

The Final Word of the Apostle to the Gentiles

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2 Timothy 4, would you turn there? As we come to these benedictory words of 2 Timothy as he's writing to Timothy and giving him the final words he's going to inscribe. And it's, uh, a unique passage in that, um, it's a personal and practical, if you will, sort of greeting and updating of some things, but there are rich, rich nuggets in here of both exhortation and encouragement. So don't try to keep up with all the details I'm going to lay out as we look through all of the people he mentions and the situations surrounding them, but get for yourself the encouragements and exhortations that you need this morning, and maybe I should say that God knows we need this morning.

I entitled this final exposition, "The Final Word of the Apostle to the Gentiles." Underlying Paul's entire ministry are two foundational convictions. Underlying Paul's whole ministry are two foundational convictions. 1. God has spoken. Paul knew God had spoken a truth to him and that this thing that God had given was of authoritative revelation. It was full of godly authority. It was right. Paul refers to this truth, this body of truth we hold as sometimes "the faith," "the truth," "the word," the gospel, the sound teaching and other things. And he believed this truth was given to us, God's spoken, he's given us this truth and he has entrusted it to his church and to him as one of the church's ministers. It's it's a sacred deposit. It's a treasure we have as he writes to Timothy and says the church is the pillar and support of the truth that is Christianity. And so he writes to Timothy with that conviction to further ground and reaffirm Timothy in the truth and to further reform the local church that Timothy is overseeing, and that's the local church at Ephesus.

Well, that's the first foundational conviction. God has spoken and given us this truth. The second conviction, foundational conviction of Paul that was over-ruling the entirety of his ministry was that God had called him to the office of apostle and that he is to exercise that office with authority and with confidence. That rather jumped out with me, as I surmised the way Paul gave instruction. He talked about this man and this couple and this man, "And I told this one to go here, I told this one to stay there. I left this one here." He clearly exercises his office with authority and with confidence.

Now as we look at this, we come to this last section and we note that Paul has already mentioned 15 individuals in his letter to Timothy, and now he's going to mention eight more. Would you look at there? 2 Timothy 4:19 through 22. He closes the letter by

saying, "Greet Prisca and Aquila," sometimes we'll say Priscilla and Aquila, I'll use probably both names, just probably just a short version of Priscilla, Prisca and Aquila, "and the household of Onesiphorus. Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. Make every effort to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brethren. The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

Now the the section just naturally lays itself out in five parts. This is not my titles are different from others, but a lot of expositors show these five parts. That's what I'm going to do. 1. I. A greeting to pass on to believers in Ephesus. He says there, first of all, in verse 19, "Greet Priscilla or Prisca and Aquila." Now, these two folks, this married couple, they were dear, faithful coworkers with the Apostle Paul. I should say more than more than coworkers, just just under-girders, supporters to Paul. And it's no doubt that in the providence, providence of God, God raised up Priscilla and Aquila to do this and to be this, as they assisted Paul in his preaching, church planning, and on his missionary journeys. You see, first of all, Paul comes over, uh, uh, west and he comes into Europe. There in Philippi Lydia is saved, the first church is started in Europe, then he goes south all the way down to Athens, and then he goes west again over to Corinth. When Paul left Athens to go to Corinth, he had some mixed results over in Athens. He was at the Areopagus there and, uh, preaching and some of the people Acts tells us sneered at Paul's message, but others said, "Now we we need to hear some more about this. We're interested and we'd like to hear some more about it."

Acts 18:1-3 tells us, "After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them, and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers." The providence of God, Claudius, an Emperor, causes the Jews Aquila and Priscilla to leave and go to Corinth, and there Paul happens to be, providence of God, leaving Athens and going to Corinth, and they just happen to all three be tent-makers. Isn't God creative like that? And Brother Chad, here's another example of the Philemon fellowship truth. Here Aquila and Priscilla have a business and they join with Paul in the business to get the gospel out and plant churches and build up churches. I mean, we might should call it the Aquila and Priscilla fellowship because it's such a clear picture of what we want to accomplish accomplish in the Philemon fellowship. Now, again, let's be balanced here. Uh, Brother Chad does a beautiful job of this, and I'm in full conviction with him. There's no absolutes here, we just want the Philemon fellowship to be an encouragement for businessmen and business owners to use biblical principles, Christian principles in their business, and be a part of supporting God's to work just like Aquila and Priscilla did.

So God uses the edict of the ungodly Emperor to put Paul with Priscilla and Aquila. It's, it was so enlightening to Miss Pam and I as we left Athens, like Paul left Athens just about 2,000 years later, and we went to Corinth like Paul went to Corinth, and we walked among the ancient ruins of the ancient city of Corinth. Now, there's not a lot of buildings there, but there's fragments, there's foundations, the roads are there and it's amazing how

the Romans built roads because they really are the best roads, I guess the world's ever had. They're still there, you can just walk along them, you could drive a truck along them. And we were walking up and down the agora, the marketplace, and it struck me that I've probably walked within four or five or six feet where Aquila, Priscilla and Paul had their tent-making business and Paul made tents with them and lived in their home that was probably adjacent to the the building, and there they together preached the gospel, and Paul stayed there in that tent-making business with Aquila and Priscilla preaching the gospel for 18 months. It's just powerful to be there and think of all that happening right there next to where I stood.

Aquila and Priscilla were no doubt present as Paul preached the gospel as Acts 18:3-4, and verse 11 tells us, Acts 18 rather 3 and 4 and verse 11 tells us, "and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them," that's Aquila and Priscilla, "and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers. And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks." Now he's preaching the gospel. He's looking for more converts but at the same time, he is thoroughly equipping this business couple, Aquila and Priscilla, in the things of Christ and in the doctrines of Christianity. Verse 11 continues on, "And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." So that's again a total of 18 months in Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla.

Now at the end of Paul's 18 months with them in Corinth, they all, uh, begin to leave but before they left, let it be noted that they established, they planted a New Testament church. Nobody in the annals of history remembers that Aquila and Priscilla might have been the finest tent-makers in Europe but it is still true that they founded a church out of their business, out of their house in the city of Corinth. What's going to be the testimony of your business life? I mean, it'll be gone so quickly but what you do for Christ will last forever. It's right here recorded in sacred text about Aquila and Priscilla and their business, and using it for Christ.

Well, they sailed from Corinth, Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla. They head to Ephesus. At Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla found a preacher by the name of Apollos. Apollos was a fiery, zealous guy, but he needed to learn more about doctrine. You you're not just to yell and be excited, you're to be true. And the Bible tells us in Acts 18:26, "and he," that's Apollos, "began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him," they said to themselves, "God's got his hand on him but he don't understand true doctrine yet." That's my amplification. I inserted that, "they took him aside," the text actually says, "and explained to him the way of God more accurately." And we also know that a church was established in their home of Ephesus. So they left a church in Corinth. They moved their business to Ephesus. They worked with Paul in Ephesus and they started another church there in Ephesus.

Romans 16, 16 rather 3 through 5 tells us that Aquila and Priscilla also went to Rome and helped plant a church there again in their house and they even risked their lives for Paul. Romans 16:3 through 5 tells us, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risked their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but

also all the churches of the Gentiles; also greet the church that is in their house." These guys fire me up. Everywhere they went I'm sure they kept their business going, but they started churches. Powerful thing. What an encouragement to us.

So wherever we see Priscilla and Aquila, they're opening businesses and local churches are being established but now they're evidently as Paul's writing this, they're back in Ephesus and Paul wants to send greetings to them because they are so dear to him and were such a wonderful help to him. And it made me think of so many of you guys who through the years have just been faithful under-girders, faithful helpers. They're not pastors. They're not preachers. Might be like a small group leader, perhaps, but more than anything, just working under Paul to help Paul get the gospel out and plant New Testament churches. One thing that is sure that wherever Aquila and Priscilla landed, they were an important blessing and help to God's preacher and an important blessing and help to the local church.

Well, not only that, he he greets the household of Onesiphorus. Look at it there in verse 19, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus." I agree with the scholars who say that it's very likely Onesiphorus has passed on. He's deceased by this point. Uh, back in 2 Timothy 1:16 through 18 he says, "The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus." Now notice again, he says the house of Onesiphorus, not him personally, "for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus." So once again when we come to the end of 2 Timothy, here in chapter 19 he doesn't say greet Onesiphorus, he says the house the household of Onesiphorus. It's the idea that Onesiphorus was so bold and courageous and faithful in supporting Paul in his church planting work that Onesiphorus' people, his family, were special and dear to Paul. It's kinda like that expression you and I used today when you say, "Well, if you're a friend of So-and-so, you're a friend of mine." Yes, it's respect for that person, whoever is kin or associated to them are special to you too.

I went to the funeral of Brother Wayne Ledbetter this last week and spoke with Ann and the boys and, of course, I know them and love them in in their own right but I just had such love for Wayne and such thankfulness for him it made me have an even deeper, endearing spirit toward the whole family. That's the way Onesiphorus was. Paul says, "Greet that household. That man, that man stood for me. He stood with me. He helped me when supporters were very hard to find, even fought his way back into the Roman prison to find me so he could encourage me." Man, we get some strong commendations and exhortations and encouragements from these people's testimonies.

Well, the second part, II, he gives an update on coworkers in Rome. An update on coworkers in Rome. Look at verse 20. He says, "Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus." Now they were centered in Rome, but now, of course, they're in Corinth and Miletus. But a couple of things about these two guys. First of all, Erastus. It's it's not a common name, but we do find it in three passages in the New Testament. In Acts 19 we find Erastus accompanying Timothy from Ephesus to

Macedonia. So he was a long term faithful worker evidently. In Romans 16:23, the Apostle Paul refers to him as the city treasurer. Here again we find a prominent person like Lydia, like Philema and Philemon, and like Aquila and Priscilla, now Erastus, the city treasurer of Rome. Uh, archaeologists have found numerous inscriptions on the ruins of ancient Corinth with this name Erastus on it, and you would expect that if he was the treasurer. He probably had his name on the coinage and other things in that area. And so Paul says, "I wanted you to know about him because God gave me a strong help and supporter of this man who got saved." Isn't it neat how God saves the down and out and God saves the up and out, a prominent official in Rome and here he is being committed by the Apostle Paul. Now we don't know, of course, and he third place he's mentioned is here in the final, uh, words of 2 Timothy and we don't know if this is the same Erastus every time. I think that it is. If so, again, it reminds us God can save and use anyone.

Well, not only Erastus, but also Trophimus is lifted here. Verse 20 he says, "I left him sick in Miletus." Uh, Trophimus is originally from Ephesus so Timothy would know him, and perhaps it means that Paul got as far as Miletus in coming to Ephesus to see Timothy, the circumstances prevented him from going any further. We don't know but three things about Trophimus that are interesting, though. First of all, he was something of a messenger or a courier for Paul. We know Trophimus was one of the men entrusted to take the offerings from the Gentiles and take it to the suffering saints in Jerusalem. So he must have been a very trustworthy man.

Secondly, he was with Paul in Troas for seven days the Bible says fellowshiping with the brethren. And what's interesting about this, this is the place where Eutychus falls asleep in the windowsill and he falls out asleep while Paul is preaching, three stories up. And, um, uh, Paul goes and ministers to him, evidently healed him, and he's going to be all right, and I think as we think about Eutychus and falling out of the window because he's asleep, there might be some applications for you this morning. But let's give some grace to Eutychus because the text says Paul preached until daybreak. Maybe that's an application for me.

Now thirdly, Trophimus was with Paul in Jerusalem and unintentionally he gets Paul arrested. The Jews identify Trophimus as a Gentile and they just assumed Paul must have brought Trophimus into the temple when he came in the temple and talked which would be forbidden by law in Jewish doctrine. You can't have a Gentile in the Jewish temple. So this got Paul thrown out of the temple and it got Paul arrested but Trophimus didn't mean for that to happen, but he was the reason why it happened. Paul here tells Timothy though at the end as he ends this letter we call 2 Timothy, "Trophimus I left sick at Miletus." One thought here is why did Paul live leave Trophimus sick in Miletus? Why didn't Paul just heal Trophimus? I agree with the scholars that say it's obvious that the normative signs and wonders of the early apostles did not accompany the apostles all the way through their ministries. There is a sense in which God did special signs and wonders when the church was first being established that curtailed and they are no longer normative for God's work today. If you disagree with that, we can still love each other and go to heaven, okay?

But it is an interesting personal touch speaking of Miletus, or rather Trophimus sick at Miletus and it got me thinking about how the New Testament especially just doesn't give a lot of personal information. It's just kind of like mentions it and skims over and gets on to what's more important. For example, in 2 Corinthians 11, Paul kind of outlines very briefly the things he's endured for the gospel: imprisonments, plural, beaten without beating times rather without number, labors, often in danger of death, five times I got 39 lashes, three times beaten with rods, starved, stoned, three shipwrecks, dangers from rivers and from robbers, a a a sleepless nights he talks about, I had known I've known hunger and thirst, I've known cold and exposure, and then on top of that there's the daily pressure of all the churches. Now in today's world ministers would write volumes on this. Paul just hits it and goes on. The Scriptures are not that concerned about all the personal details but what's the truth God is communicating through these people and through their circumstances.

Well, III, greetings from brethren in Rome. Here we got four names in verse 21. We're at the second-half of verse 21, "Eubulus greets you, also Pudens and Linus and Claudia," and then he just says, "all the brethren." Now these are likely not coworkers so much as just members of the church in Rome that Paul had an off and on contact with being there in the prison. Um, it's church tradition, now, these four people are not mentioned any other time in the New Testament, so this is all we know about him for sure. Now, early church writings and early church church tradition says that Pudens and Claudia were later married but they were not married at this writing, and early church tradition and early church writings tell us that Linus became the Bishop of Rome. Know what the Catholic Church does with that because they would say that it had to be Peter. But who cares about the biblical text when you're building a world empire?

Now I do think it's of note that, uh, a woman is mentioned, Claudia. That would not have been common at all in the ancient Roman culture and that's because Christianity liberates women from depression and the abuse. We see that over and over. Have there been those who've named the name of Christ and were charlatans and phonies and misused it? Absolutely, but where there's true Christianity women have experienced true liberation from the oppression they knew from their own husbands and in their own culture.

So these four guys, three guys and one lady, I should say, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, and Claudia, they are unknown in Scripture but they were certainly known to Timothy and they were certainly known to Paul, and they are certainly known to heaven. This reminded me afresh of how greatly greatly dependent Paul was on a team of tireless, behind the scenes workers. Many many many more than these four, but these four, we just know their names. Nothing about them. No esteem about them necessarily. Just their names. Do you remember the sermon, "The Night Shift"? Is it time for the night shift again? These are night shift workers. No fame. No glory. Don't want any recognition. Just glad to get in on supporting work. Brother Ledbetter was a night shift worker. Stella Byrd who's just gone to heaven was a night shift worker. Just it endears my heart to them for the years of just faithful service. Is that where you are this morning?

IV. He gives that heartfelt appeal to Timothy. Look at it there at the first part of verse 21 just the pathos, the emotion, "Make every effort to come to me before winter. Timothy, please get here." Several things come to mind. First of all, Paul longs for Timothy's fellowship. Demas, probably the other First Lieutenant in Paul's line of successors, you might say, has forsaken Paul. Paul probably put a lot of stock in Demas but he's gone. He he loved this present world. He had too much world love in him to stay with Paul. But Paul, he has some people checking on him and but he don't have a Timothy. He says, "Timothy, please come before winter." He longs for his fellowship. Secondly, you can't cross the sea west over to Rome in winter. It's just too rough. And maritime travel by law was forbidden. It was shut down in the winter months. So he had to come before. Thirdly, Paul's already talked about what in verse 9, let's see, "Make every effort to come for me soon. Demas has loved this present world, has deserted me." So we see the connection between Demas being gone and Paul needing Timothy there with him in Rome.

Then he says on down there, uh, "Bring the cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, the books, and especially the parchments." The books, you remember, means the papyri, the writings on the papyri papers. I think that's probably Paul's personal writings and perhaps writings of other New Testament authors. The parchments was the more expensive or you put more special enduring writings on parchment. Uh, uh, it was a leather piece and I believe that was Paul's copy of the Old Testament text. Just my speculation. Mine's as good as anybody else's. So it says, "Timothy, when you come, bring all these things. I need these things." Well, that's why he's saying come before winter. He needed a cloak just to stay warm in the winter, that would be the fourth thing, first being he longs for Timothy; second being you can't cross in winter so come before winter; third being I want the books and the parchments; fourth being I need my cloak; and then fifth as I've mentioned already Demas was likely a part of Paul's plan of succession. He knows his passing from this earth is going to be soon, and since Demas has left him and maybe apostasized is too strong of a word, but he's forsaken Paul to say the least, he needs Timothy to come and receive parting instructions. The aged apostle is burning with passion that Timothy will carry on the work from where Paul has to stop and then he wants Timothy to pass on the work still to others.

Now lastly, the closing benediction in verse 22. "The Lord be with your spirit and grace be with you." Something interesting here that the scholars point out, and that is that there's two parts here. There's a part to Timothy, the Lord be with your spirit, then there's a part to the whole local church at Ephesus, grace be with you, last part of verse 22. Um, Paul usually dictated his letters, at least that's the summation we make in 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Colossians, 2 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon, Paul has something to this or writes something like this, "I write this with my own hand," which leads us to understand that primarily he dictated but occasionally he would write with his own hand. And a couple of thoughts there is that, um, uh, when he says, "I send this greeting with my own hand," he's saying, "This call this shows you that this is genuine. This is not a counterfeit. It's not a hoax. This is a real letter from your apostle." It also emphasized a personal endearment, a love he had for them. So it's likely sitting here in prison, you know, he's already told us, "Only Luke is with me," that Dr. Luke is dictating this letter, and as was his custom, we can see Paul now taking the stylist from Luke, and with large and possibly

shaky letters, he writes this final part of the letter, these final words of the apostle to the Gentiles.

To Timothy, he says, verse 22, the first part, "The Lord be with your spirit." Now, why would we say that's to Timothy and then the next one, "Grace be with you," be to the church? Well, the scholars tell us that the first part is a singular. The word "your" is singular to Timothy, but the grace be to you, the word "you" is a plural. You'd say grace be to you all, and they say that clearly means that Paul has two different groups in mind.

So he says, "Timothy, first of all, the Lord be with your spirit. May the Lord fill you and strengthen the inner man," because listen to me, church, listen to me: in true gospel ministry you will not make it to the end faithful, two important words, the end and faithful. You might make it to the end of something but not faithfully. You will not make it to the end faithfully if the Lord is not the strength of your heart. There's just not enough stuff out there to keep a man of God going if he's looking to other stuff. Sure, the church should be like the Aquila's and Priscilla's and Linus and Claudia and all the rest of them. Sure you should have those supporters, that's wonderful, but unless God holds you, you will not prevail to the end. So Paul writes, "O Timothy, may the Lord, be your strength." And Paul saying, "Timothy, I know, I know what it's like to be faithful to the end and it took the Lord, to get me here. So Timothy, may you know that same thing." And as the Old Testament prophet said, "It's not by might and it's not by power but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

So that's his final word to Timothy, now his final word to the church at Ephesus, "Grace be with you," again the plural, "Grace be with you all." Now this letter is addressed to Timothy and it was personal to him, but at the same time it's a word of authority for the local church. You see, Timothy was to be helped by the letter so that he might help the local church at Ephesus. For time and space history until we get to the glorified state at the end of the age, God's local churches are the centerpiece of his purposes and his glory. You see, in the first order of things, when God made heaven and earth, when God created Eden, when God made Adam and Eve and the entire universe, that was the work of Jesus in creation. That's the first order. But now we're in the second order being developed. The second order of things is God's work of having for himself a holy and righteous people. God is developing his ekklesia, the Greek word we translate "church," the English word "church" from. His called out ones. And that's different from the first creation. As the first work is a work of creation, the second work is a work of grace and, of course, creation.

Sometimes the Bible calls it the new creation and while the first creation ends in judgment and eternal loss, the second creation is transformed into glory and will know eternal gain. Ephesians 3:21 reminds us, "to Him be the glory in the church." That's the new order, God establishing a holy and righteous people. To Him be the glory in the church and in the head of the church, the Savior of the church, the Redeemer of the church, "and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

So Paul's last word to the local church, to any local church as far as his physical ministry is concerned is, "Grace be with you." You know, Paul ended every letter he wrote with a word of grace and that's why he ends this word with the word about grace because it's all about grace. Your individual salvation, your individual growth in Christ as a Christian, your individual service to Christ, the formation of your local church, the maturation of your local church, the ministry and impact of your local church, and the coming glorification of you the individual believer and as the church collective is all of grace. It's all of grace.

Paul had two strong convictions underlying his ministry. 1. God has spoken. 2. I'm God's apostle of what he's spoken to us, what he's given us and it's all of grace. In Acts 14:3 and Acts 20:23, the ministry of the word that works through us is called "the word of His grace." The word of his grace. All true Christian ministry is by grace. All true Christian ministry is about grace. That in the ministry of grace God builds his church and glorifies his own name.

Grace be with you all, and so ends the writings of the apostle to the Gentiles, the Apostle Paul. But we don't worship him but we thank God for him.