

# In Season and Out of Season

*“Preach the word;  
be instant in  
season, out of  
season; reprove,  
rebuke, exhort with  
all longsuffering  
and doctrine.”*  
—II Timothy 4:2

**The Apostle Paul’s second** letter to his beloved Timothy was written during his imprisonment at Rome. He was to soon end his consecrated course in death, and these are among his last written words. His wise admonition and

counsel represented many years of experience and hardship in the narrow way of sacrifice, and in preaching the Truth to those who had an ear to hear his message. His words thus take on added meaning and perspective, and they are worthy of our deep consideration, study, and meditation.

The apostle loved his younger brother Timothy very much, even referring to him as a son. As he began this final letter, Paul opened his heart to him and wrote, “To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my

prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy.”—II Tim. 1:2-4

It was not uncommon for Paul to address Timothy as a son. He had done so in his first letter on two occasions. (I Tim. 1:2,18) Once again in his second letter, he said, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” (II Tim. 2:1-3) The apostle had also spoken of him as a son in a letter written to the church at Corinth. He explained to them, “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”—I Cor. 4:17

## **Tender Memories**

Paul recalled many tender memories and his long-time association with Timothy and other members of his family. We read, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”—II Tim. 1:5-7

## **A Partaker of Afflictions**

The great apostle was in a Roman prison awaiting his inevitable fate. It was surely an “out of season”

experience for him to continue being faithful even unto his death. Yet, as an encouragement to his younger brother he took the opportunity to write to him. He told him, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” —II Tim. 1:8-10

Timothy gladly received the wonderful message and further counsel from the apostle. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.” (II Tim. 2:4,5) “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” (vss. 11,12) “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [Greek: handling] the word of truth.”—vs. 15

### **Our Featured Text**

Our featured scripture is taken from chapter four of Paul’s letter. Following this he continues, warning Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own

lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”—II Tim. 4:3-5

Sound advice was given to Timothy in our theme text that he should be ready to preach the Truth at all times and places, even under inconvenient and uncomfortable circumstances—that is, “out of season” for him. However, Paul cautioned Timothy to not intrude himself upon others if it was not a convenient time—“in season”—for them to receive his words. Perhaps an opportunity to proclaim the glad tidings of joy might be made available to him at a future time. It would be more appropriate to use patience in such an instance.

## **Reprove**

In our text, Timothy was encouraged to reprove, rebuke, and exhort when preaching the wonderful doctrines of truth, while at the same time exercising much longsuffering. To “reprove” means to refute or convince, and suggests the delicate art of exposing a particular error of belief or personal behavior, and then carefully and thoughtfully seeking to correct it.

In the apostle’s letter to Titus, he used the same word on three occasions that indicate the proper manner for reproof. In the first instance, Paul wrote, “Holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute [reprove, convince] those who contradict.” (Titus 1:9, *New American Standard Bible*) Again he pointed

out, “This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith.” (Titus 1:13, *NASB*) The third time he chose this word he wrote, “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” —Titus 2:15, *NASB*

In connection with the importance of reproving with the proper spirit, Jesus said, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” (Matt. 10:16) The Apostle Peter also admonished, “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” —I Pet. 3:15, *NASB*

## **Rebuke**

Paul also included the word “rebuke” in his letter to Timothy. To rebuke means to censure, admonish, or to forbid a certain thing. It is used in a wide variety of ways in the New Testament. For example, during the course of Jesus’ earthly ministry he explained to his disciples that it was necessary that he encounter much hardship and suffer many trials before being put to death at the hands of Israel’s religious leaders. However, he assured them that he would not remain in the grave, but that his loving Heavenly Father would resurrect him after three days.—Mark 8:31

The scriptural account of this particular instance includes two references where the word rebuke was used. We read, “He [Jesus] spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But

when he [Jesus] had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men.”—vss. 32,33

Peter loved Jesus very much, but he had to learn to not contradict, correct, or rebuke the Master. Jesus himself then rebuked his disciple to teach him a very important lesson. He made the distinction between our Heavenly Father’s ultimate purpose, “things that be of God,” and that of human wisdom and the opposing spirit of evil and the Adversary.

The word rebuke was used another time when Peter’s mother-in-law was sick with a severe fever. They called for Jesus to come and help heal her sickness. “He stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.” (Luke 4:39) We are not told the details of how she ministered unto the others. However, this action showed the remarkable power that Jesus was given, which serves to illustrate the greater healing power that will be available to him for healing the entire sin-sick world during his coming kingdom.

Another illustration of the word rebuke, and Jesus’ miraculous power, occurred when he and his disciples were together in a ship. We read, “There arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”—Mark 4:37-39

In a larger sense, this “great storm” represents the storms of life and the tempest-tossed waves with which the Lord’s people have done battle since the Day of Pentecost. This has been the experience of these throughout their present earthly sojourn. There is also an even more particular meaning related to the end of this age, and the great “time of trouble” and restless waves that are now upon the nations.—Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Luke 21:25

It was the Master who then said, “Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” The psalmist also reassures us: “He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.” (Ps. 107:29) That “desired haven” will be the glorious kingdom of Christ, which will bring blessings to all the families of the earth.—Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Gal. 3:8

## **Exhort**

Paul’s final admonition to his beloved Timothy was to “exhort.” This word means to call near or invite. It is usually used in a positive sense and, in his letter, the apostle used it to encourage and urge his younger brother to pursue a course of action and conduct that would be pleasing to the Heavenly Father. He was to maintain this attitude of heart especially during his preaching activities.

When writing to the Thessalonian brethren, Paul chose the same word to encourage them to greater faithfulness in the Lord. He wrote, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more

and more.” (I Thess. 4:1) Later, he told them, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded [fainthearted], support the weak, be patient toward all men.”—I Thess. 5:14

In his letter to the Hebrew brethren, Paul also urged them by saying, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”—Heb. 3:12-14

The Apostle Paul’s tireless ministry for the Lord and his people is unparalleled in the history and development of the Early Church. The accounts of his pilgrimages and writings occupy a major portion of the New Testament scriptures. He willingly suffered affliction and severe trials on behalf of the true followers of our Lord Jesus. He was faithful to his ministry, whether it was “in season” or “out of season” to himself. He also encouraged those to whom he preached to share in the present sufferings of Christ and the grand heavenly calling.—II Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1

### **An Acceptable Time**

In his letter to the brethren at Corinth, Paul said, “Working together also we call upon you that ye receive not in vain the grace of God—for He saith, In an acceptable time I did hear thee, and in a day of salvation I did help thee, lo, now is a well-accepted time; lo, now, a day of salvation.”—II Cor. 6:1,2, *Young’s Literal Translation*

We have been invited to become workers together with God, and in the carrying out of his ultimate plan and purpose for the reconciliation of the poor sin-sick human family. The apostle has thus admonished that we not receive the bountiful grace of God in vain, but fulfill our covenant of sacrifice faithfully even unto death.—Ps. 50:5; Rev. 2:10

For the true Christian, now is “an acceptable time” to offer our lives in total consecration to our loving Heavenly Father. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

### **Full Assurance of Faith**

Having given our lives in consecration to God, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”—Heb. 10:22-25

### **Ministers of God**

We have received of the marvelous grace of God. Therefore, let us heed the further admonition of the apostle. “Giving no offence in any thing, that the

ministry be not blamed: But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”—II Cor. 6:3-10

### **“To Die Is Gain”**

Paul’s greatest desire was to be faithful to his heavenly calling and share with our Lord Jesus in his future kingdom beyond the veil of death. Nevertheless, he was willing to leave all matters pertaining to his earthly pilgrimage in God’s hands. This is clearly shown in the letter he wrote to the church at Philippi. He told them, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”—Phil. 1:20

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot [know] not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more (Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 31) needful for you.” (Phil 1:21-24) The apostle was hard pressed by the two aspects of God’s providence, to live and continue to serve the special people of God, or to die and be with the Lord. By the Heavenly Father’s wonderful grace, he permitted Paul to remain a little while longer in the flesh to serve the members of the body of Christ.

Out of the treasures of Paul’s heart he continued to speak the words of Truth. With this spiritual hope imbedded deeply in his heart, he said, “Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”—vss. 25-27

Paul had faithfully kept the faith that was addressed by Jude. In his short epistle, he wrote, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 1:3) “The faith” centers on the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, and the merit of its application on our behalf. The apostle abided faithfully in the wonderful promises of God’s Holy Word. He could therefore write to the church at Rome with encouragement. “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, [shall be] eternal life.”—Rom. 2:7

## **Paul's Final Testimony**

Paul knew that he had come to the end of his consecrated walk in Christ Jesus, and that he was to soon give his life as a final sacrifice to the Heavenly Father. To Timothy, he thus acknowledged, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."—II Tim. 4:6-8

The apostle did not complain about his confinement in a Roman prison. He did not murmur concerning the many trials and tribulations he willingly endured along the narrow way in which he had walked for so long. There were many times when he endured great affliction and suffering, yet he went forward with the task that our loving Heavenly Father had given him to do. (II Cor. 11:23-30) Neither did he take the opportunity to boast of his vast knowledge of the Scriptures, or of his many accomplishments as the greatest of the apostles. His last testimonial serves as an inspiration to all of the Lord's consecrated people who are yet striving to attain to the "mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3:14

As Paul closed his letter to Timothy, he recalled some of the disappointing circumstances he had experienced with certain brethren who had caused him much pain and had forsaken him. He wrote, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge." (II Tim. 4:16) However, he acknowledged

that our Heavenly Father had been with him throughout his Christian ministry. “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear.”—II Tim. 4:17

In Paul’s final letter, he gave Timothy wonderful counsel that was surely an encouragement to him at that time in the history of the Early Church. However, it has also been a source of rich blessing for all the Lord’s people since Pentecost. “The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”—vs.18

### **“In Due Season”**

To the church in Galatia Paul wrote, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”—Gal. 6:9,10

We are thus encouraged to renew our determination to be faithful to our heavenly calling. Let us take every opportunity to share the message of Truth, especially as the days in which we now live become more violent and troubling. May we endeavor to do this whether it be for us “in season” or “out of season.” ■