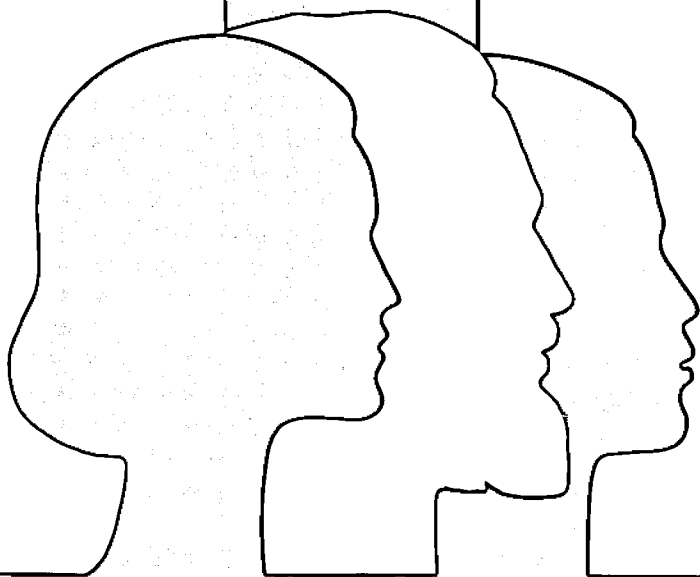

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

ADULT

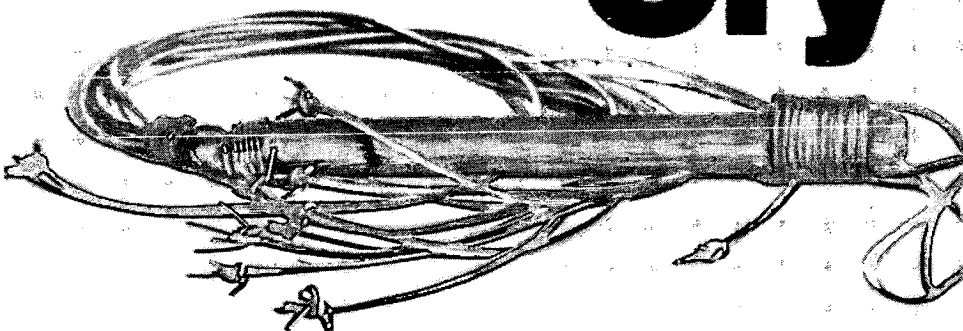
APRIL-JUNE 1985

*Christ
Our
Hope*



The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry

by E. E. WHITE



When death calls how will you answer? Will it be with bitterness or will it be with hope and courage? By studying Paul's second letter to Timothy you can discover the secret of victorious living.

One of the most inspiring letters ever written, 2 Timothy deserves closer study. *The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry* serves as a magnifying glass allowing you to discover what true faith is.

Written especially to enrich your study of this quarter's lessons, *The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry* goes beyond what is in the weekly lessons.

The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry is written by Edward E. White, an Adventist educator born in England. White has served as college president on two continents and is known as an expert on the history of Christian hymns, having authored *Singing With Understanding*.

Copies of *The Prisoner Wouldn't Cry* are available today at your Adventist Book Center for only **US \$5.95.**

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This is Lucy Henderson's lemonade stand. Lucy sells lemonade here four days a week, after school, for 5¢ a glass. Her mother donates the lemonade. Lucy usually sells 15 glasses of lemonade a day. So her weekly income is \$3.00.

On Sabbath, Lucy puts a quarter and a nickel into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and drops it in the offering plate. That 10% of Lucy's income helps support the world ministry of the church. Lucy is happy to return her tithe to the Lord.



We all know how but how much should

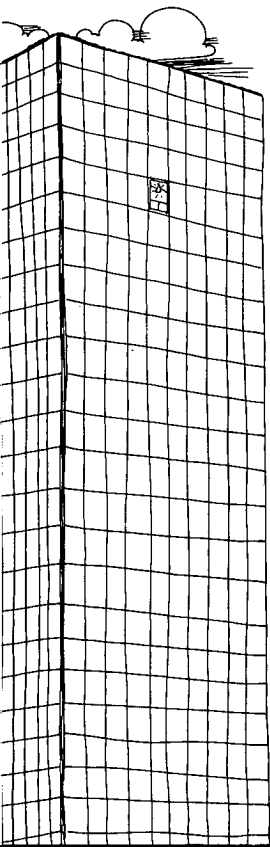
Lucy and her daddy both return tithe on an equal basis: 10% of income. But how much should Lucy and her daddy give in mission offerings?

Sometimes members are encouraged to give \$2.00. Now to Lucy, \$2.00 is more than half her weekly income. To Lucy's daddy, \$2.00 is mere pocket change. Lucy worries because \$2.00 seems much. Her daddy feels \$2.00 for him is really not enough!

 My Personal
Giving Plan

*Our Mission—
The Gospel to the World*

Proportionate financial support



This is Lucy Henderson's daddy's building. Lucy's daddy works in an office on the 32nd floor from eight to five each weekday. Mr. Henderson's weekly income is substantially higher than Lucy's.

On Sabbath, Mr. Henderson puts a check into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and puts it in the offering plate. That 10% of his income helps support the world ministry of the church. Mr. Henderson is happy to return his tithe to the Lord.

much tithe to return, we give in offerings?

Wouldn't it be better if we planned our offerings on a percentage basis, just like tithe? Many are doing that. The fact is, if every church member gave 10% of income to the World Budget Offering, all world budget financial needs, from the support of missions to educational institutions, would be adequately met. Giving as God has blessed is always abundant.

an idea as old as tithing.

After more than thirty seemingly unproductive years of seed-sowing, a full harvest is beginning to develop at Holbrook SDA School for Native Americans in Arizona.

All members of both the class of 1983 and 1984 were Seventh-day Adventists. Most were also second-generation students who now have brought their parents to a fuller knowledge of the Christ who inspired the inauguration of the school back in 1946.

Your **Thirteenth Sabbath Offering** will benefit this school, a church building in Selawik, Alaska, a medical/dental van in the Southwest Region, and the North American Division Evangelism Institute in Chicago.



Remember Your Mission on
America's Doorstep —
Give Generously on June 29

Introduction to Second Timothy

Christ Our Hope

Although this quarter's lessons are based on the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, they are not a verse-by-verse study. All the verses will be studied somewhere in the 13 lessons, but the approach will be topical.

From a letter we learn much about the writer and the person to whom the letter was addressed. We also catch a glimpse of the relationship that existed between the two concerned. In the New Testament epistles or letters we meet the problems that confronted the members of the early church in their church life. Most of the problems they faced still are live questions in the church today. We also meet fellow workers and acquaintances known to both writer and recipient of the letter. We are saddened to read about those who left the fellowship of believers, but are greatly encouraged by the record of those who remained faithful to their Lord and set a powerful example for truth and righteousness. In their experiences we gain help and counsel for problems that beset us in these last days of earth's history.

Paul's realization that his death is imminent gives both urgency and poignancy to this epistle. However, the focus is not on his own problems, but on the needs of the young preacher and the young church. Paul urges Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1)—to stand fast for the faith in spite of heresies that will creep into the church and in spite of persecution and the threat of imprisonment and death.

OUTLINE OF SECOND TIMOTHY

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Introduction (verses 1-5) Call to courage (verses 6-18)	Call to commitment (verses 1-6) Call to communicate (verses 7-26)	Call to crisis preparation	Call to coronation (verses 1-8) Personal messages (verses 9-22)

The Family of God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:1, 2; 4:9-21.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Sinners, estranged from God, become members of God's universal family through being adopted in Christ. They then develop a family relationship with their brothers and sisters in Christ that is often closer than natural family ties.

OVERVIEW: The Family Relationship Illustrated	
2 Tim. 1:1, 2	2 Tim. 4:9-21
Paul's relationship to Timothy	Timothy's love and obedience

INTRODUCTION: God's original intention in His creation was for people on earth to be part of "the whole family in heaven and earth" (Eph. 3:15), enjoying with angels, cherubim, and seraphim the friendship and communion with "one God and Father of all" (Eph. 4:6). But the entry of sin had a disastrous effect, and the first human family experienced a fatal family quarrel in the first generation (Gen. 4:8). However, the perfect original family relationship will be restored, for all who desire to be free from the bondage of sin are adopted as children into the heavenly family through Jesus. The ties of religion which bring us into this family become even stronger than the ties of birth.

This week we see how this family relationship prospered in the intimate friendship between Paul and Timothy and how, in spite of the age difference between the two, a mutual love and kindly consideration existed between them that apparently was deeper than the apostle's family ties.

Yet this is not to discount the importance of family ties. A foretaste of the heavenly joys is anticipated in the Christian family which should be a little heaven on earth. "God designs that the families of earth shall be a symbol of the family in heaven. Christian homes, established and conducted in accordance with God's plan, are among His most effective agencies for the formation of Christian character and for the advancement of His work."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 430.

DAY 2 I. PAUL'S RELATIONSHIP TO TIMOTHY (2 Tim. 1:1, 2).

2

The purpose of the Son of God in coming to the earth, "made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4), was to redeem those that were also "made of a woman" and who were in bondage to Satan. They were to be transferred to a new family and to have a new Father. Their previous father is fully described in the words of Jesus: "Ye are of your father the devil. . . . He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. . . . He is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). This adoption in Christ "is the taking and treating of a stranger as one's own child, and Paul applies the term to Christians because God treats them as His own sons, even though by nature they were strangers and enemies (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 567.

When was this plan of adoption conceived? Eph. 1:4, 5; Gal. 4:4-6.

Human language cannot portray God's amazing love in condescending to give humanity another opportunity to dwell inside the gates of Paradise. The fact that Jesus is described as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), shows clearly that the plan of salvation was not an afterthought. By assuming human nature, Christ became Brother to fallen people and made possible the plan of adoption whereby earth's sinful inhabitants not only could become but could live as sons and daughters of God. "In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 25, 26.

REACT: How does the above quotation make you feel toward Christ? What assurance does it give you? How will you translate your feeling and assurance into positive responses in your life?

Although Jesus Christ is not now personally on earth He fulfilled His promise to send another Person of the Godhead to abide with us and to comfort us (John 14:16, 18). While the visible presence of their Elder Brother was with them the disciples did not feel their need of another helper. But when Jesus ascended into heaven they realized their loneliness. However, they were comforted as they remembered His promise not to leave them "orphans," which is a more literal translation of the Greek word that has been translated "comfortless" in the King James Version.

In the light of the fact that Paul was so well known to Timothy why does he find it necessary, as indicated in verse 1, to establish his credentials as an apostle?

Such a salutation to a letter was common procedure in ancient times. However, because of the difficulties Timothy faced in the church at Ephesus, Paul's authoritative support would enhance Timothy's leadership.

DAY 3 COMPARE Paul's description of God's authorization of his apostolate in 1 Timothy 1:1 with that found in 2 Timothy 1:1.

1 Tim. 1:1	2 Tim. 1:1
By the _____ of God	By the _____ of God
The Godhead provides _____	The Godhead provides _____

The "promise of life" mentioned in 2 Timothy includes both eternal salvation and the new life of righteousness, peace, and conformity to the will of God in this present life. Both were precious to Paul as he approached his hour of death.

What is appropriate about Paul's use of a father-son relationship in writing to Timothy? 2 Tim. 1:2.

The term *son* indicates the true relationship that should exist between the older, more experienced members of God's family and the younger. The guidance given by a father to his son who treads an unknown future way illustrates the kind of help that Paul gave to Timothy as he entered the ministry. Their first meeting was at Lystra in Asia Minor where Paul was stoned and left for dead. On his second missionary journey Paul became better acquainted with Timothy and invited the young man to accompany him on his missionary travels. (See Acts 16:3.) Timothy remembered Paul's earlier visit, for "among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 184.

Evidently the cruel treatment meted out to Paul made less impression on the young witness than did the courageous and intrepid reaction of the apostle to this treatment. Far from turning young Timothy away from such a hazardous calling, "his heart was knit with the heart of Paul, and he longed to share the apostle's labors by assisting as the way might open."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 202, 203.

DAY 4 What expression used by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy gives the key to their relationship? 1 Tim. 1:2.

Because their thoughts, their ideals, and their manner of life were similar, they could walk together. (See Amos 3:3.) Paul saw that Timothy was

not one to be deterred from God's service by the prospect of persecution. This quality led to deeper friendship, respect, and love between the two. Paul, well versed in the Scriptures as he was, rejoiced to find one who had likewise been taught thoroughly from the Sacred Writings. "Those who had taught Timothy in his childhood were rewarded by seeing the son of their care linked in close fellowship with the great apostle."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 203.

How does Paul address Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:18, and how does his having done so reinforce the concept that Paul was serious in viewing their relationship?

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read 1 Corinthians 4:17 and Philippians 2:19-22. What do these verses contribute to our understanding of why Paul referred to Timothy as his son? Can you find any other references by Paul to someone other than Timothy as being his "son"? What are the implications of your answer?

DAY II. TIMOTHY'S LOVE AND OBEDIENCE (2 Tim. 4:9-21).

5

The aged apostle was imprisoned in a dark, lonely cell. His companions had left him, either because of apostasy brought on by fear of persecution or because they had been dispatched on long-term errands to serve the believers in other churches. Now Paul uttered a human feeling of neglect that could be cured by seeing his beloved son in the faith. The onset of winter meant an even more uncomfortable prison life and could threaten his health and his life too, should he escape the executioner. So he pleaded with Timothy to come to Rome to visit him, knowing in his heart that his request would be honored.

"Paul and Timothy were bound together by an affection unusually deep and strong.

"Since his conversion, Timothy had shared Paul's labors and sufferings, and the friendship between the two had grown stronger, deeper, and more sacred until all that a son could be to a loved and honored father, Timothy was to the aged, toilworn apostle. It is little wonder that in his loneliness and solitude, Paul longed to see him."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 498, 499.

What other believers were with Paul in Rome? 2 Tim. 4:11, 21.

Luke did not let the danger associated from being identified with the condemned Paul keep him from ministering to the apostle in this time of extremity. Luke counted fellowship with Paul in suffering the highest honor. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 225.)

The four believers listed in verse 21 are not mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures, but tradition has it that Linus was the bishop of Rome about A.D. 64-79. This lack of mention does not suggest that they were of no help to Paul, but their contact with Paul was risky and they may have been in a position that made it extremely dangerous for them to associate openly with a condemned criminal. Nevertheless their being mentioned by name further emphasizes the longing that Paul felt for Timothy. It seems that the fear that the journey might take too long—for bad weather could delay sailings from Ephesus to Rome—and that Paul might die before Timothy's arrival, prompted the writing of the second epistle. Paul's earnest plea stresses once more the affection which was more intimate than his friendship with Linus and the others. Nevertheless these four named believers belonged also to the Christian family and can be counted among that vast unnamed legion of faithful believers in Christ. Whether Timothy was able to reach Rome before Paul's death is not made clear in the Bible. But it seems obvious that Paul anticipated that Timothy would make every effort to do so as a loyal, loving, and obedient son.

DAY
6 **What connection is there between love, duty, and obedience? John 15:14, 15; 13:35.**

The servant is in the house to obey orders and to carry out the wishes of his master. He does not know what course to take without being told because he is not part of the family. The son, however, is part of the household. He knows its ins and outs. He not only has authority subject to his father, but wisdom to act in an emergency because he is aware of his father's intentions, and acts as he thinks his father would act. In the same way, members of God's family know His will and perform it because they are part of the household. The family's interest is their interest. They delight to serve the Father and the other members of the family.

In a word filled with hatred, distrust, and selfishness an unselfish deed stands out like a beam of light in the darkness. A life devoted to such deeds calls attention to itself, not in an egocentric way, but because of its uniqueness. To show love toward the unlovely, to minister kindness to the ungrateful, to grant rights to the unlawful and the selfish are marks of true nobility. Through such unselfish actions the true followers of Christ demonstrate an attitude that will be noted by unbelievers. Such acts as praying for our enemies and helping those who defraud and steal from us give evidence that we are following the pattern of One who laid down His life for those who despised, rejected, tortured, and crucified Him. To be a member of the family of which such an Example is the head, means simply to endeavor by His grace and power to copy His way of living. No wonder that the great commandment, the summarization of the principles of the Ten Commandments, is "that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

"Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, 'Love one another, as I have loved you' (John 15:12); when we love the

world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.

With the last three paragraphs in mind, summarize what the major qualification is for being a member of the family of God.

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Desire of Ages*, pages 325-327, noting the contrast between kinships.

Read *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pages 103-106, which comment on Luke 11:2.

“Affection Between Paul and Timothy.—The apostle’s speech had gained him many friends, and he was visited by persons of rank, who accounted his blessing of greater value than the favor of the emperor of the world. But there was one friend for whose sympathy and companionship he longed in those last trying days. That friend was Timothy, to whom he had committed the care of the church at Ephesus, and who had therefore been left behind when Paul made his last journey to Rome.

“The affection between Paul and Timothy began with Timothy’s conversion; and the tie had strengthened as they had shared the hopes, the perils, and the toils of missionary life, till they seemed to be as one. The disparity in their ages and the difference in their characters made their love for each other more earnest. The ardent, zealous, indomitable spirit of Paul found repose and comfort in the mild, yielding, retiring disposition of Timothy. The faithful ministrations and tender love of this tried companion had brightened many a dark hour in the apostle’s life. All that Melancthon was to Luther, all that a son could be to a loved and honored father, the youthful Timothy was to the tried and lonely Paul.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 916, 917.

SUMMARY: God and His human family were separated as a direct result of sin. The Son of God became the Son of man and came to restore the relationship with the heavenly Father and the brotherhood between His adopted children. The close “father-son” relationship between Paul and Timothy is instructive to church members who find some of their closest ties to their fellow members, although showing love to all people.

APPLICATION:

- Do I recognize, when I address God in prayer as “Our Father,” that His other children are my brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters “in the faith”?
- Does love for others mean that I should condone their dishonesty and greed? Do I hate the sin and love the sinner?
- As a class project take an interest in a particular youth and plan to help that youth spiritually as well as in practical ways.

A Young Missionary

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:1-5.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The knowledge of the Scriptures is fundamental to the training of Christian character and to successful Christian living.

OVERVIEW: Timothy's—		
Conversion (2 Tim. 3:15)	Call and Commitment (1 Tim. 4:12-16; 6:20)	Continuing Challenge (2 Tim. 2:1-3; 3:14; 4:5)
Childhood and youth	Call and character	Hardship and success

INTRODUCTION: Both epistles to Timothy reveal aspects of the character of the young missionary, but neither one does so fully. However, other portions of the Scriptures fill out more details that present a composite picture of the man to whom these two letters were written. Timothy's early upbringing and the influence exerted on him by his mother and grandmother are noteworthy. By implication, it appears that the father's influence as far as religion was concerned was either negative or neutral. In any case it was offset by the diligent attention to the Old Testament writings which were introduced to Timothy while he still was a child. This foundation evidently prepared him to dedicate his life to expounding these same scriptures. In the vicious attack on the apostle Paul he had been given a vivid picture of what could happen to such preachers, yet this did not frighten him from following his chosen calling. In fact, a deep and lasting friendship developed between Paul and Timothy, and the latter was willing to share the hardships and afflictions that were inseparable from the life of a gospel minister.

While it appears that he was not as rugged a character as Paul in that he sought to avoid conflicts and hesitated to press his own youthful opinions, yet there is no question of Timothy's dedication, his faithfulness, and his determination, nor of his courage and unflinching loyalty. His talents were recognized by the church when they selected him for leader-

ship. He was the overseer or bishop of the important church at Ephesus. That the civil authorities also realized his influence is evidenced in the fact that they arrested him in order to weaken the church. Later they released him from prison. Nothing is known about his death other than that tradition suggests that he was martyred. But his life was a tremendous inspiration to young workers and young believers, showing what God can do with those who yield their lives and their talents to Him.

DAY

2

I. TIMOTHY'S CONVERSION (2 Tim. 3:15).

Timothy was born in what is often termed a "divided" home, divided, that is, because of the differing religions of the parents. His grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice, were Jewish, but his father was a Greek (Acts 16:3). What did Lois think of her daughter when she married an unbeliever? Certainly she did not disown her. Instead she did all in her power to help to train her young grandchild in the scriptural heritage of her fathers. Both women could have embraced the Christian faith together. Acts 16:1 tells us that Eunice "was a Jewess, and believed"—that is, placed her trust in Jesus as the Messiah and therefore was a Christian. Lois is not mentioned in this verse, but elsewhere she is spoken of as possessing "unfeigned faith" (2 Tim. 1:5).

The fact that Timothy's father is not referred to suggests that he could have been a Gentile who was not interested in the Jewish practices of his mother-in-law and his wife. As a consequence, his son had not been circumcised. When Timothy was born this matter had not been an issue, and later the council of Jerusalem ruled against compulsory circumcision for believing Gentiles. (See Acts 15:19, 20.)

"There is slight textual evidence . . . for the addition of 'a widow' after 'woman' [in Acts 16:1]. If Timothy's father was dead, this, together with his probable difference in religion, would account for the prominence of the mother in Timothy's history."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 323.

Why should parents teach their children the Scriptures? Ps. 119:11.

List other Bible mothers besides Eunice who set notable examples in successfully training their children for God's work by leading them into a study of His Word and will:

Timothy's mother's name was truly prophetic, for *Eunice* means "a good victory," or "conquering well." She provides a most valuable example for mothers today when the burden of training children, whether through the indifference, opposition, or absence of a father, falls squarely on the other parent. "God had commanded the Hebrews to teach their

children His requirements. . . . This was one of the special duties of every parent—one that was not to be delegated to another. In the place of stranger lips the loving hearts of the father and mother were to give instruction to their children.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 592.

Such training is a bulwark against the evil that we are sure to meet in daily life. Of Lois and Eunice it is written: “The spiritual power of the lessons that he [Timothy] had received from them kept him pure in speech and unsullied by the evil influences with which he was surrounded.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 203.

DAY 3 SEARCH AND LEARN: Trace the steps in Timothy’s conversion. Acts 14:8-11, 19, 21, 22; 16:1-3.

3

When the Lystrans saw the lifelong cripple healed, they presumed that Paul and Barnabas were gods. But the missionaries were able to prevent sacrifices being offered to them by “the priest of Jupiter” (Acts 14:13). However, public opinion, as it so often does, proved to be fickle and was easily swayed when the dissident Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium. Consequently Paul soon was lying prostrate, apparently stoned to death (verse 19). It is possible that young Timothy was well aware of the proposed sacrifice the Lystrans wanted to make to these “gods” at the city gate. Ellen White says: “Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy. When Paul was dragged out of the city, this youthful disciple was among the number who took their stand beside his apparently lifeless body.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 184.

Paul’s fairly rapid return to the city where he was left for dead must have made a profound impression on the new converts, demonstrating to them how faith triumphed over tribulation.

Then on his second missionary journey, this time with Silas as a companion, Paul revisited Lystra and found that “a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus” (Acts 16:1), whose name means “honored of God.”

DAY II. TIMOTHY’S CALL AND COMMITMENT (1 Tim. 4:12-16; 6:20).

4

The impression Paul’s suffering had made on Timothy “had deepened with the passing of time until he was convinced that it was his duty to give himself fully to the work of the ministry.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 202.

God not only called Timothy but also put it into the heart of Paul to select him to be one of his companions in travel as he went from place to place preaching the gospel. In order to go the second mile and to remove any objection of favored treatment from his new spiritual father, Timothy

followed Paul's suggestion and was circumcised although he was a young adult. This avoided any prejudice that there might have been in those quarters on the part of the Jews, and any who were on the verge of accepting the Christian gospel would realize that this young preacher and prospective missionary was not trying to tear down Jewish customs in his preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Timothy was to learn by observation and experience as he accompanied Paul and Silas. He was with these two veterans and Luke when they responded positively to the vision of the man of Macedonia who appealed: "Come over . . . , and help us" (Acts 16:9). Apparently because he was very much the junior partner, Timothy escaped being jailed in Philippi. But he was not dissuaded by the imprisonment of his seniors. He remained faithful to his call. A little later we find him at Berea where Paul and Silas had fled from the Thessalonian mob (Acts 17:5-10, 13, 14). How these believers who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11) must have appreciated the ministry, brief though it was, of a young man who from a child had known these same scriptures and who exercised his gift of teaching to explain things new and old to the honest, inquiring souls in Berea!

What is the significance of the report about Timothy that came from those who knew him best? Acts 16:2; 1 Cor. 4:17.

People are best known, not by strangers, but by their friends, and even better still by their families and intimate associates. At home and in a person's own community, that person is seen so often that behavior, both bad and good, has opportunity to be revealed. Therefore, a good account of Timothy from his hometown may be taken as an indication of his good character. The testimony of Paul, who was not given to exaggeration, further confirms this conclusion, for, after associating in travel with Timothy he wrote that the younger member of his team had been "faithful in the Lord." His special mission on that occasion had been to reteach the truths of the gospel to the confused believers in Corinth. Then what a coveted recommendation came from Paul when he wrote of Timothy to the Philippians: "I have no man likeminded" (Phil. 2:20). This word literally means "of equal soul" ("who sees things as I do," NEB); two hearts, as it were, beating as one.

DAY
5

What do we learn about Timothy's character and commitment from the directions Paul gave him that are recorded in 1 Timothy 4:12-16 and 6:20?

"If we may judge Timothy's character from the directions given him by Paul . . . it would seem that Timothy was gentle and warmhearted rather than commanding."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 162. "The inference may be drawn from this epistle [1 Timothy] that Timothy was a man of mild temperament and not so aggressive as Paul might have wished. Accordingly, the apostle encourages his younger companion in the ministry to more vigorous leadership."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 285.

What other recommendations were made concerning Timothy? 1 Cor. 16:10; 2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 3:2.

The message that Paul, Silas, and Timothy collectively or separately preached was clear and plain, leaving no doubt about their own personal convictions. "Paul saw that Timothy was faithful, steadfast, and true. . . . Though young, he bore his responsibilities with Christian meekness. . . .

" . . . He did not move from impulse, but exercised consideration and calm thought."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 203-205.

Timothy's call obviously was bearing fruit, for Paul had sufficient confidence in him to send him back to Berea where "certain lewd fellows of the baser sort . . . [had] set all the city on an uproar" (Acts 17:5) causing Paul and Silas to escape by night (verse 10). Earlier Timothy had left Berea to join the apostle at Athens and then at Corinth where he deepened his experience and his knowledge of how to impress hearts with the new teaching which was so strange—strange to the Jews because it did not proclaim a conquering Messiah, and strange to the Greeks because it did proclaim a crucified Saviour. Timothy's call to the ministry became established, for we find him included in the combined salutation in both letters written to the church in Thessalonica. (See 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1.)

DAY 6 III. TIMOTHY'S CONTINUING CHALLENGE (2 Tim. 2:1-3; 3:14; 4:5).

One hardship that apparently afflicted Timothy was a frail physical constitution. (See 1 Tim. 5:23.) No man can do his best work when he is physically ill, and Timothy's arduous travels would accentuate his lack of robustness, lowering his physical resistance and even affecting his mental and moral powers.

Hardship, however, is the lot of the Christian; for our Lord did not promise His disciples a life which would be a bed of roses. He said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. . . . The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:18-20). This does not signify that the Christian will have an unhappy life, for Paul and Silas, having been flogged and imprisoned, still sang praises to God. While Timothy escaped their fate at that time, he did suffer imprisonment later as we know from this brief statement: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty" (Heb. 13:23). He probably was imprisoned because he was a recognized leader and faithful preacher of the gospel.

"Tradition has it that Timothy suffered martyrdom under either Domitian . . . or Trajan."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 326.

Timothy's early introduction to the gospel made him acutely aware that trouble never was very far away from the gospel preacher, although it should be noted that persecution is not always of the physical kind. For example, Paul warned Timothy about Alexander: "Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words" (2 Tim. 4:15).

Hardships did not, however, turn Timothy from the goal he had set before him—the successful completion of his mission of winning souls.

Many youths start out on their adult life with high ideals, bending their energies to reach their ambitions. But so often obstacles arise in their way, and a promising beginning does not always guarantee a successful end. However, it happens frequently that "better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" (Eccl. 7:8). At the end we can see the result of our labors.

What would be Timothy's best defense against deceptive teachings? 2 Tim. 3:14.

In urging Timothy to "continue . . . in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of," Paul enjoins persistent effort rather than a meteoric blaze of unfruitful activity. In his letter to the Romans Paul stressed the importance of "patient continuance in well doing" (Rom. 2:7). The words of Jesus emphasized this aspect of Christian living also, for He said: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13).

What is the significance of Paul's counsel to Timothy concerning the young man's ministry? 2 Tim. 4:5.

Paul counseled him to fulfill the expectation held out at the inception of his ministry. The same counsel was given to another disciple, Archippus: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4:17). The same word used in 2 Timothy 4:5, meaning "carry to completion," is used later in the same chapter where Paul speaks of his own ministry: "that by me the preaching might be *fully known*" (2 Tim. 4:17). (Emphasis supplied.)

Timothy's work in Philippi gave the evidence that he was fulfilling Paul's expectations for him, for the veteran says: "Ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Phil. 2:22). The word here translated as *proof* means "test" or "examination," and Timothy had obviously passed the test. This is indicated also by the affectionate terms Paul uses, showing their complete understanding of each other, the same idea being repeated in his description of Timothy as "my workfellow" (Rom. 16:21).

When he exhorted his spiritual son not to allow afflictions to hinder his evangelistic fervor, Paul knew that he himself was nearing the end of his life, whether by natural or unnatural means. He was anxious that after his departing there should be reliable servants and fearless preachers of the gospel. His hopes were to be fulfilled; for tradition says that Timothy was the leader of the church at Ephesus, that he was appointed as the first bishop there, and that he later died as a martyr at the hands of the Ephesians.

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Adventist Home*, pages 181-186, noting its emphasis on child training. For those who may not have this book, the following portion could be helpful: "Every child brought into the world is the property of Jesus Christ, and should be edu-

cated by precept and example to love and obey God; but by far the largest number of parents have neglected their God-given work, by failing to educate and train their children, from the first dawning of reason, to know and love Christ. By painstaking effort parents are to watch the opening, receptive mind and make everything in the home life secondary to the positive duty enjoined upon them by God—to train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

“Parents should not permit business cares, wordly customs and maxims, and fashion to have a controlling power over them, so that they neglect their children in babyhood and fail to give their children proper instruction as they increase in years.

“One great reason why there is so much evil in the world today is that parents occupy their minds with other things than that which is all-important—how to adapt themselves to the work of patiently and kindly teaching their children the way of the Lord. If the curtain could be drawn aside, we should see that many, many children who have gone astray have been lost to good influences through this neglect. Parents, can you afford to have it so in your experience? You should have no work so important that it will prevent you from giving to your children all the time that is necessary to make them understand what it means to obey and trust the Lord fully.”—Pages 183, 184.

Read *The Great Controversy*, pages 593-602, on the importance of Bible knowledge.

Read *Steps to Christ*, pages 77-83, “The Work and the Life,” noting especially the lesson drawn from the Lord’s 18 years in the carpenter’s shop.

SUMMARY: The life of Timothy shows that childhood training in Bible knowledge prepares for conversion and for a life dedicated to God. With such a background it is to be expected that no hardship can deprive a Christian of ultimate success.

APPLICATION:

- How soon should a child be taught the Scriptures? With the ready availability of Bibles in so many versions, should verses be committed to memory?
- What reputation do I have among my neighbors? In my community? Among my fellow workers? Among unbelievers?
- Is physical hardship more difficult to bear than mental persecution? Is my faith strong enough to withstand either or both?
- When God gives a call to a believer, does He also impress others to recognize that same call?

NOTES:

God's Gifts

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:6, 7.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God has given talents to everyone, and we are required to discover and develop them in His service.

OUTLINE:

- I. All are gifted.
- II. A sound mind in a healthy body.
- III. The use and improvement of talents.
- IV. Guarding the deposit.

INTRODUCTION: God does not deprive the wicked of His bounties and reserve them only for those who serve Him. He pours out His blessings on the just and on the unjust (Matt. 5:45) and is the Giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17). All too often we do not recognize the origin of these gifts, as they are so widespread. But God gives us good health, ability to think, capacity to love, and the all too frequently neglected and often despised gift of His dear Son, Jesus Christ. Through Christ He gives all who wish it the power to resist the temptations of Satan.

We are equipped for the duties of our daily life with certain special characteristics that we call natural ability or talents. Because these gifts obey the laws of nature which God has ordained, talents atrophy when not used and improve when put into use. Some people limit talents to gifts such as art, music, mechanical ability, or memory; but time is a talent, as are speech, money, and kindness. These talents have been given us particularly to enable us to practice and to share most effectively the greatest of God's gifts—the knowledge of the gospel. This knowledge is a most valuable treasure that God has entrusted to us in the same way that we entrust valuables to a bank. It is our solemn responsibility to guard this deposit and to use it most effectively during the span of our earthly life.

In addition to these natural gifts or talents, God has given the spiritual gifts. Not all of His people partake of the same gifts. Therefore we must be aware of the particular spiritual gifts God has given us and be sure that we are putting them to work for Him.

DAY 2 **I. ALL ARE GIFTED** (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; Rom. 12:6-8).

The intelligent human being tends to become self sufficient, for life goes on much according to his own choice; and it seems to him that, in

most cases, he can live his own life. However, the Christian needs to remember that all things are of God and that it is "the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17). Not least among these many benefits is "the gift of God" (the gifts of the Spirit) that Paul said was found in his disciple Timothy "by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). Not that Timothy did not possess his particular gifts before his ordination, but that this ceremony of laying on of hands confirmed their presence.

"Timothy's 'gift' of church leadership was not bestowed on him at the time of his ordination. No special power flowed through the hands of the 'presbytery.' Rather, the ordination service recognized Timothy's abilities and consecration, and thus expressed the church's approval of his appointment as a church leader."—*S.D.A. Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 307.

This gift had been well exercised even before Paul chose him as an assistant, for he "was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra [where he lived] and Iconium" (Acts 16:2). Beside that of administration, Timothy's particular gifts included the ability to teach (1 Tim. 4:6, 11) and also to discern subtle false doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3, 4). Each of us has some gift or gifts conferred upon us by the Holy Spirit, who divides them "severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). These are a mark of His grace toward His people. Writing to the believers in Rome, the apostle Paul likens the church to the human body (Rom. 12:4, 5), which consists of different members, each having a special function—an illustration that he amplifies at length in 1 Corinthians 12.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compile a list of spiritual gifts from 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28.

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What is the obvious lesson to us today from Paul's presentation of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12?

Each of us has received at least one gift from God which should be exercised to His glory and for the development of His church. Such a gift is lent to us by His grace. If neither we nor our contemporaries recognize its existence, this is not to say that it is not present. It simply may not have surfaced, for it may have been neglected. But a willing acceptance of God's leading and guidance in our lives, as we search His Word and follow its teachings will cause a change in our daily lives and doubtless will reveal some spiritual gift that can be used in His service. It need not necessarily be a gift that later will be recognized by the church through

the laying on of hands, as is the practice for those who devote themselves to full-time service in God's cause. But, as is stated in the first letter to the Corinthians, some members of the Christian body may "seem to be more feeble" (1 Cor. 12:22), yet still may be of vital service.

In the Christian church each member has a part to play, not for his own glory, nor even to gain personal recognition, but solely for the good of the entire body, the church, of whom Christ is the Head.

DAY 3 II. A SOUND MIND IN A HEALTHY BODY (2 Tim. 1:7).

In verse 6 the apostle Paul specifies a particular gift of God given to Timothy. As he stirs up or fans the flame, it will enable him to develop other special gifts or talents that are introduced in verse 7. The last of the three gifts mentioned is that of a "sound mind." The Roman satirist Juvenal, whose life spanned the latter half of the first century A.D. and the first half of the second century, expressed this idea in the oft-quoted sentence: "Your prayer must be for a sound mind in a sound body."

REVIEW the dramatic incident recorded in Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; and Luke 8:26-40.

Two men, one evidently more prominent than the other, were devil-possessed and acted so fiercely and so insanely that they were a menace to society. In fact, they were like wild beasts and were so treated. But in spite of being bound with chains, their superhuman (devilish) strength broke these fetters, and they led a solitary existence in the wilderness. But after the miraculous exorcism of the legion of devils that were actuating the men, the record says that the swineherds "come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). Here was a restoration of God's wonderful gift of reason that was bestowed originally as a natural, normal right.

It is Satan's business to distort God's gifts and to drag human beings down to a lower than human level by robbing them of the use of a sound mind. "The encounter with the demoniacs of Gergesa had a lesson for the disciples. It showed the depths of human degradation to which Satan is seeking to drag the whole human race, and the mission of Christ to set men free from his power. Those wretched beings . . . represent what humanity would become if given up to satanic jurisdiction. Satan's influence is constantly exerted upon men to distract the senses, control the mind for evil, and incite to violence and crime. He weakens the body, darkens the intellect, and debases the soul. Whenever men reject the Saviour's invitation, they are yielding themselves to Satan. Multitudes in every department in life, in the home, in business, and even in the church, are doing this today. . . . Christ . . . [is] man's friend and deliverer. His Spirit will build man up for the glory of God in body and soul and spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 341.

WORD STUDY: The Greek word translated *sound mind* in 2 Timothy 1:7 is used only this once in the New Testament, but words from the same root are translated *discreet, temperate, moderate*. In both the New Eng-

lish Bible and the New International Version it is translated "self-discipline." In our daily Christian life we should be models of common sense, predictable, not one-sided, and self-disciplined.

In 2 Timothy 1:7 what other gifts are associated with the gift of a sound mind?

Love is a tender emotion. It is a driving force also, just as is its counterfeit, lust. But love is forbearing, is kind, is never envious, and is not proud. The great hymn to love, written by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, describes the magnificent qualities of this gift of God. (See 1 Corinthians 13.) Furthermore, the combination of love with power matches the gift of a sound mind—a balanced mind—one that wields power in the spirit of love and exercises love in a powerful, winning way.

Love, then, is a gift of God. This means that we do not have to force ourselves to love our neighbor or our God. He has given us hearts that are softened, that reach out to the tender cry of the helpless, that hear the pitiful plea of the poor, that ache for the restoration of the happiness that God desires for all His children.

DAY
4

What assurance of power is given to the Christian? Acts 1:8.

On the Day of Pentecost, only a few days after this promise was given, it was fulfilled dramatically. This power that is assured us will enable us to resist the attacks of the enemy, for it is not a power that is inherent in humanity. Adam's sin resulted in a fatal feebleness being passed on to his descendants. But God has put enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent (Gen. 3:15), and He has provided the power of His Spirit to enable us to march successfully on our pilgrim journey, beset though we may be by the roaring lion that lies in wait for us (1 Peter 5:8). This is the kind of power that all Christians need so desperately, for it promises victory over the evil one in the struggle of life. Our Lord said that He was given all power in heaven and in earth and that His powerful presence would be with His disciples until the end of time (Matt. 28:18-20).

The spirit of power also was accompanied by the spirit of love, for this was a particular characteristic of the early church raised up in Jerusalem so soon afterward. Timothy possessed this spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind, and he exercised it efficiently in his ministry.

III. THE USE AND IMPROVEMENT OF TALENTS (2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:14).

Natural talents need to be distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit discussed in Section I. Besides the spiritual gifts Timothy received, he possessed several natural talents. Scan the two epistles Paul wrote to him and list the natural talents with which this young worker was blessed.

DAY
5

REVIEW Christ's parables of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the pounds (Luke 19:11-27), noting not only the similarities but also the widespread differences in talents.

A comparison of the two parables shows clearly that human beings are not equally endowed (Matt. 25:15). It also makes it clear that everybody is endowed, and no one can claim that he has been overlooked in the distribution of natural talents. Furthermore, the pounds that were lent by the noblemen proved to be tests of faithfulness, and the different use made of them caused greater reward to flow to the good and faithful servants. In a sense the talents or pounds that the servants received were really theirs and were retained by them. But the noblemen put them out on permanent loan for the faithful use of the servants. Notice that in each case the unfaithful and lazy servant was condemned by his own deeds or lack of them.

It follows also that we are not to regard with envious eye the talents and abilities of those more richly endowed, but rather to realize that we too have special gifts God bestowed upon us that will increase by use. While applying to all Christians, the parable of the pounds particularly is pertinent to last-day believers, for it reaches down to the second advent and shows that we are to use the time "not in idle waiting, but in diligent working."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 325.

What responsibility rests on talented persons? 2 Tim. 1:6.

There is a solemn responsibility resting on each one of us, under God, to develop our gifts and talents. Paul uses strong language to Timothy reminding him to "stir up the gift." The word from which this expression is translated occurs only once in the New Testament and is made up of three Greek words that convey the idea of rekindling or letting the flames burn brighter, generating heat, light, and blessing.

The major point being made in these parables is that idleness, or failure to use our gifts and talents, is a grave fault. They are meant to be improved and put to use in the Master's service. "The special gifts of the Spirit are not the only talents represented in the parable. It includes all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual. All are to be employed in Christ's service. . . .

" . . . He who has ability to use five talents, receives five. He who can improve but two, receives two. He who can wisely use only one, receives one. . . . God expects returns 'according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.' "—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

DAY 6 IV. GUARDING THE DEPOSIT (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14).

6

The phrases "thing which was committed" and "keep that which is committed to thy trust" use the same Greek expression which could be translated literally "guard the deposit." "In the papyri the Greek phrase is used of a bank's responsibility for the protection of monetary deposits."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 321.

Paul charged Timothy to take care of the deposit account that the Lord had entrusted to him, not to guard it only, but to allow it to increase, to let the gospel seed grow and produce fruit after the example of the good servants in the parables. This would be a fulfillment of his advice to "make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5).

In what ways did Paul make proof of his ministry? 2 Tim. 4:16, 17; 1 Thess. 2:19, 20.

The main business of Paul and Timothy was to preach the gospel in whatever circumstances they found themselves and to let the Lord give the increase in those who believed. "One way to preserve the purity and power of the gospel is to shun trivial subjects and to use one's time for teaching truth, not for discussing irrelevancies."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 321.

Timothy was to be a link in the chain of faithful witnesses who would pass on to future generations the pure gospel, the faith "delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). They would preserve the truth proclaimed by Jesus until he returned again to receive into His eternal kingdom those who had heard and obeyed this truth.

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Skim through and read as much as you can of *Christ's Object Lessons*, pages 325 to 366, and notice the varied lists of talents given to human beings and how they can be used in common daily life.

Meditate on the following gems of thought taken from these pages in *Christ's Object Lessons*:

- "God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character."—Page 331.
- "A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next."—Page 332.
- Sanctification consists in the cheerful performance of daily duties in perfect obedience to the will of God."—Page 360.

SUMMARY: Each of us has particular gifts and talents of which we should be aware. As we put these to use, we will find that we also possess other desirable qualities. All of them should be used in advancing God's kingdom of grace on earth through contact with our fellow human beings.

APPLICATION:

- Have I discovered my special gifts and talents? Am I using them to serve God?
- Am I being faithful in the less interesting duties of my daily lot?
- Do I shun responsibility when asked to do certain tasks in the church?
- How does my daily occupation relate to my religious convictions?
- Has your class chosen a youth to whom to give special help as a class project? If so, pray for this youth yourself and on Sabbath morning with your class.

Unashamed

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:8-18; 2:19-23.

DAY 1 MEMORY TEXT: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim. 1:8).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When we identify ourselves as Christians we are to stand unashamed. At the same time, our desire to avoid shame should prevent us from sinning and thus denying the Christ we serve.

OVERVIEW

Should We be Ashamed of—	Christian friends?	2 Tim. 1:8, 16	No
	Suffering?	2 Tim. 1:8, 12	No
	Christ?	2 Tim. 1:12	No
	Sin?	2 Tim. 2:19, 22	Yes

INTRODUCTION: Many people follow a religion of circumstances; that is, a religion that has no fixed principles but is subject to the whim of the individual or the pressure of the moment. Their actions are governed by external happenings and they bend to every wind of doctrine. There is no fixity of purpose, no resolve to stand for the right though the heavens fall, no determination to adhere to Christian principles and to hold high the banner of truth and righteousness even in the most difficult and trying circumstances. They are ashamed to a greater or less degree of what they believe, and they lack moral fiber. True religion is based on internal decisions, the motives and purposes of the heart, and the all-important power of the will. In the time of test spurious Christians "waver, they stand feebly, swaying first one way, then the other. They have not the genuine article that Paul possessed, that could glory in tribulation. . . . They have a religion of circumstances."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 514, 515.

To be a witness for Jesus and to proclaim His name and saving power requires courage and conviction. Witnessing cannot be done effectively in a half-hearted manner nor by those who are not sure of their ground or who are turned aside easily by opposition. Unfortunately, one of Satan's methods is to bring discouragement into the hearts of Christians, causing them to be uncertain and ashamed of what they believe. This week's lesson presents several things of which we should not be ashamed, but also one of which we should be ashamed if we are to witness effectively.

DAY **2** I. UNASHAMED OF FELLOW CHRISTIANS WHO ARE IN DIFFICULTY (2 Tim. 1:8, 16).

When Paul wrote his second letter to his spiritual son, Timothy, he was imprisoned; probably in the loathsome Mamertine prison in Rome. Timothy himself may not have needed the exhortation to remain unashamed of Paul, but it may have been a help to others with whom Timothy shared the message. Some Roman Christians were not happy to be associated with a leader who had been jailed. Onesiphorus is mentioned specifically as one who was not ashamed to associate with a prisoner. Words of exhortation and courage are never out of place. They may, at times, be just the extra assistance that is required to swing a person who is wavering back into the right direction.

What is significant in the fact that our Lord's commendation to "the sheep on his right hand" (Matt. 25:33) includes those persons who were not ashamed of prisoners but visited them (verse 36)?

These prisoners were not necessarily innocent ones who were interned for their witness to Jesus. The plight of a prisoner who is paying the penalty for his misdeeds does not, and should not, exclude him from the mercy and pity of those who have their freedom.

What heartening illustration of prison ministry is related in Jeremiah 38:6-13?

Ebed-melech, a comparatively unimportant eunuch, of his own volition interceded for Jeremiah, who had been left in an underground dungeon to starve to death. This faithful, sympathetic man was not ashamed to identify himself with the despised prophet. Although he was not doing this for reward, the Lord sent him a most comforting message of deliverance from his own fears (Jer. 39:15-18).

"When our friends are in power and credit, we can readily acknowledge them, and take opportunities to show that we have such and such connections; but when the person falls into disgrace or discredit, though we cannot pretend not to know him, yet we take care not to acknowledge him. This induced Cicero, in relation to friendships, to give for a maxim: . . . 'A true friend is known in adverse circumstances;' and from this we have borrowed our proverb, A friend in need, is a friend indeed."—Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), vol. 6, p. 625.

DAY **3** II. UNASHAMED OF SUFFERING (2 Tim. 1:8, 12).

Liberty is a prized possession. To be deprived of it forcibly is to imply disobedience to authority, consequent punishment, and a sense of shame. In the early days of the Christian church believers came into conflict with civil laws. Obedience to God sometimes meant disobedience to

Caesar. The classic example is that of Peter and the apostles. When forbidden to preach the good news of a crucified and risen Saviour, they gave this justification to the Jewish authorities for not obeying their injunction: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19, 20).

This attitude did not excuse them or prevent them from being imprisoned and later beaten, but again their justification was that "we ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). The apostle Paul experienced similar problems, for he too was cast into prison for precisely the same reason, namely, for preaching the gospel. He suffered "trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds" (2 Tim. 2:9), not that he was an evil doer, but he received the same penalty as that meted out to an evil doer.

What promise can help keep the fear of suffering from causing us to be ashamed of preaching the gospel? 2 Tim. 2:12.

"Suffering has been the portion of the people of God from the days of the martyr, Abel. The patriarchs suffered for being true to God and obedient to His commandments. The great Head of the church suffered for our sake; His first apostles and the primitive church suffered; the millions of martyrs suffered, and the Reformers suffered. And why should we, who have the blessed hope of immortality, to be consummated at the soon appearing of Christ, shrink from a life of suffering? Were it possible to reach the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God without suffering, . . . shame would seize us in the presence of those who had fought the good fight, had run the race with patience, and had laid hold on eternal life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 78.

Paul's words, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12), are a virtual paraphrase of the last beatitude: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). Paul demonstrates the truth of the promise by his introductory statement: It "is a faithful saying" (2 Tim. 2:11). But through all the suffering comes the overriding shout of triumph: "Nevertheless I am not ashamed" (2 Tim. 1:12). Even faced with the death penalty, Paul responds with a triumphant note of hope: "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

How does Paul separate shame and affliction in his counsel to Timothy? 2 Tim. 1:8.

He does so with the conjunction "but." Others may associate shame with affliction and bonds, but Timothy is to accept the affliction and deny the shame. When we feel ashamed we tend to take a compromising course that leads us to avoid clashes with authority. We are ashamed of being classified as odd, as simple minded, or as religious cranks, and the easy way to avoid the shame is by denying our allegiance to Christ and to Christian principles that are being held up to ridicule.

Paul indicates that we should accept the affliction, the sarcasm, the ironic jibes and with them the apparent shame, but not be ashamed. This counsel is illustrated by the experience of the early apostles who, after being virtually acquitted of wrongdoing by Gamaliel's wise words, nevertheless were unfairly beaten. Their attitude is worthy of emulation by all Christians who find themselves in difficult situations; they rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame" (Acts 5:41). They suffered shame but were not ashamed. They bore that reproach and did not deviate from their purpose. Their backs were red with the flogging, but their faces were not reddened by the shame that they had denied their Lord.

ILLUMINATION: It could well be that Peter had this experience in mind when he wrote later "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). He had had more than one experience inside prison walls, but not having been a murderer or a thief or an evildoer (1 Peter 4:15), he was able to turn such unpleasant experiences into the glorification of his Lord. He counseled: "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (verse 16). There was to be suffering, but paradoxically, there was to be no shame on the part of the sufferers as long as they were suffering for doing right.

THINK IT THROUGH: What is the difference between persecution and punishment?



III. UNASHAMED OF CHRIST (2 Tim. 1:12).

Writing from a place of shame—his prison—Paul confidently asserts: "I am not ashamed" (2 Tim. 1:12). Christ had not been ashamed to bear the cross for Paul, and Paul was not ashamed to bear the cross of Christ. The apostle's courageous witness came from a clear knowledge of the Christ he believed in. And nothing about Christ could make Paul ashamed of Him.

With so many years having passed since the foundation of the Christian church, and with so many of the great and prosperous nations being nominally Christian, it creates no difficulty for people in much of the world today to present themselves as Christians. For the early church, however, it often was a matter of life or death. The cross did not then have the aura of blessing and goodness and mercy that it now has. Yet even today, when in many lands it is respectable to be a nominal Christian, Paul's words are most appropriate: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:8). "That is, the Christian witness about Jesus Christ, which to the Gentiles was 'foolishness' and to the Jews a 'stumbling-block.'"—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 329.

THINK IT THROUGH: How can we be ashamed when we consider the majesty, power, and love of Him who is the Creator and Upholder of the universe? How can a weak mortal be ashamed of his Creator and Redeemer?

If we refuse to confess, are afraid to confess, or do not see the necessity of confessing Christ's name here on earth, we deny our relationship to Him. Then how can we expect to be on His side when He takes His power and reigns? Paul makes this obvious in his remark: "If we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Tim. 2:12). The Lord Himself said: "Who-soever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

After Paul accepted the call to service his life was fraught with danger, discouragement, and apparent defeat. But in whatever position he was to be found he never was ashamed of being a servant of Christ.

"Wherever Paul was,—whether before scowling Pharisees, or Roman authorities, before the furious mob at Lystra, or the convicted sinners in the Macedonian dungeon; whether reasoning with the panic-stricken sailors on the shipwrecked vessel, or standing alone before Nero to plead for his life,—he had never been ashamed of the cause he was advocating. The one great purpose of his Christian life had been to serve Him whose name had once filled him with contempt; and from this purpose no opposition or persecution had been able to turn him aside."—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 107, 108.



What positive attitude is involved in not being ashamed? Gal. 6:14.

Paul said, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Tim. 1:12)—*whom*, not *what*. His personal encounter on the road to Damascus remained a vivid experience for him throughout his life. He was a mighty exponent of the Word of God; but more, he was a mighty example of the Word of God. Because he knew the Man of Nazareth, he gloried in his sufferings for this Man. He was proud to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings and saw them, not as shame but as glory, for he said: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). False pride in his own considerable accomplishments disappeared and he gloried in what his Master had done for him—he had been "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:17).

Paul and Timothy were strong advocates of the philosophy of the cross of Christ: "No cross, no crown. How can one be strong in the Lord without trials! To have strength we must have exercise. To have strong faith, we must be placed in circumstances where our faith will be exercised. . . . It is through much tribulation that we are to enter the kingdom of God. . . . It is our privilege to be strong in the strength of God under all circumstances and to glory in the cross of Christ."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 67.

IV. ASHAMED OF SIN (2 Tim. 2:19-22).

This brings us to the turning point in this week's lesson. Any shame that we might have because of friends in unfortunate circumstances, because of persecution or suffering, or of confessing that we are Christians will disappear and be overcome if we have a sense of shame for sin. Sin

brings fear and trembling, hesitancy and compromise. Victory over sin brings courage, strength, freedom, joy, and pride in being a Christian. Paul wisely places Christ and sin at opposite poles, as he does also with the fruits of righteousness and the lusts of youth (verse 22).

Those who have turned from the inducements of Satan are recognized by the Lord—He “knoweth them that are his”—and qualify by His grace for the seal of His approval. Paul might have been drawing an analogy from the rebellion of Korah and his colleagues, where Moses says that “the Lord will shew who are his, and who is holy” (Num. 16:5), and then, placing a wide gulf between God’s people and sin, continues: “Depart . . . from the tents of these wicked men” (verse 26).

WORD STUDY: “Some suppose . . . [*seal* in 2 Tim. 2:19] to signify a *contract* or *covenant* by which two parties are bound to fulfil certain conditions and duties, the obligation to which each takes on him by *sealing* the instrument with his seal. Among the Asiatics, these seals have scarcely ever any image or figure on them, but always some very expressive inscription. . . . The twofold inscription, i.e. one on the seal of each party, may be here alluded to; that on God’s seal is . . . *The Lord approveth of them that are his*. That on the seal of his followers is . . . *Let every one who nameth the name of the Lord* (every Christian) *depart from iniquity*. Thus each has his peculiar inscription.”—Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 630.

It is true that nominal Christians bring reproach upon Christianity and that some deny the faith and commit iniquity. But the foundation God lays is not erected on the shifting sand of unaided human effort, but on the solid rock of Christ and His work of salvation for us and in us. He has delivered us from sin and Satan’s power. He places an enmity between the woman and her seed (Gen. 3:15) and the seed of the serpent, Satan. This enmity leads to hatred of sin even though sometimes we still may fall into sin. When we do, there is a disgust at our own weakness and a shame that we have wounded our Lord.

DAY 6 What sense of shame characterized Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden after their fall? Gen. 3:7.

“Standing ashamed in each other’s presence, they [Adam and Eve] sought to evade the disgrace of their nakedness. . . . Conscience was at work. That this feeling of shame had its root not in sensuality but in the consciousness of guilt before God is evident from the fact that they hid themselves from Him.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 231.

But there is hope in a new beginning, in rising after a fall: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” (Micah 7:8). The prophet gives the reason for his triumphant attitude: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (verse 18). When mortals gain a true picture of sin in its real

form, they are ashamed of it and plead for God's help to depart from all iniquity.

REACT: Study the quotation given below; then indicate your reaction in the spaces that follow:

In Gethsemane when the fate of the world trembled in the balance, "there was silence in heaven. No harp was touched. Could mortals have viewed the amazement of the angelic host as in silent grief they watched the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory from His beloved Son, they would better understand how offensive in His sight is sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 693.

"The infinite value of the sacrifice required for our redemption reveals the fact that sin is a tremendous evil."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 66.

"The exceeding sinfulness [of sin] can be estimated only in the light of the cross."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 31.

We Christians must not only be ashamed of sin but be covered by the garments of Christ's righteousness, lest we be naked and ashamed (Rev. 16:15).

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 537, 538, on the death of Peter.

Meditate on the following: "Now is the time for God's people to show themselves true to principle. When the religion of Christ is most held in contempt, when His law is most despised, then should our zeal be the warmest and our courage and firmness the most unflinching. To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 136.

Read *Christ's Object Lessons*, "Friends by the Mammon of Unrighteousness," pages 374, 375, noting the many contrasts.

SUMMARY: Any feelings of inferiority that we may experience as Christians in a hostile environment can and must be dissolved as we consider the greater shame in not confessing our Lord. We are called to witness for Christ whether circumstances are favorable or otherwise.

APPLICATION:

- Am I more concerned about what my neighbors think of me than what they think about Jesus Christ?
- Am I ashamed of sin to such an extent that I run away from it as did Joseph? (See Gen. 39:9, 12.)
- Is there someone in my church who seems embarrassed by a feature of the Adventist message? If so, what can I do to help that person overcome this sense of shame?

Called According to Grace

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:9-11; 2:1, 2, 13; 4:22.

DAY 1 MEMORY TEXT: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: According to the purpose of His grace God calls men and women to follow Him. When they respond He places them at an advantage through Christ's righteousness, making obedience desirable and possible. Then He uses them to convey His call to their contemporaries. The call of grace can be accepted or rejected.

OVERVIEW			
2 Tim. 1:9-11	2 Tim. 2:13	2 Tim. 2:1	2 Tim. 2:2
The Call of Grace	The Response to Grace	Growth in Grace	Channels of Grace

INTRODUCTION: *Grace* is a commonly used word and has thus acquired a variety and a richness of meaning. All of its definitions express a good, desirable, and kindly quality.

"Grace is an attribute of God exercised toward undeserving human beings. We did not seek for it, but it was sent in search of us. God rejoices to bestow His grace upon us, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our only claim to His mercy is our great need. The Lord God through Jesus Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitation to the sinful and fallen. He will receive all. He welcomes all. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 161.

God's plan of salvation embraces all sinners, but not all respond to His gracious invitation. While He knows beforehand who will and who will not accept, He nevertheless allows each individual to make his own decision. Those who decide to follow His will and, by His power, obey His commands are given the glorious privilege of being spokesmen for Him. It is their responsibility to extend God's call to everyone to accept His saving grace. In this way, whatever their trade or calling or profession, they become part of the company of the priesthood of all Christian believers. God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9), and He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

DAY
2

I. THE CALL OF GRACE (2 Tim. 1:9-11).

The young Timothy must have gained great inspiration from the experience of his spiritual father, for he shared Paul's manner of life and knew the story of the remarkable change in his life-style. In spite of Paul's early training—"of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church" (Phil. 3:5, 6)—that which could have been a source of pride was counted as nothing when he heard the call of Christ (verse 7). Paul perceived that God was waiting patiently for him first to recognize and second to follow God's plan for him. After his conversion Paul realized that his life had been planned before he was born (Gal. 1:15, 16). The separation that he speaks of in Galatians is a setting aside for a special purpose, namely, "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1). It was his own decision, strengthened by remarkable incidents in his life, but still his own. "By the grace of God" he was what he was (1 Cor. 15:10).

Thanks to the saving grace of Jesus Christ the apostle took advantage of God's predestined plan and, by an effort of his own will combined with the newly found power of God, changed his whole course of action. He had heard God's call pricking his conscience as he herded Christian martyrs to prison or execution, stabbing that same conscience to its depths as he guarded the clothes of those who stoned the saintly Stephen, and finally issuing forth in thundering tones as he lay in the dust on the road to Damascus. Doubtless the disciple Ananias revealed to Paul what God had told him, namely, that Paul "was a chosen vessel . . . to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). In any case, after the recovery of his sight "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues" (verse 20). The chosen vessel had accepted the call. The rest of his life was dedicated to the preaching of the gospel.

How did Paul express the certainty of his call and his commitment to it? 1 Tim. 2:7.

Paul's call filled his life to the exclusion of all else. It was not dimmed by time or by persecution. His zeal is a challenge to all Christians, whether laity or clergy, to show the same dedication.

"Let all connected with our missions, both men and women, be constantly inquiring, 'What am I? and what ought I to be and to do?' Let all remember that they cannot give to others what they themselves do not possess; therefore they should not settle down content with their natural ways and habits, seeking to make no change for the better. Paul says, 'I press toward the mark.' "—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 462, 463.

DAY
3

What kind of call is the call of grace? 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Peter 2:5.

The apostle Paul reminds his son in the faith that God "called us with an holy calling" and certified that call by His resurrection (2 Tim. 1:9,

10). This initial call was not necessarily for him to be a preacher, for Paul was later appointed "a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher" (verse 11), which was a further step for him. Every Christian has received a call to the Christian profession, as the writer to the Hebrews expresses it: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3:1). Our call is to become saints, or holy ones, separated from the world and its wickedness and practices, but still living in it, "among whom [all nations] are ye also the called of Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:6).

A calling such as this requires more than an intellectual response. It means that those who accept the call are the representatives of the Majesty of the heavens, and the standard of conduct set for them is that of the Master Himself.

What work that was also involved in the priesthood did Paul take seriously? 2 Chron. 15:3; Deut. 33:10.

Paul recognized the teaching function of his ministry and carried it out to the end of his life. After his first trial before Nero he was able to say that, although he had no human friends to stand by him, yet "the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear" (2 Tim. 4:17). His very presence and witness while still in Rome as a prisoner had its successes, for in sending greetings from Rome to the Philippians he says: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22). Here was a man whom nothing could intimidate, who preached and taught in season, out of season, at times favorable or unfavorable (2 Tim. 4:2). He was aware of his gift or talent and never ceased to exercise it. Rather than looking at the external, forbidding circumstances, he concentrated the eye of faith on the culmination of the message which he taught. His burden was for the calling of more souls to tread the narrow way. Before Nero and the Roman judges he seized the opportunity to teach the gospel to those who would never hear it in any other context.

ILLUMINATION: "Once more Paul has an opportunity to uplift before a wondering multitude the banner of the cross. As he gazes upon the throng before him—Jews, Greeks, Romans, with strangers from many lands—his soul is stirred with an intense desire for their salvation. He loses sight of the occasion, of the perils surrounding him, of the terrible fate that seems so near. He sees only Jesus, the Intercessor, pleading before God in behalf of sinful men. With more than human eloquence and power, Paul presents the truths of the gospel. . . .

" . . . Faithful among the faithless, loyal among the disloyal, he stands as God's representative, and his voice is as a voice from heaven. . . . His words are as a shout of victory above the roar of battle. He declares the cause to which he has devoted his life, to be the only cause that can never fail. Though he may perish, the gospel will not perish. God lives, and His truth will triumph. . . .

“. . . Light shone in the minds of many who afterward gladly followed its rays. The truths spoken on that day were destined to shake nations.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 494-496.

This example was the basis of his instruction to Timothy: “The things that thou hast heard of me . . . commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Here is the most powerful chain reaction of a true teacher and preacher. He multiplies himself through his disciples, and through their disciples the message reaches the extremities of the inhabited earth.

DAY II. THE RESPONSE TO GRACE (2 Tim. 2:13).

4

Why does refusal of God’s grace not change His offer? 2 Tim. 2:13.

We humans by our very nature exercise free will. This was a precious gift of God and marked human beings as a completely different kind of living creature from the rest of God’s animal creation, over which they were to exercise dominion. But free will can lead us to disregard God’s will, as our first parents did in Eden. Even after God revealed His wonderful plan to give fallen humans a fresh start and the opportunity, through Christ, to gain the victory over Satan, people still can decide not to accept God’s offer.

But God does not withdraw His offer. His promise of eternal life still is available to all who accept His grace, no matter how vile they have been or how much they have contended against Him.

Often children ask questions with the intention of trapping adults, one of the most popular being “Can God do everything?” When they receive the expected answer, Yes, they point out gleefully that the real answer is No. God cannot do everything. For instance, He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18). Although God “is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9), He cannot give eternal life to those who refuse to accept it. Those who spurn God’s gracious gift and “turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb. 12:25) will be the victims of God’s “strange work, and . . . his act, his strange act” of destruction (Isa. 28:21).

What is said about the punishment of those who have “done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:29).

DAY III. GROWTH IN GRACE (2 Tim. 2:1).

5

The apostle Peter ends his letter with the counsel to “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18), a sentiment which is hinted at in all of Paul’s epistles by his consistent reference to grace. He expects the believers to be surrounded by the atmosphere of grace and to inhale it constantly and thereby grow.

ILLUMINATION: "In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

Without exception Paul expresses in all of his epistles the wish that the grace of God be with his readers. He presents this thought in different words, sometimes briefly, sometimes in a more extended fashion. It is his way of saying "God be with you." In its extended form it is the well-known grace employed as a benediction (2 Cor. 13:14). To the Roman church he repeats the blessing (Rom. 16:20, 24); and to the Colossians and in both epistles to Timothy the shortest benediction is found: "Grace be with you" (1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22, NKJV).

What better termination could there be to an epistle which begins with "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:2)? Paul not only ends his epistles with benedictions of grace, but he also opens them with the same greeting, allying grace with peace always, and sometimes with mercy. And in between the opening and closing statements are messages full of grace and its marvelous riches and power in transforming lives.

As it happened, his final benediction—"Grace be with you. Amen."—was his final good-bye to Timothy, to his other fellow workers, and to the world. But it was good-bye until he would meet them again in glory at the coming of his Lord.

How much grace is available to all? James 4:5-8.

The grace of God is available to all, but it is "given" to those who are friends of God, although this is not a once-for-all gift. Resisting the devil and submitting to God (verse 7) is a work that requires grace added to grace. This suggests that there is an illimitable supply from which we can obtain sufficient for our needs. The apostle Paul himself was afflicted by "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet" him (2 Cor. 12:7). Three times he asked the Lord to remove it, but he received this answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee" (verse 9). The obstacle, therefore, was not of such besetting power that the grace of God could not overcome it in his life. From this intimate experience he counseled Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1). To be strong in certain characteristics is to possess them in large measure, to be expert in a certain talent, to excel at certain abilities. To "be strong in the grace" means to be capable of using grace in a large way, to fight successfully the battles of the Lord, and to defeat Satan by the unending supplies of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was "strong in the grace." His faith "made strong by effort and pure by sacrifice, upheld and strengthened him."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 108. He therefore advised his spiritual son to breathe in the atmosphere of grace and to grow strong by exercising faith in God's grace and mercy.

"The true minister of God will not shun hardship or responsibility.

From the Source that never fails those who sincerely seek for divine power, he draws strength that enables him to meet and overcome temptation, and to perform the duties that God places upon him. The nature of the grace that he receives, enlarges his capacity to know God and His Son. His soul goes out in longing desire to do acceptable service for the Master. And as he advances in the Christian pathway, he becomes 'strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.' This grace enables him to be a faithful witness."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 108.

From His inexhaustible storehouse God measures out grace according to the need of the one who asks. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph. 4:7).

DAY IV. CHANNELS OF GRACE (2 Tim. 2:2).

6

All of us are workers together with God and have an obligation to choose our lifework in references to its effect on our witness for Christ. It seems that Timothy had a gift for making difficult things simple, for teaching and clarifying ideas hard to understand. He was instructed to pass on his learning from his spiritual father "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Samuel of old and Elijah taught young men, and Paul adopted the same plan for the perpetuation of the truth. "It is not possible to advise in every particular the part that the youth should act; but they should be faithfully instructed by the older workers, and taught to look ever to Him who is the author and finisher of our faith."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 102.

We have an obligation to discover what our special talent is and how it can be used to speed on the Christian message. There are things that are of interest to us that bore other people. We enjoy doing what comes easily to us, but may be difficult for others. Little indications such as this show us wherein our natural bent lies. It is up to us to multiply this gift.

"Christ discerned the possibilities in every human being. He was not turned aside by an unpromising exterior or by unfavorable surroundings. . . .

. . . Many apparently unpromising youth are richly endowed with talents that are put to no use. Their faculties lie hidden because of a lack of discernment on the part of their educators. In many a boy or girl outwardly as unattractive as a rough-hewn stone, may be found precious material that will stand the test of heat and storm and pressure."—*Education*, p. 232.

All of us have a duty to develop talents that may be hidden below the surface or are late in making an appearance. But how can we discover such talents? Three clues are given to guide us. "We need to follow more closely God's plan of life. To do our best in the work that lies nearest, to commit our ways to God, and to watch for the indications of His providence—these are rules that ensure safe guidance in the choice of an occupation."—*Education*, p. 267.

The order of the three rules outlined in the last sentence above is most important. Watching for some unusual event comes last. Asking God for counsel does not come first either; but rather, the often uninspiring, undramatic performance of the job we already have been assigned.

What principle that our Lord enunciated guarantees success? Luke 16:10-12.

The message is plain and clear—work hard at no matter what menial, boring task you have been given to do. Put your very best effort into it. Then keep a prayer in your heart that God may guide you to greater responsibilities. Decide that whatever you do, it will be for God's honor and glory, not your own. That is how you commit your way to God. God Himself will then give you wisdom to know what are the indications of His providence in order for you to comply with the third rule given above.

Too often parents' ambitions guide their children into occupations for which they are not fitted. Doing so ignores spiritual, mental, or psychological considerations. "The specific place appointed us in life is determined by our capabilities. Not all reach the same development or do with equal efficiency the same work. God does not expect the hyssop to attain the proportions of the cedar, or the olive the height of the stately palm. But each should aim just as high as the union of human with divine power makes it possible for him to reach."—*Education*, p. 267.

"The natural aptitudes indicate the direction of the life-work, and, when legitimate, should be carefully cultivated."—*Education*, p. 233.

DAY 7 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Steps to Christ*, "Growing Up Into Christ," pages 67-75, and *commit to memory* the sentences that follow:

"In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe."—Page 68.

"Consecrate yourself to God in the morning; make this your very first work."—Page 70.

"When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself."—Page 72.

SUMMARY: God's grace is not limited to time or place or person. It is His method of saving sinners, but they must accept His grace, grow in grace, and be strong in grace.

APPLICATION:

- Am I breathing in the atmosphere of grace as naturally and as subconsciously as I breathe the air into my lungs?
- Am I as sure that grace will make me strong to overcome sin as I am that grace has forgiven my sins?
- Do I thank God daily for His abundant supply of grace?
- Have I developed a gracious attitude to those around me?
- How can I carry out the duties of a faithful Christian?

Soldier, Athlete, Farmer

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 2:1-13.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Christian is a soldier, for he is fighting against Satan. He needs supernatural weapons in this spiritual warfare. He also is an athlete, for he strives for the mastery and must abide by the rules of the contest. As the farmer is sustained by the food he produces for others, the Christian must be sustained by the grace that he ministers to others.

OVERVIEW: Characteristics of a Good—

Soldier (2 Tim. 2:3, 4)	Athlete (2 Tim. 2:5)	Farmer (2 Tim. 2:6)
Obedience Determination Dedication	Abides by the rules of the contest	Sustained by that produced Shares with others

INTRODUCTION: Living as he did in the midst of a Roman civilization that had conquered the world by its military might, and that maintained peace by the presence of its soldiers in every outpost, Paul uses the simile of warfare to describe the Christian life. It involves a struggle against evil, a fight to the death against the prince of this world who has wrested dominion from the Creator's representative. It is truly a battle for life, a good fight, for on it depends eternal life. Furthermore, it is a fight of faith, and its weapons are the Christian armor detailed for us in Ephesians 6:13-17.

The girdle, the breastplate, the footwear, the shield, the helmet, and the sword all have symbolic meaning. The Christian soldier, then, is fighting an invisible foe, a wily foe, a supernatural foe, an internal as well as an external foe, one, in fact, who has taken the whole world captive at his will.

How important it is that we have supernatural forces on our side in this conflict! This is our only hope of success. "When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is im-

pregnable to the assaults of Satan.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

The good fight is not ended until life itself shall end, for two supernatural powers are continually contending for control. Our armor must be kept free from rust by constant use, for defense and for offense, and we shall discover for ourselves that in this constant battle “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

DAY
2

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SOLDIER (2 Tim. 2:3, 4).

1. *Obedience.* Not all soldiers are good soldiers. Some have been known to be traitors; others have been accused of dereliction of duty, but the majority are aware of their responsibilities when they become part of an army. One extremely important criterion for a soldier is obedience to a superior officer. An army is built upon an authoritarian, not a democratic structure. The chain of command extends from the generals down through the noncommissioned officers, to the humblest private in the ranks. Instant obedience is an absolute prerequisite for each soldier. Without unquestioning obedience the army structure would fall apart.

As Christian soldiers we must recognize the vital importance of our obedience to the Captain of our salvation. He knows the enemy traps, He knows all the devices of our foe, and while we may not discern clearly the reason for this or that command, a good Christian soldier will obey unhesitatingly.

2. *Determination.*

What quality, automatically associated with soldiers, particularly characterizes God’s people today? 2 Tim. 2:10; 3:11; Rev. 14:12.

“To soldier on” suggests the idea of pushing doggedly forward, not merely to persevere, but to continue in this perseverance in spite of no evident progress. “Doggedly” gives the idea of persistence, tenacity, never yielding or giving up, whatever the difficulty. Therefore, hardness in a soldier’s life is not a reason for departing from the profession, for hardness is part of the profession; it comes and is to be endured. How necessary this quality is for a Christian!

What warning did Paul give Timothy of troubles to come? 2 Tim. 1:8; 4:5-8.

Note the triumphant ring as the apostle looks back on some of his own hardships. He endured, and when the time was appropriate the Lord was ready to deliver him. But we must not always expect the Lord to deliver us *from* every trouble, although we can always be sure that He will deliver us *in* trouble.

Afflictions come in many forms, not always in outward physical suffering or deprivation of liberty. There also is the sense of loneliness which the apostle experienced at his first trial (2 Tim. 4:16). No man stood with him, so to outward appearance he was alone. It was his inner confidence

that enabled him to add that the Lord was with him and as a consequence he "was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (verse 17). But even when he would finish his course and lay down his life as a martyr, Paul would be delivered. He was assured that there was set aside for him "a crown of righteousness"—a crown of victory in Christ.

DAY
3

3. *Dedication.*

What other characteristic is required of a soldier? 2 Tim. 2:4.

Laying hold on eternal life is not a task which can be tackled halfheartedly. It demands concentrated effort with the eye fixed on one goal.

ILLUSTRATION: After the imprisonment of John the Baptist, the first disciples had returned for a short time to their fishing. "But now Jesus called them to forsake their former life, and unite their interests with His."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 249. When Jesus called the fishermen, Peter and Andrew, to follow Him, "they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matt. 4:20). The next two, James and John, were in a ship with their father, Zebedee, mending their nets, "and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him" (verses 21, 22). From that day these four disciples did not return to their fishing until the day of discouragement after the resurrection when Jesus had not yet restored the kingdom to Israel. "Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing" (John 21:3). These expert fishermen, admittedly without practice for some years, toiled all night and caught nothing (verse 5). But Jesus performed a miracle for them, producing 153 great fishes (verse 11), and then repeated His call, "Follow me" (verse 19), addressing it specifically to Peter, as if to say: Forsake your worldly interests and independence and devote your whole time to the preaching of the gospel. Do not entangle yourself with the affairs of this life. I, the Lord, will provide your necessities. Have an eye single to My honor and glory.

The soldier's duty is to fight and defend, and to concentrate wholly on the orders of his commanding officer. So unreserved consecration is required of the Christian, and the wealth of this world is not to tempt him to gain riches. God has promised to care for his physical needs; his duty is to "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Anything that diverts his attention from the kingdom of God is a success for Satan.

How closely did Paul follow the counsel he gave to Timothy in First Timothy 6:12? (See 2 Tim. 4:7.)

In the good fight of faith Paul was honest, upright, dedicated, determined, and obedient. He knew how to endure afflictions and "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19). He endeavored "to

have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). After his conversion his "life was inspired by the one principle of self-sacrifice, the ministry of love."—*Education*, p. 65. He refused to exploit others; and, when necessity demanded, he supported himself, although he rightly could have asked for the provision of board and lodging for his services as a gospel minister (1 Cor. 9:14, 15).

"The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy, and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 453.

DAY II. OBJECTIVES OF A GOOD SOLDIER (2 Tim. 4:8).



Seeing that Paul uses the expression "the whole armour of God" and then proceeds to enumerate different weapons, we assume that these constitute all that are necessary. They are, of course, spiritual in nature.

SEARCH AND LEARN: One way of ascertaining a soldier's objectives is by examining his weapons and armor to see what he is prepared to do. Study Ephesians 6:13-17, then complete the following:

Loins girt about with _____

Breastplate of _____

Feet shod with the _____

Shield of _____

Helmet of _____

Sword of the _____

The breastplate, girdle, helmet, shield, shoes, and sword have spiritual counterparts in the Christian soldier who practices truth, lives righteously, and, using the Bible, preaches the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ his Lord.

The ultimate goal to be achieved by the use of the spiritual armor of God is the defeat of the evil one who would attempt to deprive us of God's eternal reward. Paul likens this to the "pulling down of strong holds . . . and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" but then goes on to make this personal application: "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). Here indeed is the battle against self to decide which master is to have control, Christ or Satan; and this requires tremendous effort of the will.

The final result is complete obedience to Christ, every thought being in subjection to His will. This warfare brings results in unexpected places, as was evident in Paul's influence in the Roman court. Here were the vile, debased Nero and his self-seeking, flattering courtiers made in the same

mold, corrupt and evil. Yet even among these were to be found those who were rescued out of the hands of the evil one. "From the vile attendants of a viler king were gained converts who became sons of God. These were not Christians secretly, but openly. They were not ashamed of their faith."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 463.

What shows that the Christian warfare is not one-sided? 2 Tim. 3:12.

The devil knows how to counterattack, and he has weapons of his own that are used against body and spirit. Can we expect any other treatment than this? Living in the world that the devil claims for his own, we are planning to escape from his kingdom by refusing to serve him in this life and by being rehabilitated in the eternal kingdom of Christ Jesus our Lord.

"Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world's standard and therefore awakens no opposition. . . . Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

Paul's attitude to apparent defeat was to look beyond the present and rest his faith in God. He writes of his disappointments to the Corinthians: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8, 9). What a thrilling repetition of "but nots" in this astounding series of contrasts! First the bad news, but then the victory; first the outward circumstances, but then the inward mastery of the circumstances. The apostle did not deny the reality nor the harshness of persecution; but he did look beyond the present and realized that his strength and stay was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of all things and all people in whose hands were the affairs of all, including his persecutors.

"Clad in the whole armor of God, this hero of the cross pressed forward in the conflict. His voice of cheer proclaimed him triumphant in the combat. Fixing his gaze on the reward of the faithful, he exclaimed in tones of victory, 'Our light affliction . . . worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' "—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 332.

He knew that a crown of victory awaited him—a crown of righteousness, symbolizing the battle that the saints win through Christ in their conflict on earth. Sin, or unrighteousness, has been conquered; and those who, like Paul, have been granted the crown also will inherit the promises made to the overcomers in the Christian church. (See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21.)

ILLUMINATION: Herein lies a paradox. Our earthly Christian experience may appear to us to be a succession of high points followed by depths of despair, of occasional victories and then discouraging defeats. Our subjective view is not necessarily the true picture of our pilgrimage; for Christ "knew that truth, armed with the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit, would conquer in the contest with evil; and that the bloodstained

banner would wave triumphantly over His followers. He knew that the life of His trusting disciples would be like His, a series of uninterrupted victories, not seen to be such here, but recognized as such in the great hereafter."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 679.

DAY III. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD ATHLETE (2 Tim. 2:5).**5**

What are the special characteristics of successful athletes? 2 Tim. 2:5.

Paul carries through the concept of fortitude begun in his soldier illustration. The successful athlete must win according to the rules; he must compete honestly and be recognized as having done so by his competitors. There are rules for every game and competition. Runners in a race must not steal an advantage by a false start. They must not shorten the distance to be run by deviating from the track. They must not deliberately hinder an opponent and prevent by unfair means his overtaking them. Any contestant winning a race by dishonest methods is rightly disqualified from receiving the crown. No matter that he was first to cross the finish line; he has broken the rules and therefore is unfit to receive the prize. If this is accepted in earthly, mundane affairs, how much more it is true in spiritual matters.

Long before he wins his victories a successful athlete not only determines that he will abide by the rules during the contest, but that he will rigorously train by the rules that lead to success. Great accomplishments do not come by chance; discipline and personal sacrifice are the predominating aspects of his life.

"The object of discipline is the training of the child for self-government. He should be taught self-reliance and self-control. Therefore as soon as he is capable of understanding, his reason should be enlisted on the side of obedience. . . . Help him to see that all things are under law, and that disobedience leads, in the end, to disaster and suffering."—*Education*, p. 287.

What additional lesson concerning Christian faith does Paul draw from the illustration of the athlete? 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

DAY IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD FARMER (2 Tim. 2:6-13).**6**

What is the special characteristic of the successful farmer? 2 Tim. 2:6.

Again, the concepts of fortitude, discipline, and patience are carried through; this time from both the soldier and athlete. Who questions the hard work of the farmer on whom all the world depends for food, and thus life itself?

Paul's spiritual lesson is this: We cannot expect to be partakers of fruit if we do not work for it. Striving, working, and enduring hardness must be expected if we are to receive the reward. Also, it is evident that if the

farmer did not share in his produce, he would die and the world would not benefit from his labors. Those who toil to bring salvation to others should be partaking of that salvation themselves. If Christians are not partaking of this spiritual harvest in their own lives, their influence will become barren.

“It is our own character and experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ’s grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 469.

V. PAUL’S APPLICATION (2 Tim. 2:7-13).

Paul has been teaching in metaphors, but in verses 7 through 13 he brings the lessons he has been illustrating to bear fully on Timothy. In Christ is found the essence of the Christian gospel. “The Christian church is not edified by irrelevant and fanciful interpretations of Scripture. The words of Jesus constitute a model for preachers as to how weary, sin-laden men and women may find peace and victory. The person of Jesus becomes the model of Christian character for all men. Christianity is a living, virile message.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 335.

The Christian worker must be willing to endure all things for the joy of seeing those for whom he or she is laboring saved in the kingdom of God.

DAY
7

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Testimonies*, volume 3, pages 33 to 35, on the Christian warfare.

Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 560 to 567, noting the constant conflict and the reference to obedience, love, and prayer.

Meditate on the following:

“In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 202.

SUMMARY: Christian soldiers are the objects of Satan’s attacks on their loyalty, their commitment, and their endurance. Christ has furnished the weapons of faith, of truth, and of prayer that will ensure victory through Him. As an athlete must follow the rules if he is to be awarded the prize of victory, the Christian will follow the rules that lead to eternal victory. Those who bring salvation to others will be partakers of that salvation just as the farmer is sustained by the produce that he sells to others.

APPLICATION:

- Am I content with past victories and deceived into thinking that the battle is over?
- What weapons in my spiritual armor need more use?
- Do hardship, sorrow, or disappointment cause me to regret my decision to follow Christ as His soldier? Do I discern that this feeling of regret is one of “the fiery darts of the wicked” one?
- Do I partake fully of the gospel in order to share it effectively with others?

The Word of God

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:9, 15; 3:15, 16; 4:2.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Scriptures are God's written word given to us to enable us to learn of His wonderful salvation through Christ.

OVERVIEW		
The Bible is	inspired	2 Tim. 3:16
	true	2 Tim. 1:13; 2:15
	saving	2 Tim. 3:15
	profitable	2 Tim. 3:16
	not bound	2 Tim. 2:9
		Preach it! 2 Tim. 4:2

INTRODUCTION: The stories, tradition, and history of a nation's ancestors are part of its cultural heritage. But these traditions become garbled or distorted if transmitted by word of mouth only. It is important that facts that need to be passed on to future generations be recorded in permanent form so that truth, not myths or fables, constitute our heritage. For the Christian the Bible is the important written record of the beginnings of Christianity and, prior to that, the dealings of an Infinite God with His creatures here on earth.

Without the Bible record we would be groping in the dark for truth, but God's "word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). This week we shall study various aspects of the Word of God as they affect our relationship with God and our daily lives, leading to the conclusion that we must be living examples of what the Bible teaches; as Paul says, epistles "known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2).

DAY 2 **I. INSPIRED SCRIPTURE (2 Tim. 3:16).**

Although the King James translators supplied the word *is*, their translation is justifiable. "C. F. D. Moule contends that this phrase 'is most unlikely to mean 'every inspired scripture,' and much more probably means 'the whole of scripture [is] inspired' " (*An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, p. 95)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 345.

Paul's comments about the Holy Scriptures are clear and positive. He says that they are "God-breathed." Their remarkable power to change hearts and lives could come from no other source but a divine one.

When Paul referred to “all scripture,” what part of the Bible did he have in mind?

In the context Paul is speaking of the “holy scriptures” (verse 15), which expression primarily meant at that time the writings of the Old Testament. The two disciples returning to Emmaus exclaimed: “Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). The earlier part of the story tells us that Jesus, their unrecognized companion, explained the prophecies of the Old Testament. “Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (verse 27).

However, inspiration did not cease with the Old Testament, for the apostle Peter classifies the epistles of Paul as part of the Scriptures too (2 Peter 3:15, 16). Peter also explains how prophecy came: “Not . . . by the will of man” (2 Peter 1:21). That is to say, no particular person decided of his own accord to write a book or a letter that should be included in the canon of Scripture, “but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

SEARCH AND LEARN: Realizing that God had spoken through them, many of these writers testified to their inspiration, as is indicated in passages such as those that follow. After each text insert the phrase that shows their inspiration:

Isa. 6:8 _____

Jer. 2:1 _____

Eze. 14:2 _____

God impelled them to utter their messages, but He rarely put words in their mouths. Often He gave them visions that they described in their own words. The prophet was an active partner in inspiration and expressed the message that he had received from the Lord in the best way he could, using his own words.

ILLUMINATION: “The union of the divine and the human, manifest in Christ, exists also in the Bible. The truths revealed are all ‘given by inspiration of God;’ yet they are expressed in the words of men and are adapted to human needs.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 747.

“The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. . . . The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen. . . .

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the

word of God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 21.

This fact is evident in the different styles used by the Bible writers who tell the same story. For example, it is noticeable in the miracles and parables recorded in the synoptic (first three) Gospels and in the different styles found in the epistles of Paul and of Peter. Messages that God wishes to convey to us emanate from human writers but are inspired by God. How important it is, then, to spend time on the content of the messages, and not to quibble about how and why they came to us in the form in which we now have them.

DAY II. SOUND WORDS OF TRUTH (2 Tim. 1:13; 2:15).

3

Language is a boon, and the words that human beings use can be a mighty blessing. By the power of their rhetoric great orators can captivate an audience; just as literary geniuses and poets can employ words of their mother tongue to stir great emotions of love, pity, or patriotism.

What does Paul mean by the expression *sound words* used in 2 Timothy 1:13?

In his many sermons and discourses the apostle Paul set an excellent example of the use of sound words. The word *sound* is translated from the Greek word which has been adopted into English as “hygiene.” It implies health and life as opposed to disease and death; implies purity of expressions; and implies words that heal and bind up the brokenhearted, bring solace to the sad, and give hope to the depressed and the dying.

To what did Jesus liken the words of life, and what deep spiritual lesson did He teach by doing so? John 6:51-58.

After the miraculous feeding of the five thousand Jesus took the opportunity to demonstrate that physical food was not the most important thing in life. Certainly the bread from heaven which fed the Israelites in the wilderness was just as miraculous as was the multiplication of the five loaves; neither could compare with the words Christ spoke. He was “the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever” (John 6:51). In answer to His disciples’ murmurings the Lord explained that they were not to eat His literal flesh but that “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Fortunately, this statement penetrated the minds of at least some of the disciples. At a time when Jesus was aware that many of His followers were leaving Him, Peter, speaking words of profound truth, said: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (verse 68).

The story of salvation comes through life-giving words; through “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8).

What does it mean to “rightly” divide the “word of truth” as we are admonished to do in 2 Timothy 2:15?

Although the Bible is the Word of truth it can be misused for base motives—one outstanding example being the devil’s use of the words of Scripture to tempt our Lord: “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up” (Matt. 4:6).

Luke adds a little more to the quotation: “He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee” (Luke 4:10). Comparison with the Old Testament passage cited (Ps. 91:11) shows that Satan omitted the important expression “In all thy ways,” that is, “in all the ways of God’s choosing. Jesus refused to go outside the path of obedience.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 125. Satan deliberately manipulated the words of Scripture to make it appear to mean something other than its evident meaning. He was “handling the word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2).

The exact opposite of this method is to “rightly divide the word of truth.” In other words, to interpret the Scriptures properly in context. Exposition of the Word in the right way will create a thirst for more of God’s Word.

“Of some truths the people already have a knowledge. There are some in which they are interested, of which they are ready to learn more. Show them the significance of these truths and their relation to others which they do not understand. Thus you will arouse a desire for greater light. This is ‘rightly dividing the word of truth.’ 2 Tim. 2:15.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 55.

ILLUMINATION: “Rightly dividing the word of truth” follows the charge to “study to show thyself approved.” Adam Clarke says: “Therefore, by *rightly dividing the word of truth*, we are to understand his continuing in the true doctrine, and teaching *that* to every person; and, according to our Lord’s simile, *giving each his portion of meat in due season—milk to babes, strong meat to the full grown, comfort to the disconsolate, reproof to the irregular and careless*; in a word, finding out the necessities of his hearers, and preaching so as to meet those necessities.”—*Clarke’s Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 630.

DAY III. THE SAVING WORD (2 Tim. 3:15).

4

The Bible is more than a book of religious history, more even than a book which tells us about God. It reveals what His plan is for sinful human beings and how they may escape the pit into which they have fallen. It tells of a bridge that has been erected between heaven and earth, and those who are wise not only will learn these facts but also will take advantage of their implications. The Word of God translated into the life becomes a saving word. Certainly God’s “pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones” (Prov. 16:24).

THINK IT THROUGH: “Take time to read the Bible—the Book of books. A daily study of the Scriptures has a sanctifying, uplifting influ-

ence upon the mind. Bind the Holy Volume to your hearts. It will prove to you a friend and guide in perplexity.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 138, 139.

In what way is the Bible different from other books?

The Word of God is completely different from any other book. Other good books written about Christianity may inform, encourage, and stimulate, but because they originate from human sources, they cannot be considered inspired in the same way that the prophets were. The Word of God emanates from a divine, infallible source; it is holy and deals with much more than morality. What it instructs is perfect truth; the promises it gives are sure and certain; the counsel it offers is trustworthy, for all come from God Himself. It requires faith to believe the Word; but, whether this quality is exercised or not, whether skeptics scoff at this Book, it nevertheless remains true and, in the light of eternity, will be seen to have made its conscientious readers “wise unto salvation.”

DAY IV. THE PROFITABLE WORD (2 Tim. 3:16).

5

What business person enters into business without the thought of making a profit? Profit is a powerful incentive, devoted though it may be to interests that are purely selfish. We should approach the business of studying the Word of God with diligence; for it will bring profit, advantage, and benefit to us as we walk the Christian pathway. Apart from the benefit of comfort and hope (see Rom. 15:4) the Bible brings us the unerring counsel of God in ways that follow:

1. Doctrine: (Greek—“teaching”). In the darkness and gloom of this earthly life on a sin-cursed earth, the Bible is a light in the valley, a shining beacon pointing to the land where there is no need of the sun, where the prince of darkness has been expelled, and where the God of light reigns supreme. Pure, undiluted, Bible doctrine will guard us from being deceived by the many false doctrines that abound.

2. Reproof: In this verse we find the only use of this noun in the New Testament, although the related verb, translated “rebuked,” is used in 1 Timothy 5:20 in reference to sin. The meaning in Greek is “censure.” “Fools make a mock at sin” (Prov. 14:9); and “because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). We can be thankful that God’s Word gives reproof, for “he that hateth reproof shall die” (Prov. 15:10) and “he that regardeth reproof is prudent” (Prov. 15:5).

3. Correction: Correction (or “restoration to a right state”) goes a step farther than reproof, for the latter points out where we have erred but does not lead us necessarily to reform our ways. The word used by the apostle occurs only this once in the New Testament—namely, *epanorthōsin*, the middle part of which, *orthōs*, meaning “straight,” “upright,” “erect,” “true,” “exact,” has found its way into many English words. We are glad for the *orthopedic* surgeon who corrects skeletal deformities in children and others and the *orthodontist* who corrects irregularities in the position of the teeth. The *orthodox* person does not

disseminate heretical views. The preposition that begins this Greek word can be understood as suggesting the idea of addition or repetition. Thus the Scriptures are profitable for straightening us up *again*, after first teaching us good doctrine and then reprovng us if we depart from that good counsel. "Happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job 5:17).

4. Instruction in righteousness: This "training" represents another advance step. Righteousness is not merely an abstract theological term. It is a demonstration of practical Christianity. It is doing right irrespective of circumstances. It is an absolute, not governed by change of fortune. It is unswerving obedience to God's will. It is likened to a garment that the saints who are redeemed by the grace of God shall wear (Rev. 19:8). It is pure and white, a tremendous contrast to our own garment, for "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). But, as was true of Abraham's faith, our "faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5) and we can increase our faith by following Paul's chain of reasoning: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

DAY V. THE BIBLE IS NOT BOUND (2 Tim. 2:9).

6

In the Middle Ages the Bible was a precious book indeed. Not many people were able to read, and books themselves were scarce even after the invention of the printing press. Even then, because they were so rare, Bibles were chained to the pillars of the church pulpit. But the Bible cannot be bound in the sense of keeping it from fulfilling God's purpose for it. The preacher of the Word was in prison when this letter to Timothy was written, but the Word of God still was being directed to the hearts of people everywhere. The apostle was bound, but the epistle was free. Neither had the tongue of the apostle been bound while he was under arrest in Rome. "It could not be expected that Paul, a poor and friendless prisoner, would be able to gain the attention of the wealthy and titled classes of Roman citizens. To them vice presented all its glittering allurements, and held them willing captives. . . .

"Yet while the apostle's work began with the humble and the lowly, its influence extended until it reached the very palace of the emperor. . . .

. . . "In less than two years the gospel found its way from the prisoner's lowly home into the imperial halls. Paul is in bonds as an evildoer; but 'the word of God is not bound.' "—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 461, 462.

The fact is that when the apostle sent greetings to the believers at Philippi he spoke of his bonds, but not as a handicap, for he said that it induced the church to be brave in witnessing (Phil. 1:14). The messenger may die and his tongue be silent, but the message, which is the word of God, "liveth and abideth for ever. . . . The word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23-25).

Realizing the transient nature of humanity, Paul wished to commit his thoughts to writing so that after his decease they would continue to speak for him. His message came as a cry from the heart. Emanating from a dark and dank prison, it urged Timothy to bring certain essentials and to come speedily, before winter (2 Tim. 4:9, 21). But it was not only the prospect of a freezing winter that caused Paul anxiety. It also was the

lack of reading materials that bothered him, for he reminded his young associate to bring “the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13).

What logical step follows our realization of the value of the Bible? 2 Tim. 4:2.

We are used to chapter divisions in our Bible, but an important emphasis is lost if we separate chapters 3 and 4 of 2 Timothy. Chapter 3 ends with a magnificent description of the power of the Word of God and its effect on mankind. Chapter 4 begins with a call to propagate this same Word. It will instruct the children of God, correct their ways, and lead them to a mature level of Christian living. Our duty is to be sure “that word of the Lord may have free course” (2 Thess. 3:1). This counsel, of special importance to the preacher, applies to every believer for the benefit of others as well as for the believer himself.

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *Gospel Workers*, pages 92 to 95. Even though this particularly is for ministers, all believers may benefit from studying these pages.

Read *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pages 307 to 309, which was written for all church members.

Study the following quotation thoughtfully: “Can we find for our schools any textbook filled with such deep, earnest declarations as is the word of the living God? Then why should this Book be laid aside for the writings of infidel authors? What more valuable book could be placed in the hands of students than that which teaches them how they may inherit eternal life? The lessons of Bible history should be kept before the youth in our schools, that those who have no love for God and no interest in spiritual things may become interested, and learn to love the word. . . .

“All that the mind can grasp is opened before us in the Bible. This is our spiritual food. We are to contemplate the wonderful works of God and repeat to our children the lessons learned, that we may lead them to see His skill, His power, and His grandeur in His created works.”—*Counsels to Teachers*, pp. 453, 454.

SUMMARY: The Written Word of God, the Bible, has been preserved in order that we can learn of Christ, the Living Word. The Holy Scriptures teach us about the plan of salvation and are a necessary food for our daily spiritual living. We have an obligation to share with others what we learn from God’s Word.

APPLICATION:

- Am I satisfied with just reading the Bible, or do I really study? How serious am I about my study? Where does it fit into my daily schedule?
- Do I pass lightly over those passages of Scripture that reprove my way of life?
- What value is there in committing Bible passages to memory? Have I memorized the memory texts suggested so far this quarter?

Human Philosophy

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 2:14-17, 23; 3:7; 4:15.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Human philosophy multiplies profane and empty words and ideas and self worship, but everlasting truth comes from God's Word alone.

OVERVIEW: Human Speculations versus God's Word	
Human speculations (2:16, 23)	secular and empty (2:16, 23) harmful (2:14) gangrenous (2:17)
Misuse of God's Word—3:7	

INTRODUCTION: This week we shall study the characteristics of that part of human philosophy that deals with religion. We human beings are prone to set up our own standards which, by the very nature of the case, are subjective, for they proceed from within. Our natural curiosity and our endless quest for knowledge lead to increasing questions being raised to which answers of some kind often are found—satisfactory or otherwise. But the great problems of life—such as origins, destiny, divinity, sin, guilt, death, and freedom—require revelation to produce adequate answers. Not all human philosophy is barren, of course; but it needs a clear head, using sanctified common sense to steer between the rocks of foolish human speculation. The underlying theme of our rather negative study this week is the vivid contrast between God's Word and human speculation in the area of the great concerns of life.

The history of the growth of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts significantly mentions three occasions when vivid contrasts are drawn between the ever-changing ideas of human beings and the eternal word of God, between frailty and weakness on the one hand and power and permanence on the other.

1. When the number of believers increased, the principle of having all things common unfortunately led to difficulties. Within the community of Jewish Christians complaints were made that the Greek-speaking widows were neglected and treated differently from the Hebrew- or Aramaic-speaking widows in the daily distribution of assistance. The matter was rectified by the appointment of the seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6), and the apostles were no longer diverted from their proper ministry. The argu-

ments between the two groups ceased and “the word of God increased” (verse 7). More time was given to prayer and to preaching the Word, and the natural consequence was that “the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly.”

2. Some time afterward, Herod Agrippa I persecuted the church, killing James and imprisoning Peter with the intention of putting him to death also (Acts 12:1-5). This arrogant monarch persecuted people other than Christians, for example, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon. These found an opportunity to restore amity, and Herod used the occasion for a display of his oratorical talents. The speech concluded amid tumultuous applause, sincere or exaggerated. The crowd roared, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man” (Acts 12:22). When that happened Herod died a horrible death immediately (verse 23); and with this persecutor removed, opportunity was again available for further preaching of the Word of God. Notice the contrast: “But the word of God grew and multiplied” (verse 24).

3. At Ephesus on his third missionary journey, Paul cast out evil spirits and wrought many miracles (Acts 19:12). As a result he made a profound impact on the magicians for which the city was famous. These brought their books containing all sorts of human incantations, charms, and spells, and burned them in public. Here again there is found a great contrast between the vague predictions of astrology, occult messages, and human superstitions on the one hand and the Word of God preached by Paul. “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (verse 20).

DAY 2 I. HUMAN SPECULATIONS (2 Tim. 2:16).

1. *Secular and Empty.* The previous verse has spoken about “the word of truth.” “Profane [secular] and vain [empty] babblings then come as a striking contrast. The phrase “vain babblings” is a translation of a Greek word that literally means “empty sound”—in other words, “idle chatter,” “meaningless talk,” or “sound without any value.” The same expression occurs in our memory text (1 Tim. 6:20) and is somewhat reminiscent of the situation in the Corinthian church where members would utter sounds, interrupt, and generally cause confusion in the assembly. They were carried away by the false manifestation of speaking in tongues. As long as no one was edified by an interpretation, it contributed nothing to the hearers, but was rather a reason for dissension. (See 1 Cor. 14:6-9.) To this particular church Paul gave some good, positive counsel when he advised them to “covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31). Then he added a most significant contrast: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal” (1 Cor. 13:1).

Paul was well aware of the difference between the fullness of the gospel and the emptiness of the godless philosophy that was beginning to make inroads into the church. He had occasion to warn the Colossians of the danger in “philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:8). What he means is “philosophy that is vain deceit. The apostle is not condemning philosophy as such, nor is he denouncing philosophers. What he is warning against is philosophy such as the false teachers at Colossae were parading, which was in reality emptiness and vanity, and was promoted by de-

ceit. The context suggests that this philosophy had to do with ceremonial observances, human beliefs, traditions, and materialistic habits and viewpoints, all of which tend to draw people away from the gospel of God. It was doubtless also made up of profitless speculation on puerile [foolish] questions, an empty show of specious arguments devoid of facts. This kind of philosophy fills in the details of difficult questions with plausible theories, that have a tendency to deceive its devotees and to negate the preaching of the gospel of God.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 201, 202.

What attitude should we take toward questions for which we can find no good answer? 2 Tim. 2:23.

It takes a wise person to give an intelligent answer to a hard question, but much less wisdom is needed to pose difficult and awkward questions. Some questions are unanswerable either because of lack of information or research, or because of finite minds being incapable of understanding things too deep for them. For example, the nature of the Trinity, the composition of the 144,000, the reason for Satan’s sinning, and the language spoken by Adam and Eve. Such questions lead inevitably to wrangling by those trying to find an answer because there are insufficient facts on which to base a decision.

There always will be those willing to follow peculiar theories, persuaded by reason of their inability to understand it, that this new teaching must be divinely inspired.

A testimony written in Melbourne, Australia in July 1892 gives this counsel: “Men will come claiming to have great light; but those who have experience in the cause of God will see that what they present as light is great darkness. . . .

“The time has come when those who are rooted and grounded in the truth may manifest their firmness and decision, may make known the fact that they are unmoved by the sophistry, maxims, or fables of the ignorant and wavering. Without foundation men will make statements with all the positiveness of truth; but it is of no use to argue with them concerning their spurious assertions. The best way to deal with error is to present the truth, and leave wild ideas to die out for want of notice. Contrasted with truth, the weakness of error is made apparent to every intelligent mind.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 164, 165.

Such an attitude may be hard to adopt, as often it seems to us that such error must be attacked and exposed. However, doing so all too frequently gives free advertisement to a falsehood and magnifies it out of all proportion. More attention should be given to promulgating the counterbalancing truth.

DAY
3

2. *Harmful.* Human speculations can harm both the individual and the church.

What lasting effect results from “word” battles? 2 Tim. 2:14.

The phrase *striving about words* comes from a single word in Greek, literally meaning "word-battling." The noun form is used in 1 Timothy 6:4 where it is translated "strifes of words." Striving of any kind, whether of words or otherwise, leads to jealousy, misunderstanding, pride, imputation of evil, and dissension. As Paul says, it leads to "the *subverting* of the hearers," a strong word which transliterated becomes "catastrophe."

Those who hear such disputings about words are not edified, but rather are confused. They begin to wonder if there is any solid truth that they can hold on to as an anchor. The faith that they once had in the Scriptures is gradually eroded. This brings shipwreck and catastrophe.

It is significant that having spoken of a war of words that result in no profit (verse 14), Paul immediately shows the contrast (verse 15) by referring to the "word of truth." The intense study of words and the differences in meaning can be valuable, but such a task can produce persons who "magnify nonessentials and trivia . . . steal valuable time from important matters and . . . confuse and upset the common man. The gospel message does not depend upon the turn of a word here and there. The goal of Christian living is . . . not skill in manipulating words or the ability to allegorize the plain words of Scripture."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 336.

"Unless ministers and people practice the truth and are sanctified by it, they will allow speculation regarding questions of no vital importance to occupy the mind. This will lead to caviling [raising frivolous questions] and strife; for countless points of difference will arise."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 312.

DAY
4

What does Alexander the coppersmith's opposition demonstrate as to whether the powerful word of God always silences opposition? 2 Tim. 4: 14, 15.

Convincing as it was, the apostle's preaching was resisted strongly by Alexander, and we should not be surprised at this. For while the "word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12), it is this very quality that reveals us to ourselves in all our nakedness, often causing us to justify ourselves. Then, instead of repenting and reforming, we turn to attacking the holy law that condemns us.

Time and again primitive peoples, after hearing the visiting missionary tell the story of God's love for His children and His desire to rescue them from the pit of sin, have said of the Bible: "This Book talks to us and tells us what we are." Satan knows the vivifying power of the Word and has directed countless attacks against the Bible. He induces bigots to burn it so that it does not come into the hands of the searching soul.

ILLUSTRATIONS: An example is seen in the action of King Jehoiakim when he burned Jeremiah's written words (Jer. 36:20-32).

William Tyndale (1492-1536) translated the New Testament and the Pentateuch into English. From his then safe retreat on the Continent he

had them printed and sent over to England. Most of the copies were bought up and burned. But the price paid helped to print more of God's Word.

Another way that Satan works is to prevail on so-called religious leaders to retain to themselves the right of interpreting the Scriptures, alleging that the ordinary person cannot understand the meaning of this special Book. Or, if its circulation is so widespread that the Book becomes common, he influences those who have it to neglect it as a source of deep study. That way the Bible gradually develops into a kind of talisman on which an oath may be pronounced.

At times opposition to the preaching of God's Word, particularly when it comes in the form of a decree from a mighty potentate who has the power of life and death in his hands, would appear to be all-powerful. But Paul knew the identity of the real instigator of the opposition and realized that he needed spiritual weapons in order to wage war against evil spirits (2 Cor. 10:3-5). So what better tool could he continue to use than the spiritual Word of God?

"Nowhere could there exist an atmosphere more uncongenial to Christianity than in the Roman court. Nero seemed to have obliterated from his soul the last trace of the divine, and even of the human, and to bear the impress of Satan. His attendants and courtiers were in general of the same character as himself—fierce, debased, and corrupt. To all appearance it would be impossible for Christianity to gain a foothold in the court and palace of Nero. . . .

". . . Even in Nero's household, trophies of the cross were won." — *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 462, 463.

DAY
5

3. *Gangrenous*:

What is the significance of the simile that is used to describe the word of false teachers? 2 Tim. 2:17.

The King James Version uses the word *canker*. Some Bibles give a marginal alternative of *gangrene*. The latter is a transliteration of the actual word *gaggraina*, used only this once in the New Testament. The term *canker* is now applied to a plant disease, notably in apple or pear trees whereby the tree becomes deformed and slowly dies. It also is used for a common disease of dogs when ulcers form in the ear. Gangrene, in Paul's day, meant death of a mass of tissue, as in moist gangrene where the flesh becomes swollen, discolored, blistered, and then bursts and oozes a foul-smelling fluid. Ultimately blood poisoning ensues and then death. The only cure for gangrenous flesh is amputation so that the diseased parts which quickly spread infection cannot contaminate the as yet healthy tissue. This remedy, in effect, is proposed by Paul. He advises us to shun the ungodly talk of false teachers; otherwise the infection will increase, given the slightest encouragement, and rapidly take possession of the entire body; bringing corruption, mortification, and death.

ILLUSTRATION: To the disciples Judas appeared to be one of the leading spirits of the Twelve—capable, astute, forthright, assertive—but suddenly he was found to be a traitor. He was a traitor long before, scheming for his own ends, yet outwardly perfectly respectable.

“Had Judas died before his last journey to Jerusalem he would have been regarded as a man worthy of a place among the twelve, and one who would be greatly missed.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 716.

He is a perfect example of words that eat like gangrene. “Judas had not decided that Jesus was not the Son of God; but he was questioning, and seeking to find some explanation of His mighty works. . . .

“ . . . He expressed doubts that confused the disciples. He introduced controversies and misleading sentiments, repeating the arguments urged by the scribes and Pharisees against the claims of Christ. . . . He would introduce texts of Scripture that had no connection with the truths Christ was presenting. These texts, separated from their connection, perplexed the disciples, and increased the discouragement that was constantly pressing upon them.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 718, 719.

His subtle reasoning had a gangrenous effect upon his own character, but there was no outward evidence of this. But when the crisis came his character was revealed for what it was and what it had been. The end result was terrible and nauseating to behold:

“The wicked throng . . . were leading Jesus to the place of crucifixion. As they passed a retired spot, they saw at the foot of a lifeless tree, the body of Judas. It was a most revolting sight. His weight had broken the cord by which he had hanged himself to the tree. In falling, his body had been horribly mangled, and dogs were now devouring it.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 722.

There is another form of gangrene, too, in the words that we use. James says, “The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body” (James 3:6). The wise man says, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21). How careful, then, we should be in regard to the words that emanate from our lips. Thoughtless rumor can work tremendous harm, and innuendoes against a person can ruin his or her character and reputation and reduce the individual to utter despair. This must be our watchword: *Watch our words*.

DAY 6

II. MISUSE OF GOD’S WORD (2 Tim. 3:7).

THINK IT THROUGH: Why is it that even many students of the Bible do not find truth or the One who is Truth?

Pilate asked the famous question “What is truth?” (John 18:38). But he did not wait for an answer, although He who was “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6) was standing there before him. Likewise, the scribes and the Pharisees, as learned as they were in theological knowledge, searched the Scriptures in order to obtain eternal life while ignoring the One who had come to bring eternal life. (See John 5:39.)

It is essential to remember that the Bible is a different kind of book; it

can be analyzed, dissected, criticized like any other literature. And this process often obscures the real purpose of the Book, namely, to make us wise unto salvation. Only using it to accomplish this last purpose leads to sound doctrine. (See 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9.)

“The frequent reference to the ‘sound, healthy words’ in these Epistles by Paul, and from which he urges his disciples and successors never to depart, indicate to us the deep importance Paul and the first generation of believers attached to the words and expressions used by the apostles and those who had been with the Lord.

“False doctrines so easily might creep in, and a lax life, too, Paul knew, was the almost invariable accompaniment of false doctrine, hence these repeated exhortations of his to these representative teachers, Timothy and Titus, of the second generation of Christians, to hold fast the form of sound, healthy words.”—C. J. Ellicott, *Ellicott's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), p. 1104.

THINK IT THROUGH: Is it possible for me to study the Bible faithfully and still misuse it?

Perhaps the most subtle misuse of God's Word is that of digging deeply into the Bible, learning its verses, studying its backgrounds and customs—all excellent objectives, but actually not the most productive use if we fail to discover the Saviour revealed in its pages.

DAY 7 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Testimonies to Ministers*, pages 105 to 111, noting that both good and evil angels are eager to guide us.

Read *Christ's Object Lessons*, “Hidden Treasure,” pages 110 to 113, noting the dangers of human speculation.

SUMMARY: The fertile human brain has discovered many of the secrets of nature and applied them in both good and bad ways. Unconverted scholars and researchers have made many fascinating discoveries and accomplish some remarkable exploits. But, when it comes to dealing with spiritual truth, the unconverted are out of their field and their studies lead to speculation which, apart from revelation, results in raising questions and doubts. Only in God's Word is there certainty.

APPLICATION:

- Do my lips utter my own words only or are they guided by God? Ps. 19:14.
- When Eve heard the serpent speak, was she convinced that this was a miracle and that therefore she was hearing truth? She did not die when she touched the forbidden fruit. What logical and theological conclusions might be drawn from this fact?
- Are there side issues or questions that are popular in my church but lead to dissension or tension? What can I do to help others to become interested in more appropriate issues?

Vessels of Honor

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 1:15-18; 2:20, 21; 4:10-20.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour" (2 Tim. 2:20).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Those early Christians who stood true to their profession of faith, including those who are well known and those who are not so well known to us, were used by God to be a source of blessing and help to all with whom they came in contact.

OVERVIEW	
Honor Roll	Dishonor Roll
Onesiphorus (1:16-18) Crescens (4:10) Titus (4:10) Luke (4:11) Mark (4:11) Tychicus (4:12) Priscilla and Aquila (4:19) Erastus (4:20) Trophimus (4:20)	Phygellus (1:15) Hermogenes (1:15) Hymenaeus (2:17) Philetus (2:17) Demas (4:10)

INTRODUCTION: This week we turn our attention from the unprofitable human disputations that we studied last week to an emphasis on people who were associated with the apostle Paul and are mentioned by name in his second epistle to Timothy. Some of these have received more prominence than others in the Scriptures. And there are several that we know next to nothing about. Some doubtless have their names written in the Lamb's book of life, whereas others seem to have turned back from their commitment.

Among the latter, Paul lists Phygellus, Hermogenes, Hymenaeus, Philetus, and Demas. Theirs is a sad record of apostasy and betrayal. Because Paul does not hesitate to mention them by name they serve as sort of a negative honor roll, warning Christians throughout the history of the church of the danger of worldliness and apostasy.

But our emphasis in this lesson will be on the positive honor roll found in Paul's second letter to Timothy. While those listed wait for their eternal reward, they are a constant source of encouragement to believers to stand firm in difficulty, to support the hands of God's ministers, to be a refreshing influence on all they meet, and to be accounted vessels of

honor in the Master's house. All such will indeed shine as the stars in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

DAY 2 I. ONESIPHORUS (2 Tim. 1:16-18; 4:19).

2

Onesiphorus was well named. His name means "bearing profit," or "bringing advantage, pleasure." That precisely fits the apostle's description of Onesiphorus' attitude to the prisoner in Rome—"he oft refreshed me." His was not a fleeting visit to the foul prison in order to ease his conscience, but again and again he endangered himself in order to bring solace, joy, and uplift to Paul in his horrible dungeon. And he did this at a time when some of the believers were ashamed of their leader because he had been arrested, when the appeal of the world had caused some to make shipwreck of their faith, and when circumstances appeared to be and were most forbidding. But Onesiphorus provided the antidote.

"In this trying time Paul's heart was cheered by frequent visits from Onesiphorus. This warm-hearted Ephesian did all in his power to lighten the burden of the apostle's imprisonment. His beloved teacher was in bonds for the truth's sake, while he himself went free, and he spared himself no effort to make Paul's lot more bearable."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 490.

We do well to note this act of kindness on the part of a humble believer. Leaders who bear responsibility often are very much alone, and by the nature of their work they must make decisions which give them anxious care. They too need the comfort of their fellow workers and believers. Even the almost undiscourageable apostle appreciated the help of this brother who was not carrying a heavy load of responsibility. We do well to encourage each other, for we do not know what burdens are pressing upon others, nor should we assume that leaders have no need of a kindly word because they are in full-time service for the Lord.

What does Paul indicate about Onesiphorus' intent and persistence? 2 Tim. 1:17.

Note Onesiphorus' persistence: "He sought . . . very diligently, and found" (verse 17). He was not easily turned aside when his first inquiries drew a blank, but like the shepherd of the parable (Luke 15:4) he searched until success came.

Quite evidently Onesiphorus had the full support of his wife and family in his ministration, a fact which Paul acknowledged in his final greeting (4:19) as well as in his earlier mention (1:16).

II. CRESCENS (2 Tim. 4:10).

Outside of this brief mention nothing is known about Crescens. Apparently he, as did Titus, left Rome at Paul's request to carry on an assigned mission. In this respect, his name, which means "growing" or "increasing," may give some insight into his value as a Christian laborer. An early Christian tradition indicates that he became a bishop.

DAY
3

III. TITUS (2 Tim. 4:10).

Titus was a genuine foreign missionary, for we find that not only did he accept this appointment to Dalmatia (4:10), but that earlier he had been sent to Crete where a good organizer was needed to strengthen the early work (Titus 1:5). He was the first Christian bishop of that island. At one time he had served as Paul's envoy to Corinth from where he returned a faithful report of conditions in that church. Because Paul knew that in their current condition the believers would not profit by his labors, he had "sent Titus to prepare the way for a visit from himself later on."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 301. (See 2 Cor. 7:6-8.)

"He had hoped to meet Titus at Troas and to learn from him how the words of counsel and reproof sent to the Corinthian brethren had been received, but in this he was disappointed."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 323. However, he finally met with him at Philippi and then was able to send his second preserved letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:12, 13; 7:5, 6). Titus was a convert who was uncircumcised and hence the focus of a controversy about whether this rite should be required of non-Jewish Christians (Gal. 2:1-9).

SEARCH AND LEARN: What insights into Titus' work and character are found in the following references?

2 Cor. 8:23 _____

2 Cor. 12:18 _____

Titus 1:1-5 _____

IV. LUKE (2 Tim. 4:11).

What pathos there is in the word *only* (KJV) or *alone* (RSV); but what comfort in the fact that Paul's only companion was "the beloved" physician (Col. 4:14)! Luke was the writer of the third Gospel and of the Acts of the Apostles.

What do we learn about Luke as indicated in the change from the third person to the first in the recital of the missionary journeys? (See Acts 16:10-17; 20:5 to 21:18; 27:1 to 28:16.)

These mutual experiences must have endeared this physician to Paul, and his medical knowledge and spiritual help would compensate to some extent for the disadvantage of being the "only" companion left. Luke's double talent would have been most helpful to Paul at this time.

"Never had the apostle needed the ministrations of his brethren as now, enfeebled as he was by age, toil, and infirmities, and confined in the damp, dark vaults of a Roman prison. The services of Luke, the beloved disciple and faithful friend, were a great comfort to Paul and enabled him to communicate with his brethren and the world without."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 490.

DAY 4 V. MARK (2 Tim. 4:11).

4

Mark's first experience in missionary endeavor began in a most heartening way in Cyprus, but after a further sea voyage to Asia Minor his courage failed. At Perga "John [Mark] departing from them returned to Jerusalem" (Acts 13:13).

"Mark, overwhelmed with fear and discouragement, wavered for a time in his purpose to give himself wholeheartedly to the Lord's work. Unused to hardships, he was disheartened by the perils and privations of the way. He had labored with success under favorable circumstances; but now, amidst the opposition and perils that so often beset the pioneer worker, he failed to endure hardness as a good soldier of the cross. . . . Mark was intimidated and, losing all courage, refused to go farther and returned to Jerusalem.

"This desertion caused Paul to judge Mark unfavorably, and even severely, for a time."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 169, 170.

When Paul and Barnabas were considering a second missionary tour, "Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them . . . and went not with them to the work" (Acts 15:38).

Because Barnabas felt a special responsibility for his relative what did he decide to do, even at the expense of a disagreement with Paul? Why do you think he made such a decision? Acts 15:39.

The sequel is a victory carved out of failure and shows great credit to John Mark and great credit also to Paul, who recognized his earlier shortsightedness by giving great praise to Mark—"profitable to me." Furthermore, in Philemon 24 he identified him as a fellow laborer. How well Mark illustrates the triumphant note: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise" (Micah 7:8)!

VI. TYCHICUS (2 Tim. 4:12).

What outstanding character trait does Paul attribute to Tychicus in Ephesians 6:21, 22 and Colossians 4:8?

Tychicus was a comforter, both to the Colossians and to the Ephesians. Paul describes him as "a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant" (Col. 4:7) and gives an almost identical recommendation to the Ephesians. When Timothy responded to the request to leave the care of the church at Ephesus in order to visit Paul in Rome, the believers in that city naturally would be disappointed. But they would become happy again when the arrival of Tychicus was announced. Here was a man who could faithfully bring blessing and comfort, a work that the Lord Himself delights in: "For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. . . . As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted" (Isa. 66:12, 13).

"Paul . . . again repeated the urgent request that Timothy come to him soon. . . . And lest Timothy should hesitate, fearing that the church at Ephesus might need his labors, Paul stated that he had already dispatched Tychicus to fill the vacancy."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 508.

DAY VII. PRISCILLA AND AQUILA (2 Tim. 4:19).

5

There are four references to this godly couple in the New Testament from which we learn much of their character. It is interesting to note that sometimes the husband is mentioned first (Acts 18:2, 26 and 1 Cor. 16:19), sometimes the wife, Prisca or the diminutive Priscilla (Acts 18:18; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19). "The placing of Priscilla's name first . . . would be explained if she were a highborn Roman."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 359.

The name *Prisca* does suggest a connection with the Prisci clan from which over a lengthy period had come a long series of consuls. "The marriage of Aquila and Priscilla might be an example, therefore, of the influence of educated Jews among the higher class of women at Rome."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 358, 359.

This family's devotion to Paul is shown in his statement that they "have for my life laid down their own necks" (Rom. 16:4), perhaps not literally true, but a token of their willingness to sacrifice everything, even life itself, for their friend. Inspiration is silent on the particular incident or incidents involved, but it may have been that they "had risked their lives for Paul, perhaps during the attack of the Jews in Corinth . . . or again in the uproar in Ephesus."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 650.

What other service had this couple rendered to the church? Rom. 16:3, 4; Acts 18:26.

Evidently these earnest people were hosts to the Roman believers, willingly allowing their home to be a meeting place for the church. This was a continuation of their earlier hospitality; for when the apostle arrived in Corinth where the pair had settled after their expulsion from Rome, "he abode with them" (Acts 18:3), and their common skill of tentmaking provided an initial bond of friendship. Their knowledge of the Bible must have been profound as they were able to instruct one who was "mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

"Aquila and Priscilla were not called to give their whole time to the ministry of the gospel; yet these humble laborers were used by God to show Apollos the way of truth more perfectly. The Lord employs various instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose; and while some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination, are called to act an important part in soul saving."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 355.

VIII. ERASTUS (2 Tim. 4:20).

One of the Bible's unsung heroes is Erastus, who held a prominent position as chamberlain or manager of Corinth. He had responsibility for the supervision of streets and public buildings.

"A paving block has been found at Corinth dating from the middle of the 1st century A.D. and bearing the inscription, 'Erastus, in return for his aedilship, laid the pavement at his own expense.' Scholars generally identify this Erastus with the one here mentioned [Acts 19:22]."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 378. (See also Rom. 16:23.)

IX. TROPHIMUS (2 Tim. 4:20, last part).

The very presence of this Gentile Christian from Ephesus and his association with Paul in the city of Jerusalem raised the suspicions of the Jews who quickly assumed, but wrongly, that he had been into the temple and thereby had polluted the holy place (Acts 21:28, 29). The uproar that followed ultimately led to Paul's imprisonment and trial before two Roman governors and his appeal to Caesar. This was an example of the wall of partition that existed between Jews and Gentiles. That it overflowed at times between Jewish and Gentile Christians is evident from the following:

"Paul . . . desired to meet the church at Jerusalem, and bear to them the gifts sent by the Gentile churches to the poor brethren in Judea. And by this visit he hoped to bring about a firmer union between the Jewish and the Gentile converts to the faith."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 389.

Both Trophimus and Tychicus (Acts 20:4) must have been good examples of Gentile Christians to have been selected in the party that was returning from Europe with the goodwill offerings for the Jewish believers.

DAY X. CHRISTIANS AS VESSELS (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

6

How should we interpret the illustration of Christians being vessels? 2 Tim. 2:20, 21.

Note that in the same house there are different categories of vessels: gold and silver for special purposes, wood and earth for common use. The gold and silver vessels represent believers who have been purged from youthful lusts and who serve God with a pure heart (verse 22). Such vessels are never discarded. The other vessels represents those who do not continue in righteousness, faith, love, and peace. When broken or no longer usable such vessels are discarded. The metaphor is not exact, for Christians do not suddenly become golden vessels at the time of their baptism. There is a development or growth in character, or, conversely, a lack of growth and degeneration.

ILLUMINATION: "Our hearts are to be cleansed from every feeling of superiority, and the living principles of the truth are to be planted in the soul. Young and aged and middle-aged should now be practicing the vir-

tues of Christ's character. They should daily be making spiritual development, that they become vessels unto honor in the Master's service."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 278.

"Some household utensils do only temporary service; that is, when broken or no longer needed, they are discarded as worthless. . . . Such members will be destroyed in the judgment. . . .

"The difference between the household utensil of dishonor and the church member of dishonor is that the church member may change his nature and become precious to God and worthy of eternal life."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 338.

Paul changes the metaphor somewhat in writing to another church when he reminds members that the gospel treasure is contained in frail vessels of earth and that the glory and the power derives from the One who fills and uses the vessel (2 Cor. 4:6, 7).

DAY 7 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Testimonies*, volume 6, pages 294 to 298 and 305 to 309, noting the suggestions made to church members. For those who do not have ready access to this book, the following are some of the points that should be noted:

1. The Lord calls on the members of His church to take up the work lying nearest us.
2. Many in need of help have been passed by.
3. Because of our neglect of those who have been wounded and bruised by the adversary the Lord has looked with disfavor on His church.
4. Wherever a church is established *all the members* should engage actively in missionary work.
5. There must be an awakening among the people of God. The entire church is to be tested.
6. The Saviour assures us that our work is noted in heaven, and that the recompense cannot fail.
7. Truehearted service for God brings a reward, even in this life.

SUMMARY: The different Christians we have studied about in this lesson had purged themselves from false doctrines and words of men and had become sanctified vessels, fit for the Master's use (2 Tim. 2:21). They carried a "treasure in earthen vessels . . . that . . . the power may be of God" (2 Cor. 4:7), and became, so to speak, golden and silver vessels instead of wooden and clay vessels.

APPLICATION:

- Do I become discouraged by initial failure?
- How diligent am I in seeking out and comforting the disheartened?
- Am I willing to work for the church although I may not receive any recognition for my services?
- Would any of my fellow workers or associates call me "beloved"?

Christian Virtues

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 2:22-26.

DAY 1 MEMORY TEXT: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. 3:14).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In our daily lives we Christians will show those characteristics that mark us as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

OVERVIEW—2 Tim. 2:22-26	
What to Avoid	What to Follow
Youthful lust (v. 22) Foolish and unlearned questions (v. 23) Strife (v. 24) The snares of the devil (v. 26)	Righteousness (v. 22) Faith (v. 22) Charity (love) (v. 22) Peace (v. 22) Gentleness (v. 24) Patience (v. 24) Meekness (v. 25)

INTRODUCTION: The new covenant anticipates that those who live under its provisions will be seen to possess and practice those virtues that were so perfectly exemplified in the Author of the new covenant. This does not imply that theirs will be a covenant of works, but rather that the fruitage of a life dedicated to Christ will be the good deeds and virtues that are shown in the Scriptures. The old life was marked by vices—the lusts of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes (1 John 2:16), the things which please and appeal to the fancy for the time but will ultimately vanish. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (verse 17).

The contrast between the unconverted and the converted person is brought out strongly in Paul's letter to the Galatians. There he enumerates in some detail the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21). After naming seventeen different vices he adds the revealing words, "and such like." Then he states the solemn truth: "of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (verse 21). Then the mood changes as he enumerates the fruit of the Spirit—nine aspects of a rich, rewarding, satisfying experience that brings honor and glory to the Lord (verses 22, 23). These fruits were exemplified in the lives of both writer and receiver of the epistle we are studying this quarter.

This week, then, we meet with high ideals, challenges to stir our spirit and our dedication to the things of God—stimuli to setting an example of our Christian profession, whether we be longtime Christians or comparatively new believers. Rather than concentrating on faults to be avoided we will confine ourselves to the study of some of the Christian virtues and spiritual fruits mentioned in the Second Epistle to Timothy. We also will seek to make these abstract virtues more understandable by choosing Bible characters whose practical examples strongly manifest these virtues.

DAY
2

I. RIGHTEOUSNESS (2 Tim. 2:22).

This comprehensive term is the antithesis or opposite of sin. It is doing right because it is right, not just doing it for a reward. It is obedience to God's commands, doing His will through His grace and power at work in our lives. Because we are born with inherited tendencies toward sin and live in the territory of the tempter, we are no match for him as human beings. But God makes possible the kind of righteousness He expects. He puts in the hearts of those who yield themselves to Him the desire to love and obey Him.

ILLUSTRATION: In what way does the experience of Adam's second son, Abel, illustrate how righteousness blends faith and works? 1 John 3:12.

The apostle John doubtless had heard the Lord's reference to "righteous Abel" (Matt. 23:35). The little we know about this first martyr is that he offered a lamb and not fruit as a sin offering (Gen. 4:3, 4) and that doing so was a demonstration of his faith "by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Heb. 11:4). He simply did what God asked him to do, this act of faith showing his trust in the divine Lamb of God to forgive his sins. God honored his faith and accounted him righteous.

II. FAITH (2 Tim. 2:22).

In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul, recognizing Timothy's youth, exhorted him to be an example to others in many respects, one of which was faith (1 Tim. 4:12). What is faith?

"Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing."—*Education*, p. 253.

Faith is a virtue that comes from outside of us and then, like a tender plant, with nurture and care grows within us. "Faith is the gift of God, but the power to exercise it is ours. Faith is the hand by which the soul takes hold upon the divine offers of grace and mercy."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

Exercising faith is more difficult when external circumstances are forbidding; and in times of prosperity when there seems to be less call for it, faith often diminishes. How then can and does it grow?

“Throughout the history of God’s people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purpose of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of a living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of an unfaltering trust. It is thus that the soul becomes a conquering power. Before the demand of faith, the obstacles placed by Satan across the pathway of the Christian will disappear.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 594, 595.

How did the problems that confronted Paul in his endeavors to preach the gospel in the citadels of heathenism and unbelief enable his faith to grow? 2 Cor. 11:23 to 12:9.

From the dungeon of Philippi to the contempt on Mars’ hill, and the stoning at Lystra, in manifold trials Paul had exercised strong faith, and he recalled some of these experiences to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:11). But his emphasis was on faith, not on tribulation—a faith moreover that is distinct from presumption. Faith has a foundation—the Word of God and its promises—whereas presumption accepts an easy religion; is devoid of self-denial, obedience, and effort; and is not divorced “from the follies of the world.” (See *The Great Controversy*, p. 472.)

“When thick clouds of darkness seem to hover over the mind, then is the time to let living faith pierce the darkness and scatter the clouds. True faith rests on the promises contained in the Word of God, and those only who obey that Word can claim its glorious promises.”—*Early Writings*, p. 72.

ILLUSTRATION: There is a wide choice from which to select a specific Bible character to illustrate faith in action. But Abraham stands out as one who demonstrated complete trust in God’s directions, first in the promise of a son when outward appearances shouted “Impossible” (Gen. 15:6), and then in his readiness to slay that promised heir at God’s command, believing that he would be raised to life again. (See Heb. 11:17-19.)

DAY III. CHARITY (2 Tim. 2:22).

3

Love is a reflection of the character of God Himself, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16). It was love for God that made Paul travel incessantly in order to carry the message of the love of God to earth’s inhabitants; it was that same love that enabled him to endure afflictions, misunderstandings, persecution, and imprisonment, for the sake of the gospel. His love for his Master made him count any earthly prize as worthless (Phil. 3:8).

“Our love is frequently selfish, for we confine it to prescribed limits. When we come into close union and fellowship with Christ, our love and sympathy and our works of benevolence will reach down deeper and will widen and strengthen with exercise. The love and interest of Christ’s fol-

lowers must be as broad as the world. Those who live merely for 'me and mine' will fail of heaven."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 530.

This binding cement of love unites Christ's church, a body of believers who are so imbued with the Spirit of God that their supreme objective in life is to do His will. After Pentecost the believers were said to be "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32)—and such love will be the motive power for the loud cry that will finish God's work on earth.

"When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 678.

ILLUSTRATION: Jonathan, Saul's eldest son, was willing to forego the royal succession and to brave his father's insane rage to save the life of one who should succeed as king instead of him. David testified concerning Jonathan's love: "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26).

IV. PEACE (2 Tim. 2:22).

What do we learn about peace from its vivid physical portrayal in one of Christ's most impressive miracles? Mark 4:37-39.

The stormy wind and the tossing waves terrified the toiling disciples, but then the Master said, "Peace, be still. . . . And there was a great calm."

However, Paul was concerned with inward peace of heart, the absence of warfare, enmity, and envy between individuals, and the peace that comes from the knowledge of sins forgiven. The wise man said that "when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7). This virtue of peace is not a product of the natural heart; it is a gift of God: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace" (2 Thess. 3:16). The greatest manifestation of this gift was the incarnation when the Lord of glory came to a world of sinners to bring them pardon and peace. No wonder the heavenly choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). Among the parting words of Christ 33 years later was His promise that although in the world His disciples would have tribulation, in Him they would have peace (John 16:33). "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:27). What blessings would abound if all the children of God, had the peace of God in their hearts and were peace-makers!

ILLUSTRATION: The Bible character who may best illustrate the virtue of peace is Isaac. In searching for a more permanent encampment he retraced his father's wanderings and found wells of precious water that Abraham had dug, but which had been blocked up. Isaac's servants

unblocked them and restored fresh water again, but the Philistines came and claimed them as their own. Twice there was contention between the herdsmen, but Isaac placidly moved on until the "Lord . . . made room" for him (Gen. 26:17-23). He refused to claim his lawful rights, renouncing them for the sake of peace.

DAY 4 V. GENTLENESS (KINDNESS) (2 Tim. 2:24).

4

Paul admonished the servants of the Lord to show this quality to all about them. From the context we learn that gentleness as it is used here is the opposite of striving or disputing about topics that are unprofitable and foolish. To hold an opinion strongly is one thing; to remain firm in our convictions without annoying those who do not agree is another. There will always be differences of opinion or interpretation, but the gentle Christian will be the one who grants the other person the right to keep his own opinion. Gentleness is often considered a synonym for weakness, but the psalmist says, "Thy gentleness hath made me great" (Ps. 18:35). Gentleness comprises those acts of decency and kindness that are calculated not to hurt or offend. The meaning is well illustrated by the Labrador retriever dog that picks up a fragile egg and carries it unbroken to its master. The dog is strong and one bite would crush the egg, but its strength is controlled by its gentleness.

What source alone can give us a gentle spirit? James 3:17.

Good counsel to "men in every position of trust" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 263), which includes those in a position of responsibility and superiority, is as follows: "In your dealing with others, whatever you see or hear that needs to be corrected, first seek the Lord for wisdom and grace, that in trying to be faithful you may not be rude. Ask Him to give you the gentleness of Christ."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 264.

ILLUSTRATION: The apostle Paul generally is thought of as rugged, independent, and forthright, withstanding Peter to the face for example (see Gal. 2:11-14), not suffering fools gladly (though that is an expression he uses of others in 2 Corinthians 11:19). But we choose him as an exemplar of gentleness because the word translated *gentle* in our text is used only once more in the New Testament, and that by Paul himself about himself. He says: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. 2:7). That his attitude was inspired by love for the Thessalonians is evidenced by what follows in verses 8 through 11 where he adds the simile of a father and his children.

DAY 5 VI. PATIENCE (2 Tim. 2:24).

5

The Greek word translated *patient* in 2 Timothy 2:24 occurs only once in the New Testament and is formed from three other words meaning "to hold oneself against evil," that is, "enduring evil," or "forbearing." The common word for *patience* in the New Testament has the idea of perse-

verance or remaining under the difficulty and not giving up. These ideas overlap and present desirable qualities that are needed especially in the present evil world of injustice.

“Paul’s patience and cheerfulness during his long and unjust imprisonment, his courage and faith, were a continual sermon. His spirit, so unlike the spirit of the world, bore witness that a power higher than that of earth was abiding with him. . . .

“ . . . The Christian who manifests patience and cheerfulness under bereavement and suffering, who meets even death itself with the peace and calmness of an unwavering faith, may accomplish for the gospel more than he could have effected by a long life of faithful labor.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 464, 465.

In the well-known parable of the sower the interpretation of the good-ground hearer is one who hears the word, understands and receives it, and bears fruit. (See Matt. 13:23; Mark 4:20.) Luke’s recital adds an interesting thought: “Having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit *with patience*” (Luke 8:15, emphasis supplied). Every farmer or gardener knows that there is a waiting time between seed sowing and harvest, and a little child realizes this truth readily when he looks day after day to see if his seeds are peeping through the soil. “The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it” (James 5:7).

How is patience developed? James 1:3.

“Though we can not see the definite outcome of affairs, or discern the purpose of God’s providence, we are not to cast away our confidence. Remembering the tender mercies of the Lord, we should cast our care upon Him, and with patience wait for His salvation.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 61.

ILLUSTRATION: The obvious choice for a Bible character to illustrate patience is the one selected by an inspired writer: “Ye have heard of the patience of Job” (James 5:11).

DAY VII. MEEKNESS (TEACHING ABILITY) (2 Tim. 2:25).

6

The word translated “apt to teach” in verse 24 is transliterated into the English as “didactic,” which describes a person who has been instructed and qualified to pass on information. While the word *didactic* has acquired a somewhat harsh meaning, suggesting pride in superior knowledge, it really means “to act like a teacher,” that is, “to instruct,” “to explain,” “to clarify.” Paul evidently had this idea in mind, for he joins “apt to teach” with “in meekness instructing,” showing that he expected a didactic person also to be meek.

Meekness always is the mark of a true teacher, for the knowledge that he has acquired has introduced him to greater areas of ignorance that he has not yet explored. Recognizing this induces a feeling of humility in him.

ILLUSTRATION: Sir Isaac Newton, who is reputed to have added to mathematical knowledge more than all other mathematicians who preceded him, apart from saying anything about his researches into physics, astronomy, and theology, was a meek and humble man. Of himself he said: "To myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me." (See also *Education*, p. 133.)

What characteristics of meekness make it distinct from servility?

"Meekness is precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 335.

"I would plead with those who have accepted the position of teachers, to first become humble learners, and ever to remain as pupils in the school of Christ to receive from the Master lessons of meekness and lowliness of heart."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 527.

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Search for other Bible characters who demonstrate one of the virtues studied in this lesson.

Meditate on the following: "How often the disciples' experience is ours! When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. . . . Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.

Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 529 to 533, on the transformation of the soul.

SUMMARY: The Christian life is a continual growth in grace, developing various virtues that were enacted perfectly in the life of Jesus Christ on earth. All are gifts of God, fruits of the Spirit that ripen with experience.

APPLICATION:

- Do I manifest strongly in my life any one of the Christian virtues? Does my answer demonstrate meekness?
- What virtue do I need to ask God to magnify in my life? Am I willing to let Him do so?

Roots of Apostasy

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 3:1-9.

DAY 1 MEMORY TEXT: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the same way that Satan seduced certain of Paul's contemporaries into apostasy he will try to do the same in the last days by debasement of moral and spiritual standards of living.

OVERVIEW—LAST-DAY PERILS

Selfishness	2 Tim. 3:2, 3
Wordliness	2 Tim. 3:4
Formalism	2 Tim. 3:5
False teachings	2 Tim. 3:8

INTRODUCTION: Although not long ago it was thought by the false optimists who expected a millennium of peace and happiness that the world was getting better and better, it was not. Rather, the world is rushing toward destruction. Many thinking observers are desperately afraid that the world will end in violent self-destruction. This presents a gloomy outlook, but Bible students have no reason to contradict this cheerless prediction. Instead, theirs is a hopeful solution—one that is found in the intervention of the Creator Himself.

Meanwhile, until that day when the Lord shall return in glory, perilous times are prophesied. But the peril comes not so much from human hands raised in violence and hatred as it does from the crass selfishness that will take possession of many hearts and turn them away from their only hope—surrender to Christ.

This week's lesson may seem to be dealing mainly with negative qualities. But it is designed to erect warning signals as to what the roots of apostasy are. Only when we recognize them can we be shielded from the evil circumstances and temptations that we can expect in these perilous times.

Successful though he was in winning souls from the realm of Satan, even Paul suffered disappointment and personal distress as he saw some of his converts turn back from the faith that they had embraced. Particular examples are given of some of his old-time associates whose spiritual successors walk the earth today. Although they were members of the church, they were swept away by the tide of evil. We need to analyze the

reasons why they forsook their early love in order that we too may not be deceived by and fall into the traps set by the archenemy.

DAY 2 I. SELFISHNESS (2 Tim. 3:2, 3).

2

The first peril mentioned here sums up the remaining ones—*lovers of their own selves*. This was and continues to be Satan's cardinal sin. His "heart was lifted up" because of his beauty (Eze. 28:17). In his battle to gain control of the minds of people today it is to be expected that he will instill in them this deadly root of self-love. It leads logically to the next peril—*covetousness*—for when we assume that we ourselves are the most important people, whose every whim must be granted, we begin to covet what other people have and consider that we should possess such things as well. Such covetousness led to Satan's downfall. Scripture reveals the inner workings of his mind: "Thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend. . . . I will exalt my throne. . . . I will sit also upon the mount. . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:13, 14).

The list in 2 Timothy 3:2 continues: *boasters, proud, blasphemers*. These three characteristics would fit well the builders of the tower of Babel. Their intent was to make a name for themselves, to erect a huge monument that would be their great pride, and to show their contempt for God by their actions if not by their words; thus misrepresenting the image and character of God to others. These loathsome traits are outgrowths of the egotism that is bound to come when people ignore their Creator and attempt to remake God in their own image. Paul lists the proud and the boasters along with the "haters of God" in Romans 1:30.

The long chain introduced in Second Timothy continues with *disobedient to parents*. This is the natural result when children obey only the dictates of their selfish hearts. While the fifth commandment is applicable to people of whatever age as long as their parents are living, this expression implies willful disobedience of young children, the first sign of a breakdown in home discipline and a possible forerunner of further disharmony at a higher level.

What is the significance of the two ugly characteristics that follow in the list that Paul gave to Timothy? 2 Tim. 3:2.

Unthankful, because to be grateful or aware of a kindness or service done is to admit that the person involved is in debt, so to speak, to the donor. Selfishness wipes out such kindly feelings toward others, for it arrogates to itself the idea of all-sufficiency with no favors asked or desired.

Unholy is being the opposite of all that is godlike, for He is holy and His law is holy (Rom. 7:12).

Paul's list continues in verse 3—*Without natural affection*. The Greek word from which this expression is translated is the negative form of a word meaning "to love," "to cherish," "to like," "to be fond of." In

these people of the last days, there is no inward principle of love, even for their own kin.

Trucebreakers: In its only other use in the New Testament, in Romans 1:31, this word is translated as “covenantbreakers.” In other words, those who do not keep their promises or agreements, but in a wider sense such conduct breaks the covenant that God made with humanity, of which such “trucebreakers” are willingly ignorant. They cannot be trusted.

False accusers: The Greek word is the noun form of a verb that means “to thrust through,” hence to slander or revile. False reports do indeed cut through the heart and do the devil’s work, for Satan is the one who brought a false accusation against God Himself, charging Him with injustice, oppression, and arbitrary dictatorship.

Incontinent: This word and the next one are used only this once in the New Testament. Literally, this word means “without power,” which includes the usual meaning of “immoderate,” but covers also giving way to passion, lack of self-restraint in any form, not recognizing the rights of others, and being incapable of curbing inner urges.

Fierce: Literally, “not tamed,” “not cultivated,” “not gentle.” Just as an untended garden produces multitudes of weeds, so does the fierce heart engender wild passion, uncontrollable anger, and violent behavior in order to obtain a person’s selfish desires.

Despisers of those that are good: A good deed shines brightly in this dark world, piercing the darkness of an evil life and bearing witness against it. Convicted but unrepentant souls have no desire for the darkness to be dispelled, loving darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John 3:19). They hate good people in the same way that the Jews hated the Light of the world.

DAY II. WORLDLINESS (2 Tim. 3:4).

3

The traits of worldliness described in this verse are summarized by the concluding description: “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.”

What is the significance of the word that begins this verse? 2 Tim. 3:4.

The word translated *traitors* is the same one used by Luke about “Judas Iscariot, which was also the traitor” (Luke 6:16). We think of that traitor as selling his Master because of the greed in his heart, his covetous spirit, and the gain he expected from putting self first.

Heady: The word used means “precipitate,” “rash,”—literally, “falling forward”—and is found only here and in Acts 19:36 where, interestingly enough, it describes a scene in which Alexander, mentioned later in 2 Timothy 4:14, figures prominently. The incident described in Acts was the riot in the city of Ephesus where the goddess Diana was worshiped and where the silversmiths and the goldsmiths made a good living by manufacturing replicas of the goddess to sell to her devotees. Paul’s preaching against idolatry caused no small stir. The people took to the streets shouting slogans that finally were unified in a two-hour chant of

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians.” (See Acts 19:24-35.) Fortunately, the town clerk kept his head and said, “Ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing *rashly*” (verse 36, emphasis supplied). The italicized word is translated “heady” in 2 Timothy 3:4 and describes conditions found everywhere today.

Highminded: This word, occurring only in the epistles to Timothy, is translated “lifted up with pride” (1 Tim. 3:6); “proud” (1 Tim. 6:4); and “highminded” here in 2 Timothy 3:4. Each word in the Greek is a different form of the same verb that means “to envelop with smoke” or “to inflate with self-conceit.”

Lovers of pleasure: The chief rulers in the time of Christ’s ministry loved the material rather than the spiritual. Although some among the ruling class were attracted to His teaching, they “did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42, 43).

THINK IT THROUGH: How can Paul’s list of last-day sins be identified with conditions current in the area where you live?



What examples does Paul give in 2 Timothy of those who forsook him because of their lack of commitment? 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:10.

Demas was a well-known figure in the church, for Paul associated him with Luke in sending greetings to Colossae (Col. 4:14). Unfortunately, Demas’ love for God’s work was secondary to his other interests and he forsook the apostle (2 Tim. 4:10).

Two others remembered for their defections were Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Tim. 1:15).

“The few friends who had shared the burdens of the apostle, now began to leave him, some by desertion. . . . Phygellus and Hermogenes were the first to go. Then Demas, dismayed by the thickening clouds of difficulty and danger, forsook the persecuted apostle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 490.

“Demas, steadfast for a time, afterward forsook the cause of Christ. . . . For worldly gain, Demas bartered every high and noble consideration. How shortsighted the exchange! Possessing only worldly wealth or honor, Demas was poor indeed, however much he might proudly call his own.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 455.

III. FORMALISM (2 Tim. 3:5).

One of the unsuspected perils of the last days is formal but insincere godliness. However we cannot judge motives. In spite of advances made in practical psychology, we cannot read people’s hearts. Therefore even the church must still draw conclusions and administer discipline on the basis of external behavior.

Seventh-day Adventist church standards include such obvious externals as Sabbath observance, tithe paying, missionary endeavor, Bible study, temperance, and dress standards. Conformity to these evidences of our love for and surrender to Christ is manifest in Christians

who are dedicated completely to God. But many of these activities can be put on as a cloak and the outward appearance of one who is essentially selfish may not be much different from one whose heart is unselfish. This does not mean that we should suspect our brethren, but that each of us must examine his or her own heart and motives.

It is certain that after a great revival such as the enthusiastic development of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination, there follows a decline in the first love such as that which occurred in the early Christian church when forms and customs took the place of power.

ILLUMINATION: "The Bible declares that before the coming of the Lord there will exist a state of religious declension similar to that in the first centuries."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 444. This falling away in the early church was brought about when the church began "to receive favors and honors from the world." Then "she began to lose favor with God. Shunning to declare the straight truths which shut out the lovers of pleasure and friends of the world, she gradually lost her power. . . .

"[Many Christians] merely assume the Christian name, while their hearts are still carnal. . . . Hiding their deformity under the name of Christian, they pass along with the unsanctified natures, and their evil passions unsubdued. This gives occasion for the unbeliever to reproach Christ with their imperfections, and causes those who do possess pure and undefiled religion to be brought into disrepute."—*Early Writings*, p. 227.

DAY
5

How does formalism imperil the church?

The peril of formalism is twofold: (1) It denies and removes the power of the gospel to change lives and to gain the victory over Satan. (2) It deceives those who satisfy themselves with the externals of religion.

ILLUMINATION: "Many have a form of godliness, their names are upon the church records; but they have a spotted record in heaven."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 442.

"The Saviour's curse pronounced upon the fruitless fig tree is a sermon to all formalists and boasting hypocrites who stand forth to the world in pretentious leaves, but are devoid of fruit. What a rebuke to those who have a form of godliness, while in their unchristian lives they deny the power thereof! He who treated with tenderness the very chief of sinners . . . came down with scathing denunciations upon those who made high professions of godliness, but in works denied their faith."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 403, 404.

The incidence of such evils in the world is not a reason for lowering standards. Recognizing their danger to the Christian, Paul gives simple, unequivocal counsel: "From such turn away."

IV. FALSE TEACHINGS (2 Tim. 3:8).

Resisting the truth can assume two forms:

1. **Direct Opposition to Truth:** Jannes and Jambres were two of the Egyptian magicians who opposed Moses when he performed his miracles before Pharaoh at their early encounters. They imitated Moses and Aaron by turning rods into serpents (Ex. 7:10-12), turning water into blood (verse 22), and bringing forth frogs from the river in great numbers (Ex. 8:7); but this was the end of their apparent success (verse 18). However, in spite of continued demonstrations of God's power, they influenced their ruler to resist, making only the grudging admission that "this is the finger of God" (verse 19).

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: Alexander the coppersmith directly opposed Paul's teachings. Writing about the tumult that took place at Ephesus when the metal workers rioted, Ellen White states: "The fact that Paul and some of his companions were of Hebrew extraction made the Jews anxious to show plainly that they were not sympathizers with him and his work. They therefore brought forward one of their own number to set the matter before the people. The speaker chosen was Alexander, one of the craftsmen, a coppersmith, to whom Paul afterward referred as having done him much evil. . . . Alexander was a man of considerable ability, and he bent all his energies to direct the wrath of the people exclusively against Paul and his companions."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 294.

DAY 6 2. **Misinterpretation of Truth:** This second form of false teaching is more subtle than the first form mentioned as it accepts a truth outwardly, but badly misinterprets it.

EXAMPLE: This was the dangerous error of Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17, 18) in regard to the resurrection. When they taught that the resurrection already had taken place they were not referring to our Lord's resurrection, for this miracle had been the motive power for the tremendous growth of the early church. Instead they were referring to the logically associated doctrine of the future resurrection of the sleeping saints as already having taken place. Paul refuted their erroneous teaching in his letter to the Corinthians with a powerfully sustained argument (1 Cor. 15:12-23; 51-54).

The two false teachers may have been citing a true example for, at the death of Christ, "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. 27:52, 53).

The subtle deceiver, Satan, used these two willing tools to proclaim the truth of this resurrection, but to use it to deny the truth of an even greater resurrection when Jesus returns to earth in power and great glory.

This tactic is not new, for the greatest deceptions are those which contain some truth. Outright error can be directly refuted, but half truths need sifting, and in the process many innocent and naïve people may be confused or misled. These two preachers had overthrown the faith of some believers and had made shipwreck of their own. (See 1 Tim. 1:19.) As a result, Paul had to disfellowship them for their blasphemous conduct. (See verse 20.)

Why do people become attracted to false teachers? 2 Tim. 4:3, 4.

In the last days those seeking religious knowledge will flock to teachers who “prophesy smooth sayings.” Such teaching tickles the fancy, appeals to the lusts of the heart, and lulls the conscience to sleep. It often appears to be much more comforting than sound doctrine that condemns sin. While it is true that the gospel message should comfort the afflicted, it is also true that it should afflict the comfortable.

DAY 7 **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *Prophets and Kings*, pages 177, 178, in the light of the fact that we believe that the church has been given “the Elijah message” to proclaim.

Read *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 101, 102, which compare Noah’s day with conditions in our day.

Read *Testimonies*, volume 6, pages 132, 133, concerning the origin and reception of the truths of the Bible.

Ponder the following: “Never, never was there a time when the truth will suffer more from being misrepresented, belittled, demerited through the perverse disputings of men than in these last days. Men have brought themselves in with their heterogeneous mass of heresies which they represent as oracles for the people. The people are charmed with some strange, new thing, and are not wise in experience to discern the character of ideas that men may frame up as something. But to call it something of great consequence and tie it to the oracles of God does not make it truth. Oh, how this rebukes the low standard of piety in the churches. Men who want to present something original will conjure up things new and strange, and without consideration will step forward on these unstable theories that have been woven together as a precious theory, and present it as a life and death question. . . .

We have the truth, the solid truth in the Word of God, and all these speculations and theories would better be strangled in the cradle rather than nourished and brought to prominence.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1064, 1065.

SUMMARY: Perilous times come as the result of the angry efforts of Satan to corrupt the church. He attacks from outside by temptations to the carnal heart and from inside by seductive teachings that have a semblance of truth or by getting church members to give only formal lip service to truth. But truth is *stronger* than fiction and fables and will prevail in both the church and the world in the last days.

APPLICATION:

- Am I on guard against subtle distortions of truth?
- What is my reaction when the preacher unwittingly pricks my conscience?
- I am “in good and regular standing” in the church. Does the heavenly record agree with this outward assessment?
- What specific action can I take that will contribute to the spiritual growth of my church?

Keeping the Faith

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 4:1-7.

DAY **MEMORY TEXT:** "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

1

CENTRAL TRUTH: Paul summarizes the essentials of Christianity.

OVERVIEW of 2 Timothy 4:1-7

Preaching the Word (1, 2)	Teaching the Truth (3-5)	Keeping the Faith (5-7)
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INTRODUCTION: For at least 30 years Paul had been laboring as Christ's tireless ambassador, but when he wrote these lines, his days were numbered. Not knowing whether Timothy would arrive before his execution, he spoke as a dying man would to his son. His solemn words are profoundly stirring. Although Paul said nothing new in this last chapter of 2 Timothy, the fact that the shadow of the sword hung over his head gives special importance to what he chose to say. He summed up his career in these few words—a dying man does not waste words. How intently Timothy must have read them, his hands trembling and his eyes filled with tears!

What Paul said to Timothy applies to every Christian down through the years until Jesus comes. Although the ordained minister should take special heed to Paul's incisive commands, no church member can avoid his own measure of responsibility. Paul is speaking to all who wish to finish life with the confidence that they too have "fought a good fight," stayed on course, and "kept the faith."

Paul had a great opportunity to think of himself and his predicament as he penned these words. After all, he was on trial for his life. He had labored incessantly for untold thousands; he had stored up no material security for his old-age convenience. But now, when he needed his friends, where were they? They had left him, and not always for the best of reasons. A show of self-pity on Paul's part would have been understood easily. But instead of pleading his case, he continued to plead the cause of Jesus Christ. He asked only that Timothy go and do likewise. He knew well the problems that Timothy would face, but the gospel was more important than a person's comfort and convenience.

DAY
2

I. PREACHING THE WORD (2 Tim. 4:1, 2)

This section and the next summarize the two major theological themes that run through First and Second Timothy and Titus. This section,

“Preaching the Word,” comprises a restatement of Paul’s overriding concern that God be fairly and accurately represented to His world. The next section, “Teaching the Truth,” will take up Paul’s concern that our picture of God shape our characters and life-styles.

What is the significance of Paul’s last charge to Timothy? 2 Tim. 4:1, 2.

The charge to all Christians, and to the ministry in particular, is to “preach the word.” In verse 3, the equivalent word is “sound doctrine”; in verse 4, “the truth.” The “word” consists of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15, 16) and all that Timothy had heard and learned from Paul and the other apostles. The “word” that Christians are to proclaim is not their own invention. Our Christian duty is to hear the Word and to obey it, guard it from heresy, and proclaim it wherever we are without embarrassment and without tempering it to curry favor. Such preaching is clothed in urgency. Hearts are not warmed and broken by listening to a listless, drowsy witness. The judgment is coming, and the times are uncertain.

Paul added relevancy to urgency—God’s Word fits the need of all—bringing convincing arguments for the doubtful, rebuke for the sinful, and encouragement for the weary or fearful.

Calling Timothy’s attention to who it is that is behind the proclamation of the Word, Paul pointed him to the One who is ultimately responsible for its success—the ever-present God and the coming Jesus, the Judge of the living and the dead.

“**Reprove.** . . . ‘to convict,’ that is, with sufficient proof. . . . Every man should be warned of his sins, but the warning must be based on irrefutable evidence from God’s Word.

“**Rebuke.** Or, ‘censure.’ Flagrant sin demands stern censure, and the church’s duty consists in revealing God’s position regarding sin. The sin must be rebuked, the sinner loved. The Word is the standard by which censure is to be administered.

“**Exhort.** . . . ‘to call to the side of,’ ‘to encourage.’ . . . Only the Word can adequately urge and encourage flagging hearts and weary feet.

“**Longsuffering.** . . . ‘endurance,’ ‘patience’ (see ch. 3:10). . . . Every phase of the minister’s task, whether reproving, rebuking, or exhorting, should be clothed with the grace of patience and compassion. Severe, cold condemnation will never bring sinners to Christ.

“**Doctrine.** Or, ‘teaching,’ which forms the foundation and framework of all genuine Christian experience. Doctrines constitute the facts about God and His program; they are the minister’s only weapon against error, his only handbook for right living.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 347, 348.

DAY II. TEACHING THE TRUTH (2 Tim. 4:3-5).

3

Why was Paul greatly concerned that the gospel be preached with unflinching urgency? 2 Tim. 4:3-5.

Already in Paul's day the church was plagued by those who would seek to remake the gospel after their own whims. Paul focused on a strange condition called "itching ears." People with "itching ears" are attracted to certain teachers who find peculiar satisfaction in serving up novelties and concentrating on the curious and sensational. The pity is that such people close their ears against the clear, old-fashioned gospel, chiefly because the gospel always asks for commitment from those who expect to receive its blessings.

By what standards do some church members judge their teachers and preachers? "The apostle does not here [2 Tim. 4:3, 4] refer to the openly irreligious, but to the professing Christians who make inclination their guide, and thus become enslaved by self. Such are willing to listen to those doctrines only that do not rebuke their sins or condemn their pleasure-loving course. They are offended by the plain words of the faithful servants of Christ and choose teachers who praise and flatter them."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 504, 505.

Paul's advice to Timothy was simply this: Don't take your lead from the prevailing theological fashions of the moment; don't quietly leave the scene to the gratifiers of "itching ears." When people are unstable, that is the time for the man of faith to stand his ground. When people would rather hear anything but the sober word, that is the time for conscientious Christians to be even more persevering. The deafer the people, the more forceful and clear must be the proclamation.

In 2 Timothy 4:3-5 Paul admonishes Timothy to work against religious formalism—that process by which the glow of an effective faith gives over to argument and insincere obedience.

THINK IT THROUGH: When people show greater interest in side issues and novelties than in the straight message, do I tend to back away and wait for a more favorable opportunity, or do I think of more effective ways to gain their attention and respect? List two ways to do this:

ILLUSTRATION: The best way to preach the gospel, or to teach the truth, is to live it. Going back again to Paul's conversion experience, we see that the catalyst for his dramatic acceptance of Christ as Lord was the winsomely courageous behavior of Stephen at his martyrdom.

"The Saviour had spoken to Saul through Stephen, whose clear reasoning could not be controverted. The learned Jew had seen the face of the martyr reflecting the light of Christ's glory—appearing as if 'it had been the face of an angel.' Acts 6:15. He had witnessed Stephen's forbearance toward his enemies and his forgiveness of them. He had also witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of many whom he had caused to be tormented and afflicted. He had seen some yield up even their lives with rejoicing for the sake of their faith.

"All these things had appealed loudly to Saul and at times had thrust upon his mind an almost overwhelming conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 116.

DAY
4

III. KEEPING THE FAITH (2 Tim. 4:6, 7).

What pressing reason did Paul give Timothy for fulfilling his ministry? 2 Tim. 4:5-7.

One of the main reasons that Paul attached such importance to Timothy's ministry was that the apostle recognized that he was at the point of being executed. Paul uses the language of the temple here—sacrificial language. The New English Bible reads, "My life is being poured out on the altar."

Departure in the Greek suggests the loosening of a ship's mooring rope, or the loosening of a tent's cords as the tent goes down. But there is a total absence of self-pity or regret in Paul's last words. He did not deserve this kind of death. Nevertheless, he maintained triumphant hope and cheer as he showed his converts everywhere how the man of faith faces death.

What kind of fight was Paul referring to in verse 7?

"The life of the apostle Paul was a constant conflict with self. He said, 'I die daily.' 1 Corinthians 15:31. His will and his desires every day conflicted with duty and the will of God. . . .

"At the close of his life of conflict, looking back over its struggles and triumphs, he could say, 'I have fought a good fight.' . . .

"The Christian life is a battle and a march. In this warfare there is no release; the effort must be continuous and persevering. It is by unceasing endeavor that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. Christian integrity must be sought with resistless energy and maintained with a resolute fixedness of purpose."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 452, 453.

"Each one has a personal battle to fight. Not even God can make our characters noble or our lives useful, unless we become co-workers with Him. Those who decline the struggle lose the strength and joy of victory."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 487.

DAY
5

What settled assurance did Paul have when he faced death? 2 Tim. 4:7.

Every Christian has his personal race to run—not against anyone else, but on a course that has only one goal, to reflect the character of Jesus. Paul likens this course to the public footraces that were familiar to his readers. Timothy had been by his side when Paul had run against stiff winds of hostility and misunderstanding. Timothy knew well what that course would be like after Paul was gone. Paul's record was plain and for all the world to examine—he had not faltered. He did not run halfway and stop, satisfied with his progress.

In what way did Paul keep the faith?

Throughout the letters to Timothy, Paul contrasted faith with a counterfeit religious experience. Genuine faith produces love and does not mistake theological knowledge for true Christian experience. But Paul does not depreciate doctrine when he emphasizes faith. Although it is true that a church member may have sound doctrine without faith, he cannot have faith without the foundation of the truth about God and how He saves. The purpose of doctrine is to lead us to a trusting, obedient relationship with God.

THINK IT THROUGH: In what specific ways does Paul's example of faithfulness challenge me?

"While fighting 'the good fight' and running 'the course' that God had assigned him, Paul had the satisfaction of knowing that, though he had often faced great hardships and temptations, he had not failed to guard and preserve the faith entrusted to him. . . . Paul's example of faithfulness was to be a challenge to Timothy and to every future minister of the gospel. Personal faith depends upon adherence to God's Word. Every Christian will 'guard the faith' by his personal representation of its principles. The sincerity of a Christian's personal faith is measured by the extent to which he reflects these principles."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 349.

DAY
6

What lessons can we learn from Paul's manner of facing death?

Of course Paul would have liked to avoid the gruesome end that he faced. He probably hoped, as anyone of us would, that circumstances would change and that he would be able to take up his books and parchments and continue his ministry. But because he also was prepared for the fact that the probability was against any such change, he took a last opportunity to restate his confidence in God's fairness and in the effectiveness of Christianity as a means of character development.

The comfort that Christianity provides in the face of death is not the comfort of a cover-up. The physical pain and misery that often accompany dying and the heartaches experienced by soon-to-be-parted loved ones lie in an area that can be softened or tempered by faith but never erased or blotted out. But there is another deeper and more essential level beyond which the sorrowing Christian does not have to go. This is the level of those great questions about our origin, the meaning of life, and especially the nature of eternity. Amid the sorrow and perplexity of death, life still has meaning, stability, and purpose for a Christian. From the beginning death has been the sin-inflicted tragedy that resulted from rejecting the principles of life inaugurated by a loving God.

Finishing the course. Notice that finishing the course involves two other ingredients (2 Tim. 4:7):

1. Fighting the "good fight" (durability).
2. Keeping "the faith" (determination).

Putting these three together gives us insight into what constitutes an

enduring faith. In your own words describe these three ingredients of enduring faith in a way that will make them most meaningful to you:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

DAY
7

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: For a description of Paul's change of heart toward God, see *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 435 to 437. Here the story of Paul's witnessing before King Agrippa is recorded. Notice that the touchstone of his argument is his conversion experience which gave him a new picture of God's character.

Compare Paul's attitude with that displayed by the recipient of the testimony that follows:

"The best way in which you can recommend the truth is, not by argument, not by talk, but by living it daily, by leading a consistent, modest, humble life as a disciple of Christ.

"It is a sad thing to be discontented with our surroundings or with the circumstances which have placed us where our duties seem humble and unimportant. Private and humble duties are distasteful to you; you are restless, uneasy, and dissatisfied. All this springs from selfishness. You think more of yourself than others think of you. You love yourself better than you love your parents, sisters, and brother, and better than you love God. You desire more congenial labor, for which you think you will be better fitted. You are not willing to work and wait in the humble sphere of action where God has placed you, until He proves and tests you, and you demonstrate your ability and fitness for a higher position. 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.' The spirit of meekness is not a spirit of discontent, but it is directly the opposite.

"Those professed Christians who are constantly whining and complaining, and who seem to think happiness and a cheerful countenance a sin, have not the genuine article of religion. Those who look upon nature's beautiful scenery as they would upon a dead picture, who choose to look upon dead leaves rather than to gather the beautiful living flowers, who take a mournful pleasure in all that is melancholy in the language spoken to them by the natural world, who see no beauty in valleys clothed with living green and grand mountain heights clothed with verdure, who close their senses to the joyful voice which speaks to them in nature and which is sweet and musical to the listening ear—these are not in Christ. They are not walking in the light, but are gathering to themselves darkness and gloom, when they could just as well have brightness and the blessing of the Sun of righteousness arising in their hearts with healing in His beams.

"My young sister, you are living an imaginary life. You cannot detect or realize a blessing in anything. You imagine troubles and trials which do not exist; you exaggerate little annoyances into grievous trials. This is not the meekness which Christ blessed. It is an unsanctified, rebellious, unfilial discontent. Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently,

willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate. Meekness is not to be silent and sulky. A morose temper is the opposite of meekness; for this only wounds and gives pain to others, and takes no pleasure to itself. . . .

“. . . Christ invites you: ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.’ Submit your neck to the yoke which Christ imposes and you will find in this submission the very happiness that you have tried to gain to yourself in your own way by following your own course.

“You may be cheerful if you bring even your thoughts into subjection to the will of Christ. You should make no delay, but closely search your own heart and die to self daily. You may inquire: How can I master my own actions and control my inward emotions? Many who profess not the love of God do control their spirit to a considerable extent without the aid of the special grace of God. They cultivate self-control. This is indeed a rebuke to those who know that from God they may obtain strength and grace, and yet do not exhibit the graces of the Spirit. Christ is our model. He was meek and lowly. Learn of Him, and imitate His example. The Son of God was faultless. We must aim at this perfection and overcome as He overcame, if we would have a seat at His right hand.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, pp. 334-336.

SUMMARY: Paul never ceased to be amazed at God’s patient respect for human reasoning and freedom. Over and over again Paul indicates that God wants to win His case against Satan with evidence made up from the winsome lives of sincere Christians. The power of the gospel is directed solely to making crooked lives straight and meaningful again. The clear perception of a loving God and the reflection of this perception in the life of the Christian is the basis of keeping the faith.

APPLICATION:

- Is my life all that it should be in presenting a true and faithful witness?
- Do I have the assurance of having fought a good fight and a conviction of confidence that a crown of righteousness awaits me?
- What personal battle against temptation do I have to fight currently? What can I do to cooperate with God’s plan for my life so that He can help me experience the joy of victory?

NOTES:

Christ Our Hope

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: 2 Tim. 4:8-22.

DAY 1 **MEMORY TEXT:** "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" (2 Tim. 4:8).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Christian is forward-looking because his hope is centered in God and on things eternal rather than on the transient things of today. Consoled by the Comforter, safe in the hands of the Judge, excited by the hope of the resurrection, we have a well-grounded confidence in the King's promise to return to take all who are prepared to the home He has prepared for them.

OVERVIEW—Hope in . . .

the Comforter	2 Tim. 4:16, 17
the Judge	2 Tim. 4:1, 8
the resurrection	2 Tim. 4:8, 18
the King	2 Tim. 2:12

INTRODUCTION: Hope has a variety of meanings ranging from a weak and doubtful expectation of some future event of remote possibility to a strong, vibrant, and confident expectation of an event that will certainly take place in the future.

This strong, positive aspect is shown by the apostle Paul in writing to the Philippians: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope . . . that with all boldness" (Phil. 1:20). This is the hope that "maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:5), for it is not an indefinite longing for some unattainable goal but a firm faith in God's plan for the future.

Paul uses word *hope* twice in his first epistle to Timothy (1:1 and 3:14), but not at all in his second epistle. However, it is clear that he had hope in his Lord. This week we shall consider four aspects; his hope in the Lord's presence to comfort, in the Lord's righteous judgment, in the Lord's promise of the resurrection to eternal life, and in the Lord's eternal reign in glory.

DAY 2 I. HOPE IN THE COMFORTER (2 Tim. 4:16, 17).

2

These two verses draw a strong contrast between the physical and the spiritual; and Paul, as we would expect, is not blind to the great importance of the latter. Outwardly all his friends had forsaken him, but the eye of faith saw a great Advocate supporting him. At his trial Paul actually experienced the hope that Christ had planted in the hearts of His disciples

when He said that the Spirit of God would give them words to speak when they were brought to trial (Matt. 10:17-20), and that, after His ascension, He would send them a Comforter (John 14:16). Moreover, Paul looked far beyond the circumstances of his trial to the widespread effects that it would have in the fuller preaching of the gospel, a fact that he places before his mention of his physical deliverance from the Roman authorities.

What further significance did Paul see in his deliverance? 2 Tim. 4:18.

The possibly unexpected result of his first trial was viewed by Paul as an evidence that not only was the Holy Spirit with him then, but more, that He would be with him always. It is true that, ultimately, the apostle suffered death; but he understood that this would be but an interlude between life here on earth and eternal life.

What two applications can we make for ourselves from Paul's claim of deliverance in 2 Timothy 4:17, 18?

1. For today (verse 17) _____
2. For the future (verse 18) _____

The preservation that he speaks of applies to our constant walk with the Saviour. Those who fear for the future when we may be brought into like difficult circumstances need to recall the Master's encouraging words.

"God's grace will be dispensed to His servants to meet the emergency. 'It shall be given you,' says Jesus, 'in that same hour what ye shall speak.' . . .

"The disciples were not endowed with the courage and fortitude of the martyrs until such grace was needed. Then the Saviour's promise was fulfilled. . . .

"The servants of Christ were to prepare no set speech to present when brought to trial. Their preparation was to be made day by day in treasuring up the precious truths of God's word, and through prayer strengthening their faith. When they were brought into trial, the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance the very truths that would be needed."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 354, 355.

DAY 3 II. HOPE IN THE JUDGE (2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

3

In verse 1 Paul speaks in the same breath of the Lord's appearing and also of His kingdom. Those who are not granted an entrance into His kingdom evidently will have their sentence of exclusion pronounced on the day of final judgment.

ILLUSTRATION: The parable of the tares gives additional insights on these events. Two classes of people are indicated: "The good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38). The separation is not made, nor is it perhaps evident,

until the end. "Let both grow together until the harvest," which is "the end of the world" (verses 30, 39). Then the judgment will be executed as the reapers, that is, the angels, gather out those who do iniquity and deliver them to be destroyed (verses 39-42).

In this context of the judgment Paul calls his younger associate to stand, as it were, in the presence of God and to be ever mindful of His presence. Like Aaron of old who "stood between the dead and the living" (Num. 16:48), the worker for God is to remember that he or she is engaged in matters of life and death, and that "he is to bring to his hearers those things which most concern their present and eternal good" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 147).

The thought of appearing before the judgment seat of Christ is awe-some and perhaps frightening, but to Paul it was a message of hope. He knew that the Lord was a righteous Judge; and, because "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13), His judgment will be fair and perfect. As Abraham said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). Furthermore, Paul had hope in his Advocate who also was his Judge. Being justified by faith, he had peace with God through Christ and hence was not under condemnation. So with his hope fixed firmly on his Advocate and Saviour, he could look forward to having "boldness in the day of judgment" (1 John 4:17).

What does Paul expect to receive from his "righteous judge" that all who "love his appearing" will share in receiving? 2 Tim. 4:8.

There is not the slightest shadow of doubt in Paul's mind about the future after death. He says that there is a crown waiting for him; he had not seen it, but he was sure of its existence. The crown that he expected was the crown of victory.

Notice how Ellen White described the way that Paul faced the reality of his own execution: "The apostle was looking into the great beyond, not with uncertainty or dread, but with joyous hope and longing expectation. As he stands at the place of martyrdom he sees not the sword of the executioner or the earth so soon to receive his blood; he looks up through the calm blue heaven of that summer day to the throne of the Eternal.

"This man of faith beholds the ladder of Jacob's vision, representing Christ, who has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. His faith is strengthened as he calls to mind how patriarchs and prophets have relied upon the One who is support and consolation, and for whom he is giving his life."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 511, 512.

But Paul's assurance of a crown was not for himself alone. He included all those who are looking forward earnestly to the day when their Lord will come. Looking into the future with keen vision he saw his contemporaries and his successors carrying the gospel of the resurrection and of the crown of righteousness against all opposition and persecution.

"From the rack, the stake, the dungeon, from dens and caves of the earth, there falls upon his ear the martyr's shout of triumph. He hears the witness of steadfast souls, who, though destitute, afflicted, tormented,

yet bear fearless, solemn testimony for the faith, declaring, 'I know whom I have believed.'"—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 512.

DAY
4

III. HOPE IN THE RESURRECTION (2 Tim. 4:8, 18).

Death is the result of sin, and Paul confessed himself the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). He realized that the consequences of sin would apply to him just as it had to every other child of Adam (save Enoch and Elijah). He would join them in walking the pathway that leads to the portals of the tomb. He did not expect to die a natural death, even though he was advanced in years, but presumed that his life would be taken by the Romans, as indeed it was to be. Yet he faced this prospect calmly, saying: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6).

The soul resting fully in Christ knows that death is an enemy, but also that it is an enemy that finally will be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). Paul's hope has been expressed by Ellen White in the words that follow:

"His life is hid in God, and he is persuaded that He who has conquered death is able to keep that which is committed to His trust. His mind grasps the Saviour's promise, 'I will raise him up at the last day.' John 6:40. His thoughts and hopes are centered on the second coming of his Lord. And as the sword of the executioner descends and the shadows of death gather about the martyr, his latest thought springs forward, as will his earliest in the great awakening, to meet the Life-giver, who shall welcome him to the joy of the blest."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 512, 513.

Why was it that Paul did not fear death? Phil. 1:20, 21.

In these verses Paul contrasts life and death and declares that either in his case would present Christ and His message and glorify Him. "He said, 'For me to live is Christ;' for his life revealed Christ to men; 'and to die is gain,'—gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. 'Christ shall be magnified in my body,' he said, 'whether it be by life or by death.' Phil. 1:21, 20."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 549.

Death for him was but an interlude between this earthly life and the eternal, heavenly, perfect life. He regarded it in the light of the resurrection—a hope that changed his outlook completely. It was the resurrection that had changed a disheartened group of disciples into a band of fearless promulgators of this marvelous truth, the miracle of miracles.

For Jesus to speak life into the dead body of Lazarus, into the son of the widow of Nain, and into the daughter of Jairus was indeed an outstanding exhibition of His mighty power. But when the Prince of life allowed Himself to be crucified and was laid in the grave, how could He raise Himself? But as Jesus explained earlier: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17).

The resurrection of Christ was the focus of much of Paul's preaching and inspired hope in his hearers: "Remember that Jesus Christ . . . was

raised from the dead according to my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). So, to the apostle, living or dying was not the relevant factor, but witnessing for Christ and winning souls for Him was. This hope and expectation was fulfilled in his life and most certainly in his death.

The hope in Him who was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25), who was dead but then alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18), sustained Paul in his last hours on earth; for he "was looking into the great beyond, not with uncertainty or dread, but with joyous hope and longing expectation."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 511. He knew that while death was the end of life, just as surely was the resurrection to eternal life the end of death.

Even today, centuries after Paul's voice has been silenced, his words bring untold comfort to Christian believers. His mighty exposition of the theme of Christ's resurrection and the consequent resurrection of all who believe in Him is immortalized in 1 Corinthians 15, leading to this glorious climax: "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

DAY
5

What other truth is inseparable from the doctrine of the resurrection?
2 Tim. 1:10.

Lazarus, Dorcas, the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, Eutychus, the son of the widow of Zarephath, and the son of the Shunamite woman were raised from the dead, but all of them died a second time. Their resurrection merely gave them an extension of life on earth. But the final resurrection at the second coming of the Lord will be to a life that has no end—to immortality or corruption—when old age will not be synonymous with decrepitude and feebleness. It is a virtual recreation, when there will be no more sickness, pain, senility, blindness, deafness, or handicaps of any kind. The inhabitants of earth will once more be untouched by sin—a glory to their re-Creator—for death itself will be dead.

When our first parents disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, they were denied access to the tree of life; otherwise they would have lived forever (Gen. 3:22, 23), thus perpetuating sin. As a consequence of their exclusion from Eden, the human race has suffered death. But in Christ there is the sure hope of returning to the Garden, of partaking of the fruit of the tree of life, and of receiving the indescribable gift of immortality.

A message with this hope at its core inspires us to give our all in declaring it. It magnifies the bearer and becomes even more encouraging in the process. Because he had such a hope, the following could be said about Paul at his trial before Nero: "Faithful among the faithless, loyal among the disloyal, he stands as God's representative, and his voice is as a voice from heaven. There is no fear, no sadness, no discouragement in word or look. Strong in a consciousness of innocence, clothed in the panoply of truth, he rejoices that he is a son of God. His words are as a shout of victory above the roar of battle. He declares the cause to which he has devoted his life, to be the only cause that can never fail. Though he may perish, the gospel will not perish. God lives, and His truth will triumph."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 495.

How did Paul use a simple illustration to stimulate hope? 2 Tim. 2:6.

The gardener and the farmer cast away their seed in full assurance of harvesting their crops in due season, and their hopes usually are fulfilled. So the Christian has the hope or expectation of a life that will follow the life lived on earth. This eternal life is the one referred to in "the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:1).

Just as the gardener cannot change the pea seed into a mass of vines and pea pods but must depend on the life, mysterious as it is, initially resident in the living plant, so the Christian's harvest is dependent on the life implanted in him by the Spirit of God.

But the soil must be cultivated and the garden of the heart cleared of weeds that choke the good seed and spoil the anticipated crop. And the simple, yet profound, parable of the sower explains that we may lose eternal life if we allow the thorns to stifle the working of the Word of God. Therefore we must beware of "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22) which prevent the hope of fruit being realized.

DAY IV. HOPE IN THE KING (2 Tim. 2:11,12).

6

Notice that the sequence mentioned in these verses is that of reigning after suffering. It is introduced by the assuring statement: "It is a faithful saying." Suffering, provided it be for the sake of Christ, should not bear us down with discouragement, for it is an uncontroverted truth that the end result will be a transformation of roles. The sufferer becomes the ruler and reigns with Christ.

Reigning implies kingship when suffering will cease. Our hope in the King will sustain us in suffering. Our allegiance to the King will strengthen us in times of persecution when attempts will be made to force believers to deny their allegiance to Christ. But if we deny our Lord, we deny ourselves the crown of victory, for He will deny us. Not only Paul's words but those of the Master Himself declare, "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father" (Matt. 10:33).

This planet Earth is now the domain of Satan, styled the "prince of this world," and his evident intention is to cause as much havoc as possible among the inhabitants who do not acknowledge him as their king. But there have been, are, and will be those who do not serve him. They love righteousness and live for the Prince of Peace. Their faith and hope are placed in Him. True, they may suffer while they are in enemy territory, but they have the glorious hope of reigning with Christ, and their sufferings will be as nothing compared with the infinite bliss that awaits them in the land of eternal happiness.

ILLUMINATION: "None will be there who have not, like Moses, chosen to suffer affliction with the people of God. The prophet John saw the multitude of the redeemed, and inquired who they were. The prompt answer came: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 78.

SEARCH AND LEARN: What promises have the redeemed looked forward to?

1. Rev. 1:6 _____
2. Rev. 3:21 _____
3. Rev. 11:15 _____
4. Rev. 22:5 _____

What a glorious hope we have of seeing “the king in his beauty” (Isa. 33:17), of joining in “the voice of a great multitude . . . saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev. 19:6)! Then “hope shall change to glad fruition.”—H. F. Lyte, *Church Hymnal*, no. 267. “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

DAY 7 FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 492 to 497 and 509 to 513, noticing in particular the contrasting attitudes of Paul and Nero as each faced death.

Read the entire second epistle to Timothy at one sitting, ignoring chapter divisions, as if it were a personal letter to you.

Meditate on the following: “When the testing time shall come, those who have made God’s word their rule of life will be revealed. . . . Let opposition arise, let bigotry and intolerance again bear sway, let persecution be kindled, and the halfhearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in days of prosperity.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 602.

SUMMARY: The gloom of approaching death was made bright by Paul’s sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life. God has promised a crown and a throne to all who trust in Him, and His word is sure:

APPLICATION:

- Hope, it is said, “springs eternal in the human breast.” Does it in mine?
- Does my attitude in trial or under pressure weaken or strengthen my hope?
- Does my hope of future glory and eternal life inspire me to share this hope with others?

Lessons for Third Quarter, 1985

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1985 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Beginnings and Belonging."

First Lesson:

THE WAY OF FAITH

MEMORY TEXT: Rev. 21:4

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Overview of the Book of Genesis

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The book of Genesis reminds us of our origin and our inestimable value to God and reveals that the way of faith leads from Eden lost to Eden restored.

OUTLINE:

- I. The Beginning of All Things (Gen. 1-11).
- II. The Beginning of God's People (Gen. 12-50).

Second Lesson:

CREATION

MEMORY TEXT: Psalm 33:6, 9.

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Gen. 1.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Neither accident nor force of chance but a loving, caring God was responsible for the creation.

OUTLINE:

- I. "In the Beginning" (Gen. 1:1, 2)
- II. "Form" and "Fulness" (Gen. 1:3-25)
- III. The Crowning Act of God's Creation (Gen. 1:26-31).

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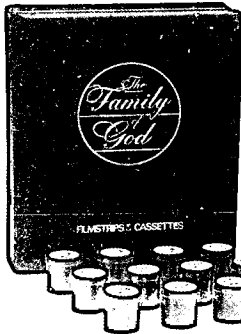
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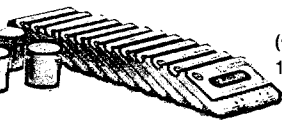
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