

## **“Looking Ahead With Faith”**

### **2 Timothy 4:1 – 18**

Yes folks, I know it is hard to be optimistic when the world is falling apart. The events of the times pose challenges even for positive thinkers. Some would say the only optimists these days are fools who won't face the facts. Fact is, the troubles we face these days seem, to have reduced the number of positive thinkers. There is however, valid basis for optimism about the future. The Apostle Paul in his day was aware of the troubles in the world but he had faith in the final outcome. Where did Paul get this optimism? He tells us in (2 Timothy 1:12), “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day”. Paul was no recluse, but he reached out to others, testifying to God's goodness and encouraging others to put confidence in God and not people or circumstances. If we are to live abundantly today we must face the future with faith.

Paul continues with exhortations and commands as he gives nine imperatives in light of two future developments; (1) Christ's judgment and coming kingdom and (2) the coming apostasy in the world. Judgment held no fear for Paul but he knew he would need to give an account of himself. He then reminds Timothy how to deal with the apostasy he would face as he preached the truth. The first five imperatives in (verse 2) refer to the nature of his work as a minister. 1. Preach the Word. 2. Be prepared at all times to witness. 3. Correct. 4. Rebuke. 5. Encourage. This all is to be done with great patience and understanding of the word. The next four imperatives speak of personality traits in (verse 5) as Paul tells Timothy, 1. Keep your head in all situations. 2. Endure hardship. 3. Do the work of an evangelist, and 4. Discharge all the duties of your ministry. Paul is encouraging Timothy to face the future with faith in God's grace.

Paul faces his own future with joy and anticipation as he looks forward to seeing the Lord. In (verse 6) we see that Paul is fully aware of his present condition. In (verse 7) he clearly remembers experiences of the past and in (verse 8) he is looking forward to the future with the Lord. We then need to be aware of our present condition, and be sure that we have been fighting a good fight and then we can finish course with faith. If so, then, we too will receive a crown of righteousness.

Paul reminds us in (verses 16-18) that our fellow men will not always stand with us, but we can be assured the Lord Jesus will stand by and strengthen us not matter how bleak the situation may appear. God will not only deliver us but he will preserve us for his kingdom.

As we follow Paul's admonitions and his example our hope should spring eternal as we look forward with faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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