

2 Timothy 4:9-22 “Living with the Final Day in View”
Nehemiah 13
Psalm 28

(January 22, 2012)

Nehemiah asks God to remember me for all the good I have done –
and for all that I have suffered.

He also asks God to remember *them* – to remember those who have desecrated the priesthood
by marrying foreign women (idolaters).

Nehemiah understands what God has said:

“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

Nehemiah is a judge and ruler,
and so he seeks to do righteousness and justice in the land,
but he does not seek to take vengeance himself.
But he is confident that God *will* bring judgment.

When God says that vengeance belongs to him,
he is not saying that vengeance is *bad*.

It is a good thing for the wicked to pay for their crimes!

You hear about the awful things that coaches and pastors have done to children –
and you are *right* to want vengeance!

Sometimes God brings that vengeance through the justice system of the nations.

Other times he waits until Judgment Day.

But God *will* make all things right.

Maybe someone has done something really horrible to you.

It’s a good thing to seek justice in this life
but if the courts fail to give justice,
we should not worry.

The Lord Jesus is the righteous judge (4:8),
and he will make all things right on the Final Day.

That is a good thing for those whose hope and trust are in Jesus.

That is a terrifying thing for everyone else –

because Jesus is the righteous judge who will take vengeance on the wicked.

When you are living with the Final Day in view,
then you *want* to see justice done

(and you *want* to see human judges reflecting Christ’s justice –

“living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”),

but your hope is not that this age will give you justice.

Your hope is the gospel – the good news that Jesus has established his kingdom,
and will bring vengeance on *that day*, making all things right.

And so let us sing Psalm 28 – a Psalm that asks God to “repay them for their evil deeds.”

Read 2 Timothy 4

1. Now or Then: Which Do You Love? (v9-18)

a. In Love with This Present World: the Desertion of Demas (v9-10)

⁹ *Do your best to come to me soon.* ¹⁰ *For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.*

Our passage today begins and ends with Paul's plea for Timothy to come soon – hopefully before winter.

Paul has been talking to Timothy about the struggles that Timothy will face as a pastor – and one of those struggles is that people will leave you:

sometimes for good reasons – and sometimes for bad reasons.

Paul will give several good reasons,
but he starts with a bad reason.

Demas has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

When Paul wrote to the Colossians, Demas joined with Luke in sending greetings (4:14), and in his letter to Philemon (probably written at the same time as Colossians) Paul included Demas as one of his “fellow workers.” (24)

We have frequently heard Paul talk about his traveling presbytery – the pastors and interns (and their families) that traveled with him.

Here Paul tells Timothy that one of his fellow workers had abandoned him.
Often Paul would send one of his fellow-workers on a mission – we'll hear about Crescens and Titus in the next line.
But Demas has deserted Paul.

Why?

Because he is “in love with this present world.”

What does it mean to be “in love with this present world”?

The phrase in Greek is literally translated “loving the now age.”
“loving the age of *now*.”

For Paul, the present age is contrasted with the age to come – and the age to come has dawned in the resurrection of Christ.

Jesus is now king – and so the kingdom of God has begun in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Paul talks about “the now age” in 1 Timothy 6:17,
when he told Timothy to speak to those who are “rich in the present age”
“and charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches,

but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.
They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share,
thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future,
so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”

Those who are rich in the “now age” need to be focused on the age to come –
so that all that they do is oriented toward “that which is truly life.”

Likewise in Titus 2:11-14, Paul reminds Titus that “the grace of God has appeared
bringing salvation for all people,
training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions,
and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,
waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Savior,
Jesus Christ,
who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness
and to purify for himself a people for his own possession
who are zealous for good works.”

In other words, the gospel – the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus –
entirely reorients us away from the pursuit of the things of *this present age*,
so that we might live “self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

Because we *live* in the present age.
You cannot escape this age –
this present age is the context in which you are lived a kingdom-centered life!

As Paul said to the Colossians 3:1-5,
“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is,
seated at the right hand of God.
Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ, who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:”

In other words, Paul wants you to be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good!
Because look at what Paul means by earthly:
“sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.
On account of these the wrath of God is coming.” (3:6)

When Paul says that Demas is ‘in love with the present world’ –
that Demas loves “the now age” –
Paul is saying that Demas is *not* setting his heart and mind on things above,
Demas has set his heart on earthly things.

If you had asked Demas, what would he have said?
Why did he go to Thessalonica?

We would like to think that Demas deserted Paul because Demas had denied the faith and ran off to live a life of dissolute wickedness.

But Demas himself might have said,

“No, I still believe in Jesus – I just had to take care of some business
I don’t know why Paul’s so upset,
he tends to be a bit fanatical.
If he hadn’t overreacted I might have come back in a few months.”

When Jesus called one man to “follow me”,

the man replied, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father,”
and Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead.
But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Yet another said,

“I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”
Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back
is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:59-62)

If you claim to follow Jesus,

then you must do what Jesus says.

What calling has God given you?

Has he called you to be a husband and father?

Then do not turn aside from that calling,
but seek to be a heavenly-minded husband and father,
and put to death your earthly desires.

What is the work that Christ has given you to do?

The kingdom of God finds expression in the present age
as we live “self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”
(Titus 2:12)

Demas has turned aside from the calling of Christ.

He loves the world – he loves the “now age.”

What you need to see is that you *cannot* love both God and the present age!

When you are living with the Final Day in view,
then you will see that the present age is in rebellion against God.

As long as the present age continues the Final Day *cannot come*.

If you love God, then you *will* love all that God has created –
but you will *not* love rebellion.

We love all people,

because all people are created in the image of God.

And because we love God, we love everything that reminds us of God!

But the present age – the age that is fixated on “now” – this evil age –
is in rebellion against God.
And we must hate everything that is opposed to God
(and when we sin, we oppose God –
and therefore we should hate that about ourselves!)
There is a proper sense of self-loathing that we *should* have because of sin!
It is true that many people have problems with “self-esteem” –
but the solution is not to pump ourselves up with “good feelings”;
the solution is – as Paul said – “set your minds on things above” –
We must see ourselves for who we are *in Christ*.

We cannot love the present age.

b. Useful for Ministry: Paul’s Traveling Presbytery (v10-13)

Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ *Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry.* ¹² *Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus.* ¹³ *When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.*

There are several others that Paul says have left him – but in a good way!
Crescens and Titus are now preaching in Galatia and Dalmatia.
Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus.
Carpus is at Troas.

And not just people –
Paul has left some of his books and parchments with Carpus.
In an age where books were scarce,
it would be a common practice to leave portions of your library with friends,
so that they could copy them.

Now Paul asks that Timothy would bring back his books and parchments –
and also Mark!

In the book of Acts we hear that Paul was upset with Mark
for leaving them in the middle of their journey –
but apparently that was dealt with –
and now Mark is useful in the ministry of the gospel.

This is a good reminder that early failures in life
do not disqualify you for later usefulness!
(Paul himself is a good example of this – he once persecuted the church!)

We don’t know much about Crescens,
but Titus played a significant role in the church of Corinth
(he is referred to 8 times in 2 Corinthians)
and was known to the Galatian churches as well (Galatians 2).

Now, Titus is in Dalmatia (modern Croatia/Bosnia).

Paul's epistle to Titus was sent to Titus while he was on the island of Crete.

In other words, Titus was sent all over the Roman world in the service of Christ.

If you want to understand the difference between being 'in love with Christ'
and 'in love with the present age' –
just look at Demas and Titus.

They both do the same thing:

they leave Paul and go someplace else!

But one leaves to pursue his own selfish desires.

The other leaves to pursue the calling of Christ.

Tychicus is another one of Paul's faithful fellow workers.

He appears in Acts 20, as one who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem.

He was Paul's messenger who carried the letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians.

And Paul was thinking about sending Tychicus to replace Titus at Crete.

You can see here how Paul's traveling presbytery has functioned.

Paul, as an apostle, and as the "presiding elder" of the presbytery
trains up his interns and prepares them for ministry.

Some of them he keeps around him – others are sent off for shorter or longer periods.

But now, only Luke is with him.

We saw last time that Paul's ministry is essentially over.

"The time of my departure has come.

I have fought the good fight.

I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith."

Paul's traveling presbytery is being disbanded –
or perhaps better – expanded!

His task is finished – theirs is just beginning!

Crescens and Titus and Tychicus are imitating Paul,
in developing presbyteries – elderships –

that are functioning in ministry very much like Paul's traveling presbytery.

Most of these presbyteries will eventually become more sedentary!

Once the church is planted, and there are established elderships in each city,
then you don't need the traveling presbytery any more.

By the time of Ignatius (at the end of 1st century)

it is clear that every city has its own presbytery.

Our presbytery – the Great Lakes Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America –
is geographically too spread out.

We cover the whole state of Michigan and northern Indiana.
There should be at least three presbyteries in northern Indiana:
Gary, South Bend, and Fort Wayne,
and several more in Michigan.

But we are making progress!
Twelve years ago the Great Lakes Presbytery included all of Indiana,
most of Ohio, and all of Kentucky!

Today there are four presbyteries where 12 years ago there was one!
In order to continue this, we need to be more intentional – more focused –
in our church planting.
There are different needs – and different challenges –
in the different parts of our community.
South Bend and Mishawaka are the urban centers –
but most of the region is dotted with small towns and rural communities.

We've started with Faith Community Church in LaPorte
because that was what God put in front of us to do!
And as we have sought to encourage them,
now there may be an opportunity in downtown South Bend.

What do we mean when we pray “thy kingdom come”?
Our shorter catechism has a great answer:

Q. 102. *What do we pray for in the second petition?*

A. In the second petition, which is, “Your kingdom come,” we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

When you are living with the Final Day in view,
this prayer is what drives us every day!

c. The Lord Will Repay: the Active Opposition of Alexander (v14-15)

¹⁴ *Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.*

¹⁵ *Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message.*

But as we pray this, we realize that we will face opposition.

There are two other references to an “Alexander” in Paul’s life:

Acts 19:33-34 refers to an Ephesian Jew named Alexander
who was shouted down by a Gentile mob.

1 Timothy 1:20 refers to an Ephesian Alexander who joined Hymenaeus
in his blasphemous doctrine that the resurrection has already happened
(for which Paul handed them over to Satan).

But the identification of Alexander “the coppersmith” may suggest that Alexander is at Troas –

(a city known for its guild of coppersmiths)
and that Paul left his cloak, books, and parchments there
because he was hauled off in chains.

The context suggests that Paul may have been arrested at Troas –
because when Paul says that Alexander “did me great harm” –
he uses a law term that refers to giving information against/or testifying;
so it might be better to translate it, Alexander “testified evil against me.”

Indeed, the placement of the warning
suggests that Paul fears that Alexander will cause trouble for Timothy,
when Timothy goes to Troas.

At any rate, Paul says that Alexander continues to oppose the message of the gospel,
and he reminds Timothy that the Lord Jesus will “repay him according to his deeds.”

Like Nehemiah, Paul understands that he should not take vengeance himself.
But he is confident that God *will* bring judgment.

It’s a good thing to seek justice in this life
(Paul appeared before the court, as he describes in verse 18),
but if the courts fail to give justice (as he describes in verse 18),
Paul does not worry.

The Lord Jesus is the righteous judge (4:8),
and he will make all things right on the Final Day.

When you are living with the Final Day in view,
then you *want* to see justice done
(and you *want* to see human judges reflecting Christ’s justice –
“living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age”),
but your hope is not that this age will give you justice.

Your hope is the gospel – the good news that Jesus has established his kingdom,
and will bring vengeance on *that day*, making all things right.

d. May It Not Be Charged Against Them: the Passive Fear of Many (v16)

¹⁶ *At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!*

But notice that while Paul wants *vengeance* on Alexander the coppersmith,
he does not ask for vengeance against those who deserted him.

As Alexander breathed forth lies and slander,
no one stood by Paul.
Alone – abandoned by friends and colleagues –
Paul was deserted.

He could have been angry and justly denounced them as pious frauds:
“They call themselves Christians!!!”
He could have launched a tirade about how they had denied the faith
and fallen in love with the present age!

But he doesn't.

They were afraid.
They failed to take a stand.
But Paul does not blame them.
“May it not be charged against them.”
May the righteous judge, our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on them.

A servant must be like his master.

When Jesus was abandoned and deserted by his disciples,
he went willingly and faithfully to the cross.
And so Paul sees the example that he must follow –
and puts a bit of a twist on Jesus' words,
“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Paul has an unrelenting standard:

“all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (3:12);
but he has great sympathy with those who stumble!

His example would be followed in the early church by the confessors.
The early church distinguished between “martyrs” – those who died for their testimony –
and “confessors” – those who confessed Christ on pain of death,
but were spared by the Romans anyway.

Well, there was another category: the “lapsed” –
those who failed to confess Christ, and denied Christ when persecution came.
Some said that the lapsed could never be restored –
but it was the confessors who defended them (many of whom had wavered –
and knew how hard it was to look death in the face, and say,
“Jesus is Lord”).

It is true, “if we deny him, he also will deny us” (2:12) –
but Paul (like the later confessors) will show mercy to those who are weak.

Yes, they deserted me –
but Lord Jesus, King of Kings – have mercy on them!

And you can see why Paul says this in verses 17-18:

e. Rescued from the Lion's Mouth: To God be the Glory (v17-18)

¹⁷ But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. ¹⁸ The

Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When the Lord Jesus stands by you – you can be gentle with the weak!
And the Lord strengthened me, “so that through me
the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.”

The Lord Jesus is present with you and strengthens you *for the sake of his heavenly kingdom*.
Often times we wonder why God doesn’t seem to be with us.

The reason is often because we are not with him!
If we are in love with the present age – and pursuing our own selfish desires –
then we should not expect the presence and power of God in our lives!

But Paul’s message is a message that the kingdom of God has come.
Jesus is sitting on the right hand of the Father –
and by this message – by this gospel –
the Spirit of God comes upon those
who have been selfishly pursuing their own kingdoms
and reorients them to the heavenly kingdom of Christ.

And for those who have been brought from death to life,
Paul can say, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed
and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.
To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”

Now here is where language gets you in trouble.

If you read verse 10 – Demas, “in love with this present world”
and verse 18, “to him be the glory forever and ever”
you might not think that there is any connection.

But Paul uses the same word in both verses.
The word “age” (aion).
Demas loves “the now age.”
But all glory belongs to Jesus, “unto the ages of ages.”

The “now age” refers to my selfish pleasures here and now.
This is an itty-bitty kingdom of one – centered on “me and my happiness.”
The “ages of ages” refers to the eternal kingdom of Jesus – centered on his glory.

Now, I realize that it’s awfully hard to imagine the glory of that heavenly kingdom –
but it’s not so hard to imagine the futility of “the now age.”

How is your pursuit of happiness going?
When your goal in life is “my happiness”
maybe you get fleeting glimpses here and there –

but you always need more – you’re never satisfied!

Demas, in love with the “now age” is running after his own pleasure.
Paul, focused on the glory of Jesus in the “ages of ages”
is focused on the heavenly kingdom.

2. Final Greetings (v19-21)

¹⁹ *Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.* ²⁰ *Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.* ²¹ *Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the brothers.*

Paul concludes his letter with greetings to several familiar folks.

Prisca (or Priscilla) and her husband Aquila
are familiar figures in Paul’s letters,
as are Onesiphorus and Trophimus.
But all the familiar names are now far away.
Many have noted that Trophimus was ill – and that Paul left him there.

In other words, while Paul often healed people –
he did not have a “magical” gift of healing.
Miraculous healings in the Bible are all *redemptive historical* –
they are designed to demonstrate the power of the gospel in history.
Paul did not have the power to heal just anyone he wanted to heal.
That would be a self-centered, magical power.

Paul’s power is the power of the kingdom –
and so his healings are all designed to demonstrate that the kingdom has come.

The greetings at the end of the epistle remind us that Jesus has only one church.
We are all one family – we are brethren.
We live in different cities – we attend different congregations –
but Jesus has only one church.

Conclusion: The Lord Be with Your Spirit (v22)

²² *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

You might be tempted to overlook verse 22 –
but there is one final thing you need to see.

The first you in verse 22 is singular (“the Lord be with your Spirit”).
But the final “you” is plural (Grace be with you all)!

Paul writes to Timothy – but with the recognition that everyone else is listening in.
The Lord be with your spirit, Timothy, as you lead and shepherd this congregation.
Grace be with you all, congregation, as you follow the lead of your shepherd,
as you live with the Final Day in view.