

18.1 The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy

Introduction

The hallmark of this letter is the fact that Paul knows he is about to die: ⁶ For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (4.6-8).

Implications

This must be Paul's last correspondence with Timothy (as far as we know and for what we need as canon). He wants to see Timothy as soon as possible: **Do your best to come to me soon** (4.9); **Do your best to come before winter** (4.21). Paul has some brief future still ahead of him on this earth, but the time of his departure has come. He writes under the shadow of the scaffold where the Romans will execute him.

The letter to Timothy is a letter to all succeeding ministers of the gospel and for the church down through the ages. Paul's reflections on his life and death yield a passionate exhortation regarding how to live in a way that prepares you for death. He exhorts Timothy as a representative of coming ministers who, in turn, represent all servants by extension. We get this focus from the addressee (1.2, **To Timothy**), for the training of men in succeeding generations (4.2, **what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also**). He looks ahead to the last days with many challenges (3.1, **understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty**) and seeks the grounding of the post-apostolic church on the preaching of the words that come from the breath of God's mouth:

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. ^{4.1} I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry (3.16-4.5).

Reference to the Bible as "inspired" comes from vs. 16 ("breathed out"). What does "Scripture" mean literally (cf. v. 15)? What does "breathed out" tell us about Scripture?

Application

Given that Paul wrote *to Timothy*-ministers-all servants *for the church*, how can we summarize (list) the duties that apply to pastors and *mutatis mutandis* to members? Consider the following sample text from the book:

2 Timothy 1:8-14 ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ and which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, ¹¹ for which I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, ¹² which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.