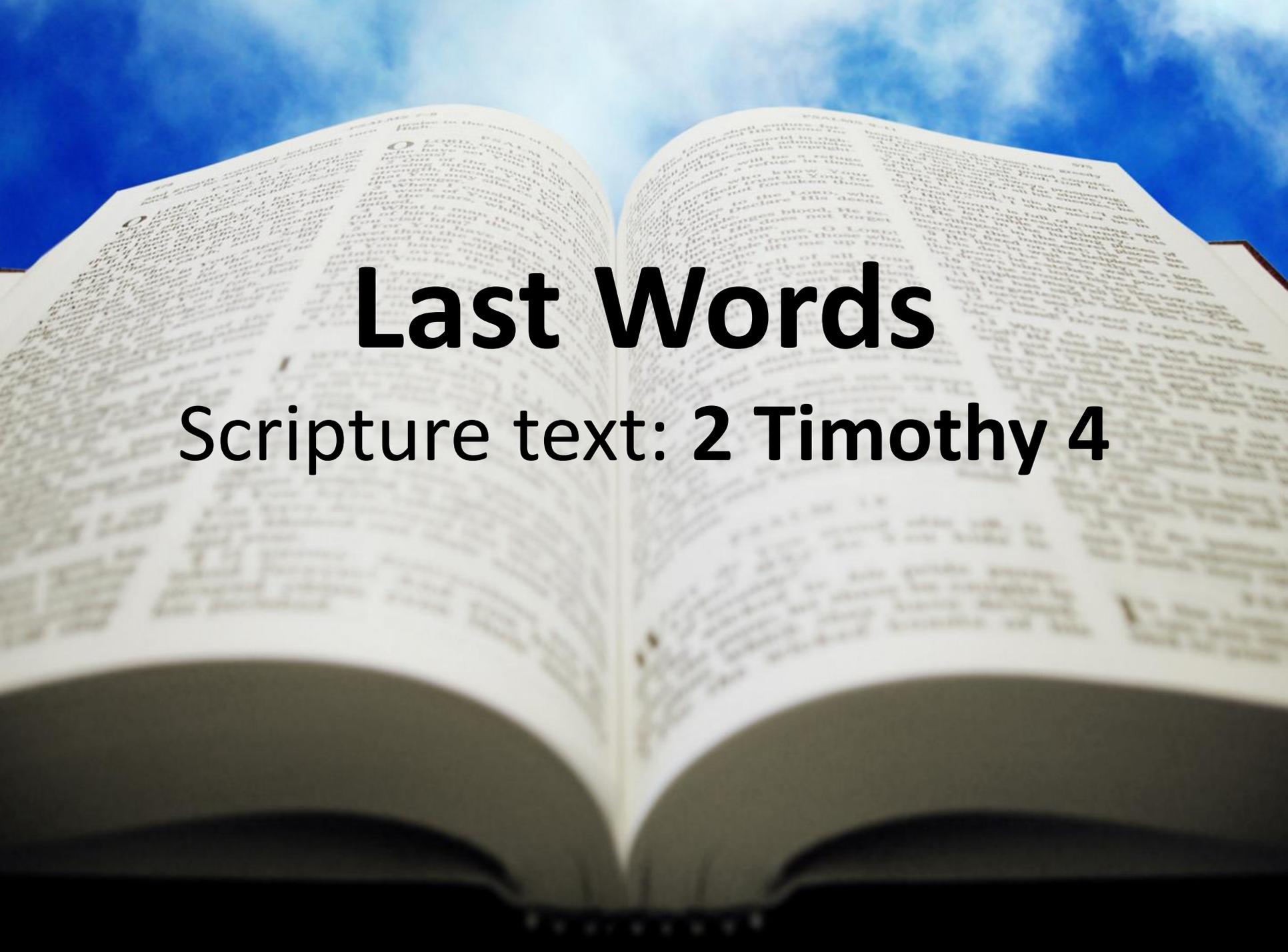


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Last Words

Scripture text: 2 Timothy 4

LAST WORDS

A great person's last words are significant. **They are a window that helps us to look into his heart, or a measure that helps us evaluate his life.** In this chapter, we have Paul's last words to Timothy and to the church.

It is interesting that Paul expressed no regrets as he came to the end. He even forgave those who made his situation difficult (2 Tim. 4:16). More than seventeen people are referred to in this chapter, which shows that Paul was a friend-maker as well as a soul winner. Though his own days were numbered, Paul thought of others.

“Preach the Word!”

Fulfill Your Ministry

Timothy was not only a preacher; he was also a soldier (2 Tim. 2:3–4) who would have to “endure afflictions” (2 Tim. 4:5).

“Do the work of an evangelist”

He looked around (v. 6).

Paul looked back (v. 7).

Paul looked ahead (v. 8).

Jesus Christ is the “righteous Judge” who always judges correctly.

Be Diligent and Faithful (2 Tim. 4:9–22)

“Hurry and get here!” is the meaning of the admonition to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:9). Tychicus would take Timothy’s place in Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:12). As Timothy hurried to Rome, he could stop in Troas and get the cloak, books, and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13).

Paul probably **left them there in his haste to depart**. It is touching to see that, in his closing days on earth, **Paul wanted his dear “son in the faith” at his side**. But he was also practical: **he needed his cloak for warmth, and he wanted his books for study**.

The “books” would be papyrus scrolls, perhaps of the Old Testament Scriptures; and the “parchments” would be books made from the skins of animals. We do not know what these “parchments” were, but we are not surprised that a scholar such as Paul wanted material for study and writing.

Before he ended the letter, Paul urged Timothy to **“come before winter”** (2 Tim. 4:21). Why? All the ships would be in port during the winter since it would be too dangerous for sailing. **If Timothy waited too long, he would miss his opportunity to travel to Paul; and then it would be too late.**

Why should Timothy be diligent and faithful?

Look at 2 Timothy 4:10, which gives part of the answer: **Some in Paul's circle were not faithful, and he could not depend on them.** Demas is named only three times in the New Testament; yet **these three citations tell a sad story of failure.**

Paul listed Demas along with Mark and Luke as one of his "fellow laborers" (Phile. 24). Then he is simply called "Demas" (Col. 4:14). Here (2 Tim. 4:10) it is, **"Demas hath forsaken me."**

Paul gave the reason: Demas **“loved this present world.”** He had, as a believer, **“tasted ... the powers of the world to come”** (Heb. 6:5); but he preferred **“this present evil world”** (Gal. 1:4).

In his Pilgrim’s Progress, John Bunyan pictured Demas as the **keeper of a silver mine at the Hill Lucre.**

Perhaps **it was the love of money that enticed Demas back into the world.** It must have broken Paul’s heart **to see Demas fail so shamefully; yet it can happen to any believer.** Perhaps this explains why Paul had so much to say about riches in his pastoral letters.

Another reason why Paul wanted Timothy in Rome was that his next hearing was coming up and only Luke was with him.

The believers in Rome and Ephesus who could have stood with Paul had failed him (2 Tim. 4:16); but Paul knew that Timothy would not fail him. Of course, the Lord had not failed Paul either! (2 Tim. 4:17)

The Lord had promised to stay with Paul, and He had kept His promise.

When Paul had been discouraged in Corinth, **the Lord came to him and encouraged him** (Acts 18:9–11).

Act 18:9-11 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.**" And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

After he had been arrested in Jerusalem, Paul again was visited by the Lord and encouraged (Acts 23:11).

Act 23:11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "**Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.**"

During that terrible storm, when Paul was on board ship, the **Lord had again given him strength and courage** (Acts 27:22ff).

Now, in that horrible Roman prison, Paul again experienced the strengthening presence of the Lord, who had promised, "**I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee**" (Heb. 13:5).

But note that Paul's concern was not for his own safety or comfort. **It was the preaching of the Word so that Gentiles might be saved.** It was Paul's special calling to minister to the Gentiles (see Eph. 3); and he was not ashamed of the Gospel, even in the great city of Rome (Rom. 1:16).

What a man! His friends forsake him, and he prays that God will forgive them. His enemies try him, and he looks for opportunities to tell them how to be saved!

What a difference it makes when the Holy Spirit controls your life.

“I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Tim. 4:17). Who or what is this “lion”? It cannot mean a literal lion because Paul was a Roman citizen and, if convicted, he could not be thrown to the lions. Instead, he would be executed by being beheaded. Was “the lion” the Emperor Nero? Probably not. If he had been delivered from Nero, then this meant he was acquitted; yet, he had only had a preliminary first hearing. **The lion is a symbol of Satan** (1 Peter 5:8).

Perhaps **Paul was referring to some scheme of the devil to defeat him and hinder the work of the Gospel.**

To be “saved from the lion’s mouth” was a proverbial saying which meant “**to be delivered from great danger**” (Ps. 22:21).

But for a Christian, there are things even more dangerous than suffering and death. Sin, for example. This is what Paul had in mind (2 Tim. 4:18). **He was confident that the Lord would deliver him from “every evil work” and take him to the heavenly kingdom.** Paul’s greatest fear was not of death; it was that he might deny his Lord or do something else that would disgrace God’s name. Paul was certain that the time had come for his permanent departure (2 Tim. 4:6). He wanted to end his life-race well and **be free from any disobedience.**

It is heartening to see how many people are named in the closing part of this last letter Paul wrote. **I believe that there are at least 100 different men and women named in Acts and Paul's letters**, as a part of his circle of friends and fellow laborers. Paul could not do the job by himself. **It is a great man who enlists others to help get the job done, and who lets them share in the greatness of the work.**

Luke (2 Tim. 4:11) is the “beloved physician” who traveled with Paul (Col. 4:14). He is author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. (Notice the “we” sections in Acts, the eyewitness reports of Dr. Luke.)

Paul probably dictated this letter (2 Tim.) to Luke. Being a doctor, Luke must have appreciated Paul's reference to gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17).

Crescens (2 Tim. 4:10) was sent by Paul to Galatia. We know nothing about him, nor do we really need to know. **He was another faithful laborer who assisted Paul in an hour of great need.**

Titus (2 Tim. 4:10) was Paul's close associate and, along with Timothy, a trusted "troubleshooter."

Paul had left Titus in Crete to straighten out the problems in the churches there (Titus 1:5).

As we study Paul's letter to Titus, we get better acquainted with this choice servant of God. Titus had met Paul at Nicopolis during that period between Paul's arrests (Titus 3:12). Now Paul had summoned him to Rome and sent him to Dalmatia (our modern Yugoslavia).

Mark (2 Tim. 4:11) was a cousin of Barnabas, Paul's first partner in missionary service (Acts 13:1–3). His mother was a noted Christian in Jerusalem (Acts 12:5, 12).

Unfortunately, John Mark failed on that first missionary journey (Acts 13:5, 13). Paul refused to take Mark on the second trip, and this led to a falling-out between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41). However, Paul now admitted that John Mark was a valuable worker; and he wanted Mark with him in Rome. **How good it is to know that one failure in Christian service need not make one's whole life a failure.**

Tychicus (2 Tim. 4:12) was a believer from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4) who willingly accompanied Paul and probably ministered as a personal servant to the apostle.

He was with Paul during his first imprisonment (Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–8). Paul sent Tychicus to Crete to relieve Titus (Titus 3:12). Now he was sending him to Ephesus to relieve Timothy. **What a blessing it is to have people who can replace others!** A relief pitcher may not get all the glory, but he may help win the game!

Carpus (2 Tim. 4:13) lived at Troas and gave Paul hospitality. Paul must have departed in a hurry (was he being sought for arrest?) because he left his cloak and books behind. However, Carpus was a faithful brother; he would guard them until somebody picked them up to take to Paul.

Even such so-called menial tasks are ministries for the Lord.

Is Alexander the coppersmith (2 Tim. 4:14) the same Alexander mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:20? Nobody knows, and there is no value in conjecturing. The name was common, but it is possible that this heretic went to Rome to make things difficult for Paul. **Satan has his workers too.** By the way, Paul's words, **"The Lord reward him according to his works"** (2 Tim. 4:14), are not a prayer of judgment, for this would be contrary to Jesus' teaching (Matt. 5:43–48). **"The Lord will reward him"** is a better translation.

Prisca (or Priscilla) and Aquila (2 Tim. 4:19) were a husband-and-wife team that assisted Paul in many ways (see Acts 18:1–3, 24–28; Rom. 16:3–4; 1 Cor. 16:19). Now they were in Ephesus helping Timothy with his ministry. **It is wonderful when God's people do their work regardless of who their leader is.**

Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 4:19) and his household we met in 2 Timothy 1.

Erastus (2 Tim. 4:20) might be the treasurer of Corinth (Rom. 16:23); and he might be the same man who ministered with Timothy in Macedonia (Acts 19:22).

Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20) from Ephesus was a friend of Tychicus (Acts 20:4), and the man whose presence with Paul helped to incite that riot in Jerusalem (Acts 21:28–29). He had been serving at Miletus, but now he was ill. Why did Paul not heal him? Apparently not every sick person is supposed to be miraculously healed.

The other people mentioned (2 Tim. 4:21) are unknown to us, but certainly not to the Lord.

“Grace be with you” (2 Tim. 4:22) was Paul’s personal farewell, used at the end of his letters as a **“trademark” that the letter was not a forgery.**

The Bible does not record the final days of Paul. Tradition tells us that he was found guilty and sentenced to die. He was probably taken outside the city and beheaded.

But Timothy and the other devoted believers carried on the work! As John Wesley used to say, **“God buries His workmen, but His work goes on.”**

You and I must be faithful so that (if the Lord does not return soon) future generations may hear the Gospel and have the opportunity to be saved.