

Prayer

Gracious Lord, help us in the midst of our troubles.

Sort out the mess we have made and save us from sin:

Accept our apology for making chaos out of Your order,

Lead us to repentance and a complete change of heart,

Forgive us for our stupidity in following the paths of evil,

Restore us by Your peace to rise again above our distress:

On this Your day, Gracious Lord, we thank You. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Broken families

In the UK we have been shocked by the deaths of little children, murdered by parents whose lives are broken. Pray for broken families in your country, especially the children.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the gifts of life and joy and love.
- Pray for the security of the seas and the problem of piracy
- Pray for little children who are abused by family members

Meditation

Lord God, Holy Father, Almighty Saviour and Lord;

Our lives are nothing without the power and drive
of Your redeeming love, by which we are saved.

Our spirits crave the creative power of Your Spirit
like a plant needs water, and an artist uses a canvass:

Our souls desire the love and care of the Creator
cherishing, cleansing, nurturing, empowering:

Our bodies cry out for the healing of the Saviour,
restoring flesh and bones, and speeding recovery:

Our minds love the challenge of a life lived for You,
Intellectual, practical, pragmatic or reflective:

Thank You, Lord, forever and ever; so be it, AMEN!

Bible Study - 2 Timothy 4:9-22

⁹ Do your best to come to me soon, ¹⁰ for Demas, who is in love with this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. ¹¹ Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is helpful in my ministry. ¹² I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus. ¹³ When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and especially the parchments. ¹⁴ Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him for what he has done. ¹⁵ You should beware of him yourself, because he strongly opposed our message.

¹⁶ *At my first defence no one came to stand with me, and everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them!* ¹⁷ *But the Lord stood with me and gave me strength, so that the message might be fully proclaimed by me, 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 attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly Kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

¹⁹ *Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus.* ²⁰ *Erastus stayed in Corinth; and I left Trophimus, who was ill, in Miletus.* ²¹ *Do your best to come before winter. Eubulus sends greetings to you, as do Pudens and Linus and Claudia and all the fellowship.* ²² *The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.*

Review

These final verses of 2 Timothy are full of personal comments, and although it is not easy to deduce much from what is said, there is the hint of a strong connection with Ephesus in the names mentioned and the comments made by Paul (4:16-18) about an incident from his ministry. In general, the names remind us of the relatively tight knit community of evangelists and helpers who made up Paul's 'team' whilst he was on mission. Paul wrote this letter whilst in Rome, awaiting the hearing of his case before the Emperor (possibly Nero) and was certainly aware that his life might not last long (4:6-8). It is quite understandable that he should send instructions and greetings via Timothy to those with whom he had worked.

A company of people The first part of the passage (4:9-15) mentions some interesting names. Demas had been a part of Paul's entourage at some time in the past and is mentioned in both Colossians (Col 4:14) and Philemon (Phlm 1:24) as one who travelled with Paul. A parting of the ways had clearly taken place however, and Paul's sad comment was that he had fallen 'in love with this world' (4:10). The two most significant characters in this text are Mark and Luke. Luke (possibly the writer of Luke's Gospel) is mentioned alongside Demas in the same two letters (Colossians, Philemon), but we cannot be sure which Mark this is. On the one hand, this could be 'John called Mark' who went with Paul on his first missionary journey with Barnabas, and we do not know whether this is the same 'Mark' who wrote 'Mark's Gospel'. Paul had fallen out with Mark, however, and refused to take him on another journey, causing a division between himself and Barnabas (Acts 15:37f.). If this is the Mark referred to here, then it is good to know that a reconciliation had taken place. However, Mark was a common name, and there is at least one other Mark mentioned in the Bible (the 'son' of Peter – see 1 Peter 5:13).

The riot at Ephesus Some of the other names mentioned (4:9-15) have a strong connection with Ephesus. Clearly, as stated, Tychicus had been sent to Ephesus. Tychicus had frequently been used by Paul to take letters and messages for him (see Eph 6:21, Col 4:7, Titus 3:12), and some have suggested that this second letter of Paul to Timothy was taken by Tychicus from Paul in Rome to Timothy in Ephesus, thereby suggesting that Timothy's work was to look after the very significant church at Ephesus. The Ephesus connection is made stronger for two reasons. Firstly, Paul mentions 'Alexander the coppersmith' who had made life difficult for Paul. Now, when Paul was first in Ephesus (Acts 19), a riot was started by a silversmith named Demetrius against Paul's preaching which threatened to undermine the local tradecrafts associated with the worship of the great 'Artemis (also called 'Diana') of the Ephesians' (Acts 19:23-41). In this riot, a man called 'Alexander' (Acts 19:33) was put forward by the Jews to refute Paul, but the situation became perilous and the local authorities intervened. Secondly, it is possible that this is the incident to which Paul refers next, in which he says that he had been deserted by

everyone (4:16). It is unclear (in the report in Acts 19) what happened to Paul in the midst of the Ephesus riot, but Paul must have felt very exposed at such a dangerous time. The whole incident must have made Paul feel as if he had been placed, like Daniel, in the 'lion's den' (4:17 – see Dan 6:19f.)!

The final greetings mention 'Prisca and Aquila', a well known married couple who were involved in the wider leadership of the early church (Rom 16:3, 1 Cor 16:19). It also refers to a group of other people who are mentioned nowhere else except here (Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia), who are presumably in Rome and wished to be mentioned in Paul's letter by way of greeting. It is a brief end to a significant and personal letter. We wonder how Timothy received it and the advice it contained, for outside of what we can infer from Paul's letters, there is little information about Timothy in other writings from the early days of the church. Paul said to Timothy 'the Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you' by way of conclusion. The presence of Christ and the grace of God has certainly been felt powerfully by those who have read this letter through the two thousand years since it was written.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Look up some of the references in the other letters of Paul which refer to some of the names he mentions, and find out what you can about these characters.
2. Look up Acts 19 and read the story about Paul's ministry in Ephesus, and see whether you agree with my suggestion of a connection with Ephesus. Was Timothy there when Paul wrote this letter?
3. In your group, write down your own reflections of the important message of 2 Timothy, and share what you have written.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Some scholars suggest that 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy were written by people other than Paul who wished to use his name as a means of getting across their message about certain features of the life of the church. The arguments about this are complex, but largely based upon a detailed analysis of the Greek of the two letters, which is said to deviate from the other letters of Paul. Having seen how a writing style can change with people's age and the stress of their circumstances, I do not subscribe to this theory. I feel that if anyone was contriving a letter (even for very noble reasons), then the greetings and ending of the letter would create very difficult problems, for everyone would be able to tell if one small detail was out of place! No, this is a genuine letter.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *At any one time, there are a number of people who are close to us and to our lives. Over time, this group changes. Who you are close to at the moment, and who makes a significant contribution to your life? Pray for them.*
- *Pray to the Lord about any incidents or people from your past that have left unhappy memories. Ask the Lord how to deal with these, and pray for the wisdom to know how to handle them in a godly manner.*

Final Prayer

Let me hear Your voice tonight, faithful God and Lord of all. Speak to me so that I may know Your will, whether it be hard or easy, comforting or challenging, exciting or mundane; and let me