

Winter is Here

“Do thy diligence to come before winter.” (2 Timothy 4:21a). It is always interesting to examine the lives of people of renown; examine their motivation, see what was important, and what they deemed trivial. What we glean from the messages written of and by their lives is of much use to those of us who struggle daily to be the best that we can be. The life of Paul, the apostle of Jesus, is a rich study, but the last words of his last epistle have attracted the attention of many Bible students. The end was near and Paul knew it. Take a moment to read chapter four of Second Timothy.

At the head of the list is the vital imperative of continuously, consistently, faithfully preaching the word of Jesus Christ. It comforted the old soldier of the cross to know that after his departure young soldiers would eagerly, energetically take up the fight. The enemy never rests, so neither must we. Well acquainted with affliction, the great apostle insists that vigilance and endurance are essential to fulfilling one's service. It was important to Paul that Timothy fulfill his ministry, see it through to the end, just as Paul had done. To the Christian anything short of victory is defeat. Paul was secure in his faith and content in his condition. Let this be a lesson for every Christian who would face his own mortality with equal courage: ***Fight*** the good fight, ***finish*** the course, ***keep*** the faith! Paul longed for the company of faithful Christians, and he mourned the loss of a onetime coworker, Demas, back to the world. He had resolved old conflicts and now desired the company of a young man, John Mark, who had once disturbed his work by deserting it in the middle of a great mission. Care for his own physical condition was important only to the degree that he wanted a cloak that he had left behind at Troas. What was done with the scrolls and parchments to which Paul attached such importance? Whatever their fate, the scrolls, but especially the parchments, were deemed of greatest value. Given Paul's commitment to Christ there is little doubt that the scrolls and parchments were writings of a spiritual nature. There was no place in his life for “getting even,” for he was confident that the Lord would deal appropriately with evildoers, but he saw it important that others be warned, by name, of those who greatly withstand the truth. Paul reminisced that although he had not been spared hardship (affliction was trivial) the Lord had always seen him through. He had stood by the Lord, the Lord had stood by him, and would continue to do so throughout eternity. Paul drew great strength from this. Finally, what was needful to be done, was to be done without delay, while opportunity and ability existed, and before hindrances would invariably come.

What may we learn? How important is it to us that there always be those who faithfully “preach the word?” Do we have concern that there always be young soldiers to step into the breach when old soldiers of the cross finish their course? Do we grieve over those who have become unfaithful? Have we learned the divine characteristic of forgiveness? Are spiritual concerns of greater importance than those physical? How much value do we attach to the “Book?” Where is your personal copy today? Will it be in your hand when you go to the next assembly of the Saints? Are we disciplined enough to resist “getting even” and let the Lord deal with evildoers? Are we strong enough to warn others of those who greatly withstand the truth? Will we stand by the Lord? We must steadfastly determine to do for Christ all that we can, while we can, while opportunity exists, and while we still have ability. The winter of life is already here for many of us, and for all the rest winter is coming. What is important to us? What is trivial? What is our motivation?

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