deal around us in the Christian circle, so to speak, in the Christian sphere of things, which is not exactly heartening, a great deal around to be distressed about if we are allowed to do that to us. A great deal that might shock us and surprise us perhaps if we didn't have our Bibles to guide us about the trends that were likely to take place in the Christian profession. [00:14:11] But our Bibles tell us very clearly about this sort of thing and especially this epistle and it should be no surprise to find declension and to find things going from worse to worse even in the Christian profession. Here we see it beginning to happen as this letter was written. The Lord Jesus Christ foresaw it, spoke about it in the 13th chapter of Matthew.

There are several parables there that tell us about things, evil trends taking place in the sphere of Christian profession, as well as the trends for good that would go on alongside it. Something very valuable happening beneath the surface, but also something very uncharacteristic happening alongside of it. [00:15:08] The Lord Jesus Christ spoke about this and our Bibles have not reached their completion before these things are coming about and coming into existence. Paul and Timothy, John, lived to see within the Christian profession things going wrong, things to be ashamed of and things to be seen to be bad and evil and deceptive and wrong as far as true Christianity was concerned.

And Paul is facing up to this, not deterred by it, but telling Timothy about it, telling him of a need to be strong in the face of these kind of trends. If this was true before the Bible was finished, how much more true is it in our day? How bad things have gone in general in the Christian profession, and how needful it is that we should take notice of letters like this, epistles like this, that have advice for us in the day of declension.

[00:16:29] Tell us how important it is that we should be men of God in the face of evil men being present, silly women being present. These are phrases from our third chapter of this epistle. Trends which are shocking around us, but the possibility of being faithful and being manly and being consistent and being true to the thing that we possess through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there for us. [00:17:05] And this is not exactly the most comforting sort of epistle to read, perhaps, but it has in it exhortation and prompting for us, and we need to face the passages of the scripture which are not the most comforting ones, but the ones that are stimulating and the ones that are challenging, and there's nothing much more challenging than these passages that I have read to you here tonight. We too need to be stirred up. If Timothy did, how much more do we in our day? We too have been entrusted with something that we can be true to, or can fail to be true to.

Timothy had things committed to him, and he was told to pass them on to faithful men that would be able to teach others also. And if Timothy was at the beginning of this succession, so to speak, Paul passed on these things to him, he was told to pass them on to other faithful people who would be able to teach others also. [00:18:16] The succession has been a long one. We, in our day, have had things entrusted to us to be true to, and to maintain, and to teach, and to hold fast to. These things are ours to be true to in our day. And if Timothy had had these things entrusted to him, we have had things entrusted to us. We have had teachers who have gone before us, that have brought in front of us, brought before our attention, the very valuable things that are to be found in the word of God.

These are things that all of us know about, I'm sure. We have been in touch with very precious teaching, of one kind and another, from the holy scriptures, and that trust is something that's been entrusted to us today. And it depends, to some extent, on us to be faithful to what we have been given, and what has been entrusted to us. [00:19:19] So that there can be little doubt that this message, while it was directed first to Timothy, is relevant to us here in our day, here in Newcastle on Tyne, other places too, who have known so much over the years of the truth of God from the holy scriptures. These are things that are committed to us, and there's a certain responsibility rests upon us to shoulder these things, and to carry them properly, and to maintain them properly. It rested on Timothy's shoulders in his day, it rests on our shoulders along with many another person over the face of this world in our day. [00:20:08] We are not immune from these softening influences that so easily mar and dim our testimony. Timothy was told to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and to war a good warfare.

These are not awfully, not the most comforting words, as I've said already, but these are words that are necessary words for us today. Endure hardness, he says, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The softening influences all around us in our kind of life today, many are the things that can make us, divert us from the consistent, purposeful life which is the true life that the Christian should live today. [00:21:06] We are not exempt from those softening influences that could so soon take us off the line that is advised in this epistle. So that these words seem to me to be extremely relevant to us to today.

If you look back into that third chapter, you will find that Paul speaks of many things which were Timothy's advantages. I'd like to ask you just to think about these things for a few moments.

I began, in order to avoid reading an awful lot, I began at verse 13. But if you cast back your eye a few verses further, you will see in verse 10 it says, Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch. [00:22:13] What persecutions I endured, but out of them all the Lord delivered me. So Timothy had had the special advantage of having seen at fairly close quarters, at first hand, the manner of life that the Apostle Paul lived.

He had known also his teaching, and he had seen the consistency between the teaching and the manner of life. And that was a great advantage to Timothy, to have seen that in Paul at close quarters, to have received that teaching that came from the Apostle, to be in close contact with an Apostle was a special advantage. [00:23:03] We have never had an Apostle come and talk to us at any of our meetings, because there are no Apostles around. But here was a foundation gift to the Church. Timothy had been moving around with him, and he had heard his teaching, and he had seen his manner of life. That was a tremendous advantage to him. We have not quite seen that kind of thing in the same sort of way as Timothy did. We have, what Timothy didn't have, the New Testament to read, and the details of the activities and the teaching and the manner of life of the Apostles and the other New Testament writings are there for us to know about in a different way. We have, though in a different way, the same kind of things available as Timothy had had. We have had many another predecessor, shall we say, in the Christian life, whose example and whose teaching and whose manner of life has been such a wonderful thing for us to observe.

[00:24:25] Timothy had these assets, and we too have assets of a similar sort around for us to take advantage of. He had seen the Apostle Paul in all his ways of doing things. But then there are other things too.

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, verse 14, which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

[00:25:01] We, I'm sure, know that the source of these wonderful graces and praise that we see in other Christian people, especially in those things which the Apostle Paul evidenced as he lived and worked for the Lord, we have known that those were not emanating from Paul himself, but that there was a source from whom those things were coming to us. And I believe in that verse, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, Paul is not saying knowing that you've learned them from me, but knowing that behind me this teaching and this living, kind of living that is consistent with this teaching, comes from God. And Paul is drawing Timothy's attention, not to himself so much, but to the source of this instruction, the source of this teaching, knowing of whom thou hast learned them. Knowing that these things come from God, continue in these things. [00:26:12] This is the essence of what that verse says. And how strongly that is upon us, is it not, that knowing that we have things that not men have taught us, but that God has revealed to us and God has instructed us in, how important it is that we should continue in the things that God has taught us. Knowing that we've learned these things from God, how important it is that we should continue in them. That verse tells Timothy to do so, and that verse advises us to be not those that fail or fall down or are swamped in our Christian lives, but as those that continue in the things that we have learned, knowing that God is the author. [00:27:05] God is the source of this wonderful heritage that you and I possess. And then it goes into verse 15 and it says, from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

Timothy had been specially privileged in this sense as well, in that not everybody knows and has heard about the holy scriptures from childhood, but Timothy from a child had known the holy scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. We have known the holy scriptures. I look around and I see older faces and I see younger faces, but I would think it is probably true of every one of us here that in some degree or other we know something about the holy scriptures. [00:28:11] Some of us might from childhood have been taught to revere and to respect and to read and to imbibe the holy scriptures. Some of us might have done this over many years. Some younger ones may be just getting into this field and beginning to realize how valuable a field of interest and activity it is. However long or however short has been our time period in this sort of field, what a wonderful thing this is. They are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It doesn't suggest that scripture reading and scripture study is a thing in itself, but it does seem to suggest that faith that sees into the message and that grasps and obeys the instruction which is found in the holy scriptures, puts one in touch with the Lord Jesus Christ. [00:29:18] Puts one in touch with Christ Jesus. Faith that finds Christ in scripture, finds salvation. Finds salvation for daily life as well as for eternity through faith in Christ Jesus.

The scriptures through faith grasped and accepted and the person who is at the center of the scriptures held on to, leaned on and the desire to be true to him. How wonderful an operation and a possibility that is. Timothy had known about this from a child. He had known the holy scriptures. And then how Paul goes on in that 16th verse to say that those holy scriptures also come from God. The teaching that he had received from Paul, the real author of that teaching was God himself. [00:30:19] And here the author of scriptures, the inspirer of the holy writings, the inspirer of every scripture, as I believe that verse ought to be read, every scripture it says, each one, all parts of holy scripture are inspired of God. God breathes is the meaning of the original language there. It's something that comes out from God. God's breathing out to us of his instruction and his light and his Christ comes out to us and we can grasp it by faith, find it in holy scriptures.

[00:31:05] The scriptures are inspired, their whole source is in God, so this verse tells us. And they are profitable to every part, every scripture, profitable for various kinds of instruction for us. For teaching, that's the first thing. Doctrine, which of course is just teaching. Reproof, conviction, some people translate that, might be a slightly better word perhaps, the thought of reproof. It's not exactly the idea maybe. Conviction, if we read the scriptures, we are not just reading an ordinary book, we are not reading ordinary words, we are reading words that put us in touch with God. God grips us, God convicts us, God takes a hold of us through the message which is in holy scripture, convicts us, corrects us. [00:32:08] And which of us can say that we never need correction, not in a state where correction is not sometimes needed. Scripture is able to do these things and what a privilege it is to be under the impact of holy scripture which will do these things for us and sort us out and put us right in our ways of living before God. Not only correction, but instruction in righteousness. It would never do to be reproofed and corrected without being put in a right line. It's one thing to be told that we're wrong, it's another thing to be guided into the lines that are pleasing and right before God. There is instruction in righteousness in scripture. All scripture, every scripture is available and is useful, profitable for all these kinds of things for those of us who will bow to it and receive it, imbibe it and profit from it. [00:33:15] That the man of God may be perfect, truly furnished unto all good works. Timothy was well equipped, he had these scriptures, he had known them over the years from a child and he knew their value, he knew their importance, he knew where to go to get guidance and to get help to be true to his law. Paul draws his attention to these assets that he had, these resources that he had. Even though Paul might disappear off the scene, Timothy would still have the scriptures, still have the teaching, still have the example of those that had gone before. Still have God as the source of his guidance and of his support, strength for all that he needed to do in those days, those difficult days that might lie still ahead for Timothy when Paul had gone. [00:34:14] Well we have these assets as well and how we ought to value them, how necessary it is that we ought to draw on these things. How important it is that we should actively obey these straightforward statements that are in these verses, continue in the things that we have learned. And now when we get into chapter 5, there's a solemn charge upon Timothy and it's not less a solemn charge upon us either. We are charged as we read these words, by the author of these words, by Paul, by God behind Paul. I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, preach the word, be instant in season and out of season. There needs to be active obedience to these simple direct pieces of instruction that we find in these verses.

[00:35:22] We need to be obeying and reflecting the word of God. Strikes me, I don't know whether it strikes you, but Timothy is told to be like the scriptures. That's how it strikes me. It says, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with awe, longsuffering, and doctrine. Reprove, that's the same word, convict again. Rebuke, and the word exhort is encouraged perhaps.

[00:36:01] So Timothy is told to be doing the very kind of thing that the scripture does to him. And to reflect the word of God in his approach to people and in his teaching to people.

He has to be like the holy scriptures themselves, deriving these characteristics from scripture and putting them out in a very firm way. Reprove, rebuke, exhort. Not in a vicious way, not in a nasty way, but with awe, longsuffering, and doctrine.

Rebuke and reproof that isn't based on teaching can be very unpleasant. But if we refer to the teaching that will direct people in the right way and show people where they are being misled, then there'll be help in what is being said. [00:37:05] And this is what Timothy is being encouraged to do. To be like the message that comes from God itself. To not hesitate to correct people, but to do it in the

light of teaching. And to do it in a gracious, delicate way, with awe, longsuffering, and doctrine. And then it goes on to say, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine. These are rather sad words, are they not, these next verses. It says, after their own lusts, shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. Timothy is told to preach the word, constantly, persistently, being true to it, in the right way. These verses tell us about hearers of preaching.

[00:38:13] Hearers of the teaching that comes from God. These verses tell us about people that would prefer not to listen to that kind of thing, but will turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned unto fables.

When the truth, when it is proclaimed, is not very palatable, and a little bit too uncomfortable to listen to, people shelve it, turn their back on it, will not endure sound teaching. Paul says the time will come, and shortly was to come, when that was to be true. What a pleasant thing it is to find people who want to come to listen to the Bible being expounded, and are prepared to listen to any kind of teaching that the Bible contains. [00:39:08] And even if we listen to these rather challenging words here tonight, they are words that come from God, from the scriptures, and they speak to us, and we wouldn't want to turn them down, we wouldn't want to turn away from these exhortations, I would hope. What a possibility this is in these days in which you and I live, that we go for the comfortable things, and the pleasing things, but avoid the challenging things. There are things which are searching, and there are things which expose our faultiness, so to speak, in the word of God, and these are the very things that we ought not to avoid. These are the things that we ought to welcome, the teaching that comes from God, that puts us right when we are off the mark, and that tells us how God would have us to be, prompts us into those lines that are consistent, strong in response to his grace towards us. [00:40:16] Well, there will be hearers, so Paul says, that will avoid the truth because it's too searching, and they'll turn from the truth to things that are more palatable, having itching ears, so it says. But the point of listening to a false message is not very obvious, is it? It's pleasant to listen to at the moment, but it's no help at all if it's a message that doesn't come from God, if it's a message that comes from a different quarter altogether, from deceptive people. False teaching helps nobody, and lands a lot of people in trouble, if they're not awake to what it really is. So there is a warning in these verses, that we better not turn away our ears from the truth, however searching we may find it to be, because that's no help. [00:41:18] Timothy, and we too, are told, rather than be like that, rather to watch in all things. This is what verse 5 says, watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. Fill up your measure in ministry. Timothy is told to be as full and as active as he is capable of being in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. To be watchful, to be ready always, and to be alert in the service of the Lord. We too are told to be like that.

[00:42:08] Timothy has to continue when Paul is gone. He has to be watchful still when Paul has passed off the scene. The next verses are very sweet verses, but I don't have the time to spend any time on them. I am now ready to be offered. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.

Paul is able to look back over his life, and he realizes that he's at the end of it. It might be days, it might be weeks, it might be months, but it's certainly only a short time before he will have cast adrift, so to speak, and passed out of this scene into the presence of his Lord. He will be gone soon. It might be very soon. He has no idea, but he knows it will not be long. I am ready to be offered. I am already being poured out, as I believe is the better translation of that.

[00:43:16] Processes of dissolution were happening fast, even as he was there in the Roman prison. He was sinking, perhaps, physically. He asks for that cloak later on. The cold and the rigors of the Roman prison were causing him to crumble, perhaps, even before the moment came when he was to be taken out to be martyred. He was already being poured out. The end was nearly there, as far as he was concerned, but it wasn't the end in another sense. He had fought a good fight. He had finished his course. He hadn't any more to do in serving the Lord that Timothy had. He had kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day. Not to me only, but unto all them also that love is appearing. Paul is going out of this life very soon. He's going to cast adrift and be gone very soon. [00:44:25] He's going to pass out of this scene of ill usage and misunderstanding. He's going to go into the place where there's a righteous judge, who will know how to assess that life that he had lived for the Lord. And it was to give him a crown of righteousness, which would not only be for him, but for all those that love his appearing. I find these few personal remarks that come next a little bit significant. I would like to close by drawing attention to some of these little things that he says about individuals in some of these next verses. [00:45:09] Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. He's pressing Timothy to get there before it's too late. For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed into Thessalonica. Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. There aren't very many of them all told that he is able to speak about, that he is immediately in touch with, that are around him, and some have just departed. It's a small band at this stage that he's able to talk about one by one. There's one who had caused him a lot of disappointment, it seems. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. [00:46:11] Well that's a very sad thing for Paul to have to say to Timothy at that juncture particularly. One of the few that had been one of his fellow labourers, one of the other epistles, Colossians I think it is, refers to Demas at the end. Philemon speaks about Demas as having been a fellow labourer, being a fellow labourer at the time when that letter was written with Paul. But that fellow labourer had ceased to be a fellow labourer with Paul and had gone, having loved this present world, so it says. Here's one who had begun, who had seemed to be going along well, who had served the Lord, no doubt in reality, and yet the difficulties were too many and the other attractions were substantial too. He loved this present world. [00:47:10] Off he went. Paul has to speak with great regret, great disappointment about a man who was on his way out as far as serving the Lord was concerned. A man who was not continuing. I find that very solemn. But there is a comforting thing in almost the next verse. He says, bring Mark, bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry. So if he has to talk about one who is on his way out, sadly, as far as the testimony of Christ was concerned, he's able to speak about one who had let them down in one sense. We all have heard, I'm sure, how Paul and Barnabas had a dispute because Barnabas wanted to take Mark and Paul didn't want Mark to go on one of those early missionary journeys. Mark didn't seem to be a satisfactory servant to work with them, in Paul's estimation, anyway, at a certain stage. [00:48:17] Mark had defected, perhaps, certainly Demas had at this stage. Mark had defected earlier, but here he was now profitable. Better to be true to the Lord late in life than at the beginning and to fall out.

And I'd like to ask the question whether we are those that are coming in as far as this matter is concerned or whether we are those that are on the way out. Because to be true to the Lord is something that is desirable and these words press it upon us so very firmly. This epistle encourages us to be strong and to continue to go on in faithfulness to Christ. And it gives us an example at the end of a man who wasn't able to do that. Loved this present world. But it gives us another example. [00:49:17] It says, well, there was this compensation for the Apostle Paul, I'm sure, that there was a man who had once not been so useful to him, but now was profitable and at a very critical time could

be profitable to Paul. Bring him with you, he says, he is profitable to me for the ministry. So I perhaps can leave it on this note. Are we on the way in as far as faithfulness and service and consistency as men of God, for God, in a difficult day? Are we on the way in or are we on the way out? Both of these things are possibilities. And this chapter presses upon us the need for continuing to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul was confident about Timothy, though he needed to press these things upon him. He had no doubt about his faith and about his Christian manliness, so to speak, but that didn't prevent him from pressing it upon him. [00:50:25] And he saw the urgent need for this still more when he was on the point of going himself. And surely these things are urgent for us. And it is so vital which way we go in these things. We need to continue in the things that we have learned to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I hope you don't mind me passing on a word of exhortation here tonight, because it certainly is not exactly a word of comfort, but it's a word of exhortation. It's a word that scripturally passes on to us. And I have felt over this week that this was the passage that perhaps I ought to speak about here tonight. [00:51:11] I hope we can just go away with the straightforward instruction that this contains for us, that we need to continue. We need to be consistent, and we need to draw on our resources, and we need to be true to the one who has blessed us and saved us. And we can look forward, like Paul could, to that moment of the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think of the day of reward and how wonderful will be the rewards that the Lord presents to those that have been true to him over the day when things have been difficult and when to be true costs one something. [00:52:02] There's no minimizing of the cost to be true to the Lord Jesus Christ in these days, in these epistles, but there's every incentive to go on, every thought that there'll be wonderful reward at the day of his appearing for those that love that moment, love that thought of his manifestation, his glory, his eminence, how right it is that we should be true to him in the meanwhile. Go on in this path in which we may already have begun.