

## PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY.

– 2 TIM. 3:14-4:8. – JUNE 21. –

**"There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."**

ADREADFUL conflagration burst forth in the City of Rome a few months after Paul was set at liberty, which laid waste a large area of the city during the six days it continued. Nero, the Emperor, "enjoyed the dreadful sight from a turret of his palace, singing and dancing the mime of the 'burning of Troy' during the progress of the national catastrophe." It was rumored that Nero himself caused [R3210 : page 187] the fire, and to avert suspicion he had it charged to innocent Christians, of whom, it would appear, there was a considerable number by that time. Christians, being unpopular with their heathen as well as their Jewish neighbors, were made the scapegoats, and they suffered dreadfully. One very careful account says: "Multitudes of every age, of every sex, were arrested. They were slain with the sword; they were exposed in amphitheaters; they were covered with the skins of wild beasts to be torn to pieces by dogs; they were wrapped in sheets of pitch, tied to stakes and set on fire. Nero drove among the people in his chariot, lighted by the flare of these hideous human torches."

The Lord's faithful of today ought to be prepared to suffer similarly for the truth, whether called upon to do so or not. It seems improbable that anything so dreadful should occur in our enlightened day; and yet we have various Scriptural reasons for expecting that within ten years all who stand faithfully and boldly for the truth will suffer to a considerable extent – some of them quite probably even unto death. What charge could be brought against them? We answer, the same charge that could be brought against their brethren of Paul's day – they are unpopular; the world hates them; their loyalty to truth and principle will hinder them from being highly esteemed among men, and probably make them the scapegoat of evil-doers.

It was about two years after this conflagration and persecution that the Apostle was arrested, imprisoned, and, very shortly after, beheaded; and it was while waiting in his prison that he wrote his second epistle to Timothy, who was, apparently, at the time with the Church at Ephesus – where tradition says he remained until his own martyrdom, which probably occurred about thirty years later, in A.D. 96. Our lesson is based upon extracts from this letter to Timothy; it urges him with Mark to visit him at Rome, but he was beheaded before they reached there. The grandeur of the sentiments expressed, the confidence and hope, can be appreciated only when we remember the circumstances bearing upon the Apostle at the time they were written. Realizing that he had come to the end of his own course, he sought to impress as much as possible of his own spirit and zeal upon Timothy – that he might be the more faithful and efficient servant of God. The exhortation is specially applicable to all who seek in any manner to minister to others – and this really includes all of the Lord's people, each one of whom should be a living epistle showing forth and speaking forth the Lord's message as his ambassador. Let us each apply to himself the words of this lesson.

Timothy is first reminded of how great his privileges had been – that he was well born, under religious instruction from his infancy. He is reminded, too, in a most modest manner, of how he had received his understanding of the Scriptures through the Apostle, and had been assured that the instructions were of God – that the Apostle spoke as an oracle of God; "He that heareth us, heareth God." The Apostle points to the Word of God as a great light, or lamp, able to make wise unto salvation. He must have referred chiefly to the Old Testament, since the New Testament was not yet completed; but no one will doubt that if the Old Testament is valuable for the instruction of the Lord's people, the New Testament is still more valuable as its key and elucidation. The Apostle's words give the thought that these divine instructions are for the purpose of making the Lord's people wise unto salvation, – of showing them how they may please God and be acceptable to him under the terms of his covenant. However, the

Apostle carefully guards the matter by indicating that such wisdom cannot be unto salvation except through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus must be recognized as the antitypical Prophet, Priest and King, and must have reverence and obedience as such to the extent of our ability, else there can be no salvation. Ours is not a gospel of works merely, but a gospel of faith, which acknowledges that we cannot perform the works which we recognize to be perfect, but must needs have the merit of our Redeemer imputed to us.

We live in a time when the Bible is more generally in the hands of the people than ever before, but in a time when its inspiration is more generally doubted than it has been for centuries. Only a short time ago the opponents of the Bible, Paine, Voltaire, Ingersoll, *et al.*, were called infidels; but today its opponents and traducers are found in the majority of the pulpits of Christendom, and in the Professors' chairs of nearly all its colleges and seminaries. This recent view holds the Bible to be worthy of reverence because of its age, but not as a revelation from God; it places the Bible alongside of Shakespeare, and draws comparisons in favor of the latter; it attempts to question not only the inspiration of the book, but even its reliability as history. So virulent is this attack that the faith of all Christendom is being shaken to its foundation, and our expectation is that within ten years there will be a distinct cleavage between those who accept the Word of God and those who reject it, and that amongst those professing the name of Christian the unbelievers will be an hundred-fold more numerous than the believers. This will form a part of the great falling away predicted for that day: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

The best proofs respecting the inspiration of the Scriptures are to be found on the inside – in the divine plan of the ages which it records with such grand harmony. **[R3210 : page 188]** The trouble with the higher critics is that they do not see this internal evidence, but, on the contrary, have accepted the incongruous and unreasonable theories of the dark ages which misrepresent the real teachings of the Bible, and

these higher critics are now showing the book (which they believe to be full of inconsistencies) from the outside – endeavoring to prove that it was not written by the people whose names are attached to its various parts. To those who see the divine plan which the book contains, these arguments of the higher critics respecting the authorship of the parts are of little weight; for it matters not to us who wrote the books, so long as we see they contain the elements of a divine plan so stupendously grand that we are confident no human mind conceived it or could have depicted it.

That the Apostle was a firm believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures is evidenced by his declaration, found in this lesson, to the effect that "all Scripture [holy writings] given by inspiration of God, is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for rebuke, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

In harmony with this testimony of Paul respecting *inspired* writings, we have the words of the Apostle Peter assuring us that holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the holy spirit. (2 Pet. 1:21.) It seems difficult for some to understand how this inspiration could be, and yet the individuality of the writer be maintained. The matter, however, becomes very clear and simple when we consider that God was able to inspire the sentiments and leave much of the clothing of those sentiments to the judgment and taste and mannerism of the prophet, merely overruling where necessary to hinder any misstatement which might prove injurious, and to secure an exactly proper statement of a necessary item.\*

[\\*We refer the reader to MILLENNIAL DAWN, Vol. I., especially to Chap. 3, "The Bible as a Divine Revelation, Viewed in the Light of Reason."](#)

How true are the Apostle's words that the teachings of this wonderful book are profitable! What other book ever so inspired us with hopes and joys eternal, and of newness of life in order to attain this? What other book ever proved valuable to so large a number for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness? – None. The value of all other books is in proportion to their fidelity to the teachings of this Book of books. What is true of teachers is true also of books written by teachers: "If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." – Isa. 8:20.

Not only can no man of God be "complete and thoroughly furnished unto every good work" without the assistance of the Bible, but it is admitted even by worldly men that no man's education is complete without a considerable knowledge of this wonderful Book. The Lord's people who are growing in grace and in knowledge are daily becoming more convinced of their need of the instructions which flow from this Book, by whatever silver tongues and helping hands of explanatory writings the interpretation may come.

After thus laying down the foundation of Timothy's established faith, and after thus urging him to abide, or continue, in those things which he had learned, the Apostle proceeds to deliver his dying charge. He sets the matter forth in a most solemn form, according to the Greek – "I adjure thee [I most solemnly urge upon you, therefore] before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom." We may accept these urgent words from the Apostle as applicable to ourselves. We, also, stand before God; we, **[R3211 : page 188]** also, are trusting in his favor for eternal life; we, also, are adopted into his family, and as sons are hoping to have such experiences as will fit and prepare us for the glorious things the Father has promised to them that love him. We, also, have respect to the Lord Jesus and his appearing and Kingdom – hoping to have a share with him in those future glories and grand opportunities. We, also, remember that that Kingdom is to judge the world, and to judge the fallen angels – the latter, the quick, the living, who have never passed into death, but are restrained by chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; the former, the race of mankind to which we belong by nature, children of wrath even as others, all of whom are dead, under sentence of death. Hoping for a

share in all these glorious privileges, what manner of persons ought we to be! Let us hearken to the charge further: –

"Preach the Word!" All of the Lord's people are teachers; as it is written, "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good tidings," etc. This anointing of the spirit which came upon our Lord, the Head of the Church, comes down to, and covers every member of the body, anointing each one similarly to preach the good tidings, the Word of God's grace and mercy and peace through Jesus – to all who have an ear to hear. The Christian washerwoman is to preach this message; so is the Christian business man and laborer and housewife, each according to his opportunities – and there are surely some opportunities for all. All should be able to show forth the praises of him who hath called us "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1Pet. 2:9); – should be living epistles known and read of all men. We are to consider the preaching of the Word **[R3211 : page 189]** to be the chief business of life, and the earning of a living and keeping ourselves in comfort to be secondary and incidental to the one vocation to which we are called of the Lord. He who would hold back the word of truth must surely do so for a reason, and the reason cannot be a proper one. If he has received the truth in the love of it, he will love to tell it forth; and any restraint will, therefore, indicate either that he is subject to the fear of man or ashamed of the Lord and his Word; and the Master has declared that such are not fit for the Kingdom – not fit to be of the Bride class, whatever else they may be fit for. – Luke 9:62.

"Be instant in season and out of season." This cannot mean that we are to violate the laws of reason and decency by intruding the good tidings upon others at times inconvenient and unseasonable to them; but it does mean that we are to have such a love for the truth, such an earnest desire to serve it, that we will gladly accept the opportunity to do so, however inconvenient it may be for ourselves. It is the chief business of our lives, to which life itself even is subservient, and hence, no opportunity for service must be laid aside.

"Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." This part of the exhortation is not alike applicable to all; too many feel at liberty to reprove and to rebuke. Doubtless many need reproofs and many need rebukes, but how few are able to administer these to profit and not to injury! The Apostle addressed these words in a particular sense to Timothy as an experienced elder in the Church of Christ, and to some extent an overseer amongst the elders. It would be a great mistake to apply these words in general, and for each of the Lord's people to see to what extent he could administer reproofs and rebukes to his brethren. Rather should sympathy go out to such an extent that reproofs and rebukes would be avoided, except as duty, because of responsibility in the Church of God, should necessitate this. Even so experienced an elder and overseer as Timothy must see to it that his reproving and rebuking and exhorting should be done with all longsuffering – with patience, gentleness and forbearance, and with doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2); showing clearly wherein the principles of righteousness were infringed and pointing out distinctly the Word of the Lord concerning the same. This duty still rests upon those who occupy places of prominence in the Church to which they have in the Lord's providence been appointed; and in proportion as they are filled with the Lord's spirit of love and gentleness and meekness and patience and forbearance, they will strive to perform this delicate and unpleasant business of reproving and rebuking, where necessary, in most modest language and under the most favorable conditions.

Without knowing how long it would be from his day until the harvest, the end of the age, the Apostle did know distinctly from the Scriptures that a great falling away would come and that the end of the age would be a period of special trial amongst the Lord's people, when every man's work would be tested; as he elsewhere wrote, "The fire of that day shall prove every man's work of what sort it is." In verses 3 and 4 of our lesson he describes the conditions which prevail today in the nominal churches. The time has come when sound doctrine is not endured, when the faithful ministers of the Word are considered back numbers, and when up-to-date higher critics are



wanted for all the high-salaried pulpits. The Revised Version says, "Having itching ears will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts [desires], and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside unto fables." How true to the facts! In scarcely any of the pulpits of Christendom are the truths of God's Word set forth. The great mass of preaching is largely composed of anecdotes or delineations of science, often falsely so called, or essays on politics, social uplift, etc. The preaching of the Lord is obsolete because the hearts of men have been turned largely from the Word of God to the great Adversary's deceptions – putting darkness for light and misrepresenting the Bible through the creeds of the various churches.

But what should be the attitude of the true soldier of the Cross at such a time? The faithful ministers of the truth, whether they teach merely by example or precept, or by the printed page or orally, – what should be their attitude? It is clearly pointed out by the Apostle saying, "Watch thou in all things, endure affliction [suffer hardships], do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" – demonstrate what you have professed and what you know to be the truth, that you are a servant of God and not of man, that you are loyal as an ambassador of the great King in delivering none other than the message he sends.

As clinching this earnest appeal for faithfulness to the Word of the Lord, the Apostle refers to himself – that he must give up the fight; that the end of his life course was apparently in sight; the time of his departure from life was at hand. How we can rejoice that he could and did write the burning words of verses 7 and 8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith," etc. As we glance through the Apostle's history we concur with his judgment, and see that he was not boasting; but was a faithful follower in the footsteps of Jesus; that he did make a good fight for right, for principle, for truth, for the Lord against sin and selfishness; that notwithstanding its narrowness and ruggedness, he did run faithfully over the course from the time that he started in **[R3211 : page 190]** it;



that he did keep the faith to the close, at the cost of self-denial, of self-sacrifice, hardships and persecutions. And here we must remember that keeping the faith is not merely keeping it in us, but is in the sense of faithfully declaring it; for whoever does not declare the good tidings to others will soon lose the faith himself. Let us press along the line toward the same mark for the same prize of joint-heirship with the Lord; and if when we come to the close of life we can say, as did the Apostle, that we have fought well all along the course and kept the faith, the Lord will not say to us that we did not do as much as the Apostle Paul or as much as the Lord Jesus, but having done what we could, having been faithful in the few things and in the small talents entrusted to us, we will hear the welcome words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

These joys of the Lord the Apostle refers to as a crown of righteousness. The Apostles James and John speak of the same crown and call it the crown of life. (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10), and the Apostle Peter speaking of the same calls it the crown of glory. (1 Pet. 5:4.) The thought at the bottom of each of these expressions is evidently the same; namely, the custom in olden times of running races and the giving of a crown to the successful runner at the end of the course. As it was not sufficient to enter a race, or start to run, but it was required that the race be run faithfully and perseveringly to a conclusion, so with this race which we are running as followers of Jesus, it is essential not only that we shall make consecration to the Lord, but that we persevere to the end, and our reward will be the crown of life in the sense that we will get life on the highest plane, inherent life, immortality. It will be a crown of righteousness in the sense that only those who are approved of God as righteous will thus be rewarded and glorified; and our hope is, therefore, that we may be accepted in the Beloved; that the righteousness of the Lord may be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit; and that the rewards which God has promised to those who love him and serve him will be granted to us. The crown of glory is another name for the same grand reward – the glory of the Kingdom, the glory of immortality, the glory

of the Father's favor, the glory of being joint-heirs with Christ in his Kingdom.

The Apostle declares that his crown is laid up for him; he did not claim to possess it at the time, except by faith, and he had never seen it except by the eye of faith. This laying up of crowns is an expressive figure. The Scriptural thought seems to be that when justified **[R3212 : page 190]** believers make a full consecration to the Lord and are accepted as members of the body of Christ, their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and crowns are set apart for them. If they are faithful their names will never be blotted out and their crowns will never be given to others, but if unfaithful others will be permitted to take their places upon the roll of honor and attain to their inheritance to the crown, their share in the Kingdom. – Rev. 3:11; Rev. 3:5.

### **PETER AND PAUL.**

"In the Vatican library at Rome is preserved a bronze medal with the heads of Peter and Paul, which was found in the cemetery of Domitilia, one of the Flavian family, and if genuine is no doubt the earliest portraiture known of the two great apostles. The medal is referred to the close of the first century or the beginning of the second, and at this early period the features of the two apostles must have been faithfully preserved. Both heads are full of character, and that of Paul in particular is distinguished by solemnity and dignity, and the thoughtful and wrinkled brow indicates the high intellect that so remarkably characterized the man."

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The Lord, the righteous Judge, will determine the matter of unworthiness for the crowns. The Apostle's language elsewhere in this letter seems to imply that some who did have confidence in him had lost their confidence, and in the heat of trial had deserted him. "At my first defense no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their charge." (2 Tim. 4:16.) He here intimates that he

cannot even accept the judgment of the brethren respecting his faithfulness, but that he has appealed his case in the fullest sense of the word to the great Lord and Judge who shall finally determine these matters for him and for all. He is a righteous Judge and, therefore, will not condemn any who are seeking, to the best of their ability, to serve and praise him. He will approve such, but being a righteous Judge none may venture to hope that he will approve that which is evil, unrighteous, unfaithful; hence, if our hearts condemn us not we may have peace with God.

The Apostle was not expecting his crown of righteousness, the crown of life, the crown of glory, at the moment of death; but pointed Timothy forward to the **[R3212 : page 191]** second coming of Christ, and the general giving of rewards, as the Lord has promised, "at that day." We rejoice to believe that we are living "in that day," and hence that the Apostle is no longer waiting, but has received his crown during this harvest time, and we expect that those who are now alive and remain need not wait, but that when the hour of death shall come to them there will be no need of sleeping to wait for a future time, but the death change will mean the immediate entrance into the glorious conditions referred to by the Apostle.

The Apostle distinctly points out that although he, with the other apostles, occupied a high position in the Church of Christ, this did not signify that only the Lord and the apostles were to be crowned as victors; on the contrary, he includes all of the faithful ones of this Gospel age; saying that the crown of righteousness is not for him only, but "for all those who love his appearing." Ah! the loving of his appearing is indeed a close test, whether applied now or in the Apostle's day! The Apostle himself could not have looked forward with joy to the day of Christ's revelation in Kingdom power and glory, if he had not felt that he had fought a good fight and kept the faith courageously; and so it must be with all others who have named the name of Christ and started to run in this Gospel race for the heavenly prize. If they are overcharged with the cares of this life and the

deceitfulness of riches in any sense, they will put far from them the thought of the Lord's presence and Kingdom; they will not be looking for it and longing for it; they will not be loving it. Those who love the Lord's appearing must of necessity love the Lord himself, and this will mean that the love of Christ will constrain them to endeavor to serve him and those who are his. John Calvin remarks, "Paul excludes from the number of the faithful those to whom Christ's coming is a source of terror."

