

# The Christian Arsenal

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## 2 TIMOTHY 4:1-22

His name was Paul. His friend and son in the faith was Timothy. As we enter Paul's cell, his dungeon, we can feel his pain, perhaps his fear, surely his loneliness.

It's as though we can hear him say,

"The rattle of heavy chains only increases my anguish. No gleams of sunlight penetrate the damp and gloom of my misery. My needs are several, all of them intense.

I need my cloak. I must have left it at Troas. You'll have no trouble spotting it, Timothy. It's an old thing, but it's been on my back through many a bitter winter. It's been wet with the brine of the Great Sea, white with the snows of the rugged peaks of Pamphylia, gritty and brown from the dust of the Egnatian Way, and crimson with my own blood from that awful stoning at Lystra.

The cloak is stained and torn, Timothy, but winter is coming and I need the warmth it will bring.

I also need the books. You remember them. The ones I read under candlelight as we rode out the rough waters of the Aegean and endured the rigors of Macedonia together...those scrolls that fed my mind with fresh bursts of hope and stimulating ideas. Bring along those books, my friend.

I especially need the parchments! Those are my most treasured possessions, Timothy. How I need the comfort of King David's Psalms, the fortitude from the prophets' pens, the insights and perception from Solomon's proverbs. Yes, the parchments, surely they will help keep my heart warm and my hopes high in this desolate place.

But, Timothy, I need you! How desperately I need you! Make every effort to come...come before winter.

Come before November's winds strip the leaves from the trees. Come before the snow begins to fall. Come, my friend...the time of my departure has arrived.

Soon the blade will drop and time for me will be no more. I cannot bear the thought of midwinter without the warmth of your companionship...those eyes of understanding, those words only you can bring to get me through this barren and bitter season.

If I don't see you before winter, Timothy, I may not see you again this side of heaven...make every effort to come before winter."

This is an excerpt from a book by Charles Swindoll entitled **COME BEFORE WINTER**...and of course, it's Swindoll's paraphrase of part of the passage we have before us today.

**These are the last recorded words we have from the Apostle Paul...and the last words of anyone are very precious and very memorable to us, aren't they?**

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## 2 Timothy 4:1-4...

In these verses, we see Paul giving Timothy a solemn charge. A man of God's ultimate accountability is not to a **board of deacons**,

Or a **local congregation** or even a **denomination**...

**His** ultimate accountability and **my** ultimate accountability and **your** ultimate accountability is to the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Preach the Word, Timothy, preach it **in season and out of season**.  
Preach it when **it's convenient and preach it when it's not**...  
Preach it when **folks long to hear it and when they don't**...  
Preach it, Timothy – **to reprove folks and to rebuke folks**...  
Preach it to **exhort folks**. Preach it with **great patience, Timothy**.  
Preach it **with instruction**."

Are these instructions only for preachers? No, I don't think so. Have you noticed that when a person knows and lives by God's Word, that he or she is called on by so many to share it?

Some of you are the only Christian in your family. If you are then you know that when crisis and crunch times come in your family, you're the one folks usually turn to.

We must know God's Word, and we must also know that the more we know, the more God holds us accountable, to share it. He will literally place folks in our path!

I don't believe there ever has been a time when folks have had "**itching ears**" like today!

Folks are "itching" for a **social gospel**.

Folks are "itching" for **experiences**.

Folks are "itching" for **sermonettes**.

**They simply want to go to church and have their ears tickled and sadly, there are plenty of preachers and teachers around who will tickle them!**

## Verse 5...

Paul draws a contrast between Timothy and those who preach in order to tickle ears.

## Verses 6-8...

The final words of a dying man or woman usually are stripped of hypocrisy. They usually reflect in an accurate way their true beliefs and feelings.

Napoleon:

"I die before my time, and my body will be given back to the earth to become food for worms."

Gandhi:

"My days are numbered. I am not likely to live very long...  
I find myself in a slough of despond. All about me is darkness."

How different, what a contrast are the words of Paul. Just as Paul had presented his body a living a holy sacrifice to the Lord in life, he was willing to poured out as a sacrifice in death.

After the death of my mother-in-law, a note was found among her things... "Remember, my death is not death and decay and dust, but a glorious resurrection to live with Jesus in heaven. Please join me."

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**The dying person gives more insight into eternity than the living!**

Paul had **fought the good fight...**

He had **finished the course...**

He had done both of these things because **he had kept the faith.**

And as a result of this, Paul was expecting **a crown of righteousness**. There are five crowns mentioned in the Word of God for believers...

- 1) crown of glory – **1 Peter 5** - for those who faithfully shepherd God's sheep.
- 2) crown of life – **James 1** and **Revelation 2** – for those who persevere under trials.
- 3) crown of incorruption – **1 Corinthians 9** – for those who labor in the work of the Lord.
- 4) crown of exultation or joy – **1 Thessalonians 2** -for those who win souls for Jesus Christ.
- 5) crown of righteousness – for those who have kept the faith and who love the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

I want to ask you this morning...how many crowns will we have to lay at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ?

There's an old song that says,

"Must I go and empty-handed...  
Thus my dear Redeemer meet,  
Not one day of service give Him,  
Lay no trophy at His feet?"

I want us to spend some time looking at how Paul dealt with imprisonment...and hopefully how you and I can deal with our various imprisonments.

## **Verses 9-22...**

Have you ever thought about the fact that you and I have something very much in common with Paul? Paul was a prisoner in Rome and you and I have been prisoners as well. Now, we may not have been prisoners in a dungeon, but all of us have been imprisoned.

We have all been imprisoned by sin. And when we were saved by the blood of the Lord Jesus, we were set free! The doors of the prison of sin have been swung open wide by the grace of Almighty God!

But, I'm thinking about various other kinds of prisons where you and I are deprived of our freedom...deprived of carrying out our desires... hindered in our activity...prisons that confine us and keep us from doing those things we want to be free to do.

It may be a prison of **timidity or lack of confidence** that binds us.  
It may be a prison of **illness** that confines us and hinders us.  
It may be a prison of **loneliness or abandonment or rejection** that intimidates us.  
It may be a prison of **depression** renders us ineffective.

Many times we find ourselves in a black hole...incarcerated behind bars of heartache and we cannot function as we want...things just haven't worked out the way we thought they would.

Dr. Ron Dunn had a sermon entitled "A View from the Pit." And I just want to think about some of the points he made in that sermon.

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Once in awhile, we run across some “super-saint” who will tell us that their lives are wonderful...no heartache...no disappointments...no arguments. Their **family** is perfect. Their **kids** are perfect. **They're** perfect! They'll tell you that they're always on the mountaintop and never in the valley.

But... I want to tell you that I still have times when I feel like I'm in a pit, and I believe if we were all honest today, we would all say the same thing.

And this is where we see Paul today.

Think about it...Paul was a well-educated man. Paul was on his way to becoming **somebody** in Judaism...and yet Paul gave it all up for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul lived in and out of jail. We read last week the many different hardships Paul endured.

And we also said last week...we learn much more when we're in prison, than when we're not! And if Paul hadn't been in prison, God wouldn't have been able to teach **Paul** as much as He did and Paul wouldn't have been able to teach **us** nearly as much as he did!

What does God have to teach us when we're in the pit...when we're in prison?

Just quickly let's think of three things we can learn when we're imprisoned:

## 1) **People are fickle and their loyalty is often fleeting.**

**Verse 16**...Again and again Paul says folks have forsaken him. If there was anyone who should have been surrounded by friends in his time of need it was Paul...and yet he writes,

“When I stood there at that preliminary hearing there was no man who stood with me for all had forsaken me.”

We know that Paul had brought the Word of God to the household of Caesar and the whole praetorian guard...some very influential people...yet, all of these folks had deserted him. And I believe these are the folks Paul is speaking of here.

Some of these folks had Caesar's ear...yet they had all deserted Paul! Anyone who could have served as a character witness for Paul seemed to have had something else to do that day!

Here is a man who was greatly loved...yet no one stood with him...no one supported him.

And when you're in the pit, you sometimes discover that people are often fickle and their loyalty is fleeting.

We really need each other. We will never become so spiritually strong that we won't need others in our lives for encouragement and support.

And let me just say this... **Value your friends**. Don't take them for granted. Don't let little disagreements or misunderstandings come between you and your friends!

And I believe we see from this passage that it is a sin for you and me to abandon those Christian friends we know who are in need. Look at what Paul says, “may it not be counted against them.” Paul was hoping the Lord would forgive them for this.

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The Bible tells us that when one of us rejoices we should all rejoice. And when one of us hurts we should all hurt. Why? Because we are all members of the same body.

**We** shouldn't desert those in need, nor should we get our feelings hurt and get all bent out of shape if **we're** deserted. Paul forgave these folks...and he hoped God would as well. Sometimes we forget that forgiveness is God's will.

And when we pray, **"Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us"** we better be sure that we are forgiving others as we would have God forgive us!

Another thing you learn when you're in the pit is this:

## 2) **The Lord is faithful.**

Sometimes you have to be in the pit to know just how faithful the Lord is!

### Verse 17...

In **verse 16** we see the **bad news**...no one stood with him. But, in **verse 17**, we see the **good news!** **The Lord** stood with him and strengthened him. This word "stood" in the original Greek means "an advocate"...one who would stand beside him and tell him how to answer.

"When I was forsaken by those who could have been there for me, the Lord didn't leave me nor did He forsake me...He strengthened me and every time I thought, 'Lord, I don't think I can take anymore...' God would pour more and more of His grace and strength into me!" **He exchanged Paul's weakness for His strength.**

And I want you to look at something very interesting...

### Verse 18...

Now, wait just a minute. You say that they're going to take you out one day and chop your head off?

Didn't you just write to Timothy that the Lord will deliver you from every evil deed. But, you're going to have your head chopped off!

I believe what Paul is saying, "If the Lord doesn't deliver me from it, it must not be evil." Do you understand what I'm saying?

The Bible says, **"No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly with Him."** Do you believe that? Then, why do we complain when He withholds certain things from us? You see, when He withholds something from us, then it must not be good for us...right?

Dr. Dunn preached a series of sermons years ago called "Strange Ministers." These were ministers that God allowed in our lives to do us good...and among them were the minister of **weakness** and the minister of **chastisement** and the minister of **trouble** and the minister of **failure** and the minister of **disappointment** and so one...

Not only can **folks be fickle** when you're in the pit, and not only will we find that **the Lord is faithful** when you're in the pit...but I believe when we're in the pit we can find that

## 3) **The pit itself can be fruitful...**

**Verse 17... "...through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear..."**

Many times the pit can be fruitful because it can fulfill in our lives the purposes of God! God called Paul for a particular ministry. What was it? It was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles!

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And I believe Paul is saying, "Had I not been put in this pit, my ministry would never have been fulfilled!"

Listen...Paul didn't hold anything against God! God told him at his conversion that he would take His message to the Gentile world. That's why Paul's name was changed from Saul, a Jewish name, to Paul, a Greek name.

God also told Paul from the beginning that he would suffer much for the sake of the Gospel. God reaffirmed that over and over to Paul.

Every imprisonment, every stoning, every beating, every persecution...all these things were allowed by God for one purpose and that was that His Gospel be proclaimed to the Gentiles.

What does this mean to you and me today?

I believe that once you commit your life to the Lord Jesus Christ that nothing comes into your life without the knowledge of God and without the ultimate desire that His purpose be accomplished in your life. And whether you and I fully understand this or not, you and I must be encouraged by it!

We need to remember that nothing is incidental in our lives. Nothing takes God by surprise. Whatever comes into our lives comes by His permission...filtered through His loving fingers. **God causes all things to work for good in the lives of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose!**

**I didn't say this! I'm not making this up...Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit said it! And I believe it will only be when we get to heaven that we will see this clearly and understand this fully!**

The other fruit that is born in the pit is that in the pit we learn to praise the Lord! Look at the last phrase in **verse 18... "to Him be the glory forever and ever..." How I pray that in the midst of every circumstance we can learn to walk in that circumstance with a song of praise on our lips and in our hearts!**

**When we're in a prison, it's because God has allowed it and He can use it for our good and His glory!**

Let's take a few minutes to look very quickly at some of these men Paul mentions in this chapter...

Paul said **Demas** was gone..why? Because he loved this present world. Then, he said that **Luke** was with him. How comforting that Paul did have a friend there with him. Then, on down he told Timothy to bring **Mark** with him because he was profitable to him.

And I believe we see in these folks a representation of Christians even of our time today! People haven't changed really.

So, let's look at these folks as representatives of the spiritual service we see today.

Demas, Luke and Mark.

What we learn from Paul in his remarks about **Demas** is that no one ever gets beyond the temptation to be worldly.

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And Demas yielded to the temptation to be worldly. Demas was mentioned only three times in Scripture. The first time is in **Philemon** and Paul calls him “my fellow-laborer.” And then he’s mentioned in **Colossians** and he is with Paul and he sends greetings to the church at Colosse.

But, here he has forsaken Paul because he loved this present world. Here Paul is getting ready to face a martyr’s death and Demas couldn’t tough it out...he has forsaken Paul...when the going got tough, Demas got going...he left!!!

Paul said in **verse 8** that he, Paul, loves the appearing of Jesus. He said in **verse 10** that Demas, on the other hand, loves this present world.

And I believe it would be safe to say that there was a day when Demas loved the appearing of Jesus and the thought of the next world as much as Paul...but Demas allowed something to come into his life to take his eyes off eternity and heaven and place them on the world around him.

Demas failed to ward off the allure of the world. Demas thought he could do a lot better out in the world than he could in serving the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said we are to be in the world but not of it! Demas decided he wanted to be in it **and** of it!

What do we remember about Demas?

Demas probably led folks to the Lord! Demas walked and talked with the great Apostle Paul! Demas spent time with the greatest teacher other than the Lord Jesus who ever walked the earth... and what do we remember about him the most? **That he loved this present world to the extent that he forsook Paul!**

God has called us to finish the course. He hasn’t called us to finish first, but He **has** called us to cross the finish line!

Maybe there is someone here this morning who is being tempted by this present world...Maybe the world is becoming more and more appealing and attractive to you.

There was a moment in the life of Demas when he said “yes” to the world and “no” to an all-out commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is a moment in the life of each of us when we must make the same choice.

**Luke...**

**Verse 11...**Luke was the only one with Paul. Some had to leave Paul for good reasons. Some simply deserted him. Some simply didn’t show up to support him at all. But, Luke stuck with him.

Luke was a very unassuming man. He was a physician. He wrote the book of **Acts**. But, we don’t really know much about him. But, he stuck by Paul. Maybe he stuck by Paul to minister to him physically.

We know that Paul had a “thorn in the flesh.” We don’t know what that was...but many theologians believe it was a physical ailment...maybe having to do with his eyes...we really don’t know. And maybe Dr. Luke stuck by Paul so that he could minister to him physically! Luke was faithful to Paul and to the Lord Jesus.

I hope there are many “Lukes” sitting here this morning. Folks who don’t crave the limelight...folks who simply want to stick by the stuff and do what the Lord wants them to do whether folks know about it or not!

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Not only Luke, but Mark...

## Mark...

Do you remember who Mark was? Well, he wrote the book of **Mark**...but before that, as a young man, Mark had been with Paul and Barnabas and for whatever reason decided to leave and go back home.

You remember the story. Barnabas was Mark's uncle and later on wanted to give Mark another chance. He told Paul that they ought to invite Mark to come along with them on another mission trip and Paul said he didn't want to and he and Barnabas had a disagreement about that and parted company.

But, here...Paul said, "Do everything you can, Timothy, to get here before winter, but **take the time to pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.**"

What does this teach us? It teaches me that **failure doesn't have to be fatal**. We serve the God of second chances. It's good to know that if we see the error of our ways, He forgives and gives us another chance to serve Him.

And it just may be that the very reason Mark was considered useful to Paul for the ministry was because of what Paul had done years earlier. Sometimes folks have to take a tough stand with us and we must bear some tough consequences in order for us to see things clearly and get back on track!

If folks never rebuked us and reprimanded us, then we'd never know when we've done wrong!

Is there a "Mark" sitting here this morning? Have you failed the Lord and believe He can never use you again? Let me tell you, God loves you and longs to use you!

And I just can't close this chapter without thinking of Timothy. Timothy must have been so concerned to know that Paul's death was imminent. Timothy needed Paul...but Paul had equipped Timothy to carry on without him and I believe he did.

Paul had poured his life into this young man. Paul and Timothy were so close that both names are listed as the authors of six of Paul's letters. The writer of the book of **Hebrews** indicates in **chapter 13** that Timothy was imprisoned at some point but was released.

Well, that ends our study in **2 Timothy**. I hope we leave this study knowing that Paul was a real person.

**"Come soon, Timothy. Bring my coat. Bring my books.  
Bring my parchments. Bring Mark. Tell my friends  
I send them my love. Come before winter."**

Are you a Timothy in need of a Paul? Are you a Paul in need of a Timothy?

Would you agree with me that at different times of our lives we may be a timid Timothy in need of a strong and confident mentor like Paul?

And that at other times we can come alongside someone who needs that strength and instruction and mentoring that Paul gave to Timothy?

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Every one of us will face **imprisonment**. Every one of us will face **the winter of our lives**. But, we can know that even **then** God hasn't left us.

We can know as Paul knew that God will deliver us from every evil deed and will bring us safely to His heavenly kingdom! I hope if we don't take anything else with us, above all else we take that with us from the book of **2 Timothy**.

To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!