

THROUGH THE BIBLE

2 TIMOTHY 3-4

Once a pastor went to the ICU at the local hospital to visit a church member who was on life support.

The pastor stood at the man's bedside, and spoke to him for several minutes. The patient grew disturbed, agitated. He reached for his pad, and wrote the pastor a note. Not wanting to further upset the man, the pastor smiled and slipped the note in his jacket pocket.

He prayed for the fellow, then left the hospital.

Sadly, a few hours later the pastor got a call from a relative with news that the man had passed away.

It wasn't until halfway through the funeral service that the pastor remembered the note the man had written.

He'd forgotten all about it. He reached into his jacket, pulled it out, and held it up to the crowd, "I have in my hand a piece of paper that contains the last words of our brother." *But the pastor never read it.* The dead man had written, "You're standing on my oxygen tube."

Well, 2 Timothy 3-4 are Paul's last words.

As he awaits execution he records some final instructions. As Timothy unfolds this note he discovers what Paul was thinking as he prepared for eternity.

Chapter 3, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come...” The Greek word translated “*perilous*” means “dangerous, savage.” Paul warns Timothy that as we get closer to the return of Jesus, society will grow worse, not better. *And here’s how...*

“For men will be lovers of themselves...” People will become self-absorbed. They’ll exist for number one!

“Lovers of money...” The early church father, John Chrysostom, had some stern words for money lovers...

“A dreadful thing is the love of money! It disables both eyes and ears, and makes men worse to deal with than a wild beast, allowing a man to consider neither conscience nor friendship nor fellowship nor salvation.”

Men will become “boasters, proud, blasphemers...”

Years ago the local atheist group in Madison, Wisconsin erected a sign next to the city’s Christmas tree, “In this season of the Winter Solstice, may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only the natural world. Religion is but a myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds.” But ironically printed on the back of the sign were the words, “Thou shalt not steal.”

It’s amazing that the people who blaspheme God still lean on His laws to protect their own self-interests.

Atheists mock the idea of God, but without His moral standards of right and wrong, they can’t construct an orderly world worth living in. Life turns into chaos.

In the last days folks will become “**disobedient to parents...**” Once, after a visit to the US, the Duke of Windsor was asked what impressed him most. He said, “**The way American parents obey their children.**”

Pop culture mocks parental authority, and glamorizes rebellion. Entertainment media encourages disrespect. Today, disputing authority is seen as a rite of passage.

A parent who wants his child’s respect has to earn it, and fight for it, and insist on it. You’re not going to get a lot of help from the television, or radio, or public school.

Paul continues his list, “**unthankful...**”

Years ago I read of Michelle Tribout, a 36 year-old mother from Illinois. Michelle said she was tired of the back talk, whining, and general lack of appreciation. So the mother of three children decided to go on strike.

She climbed up into the kids’ treehouse and refused to come down. She stayed in the treehouse overnight.

Her husband, Sonny Tribout, said Michelle came down only after her kids left brownies at the base of the tree. He said, “**There’s good news, negotiations to settle the work stoppage have begun.**” Seriously, in the last days folks will be better off, and appreciate it less.

They’ll also be “**unholy...**” No one will fear God, or feel the need to make any sacrifices for His sake.

Verse 3, “**Unloving...**” The word means, “**without natural affection.**” Normal, natural ties will disappear.

I read this week of a 22 year old Florida mother who killed her 3 month old son. She shook him to death for interrupting her while she was playing Farmville. The baby was crying while his mom tended her virtual farm.

That's "*unloving*" and certainly *not natural*.

This past Thursday was "*Valentines Day*" for some people, but on most college campuses it was "*National Condom Week*." This is what's happening today - we're becoming increasing "*unloving*" - to the point of replacing *love and romance* with *raw lust and sex*.

People will become "*unforgiving...*" Folks will grow bitter, self-righteous. Imagine a world where everyone carries a grudge. That's where we're headed...

"*Slanderers...*" Today, we live in the internet world where folks can blog and post their innuendo or gossip.

It's tweet first, then check its credibility...

Folks will be "*without self-control, brutal...*" We live in an increasingly violent society. Every 22 seconds in America a person is beaten, or stabbed, or shot.

And what would you expect after sampling the violence on primetime TV. David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Media and Family stated, "*It is tragically ironic that at the very time we are wringing our hands about violent behavior among young people, we are simultaneously entertaining them with it.*"

The same people who pay \$4 million for a 30 second Super Bowl commercial turn around and tell us that TV and video games have little effect on violent behavior.

Do they really think we're that foolish?

In the last days folks will also be “despisers of good, traitors...” You’ll no longer be able to trust people.

There was a day in America when a man’s word was his bond - no longer. Everyone looks for loopholes. Contracts are renegotiated. Handshakes mean nada.

People will also be “headstrong...” - stubborn, prejudicial. They’re right and everybody else is wrong.

And folks will become “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...” If ever there was a statement that fit modern America this is it! People today live for the weekend – *and not to go to church, sadly* - but to party all night and play all day. We’re *lovers of pleasure*.

In a USA Today poll, Americans, age 18 to 64, were asked about how they spend their leisure time...

At the top of the list was television - 15.1 hours a week. Religion was way down the list - less than one hour a week. We spend 15 hours a week watching TV and 50 minutes a week on our relationship with God.

We’re “*lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.*”

It’s been said, “In America we worship our work, we work at our play, and we play at our worship.”

In the last days, men will value fleeting pleasures more than they’ll value a right relationship with God.

Verse 5 continues Paul's last day's analysis. "Having a form of godliness but denying its power." Realize, up until now Paul's list doesn't exclude the desire to be religious. You can be *a lover of yourself*, and *of money*, and *proud*, and *headstrong* - and still be religious. But spirituality and religion are not the same as godliness.

You can be religious, yet deny God's power.

People embrace *the form without the force - the religion without the reality - the liturgy without the life.*

The Prophet Jeremiah lived among religious yet hypocritical Jews. In Jeremiah 12:2 he describes them, "(God is) near in their mouth but far from their mind."

People in the last days will want enough of God to feel secure, but not enough of God to change their heart, and renew their mind, and reform how they live!

It reminds me of a quote, "I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk, or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a man of a different color, or pick beets with a migrant worker.

I want ecstasy, not transformation. I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3 worth of God, please." One day soon the world we live in will all realize that the Almighty doesn't come in \$3 portions.

Jesus is either Lord of all, or He's not Lord at all!

Notice what Paul says about people who embrace style without the substance... "And from such people turn away!" If a believer is in a church full of people who are

simply playing at religion its not his job to remain among them in hopes of changing them.

Paul says, remove yourself from such people. Chances are they'll rub off on you - not vice versa!

Verse 6, **“For of this sort are those who creep into households...”** The NIV reads, **“they worm their way in.”**

“And make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts...” Paul is thinking of the smooth-talking preacher who plays on the rich widow's guilt or naiveté, and milks her of her money.

Slick pastors who play at religion are consummate con-artists, manipulators. They pluck the heart-strings of the emotionally vulnerable to pad their own pockets.

They're **“always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”** Here's a lot of Christians...

They're always on the look-out for a fresh insight - a new revelation. They're chasing after the secret key...

Rather than resting in the truth we know - the grace of God and the Spirit's work - and letting our faith grow. They run around trying to discover the magic potion.

It's a lot easier to excuse my failure on a lack of knowledge, than it is a lack of faith, or obedience.

Verse 8, **“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.”** In Exodus 7 Moses

threw down his rod before Pharaoh and it turned into a serpent, yet the magicians of Egypt were able to duplicated the miracle.

Satan also has supernatural power. In Exodus 7 the sorcerers are nameless. It's not until 2 Timothy 3:8 that we discover their names... "*Jannes and Jambres.*"

These occult practitioners duplicated several of Moses' miracles. They turned the Nile to blood, and called up frogs... but when Moses brought the third plague (of lice) they threw in the towel. Exodus 8:19, "Then the magicians said... 'This is the finger of God.'"

Yes, Satan also has supernatural power, but its limited. The *power of God* exceeds the *power of Satan*.

Paul tells us the false teachers in the last days will likewise demonstrate a powerful resistance to the truth, but eventually that resistance will be overcome and proved foolish. It'll be eclipsed by the power of God.

Paul focuses in on Timothy in verse 11, "But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra - what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me."

Timothy's hometown was Lystra in Galatia - where Paul was stoned by the Jews early in his ministry.

Timothy had seen firsthand Paul's godly example, and the ungodly persecution he'd encountered. Most importantly he had witnessed God's deliverance.

Paul's life was an object lesson. What happened to Paul happens to all believers to one degree or the other. Paul promises Tim, "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."

Christians, love to claim the promises of God...

Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other things shall be added to you." Philippians 4:19, "My God will shall supply all your need according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Hebrews 13:5, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." We love all God's promises except 2 Timothy 3:12 - "*all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*" This is the promise you won't seen taped to the refrigerator - or turned into a bumper sticker - yet it's a promise of God nonetheless.

We might as well expect it - and prepare ourselves for it. If this world hated Jesus, then it will hate us!

Verse 13, "*But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*"

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them..." The key is not a new revelation, but the once-for-all-revelation we have in God's Word.

"And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Realize, you never graduate from the Bible. You don't study the Bible for a semester, then sell it back to the bookstore. This book is your curriculum for life.

The Bible is God's Word to us. In it is all you need to obtain and maintain a right relationship with God.

Paul assures us in verse 16, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..."** Realize, certain sections of Scripture are not more inspired than other sections.

All Scripture is equally inspired. That's why I teach book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse. The book of Leviticus is as inspired as the book of Matthew.

There're truths we can glean from all the Bible. It's true, **"It takes a whole Bible to make a whole Christian."**

Here's a favorite poem, **"I thought I knew the Bible, reading piecemeal hit or miss – now a bit of 'John' or 'Matthew', now a snatch of 'Genesis'. Certain chapters of 'Isaiah', certain Psalms, the 23rd – 12th of 'Romans', 1st of 'Proverbs'. Yes! I thought I knew the Word.**

But I found a thorough reading was a different thing to do, and the way was unfamiliar when I read the Bible through. You who treat the crown of writings as you treat no other book – just a paragraph disjointed, just a crude, impatient look – try a worthier procedure, try a broad and steadier view. You will kneel in very rapture when you read the Bible through!"

"And (the Bible) is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."

***Doctrine* is what to believe... *Correction* is what not to believe... *Instruction* is how to live... *Reproof* is how not to live... And the Bible accomplishes all four tasks!**

The Word of God has been given to us “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” All you need to know to grow and go as a Christian is found right in the pages of the Bible!

Chapter 4, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom...” Jesus is returning to Earth to judge every soul that has ever lived and establish His eternal throne on planet Earth.

Once, a lady that was accused of a crime. She was guilty and knew she needed a crack defense attorney.

A lawyer was recommended, and she wrote down his name and address. But she delayed in contacting him.

When her trial date grew closer she realized she needed to act, so she called the attorney. Sadly, it was too late. He explained that if she'd called just a week earlier he would've been happy to take her case, but two days ago he'd been appointed judge. *Instead of being her advocate, he had now become her judge!*

This is going to happen to millions of people all over the Earth. Today Jesus sits at the right hand of God as our advocate – our attorney. He's willing to plead our case and secure for us the mercy and pardon of God.

But soon, when Jesus returns, He'll be appointed Judge. And the verdict will be clear. He'll be forced to condemn all sinners. *Don't wait too late to call Jesus.*

This is why Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season.” When its convenient or inconvenient - planned or spontaneous.

“Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” We need to proclaim God’s Word with as much persuasive power as we can muster... convince, rebuke, encourage, teach, and stay at it! *Don’t give up!*

Here’s another poem. You don’t want to hear this one day, “My friend, I stand in judgment now, and I feel that you are to blame somehow. On earth we talked together day by day, but never did you point the way.

You know the Lord in truth and glory, but never did you tell the story. My knowledge then was very dim; you could’ve led me safe to Him. Though we lived together on the earth, you never told me of the new birth. And now I stand, this day condemned, because you failed to mention Him.” Proclaim the Word of God!

Verse 3, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” In the last days truth will no longer be sought.

People will develop an appetite for half-truths. They’ll listen to what *pleases* and *teases* - what *tickles* rather than what *teaches*. And the Church and its pastors will cater to their demand. They water down the Word, and pass out defective doctrine - *fables rather than truth*.

One of the scariest passages is Jeremiah 5:31, “The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power; and My people love to have it so.” Church members get the leaders and teachers they deserve.

If we hunger for the meat of God’s Word - then God will meet it with faithful teaching that feeds our soul.

“But you (and he’s speaking to Timothy, the faithful minister) be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”

Perilous times have a way of discouraging faithful servants. Paul tells Timothy to persevere, stick-to-it, endure. He should finish what God called him to do!

It was by perseverance the snail reached the ark!

Searching for an example to illustrate perseverance Paul uses himself, verse 6, “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.” Paul’s life on earth is at a close.

Graduation day is right around the corner for Paul. He’s about to depart this world to be with Christ.

Notice, Paul describes his life as a drink offering – a sacred libation poured out on the sacrificial meat.

The drink offering was like *spiritual steak sauce*.

Paul’s life added flavor and tenderize the hearts of those saints who gave themselves as living sacrifices.

You might call Paul an A-1 servant of Christ.

Notice too, Paul’s life could never be taken from him, for it had already been given to God and poured out on others! You can’t take away what I no longer possess.

Paul left it all on the field. He had nothing left to give.

He gave all of his life to Jesus. He was about to pass into eternity with no regrets. He had held nothing back.

Paul even speaks of his impending execution not as *death*, but as “*the time of my departure*.” The Greek word translated “*departure*” is a wonderful word.

Warren Wiersbe provides at least four definitions...

First, “to hoist an anchor and set sail.” And that’s what Paul was doing. He was headed for new waters.

Second, “to take down a tent.” Paul’s physical body had been but a temporary dwelling. He strikes the tent.

Third, “*departure*” means “to free a prisoner.” Death for Paul was God’s jailbreak. It was God’s means of deliverance from prison and persecution into paradise.

Fourth, “to unyoke an ox.” Paul had spent a lifetime of tireless service – now he’s entering into his rest.

Paul continues in verse 7, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

Paul was like a marathoner crossing the finish line, or a fighter going the distance, all 15 rounds... Paul refused to tap out. He’s now about to break the tape.

All his Christian life he ran to win. Now the stretching and straining will finally be rewarded. *What a moment!*

Once, a little boy received a yellow parakeet as a birthday gift. He was painting its cage with a coat of varnish, when he reached inside to remove the bird.

The parakeet fell into the varnish and drowned. It was tragic! The boy was terribly upset. He was crying...

His older brother found him, and comforted him as only a big brother can, “Cheer up little buddy, at least your bird had a good finish.” And here Paul is finishing well. He’s fought – He’s ran – and He’s kept the faith.

Don’t gloss over how Paul views his life... He didn’t say, “The party’s over.” He says, “*I fought the fight.*” “*I finished the race.*” I went toe to toe with all life could throw at me - I endured - I “*kept the faith,*” “*I finished.*”

Paul fought Judaizers and Gnostics – illnesses and weariness - jealous people, pagan people, greedy people - physical assaults, and personal attacks, and vicious lies – close friends forsook him - churches denied him – Paul’s Christian life was an uphill fight.

How do you view your life? *A stroll in the park? A tiptoe through the tulips?* I believe if you live for God’s glory, your life will be nothing short of a brawl!

Do your job with integrity and you’ll fight your co-workers who cut corners... Hold high standards at home and you’ll fight your kids’ compromise... Desire holiness in your heart and you’ll fight with your own flesh... Lovingly lead your wife and you’ll fight with your mother-in-law... Open up your home for a Bible Study and you’ll fight with the neighbor next door...

This world is hostile to God. It killed Jesus. Don’t expect this world to roll out the red carpet for you.

We need to stop whining - *buckle our chinstrap* - fight the good fight - finish the race - keep the faith!

And the winner of a fight receives a belt, a crown, an award. And this is what Paul's eyes are on...

He says in verse 8, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Two types of crowns are mentioned in Scripture. The Greek terminology is "diadema" and "stephanos."

The *diadem* was the **king's crown**. It was inherited rather than earned... But the *stephanos*, or laurel, was the **victor's wreath**. It was given to the winners at the Olympic Games, and worn by conquering generals...

This is the reward Paul expects – "the **stephanos of righteousness**." The Bible teaches certain crowns are passed out to Christians at the Judgment seat of Christ. The Lord Jesus will reward believers who remain faithful to Him in their life and in their service.

The New Testament mentions five different crowns...

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 lists an **imperishable crown** - given to the believer who lives a disciplined life.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 Paul mentions a **crown of rejoicing** - it goes to a person who wins souls for Jesus.

James 1:12 talks of a **crown of life**. This is awarded to those believers who resist temptation.

1 Peter 5:4 speaks of a **crown of glory**. This is the award given to faithful church leaders.

And here a **crown of righteousness** is received by all believers who keep their hearts primed - who stay undistracted by the allurements of this world - and live their lives longing for the appearing of Jesus Christ...

The **“crown of righteousness”** is given to folks who **“love His appearing.”** I have a friend who used to call himself a **“Pan-trib.”** When it comes to the return of Jesus for His Church he figured *however it pans out...*

I don't like that attitude. I'm a **pre-trib.** I believe the next thing to happen on God's prophetic time table is the rapture of the Church... *Love the Lord's appearing.*

Long to see Jesus! Jesus is what's next! You won't endure the fight if you don't see the coming prize.

As a kid I loved my mom, but I didn't always love her appearance. When my hand was in the cookie jar, and she walked into the kitchen I loved my mom, but I didn't necessarily love her appearance at that moment.

A special crown goes to the man who keeps his hands off the cookies, and lives ready for Jesus' return.

I'm hearing of so many people today who're getting caught with their hand in the cookie jar. You know Jesus is coming back? Be ready when he does?

For the rest of the chapter, Paul deals with practical issues. We get a rare glimpse into his personal world.

In verse 9 he writes to Timothy, **“Be diligent to come to me quickly...”** Paul's legal proceedings weren't going well. His appeals were almost exhausted. An execution date hadn't been set, but it would be soon.

Paul would love to see his son in the faith one more time. Nobody should have to die alone. *Hurry Timothy!*

Verse 10 tells us why it's so vital that Timothy come to him, "for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica..."

There is a famous painting of the rich, young ruler. All you see is his back, as he walks away from Jesus. It's so sad... But that painting could also be of Demas...

Demas was once a trusted ally of Paul - but the world stole his heart. Demas sold his soul. He got weary of the fight - of the ridicule and hardship...

I know Demas' last words before he bailed out. They're not in the Bible, but I know them. I've heard them so many times before... "I just want to be happy."

I bumped into a guy at the Waffle House. He was once a part of CC, but it had been months since I'd seen him. He told me he was contemplating a divorce. This is what he said, "I just want some happiness."

That's what Demas said - but that's not what he meant! He meant I just want to get drunk. I just want to be free from responsibility. I'm just tired of my job, and my wife's nagging, and the kids disrespect, and all the ingratitude. Life has gotten hard, and I want out!

Trust me Demas, regardless of how attractive it sounds, abandoning and escaping God-given responsibilities is not anyone's ticket to happiness.

Demas swapped his *commitments* for a few *jollies*.

There's no *joy* - no *satisfaction* - in that. And on top of his emptiness he added alimony, and child support, and shame, and guilt, and the loss of his kid's respect.

Life is a fight - *with or without Jesus...*

Without Jesus life is a wild goose chase with no goose. But **with Jesus** there's a prize after the fight!

Paul was now alone. "**Crescens** had left **for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.**" They left on Kingdom business.

"**Only Luke is with me.**" Luke was not only the NT historian, but he was Paul's personal physician.

There's evidence Paul had an infectious eye disease that flared up in the more coastal, tropical areas.

"**Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.**" This is wonderful news.

Earlier in Acts 15 on their first missionary journey, Mark abandoned Paul and Barnabas. When it came time for a second expedition, Paul refused to take Mark along. It created a split between Paul and Barnabas.

But now at the end of Paul's journeys he once again desires to be with Mark. Paul harbored no grudges. He'd forgiven Mark, and given him a second chance.

Now Paul considers him "**useful to me for ministry.**"

Verse 12 "**And Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.**"

Timothy is pastoring the church in Ephesus. Tychicus is delivering this letter to Timothy. Paul sends Ty as Timothy's replacement, so Tim can come to Rome.

In verse 13 Paul adds, “Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come...” Apparently, winter was right around the corner. And it was getting cold in the Roman prison. Paul needs a coat to stay warm.

He also asks for “the books, especially the parchments.” This amazes me, Paul wrote half the NT.

He took the Gospel around the globe - started churches everywhere - *yet he really needed his Bible.*

Here’s a man who kept growing even to the end - until the day he died. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” And that’s true whether you’ve been a Christian for 30 minutes or for 30 years.

Verse 14 “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.”

Paul pulls no punches. This Alexander did him “*much harm.*” Paul levels the worst of curses on this man...

He affords *him no grace, no mercy* - just give the guy what he deserves. Repay him according to his works.

Paul had enemies, as well as friends, and before he departs this earth he points out to Timothy the guys who’ll give him the most trouble. “You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.”

Verse 16 is one of the most heartbreaking verses in the Bible... “At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.” The

Roman courts preliminary hearings where evidence was presented *for* and *against* the accused.

A time was scheduled for the prosecutor to parade his witnesses before the court. Then the defendant could bring his witnesses to *affirm his innocence* and *attest to his character*. On the day Paul defended himself nobody showed. Not a single friend was there.

Paul led thousands of people to Jesus, yet when he needed a friend no other human being showed up.

Yet Paul held no resentment. He learned a lesson. Verse 17, “**But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.**” At his trial before Nero, only Jesus stood with Paul - but he realized Jesus was all he needed.

I love this paraphrase of verse 17, “**At my preliminary hearing no one stood by me. They all ran like scared rabbits. But it doesn't matter - the Master stood by me.**”

At the end of verse 17 Paul says of his first imprisonment, “**And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.**” It could be he was literally thrown to the lions.

In Rome's attacks against the Church, she threw thousands of believers to wild beasts. God may've struck the big cats with lockjaw – like He did for Daniel.

Paul also could've been speaking metaphorically – of Nero - or even Satan himself. 1 Peter 5:8 refers to Satan as “**a roaring lion.**” The point Paul makes is God delivered him once, He'll can do it again if He chooses.

Verse 18, “The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.

To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!”

“Greet Prisca and Aquila...” Priscilla and Aquila were the dynamic duo who merged *marriage* and *ministry*.

Everywhere their names appear in Scripture we find them hosting a Bible study in their home. They opened up to Jesus both *their hearts* and *their home*.

“And (also greet) the household of Onesiphorus.”

Recall, Onesiphorus was visiting Paul in Rome. I can imagine him eagerly poking Paul in the ribs, and asking him to make mention of his family in his letter.

Verse 20, “Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.” If it’s God’s will to heal all illness – *why did Paul leave behind a sick Trophimus?*

Paul would’ve healed him - or at least stayed with him and prayed for him until he was healed. The truth is that God often uses illnesses for His purposes.

Paul goes on to say to Timothy, “Do your utmost to come before winter.” *And why the rush?* His coat is in Troas. Timothy needs to fetch it before it turns chilly.

“Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.” All believers in Rome.

And here are Paul’s final words, “The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.”