

# GOING HOME!

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*By the Book*™ A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*G.K. Chesterton once said, "Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die." When Paul was writing to Timothy, he had long ago learned this lesson. He confessed to the Philippians, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:23-24). How could he display so much confidence? Simple—for the Apostle, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (v. 21).*

*More than ever Paul's principle would be tested. He knew his ministry was almost complete, for he calmly admits, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (v. 6). One might imagine the Apostle thinking back over his years beginning on the Damascus road (Acts 9) and coming to the end of the road at Rome. And, as he sits on death row, one might also imagine him expressing despair, defeat, and dejection. Would we not be busily exploring ways to get a pardon from the emperor?*

*So, just what was on the Apostle's mind and heart as he waited for Nero's axe to sever his head? In a word, going home. Paul was thinking about Jesus. The One Whose flashing light pierced his heart and blinded his fleshly eyes (literally!) was issuing Paul his ticket to glory. The train was at the station, and the conductor was loudly calling, "All aboard!"*

*Chapter four is Paul's good-bye to this world. And, in the good-bye, he gave three specific words to the church. As we explore the final words the Apostle wrote, let's turn attention to the outline below:*

- I. Words of Examination (vv. 1-8)**
- II. Words of Preparation (vv. 9-18)**
- III. Words of Exhortation (vv. 19-22)**

## I. Words of Examination (vv. 1-8)

No surprise exists that Paul begins his good-bye by probing us to *examine* ourselves. First, we must examine our *doctrine*. He writes, "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" (vv. 1-4). The Apostle's final charge to Timothy was to "preach the word... sound doctrine...truth." Nothing remains more significant to the church's health than systematic teaching of the Word of God.

The Word must be shared *seriously*. Why? Christ's "appearing" will bring judgment and evaluation. No one will escape the all-seeing eye of the Savior. Not only is the Word shared *seriously*, it is also shared *continually*—"be instant in season, out of season." Believers must always be ready to share the Word of God (cp. Eccl. 11:4-6). In addition, the Word must be shared *earnestly*. By faithfully preaching the Word, men of God "reprove," which serves as a spiritual catalyst in forging convictions in a person's heart. Also, preaching serves to "rebuke," calling for courage to stand against sin and in holiness. Finally, preaching is the pastor's greatest tool to "exhort" people, encouraging them in the faith. Paul insists Timothy grasp how significant preaching is, for the day will soon arrive—"time will come"—when people will turn away from the truth (vv. 3-4). "Sound" teaching will be shunned and people will be more apt to embrace uninspired "fables"



### Reflection Connection

*How often do you think about the examination you will face when you meet Jesus? What do you think it will be like? Explain.*

than the faith once for all given to the saints. Consequently, their minds will be twisted and warped, resulting in false worship and godless lifestyles.

Second, we must examine our *duty*. Paul writes, “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (v. 5). Paul pushes Timothy to examine himself, never to surrender until he finds what God intended for his life. How often do we quit before we know what God wants for us? Timothy must learn the art of “watching” and, then he would be able to “endure afflictions.” So must we. Indeed we must watch both patiently and faithfully, keeping our passions under control and accepting life as it comes to us every day.

Third, we must examine our *departure*. Hear the Apostle again, “For I am now ready to be offered, 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” (vv. 6-8). The end for Paul was drawing near. He was facing death, and three thoughts filled his heart which we may pose as three questions.

- ♦ **What about the present?:** the watchword here is *preparation*. Paul is “ready” to make the journey home (v. 6). The question we all must answer personally concerns whether we are ready to meet God. The Prophet Amos stirred Israel to repentance with his thundering words, “Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel” (4:12). While death is no pleasant thought, it nonetheless is a reality. For Paul, death is like an “offering” (cp. Phil. 2:17) and a “departure.”
- ♦ **What about the past?:** the watchword for the past is *completion* (v. 7). For Paul, a wrestler in the games or a runner in the stadium fits perfectly the course of the Christian life (cp. Acts 13:25; 20:24). In addition, banking terms are useful for explaining the Christian’s walk with the Lord—“kept the faith.”
- ♦ **What about the future?:** the watchword for the future is *anticipation* (v. 8). Paul doubles up on the athletic picture since he speaks of a “crown” of victory given to those who finish life’s race. What is more, not only would the Apostle receive a crown, but a crown of victory would be given “all them” who believe in Christ and “love his appearing.”

## II. Words of Preparation (vv. 9-18)

With his full heart, the Apostle not only called for *examination*, he also called for *preparation*. Eager to see Timothy (v. 9), he faces the reality of his situation. *First, he mentions some important personalities.* These men signify a cardinal truth of the Christian faith. He writes, “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” (2 Tim. 4:10-12).



Demas is among those who *run* when things get tough. Mentioned three times in Scripture (cp. Philemon 24; Col. 4:14), he may represent those who start fast but end poorly. Paul reminds Timothy Demas “hath forsaken” him. The term translated “forsaken” is a strong word carrying the idea of abandonment. Hence, Demas was duped by the spirit of this age, having loved the present world. Contrarily, Luke is among those who *remain* through the tough times. There are decidedly few who stick it out when circumstances become difficult. In fact, the Apostle said, “only” Luke had remained. Even today every Christian—sooner or later—will face circumstances where he or she is the only one standing. Luke started well and finished well. He may represent the ideal Christian journey. Finally, Mark is among those who *return* after coming to their Christian senses. It is true Mark’s story is a story of failure (cp. Acts 13:13). But aren’t our lives just as checkered? We all have run when we should have stood ground for the Lord Jesus. If Luke is a picture of the ideal Christian journey, Mark is a picture of the normal Christian journey. Even so, God is a God Who delights in giving second chances. He desires to lavish mercy on His creation. While there was a time when Mark lost the confidence of the Apostle Paul (Acts 15:36-41), he now had fully regained it; Paul counted him “useful to him” for “ministry.”

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*Second, Paul mentions some necessities he needed.* Timothy was God’s blessing to Paul to meet his need. He says, “The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (v. 13). Paul had *physical* needs to which must be attended. The “cloak” was a circular garment similar to a cape and was used for weathering inclement conditions like rain and cold. The dungeon in which Paul was imprisoned was cold, damp, and dreary. In addition, Paul had *mental* needs—“books.” Even in the closing days of his life, the Apostle concerned himself with studying, reading, and keeping his mind sharp. With the technology we have today, no excuse exists for believers not to accelerate in reading and studying. Most importantly, the Apostle had *spiritual* needs—“parchments.” Made of sheep skins, parchments were a treasured possession of the ancient world. Undoubtedly, from Paul’s emphasis on “especially” bringing the parchments, what he referred to was none other than the Word of God. Nothing could take the place of God’s book in a time of need. Paul requested the Scripture, indeed the final request the Apostle made from someone on this earth.

### Reflection Connection

*Though Paul was an apostle commissioned by Jesus Christ Himself, he still had spiritual needs in his life. Do you think it is harder or easier for Christian leaders to grow spiritually? Explain.*

*Third, Paul mentions some victories.* He writes, “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and 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 for ever and ever. Amen” (vv. 16-18). Being deserted, no one came to his defense (v. 16). His enemies had won the round (vv. 14-15). How did he react to being abandoned? He prayed God would not hold it against them. How do



we normally respond when we are let down? Do we get angry? Become bitter? Claim our rights are violated? The Apostle knew how to forgive. Do we?

Though he was deserted, the Apostle remained *determined* that through him, Christ would be “fully known” through the preaching of the Gospel (v. 17). Paul turned his disappointment into an opportunity to witness about Jesus. God may at times place us in circumstances when our patient response to a difficulty we face is precisely the opportunity a person needs to hear about the saving news of Jesus Christ. In other words, our determination becomes the occasion for their *deliverance*. Not only so, it also becomes the occasion for ours—“ the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work.”

### III. Words of Exhortation (vv. 19-22)

The final utterance of Paul’s recorded words remains a testimony to his spiritual greatness. He writes, “Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus 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” (vv. 19-22). The cloak which Paul requested from Timothy (v. 13) indicated he needed it “before winter,” and hence, he made sure Timothy hurried along as well.

Paul’s final words record three exhortations to his young protégé. *First, Paul spoke about life’s brevity.* Life is similar to seasons of the year. Sometimes there is spring when things appear green, growing, fresh, and bursting with new life. On the other hand, winter comes and death covers the grass while cold winds blow our way. Indicative also is the shortness of life. The changing

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seasons picture life going through stages. Aging takes place. Wrinkles are a part of life. The Apostle James spoke as if life were a vapor which appears for a mere moment and vanishes away (James 4:14; cp. also Job 7:6; Psalm 90:9). Winter is coming, so Timothy must hurry. Do what he can while he can.

*Second, Paul spoke about life’s opportunity.* The fact is, some things will never get done if they are not performed “before winter.” Are not scattered throughout our lives graveyards of opportunities not taken because we failed to do them “before winter”? Some dads no longer have the opportunity to lead family devotions because they did not do so “before winter.” Now the children are grown and gone. Others missed the opportunity to witness about the wonderful news of Jesus Christ to a particular co-worker because they did not do so “before winter.” Now the co-worker is no longer there.

*Third, Paul spoke about life’s necessity.* Paul continually spoke about the significance of giving one’s life to Christ. To Timothy Paul simply said, “come.” The immediate context is Paul urging Timothy to see him. The wider context of the whole Bible uses “come” as the great word of Gospel invitation. God



invites rebellious sinners to “come” and reason together with Him (Isa. 1:18). He further insists they “come” and purchase necessities from Him “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). Jesus issues the invitation to all those who “labor and are heavy laden” to “come unto me” (Matt. 11:28). The Bible closes with the 3-fold appeal to “come.” (Rev. 22:17). Life’s greatest necessity is coming to Jesus. Life’s greatest joy is getting to Jesus. And life’s greatest reward is eternally living with Jesus.

### Golden Greek Nugget

Paul predicted the time would come when people would not listen to sound doctrine, but possess “itching ears” (4:3). The Greek term is *knetho*, and is used only one time in the New Testament. It means “to scratch” or “to tickle” and carries the idea of desiring something which brings pleasure. In other words, people will desire to be told something pleasurable about themselves, about God, or about life rather than the truth. How often do we hear a diluted Gospel in mainstream media presentations of Christian faith? Paul’s prophecy is already taking place!

### Wrap Up

*The greatest evangelist to live was the Apostle Paul. He started well and ended well. Paul’s life was all about sharing Christ. He neither hesitated in examining his own life nor did he grow weary when things got tough. He was ready to meet God because God was no stranger. For Paul, to live was Christ; therefore to die was gain (cp. Phil. 1:21).*

