

TO MY SON

An Expositional Study of II Timothy

by

GUY H. KING

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE CRUSADE Fort Washington, Pennsylvania

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN -

JUST A LAST FEW LINES

II Timothy 4:19-22

19 Salute Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.

20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

IT was Paul's custom to dictate his letters to someone who would act as his amanuensis. We do not know whether they were taken down in shorthand. That was a possibility, because this useful accomplishment was not invented by Isaac Pitman, until 1837; many systems had existed long before Sir Isaac's day, and indeed, it was practiced extensively by the Romans away back in Cicero's time, 106-43 B.C., many of whose speeches were "taken down." For all we know, then, Dr. Luke, who presumably took down this Letter, may have added stenography to his many other gifts.

What we are sure of is that Paul always added a closing few lines in his own hand, as II Thessalonians 3:17 tells us- "**The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.**" There is, if my understanding of it is correct, a rather pathetic ending to his Colossian letter, which (4:18) he concludes by writing, "**The salutation of me, Paul. Remember my bonds . . .**"

Why does he add that last bit? Well, as we know, he was, during the imprisonment, chained at the wrist to a Roman soldier; and whatever his normal handwriting was like, it could not have been improved by that circumstance. I suggest that, when he saw what a bad fist he had made of it, he adds those words about his bonds by way of explanation and extenuation. Our present passage, following that first "**Amen,**" would appear to be his personally written addition to this particular letter, and was presumably the last thing he ever did write.

Let us note three things

FIRST - PERSONALITIES

He has already mentioned fifteen people, in the course of his dictation, and now he writes of eight others: the ninth name here occurs earlier.

(a) Some are in Ephesus, where Timothy is and the apostle bids him "salute" them - that is, give them his kind remembrance, his affectionate greetings.

(i) *Prisca and Aquila*. Six times this splendid couple are referred to in the New Testament, and in four of the instances the lady, as here, is put first. Is the suggestion fanciful that this possibly indicates that she was the leading spirit in the partnership, so far as spiritual things were concerned?

It seems probable that Paul first made their acquaintance in the way of business. When he first arrived with the Gospel at Corinth, he determined to support himself by his tent-making. Every Jewish boy, however genteel the family, was taught some trade; and Paul had often to be thankful for his proficiency in this craft. As it happened, there were two Jewish refugees at Corinth at the time. They had come from Rome, whence all Jews had been expelled by the Emperor Claudius, about A.D. 53. "The emperors more than once expelled them from the city, but they always returned," comments the late Professor H. M. Gwatkin, in his grand *Early Church History*, vol. i., p. 40.

As a matter of fact, these two are back in Rome in Romans 16:3. Their trade was tent-making, and they had "set up shop" at Corinth, and when Paul came across their sign, he secured, as Acts 18:1-3 recounts, both work and lodging with them, thus supporting himself, and giving himself in his spare time, and on the sabbaths, to the preaching of the Gospel.

It is not long before, as had previously happened with his doctor, he led his landlady and landLord to CHRIST. I wonder if part of the influence he exerted on them was due to the efficient way in which he did his work? It is recorded of Joseph, in Genesis 39:3, that "**his Master saw that the Lord was with him**" - a something about the way he did his work?

And perhaps Paul's employers were impressed with the fidelity and dexterity with which he set about his daily tasks, and were all the more readily disposed to listen when he spoke to them of his Master. Let all those take special note of this point who, being Christians, are in domestic service, or at a workshop bench, or on an office stool, or at a school desk. "**His Master saw**" - - and of course, his Master saw!

Anyhow, the two are converted; and how quickly they grow, for by Acts 18:26, having passed on to Ephesus, they were able to take the greatly gifted Apollos, and to "**expound unto him the way of God more perfectly.**"

Their loyalty and courage are next to be observed, for Romans 16:4 says they "**have for my life laid down their own necks**" - in some ugly situation they had risked their necks to save the apostle.

Unlike those nobles of Nehemiah 3:5, who "**put not their necks to the work of their Lord**", these two were "up to their necks" in it. Finally, in I Corinthians 16:19, we find them lending the accommodation of their home for the gathering of the believers for worship, "**the church that is**

in their house." A fine pair of devoted Christians: no wonder Paul sends them, through Timothy, his affectionate greetings.

(ii) *The household of Onesiphorus is also greeted.* We dealt with them at 1:16. Onesiphorus himself, as not being included in the good wishes, was obviously absent, either because he had died, or, as I think, was away on some journey. "**He oft refreshed me,**" says the apostle - recalling wistfully the delightful hospitality he had enjoyed in that home.

Led of the Spirit, Paul had joined with Peter (Romans 12:13; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; I Peter 4:9) in pressing upon believers the duty and virtue of Christian hospitality - all the more needful, perhaps, in those early days, when believers were few and scattered; but still greatly fruitful in these days.

Continuing our study of these recorded personalities, we see:

(b) Some are in Rome, where Paul is. Each of them "**greeteth**" Timothy - there is Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia.

Various flimsy identifications of these people have been attempted, but they may quite safely be ignored, with one exception. Says Dr. Handley Maule, "More solid, for early tradition favours it, and there lies no difficulty in the way, is the belief that the Linus here named is the first Christian pastor to be entrusted with the bishopric of Rome in the early and holy simplicity of that great office."

Dr. Alfred Plummer may also usefully be quoted, "We may safely conclude that the Linus who here sends greeting is identical with the Linus who, according to very early testimony preserved by Irenaeus, was first among the earliest bishops of the Church of Rome. Irenaeus himself expressly identifies the [two]." "**And all the brethren,**" proceeds our passage - all the church in that city, called "**brethren**" because members of the same Family.

(i) *What a large family we are* - "**the blessed company of all faithful [believing] people**", as the Church of England Prayer Book describes them: embracing all believers, the first, the last, and the rest. At any given time, or spot, seen to be a "**little flock**", but in the eternal aggregate, a "**great multitude**", Luke 12:32; Revelation 7:9.

(ii) *What a loving family we should be* - the bickering, quarrelling, criticising, that disgrace some earthly families should never disfigure the family of GOD. And having written that, I hang my head with shame, and pass sadly on to

(iii) *What a loyal family we should be* - loyal to one another; but, above all, loyal to the Head of the Family.

But now:

(c) Some are elsewhere.

(i) *At Corinth* - was Erastus. He is, I expect, the same man as is mentioned In Acts 19:22, who

had accompanied Timothy on a certain mission to Macedonia. They would have got to know each other very well on that trip; and Timothy would be glad to have news of him. So he "**abode at Corinth**," did he? Well, that was where he belonged; indeed, he was a person of some considerable position there, being, as Romans 16:23 tells us, "**the chamberlain of the city**" - the City Chamberlain, the Borough Treasurer.

What a splendid thing for any Municipality when there are avowed Christians in, its important posts. I am presuming again, you see, that the same name here means the same person. You and I, my reader, have some position in the Municipality, whether high or humble, whether an employee or a citizen: may we seek to influence the civic life of our town in any way, big or small, that comes to our hand as avowed Christians, pulling our weight on behalf of everything that is clean, and true, and beautiful for the community, acting "on the aide of the angels," as Benjamin Disraeli would say, "**for ye serve the Lord Christ**", as Paul would say, Colossians 3:24. Then:

(ii) *At Miletum* - was Trophimus. He, too, taking the references to denote the same person, is mentioned in two other places. In Acts 20:4 his name is included in the list of helpers as one of Paul's mission parties; and in Acts 21:29 he is the innocent cause of Paul's being mobbed at Jerusalem: but it is the account of him here in our present passage that I want particularly to look at, and I shall do so under our following heading:

NEXT - HUMANITIES

Paul was so remarkable a character that we are sometimes in danger of forgetting that he was only human after all. This latter quality peeps out here, in

(a) *His human limitations* - "**Trophimus have I left at Miletum, sick.**" Yet it would seem that he would have been so helpful to the apostle's work if only he had been made well enough to go on, instead of having to be left behind: and Paul had remarkable healing powers entrusted to him, as we learn from Acts 19:11-12, "**God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them . . .**"

Yes, but you see if we take the whole Scripture testimony, and eschew the One-Text Method, we are, I believe, driven to the conclusion that bodily healing is not always the will of GOD. Why, even Paul himself was handicapped by obstinate ill-health, a "**thorn in the flesh**", which I personally follow Sir William Ramsay in thinking was malaria. How much more, and how much better, service he would be able to render to the Cause, if he could get rid of this persistent infirmity. So he prayed GOD, for His own glory, to heal him, three times he very specially prayed about it, with what result we know from II Corinthians 12:8-10 - GOD did not heal him; but, what was harder, gave him "**grace**" to triumph over it.

And Timothy, too: what a pity, and what a hindrance, that he should remain something of an invalid, with his frequent attacks of gastric trouble; whereas, with a robust constitution, he could wage so intrepid a fight. Why, then, did Paul not heal him? Why was it that the best he could do was to prescribe a regular vinous dosage for his "**often infirmities**", 1 Timothy 5:23?

Paul had his gifts, his powers, but he was only human, and his great possibilities were subject to the limitation of GOD's perfect will and purpose.

We observe here also

(b) His human longings - "**Do thy diligence to come before winter.**" Under the restrictions of the primitive navigation of those days, there was no sailing in the winter; and if Timothy did not get away before then, it would necessitate a long dreary postponement of his visit, and in all probability it would then come too late. And this very human father did so badly want to see his son. In verse 9, he had already dictated, "**Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me**", come quick; but now, in his own handwriting, he pens it, "**Do thy diligence to come before winter.**"

The Master would not upbraid him for this humanity: He, too, was so truly human that he leant, in the Garden, on the prayerful sympathy of His three intimate friends, as we saw in an earlier Lecture.

The fact is, the New Birth does not deprive us of our humanities. A great treasure has become ours; but, as II Corinthians 4:7 tells us, "**we have this treasure in earthen vessels.**" I suppose that fact

(i) *Modifies the treasure* - owing to our sinful nature, our dull mind, our tired body, our fragile will, our fluctuating feelings, our frayed nerves, it becomes restricted in its operations. But I know that this fact:

(ii) *Magnifies the vessel* - to think that GOD not only can, but will, take us up in His service in spite of our human weakness. In Psalm 39:4, David expresses his anxiety "**that I may know how frail I am.**"

Yes, better to know it, and to guard against it. Yet

(i) *GOD chooses such*. The Early Church was up against a stiff proposition - the wise, the mighty, the "**things that are**", or, as we should say, "**the powers that be**": and to counter and conquer them He quite deliberately "**chose**" very frail persons, as I Corinthians 1:27-28. Moreover

(ii) *GOD uses such* - Peter the boaster, Thomas the doubter, Philip the ignorant, John the fiery, you, and me. He is prepared to use even such poor specimens as ourselves. Because

(iii) *GOD infuses such* - fills them with the HOLY SPIRIT, that they may be, and do, what He purposes for them. The frail shall not fail - if filled.

Having looked at the quite natural humanities, our passage unfolds to us

THEN - DIVINITIES

Paul pens his last words to his son: where shall he lead him, where leave him? where shall he find for him a stable resting-place? First, in

(a) A Divine Presence - "**the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.**"

(i) *Paul's own experience* - had, through a myriad perils, and adventures, and distresses, been very precious. Over and over again it had been his Master's Presence which had saved him. Even in our last Study, we saw him in perplexity because all who should have stood by him had forsaken him: but, in verse 17, we find him drawing his comfort and help from the blessed realisation that the Lord stood with him. Paul might have driven home his lesson by recalling case after case of GOD's people throughout his prized Old Testament who had been similarly succoured. For instance

(ii) *Joseph's experience* - was so eminently remarkable. Genesis 39:2 had said that "**the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man**" - or, in William Tyndale's vivid rendering, "he was a luckie fellowe." A lucky fellow? Listen: He is a slave, and in a foreign country, and knowing not a soul there, nor one word of the language! A lucky fellow, indeed! Yes, for the one all-sufficient reason that the Lord was with him. That was the overriding fact of his life, the over-Mastering secret of his success. And this shall be:

(iii) *Timothy's experience* - he shall soon be bereft of his spiritual father's earthly presence: but he shall be stayed and stablished on that of his Heavenly Father.

Looked at from the merely human and earthly standpoint, Timothy's situation was a by no means enviable one - his environment, with increasing persecution abroad, was gravely forbidding: his personality, somewhat timid and shrinking, and delicate in health, was scarcely "tough" enough to be expected to stand up to it all: his responsibilities, as the leader of the Christian forces in his area, the one to whom they would all naturally look for guidance, and inspiration, and example, would weigh down even the strongest.

Yes, all true: but, Timothy, this also is true, that, in the hottest of the fire, you shall know the comfort of the Master's presence, even as three other young men did long years before you, when "**the Form of the fourth**" meant so much, Daniel 3:25. And

(iv) *Our experience* - shall, thank GOD, be the same. We, too, may count upon His Presence, however difficult our circumstances may become.

That, then, is the first of the divinities to which Paul directs his young friend.

The second is

(b) A Divine Power - "**grace be with you.**" Grace: what a word, and what a thing! Dr. Handley Moule defined it as "love in action." Our familiar hymn has accustomed us to the idea of "*grace to cover all my sin*" - that comes first, of course; but then we have "*grace to cover all my need.*"

How tremendous, both in volume and in variety, was Timothy's need - and yours, too, perhaps. But how enormous is this vast supply. I am greatly interested in a Greek word, which comes only twice in the New Testament, each time used by Peter, and in both places translated "**manifold.**"

In I Peter 1:6 it is "**manifold temptations**" - oh, how many are the trials, and troubles, and testings of life. How shall we stand firm? In I Peter 4:10 it is "**manifold grace**" - one grace in a myriad manifestations. Hold up your left hand, and look upon the fingers and thumb as representative of the first "**manifold**": and now your right, as picturing the second "**manifold.**"

As you view the one, bring across the other, to cover it - exactly matching, you will observe, all the fingers, and each of the fingers. And then take the illustration down into your very soul - that, on the one hand, the "**manifold grace**" is there to meet the "**manifold temptations**" on the other hand, the shape and style of the grace exactly corresponding to the shape and style of the need.

Note one last point: the "**you**" here is plural. It is usually present with "**with you all**": I venture it, "with you and yours." The all-sufficient grace for Pastor and People, for Shepherd and Flock. alike. "**Amen**"!

So ends the letter of this Father to this Son. Tell me: have you any sons, any children in the faith, any that you have been enabled to bring to a saving knowledge of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, as Paul brought Timothy, and a thousand more?

As you put down this book of Studies, will you, if you have never begun before, start to long, and to labour, to be a Soul Winner - that you may have one, and many more than one, to bring up for Him and bring on in His ways.

John Keble said, "The salvation of one soul is worth more than the framing of a Magna Charta of a thousand worlds." Indeed, as Proverbs 11:30 has it, "**He that winneth souls is wise**": and if you feel wholly inadequate for such a holy task, you must go and speak with Him about it who said, in Matthew 4:19, "**I will make you fishers of men.**"

Of the famous Dr. Arnold, his eldest son, Matthew, wrote in his Rugby Chapel

"But thou wouldst not alone
Be saved, my father! alone
Conquer and come to thy goal."

Neither would Paul, who, in I Corinthians 9:22, wrote of his earnest longing "**that I might by all means save some.**" Please GOD, our study together of this Great Letter shall lead us to the like frame of mind, and to the like purpose of life.

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