

## TO MY SON

An Expository Study of Timothy

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### CHAPTER THREE -

#### THE PASSING DAYS TILL THE PERFECT DAY

II Timothy 1:8-12

**8 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;**

**9 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,**

**10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:**

**11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.**

**12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.**

"**AGAINST that day**" - how characteristic of the apostle is that phrase. The thought was constantly at the back of his mind.

As you read his correspondence, you note how frequently it crops up - sometimes he deals with it specifically, sometimes it just slips out. In this short Epistle he has three references to the matter: here at 1:12, at 1:18, and at 4:8. So, for him, the passing days are shaped and coloured by the thought of the coming perfect day. In view of this latter, he would counsel his young son in the faith to be -

#### NOT ASHAMED

"**Be not... ashamed**", he says in verse 8; and because, as we saw last time, he always practices what he preaches, he says, "**I am not ashamed**," in verse 12. After all, what is there to be ashamed about in being a Christian - except it be that one is such a poor Christian. In very truth, it is a matchless honour to be a Christian.

In one of the Italian wars of many years ago, the recruiting band was marching through the villages gathering young volunteers as it went, who brought their weapon, a gun, a sword, from their houses, and fell in at the tail end of the procession. At one place an old woman, stirred by

the martial music, went hurriedly back into her house: she had no sword, no gun, but she had a broomstick - and with that at the "slopearms," she joined the march. How her fellow-villagers laughed! What could the silly old woman do for the war? She hurled at them her spirited reply - "I don't care so long as you know whose side I'm on".

I hope that story is true, for the action was fine! Even if we have nothing but a broomstick to contribute to the Cause, let us bring that, and see that there is no question of our allegiance, that all may know that we are undoubtedly and unashamedly His. As for Timothy:

(a) *Shall he be ashamed of the Master he served?* "**Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord**". There is, as here

(i) Our testimony of Him. In these days He is "**despised and rejected of men,**" but in "**that Day**" He shall be crowned.

How easy it will be to honour Him then; but how infinitely more worth while to honour Him now, in the days of His rejection.

Have you not some testimony to give concerning Him? Does He mean to you something that you long to share with others? Is He not a Saviour so complete, a Master so amazing, a Friend so altogether wonderful? Tell out, not something that you have read in a book, but what you yourself have experienced of Him in your own heart: this, and this, and this, I have found Him to be. On the other hand, there is

(ii) His testimony concerning us. To give our testimony in these days will lead us on to receive His testimony in that day! "**Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will confess also before My Father which is in Heaven . . . . Whosoever 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,**" Matthew 10:32; Mark 8:38.

Such is His own assurance. We do not forget that we may actually have some testimony from Him even now. You remember old Enoch, of whom Hebrews 11:5 tells us that "**before his translation, he had this testimony, that he pleased God**". It was on this verse that dear Taylor Smith used so often mysteriously to challenge people: "Have you the testimony?"

For oneself, one feels one can only turn the question into a prayer!

"Ashamed of JESUS! that dear Friend  
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend!  
No, when I blush, be this my shame,  
That I no more revere His Name.

And, oh, may this my glory be,  
That CHRIST is not ashamed of me."

Well then,

(b) *Shall he be ashamed of the Man he loved?* "**Nor of me His prisoner**".

Time was when Timothy held Paul as his hero, as well as his father in the faith, when he was proud beyond words to be seen in his company, to be counted amongst his helpers - has all that to be altered now that his friend has been thrown into prison, and is under social disgrace? No, no, a thousand times, No.

Apart altogether from the spiritual bond, and the mutual affection, between them, this Paul who is so dishonoured now by men will in that Day be seen to be held in high honour in Heaven - shall Timothy, then, be ashamed of one "**whom the King delighteth to honour**"? Esther 6:6.

But let us pursue the thought, for a moment, in a different direction. There is, I think, sometimes a subtle temptation to despise some of our fellow believers - those of a lower social scale, those whose mental development has been sadly arrested, those who are not as "out-and-out" for the LORD as we fondly imagine ourselves to be, those who are physically maladjusted. I often think that some of these humbler, or afflicted, brethren are going to have a high place hereafter, and perhaps we shall feel happier in that day if we have not been ashamed of them in these days.

But to go back to the prisoner - how great a privilege shall we count it to have been the companions of GOD's prisoners: a Samuel Rutherford, a John Bunyan, a Niemoller, a Paul. I am quite sure that, whatever else may happen, Timothy will never be ashamed of his great leader, in prison or out of it. Paul, you need have no anxiety on that score!

Then

(c) *Shall he be ashamed of the Message he bore?* Need he blush to think that he should ever have preached such things? His message is here declared to be a "**gospel**" - a Good News, not as the late Prebendary Webster would have said, "good advice"! We have had more than enough of this latter commodity from our pulpits; what people want is good news, the Good News.

But remember this begins with Bad News - the pronouncement of our guilty sinnership precedes the announcement of His gracious Saviourhood. Note in our passage:

(i) *How the Gospel is described.* First, it is neatly connected with "**power**". That is why Paul himself was so proud of it, as he explains in Romans 1:16, "**I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**" - the word he uses for "power" is that from which the English word "*dynamite*" comes: the dynamite of man is unto destruction, but the dynamite of GOD is unto salvation. How immensely powerful is this Gospel. If sometimes we miss the old power nowadays, that is not because the strength is no longer there in the Gospel, but that we have lost the knowledge of how to use it - afraid of handling the dynamite, we have taken to use soft soap instead.

Next, we observe that through this Gospel He "**hath saved us**" - grand old word, though so shabbily treated to-day. It includes three things of course. As to the guilt and penalty of sin, "**ye are [have been] saved**," as in Ephesians 2:5, and here: it is all over and done with - you are once and for all, and for ever, released; as to the power and habit of sin, the word speaks, as in I

Corinthians 1:18, of "**us which are saved**" as a matter of everyday practical experience of the power of GOD; as to the ultimate connection with sin, we shall be saved, in which sense, "**now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,**" as Romans 13:11 tells us: we hasten on towards sin's complete and final expulsion. What a salvation; and what a gospel! Who is going to be ashamed of it?

Further, this Gospel brings no merely negative blessing: its positive side is that, in it, we are "**called... with an holy calling**" - if, as Christians, we are failing to live a positively holy life, we are gravely disappointing one of the primal reasons of our redemption, namely, that we should be "**conformed to the image of His Son**", as Romans 8:29 makes plain.

How sadly blameworthy are some of us believers in this connection: how little "**like Him**" we are. In the Perfect Day we shall be perfectly "**like Him**," says I John 3:2: oh, that in the Passing Days we might be more so!

Lastly, this description of the Gospel committed to Timothy - and to Paul, and to us - makes it quite clear that its blessing comes "**not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace**". There is still a multitude of people, even many church people, who think that acceptance with GOD is secured by their own merit, that entrance to Heaven is gained by their own good works. How insistently does the New Testament combat that self-flattering idea!

Although salvation is "**unto good works**" - that is, it commits its recipients to a subsequent practical Christianity yet - it is not "**of works**" - that is, our works cannot win it. His finished Work for us must first be accepted "**by faith**," and then our continual works for Him must follow, as the mark of our gratitude and the fruit of our love. Such is the teaching, not of this present poor scribe, but of the inspired writer of Ephesians 2:8-10. All comes of "**His own purpose and grace**": because of His infinite grace, He conceived the loving purpose of our salvation. When did He come by that purpose? Let us dare to take just a few steps into that realm of mystery, and note

(ii) *How the Gospel is prepared.* "**Before the world began,**" says our verse 9. It was not a sudden whim of the Almighty: it was "**prepared before the face** (perhaps here = the existence) **of all people**", sang old Simeon, in Luke 2:31. Before the sin happened, before the sinner came, before the sinner's world was - the salvation plan was drawn up ready.

The Lamb, Who is the Plan, "**was foreordained before the foundation of the world,**" Peter was allowed to reveal to us, in I Peter 1:20. That word "**foundation**" means "*the architect's plan*". He has the conception of his house in his mind; then he sets about drawing his plans. With his thoughts upon what will be the needs of those who will come to inhabit it, he puts in this and that - kitchen, bedrooms, coal cellar, bathroom, study, lounge, and so on. Our word suggests to us the Architect of the Universe, first conceiving, and then planning, this World - House for the habitation of men. All the while, His mind will be dwelling upon what will be their need.

He sees them in His mind, as if they were already here in occupation of the house. "**According to the foreknowledge,**" as I Peter 1:2 has it. The Architect knows that the chief need will be for the provision of a way of dealing with sin - so it is put down in the Plan. Even before the emergency of sin, there is the emergence of grace. In the course of time the Plan was put into

effect and, as our passage says, "**is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.**" Hebrews 9:24 ff speaks of three appearances of Him - "**He [hath] appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself**"; He has gone back into Heaven "**now to appear in the presence of God for us**"; and "**He [shall] appear the second time . . . unto salvation**".

It is, of course, the first of these that the passage we are studying refers to, the time when He was "**manifested**" in the unfolding of history as the Eternal and Almighty Plan of Salvation.

See here further:

(iii) *How the Gospel is exemplified* - that is, how one example is given of the mighty things that the Gospel gives us to declare: the way in which He deals with death. That is, in Romans 6:23, described as "**the wages of sin**"; so that it would seem that, if He deals completely with sin, it must somehow affect the fact of death.

Two things are indicated: again, the one negative, and the other positive. First, then, He hath "**abolished death**". Hebrews 2:14 says that "**through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil**". Abolish, destroy - it is the same word in the Greek; and its real meaning is, not to do away with altogether, but to render harmless, as you might take the pin out of an unexploded bomb, to make it of none effect, to rob it (death) of its sting, so that I Corinthians 15:55 can say, "**O death, where is thy sting?**"

In the Perfect Day, death shall, like sin, its foul parent, be utterly, finally, done away; but meanwhile, even in these Passing Days, it is, for the believer, robbed of its sting, and need no longer be feared. Also, to speak positively, He "**hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel**" - Dr. Handley Moule considers the phrase, "brought out into the light": it was once so dim, but now so different.

It is interesting to reflect that some kind of belief in an after life is found in every race of men throughout the world: often it is very crude, but it is there.

That explains the curious burial customs among some people - for instance, the burying of furniture, of a wife, of a horse, even of food, to meet their presumed need beyond the tomb. But it is all so dim. When you come to the Old Testament, you find many references, yet even there we are still moving in the dusk.

Then, the Saviour is "**manifested**": He dies, is buried, and is raised by GOD; and in that glorious resurrection the blessed fact of blissful immortality is "brought out into the light". Gather up all we have said about it: what a Gospel it is that is committed to Timothy - and to us. Who will be ashamed of it, or of Him, or of His people?

Two ways run throughout this life, as the Master shows us in Matthew 7:13-14. On the one are so few, and they have had to come down so low in humbling themselves, and their lives must be lived in narrow fashions. Do they sometimes have a certain fog of shame in themselves, when they look across upon that other way, with the great crowds that press through the wide-opened gate, and that enjoy such seeming freedom and liberty?

The Master Himself did not hide from would-be followers that the company they sought was a "little flock", Luke 12:32; but He hastened to add that it was the **"Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"**. Let them not dwell overmuch upon the situation in the passing days, but view it all in the light of the perfect day. Whither goes that crowded road, and whither that sparse way? The one to Destruction; the other to Life. Oh, where is shame? Let the believer rather lift up his head in proper pride - not in his own merit, not in his own achievement, but to the grace-given, God-given, privilege that has placed him amid the glorious company of GOD's elect.

Paul, in the storm, confesses GOD, **"whose I am and whom I serve,"** Acts 27:23 - and verily, they are the words of the proudest man on board. Captain Julius is proud, for he belongs to Imperial Rome, and serves the great Emperor yet - even he is not so conscious of dignity and privilege as this prisoner of his; so humble in himself, so proud in GOD! We have been far too long on this first aspect of our subject: we must hurry on to observe another direction for life lived **"against that day"** - we should be

### NOT ASLEEP

You remember how the LORD warns His disciples, in Mark 13:36, **"lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping"**.

Paul now offers himself and his experience as a guiding illustration to his spiritual son and successor.

(a) *He had a work to do.* He speaks of **"the gospel, whereunto I am appointed,"** or, as he puts it in Romans 1:1, he is **"separated unto the gospel"**. Having, for himself, accepted the gospel, he was thenceforth, in some sense, committed to the service of the Gospel; but he was not peculiar in that: every Christian is, "By Royal Appointment," in the King's Service. **"To every man his work,"** Mark 13:34: this for you, that for me; something for each.

**"That day"** must not catch us unawares, slothful, slumbering.

One of our hymnaries has a hymn, *"Work, for the night is coming"*. The very next one is *"Work, for the Day is coming"*. Well, either way, Work!

Then the apostle is our example in that:

(b) *He had a zeal for it.* He did not do his work because he supposed he ought to, or because he must: quite obviously he revelled in it, and never dreamed of slackening up. He was always at it- **"a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles":**

- preaching is public ministry;
- teaching is private ministry;
- apostolising is peripatetic ministry.

What an impression we get of ceaseless, and tireless, activity. How utterly amazed this zealous warrior would be at those arm-chair Christians that are all too frequently to be found in our ranks. Don't you think that enthusiasm in Christian service is a quality that is becoming more

rare amongst us?

Well, the next thing Paul lets slip about himself is, that

(c) *He had a price to pay*. "**For the which cause I also suffer these things**". When I find myself becoming more than usually religiously comfortable, I turn up the passage, II Corinthians 11:23-28, where Paul details some of the things he endured for CHRIST. Very rarely can I read those verses without being greatly moved, and deeply shamed. My friends, it costs something to be the type of Christian worker Paul was.

Whether you will be called to suffer physically or not, I cannot tell; but I am sure that you will be challenged to an expenditure of time, money, energy, thought, ambition, self. Paul does not want Timothy to forget that all-out Christian service involves a big price. Indeed, could he ever forget it, if, as is not unlikely, he saw Paul's mangled, tortured, and supposedly dead body on the roadside by the gates of Lystra, as is described in Acts 14:19.

Ah, but you see

(d) *He had a goal in view*. Do you remember how he describes it in Romans 8:18, "**I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed**". There, you see, is his secret.

It was the thought of the Perfect Day that enabled him to endure the hardships of the Passing Days. In the light of "**that Day**", he was:

- (i) eager to serve, and
- (ii) ready to suffer.

His goal brightens even his jail. Keep your eye on that Day, Timothy - and you, my reader; and I, your scribe.

Now let us go on to consider one further characteristic that our apostle would emphasise in view of this upward look, this onward look: we must needs take care to be

### **NOT ADRIFT**

In Timothy's day there would be many temptations to drift, and there would be many such also in our day - a danger of cutting adrift from the old moorings; a danger lest the tempestuous circumstances of our experience may loosen our hold upon the old realities; a danger of drifting into calmer but illegitimate waters to escape the buffetings of a more adventurous Christian life; a danger of letting go the old anchors that once held us to the faith.

Such things have happened to Christians before now; but Paul prefers to remind Timothy of the other side of the matter, and still using his own experience as an example, he says that:

(a) *The believer is kept*. This is one of those things about which he is "**persuaded**". There are things about which it is legitimate for different persons to have contrary views; and the

university-trained scholar in Paul would make him the very last one to deny the right of difference of opinion in all such things. But on some points he was magnificently dogmatic. Things revealed admit of no question.

In free and easy days, when, in the religious sphere, it is almost a crime against good taste to profess to be quite sure about anything, Paul's forthright dogmatism has a tonic quality - "**though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed**", (Galatians 1:8); there's iron in that. I suspect our blood needs a course of iron just now. Even the gentle John is equally certain when occasion demands; "**we know**" is one of the characteristics of his First Epistle, which, incidentally, was written in order "**that ye may know**" (5:13) - it is, to him, not enough to think, or to hope; he bids us rest upon GOD's Word, and then and thus to know for sure.

Well, after that long preamble, one of the matters about which Paul was quite certain was that GOD is "**able to keep**" those whom He has proved Himself "**able to save**". The storms of life might strain his cordage, and tug at his anchor, but the believer need not get adrift, because GOD can hold him steadfast and sure. But only if:

(b) *The believer is committed* - "**that which I have committed unto Him**" is the condition, and limit, of His keeping power.

When going to stay at hotels, you have often seen by the reception desk a notice to the effect that "The Management will not be responsible for the safety of any valuables unless they are placed in the custody of the Hotel safe". The safe is "**able to keep**", but only if the valuables are committed into it.

In this latter event, they are kept safe until that day when they are wanted. Oh, restful, steady, thought: that if we commit ourselves to Him, He will keep us gloriously safe "**against that Day**" when He shall take up as well as "**make up [HIS] jewels**", Malachi 3:17.

About this committing to Him, Dr. Alexander Maclaren says, "The metaphor is a plain enough one. A man has some rich treasure. He is afraid of losing it, he is doubtful of his own power of keeping it. He looks about for some reliable person and trusted hands, and he deposits it there". And who is infallibly trustworthy but He?

Now, the reason for this complete assurance exists only in the fact that:

(c) *The believer is acquainted* - "**I know Whom I have believed**": the rest naturally follows.

It cannot always be said that the believer knows What, or knows When, or knows Where, or knows Which, or knows Whether, or knows Whither, or knows Why - but he knows Whom! That is the essential, and the supreme, knowledge. You will remember another apostle's farewell message, to his friends, "**Grow in . . . the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**," II Peter 3:18.

We should all of us progress from our first Introduction to Him, through all the Intermediate stages, towards that Intimacy with Him, which He so graciously, and so wondrously, allows.

When Ned Weeks, the cobbler evangelist, who did such a remarkable work for GOD in Northampton, came to die, he was accorded a great funeral.

In a public house on the line of route, by way of explaining to the others the reason for the crowds and the kind of man Ned was, one of the men said, "He was wonderful thick with the Almighty". It reminds one of Enoch, who, amid all the difficulties of his family and public life, and in face of all the opposite factors at which Jude 15 hints, "**walked with God**," until the day when, as a little child explained, "They went so far that GOD said, 'It's getting rather late, you had better come home with Me'."

To know Him is to want to commit ourselves entirely to Him. and to be thoroughly persuaded that He is quite well able to keep that deposit safe "**against that Day**".

Yes "**that Day**" has been at the back of all our thinking in this section. Paul would counsel us to have the thought both in the background and in the foreground. He says as much to his other young helper, Titus, when writing (2:12-13) that "**we should live . . . looking**". Do you know what it means to live through the passing days with an eye on the perfect day? If you went to boarding school perhaps you would understand; for amongst their denizens you would often discover those who kept somewhere a mysterious piece of paper, on which was written just a series of numbers - say, 50, 49, 48, 47, and so on.

It was "Days till the Holidays"; as each night came, a day was scored through - so the happy Day of release coloured all the varied days of term; they "**lived . . . looking**".

And what of those wounded prisoners of war who recently were told they were to be brought Home? Each day since has been one day nearer the Day; that has helped them with the difficulties of the passing days; they have "**lived . . . looking**". It is our wisdom, our joy, our inspiration, our comfort, to look at everything in life as up "**against that Day**". George Meredith speaks somewhere of what he calls "the rapture of the forward view".

He was not thinking of our present theme; but his words may well abide with us as we close this study.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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