

Wisdom From A Mother's Heart

New Testament Reading Plan

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Now today, we're going to turn to the paragraph which is technically the last chapter, the last section in the life of whom we know as the Apostle Paul, and it may seem at first to be somewhat of an unusual passage for the celebration of what we know as Mother's Day but let me remind you, as we read through the book of Acts, as we study the book of Acts as a family of faith this summer, one of the key, if not the key principal character is whom we know as the Apostle Paul, and if you begin to study that which the Lord gave us through the Apostle Paul, the first letter is what we know as 1 Thessalonians, the last letter is what we know as 2 Timothy. Why is that important? Because in 1 Thessalonians 2, the Apostle Paul is talking to those who are new in the faith, are growing in the faith, some of them are even struggling in the faith, and he makes a very interesting observation, he said, "I have nursed you from the beginning." Basically the Apostle Paul says, "I have mothered you." Think about all the descriptions that we just heard on that video and even though the questions were about school and being raised in the physical, they do transpose to the spiritual, do they not? Who is that individual who more likely than not gave us that first communication of the gospel, who loved us and demonstrated, gave and sacrificed for us? That's what the Apostle Paul is saying. He said when you came to faith and you were new in your faith, just like a mother does their child, I helped raise you and I helped discipline you, and I helped set you on the right path for your faith.

That was 30+ years before 2 Timothy 4 and what's interesting is as we played that video, as we sit today and reflect on those who have been so influential in our life, those whom we call mom, oftentimes it causes us to think back years ago, decades ago, the wisdom that was instilled, the example that was set before us. When we get to 2 Timothy 4:9, the Apostle Paul ends his written words to us, I mean, this is the last paragraph that the Lord will give us through his life, it doesn't sound real influential, it doesn't sound real impactful but I think today what we're going to discover is that in the list of names and descriptions of places, the Lord has a very important word for us.

Beginning in verse 9, he says,

9 Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Take

Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. 13 The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: 15 Of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. 16 At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. 17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 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.

Now if we were to go through what we know as the letters of the Apostle Paul, I think we'd all confess there's a whole lot more inspirational passages out there but what I see in 2 Timothy 4 at the very end is not only a man at the end of his life but much like the moms in our life have done to us, have you ever had one of those what I call coffee talk conversations? Maybe it wasn't actually coffee that you were drinking at the time, but maybe you're sitting at a table, maybe you're sitting at a diner, and that one who has loved you and nursed you and cared for you just speaks some pretty practical words of wisdom into your life. Today, I want us to see a couple of things that I think the Lord has for us out of this passage and I'm going to present it in a very Mother's Day fashion. I'm going to share with you one of those ancient proverbial statements that moms always use, and then I'm going to give the biblical precept of what it means. Don't raise your hand because it would require all of us and we'd look like a Pentecostal church if we did so, how many of you have had your mom say, "That room ain't gonna clean itself"?

Now in our house, there are four men in our house. This may be with a variation thereof, the most frequently thing that is every said in our home. "That room is not gonna clean itself." And it doesn't matter, male or female, when you're going through those young stages of life in middle school and high school, what we know as a dumpster and a teenager's room are synonyms at that point. It's amazing how much we as young people are able to cram and stuff and hide and whatever it may be, but what does it mean, what does it mean when mom says this? It means that if you don't put a little effort into it, if you don't put a little bit of elbow grease into it, it's not just going to naturally happen. Here's the biblical precept. Godliness, righteousness, holiness does not happen in and of itself. You have to put forth a little effort.

Look at verse 9. He says, "Do thy diligence." Look in verse 21 at the end, "Do thy diligence to come before winter." What was the Apostle Paul asking Timothy to do? He was asking him basically to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We're going to speak about it

in just a moment. "There's a coat that I need. There's some books that I need. There's some relationships that we've got to tie up here." And what the Apostle Paul understood, what moms understand, and what we need to understand today is that holiness, righteousness, godliness, does not come naturally. You cannot put your life in neutral and just expect it to happen. In fact, the Bible makes it very clear that you and I as humanity, have a natural disposition toward the things of this world more than we do the things of God.

Allow me to illustrate. My wife and I throughout the years have had numerous residences and one of the things that I don't know why we do but we just keep doing it, is we tend to buy homes that are older than we are and kind of put our personal touch on it. Now if you've ever had a home that is your age or older and it has wood or tile floors, you know that no floor is level, right? I mean, they're just not. And we've had some that were basically roller-coasters under a roof, and we've had others that were hard to see with the eye. But one of the things that we notice, particularly as you're raising little children, is, I guess in our case particularly with the boys, whether it is a ball or has anything that is spherical, when it hits the floor, what does it do? It naturally rolls to the lowest depression.

You see, when left to our own devices, we naturally will go the lowest common denominator, will we not? We will always gravitate toward the lowest option or opportunity in life. But let's talk about godliness, holiness here in this passage. He's saying, "I need you to serve me. I need you to be selfless. You need some diligence here." It takes effort to read your Bible. It takes effort to pray. You don't believe me? Try doing it for more than three minutes. It's tough. How about going to church? Now don't show your hands but how many of you have had a good old fashioned family fight before you got in the car today? It's tough. Do your diligence. If you and I today are going to determine that I want to be one of God's, if I want to be holy, if I want to be righteous, if I want to live a life that is contrary to this world, do not expect to put your life in neutral and it naturally happen. You're going to have to put forth some effort.

He says, "Do thy diligence." The second statement that many of us have heard from our moms throughout the years, "If your friends jumped off a cliff..." I already got a yes and an amen out of some moms, right? Why do we hear this statement? The reason we hear this statement is typically there are some people in our lives that want us to do some things that aren't the wisest of decisions. There are people that are trying to talk us into or maybe we're trying to convince ourselves that this is a decision that needs to be made, a behavior that needs to be implemented, whatever it is, and it is those mom figures in our life that do that look that was on the video and say, "If your friends jumped off a cliff, would you jump too?"

We know what they mean. What they mean is what you just shared with me is the dumbest thing I've ever heard in my life. That's what they're actually saying, but they're communicating in a very valuable biblical truth. The relationships that you have in life will either encourage or discourage your relationship with God. Remember the first point: there is no neutral. You're going to start rolling. It takes effort to be of God and to do

things God's way, but it is those who we relate to, it is the relationships that we possess in life that will have the greatest influence on our relationship with the Lord. Those whom we interact with can either build us up in our relationship with the Lord or they can tear us down.

Now in this specific passage, we have the Apostle Paul and one of the things that I want to share with you this morning is I think everybody in our life, everybody here, needs a Paul, a Barnabas and a Timothy. If you've never heard that illustration before, let me unpack it. Every one of us needs a Paul. Every one of us needs someone who's closer to the Lord than we are to kind of guide us and to help us. We all need some Barnabas's, those are those who will encourage us, they're kind of where we are spiritually, they're walking the journey of life step by step with us. Then we need a Timothy. We need somebody who we're pouring into.

Now allow me to illustrate what that looks like. I want you to imagine on these steps here, that there is Paul above and there is Timothy below. Paul is trying to encourage me to step up and to be more dedicated to the things of God. And then there's Timothy who hopefully I'm encouraging to follow suit and do the same thing. But here's one of the things that I want you to hear this morning, that if you are physically on steps and there is somebody who is below you, thanks to the laws of nature and gravity and a multitude of other things, it is easier – hear me clearly, church – it's easier for them to pull you down than it is for you to pull them up.

I want you to notice the list of people that are here in 2 Timothy 4. This is the Apostle Paul and last time I checked, he had some relationship issues, did he not? There were some people in his life that were causing him to struggle and I want to focus just on four of these individuals today with the illustration of the steps and I want you to see how they will impact your walk with the Lord.

Let's talk about Demas. Notice what it says there, it says, "Demas," verse 10, "has forsaken me." We all have those individuals in our life who for one reason or not decide that they'd rather experience the things of the world than the things of God. Oftentimes we would call them prodigals, that individual who says, "I would rather wallow in the mud by myself than to be in the house where I know I'm supposed to be." Notice he says, "Demas has forsaken me for the love of this world." We're all going to have people in our lives, fellow believers, whomever it may be, that for whatever reason decide they want to go and play in the mud of this world. Can I give you some motherly Apostle Paul advice? Don't go chasing after them. Pray for them, encourage them, whatever it may be, but did you see in Luke 15 the prodigal son, did you ever see once where the dad in the story got in the mud? Not once. You see, the problem is when we start chasing people in the mud, we end up getting stuck ourselves. He says, "Demas has forsaken me," and there is this tendency when we have friendships and relationships that are wallowing in the world, we have this tendency to somehow think, "I'm the life preserver. I need to jump in the mud with you." Now instead of one in the mud, we've got two in the mud, and who's going to get you out?

You see, Demas was that one who the Apostle Paul was holding onto and if you'll take the story and kind of extrapolate it, the prayer is that one day that Demas will "come to his senses" like Luke 15, and who should be there to pull him? That's right, the Apostle Paul. You can't pull him out if you're in there with him. There are people in your life that will choose the things of this world more than the things of God. Do not experience what we jokingly call missionary dating or missionary friendship where you think you've got to be in the mud with them to get them out of it. Demas has forsaken him.

Then later on in the passage, we hear about a guy named Alexander the coppersmith. This is interesting. It says, "Alexander has done me great evil." Allow me to go back to my illustration. So Demas basically just broke off and said, "I'm out of here." What did Alexander do? Alexander strategically and purposefully tried to pull him down. Now let me tell you about the Alexander's in your life. These are the individuals who say all the right things, maybe they couch phrases just the right way but it's manipulative, it doesn't have your best interest at hand. These are the ones particularly that your mom said if they jumped off the cliff, would you? "He tried to do me much evil." There are people in your life who will do their best to wreck yours and what did he say? "He did much evil. May the Lord reward him."

You see, there are Demas's in our life that will run to the world. Don't go get in the mud with them. There are Alexander's in our life who will try to tear our world apart. Notice the Apostle Paul did not enact revenge on him. He did not create some secret stealthy plan to "get back" at him. He just said, "The Lord reward him." Then there's Mark. By the way, Mark in this passage is John Mark, back in chapter 15. You may not be familiar with this story but the Apostle Paul is on the missionary journey and he and John Mark get in such a disagreement that they can't go together. You know, there are times where we just have to part ways with folks even though we love them, we care for them. But notice it says at the end that he is profitable for ministry. If I were to go back to my illustration, sometimes Demas just lets go and takes off, sometimes Alexander will try to drag you into the mud with them, but church, listen to me, this is hard for some of you, sometimes you've got to let go. Sometimes you've got to say, "Do you know what? This isn't good for my relationship with the Lord." Sometimes you've got to say, "This isn't going to grow me closer to the Lord. If I keep fostering this relationship, if I keep spending time and delving my emotional energy, it's going to eventually drag...." Do you see something? Demas let go, Alexander tried to drag down, but Paul had to let go of Mark. Now here's the beautiful part of this story and this will be Sermon 2.0 if we had time. We have evidence that whatever it was that caused division was repented of, it was restored and they finished the race together.

Last but not least, Luke. Colossians 4, he's called the beloved physician. Now according to the Bible, if you've been beaten five times, three times left for dead, you need a doctor with you at all times and that's who the Apostle Paul was. But nonetheless, notice that Luke is the one who the Lord used to give us not only the gospel of Luke but what we know as the book of Acts, that which we're walking through all summer long. "Only Luke is with me."

Now I want you to think about that from two perspectives. 1. Let's talk quantity. The great majority of the relationships in your life do not enhance your relationship with the Lord. That is just a cold hard fact. Guess what? It's kind of like mom sitting across the table with a cup of coffee, sometimes mom's got to tell you some stuff you don't like to hear but it's true. He meant well with Demas, Alexander was for a while, John Mark was good, but only Luke. You've heard this analogy before, as we grow older in life, that the number of our truest friends, those who we can really count on gets smaller and smaller and smaller. "Only Luke is with me."

Well, who are those in your life? Well, there's a lot of metrics that you can use but can I use one from the Meyers' family? The Luke's of the world are the ones who at midnight will drive across the state to pick you up when your car breaks down. That's a Luke, one who says, "Do you know what? It doesn't matter what it costs me in sleep, it doesn't matter what it costs me in finances, I care enough about you, I'm willing to give up what I've got so that you can be benefited." That's a true story. On a Saturday coming back from Texas once, my oldest son and I broke down on the side of the road. Do you know how nervous it makes a Baptist preacher when you start counting down, "Okay, 13 hours until the service. 12 hours to the service." And you're still sitting on the side of the road. I only had one person I could call. I only knew one person who had the equipment to take care of me. I didn't call Demas. I didn't call Alexander. I called Luke, that wasn't his actual name but I called him. Folks, the Luke's of this life are very very rare.

Notice he said, "I made the decision. Nobody was with me." Can I give you some Apostle Paul mother advice today? If you decide to live a life of holiness, godliness and purity, don't expect to have a huge friend base. Don't expect to have a large crowd behind you. Pray to God that you just have a Luke in your life who will drive back with you in the middle of the night.

There's one other statement that moms make all the time, in fact, you don't even have to be growing up as a teenager to hear this one, at least in our home. "If you don't eat your vegetables, you're not getting dessert." I've heard that enough, in fact, oftentimes my wife has the privilege of either to go and see her family in Texas or maybe take a ladies' trip, whatever it is, and people ask me, "So how is it, just the guys?" And I say, "We haven't eaten a vegetable since she left." Why? Because when momma's not there, bring on the cheesecake, fried chicken, barbecue, who needs vegetables? We'll make up for lost time when she gets back. But we know why mom says this, right? Because she knows that if you have a diet of nothing but good old Southern Baptist food, it's not going to go well for your health, is it? In fact, what's the biblical principle here? That balance is the key to godliness, balance is the key to holiness and righteousness.

I want you to look at verse 13. I think it's one of the most intriguing verses not only in the life of the Apostle Paul but in the entire Bible. It's going to seem like a list that one would put going to the store. He says, "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." That's interesting, he focuses so much on relationships and then he says, "Okay, but here's what's important for my life." Now I want you to think about where the Apostle Paul is here. He's in

prison. He's appealed unto Caesar. He knows he's in his last days. He's instructed Timothy, "I need you to put some effort here. I need you to be diligent here. Of all the relationships I've got, you're one of those who I can depend on, who I can trust. Bring the coat." What was he saying? "I'm cold." And when you're in the middle of a prison off the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, it gets a little chilly. He said, "I'm cold." And I think sometimes that's important when we talk about balance, is there are aspects of our physical life that have to be addressed in our life. You know, in the book of Proverbs it says a man that does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. I think sometimes we get so heavenly-minded we're no earthly good. In other words, we forget that there are these physical aspects, in fact, you may be shocked to find out there's over 2,500 verses in the Bible about handling money. You say, "Why would the Lord have so much?" Because we struggle with it. Those physical things of life, he said, "There are some things that have to help me physically."

Notice the second thing, "Bring the books." Now I would give you this scary statistic. Did you know that the average American, the average American once they complete their last day of formal education, whatever that is, rarely average reading one book every three years, and if they do, it's less than 128 pages. Why is that important? This was a man who knew he was about to die and he never quit learning. He never quit. This was the man who stood before the Athenians in Acts 17 and he talked about philosophy. This is the man who stood before Felix and Festus and they said, "You've almost persuaded me." This was the man who said, "Do you know what? I've been out of school for decades, I'm about to lose my life, but the Lord has still given me," listen to Romans 12:2, "a mind that must be transformed."

You know, sometimes we forget that our mind will take us places our body will not, and it's not just the physical needs of being met, it's the mental or the emotional needs. But look at this last thing, "but especially the parchments." What were the parchments in his life? Those were the scriptures. In our language today if we were to rewrite verse 13, we'd say, "Bring me a Bible. I need a Bible." What's important to this conversation is this, is that nowhere did he say that one of them was more important than the other one, and allow me to illustrate. Most of you, if not all of you today, came on some type of transportation that utilizes wheels. If you've ever been in a vehicle no matter how rudimentary or how fancy that either has a wheel that is under or over-inflated, you know how dangerous it can be. In order for a wheel to roll smoothly, it has to have equal pressure on all sides. What was the Apostle Paul saying? What do our moms tell us about vegetables compared to dessert? There's not a problem with eating dessert but you have to balance it with vegetables. There's not a problem with the success of the material things of this world but you'd better equal it out with your love for the Lord. If you don't believe me, just ask Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes. And yet sometimes we get so heavenly-minded we're no earthly good. I know folks that spend so much time in Bible study and they neglect their own loved ones. You know that that's a wheel that's out of balance? On the same time, if we spend so much time with the physical things in our studies of life and our jobs of life that we allow our spiritual life to be "depressed," then it makes for a very very bumpy ride.

These are the very last words of the Apostle Paul and here's what he's saying. If you want a life of godliness, holiness and righteousness, you're going to have to put forth some effort, and in doing so, you'd better analyze who you're allowing in your life, who's pulling you down, who's leaving you, who is actually edifying you, and last but not least, you need some balance. You need some balance between the things of this physical life, your mind, and even the things of God. There needs to be a smooth rolling wheel. You know, it's interesting that when you get to the very last part, the very last verse, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." As we close, let me be completely forthright: up until this moment, almost everything I've shared with you could be in a TED talk. Almost everything: put forth energy, watch who you hang around with, have balance. But notice how he ends in the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, those wheels that you rode on to get here, those wheels did not operate independently, there was a hub, there was an axle that was in the center that everything else revolved around, and here's what he's saying, if you have all the balance in life, if you have all the right relationships in life, if you have all the energy and desire in life, if it is not rooted and grounded in and centered upon Jesus Christ, it is for nothing. The greatest advice, the last advice we got from the Apostle Paul and many of us got from our own moms, was that if Jesus Christ is not at the center, then it doesn't matter what else you put in your life.