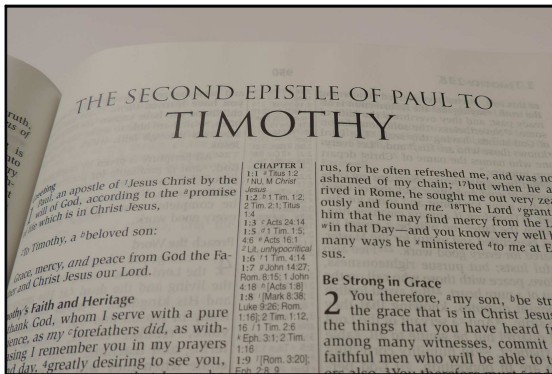


PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



November 2018

Bible readings from 2 Timothy, Titus and Psalms 143 to 147

2 TIMOTHY

Rome was devastated by fire in AD 64 (said to have been started by the wicked emperor Nero for his own entertainment). Nero blamed the Christians for this and unleashed terrible persecution on the church. Thousands of Christians were tortured and killed. It was probably during this persecution that Paul was again imprisoned and put to death.

Paul's second letter to Timothy is the last of all his letters in the New Testament. It was possibly written within a few months of his death and only Luke was with Paul and he was most anxious for Timothy and Mark to come to Rome to see him before he died (cp. 4:6,9,11). The apostle faced death with a calm dignity and with an expectation of the Lord's reward for faithful service (4:6–8). As a man who knew that he was nearing death, he urged Timothy to persevere *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ* (2:3) and to shun false teaching (2:16–18; 3:1–9). The great antidote to false teaching is sound doctrine and Hendriksen points out that the apostle urges Timothy to: hold on to it (1:13–14); teach it (2:2,24); abide in it (3:14) and preach it (4:2).

Outline of 2 Timothy

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------|
| 1. Opening greetings | – | 1:1–2 |
| 2. Thanksgiving for Timothy's faith | – | 1:3–5 |
| 3. Exhortation to be bold and faithful | – | 1:6–14 |
| 4. The loyalty of Onesiphorus commended | – | 1:15–18 |
| 5. Exhortation to persevere | – | 2:1–13 |
| 6. The man God uses | – | 2:14–26 |
| 7. Warning against the coming apostasy | – | 3:1–9 |
| 8. Equipment for perilous times (the Word of God) | | 3:10 to 4:5 |
| 9. Paul's own circumstances | – | 4:6–18 |
| 10. Closing greetings | – | 4:19–22 |

For further reading I recommend the commentary by William Hendriksen on 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus and The Pastoral Epistles by Geoffrey B. Wilson both published by Banner of Truth.

The notes for 1 November are included with the notes for October

The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus

This is Paul's last recorded letter in the New Testament. He writes to Timothy whom he describes as his *beloved son* (or 'child' 2). He had addressed Timothy as his *true son in the faith* at the beginning of his first letter (1 Timothy 1:2).

William Hendriksen observes with reference to verse 2, 'Upon this "beloved child" Paul pronounces *grace* (unmerited pardoning and transforming favour), *mercy* (warm and tender affection shown to the one who is in a difficult situation), and that blessing which flows forth from grace and mercy just as a stream issues from a fountain, namely, the blessing of *peace* (the consciousness of having been reconciled to God through the accomplished mediatorial work of Christ).

'These gifts are regarded as having their source "God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." God the Father bestows them. The Son has earned them' (COMMENTARY ON 1 & 2 TIMOTHY AND TITUS, page 224).

Paul was in prison awaiting execution (4:6) but he was not afraid to die because in Christ Jesus the gospel brings *the promise of life* (1; cp. 1 Timothy 4:8). He could look back on his life knowing that he had served God *with a pure conscience*. There isn't any trace of self-pity in the apostle because of his adverse circumstances. He rather opens his letter with thanksgiving to God (3). Paul's love and concern for Timothy drove him to pray for him day and night. He longed to see Timothy again, remembering his tears (4; cp. 4:21). This may refer to the last time that they were together and the tearful parting that followed. **True friendship and concern will show itself in constant prayer for those who are the objects of our love.** How often do you pray for Christian friends and for ministers and missionary friends?

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The genuine faith that is in you

Timothy was from Lystra in southern Galatia where Paul and Barnabas had encountered much opposition. Unbelieving Jews stirred up a mob against Paul who was stoned and left for dead. Paul recovered and soon returned and made many disciples (Acts 13:19–22). It would appear that Timothy, his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois came to faith in Christ at that time. When Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, Timothy was commended by the church to him and he asked Timothy to join Silas and himself (Acts 16:1–3).

Paul was thankful to God for the sincere faith (*'genuine faith'*) of Timothy and recalled that this kind of faith had been seen in his mother and grandmother (5). Timothy's Jewish mother had married a Gentile father (Acts 16:1). **Eunice is a great example to any whose husband (or wife) is not a believer.** This godly woman and her mother Lois had taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures from his earliest years (3:15). This grounding in the Old Testament had helped prepare Timothy to receive the gospel. He became an outstanding Christian and a beloved fellow-worker of the apostle Paul. Lois is a great example to grandparents who can play an important role in the spiritual nurture of their grandchildren.

Parents, you have a great privilege in having children given to you by the Lord. You also have the great responsibility to teach them God's holy Word, to pray with them, and to set a godly example before them in and out of the home. Are you doing these things?

*How shall the young direct their way?
 What light shall be their perfect guide?
 Thy word, O Lord, will safely lead,
 If in its wisdom they confide.
 Sincerely I have sought thee, Lord,
 O let me not from thee depart;
 To know thy will and keep from sin,
 Thy word I cherish in my heart.*

(Psalter, 1912)

Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord

Paul urged Timothy to stir up into a living flame of the gift of God which he had received through the laying on of hands (6; cp. 1 Timothy 4:14). The Lord gives all Christians various gifts but they must be stirred up and used for his service (cp. Romans 12:6–8). The devil wants us to neglect our God-given gifts and he will encourage us to hide them because of the fear of men. Timothy had a timid disposition and the apostle sought to encourage him (cp. 1 Corinthians 16:10). Are you beset by fear? Is this fear hindering your service for God? Remember, *God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (7; some translations have ‘self-control’ rather than ‘a sound mind’). How wonderful and encouraging!

When persecution rages against believers, it is all too easy to hide our Christian testimony. *God has not given us a spirit of fear ... Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner* (7–8). Notice that though the apostle was imprisoned by the Romans, he recognised the sovereignty of God in his suffering; he was not the prisoner of Nero but of Christ. Paul urged Timothy to share with him in *the sufferings for the gospel* (8). If you faithfully follow Christ, do not be surprised if you suffer for the sake of Christ.

Many Christians are *ashamed of the testimony of our Lord*. They are fearful of the scorn of men and women and do not speak about the Lord, nor of his greatness and love. They are ‘secret believers’. **Why should we be ashamed?** The superstitious person is not ashamed of his folly; the godless man is rarely ashamed of his wicked lifestyle. **Why should we be ashamed of Christ or of stating our conviction that the Bible is God’s holy Word? *God has not given us a spirit of fear so why should we be ashamed?*** When we openly speak of the Lord and lead a life which honours him, we know much joy and blessing. Pray that the Lord will help you open your mouth to speak of him, and to strengthen you so that you have a good witness. Pray that your life will glorify him. *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.*

Nevertheless I am not ashamed

When we see the greatness of the gospel and the exceeding perfection and goodness of Christ, we also see that he is worthy of our devotion. There is a great statement about our salvation in verses 9 and 10. Election (God's choice of individuals to salvation) is not based on our works but is by grace according to the purpose of God. We were chosen in Christ *before time began*, not because God foresaw any good works in us *but according to his own purpose and grace* ('grace' is the undeserved favour of God). Theologians describe this wonderful truth as 'unconditional election'.

We have been saved and called with '*a holy calling*' (9). Holiness of life is demanded of every Christian (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:15). Christ through his death has abolished death (deprived it of its power) and *brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*. Our souls will go to heaven when we die and our bodies will be raised when Jesus comes again (cp. 1 Corinthians 15:5–55). What a glorious hope we have in Christ!

God had appointed Paul to be *a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles* (11). As a servant of God he suffered, but he also testified, *Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day* (12). It is important that we not only know what we believe, but that we also know whom we have believed (God). Paul stresses here his relationship with God. He was persuaded that God would keep all the precious things that he had committed to his care – his soul, his future, his friends, his work. Paul had such a great trust in his God and Saviour that he could face death with peace and assurance.

Is your experience like that of the apostle? Do you know whom you have believed? Are you persuaded that he is able to keep what you have committed to him until that day (of Christ's return)? **Commit your life, your ways, your problems, your anxieties and your cares to him. He will never fail you, he cannot fail you, for he is God.**

He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain

Many people say that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. That is just not true! The Bible has many warnings against false religions, false teachers and error. False teaching is the enemy of truth and of the gospel. Like Timothy we too must *hold fast the pattern of sound words* which are found in the teaching of the apostles. God had entrusted Timothy with the gospel (1 Timothy 6:20) and he was to keep this good thing which had been committed to him. He could not do this in his own strength but by *the Holy Spirit who dwells in us* (14). We must never forget our need to depend upon the Holy Spirit.

When Paul was again imprisoned, it appears that he appealed to leading Christians in the province of Asia (of which Ephesus was the capital) to come to Rome and support him at his trial. They had failed to do so, perhaps because of fear and he singles out Phygellus and Hermogenes. This would have been a bitter disappointment to the apostle.

There was a man at Ephesus who was different and he was a great character (15–18). We are briefly introduced to Onesiphorus who had always been a loyal friend to Paul and had ministered to him at Ephesus. He went to Rome where Christians were being slaughtered for their faith during Nero's persecution of the church. Braving all kinds of danger, he diligently searched for Paul until he found him (17).

Paul had urged Timothy, *Do not be ashamed*. He also stated that he *was not ashamed* and now he writes of this dear brother who was not *ashamed* of him. *He often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain* (16). Onesiphorus was not ashamed to be identified with a man condemned to death despite the great danger to himself in a climate of great persecution against Christians. He was a merciful man and Paul prayed that God would have mercy on him and his household (cp. Matthew 5:7). Men and women of such calibre are indeed rare. How often do you 'refresh' other Christians in their need? **Are you willing at all times to be loyal and true to God and his servants, whatever the cost to yourself?**

A good soldier of Jesus Christ

Paul had reminded Timothy of the examples of Lois, Eunice, Onesiphorus and himself (chapter 1), He follows on by encouraging Timothy to *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus* (1). He was to commit the teaching he had received from Paul to faithful men who would then be able to teach others (2). What does it mean to be faithful? In this context it means to be devoted to Christ and to the truth of the gospel. It means to be trustworthy and dependable. Paul went on to liken the Christian life and service to that of a soldier (3-4), an athlete (5) and a farmer (6). Geoffrey B. Wilson comments, ‘The ministry of the gospel demands:

1. The whole-hearted devotion of the soldier;
2. The self-discipline of the athlete;
3. The wearisome toil of the farmer.’

(THE PASTORAL EPISTLES, page 140).

We are involved in *the good warfare* (1 Timothy 1:18) against the world (4), the flesh (22) and the devil (26). *A good soldier of Jesus Christ* must endure hardship (3). The Greek word translated ‘*endure hardship*’ is the same as that rendered ‘*share ... in the sufferings*’ (1:8). We must not expect to have an easy time.

A good soldier of Jesus will not get entangled *with the affairs of this life* (4). We may have to deny ourselves pleasures and enjoyments which are not in themselves sinful, but which may distract us from our warfare. *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful* (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Our supreme aim must be to please him who has *enlisted* us as his soldiers (4). Dare we be half-hearted when the Lord Jesus gave his life to save us? Surely, if we love him, we will be prepared to deny ourselves for him and to suffer for him. **Let us consider the words of Paul in these Scriptures and remember that success and fruitfulness in spiritual work do not come without hard toil and sacrifice.**

The word of God is not chained

Persecution against the church was raging when Paul wrote this letter to Timothy. He had told his younger friend that he must endure hardship in his service for Christ (3). He now encourages Timothy not to fear. He reminded him that because Jesus was raised from the dead, God's elect *may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory* (8,10). Our Saviour conquered death which is a terrible enemy but our great salvation leads to eternal glory.

Paul was in chains for the gospel but he knew that *the word of God is not chained* (9). This encouraged the apostle to endure *all things for the sake of the elect* (10). Wicked men may imprison or kill God's servants, but they cannot imprison God's Word or prevent it from working in the lives of men, women and young people. **Oh, that we had such a confidence in the Word of God, and love for the elect that we could honestly say that we would endure anything for them! Our churches, our evangelism and our missionary work would be transformed.**

There is another 'faithful saying' in verses 11 to 13:

- *For if we died with him* (Christ), *we shall also live with him*. This refers not so much to dying to sin (eg. Romans 6:7–8) but to dying to earthly comfort and ambition as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, being ready to suffer reproach, imprisonment or even death for him. *We shall also live with him*. 'To live with Christ means to be with him, to have fellowship with him, to delight in him, to be like him, to love him, and to glorify him' (Hendriksen, COMMENTARY, page 259).
- *If we endure* ('bear up courageously under suffering' – VINE'S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS), *we shall also reign with him*.
- *If we deny* Christ (by apostasy), *he also will deny us* on the day of judgment.
- *If we are faithless, he remains faithful*. Let us praise him and encourage ourselves in him.

Approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed

Timothy was to remind the ‘*faithful men*’ whom he taught (2) of the things mentioned in verses 8 to 13. He must solemnly charge them (‘*before the Lord*’; 14, cp. 4:1) not to engage in useless battles about words which do not profit the hearers but lead to ruin (14; our English word ‘catastrophe’ comes from the Greek noun translated ‘*ruin*’). The apostle had warned Timothy in his first letter against false teachers who are *proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words* (1 Timothy 6:4).

Paul now urges Timothy, *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth* (15). William Hendriksen comments, ‘Timothy then, must be a workman, not a quibbler. His work, moreover, must be such that it does not reflect shame on him and that he does not need to fear that shame will cover him when he hears the divine verdict with respect to it’ (COMMENTARY ON 1 & 2 TIMOTHY, page 262). **Christian, are you being diligent in your service, a worker who does not need to be ashamed?**

The Christian worker must rightly divide *the word of truth* (15). The Greek verb translated ‘*dividing*’ means ‘cutting straight’; it is also used of a plough cutting a straight furrow in the soil. The teacher of God’s Word must guide it along a straight path and refuse to be turned aside by useless debates or heresy. The ideas of heretics spread like *cancer*. The Greek noun is ‘gangrene’ and this is how it is translated in the ESV.

Hymenæus and Philetus were teaching that the resurrection had already happened, denying the future resurrection of the body (17–18). They probably taught that the resurrection was only spiritual (eg. the new life experienced at conversion). **Do you see the craftiness in such an error? It affirms one truth in order to deny another.** A gospel that denies the bodily resurrection of Christ is a false gospel (18).

A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all

We are deeply troubled when Christian leaders go astray, either through embracing false ideas or through immoral behaviour. We rightly wonder if they were ever truly saved, and the faith of many is shaken because of such people. We may not know whether certain individuals have ever been truly saved, but *the Lord knows those who are his* (19). On the day of judgment, the Lord Jesus will say to those who have not really known him as their Saviour, *'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practise lawlessness'* (Matthew 7:23).

There are two essentials for any Christian leader and for every Christian – purity of life and purity of doctrine.

- Purity of life. Holiness is essential for all who profess to follow Christ. They must *depart from iniquity* (19). The worker *approved to God* (15) will *flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart* (22). A godly character is far more important than the possession of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians chapter 13).

- Purity of doctrine. The servant of the Lord must rightly handle the Word of God (14). He must *avoid foolish and ignorant disputes* (23). He *must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient* (24). He must humbly seek to correct and recover false teachers from the error of their ways. These people have been ensnared by the devil (25–26). **A godly life enhances our handling of Scripture. How is it with you? How is your doctrine and life?** Are you being diligent to *present yourself approved to God ... sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work* (15, 21)?

Pause, my soul! and ask the question

Art thou ready to meet God?

Am I made a real Christian,

Washed in the Redeemer's blood?

Have I union

With the church's living Head?

(William Gadsby)

Having a form of godliness but denying its power

The last days (1) are not limited to the time which immediately precedes the second coming of Christ. They refer to the gospel age (Acts 2:17), from the time in which Paul lived, and the twenty-first century, through to the end of the world.. There have been and there will continue to be perilous seasons which will have their climax in the revealing of the Antichrist, the man of sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12).

Verses 2 to 4 contain a list of dreadful sins which in many ways are seen in the godless society around us. The first sin in the list is the love of self, followed by other sins that grow out of selfishness – *lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, etc.* The Lord Jesus calls on all who would follow him to deny themselves (Mark 8:34). Let us examine our own hearts to be sure that none of these sins are to be found lurking within.

These sins are not only found among the godless. Paul warns us about religious people who are described as *having a form of godliness but denying its power* (5). The religious high priests, scribes and Pharisees of New Testament times loved religious ritual and ceremony, but they were strangers to the power of living religion. Their religion was all outward show and they plotted to have the Lord Jesus crucified (Luke 22:2; John 18:3; Acts 3:13–14).

Others with *a form of godliness* gain entrance into the homes of gullible women who are loaded down with sins. Many false teachers and their followers turn a blind eye to wickedness and the need for repentance and trust in Christ for salvation. They are *always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* (6–8). They resist the truth as did Pharaoh's magicians, Jannes and Jambres. We must have nothing to do with such people (5). A time is coming when the folly of such people will be revealed (9).

Be sure that your Christianity is real. If your life has only a form of godliness, but denies its power, you are in a perilous state.

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution

Timothy was very different from the false teachers mentioned in the previous verses. Paul was able to write of him, ‘*But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, etc*’ (10). If our teaching does not make us godly, if our life does not match our Christian profession, we must question whether or not we really know the Lord. Let us think about Paul’s ‘*purpose*’ (10). He lived for Christ and aimed always to please him (2 Corinthians 5:9; Philippians 1:21). He lived to preach the gospel of Christ and to serve the Lord’s people (2 Corinthians 4:5). How do those who know you observe your life? Can they see that you love the Lord and that you desire to be godly?

Paul was a godly man who suffered much persecution for the sake of the gospel but he could testify to the Lord’s deliverance (11). Hendriksen comments on this verse, ‘The Lord ever rescues his people, frequently from death, sometimes by means of death. Either way, nothing ever separates them from his love (Romans 8:38, 39)’ – (COMMENTARY ON 1 & 2 TIMOTHY, page 293).

We must not be surprised when persecution comes our way (cp. 1 Peter 4:12–14). *All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution* (12; cp. John 15:18–25; 16:33; 1 John 3:13). A godly life attracts the relentless opposition of Satan. There is increasing hostility and hatred towards Christians in the United Kingdom and some believers have been dismissed from their jobs because they refused to deny their biblical principles; Christian businesses and schools are also under attack. * There is much greater persecution in other countries of the world and we should support and pray for our fellow Christians in those lands. The world will leave us alone if we are prepared to compromise our Christian faith or witness. **Are you prepared to suffer for the Lord Jesus and to follow him whatever the cost? Do you desire to lead a godly life in Christ Jesus?**

* See the website of the Christian Institute: www.christian.org.uk

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God

The apostle again warns Timothy about the enemies of the gospel who are described in verses 2 to 9. They are *evil men and impostors* who *will grow worse and worse* in their activity of deception and who are themselves deluded (13). What was Paul's advice to Timothy in the face of persecution and of increasing confusion caused by false teachers? He urged Timothy to continue in the things he had *learned and been assured of* (14; cp. 2:2). He had been taught the Old Testament Scriptures from his infancy (15; cp. 1:5). **We cannot emphasise enough the necessity of a thorough grounding in the Scriptures.** This is essential if we are to be godly people who are equipped to combat false teaching. Parents must follow the example of Timothy's mother and teach their children the Word of God.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God (ie. 'God-breathed', 16). The Bible is the Word of God. *Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit* (2 Peter 1:21). The Word of God has been under attack from early history. In Eden Satan questioned and contradicted the things that God had said (Genesis 3:1, 4–5). There are no errors in the Bible (this is known as the 'inerrancy of Scripture'). The Bible alone is the authority for our teaching. We must beware of those who add to it (eg. superstitious fables and teaching found nowhere in its pages) and those who subtract from it (eg. Modernism which denies that the Bible is God's Word and rejects the creation account found in Genesis chapters 1 to 3).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (16–17). The Bible is the holy Word of God and it is our complete guide for our teaching and for instruction in leading a godly life. *All Scripture ... is profitable* (and that includes the Old Testament Scriptures). **How thoroughly equipped for every good work are you?**

Be watchful in all things

Paul knows that he will soon be put to death and he makes a very solemn charge to Timothy *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead* when he comes again (1; cp. 1 Timothy 5:21). The apostle charges Timothy to:

- *Preach the word!* The Greek verb translated ‘preach’ means ‘proclaim’ or ‘herald’. True preaching proclaims the message of God. The proclamation of the Word is essential for a healthy church. If a professing Christian despises the preaching of God’s Word, serious questions must be asked about his religion.
- *Be ready.* Paul had urged Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned (3:10,14). He must also be ready at all times to proclaim these truths.
- *Convince* the sinner of his sin and of his need to repent.
- *Rebuke* those who continue in sin. The godly preacher will never tone down the serious nature of sin and its consequences.
- *Exhort* – encourage sinners to repent and follow Christ (2).

The Christian preacher and teacher must fulfil his ministry with long-suffering (2; cp. 3:10). This means being slow to anger and being gentle and patient with those he teaches.

Many who profess to love the Lord will not endure sound doctrine. Their ears itch for sensational stories. Others *heap up for themselves teachers* who make outlandish claims. They are taken in by fables, but they have little interest in the truth (3–4). Paul urges Timothy, ‘*Be watchful* (‘sober’) *in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist* (preachers must be able to proclaim the gospel plainly and powerfully), *fulfil your ministry*’ (5).

We live in difficult and dangerous days. Many churches are very weak and error and false religions continue to make great progress. **Let us be watchful (sober) in all things.**

I have fought the good fight

The apostle now makes a most moving and wonderful statement of faith. He writes, *'I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand'* (6). In Old Testament times a drink offering was poured out as *'a sweet aroma to the LORD'* (Numbers 15:7). During his first imprisonment Paul had thought about the possibility of execution (*'if I am being poured out as a drink offering'* – Philippians 2:17), but now he knew that he was soon to die (*'I am already being poured out'*). His life of sacrificial service for his Saviour ascended to God as a sweet fragrance. For Paul death was not the dread end, but a departure for heaven; it was to be with Christ which *is gain ... which is far better* (Philippians 1:21,23). When Christians die, they go to be *at home with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Paul had wrestled throughout his Christian service with Satan and the powers of darkness. He had been in a continual battle with Jewish and pagan opposition to the gospel, with false teachers and with his own remaining sin. He writes, *'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith'* (7; cp. 2:3–5). Like the successful athlete he was looking forward to receiving his heavenly reward (8). Everyone who loves the appearing (the second coming) of Christ (cp. verse 1) will receive *the crown of righteousness* from the Lord.

Many professing Christians do not finish the race; they are drawn away by the love of the world (cp. verse 10) or they grow lukewarm and forget that the Lord will require an account of their lives. If we really love the Lord, we will always seek to please him and we will long for his return. **Let us be faithful to God** in the work that he has given us so that we will be able to say, when our earthly pilgrimage comes to its end, *'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.'*

*Until the race is run,
Until the journey's done,
Until the crown is won,
Teach me thy way*

(Benjamin M. Ramsey)

The Lord stood with me

Paul closes by giving Timothy some news of their fellow-workers and their present spheres of service, (9–18). Only Luke remained with him and he urged Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, bringing Mark with him (9–11,21). Luke *the beloved physician* had been a loyal and precious friend to Paul. He had accompanied him on many of his travels and was with him in Rome during his first imprisonment (Colossians 4:14). The apostle was deeply disappointed with Demas who had forsaken him, *having loved this present world* (10). If we live for this life, we will grow lukewarm in our love for the Lord.

Paul wanted Timothy to come urgently (9), not only because of his impending death, but if he were spared the winter, he would need warmth in his cold, damp prison cell. The cloak that he had left at Troas could be brought to him as well as his books and especially the parchments (13,21). Paul was a reader to the end and he wanted to encourage himself in the Scriptures (*the parchments*). He warned Timothy against Alexander the coppersmith who had been a bitter enemy and he prayed that the Lord would deal with him according to his works (14–15; cp. Romans 12:19).

No influential person had come to support Paul at his first court appearance. Were there such Christians in the Roman church, who held back for fear of their lives? Paul prayed that the Lord would forgive them (16; Hendriksen argues that Paul was speaking of his first imprisonment in Rome, but I am not convinced that this was so). **Paul was not alone however.** *The Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached* (17). How wonderful to know that the Lord stands with those who are faithful to him (cp. Hebrews 13:5–6)! Paul had a burning passion to preach the gospel to the very end (17). He had fought the good fight and he knew that the Lord would preserve him for his heavenly kingdom (18). Let us praise our great God who cares for us and preserves us, who will never forsake us. *To him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen!*

Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick

Paul asks Timothy to pass his greetings to Prisca (Priscilla) and Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus (19). He had already stated his indebtedness to Onesiphorus who had travelled from Ephesus to Rome to visit and encourage the imprisoned apostle (1:16–18).

Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who had fled persecution in Rome and they first met Paul in Corinth and they accompanied him to Ephesus where they remained to serve the Lord (Acts 18:1–3, 18). Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, He sent greetings to the church at Corinth from Aquila and Priscilla and the church that was in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19). It appears that they returned to Rome where the church too met in their house. They had risked their own lives to save to apostle, and were known and highly regarded in the churches of the Gentiles (Romans 16:3–5). They were now back in Ephesus. and the apostle sends his greetings to them. **Aquila and Priscilla are a great challenge to us all.** Here is a couple who were self-sacrificing and who used their home to serve the Lord.

Erastus had accompanied Timothy to Macedonia during Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 19:22). Trophimus was an Ephesian and also a fellow worker of the apostle (Acts 20:4–5, 21:29). Paul had left him in Miletus sick. He was just thirty-six miles from his home in Ephesus and he had to be left behind. Paul had been used by God on many occasions to heal the sick (Acts 14:8–10; 19:11–12; 20:9–10; 2 Corinthians 12:12) but not on this occasion. **We are very mistaken if we believe that it is always God's will to heal us from sickness and disease.** Many of God's choice servants have struggled with bodily weakness and illness throughout their lives.

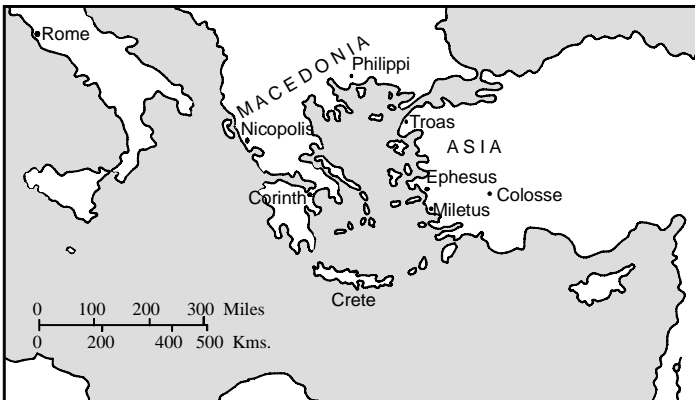
We do not know anything of those mentioned in verse 21 but Paul urges Timothy to come to him before winter when travel by sea was hazardous. Only Luke was with him (11) and he longed to see Timothy again before he died. True friends are very precious!

TITUS

Paul describes Titus as his *true son in our common faith* (1:4; cp. 1 Timothy 1:2) and wrote to him at the same time as he wrote his first letter to Timothy (approximately AD 63). Titus, a Gentile (Galatians 2:3), was a faithful and trusted fellow-worker (cp. 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6–15; 12:18; 2 Timothy 4:10). Paul had left him in Crete to *set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city* (1:5). This letter sets out the things necessary for a healthy church – godly elders, sound doctrine and godly living. Paul also wrote to urge Titus to come to him at Nicopolis as soon as Artemas or Tychicus arrived in Crete to take over from him (3:12).

Outline of Titus

1. Opening greetings – 1:1–4
2. Titus' task: *to set in order the things that are lacking* – 1:5 to 3:11
 - a. To appoint elders (1:5–9).
 - b. To combat error (1:10–16).
 - c. To teach sound doctrine and to encourage godly living (2:1 to 3:11)
3. Personal messages and closing greetings – 3:12–15



The faith of God's elect

Paul addresses Titus as *my true son in our common faith* (4); this indicates that Titus was saved under his ministry. His opening greetings (1–4) would have given added weight to Titus' authority for his mission in the island of Crete. He describes himself as *an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect* (1). We have already seen in our reading in 2 Timothy 1:8–12 that the 'elect' are those whom God was pleased to choose to salvation before time began. *Our common faith*, the faith that we share, is *the faith of God's elect*. Let us think about this faith:

- This faith produces a love for truth and godliness: *The truth which is according to godliness* (1; cp. 1 Timothy 6:3). God has chosen us to be holy (Ephesians 1:4). Truth and godliness must always go together. Truth embraces the great doctrines of the gospel and all that is taught in God's Word.
- *The faith of God's elect* rests on the unchanging faithfulness of God, *who cannot lie* (2). We have the *hope of eternal life* which he *promised before time began* (2; cp. 2 Timothy 1:9). All the promises and warnings in the Bible are true because God cannot lie! Satan tried to undermine this fact when he tempted Eve. He asked, '*Has God said?*' and then stated, '*You will not surely die*' (Genesis 3:1,4). If you are struggling in trial or perplexity, if you are beset by doubts, encourage yourself in the Lord by remembering that God cannot lie. He cannot deny his holy character (2 Timothy 2:13). He will bring you through your trials and troubles.
- *The faith of God's elect* is committed to the faithful preaching (proclamation) of God's Word (3). This faith will not bow to pressures coming from those who despise preaching and seek to replace it with entertainment in the church.

The faith of God's elect is a precious faith. Do you have it?

Elders

It would appear that Paul had completed a very successful period of missionary work in Crete after his release from his first imprisonment. Many had responded to the gospel and were gathered in local fellowships throughout the island. He had left Titus behind to do two things:

- He was to *set in order the things that are lacking* (5). The Greek translated ‘*set in order*’ means ‘to straighten out’ and Titus was to deal with the things that remained to be done. Believers were to be gathered together to form churches under godly leadership.
- He was to *appoint elders in every city* (5). The ‘*elder*’ is also described as a ‘*bishop*’ (‘overseer’, 7). An elder (or pastor) shepherds the flock of God (1 Peter 5:2). The practice of a single bishop who oversees several churches does not conform to the biblical pattern. The New Testament shows that each church had a plurality of elders (eg. Philippians 1:1). Churches need elders, but they must only appoint men who have the spiritual qualifications for such a ministry. Compare the qualifications required in elders (5–9) with those in 1 Timothy 3:1–7. Much harm is done if these qualifications are ignored.

An elder must be above reproach because he is *a steward* over the household of God (the local church). He must be *blameless* in his family life, faithful to his wife, a good husband and father. A man whose children are unruly must not be appointed (6; cp. 1 Timothy 3:4–5). If he is unable to control his own children, he is hardly fit to control unruly elements in the church. There are five character traits which are not acceptable in those who would be elders (7) and seven things which must be seen in their lives (8–9). Elders must be sound in their doctrine, *holding fast the faithful word* that they have been taught, so that they are able to deal with false teachers (9).

Let us pray that God will be pleased to raise up godly men to serve as elders in our churches and also pray for our own elders that they will always be faithful to their awesome responsibilities.

Sound in the faith

Wherever God is at work, you can be sure that Satan is not far away. The infant churches of Crete were already being troubled by false teachers. Titus needed to appoint suitable men as elders over these churches to guard them against these deceivers. *Those of the circumcision* (10) were misguided Jewish Christians who insisted that Gentile Christians submitted to Jewish rites (eg. circumcision) and dietary laws. Many of their petty rules and regulations were derived from *Jewish fables* (14–15) rather than the Old Testament. Such teaching was a denial of the grace of God (cp. Galatians 2:16,21).

False teachers are liars and Paul quoted the Cretan poet, Epimenides, who had said, *Cretans are always liars* (12). What a contrast to *God, who cannot lie* (2)! Epimenides was revered by the Cretans as a prophet but he had harsh words to say about his own people. It was a recognised fact in the ancient world that the Cretans had such a reputation for lying that they had a verb ‘to cretize’, which means ‘to lie and cheat’. The Cretan poet had described his people as ‘*evil beasts, lazy gluttons*’. The wonderful thing is that many had been transformed by the grace of God and were now following the Lord Jesus. The Jewish false teachers were like the unconverted Cretans in their quest for *dishonest gain* (10–14).

We must not tolerate false teachers. Their *mouths must be stopped* (11) and they must be sharply rebuked (13). Elders must not be afraid of being accused of lack of love when they deal firmly with false teachers. It is cowardice and lack of love for the Lord and his people to allow error to flourish in a church. What is the antidote to error? It is the teaching of *sound doctrine* (9; 2:1) so that those who sit under such a ministry become *sound in the faith* (13; cp. 2:2). The Greek word translated ‘*sound*’ means ‘healthy’. Healthy doctrine leads to a healthy faith. **Are you healthy in doctrine and faith?**

To the pure all things are pure but not so for unbelievers or those who profess to know the Lord but are ungodly in their behaviour (15–16). Religious ritual will never save such people!

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things

Paul has stern words concerning false teachers (1:10–16) but he now reminds Titus of what is expected of the servant of God. He was to teach and to be an example of one who embraced *sound* (healthy) *doctrine* (1,7–8). He was to reach all aged groups in his pastoral work encouraging young and old alike to lead godly lives (2–10).

Old Christian men are to show spiritual maturity in their lives. They are to be *sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience* (2). Old men often lack patience, but they must look to the Lord to correct this deficiency (2). Every Christian, young or old, must be ‘*sober*’ (serious-minded, 2,6,12) and beware of the type of Christianity which lives for religious excitement. This of course does not exclude joy and laughter in our lives, for walking with God brings great happiness.

Older women have a very necessary ministry in teaching good things to the younger women in the church (3–5). This vital ministry is only possible when the older women are loved and respected for their godliness. The young women should be willing to receive the help and teaching of such people. Paul urges Titus, ‘*Exhort the young men to be sober-minded*’ (6). They are to be ‘self-controlled’ (ESV). Titus must be an example to them in his own life. ‘*In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works, in showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, etc*’ (7–8).

Godly living in the home and at work is essential if our witness is to be taken seriously by those outside the church. An inconsistent life will cause the Word of God to be ‘*blasphemed*’ (5; cp. 1 Timothy 6:1). We have already considered slavery in New Testament times (see notes on 1 Timothy 6:1–5). *Servants* (Greek = ‘slaves’) were often very surly and untrustworthy but a Christian slave was able to have a very convincing testimony by being different (9–10). The same principle applies to all of us. Our lives must *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*. Is this true of you? **Do your life and witness make the Christian faith appear beautiful and attractive?**

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men

The gospel is good news for all people and must be preached to all whatever their nationality. *The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men* (11). The grace of God is described here as a teacher (12). What does it teach us?

- To renounce *ungodliness and worldly lusts* (this includes immoral sexual desires, living for pleasure and being self-centred).
- To *live soberly, righteously, and godly* (12).
- To look for *the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ* (13). This verse is one of so many which teach that the Lord Jesus is God (eg. Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15–20; 2:9). Do you think much about the return of the Lord Jesus? This glorious hope is a great incentive to leading a godly life (12,14; cp. 1 John 3:3).

The Lord Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from sin and *to purify for himself his own special people who are zealous for good works* (14). Christian, never forget that you are one of *his own special people* (cp. 1 Peter 2:9). You are special to God! He chose you for himself before he created the world. He gave his only begotten Son to die for you, to save you from your sins. The Lord Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you and he will come again for you. Be encouraged that you are so special to him. **If the grace of God has been teaching you anything, it should be that you are to show by your life that you belong to the Lord.**

Titus was to teach these things, to encourage and rebuke. He was not to allow anyone in the church to despise him in the exercise of his pastoral work (15). This was not an encouragement to be arrogant nor to lord it over the flock (cp. 1 Peter 5:1–3). Oh, do not rebel against your pastor when he seeks to apply the Scriptures to encourage you to lead a godly life. He is concerned for you and for your spiritual wellbeing.

To be peaceable, gentle, showing humility to all men

Paul told Titus to remind the Christians in Crete that as God’s special people they were to be model citizens; these instructions apply to all Christians.

- We are to *be subject to rulers and authorities* (1); this command can be very difficult to follow, especially when politicians are corrupt and there are unjust laws. We must remember, however, that God is sovereign over rulers and that he appoints them (Proverbs 21:1; Romans 13:1–7). We are to pray for rulers and for those in authority over us even when they enforce laws which are unjust (1 Timothy 2:1–3).
- We are to *be ready for every good work* (1); good works of compassion and kindness honour God and are an evidence of the reality of our faith (Matthew 5:16; James 2:14–18; 1 John 3:16–19).
- We are to keep ourselves from slander and gossip – *speak evil of no one* (2); this sin is common among many believers and causes great damage in churches.
- We are to be *peaceable* (Greek = ‘non-fighting’), *gentle, showing humility to all men* (2). Many a Christian has been deeply hurt by individuals who have been harsh, rough and arrogant towards them.

Are the virtues listed in verses 1 and 2 seen in your life?

Let us think about our state before God graciously saved us (3). We were *once foolish* (ignorant of spiritual things), *disobedient* (rebels against God), *deceived* (believing the lies of Satan), *serving various lusts and pleasures* (slaves of our own sinful passions), and *living in malice and envy* (because of sin ruling our hearts). It is only when we are saved that we realise the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart. Let us thank God for delivering us from the power of sin and be determined to please him by leading godly lives.

The kindness and love of God our Saviour toward men

We are repeating yesterday's Bible reading and we will think particularly of verses 4 to 7. Man without God lives in malice, envy, and hatred (3) and we see this continually in the world around us, but God is kind. Verse 4 contains one of the great 'buts' of Scripture (cp. Ephesians 2:4). *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards men appeared* (cp. 2:11 – *the grace of God ... has appeared*).

Good works are important and they are an evidence of our faith (1, 8; cp. 2:14; James 2:17), but we cannot possibly save ourselves by our good works. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us* (5). This salvation includes:

- The washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (5). We have cleansing from sin.
- The abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ our Saviour (6).
- Justification by his grace (7), being declared righteous in the sight of God and no longer condemned for our sin (cp. Romans 5:1; 8:1).
- Being made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (7).

All this is so wonderful! Does it not cause your heart to overflow with adoration and praise to our kind and loving God? Does it not encourage you to please God and to live for him?

If you are downhearted or discouraged, remember that God is kind. Pour out your heart to him in prayer and bring your needs to him. He did not spare his Son in order to save you and he will not turn you away (Romans 8:32). If you are not a Christian, remember that God is kind and that he will freely forgive you and save you from your sins if you will turn from them and trust in him.

*Indulgent God, how kind
Are all thy ways to me
Whose dark benighted mind
Was enmity with thee;
Yet now, subdued by sovereign grace,
My spirit longs for thy embrace!*

(John Kent)

Be careful to maintain good works

The last of the *faithful sayings* (8) refers to the words in verses 4 to 7. We are not saved *by works of righteousness* (5) but we are saved to do good works. Paul urged Titus to *affirm constantly* these things (8) **We must always remember that free grace is not the enemy of good works. We must be kind to others because God is kind to us.** We are to be *ready for every good work* (1). Those who have believed in God *should be careful to maintain good works* (8).

Good works flow out of a life which loves the Lord, which is grateful for his grace. They come from a heart of compassion for those around us. This does not mean that we are to tolerate false teachers or those who threaten the unity of the fellowship. Such people are ‘*warped*’ (11; Greek = ‘perverted’); they are *self-condemned* by what they teach and do (9–11).

The apostle promised to send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete so that Titus could be released to go to him at Nicapolis where he was planning to spend the winter (12). Zenas and Apollos were probably the bearers of Paul’s letter to Titus (13). Paul returned to the theme of good works in his closing greetings. *And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful* (14). Is there an urgent need that you could meet by some good work? Is there someone you could help with a word of encouragement? **Seek to be fruitful in your Christian life; it is far healthier than seeking to receive blessings.**

*Give me a faithful heart,
Likeness to thee,
That each departing day
Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wanderer sought and won,
Something for thee.*

(Sylvanus O. Phelps)

My soul longs for you like a thirsty land

This psalm is divided into two sections by the ‘*Selah*’ (pause) at the end of verse 6. David was suffering persecution and he called on God, ‘*Hear my prayer (1) ... answer me speedily (7) ... deliver me (9)*. He expected God to answer him because the Lord is faithful and righteous (1). He went on to plead that God would deliver him for the sake of his name (character) and righteousness (11). Spurgeon comments. ‘With God’s faithfulness and righteousness upon our side, we are guarded on the right hand and on the left’ (TREASURY OF DAVID). David was unable to plead his own righteousness before God for he knew that he was a sinner (2).

David described the reason for his distress (3–4). He remembered better times and meditated on the works of God (5). This was not a futile indulgence in nostalgia but an exercise in encouraging himself in the Lord. He spread out his hands in prayer to God and said, ‘*My soul longs for you like a thirsty land (6)*’.

He goes on in the second part of the psalm to pray for deliverance (7–9). He called on God, ‘*Cause me to hear your lovingkindness in the morning ... Cause me to know the way in which I should walk (8)*. How do we hear the lovingkindness of God? We find it written in his holy Word which speaks to our hearts and we see it in his gracious dealings with us. Reading God’s Word must take priority over reading these notes! Notice David’s expressions of faith – ‘*For in you do I trust ... for I lift up my soul to you ... in you I take shelter.*’ He then prayed that God would teach him his will, lead him and revive him (10–12).

Many Christians show little desire or thirst for God. How is it with you? Do you long to have closer fellowship with your Saviour? Do you thirst after God (6)? Persevere in prayer, trust in the Lord and submit to his will. The Lord Jesus promised, ‘*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6)*’.

Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!

David begins this psalm with praise to God for his steadfast love and protection (1–2). The New Bible Commentary (1958 edition) entitles this psalm, ‘From peril to prosperity.’ Spurgeon writes, ‘David trusts in God and finds him to be everything; he looks to man and sees him to be nothing; and he wonders how it is that the great Lord can condescend to take notice of such a piece of folly and deceit as man’ (TREASURY OF DAVID).

Do you ever stop and think to yourself just how amazing it is that God should be mindful of us (3–4; cp. Psalm 8:4)? It is wonderful that God should not only come down from heaven (5), but that he sent his beloved Son into the world to die at Calvary to save us from our sin (Matthew 1:21; John 3:16)? Does not this cause your heart to rise up in praise and adoration?

David prayed that God would come down to deliver him from the hands of wicked foreigners (7–8,11). He would sing a new song to God when his prayer was heard (9–10). He looked forward to his prayer being answered, bringing blessing in families, in abundance of food and livestock, security and streets free from cries of distress (12–14). Happy are the people who know such temporal blessings, but happier still are those people *whose God is the LORD!* Spurgeon writes, ‘These verses may with a little accommodation be applied to a prosperous church, where the converts are growing and beautiful, the gospel stores abundant, and the spiritual increase most cheering. There ministers and workers are in full vigour, and the people are happy and united. The Lord make it so in our churches for evermore’ (TREASURY OF DAVID).

There are thousands of useless gods, worshipped by millions of people, but true and lasting happiness is only found by those whose God is Jehovah (Yahweh). What a glorious message we have to declare! **If you are not happy, could it be that you do not know, worship or obey Jehovah (*‘the LORD’*), the only true and living God? – *Happy are the people whose God is the LORD!* (15).**

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised

This is an acrostic psalm, the verses beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet except for the letter ‘nun’. The verse with the missing letter is supplied in the Septuagint and in the Dead Sea Scroll manuscripts; it is included in the English Standard Version of the Bible, being added to verse 13. In this psalm, David extols and blesses God. He blesses God for:

- His greatness (1–6). How sad it is that many extremely intelligent people worship useless idols or venerate images! The only true God is the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, whom we worship! *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable* (3; cp. Psalm 48:1). God is awesome in his person and in his mighty acts. It is good to meditate on the *glorious splendour* of his majesty (4–6).
- His goodness (7–10). God is not only great in all his majesty and works, but also in his goodness. *He is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The LORD is good to all* and yet most people do not acknowledge his goodness.
- The *glorious majesty of his kingdom* (11–13). What a marvellous kingdom it is and what a privilege it is to belong to this everlasting, righteous kingdom! We owe so much to our King who loved us and died on the cross to save us from our sins.
- His gracious works (14–21). He upholds those who fall (14), and he supplies our needs (15–16). *He is near to all who call upon him* and he hears them (17–18). *He will fulfil the desire of those who fear him* (19) and he *preserves all who love him* (20). Christian, think about these precious promises. They are for you if you are walking with God. The goodness of God encourages us to pray with faith and expectation.

When we think about these things, our hearts should overflow with praise. Let us declare his greatness and sing of his righteousness (6–7)! — *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised.*

While I live I will praise the LORD

Psalms 146 to 150 are psalms of praise, each one of them beginning and ending with *Praise the LORD!* Isaac Watts' great hymn, 'I'll praise my Maker while I've breath' is based on Psalm 146, though it is to be regretted that the second verse of the hymn which covers verses 3 and 4 of the psalm is omitted from most modern hymn books. The psalmist was determined to spend his life praising God: *While I live I will praise the LORD* (2). Many around us continually curse and blaspheme God. Are the praises of God found on our lips as much as blasphemy is found on theirs?

We are reminded of the futility of putting our trust in man whose plans perish when he dies (3–4). At this present time, many trust in politicians for help. Some politicians are very sincere but their best laid plans and aspirations are frustrated because they are human and they are fallible.

Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God (5). The following verses give nine reasons for this happiness, four beginning with 'who' and five with 'the LORD'. We can safely trust in the Lord because he is the God *who made heaven and earth ... who keeps truth for ever* (i.e. remains faithful for ever) ... *who executes justice for the oppressed ... who gives food to the hungry* (6–7). *The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners ... opens the eyes of the blind ... raises those who are bowed down ... loves the righteous ... watches over the strangers; he relieves the fatherless and widow* (7–9). Think about the ministry of the Lord Jesus when he lived on earth and how he fed the hungry, healed the blind, raised those who were bowed down, etc.

We may feel that the wicked now have the upper hand but we must remember that the Lord will deal with them and that he shall reign for ever (9b–10). Let us be encouraged and *praise the LORD!*

The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him

This psalm shows that it is not only our duty to worship God but that it should also be our delight. — *Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and praise is beautiful* (1). We are given many reasons here why we should praise God. He is the sovereign Creator and Lord over the vast galaxies and he is infinite in his power and understanding. Though he is so great and glorious, he is good to his people, healing the broken-hearted and lifting up the humble (2–6). We should also praise the Lord for sending rain to water the earth (seasons of drought remind us of our dependence on God for water). He also provides food for the animals and birds (7–9).

God does not delight in the military might of the cavalry with its strong horses and the infantry whose soldiers are strong in leg to stand firm in battle. *The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him* (10–11). Isaac Watts based his hymn ‘Praise ye the Lord! ‘tis good to raise your hearts and voices in his praise’ on this psalm. This is how he paraphrased verse 11:

*But saints are lovely in his sight;
He views his children with delight;
He sees their hope, he knows their fear,
And looks, and loves his image there.*

The Lord had built up Jerusalem (2) and had bestowed protection, peace, prosperity and his own special favour on the city which is called upon to praise him for his blessing on her and her inhabitants (12–20). Think about the ways in which God builds up his church which is *Jerusalem above* (Galatians 4:26).

How wonderful it is that God takes pleasure in every Christian! If God takes pleasure in you, what have you to fear, child of God? Come to the Lord with your praises, thanksgiving and requests.