

# Route Sixty-Six

*Part Fifty-Five*

*2 Timothy*

*Perilous Times*

*(John 5:39; 2 Timothy 1:7)*

*With Study Questions*

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*(John 5:39; 2 Timothy 1:7)*

**You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me (John 5:39)**

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).**

## **Introduction**

As people were sharing that which they are thankful for during last week's Thanksgiving celebration, I came upon a quote from a young lady with whom I am a distant acquaintance. She advertised her thankfulness for (in her words) homosexuality, gender deviance, sodomy, men in dresses, women with tattoos, depressed leftists with bleached hair, and the destruction of America as we know it. She was also thankful for Karl Marx, Planned Parenthood and witchcraft.

I didn't find it terribly uplifting.

Honesty and full disclosure require I admit that the moral and spiritual climate of our culture has had a clear and rapid descent under the Baby Boomer watch. I don't wish to be overly self-deprecating since I have little doubt that though the symptoms of darkness have more recently become demonstrably apparent, the heart of this disease began long ago.

What are Christians and pastors to do in the midst of an ethos where virtually every form of art and media portrays them as simple-minded, undisciplined, hate-filled and hopelessly isolated from reality?

I have noticed two currents in which we tend to get caught. One, in our effort to be relevant, loving and redemptive, we find ourselves in a state of compromise. Jesus, we say to ourselves, was a friend of sinners, should we not imitate Him? And though it is true that Jesus was a friend of sinners, it must be noted that sinners never had any influence upon Jesus. It was just

the opposite. Jesus would speak and behave in such a way as to convert sinners or alienate sinners.

This current is more like an undertow. The Scriptures are not unclear that in our ministerial efforts, we should never allow ourselves to be corrupted.

**Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world (James 1:27).**

The other current is not a current at all. To get caught in a current, one must at least put their toe in the water. This response is one of isolation. In an effort to remain pure, we insulate ourselves in cultural bubble-wrap. Interaction with our dying culture becomes somebody else's problem. It is difficult to find a disposition that is less Christian than this.

Ministerial licentiates are often asked what is new about the New Covenant. Among the list of potential answers to this question is the word *go*. In the Old Covenant people came to the Tabernacle, the Temple and the nation of Israel. In the New Covenant, the Temple goes to the people; to all nations. But the Temple (the body of Christ) must remain the Temple if it is to be the beacon of light, hope and redemption.

Second Timothy is the Apostle Paul's final letter. He is writing while he awaits execution. He will be poured out as a drink offering (2 Timothy 4:6). **"Come before winter" (2 Timothy 4:21)** is his plea. John Calvin wrote of this letter:

**Paul had before his eyes the death which he was prepared to endure for the testimony of the gospel. All that we read here, therefore, concerning the kingdom of Christ, the hope of eternal life, the Christian warfare, confidence in confessing Christ, and the certainty of doctrine, ought to be viewed by us as written not with ink but with Paul's own blood.<sup>1</sup>**

Paul is writing to his young protégé in the faith, anticipating his own death and Timothy's challenges as a young minister. In many respects it would be more difficult for Timothy than Paul. Paul had started many

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin, J. (1998). [\*2 Timothy\*](#) (electronic ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

churches. Though Paul had endured great suffering, he had seen true flourishing take place.

But as the Old Covenant was vanishing away (Hebrews 8:13) Timothy would be confronted with harsh and discouraging ministerial encounters. Many had abandoned Paul or the ministry. Some of these are mentioned by name (2 Timothy 1:15; 2:17; 4:10). Timothy would also have to contend with an apostasy and a general sway toward ungodly behavior and convictions. Paul warns Timothy of upcoming “perilous times” (2 Timothy 3:1).

Many will understand Paul’s meaning to be addressing the end of history due to his use of the term “**last days**” *eschatais hemerais*. And certainly, the counsel Paul gives Timothy should be understood and imitated by those reading this letter throughout the course of history when we encounter these types of spiritual regressions.

But we should not read 2 Timothy 3 as if it is some iron clay prophecy of matters getting worse as we approach the Second Coming. We must always read our Bibles with the original audience in mind. In this case the original audience being Timothy. In the midst of this chapter where Paul warns of people becoming “lovers of themselves, money, boasters, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy and unloving” Paul tells Timothy.

**And from such people turn away (2 Timothy 3:5b)!**

It is important to note this is written in the second person singular. What should be obvious is that Timothy would have no ability to turn away from people who would not be born for two thousand years.

Nonetheless, the church would through the course of history encounter similar challenges and should glean from the wisdom of the Holy Spirit through the word of God. How are Christians to respond when the tide of public opinion moves in an aggressively hostile direction? This is addressed by Paul and we should benefit from that instruction.

**Survey of 2 Timothy**

Early in the letter Paul reminds Timothy of his own spiritual upbringing and heritage; how he had been raised and what he had been taught by his mother and grandmother. Also, his preparation by Paul himself. He then charges Timothy with the words:

**For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).**

In a world governed by darkness, ignorance and aggressiveness, Timothy is to remain loving, clear thinking and in control of himself.

The direction Paul takes in his counsel of Timothy is to address him personally then pastorally. Personally, Timothy is not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of Paul who was in prison. There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. But heaven forbid we ever sheepishly withdraw from the conversation due to our fear of being associated with Christ!

May the Apostle Paul be to us what the Old Testament saints were to these first century Christians. To hear from someone soon to pay the ultimate price.

**You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1).**

With these words of encouragement comes also a call to persevere. The world, our own flesh and the enemy of our souls seeks our allegiance. But we are to live our lives ever repenting and ever enjoying the pardon of God in Christ. But perseverance in the faith is necessary.

***This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. <sup>12</sup> If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. <sup>13</sup> If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 1:11-13).***

The call to persevere is not a works righteousness. We learned in 1 Timothy 1:15 that Paul viewed himself as the “chief of sinners.” It is not long after that he wrote in 2 Timothy some of the only affirming words regarding his own faith.

**I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith (2 Timothy 4:7).**

We may be unprofitable servants when it comes to meriting our own salvation, but we are called to be servants, nonetheless. It may be a healthy

question to ask when we engage in a certain action, word or thought, who we are at that moment seeking to serve.

Personally, the call is to stir up, be not ashamed, be strong and endure to the end. But what is Paul's pastoral counsel? It is one thing to avoid being overtaken by the world and its ways, it is another thing to advance.

Paul utilizes both the soldier, the athlete and the farmer in his instruction regarding pastoral advancement. The battle is long term. Paul had commissioned Timothy and Timothy was to commit the ministry to others who will be able to teach as well. The soldier is not overly entangled with **"the affairs of this life"** (2 Timothy 2:4). The athlete competes **"according to the rules"** (2 Timothy 2:5) and the farmer **"must be first to partake of the crops"** (2 Timothy 2:6).

Briefly stated, our minds and hearts should never stray from the first focus of our eternal life and call. That being so, God has determined the rules or laws of ministry. Human innovation and imagination may be valuable and enjoyable in worldly endeavors, but God has conveyed the means by which His kingdom is to grow. Finally, the hardworking farmer realizes that there is much sweat and effort, even before a sprout is visible.

Directly following these illustrations Paul highlights that his current troubles flow from his own proclamation of the resurrection. And though his body is in chains, the word of God is not.

**Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, <sup>9</sup>for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained (2 Timothy 2:8, 9).**

The pastoral and advancing ministry, Paul will equate with the word of God.

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).**

Any ministry that fails to put the word of God first when it comes to our knowing who God is, what He has done and His call in our lives is one that will surely fail. Westminster Confession 1, 1 aptly state,

**Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which maketh the Holy Scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.**

In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 the well-known passage informs us of the power and sufficiency of a God-breathed word.

**All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).**

It is the handling of this word and, in humility, bringing it to bear in the lives of sinners, that we have hope of God granting redemption and repentance.

**And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient,<sup>25</sup> in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,<sup>26</sup> and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will (2 Timothy 2:24-26).**

Whether we think it convenient or not, we must ever be willing to bring forth a message of hope in Christ. Regardless of the pervasive, ear tickling messages by which we find ourselves surrounded, we must ever know and herald the gospel. There will be a day of judgment, and apart from Christ there is no standing when our accounts are called.

**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: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. <sup>3</sup> 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; <sup>4</sup> and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. <sup>5</sup> But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5).**

The ministry would continue with Timothy and continues to this day through the faithful churches numbered in history. But I have little doubt that Paul's hope for Timothy was that Timothy and "all who have loved His appearing" is that there awaits "the crown of righteousness" which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give out on that day.

John Calvin observes Paul's heart in reference to his soon departure from his current life.

**...he mentions that his own death is at hand, but he does so in the manner of a conqueror hastening to a glorious triumph, which is a clear testimony of wonderful confidence.<sup>2</sup>**

May our gracious Lord instill such confidence in our own hearts as we prepare and participate in the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin, J. (1998). [2 Timothy](#) (electronic ed.). Albany, OR: Ages Software.



## Questions for Study

1. What are two “currents” in which Christians may be caught in the face of a degenerating culture? Can you think of others (pages 2, 3)?
2. What is new about the New Covenant (page 3)?
3. What was happening in Paul’s life as he wrote 2 Timothy? How do you think that would affect his writing (pages 3, 4)?
4. Explain the challenges Timothy was about to face as a young minister (page 4).
5. Compare and contrast Paul’s direction of Timothy personally and pastorally (pages 5-7).
6. How is the word of God not in chains? What does that mean (page 6)?
7. Why would God commit His word to writing (pages 6, 7)?