

CHAPTER 4

In this chapter,

I. Paul with great solemnity and earnestness presses Timothy to the diligent and conscientious discharge of his work and office as an evangelist; and the charge given to him all gospel ministers are to take to themselves (v. 1-5).

II. The reason of his concern in this case, Why must Timothy now be instant in season, etc., in a particular manner? Because the church was likely to be deprived of the apostle's labours, for his departure was at hand (v. 6-8).

III. Divers particular matters, with a hint and caution, about Alexander the coppersmith (v. 9-15).

IV. He informs him of what befel him at his first answer; though men forsook him, the Lord stood by him, and this encouraged him to hope for future deliverance (v. 16-18). And then he concludes with salutations and a benediction (v. 19 to the end).

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-8

MINISTERIAL DUTIES

Observe,

I. How awfully this charge is introduced (v. 1): *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.* Observe, The best of men have need to be awed into the discharge of their duty. The work of a minister is not an indifferent thing, but absolutely necessary. Woe be to him if he preach not the gospel, ~~496~~ 1 Corinthians 9:16. To induce him to faithfulness, he must consider,

1. That the eye of God and Jesus Christ was upon him: *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ;* that is, “as thou tenderest the favour of God and Jesus Christ; as thou wilt approve thyself to God and

Jesus Christ, by the obligations both of natural and revealed religion; as thou wilt make due returns to the God who made thee and the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed thee.”

2. He charges him as he will answer it at the great day, reminding him of the judgment to come, which is committed to the Lord Jesus. He shall judge the quick and the dead *at his appearing and his kingdom*, that is, when he appears in his kingdom. It concerns all, both ministers and people, seriously to consider the account that they must shortly give to Jesus Christ of all the trusts reposed in them. Christ shall *judge the quick and the dead*, that is, those that at the last day shall be found alive, and those who shall be raised to life out of the grave. Note,

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead. *God hath committed all judgment unto the Son*, and hath appointed him the Judge of quick and dead, ~~ACTS~~ Acts 10:42.

(2.) He will appear; he will come the second time, and it will be a glorious appearance, as the word *epiphaneia* signifies.

(3.) Then his kingdom shall appear in its glory: *At his appearing and kingdom*; for he will then appear in his kingdom, sitting on a throne, to judge the world.

II. What is the matter of the charge, v. 2-5. He is charged,

1. To *preach the word*. This is ministers' business; a dispensation is committed to them. It is not their own notions and fancies that they are to preach, but the pure plain word of God; and they must not corrupt it, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, they speak in Christ, ~~2 COR~~ 2 Corinthians 2:17.

2. To urge what he preached, and to press it with all earnestness upon his hearers: “*Be instant in season and out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort*; do this work with all fervency of spirit. Call upon those under thy charge to take heed of sin, to do their duty: call upon them to repent, and believe, and live a holy life, and this both in season and out of season. *In season*, when they are at leisure to hear thee, when some special opportunity offers itself of speaking to them with advantage. Nay, do it *out of season*, even when there is not that apparent probability of fastening something upon them, because thou dost not know but the Spirit of God may fasten upon them; for the wind bloweth where it listeth; and *in the morning we must*

sow our seed, and in the evening not withhold our hand,” ^{<2116>}Ecclesiastes 11:6. We must do it in season, that is, let slip no opportunity; and do it out of season, that is, not shift off the duty, under pretence that it is out of season.

3. He must tell people of their faults: *“Reprove them, rebuke them.* Convince wicked people of the evil and danger of their wicked courses. Endeavour, by dealing plainly with them, to bring them to repentance. Rebuke them with gravity and authority, in Christ's name, that they may take thy displeasure against them as an indication of God's displeasure.”

4. He must direct, encourage, and quicken those who began well. *“Exhort them* (persuade them to hold on, and endure to the end) and this *with all long-suffering and doctrine.*”

(1.) He must do it very patiently: *With all long-suffering.* “If thou do not see the effect of thy labours presently, yet do not therefore give up the cause; be not weary of speaking to them.” While God shows to them all long-suffering, let ministers exhort with all long-suffering.

(2.) He must do it rationally, not with passion, but *with doctrine,* that is, “In order to the reducing of them to good practices, instil into them good principles. Teach them the truth as it is in Jesus, reduce them to a firm belief of it, and this will be a means both to reclaim them from evil and to bring them to good.” Observe,

[1.] A minister's work has various parts: he is to *preach the word,* to *reprove, rebuke,* and *exhort.*

[2.] He is to be very diligent and careful; he must be *instant in season and out of season;* he must spare no pains nor labour, but must be urgent with them to take care of their souls and their eternal concerns.

5. He must *watch in all things.* “Seek an opportunity of doing them a kindness; let no fair occasion slip, through thy negligence. Watch to thy work; watch against the temptations of Satan, by which thou mayest be diverted from it; watch over the souls of those who are committed to thy charge.”

6. He must count upon afflictions, and endure them, make the best of them. *Kakopatheson,* endure *patiently.* “Be not discouraged by the

difficulties thou meetest with, but bear them with an evenness of spirit. Inure thyself to hardships.”

7. He must remember his office, and discharge its duties: *Do the work of an evangelist.* The office of the evangelist was, as the apostles' deputies, to water the churches that they planted. They were not settled pastors, but for some time resided in, and presided over, the churches that the apostles had planted, till they were settled under a standing ministry. This was Timothy's work.

8. He must fulfil his ministry: *Make full proof of it.* It was a great trust that was reposed in him, and therefore he must answer it, and perform all the parts of his office with diligence and care. Observe,

- (1.) A minister must expect afflictions in the faithful discharge of his duty.
- (2.) He must endure them patiently, like a Christian hero.
- (3.) These must not discourage him in his work, for he must do his work, and fulfil his ministry.
- (4.) The best way to make full proof of our ministry is to fulfil it, to fill it up in all its parts with proper work.

III. The reasons to enforce the charge.

1. Because errors and heresies were likely to creep into the church, by which the minds of many professing Christians would be corrupted (v. 3, 4): *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.* Therefore improve the present time, when they will endure it. Be busy now, for it is seedtime; when the fields are white unto the harvest, put in the sickle, for the present gale of opportunity will be soon over. *They will not endure sound doctrine.* There will be those who will *heap to themselves corrupt teachers, and will turn away their ears from the truth;* and therefore secure as many as thou canst, that, when these storms and tempests do arise, they may be well fixed, and their apostasy may be prevented.” People must hear, and ministers must preach, for the time to come, and guard against the mischiefs that are likely to arise hereafter, though they do not yet arise. They will *turn away their ears from the truth;* they will grow weary of the old plain gospel of Christ, and then they will be greedy of fables, and take pleasure in them, and God will give them up

to those strong delusions, because they received not the truth in the love of it, ³¹¹2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12. Observe,

(1.) These teachers were of their own heaping up, and not of God's sending; but they chose them, to gratify their lusts, and to please their itching ears.

(2.) People do so when they will not endure sound doctrine, that preaching which is searching, plain, and to the purpose; then they will have teachers of their own.

(3.) There is a wide difference between the word of God and the word of such teachers; the one is sound doctrine, the word of truth, the other is only fables.

(4.) Those that are turned unto fables first turn away their ears from the truth, for they cannot hear and mind both, any more than they can serve two masters. Nay, further, it is said, *They shall be turned unto fables*. God justly suffers those to turn to fables who grow weary of the truth, and gives them up to be led aside from the truth by fables.

2. Because Paul for his part had almost done his work: *Do thou make full proof of thy ministry, for I am now ready to be offered*, v. 6. And,

(1.) "Therefore there will be the more occasion for thee." When labourers are removed out of the vineyard, it is no time for those to loiter that are left behind, but to double their diligence. The fewer hands there are to work the more industrious those hands must be that are at work.

(2.) "I have done the work of my day and generation; do thou in like manner do the work of thy day and generation."

(3.) The comfort and cheerfulness of Paul, in the prospect of his approaching departure, might encourage Timothy to the utmost industry, and diligence, and seriousness in his work. Paul was an old soldier of Jesus Christ, Timothy was but newly enlisted. "Come," says Paul, "I have found our Master kind and the cause good; I can look back upon my warfare with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction; and therefore be not afraid of the difficulties thou must meet with. The crown of life is as sure to thee as if it were already upon thy head; and therefore endure afflictions, and make full proof of thy ministry." The courage and comfort of dying saints and ministers, and especially dying martyrs, are a great

confirmation of the truth of the Christian religion, and a great encouragement to living saints and ministers in their work. Here the apostle looks forward, upon his death approaching: *I am now ready to be offered*. The Holy Ghost witnessed in every city that bonds and afflictions did abide him, ~~412B~~ Acts 20:23. He was now at Rome, and it is probable that he had particular intimations from the Spirit that there he should seal the truth with his blood; and he looks upon it now as near at hand: *I am already poured out*; so it is in the original, *ede spendomai*; that is, I am already a martyr in affection. It alludes to the pouring out of the drink-offerings; for the blood of the martyrs, though it was not a sacrifice of atonement, was a sacrifice of acknowledgment to the honour of the grace of God and his truths. Observe,

[1.] With what pleasure he speaks of dying. He calls it his departure; though it is probable that he foresaw he must die a violent bloody death, yet he calls it his departure, or his release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world and his departure to the enjoyments of another world; he does not cease to be, but is only removed from one world to another.

[2.] With what pleasure he looks back upon the life he had lived (v. 7): *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course*, etc. He did not fear death, because he had the testimony of his conscience that by the grace of God he had in some measure answered the ends of living. As a Christian, as a minister, he had fought a good fight. He had done the service, gone through the difficulties of his warfare, and had been instrumental in carrying on the glorious victories of the exalted Redeemer over the powers of darkness. His life was a course, and he had now finished it; as his warfare was accomplished, so his race was run. *“I have kept the faith. I have kept the doctrines of the gospel, and never betrayed any of them.”* Note, *First*, The life of a Christian, but especially of a minister, is a warfare and a race, sometimes compared to the one in the scripture, and sometimes to the other. *Secondly*, It is a good fight, a good warfare; the cause is good, and the victory is sure, if we continue faithful and courageous. *Thirdly*, We must fight this good fight; we must fight it out, and finish our course; we must not give over till we are made more than conquerors through him who hath loved us, ~~412B~~ Romans 8:37. *Fourthly*, It is a great comfort to a dying saint, when he can look back upon his past life and say with our apostle, *“I have fought*, etc. *I have kept the faith, the doctrine of faith and the grace of faith.”* Towards the end of our days to be

able to speak in this manner, what comfort, unspeakable comfort, will it afford! Let it then be our constant endeavour, by the grace of God, that we may finish our course with joy, ~~402~~ Acts 20:24.

[3.] With what pleasure he looks forward to the life he was to live hereafter (v. 8): *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness*, etc. He had lost for Christ, but he was sure he should not lose by him, ~~308~~ Philippians 3:8. Let this encourage Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ that there is a crown of life before us, the glory and joy of which will abundantly recompense all the hardships and toils of our present warfare. Observe, It is called *a crown of righteousness*, because it will be the recompence of our services, which *God is not unrighteous to forget*; and because our holiness and righteousness will there be perfected, and will be our crown. God will give it as *a righteous Judge*, who will let none love by him. And yet this crown of righteousness was not peculiar to Paul, as if it belonged only to apostles and eminent ministers and martyrs, but *to all those also that love his appearing*. Observe, It is the character of all the saints that they love the appearing of Jesus Christ: they loved his first appearing, when he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself (~~305~~ Hebrews 9:26); they love to think of it; they love his second appearing at the great day; love it, and long for it: and, with respect to those who love the appearing of Jesus Christ, he shall appear to their joy; there is a crown of righteousness reserved for them, which shall then be given them, ~~305~~ Hebrews 9:28. We learn hence, *First*, The Lord is the righteous Judge, for his judgment is according to truth. *Secondly*, The crown of believers is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ, and bestowed as the reward of the saints' righteousness. *Thirdly*, This crown, which believers shall wear, is laid up for them; they have it not at present, for here they are but heirs; they have it not in possession, and yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them. *Fourthly*, The righteous Judge will give it to all who love, prepare, and long for his appearing. *Surely I come quickly. Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.*

2 TIMOTHY 4:9-15

THE APOSTLE'S DIRECTIONS TO TIMOTHY

Here are divers particular matters which Paul mentions to Timothy, now at the closing of the epistle.

1. He bids him hasten to him, if possible (v. 9): *So thy diligence to come shortly to me.* For Timothy was an evangelist, one who was not a fixed pastor of any one place, but attended the motions of the apostles, to build upon their foundation. Paul wanted Timothy's company and help; and the reason he gives is because several had left him (v. 10); one from an ill principle, namely, *Demas*, who abides under an ill name for it: *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.* He quitted Paul and his interest, either for fear of suffering (because Paul was now a prisoner, and he was afraid of coming into trouble upon his account) or being called off from his ministry by secular affairs, in which he entangled himself; his first love to Christ and his gospel was forsaken and forgotten, and he fell in love with the world. Note, Love to this present world is often the cause of apostasy from the truths and ways of Jesus Christ. He has gone off, has *departed to Thessalonica*, called thither perhaps by trade, or by some other worldly business. *Crescens* had gone one way and *Titus* another way. *Luke* however remained with Paul (v. 11, 12), and was not this enough? Paul did not think it so; he loved the company of his friends.

2. He speaks respectfully concerning *Mark*: *He is profitable to me for the ministry.* It is supposed that this *Mark* was he about whom Paul and *Barnabas* had contended, ~~415B~~ Acts 15:39. Paul would not take him with him to the work, because he had once flinched and drawn back: but now, says he, *Take Mark, and bring him with thee.* By this it appears that Paul was now reconciled to *Mark*, and had a better opinion of him than he had had formerly. This teaches us to be of a forgiving spirit; we must not therefore disclaim for ever making use of those that are profitable and useful, though they may have done amiss.

3. Paul orders Timothy to come to him, bids him as he came through *Troas* to bring with him thence those things which he had left behind him there (v. 13), the cloak he had left there, which, it may be, Paul had the more occasion for in a cold prison. It is probable that it was the habit Paul usually wore, a plain dress. Some read it, the *roll of parchment I left at*

Troas; others, the *desk* that I left. Paul was guided by divine inspiration, and yet he would have his books with him. Whereas he had exhorted Timothy to give attendance to reading, so he did himself, though he was now ready to be offered. As long as we live, we must be still learning. *But especially the parchments*, which some think were the originals of his epistles; others think they were the skins of which he made his tents, whereby he obtained a livelihood, working with his own hands.

4. He mentions *Alexander*, and the mischief that he had done him, v. 14, 15. This is he who is spoken of ~~4HEB~~ Acts 19:33. It should seem, he had been a professor of the Christian religion, a forward professor, for he was there particularly maligned by the worshippers of Diana, and yet he did Paul much evil. Paul was in as much danger from false brethren (~~4TIB~~ 2 Corinthians 11:26) as from open enemies. Paul foretels that God would reckon with him. It is a prophetic denunciation of the just judgment of God that would befall him: The Lord *will reward him according to his works*. He cautions Timothy to take heed of him: “*Of whom be thou aware also, that he do not, under pretence of friendship, betray thee to mischief.*” It is dangerous having any thing to do with those who would be enemies to such a man as Paul. Observe,

- (1.)** Some who were once Paul's hearers and admirers did not give him reason to remember them with much pleasure; for one forsook him, and another did him much evil, and greatly withstood his words. Yet,
- (2.)** At the same time he mentions some with pleasure; the badness of some did not make him forget the goodness of others; such as *Timothy, Titus, Mark, and Luke*.
- (3.)** The apostle has left a brand on the names and memory of two persons; the one is *Demas*, who forsook him, having loved the present world, and the other is *Alexander*, who greatly withstood his words.
- (4.)** God will reward evil-doers, particularly apostates, according to their works.
- (5.)** Of such as are of *Alexander's* spirit and temper we should beware; for they will do us no good, but all the mischief that is in their power.

2 TIMOTHY 4:16-22

SALUTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS

Here,

I. He gives Timothy an account of his own present circumstances.

1. He had lately been called to appear before the emperor, upon his appeal to Caesar; and then *no man stood with him* (v. 16), to plead his cause, to bear testimony for him, or so much as to keep him in countenance, but *all men forsook him*. This was strange, that so good a man as Paul should have nobody to own him, even at Rome, where there were many Christians, whose faith was spoken of throughout the world, ^{<B18>}Romans 1:8. But men are but men. The Christians at Rome were forward to go and meet him (Acts 28); but when it came to the pinch, and they would be in danger of suffering with him, then they all forsook him. He prays that God would not lay it to their charge, intimating that it was a great fault, and God might justly be angry with them, but he prays God to forgive them. See what a distinction is put between sins of presumption and sins of infirmity. Alexander the coppersmith, who maliciously withstood Paul, he prays against: *The Lord reward him according to his works*; but respecting these Christians, who through weakness shrunk from Paul in time of trial, he says, *The Lord lay it not to their charge*. Observe,

(1.) Paul had his trials in his friends' forsaking him in a time of danger as well as in the opposition made by enemies: all forsook him.

(2.) It was their sin not to appear for the good apostle, especially at his first answer; but it was a sin of weakness, and therefore the more excusable. Yet,

(3.) God might lay it to their charge, but Paul endeavours to prevent it by his earnest prayers: *Let it not be laid to their charge*.

2. *Notwithstanding this God stood by him* (v. 17), gave him extraordinary wisdom and courage, to enable him to speak so much the better himself. When he had nobody to keep him in countenance, God made his face to shine. — *That by me the preaching might be fully known*, that is, “God brought me out from that difficulty that I might preach the gospel, which is my business.” Nay, it should seem, that he might preach the gospel at

that time; for Paul knew how to preach at the bar as well as in the pulpit. *And that all the Gentiles might hear*; the emperor himself and the great men who would never have heard Paul preach if he had not been brought before them. *And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion*, that is, of Nero (as some think) or some other judge. Some understand it only as a proverbial form of speech, to signify that he was in imminent danger. *And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work*. See how Paul improved his experiences: "*He that delivered doth deliver, and we trust he will yet deliver, will deliver me from every evil work, from any ill done to me by others. And shall preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.*" And for this he gives glory to God, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. Observe,

- (1.) If the Lord stand by us, he will strengthen us, in a time of difficulty and danger, and his presence will more than supply every one's absence.
- (2.) When the Lord preserves his servants from great and imminent danger, it is for eminent work and service. Paul was preserved that by him the preaching might be fully known, etc.
- (3.) Former deliverances should encourage future hopes.
- (4.) There is a heavenly kingdom, to which the Lord will preserve his faithful witnessing or suffering servants.
- (5.) We ought to give God the glory of all past, present, and future deliverances: *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

II. He sends salutations to *Aquila, and Priscilla, and the household of Onesiphorus*, v. 19. He mentions his leaving *Trophimus sick at Miletum* (v. 20), by which it appears that though the apostles healed all manner of diseases miraculously, for the confirmation of their doctrine, yet they did not exert that power upon their own friends, lest it should have looked like a collusion.

III. He hastens Timothy to *come to him before winter* (v. 21), because he longed to see him, and because in the winter the journey or voyage would be more dangerous.

IV. He sends commendations to him from *Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia*, and all the *brethren*. One of the heathen writers at this time mentions one Pudens and his wife Claudia, and says the Claudia was a

Briton, whence some have gathered that it was this Pudens, and that Claudia here was his wife, and that they were eminent Christians at Rome.

V. He concludes with a prayer, that the *Lord Jesus would be with his spirit*. We need no more to make us happy than to have the Lord Jesus Christ with our spirits; for in him all spiritual blessings are summed up. And it is the best prayer we can put up for our friends, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits, to sanctify and save them, and at last to receive them to himself; as Stephen the proto-martyr prayed, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*, ^{<4079>}Acts 7:59. “Lord Jesus, receive that spirit which thou hast been with while it was united to the body; do not now leave it in its separate state.” *Grace be with you. Amen.* This was our apostle's token in every epistle; so he wrote. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen*, ^{<5187>}2 Thessalonians 3:17, 18. And if grace be with us here to convert and change us, to make us holy, to keep us humble, and to enable us to persevere to the end, glory will crown us hereafter: *for the Lord is a sun, and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee*, ^{<9811>}Psalm 84:11, 12. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God our Saviour, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*