

Main Idea: Based on Paul’s example in 2 Timothy 4:9-15, in order to be faithful to the end a person must have three priorities in order.

I. We must prioritize the Lord.

A Puritan Prayer: “Teach me that if I do not live a life that satisfies Thee, then I will not live a life that will satisfy me.”

II. We must prioritize people.

- A. There are delightful people (9).
- B. There are discouraging people (10a).
- C. There are dependable people (10b-12).
- D. There are destructive people (14-15).

- 1. Who are the people who have most influenced you for Christ?
- 2. Who are the people you are presently seeking to influence for Christ?

III. We must prioritize personal growth (13).

- A. Paul wanted his cloak.
- B. Paul wanted his scrolls.
- C. Paul wanted the parchments.

Make It Personal: Grace changes everything.

- 1. Grace makes faithfulness possible.
- 2. Grace means God gets the glory for our faithfulness.
- 3. Grace motivates us to be faithful to the end.

Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 4:9-15

Recently John MacArthur began a sermon he preached to his church family in California by describing a historical incident that I found very timely. I believe it provides a helpful backdrop for our text.¹ Listen to Pastor MacArthur:

On August 24th, 1662, Saint Bartholomew’s Day, a remarkable and significant event happened in England: 2,000 faithful English Puritan pastors were permanently ejected from their churches by the national government. It was called the Act of Uniformity, and the idea was to silence all those who were preaching something other than the heresies of the time. The Act of Uniformity dispossessed those 2,000 Puritan pastors of their pulpits, and as a result, silenced the vast majority of England’s evangelical preachers. It was called the Great Ejection, and it was no isolated event, and it had far more than a temporary significance. It was, in fact, perhaps the greatest spiritual disaster in English history. It is such a disaster that it is the dividing point in the history of England spiritually. It is like B.C. and A.D.

Matthew Mead, one of the Puritans, said, “This fatal day deserves to be written in black letters in England’s calendar.” It was said that it was the greatest spiritual disaster ever in England. It was led by apostate leaders and constituted essentially a wholesale condemnation of the Bible, the gospel, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our dear friend Iain Murray wrote, “After the silencing of the 2,000 came an age of rationalism, of coldness in the pulpit, and indifference in the pew: an age of skepticism and worldliness that went far to reducing national religion to a mere parody of Christianity.”

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

¹ <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/90-472/the-lords-word-to-his-church-ephesus>; intro to sermon from Revelation 2:1-7, Aug 23, 2015.

In 1852, J. B. Marsden wrote, “As proofs of God’s displeasure, a long, unbroken course of disasters began, and within five years, London was laid waste twice.” He and others saw these disasters as the judgment of God for the Great Ejection.

The first disaster – remember the ejection was in 1662 – the first disaster hit full force in 1665 three years later. It was a plague that killed 100,000 people, a fourth of the population of London, and it was basically transmitted through the bite of a rat flea. Historians say the city was a wash in dead bodies and a wash in sewage. Within a year, it was followed by the 1666 London fire that consumed the homes of 70,000 to 80,000 people, and burned to the ground 90 churches.

Marsden, again, writing in 1852 said, “Other calamities ensued more lasting and far more terrible. Religion was almost extinguish. The lamp of God went out.” There followed, in England, a culture of coldness, a culture of barrenness.

J.C. Ryle, who has enriched us so greatly with his writings, says, “The Great Ejection was an injury to the cause of true religion in England, which will probably never be repaired.”

The next 25 years after the Great Ejection featured one long record of attempts to silence the now scattered Puritan preachers. For 25 years, they chased them wherever they went and endeavored to shut their mouths. Preaching the truth of God became a crime, a crime. It’s probably true that England has never recovered.

Then Pastor MacArthur talked about present day implications: “I don’t know exactly where we are in American history. I don’t know if there’s a great ejection coming down the road. I don’t know when the truth of God proclaimed will become a crime. I do know there are a couple of bills before our national bodies to make saying anything against abortion or anything against any kind of sexual behavior a crime. But I do know that there is a rapidly increasing hostility toward the truth. This is a generation committed to doing evil at breakneck speed; and everyone who does evil hates the Light. So I think sooner or later, we face increasing hostility from the rapidly exploding and dominating paganism.”²

I think he’s right, and in light of this hostility, there’s an objective we must embrace. It’s the title of this message. *Faithful to the End*.

That’s our responsibility. Not to appease, but to be faithful to the end.

What does it take to be faithful to the end? I think we see a vivid answer to this question in the passage before us. Based on Paul’s example in 2 Timothy 4:9-15, in order to be faithful to the end a person must have three priorities in order.

Allow me to sketch Paul’s circumstances once again. He’s incarcerated for Christ. His lodging is not the Hilton, but the Mamartine prison in Rome. This was a pit-like dungeon with one entrance, a hole in the ceiling where the apostle was dropped in. That was his only source of light and air. There was a sewage line that ran near his cell. You can imagine the stench.

In just a few weeks Paul would be executed. Death glared at him.

When you’re in a predicament like that, it’s pretty easy to sift through the chaff of life, and sort out what’s really important.

Paul teaches us, first and foremost...

² <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/90-472/the-lords-word-to-his-church-ephesus>

I. We must prioritize the Lord.

You won't see this priority spelled out in verses 9-15. But it's so basic to Paul that it undergirds everything he wrote in this letter. His number one priority in life was to live for his Lord. "So we make it our aim to please Christ," he says in 2 Corinthians 5:9. And throughout this letter he shows that his focus is Godward.

1:1 "Paul an apostle by the will of God"

1:8 "...of me his prisoner"

1:12 "...for I know WHOM I have believed... HE is able..."

1:16 "The LORD give..."

1:18 "The LORD grant..."

2:3-4 "...a good soldier of Jesus Christ...please Him who has chosen him..."

2:24 "...the servant of the LORD"

3:11 "...the LORD delivered me"

4:1 "I charge thee before GOD and THE LORD JESUS"

4:8 "...the LORD shall give me...love HIS appearing."

What made Paul tick? The Lord. What priority affected every decision, every plan, every ambition in the apostle's life? The Lord.

Is the Lord your first priority in life?

There's a great book about a man who played around with his priorities all his life. He had it all. He had power, prestige, money, influence. He tried it all. He explored every type of pleasure the world could offer. Towards the end of his life he wrote an autobiography about his exploits.

I recommend it highly. Oh, you don't need to buy the book, though, since you already have it. The man was Solomon. The book is Ecclesiastes. Yes, Solomon accomplished a lot of great things in his life. But by his own admission, he messed up his priorities. And at the end, here's what he confessed, in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

I urge you to pray a very simple prayer I ran across about twenty years ago. It's a prayer that one of the Puritans wrote three centuries ago or so.

A Puritan Prayer: *"Teach me that if I do not live a life that satisfies Thee, then I will not live a life that will satisfy me."*

Here's where we must begin. Like Paul, we must prioritize the Lord, number one.

II. We must prioritize people.

I want you to notice something very significant in 2 Timothy. It's Paul's last inspired letter. Notice how many people Paul mentioned by name.

Ch 1--Timothy, Lois, Eunice, Phygelus, Hermogenes, Onesiphorus

Ch 2--Hymenaeus, Philetus

Ch 4--Demas, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, Tychicus, Carpus, Alexander, Priscilla, Aquila, the household of Onesiphorus, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia

That's more than 24 people! Some ran the race of the Christian life well. Some did *not* run the race well. But you can't help but see the importance of people. Paul placed a high priority in his life on developing Christ-honoring relationships with people.

He poured his life into people. He confessed he needed people. And he knew that the Lord had purposed to use him for the eternal good of people.

In fact, do this sometime. Go through the book of Acts and all of Paul's writings and write down the names of people associated with Paul. Paul was no lone ranger when it came to ministry. He was a team player. There are around 100 different men and women named as part of Paul's circle of fellow laborers and friends.

So when someone says, "I have the Lord. He meets all my needs. So I don't need people," that may sound spiritual at first. But that's unbiblical thinking. God Himself said in the beginning, "It is not good that man should be alone (Gen 2:18)." Human relationships are some of the greatest gifts our loving God sends us. Family, friends, spiritual family, partners in the ministry. The Lord knows we need each other.

In fact, as a pastor, I am greatly concerned about people who live as islands, who avoid getting involved with other people.

Paul made people a priority in his life. What kind of people? He mentions four kinds of people in this passage.

A. There are delightful people (9). Verse 9, "Do your best to come to me quickly. In the AV, "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me."

Timothy was someone special to Paul. He was a spiritual son. He had labored side by side in the gospel ministry for 15 years. Paul could say he knew of noone quite like Timothy.

Take a look at Philippians 2:19-22. Yes, Timothy was a SELFLESS SERVANT. When it came to relationships, he was a giver.

To the contrary, some people get involved in a relationship merely for what they can get out of it. They soak you. They drain you. They're self-centered. That was not true of Timothy (2 Tm 1:3-4). Timothy was a refresher to Paul. Though much younger, he was an encourager to his mentor.

What did Paul want Tim to do? "Do thy diligence to come shortly (the Greek is *tackeos*, from which we get tachometer)." Do you sense the urgency in these words? Come quickly Timothy! (see 4:21)

And why quickly? What did Paul just say in 4:6? "The time has come for my departure." He is about to die.

I love the balance in this. We all need it. Paul, on the one hand, knew he would not be around much longer. So he could say, "I am ready to die." And then on the other hand say, "I'm still living, and I long to see you Timothy."

Loneliness is a painful thing. Paul was lonely. He longed for companionship. So he reached out to his brother in Christ.

Yes, Timothy was a delightful person to Paul. Do you have people like that in your life? Are you such a person in other people's lives?

But when you prioritize people, there's a second type of person you'll have in your life. One, delightful people. Two...

B. There are discouraging people (10a). Verse 10, "For Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica." The AV says, "For Demas hath forsaken me..."

Perhaps here is part of the reason that Paul wanted Timothy to come so badly. Loneliness, yes. But more than that. I think Demas broke Paul's heart, and not just for sentimental reasons, but his departure left a whole in Paul's ministry.

Notice the word "for" at the beginning of verse 10. *Come quickly, Timothy*, FOR Demas has deserted me. Who was Demas? Paul mentions him in two other letters.

Colossians 4:14 "Luke...and Demas greet you."

Philemon 24 "Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers"

So at one time Demas was part of Paul's ministry team. Apparently, he was one of his close associates. Paul could count on Demas, and did. And he commended him.

But something happened. Something changed. What did Demas do? He has "forsaken me." I want you to hear the pain in those words, the pain of personal rejection. He has forsaken *ME*. Demas became a deserter. He went AWOL. At a time when Paul and the ministry needed him most, at his lowest point in life, Demas let him down. He took off for Thessalonica.

And why? What prompted this servant of God to leave his post? Paul tells us. He says "because he loved this world."

Notice the contrast. In verse 8 Paul says the crown of righteousness will be given to those who *love and long for Christ's appearing*. But instead, Demas loved the world.

Perhaps it was the love of money that captivated Demas, or love of acceptance, or approval, or comfort, or security, the things the world seems to offer. Demas isn't the last professing Christian to abandon ship in favor of worldly pursuits.

But let's not condemn Demas. *Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love*. It could happen to us too, if we give our heart's affection to the world.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "If any man think he stands, take heed lest he fall."

Here's the naked truth, so we might as well face it. Some people will bring us great discouragement in life. People we've been close to, we've trusted, we've prayed with, we've served with.

Indeed, *we* ourselves could be those people, and the contributing factor is when we start loving this world. Instead of being *in* it, we become *of* it.

"Love not the world," says John in 1 John 2:15-16, "neither the things which are in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

C. There are dependable people (10b-12). Verse 10b "Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia."

There is no hint of defection on the part of these two men. We know nothing about Crescens other than he was another co-laborer of Paul's, and was sent to minister in Galatia. Apparently Titus had finished his ministry assignment in Crete, and was dispatched for further duty in Dalmatia (Albania).

Paul mentions some other dependable people. In verse 11, "Only Luke is with me." This of course is Dr. Luke, the one Paul called "the beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14. During Paul's missionary journeys, Luke was there. During Paul's first imprisonment, Luke was there. And now, to the very end, Luke was there. In fact, Paul says, "ONLY Luke is with me." Some feel Paul dictated this letter to Luke.

Luke was dependable. It was this same Luke that God used to write the Gospel that bears his name and the Acts of the apostles.

Praise God for the dependable people He places in our lives! This church is filled with such people, all by God's grace and all to His glory.

Next, Paul mentions a surprising candidate for the dependable list. Verse 11, "Get Mark [AV says, 'Take Mark'] and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry."

We won't take a lot of time to dig up the past record on this one. You probably know it well. If you don't check out Acts 15:36-40.

Nearly two decades earlier, Paul and Barnabas had set out on the first missionary journey. Acts 13:5 says they took Barnabas's young cousin, John Mark. Unfortunately, Mark failed. He let the missionary team down, and went home.

Later when it came time to choose teams for the second missionary trip, Barnabas wanted to take Mark again. But Paul put his foot down and said, "No! Mark may be a brother in Christ, but he's not ready for this. He's undependable!"

And to Barnabas's consternation, Paul refused to take Mark. So the two missionaries parted company and moved in different directions.

But that's not the end of the story. Aren't you glad we serve the God of hope, the patient and merciful God who specializes in creating second chances?!

Mark apparently faced up to his problem, and Barnabas invested time and energy into him, and God changed him. So much so that now, twenty years later, Paul writes this...

Get Mark. He is helpful to me in my ministry.

Helpful. *Profitable* says the AV. For the ministry. The man who dropped out of the ministry is now a dependable worker in the ministry.

There's such encouragement in those words. Have you dropped the baton in the past? Or has someone else in your life? Jesus came to rescue sinners. Not good people. Not people with clean slates. But sinners. He went to the cross, took the place of sinners and paid their penalty in full. He defeated death, and sent His Spirit to live in those who repent and put their trust in Him. He's now changing them, and won't stop until the objective is reached.

So if you have blown it, look back, but not just to your failure, to the cross! Look back to what God's Son did to provide for your forgiveness, to make you a new person, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.

And become what Mark became. *Helpful in the ministry.*

We learn of another person in verse 12. "I sent Tychicus to Ephesus." That's interesting. Paul says he sent Tychicus to Ephesus. That's where Timothy was. So why did he send Tychicus to where Timothy was?

Perhaps Tychicus delivered this letter. And perhaps he was to relieve Timothy so he could leave Ephesus, get Mark, and go see Paul in Rome.³

In my mind, Tychichus was an unsung hero. So were Crescens, Titus, Luke, and Mark. They were people on which Paul could count. They were *dependable*. And in order for the Lord's work to advance, that's what it takes, *dependable people*.

There are two words in verse 11 that are worth a second look. Paul says to bring Mark because he is helpful to me in *my ministry*.

Let that sink in. Paul is locked away in a dungeon, so he doesn't have a ministry. Right? That's not how he saw it. We always have a ministry, even Paul on death row. Granted, there were many things he presently could not do as he once did. No traveling, no preaching to crowds, no synagogue evangelism, no attending church services.

But he still had a ministry. *My ministry*, he calls it. And he's still recruiting people for his ministry.

³ According to Titus 3:12, Tychichus was someone Paul apparently sent earlier to Crete to relieve Titus.

What is his ministry? He's mobilizing others to reach others with the gospel after he's gone. That's his ministry.

So he's training future leaders. He's restoring sidelined workers. He's witnessing to guards. He's writing letters. He's giving instructions through Timothy to deal with problem people in the church. He's engaging in intercessory prayer.

All to this end. He's mobilizing others for gospel outreach. That's his ministry. He's networking others for future ministry. He's setting things in motion so the name of Christ will continue to go forth after he's gone. He may be in chains and facing execution, but he still has a ministry. And he's pouring every ounce of God-given strength into fulfilling his God-given ministry.

What a lesson for us!

That brings us to a fourth type of person. As Paul prioritized people, he had in his life delightful people, discouraging people, dependable people, and...

D. There are destructive people (14-15). I cringe when I read verses 14-15. "Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message."

Who was this Alexander? We don't know for sure. Paul mentions another Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:20, but this one he calls "the metalworker."

We do know two things. One, Alexander was well known to Timothy. And two, Alexander had done a GREAT deal of harm to Paul. (AV, "MUCH EVIL").

What had he done? Literally, "he informed many evil things against me." Some feel that Alexander was the informer who was responsible for Paul's second arrest. No wonder then Paul warned Timothy to be cautious!

But this man did more than "inform." At the end of verse 15 Paul says "he strongly opposed our message" (AV, "greatly withstood our words").

So some people are just down right destructive when it comes to the gospel and gospel ministers. They hurt us because of the Person and message we represent.

How do we respond? Do we retaliate against destructive people? Paul didn't. You see not one ounce of personal revenge in his words. Rather, verse 14, "The Lord will repay him for what he has done."

This section is so helpful. It teaches us that if we want to be faithful to the end we must prioritize, yes, the Lord first, but also people. A variety of people. We will have in our lives relationships with delightful people, and discouraging people too; dependable people, and some destructive people as well.

So let's ponder a couple of questions:

1. *Who are the people who have most influenced you for Christ?* Think about them, what they did in your life, and thank the Lord for them. Some may be in heaven. Some may be in another place. Some may be in this room. Learn from their example.

2. *Who are the people you are presently seeking to influence for Christ?* Who are the lost people you are praying for, and building relationships with? Who are the young believers you're seeking to nurture for Christ? Who are the peers God has given you, friends, family members, and how are you intentionally seeking to influence them for Christ's honor?

Brothers and sisters, there's a tragedy I do not want to see in any of our lives. To see a person in this room come to the end of his or her life without a relationship with the Lord, yes, but also without meaningful relationships with people.

We must prioritize the Lord, people, then thirdly, Paul teaches us...

III. We must prioritize personal growth (13).

Back up to verse 13, which we skipped a moment ago. Verse 13 has intrigued me for many years. In verse 13, we see the practical, down to earth side of Paul. Verse 13 makes it clear that Paul was no superman Christian.

Verse 13 makes it clear that Paul knew not only the Lord, and people, but himself. He knew himself, and he prioritized personal growth.

Paul asked Timothy to bring three things to him when he came to Rome.

A. Paul wanted his cloak. Verse 13, "When you come bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas." Why the cloak? Well, remember where Paul was. Chained in a dark, damp dungeon. And verse 21 says that winter is coming soon. There was no heat pump in the Mamartine prison, so Paul needed warm clothing. The cloak, an outer garment of heavy material, would be vital for his physical needs.

God has created each of us as physical beings, and our physical needs matter to the Lord (He taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"), and should matter to us as well. Our bodies are His temple (1 Cor 6:19).

Are you taking care of your physical body? Do you eat in a way that glorifies God, exercise, get the rest God has created your body to need? It's a vital part of your personal growth.

So is this.

B. Paul wanted his scrolls/books. "And my scrolls." The Greek word is *biblia* which literally means "papyrus rolls." What was written on these papyrus rolls? Words, of course. What words? We don't know for sure. One suggestion is that they contained the earliest forms of the Gospels, the biographical accounts of the life of Jesus written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke (John's is yet future). Perhaps they were scrolls he had written to the churches, or that Peter, or James, or Jude had written, the documents that would later be incorporated into what we call the New Testament.

Regardless, Paul longed to written words in front of him, to stimulate his thinking, to encourage his heart, to fortify his ministry tool box. He wants to be sharp mentally, to keep growing. Also...

C. Paul wanted the parchments. "Especially the parchments," he says. Interesting, *especially*. He really wanted these parchments. Why?

Parchments were basically books made from the skins of animals. As such, they would last longer than the papyrus scrolls. If you wanted something to last a long, long time, you put it on animal skins, parchments.

What were these parchments that Paul so wanted? One opinion is that they were the apostle's necessary legal documents, even his Roman citizenship. A more likely suggestion is that these parchments were copies of the Old Testament Scriptures.

I want you to hold up your Bible, and look around the room. Look at all the Bibles, in various forms, on paper, in our phones, in the form of a tablet. Even audio Bibles, as we're raising funds for to help those in the military.

We *have* what Paul *longed for*. We have words to look at, books written by people that can stimulate our minds and hearts, and most of all, *the Book* which God has given us so we can know Him personally.

Even though he's months, perhaps weeks, or even days from the day of his death, Paul gave attention to his body, his mind, and his soul. He never stopped growing spiritually. He never lost his desire to learn.

It was 1500 years later that William Tyndale was lying in prison in Vilvorde. He was to be executed because he dared to translate the Bible into the language of the common people. It was a cold, dark winter, and Tyndale wrote a letter to his friend, "Send me for Jesus' sake, a warmer cap, something to patch my leggings, a woolen shirt, and above all my Hebrew Bible."⁴

We too, like Tyndale, like Paul, must prioritize our personal growth, for the glory of our Maker and Redeemer. We must take practical steps to keep growing and living for God, until He calls us to our eternal home.

A. W. Tozer made this astute observation about what he called "flabby Christianity" more than fifty years ago:

A religious mentality characterized by timidity and lack of moral courage has given us to a *flabby Christianity*, intellectually impoverished, dull, repetitious and to a great many persons just plain boring. This is peddled as the very faith of our fathers in direct lineal descent from Christ and the apostles. We spoon-feed this insipid pabulum to our inquiring youth and, to make it palatable, spice it up with carnal amusements filched from the unbelieving world. It is easier to entertain than to instruct, it is easier to follow degenerate public taste than to think for oneself, so too many of our evangelical leaders let their minds atrophy while they keep their fingers nimble operating religious gimmicks to bring in the curious crowds. Christianity must embrace the total personality and command every atom of the redeemed being. We cannot withhold our intellects from the blazing altar and still hope to preserve the true faith of Christ.⁵

So Paul modeled three priorities for us, the Lord, people, and his own personal growth. What are your priorities? Is the Lord your first priority? Do you make it a priority to get involved in the lives of people for the cause of Christ? Is it a priority in your life to experience personal growth every day?

We could close our Bibles, pray, and leave. But I want to offer a very practical reminder, about *grace*.

Make It Personal: Grace changes everything.

1. *Grace makes faithfulness possible.*
2. *Grace means God gets the glory for our faithfulness.*
3. *Grace motivates us to be faithful to the end.*

⁴ Barclay, p. 220

⁵ From A. W. Tozer, *The Set of the Sail*, <http://www.cmalliance.org/devotions/tozer?id=683>