

The Books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 13: Final Charge and Faithfulness to the End

2 Timothy 4:9–22

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This final passage is deeply personal, and its doctrinal weight comes through the people and circumstances Paul names. The heart of it is the faithfulness of the Lord even when people fail us, and the heavenly kingdom as the believer's true destination. Paul has been deserted by Demas, abandoned at his defense, and harmed by Alexander, yet he declares, "the Lord stood by me and strengthened me" (v. 17) and "will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom" (v. 18). Help your class see that this heavenly kingdom is the believer's eternal home with the reigning Christ, not a coming earthly thousand-year reign. Christ reigns now, and what awaits His faithful people is rescue into His heavenly glory. Alongside this stands the sobering example of Demas, a genuine co-worker who fell away through love of the world, a clear warning against any notion that a Christian, once saved, can never be lost. Set beside Demas is Mark, once a failure, now restored and useful, a picture of grace at work in the Lord's church.

This lesson also gives a beautiful window into the fellowship and usefulness of ordinary saints. The closing greetings, Prisca and Aquila, the household of Onesiphorus, Luke, Mark, Erastus, Trophimus, remind us that the Lord's church is built not only by apostles but by faithful, often unnamed and unremarkable believers who simply stay useful and stand by one another. The aim is to help your students locate themselves in this picture, to see that quiet faithfulness matters, and that being restored, useful, and present for others is the calling of every member of Christ's body.

Because this lesson closes the entire study, let the teaching aim also be a gathering up of the whole journey through these two letters. From guarding sound doctrine, to qualifications for elders and deacons, to godliness, contentment, endurance, and the God-breathed word, the letters call Timothy, and us, to faithfulness. Aim, finally, at the heart. Stir in your class a resolve to be faithful to the end like Paul, sobered by Demas, encouraged by Mark, comforted by the Lord who stands by us, and longing for the heavenly kingdom into which He will safely bring all who remain His.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul records that "Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica" (v. 10). Demas had been a trusted co-worker (Colossians 4:14). What does his desertion teach us about the danger of loving the world, and about whether a Christian who has served faithfully can still fall away?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the sad weight of verse 10: “Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.” Demas was no stranger. In earlier letters Paul names him among his fellow workers, alongside Luke (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24). He had labored with Paul, traveled with him, shared in the work of the gospel. And now, near the end, he is gone.

Notice the diagnosis Paul gives: “in love with this present world.” Demas did not necessarily renounce the faith with a speech; he simply came to love the world more than he loved Christ and His suffering servant. The pull of comfort, safety, and the present age proved stronger than his commitment. This is how many fall, not through dramatic rejection but through a heart that slowly attaches itself to the world (1 John 2:15-17).

Here is where this passage speaks directly to a serious doctrinal question. Demas was a real co-worker who fell away. This stands against the idea that a Christian who has once been saved can never be lost no matter how he lives. Scripture is plain that believers can fall away and must remain faithful (Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 5:4). Demas is a living warning that past service is no guarantee of present faithfulness, and that love of the world can shipwreck even a useful worker.

Apply it soberly but not fearfully. The point is not to make believers anxious about their standing but to make them watchful about their loves. Ask the class what “this present world” offers that competes with Christ in their own hearts. The cure for becoming a Demas is not gritted teeth but a deeper love for Christ that displaces the love of the world.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of loving “this present world” more than Christ (v. 10; 1 John 2:15-17)
- A faithful co-worker can still fall away; past service is no guarantee (Colossians 4:14)
- The reality that Christians can fall away and must remain faithful (Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 5:4)
- Apostasy as often gradual, through misplaced love, rather than open denial
- Watchfulness over our loves as the safeguard against drifting from Christ

Discussion Prompts

- What does Demas’s desertion teach us about the danger of loving the world?
- How does Demas’s fall challenge the idea that a saved person can never be lost?
- What does “this present world” offer that most competes with Christ in your heart?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul, near the end, simply asks, “Do your best to come to me soon” (v. 9), and notes that “Luke alone is with me” (v. 11). When have you felt the loneliness that can come with following Christ faithfully, and how do you respond to the longing for companionship in the faith?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question draws out the human ache in Paul’s request, “Do your best to come to me soon” (v. 9), and his lonely note, “Luke alone is with me” (v. 11). The great apostle was not above loneliness. Facing trial and death, with friends scattered and one having deserted him, he longed for the company of those he loved in the faith.

Help students see that loneliness can be a real cost of faithful discipleship. Standing for the truth, refusing to love the world, and serving Christ can leave a person feeling isolated, especially when others compromise or drift away. This is not a sign of failure; even Paul felt it. Naming this honestly frees students from the false notion that faithful Christians should never feel alone.

Then point to the godly response. Paul did not let loneliness curdle into bitterness or drive him to compromise. He reached out to a friend, valued the companionship of Luke, and rested in the presence of the Lord (v. 17). Encourage students to do the same: to value Christian fellowship, to reach for one another, and to remember that even when human company is thin, the Lord stands by.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Loneliness as a real cost of faithful discipleship, felt even by Paul
- The God-given value of Christian fellowship and companionship
- The danger of letting loneliness turn into bitterness or compromise
- The Lord’s presence as the believer’s comfort when human company is thin (v. 17)

Discussion Prompts

- When have you felt the loneliness that can come with following Christ faithfully?
- How do you respond to the longing for companionship in the faith?
- How can this class be the kind of fellowship that stands by one another?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul asks Timothy to bring Mark, “for he is very useful to me for ministry” (v. 11), the same Mark who had earlier deserted him (Acts 15:36-39). What does Mark’s restoration teach us about grace, second chances, and the way the Lord makes ordinary, even failed, servants useful again?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul asks Timothy, “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry” (v. 11). To feel the weight of this, recall the history. Years earlier Mark had abandoned Paul and Barnabas on a missionary journey, and the disagreement over whether to take him again was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas parted ways (Acts 15:36-39). Mark had been, in Paul’s earlier judgment, a quitter.

Now, near the end of Paul’s life, Mark is “very useful.” The man who once failed has been restored, and the apostle who once refused to take him now wants him near. This is one of the quiet glories of the New Testament: a picture of grace, growth, and second chances. Failure was not the final word over Mark’s life. By God’s grace he became useful again, and tradition holds he gave us the Gospel of Mark.

Draw out the encouragement for the class. Many believers carry the weight of a past failure, a time they quit, fell short, or let others down, and they assume they are disqualified. Mark’s story says otherwise. The Lord delights to restore failed servants and make them useful again. Repentance and renewed faithfulness can turn a past failure into future usefulness.

Apply it to the church’s life together. We are called to be people who, like the later Paul, give grace and welcome the restored, not people who define others forever by their worst moment. A congregation that knows how to restore the fallen and re-employ the failed reflects the grace of the Lord who restored Mark.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Grace and restoration for those who have failed (v. 11; Acts 15:36-39)
- Past failure as not the final word over a believer’s usefulness
- The Lord’s power to make ordinary and even failed servants useful again
- The church’s call to restore the fallen rather than define them by failure
- Repentance and renewed faithfulness opening the door to renewed service

Discussion Prompts

- What does Mark’s restoration teach us about grace and second chances?
- How should the church treat those who have failed but are seeking to be useful again?
- Where do you need to believe that your past failure is not the final word?

Question 4

Student Question:

Even facing death, Paul asks for his cloak and for the books, “especially the parchments” (v. 13). What does this small, human request reveal about Paul, and where do you sense the Lord inviting you to keep His word near and your heart engaged, even in difficult seasons?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a small, deeply human request: “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and the books, and above all the parchments” (v. 13). The cloak was for warmth in a cold prison; winter was coming and the apostle was an old man. The detail is touching precisely because it is so ordinary. Even great saints get cold and need their coats.

But notice what else he wants: the books, and “especially the parchments,” likely portions of Scripture. Facing execution, Paul still hungers for God’s word. He does not consider himself beyond the need of study and Scripture. To the very end, the word of God was his companion and food. There is a lesson here for any believer who imagines they have outgrown the need for daily time in Scripture.

Help students see the balance in Paul. He attends to practical needs (the cloak) without apology, and he keeps his heart engaged with God’s word (the parchments) even in prison. Faithfulness to the end is not grim self-neglect; it is a life that cares for ordinary needs while keeping the word central.

Apply it to seasons of difficulty. When life grows hard, cold, or lonely, the temptation is to let our engagement with Scripture slip. Paul models the opposite: in his hardest season, he wants the word nearest. Encourage students to identify how they will keep God’s word close in their own difficult seasons rather than drifting from it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Paul’s continued hunger for Scripture even facing death (v. 13)
- The lifelong need for God’s word, never outgrown
- Attending to ordinary human needs as part of a faithful life
- Keeping the word central especially in difficult seasons

Discussion Prompts

- What does Paul’s request for the parchments reveal about his heart near the end?
- Where are you tempted to let Scripture slip when life gets hard?
- How will you keep God’s word near in your own difficult seasons?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul warns, “Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm... Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message” (vv. 14-15), yet entrusts the matter to God: “the Lord will repay him according to his deeds.” What does this teach us about how to respond to those who oppose the truth and harm us, without taking vengeance into our own hands?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul names a real opponent: "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. Beware of him yourself, for he strongly opposed our message" (vv. 14-15). Paul does not pretend the harm did not happen, nor does he excuse Alexander. He warns Timothy plainly so that he too will be on guard. Wisdom requires that we recognize those who oppose the truth and protect ourselves and others from real danger.

But notice what Paul does not do. He does not plot revenge or take the matter into his own hands. He entrusts it to God: "the Lord will repay him according to his deeds." This echoes the scriptural principle that vengeance belongs to God, not to us (Romans 12:19). Paul can name the harm, warn against the man, and still leave judgment in God's hands. That combination of honesty and restraint is the godly response to those who wound us.

Help the class hold these two together. Some believers are so afraid of being unloving that they refuse to name real opposition, leaving the church exposed. Others are so wounded that they nurse grudges and crave revenge. Paul models the better way: clear-eyed about the danger, warning others for their protection, yet free of personal vengeance because he trusts God to judge rightly.

Apply it to the inevitable opposition of the Christian life. When someone harms us or opposes the truth, we may need to speak plainly and protect others, and we must release the matter to God rather than carrying it as a personal vendetta. Trusting God's justice frees us from the corrosive burden of revenge.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The wisdom of recognizing and warning against those who oppose the truth (vv. 14-15)
- Leaving vengeance and judgment to God rather than seeking revenge (Romans 12:19)
- Honesty about real harm held together with personal restraint
- Trust in God's perfect justice as freedom from a vengeful heart

Discussion Prompts

- How do we respond to those who oppose the truth without taking vengeance into our own hands?
- Why is it sometimes loving to warn others about a real danger?
- How does trusting God's justice free you from carrying a grudge?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul says that at his first defense "all deserted me," yet adds, "May it not be charged against them" (v. 16). Where in your life is God calling you to forgive those who failed or abandoned you, and what makes that kind of release so hard and so freeing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul recalls a painful moment: “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me” (v. 16). He stood before the court alone, abandoned by those who should have supported him. And yet his response is astonishing: “May it not be charged against them.” Instead of bitterness, he offers forgiveness, echoing the very heart of his Lord, who prayed for those who crucified Him.

This question invites students to face their own experiences of being failed or abandoned, and the call to forgive. Most of us carry wounds from people who let us down, who were absent when we needed them, who deserted us at a hard moment. Paul shows that the way of Christ is not to nurse those wounds but to release them.

Help students see why this is so hard and so freeing. Forgiveness is hard because it feels like letting the offender off, like the wound did not matter. But unforgiveness binds us to the person who hurt us and slowly poisons our own heart. Releasing them, as Paul did, frees us to keep serving the Lord without the weight of resentment.

Tie it to grace received. Paul could forgive because he had been forgiven much, a former persecutor shown mercy (1 Timothy 1:13-16). We forgive in the same way, out of the mercy we ourselves have received. Encourage students to name one person they need to release, and to ask the Lord for the grace to do it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Forgiveness of those who fail and desert us, after the pattern of Christ (v. 16)
- The corrosive nature of unforgiveness and the freedom of release
- Forgiveness flowing from the mercy we ourselves have received (1 Timothy 1:13-16)
- Refusing bitterness so as to keep serving the Lord with a free heart

Discussion Prompts

- Where is God calling you to forgive those who failed or abandoned you?
- What makes forgiveness so hard, and what makes it so freeing?
- How does remembering the mercy you have received help you extend it to others?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul testifies, “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it” (v. 17). What does this teach about the Lord’s faithful presence with His servants and His purpose to spread the gospel even through our weakness and abandonment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

After the sorrow of being deserted, Paul lifts his eyes: “But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it” (v. 17). The contrast is striking. People deserted him, but the Lord stood by him. The word “stood by” pictures a faithful companion taking his place beside Paul when everyone else had fled.

Help the class see the great comfort here. The Lord’s presence does not depend on human faithfulness. When others fail us, He does not. Paul was not truly alone in that courtroom, because the Lord was there, strengthening him for the very task at hand. This is the promise that sustains believers in every season of abandonment: the Lord stands by.

Notice the purpose Paul names: “so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.” Even Paul’s lonely trial became a pulpit. The Lord strengthened him not merely to survive but to proclaim the gospel before the court. God’s purpose to spread the message advanced even through Paul’s weakness and abandonment.

Draw out the principle for the class. God often does His greatest work through our weakest, loneliest moments. When we feel most deserted and least capable, the Lord stands by and accomplishes His purposes through us. Encourage students that their hard places can become, by the Lord’s strengthening presence, places where the gospel goes forward.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord’s faithful presence with His servants even when people desert them (v. 17)
- God’s strength supplied for the task He gives, not merely for survival
- God’s purpose to spread the gospel advancing even through our weakness
- The Lord’s presence as independent of human faithfulness

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the Lord “stood by” Paul when everyone else fled?
- How have you experienced God’s strength in a lonely or weak moment?
- How might God use your hard places to advance the gospel?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul closes with greetings to ordinary saints, Prisca and Aquila, the household of Onesiphorus, Erastus, Trophimus (vv. 19-21). What do these named, ordinary believers tell you about your own place in the Lord’s church, and where might God be calling you to be quietly faithful and useful?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul closes with a list of greetings: “Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus... Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus” (vv.

19-20). These are not famous apostles but ordinary, faithful believers. Prisca and Aquila were tentmakers who hosted the church and risked their lives for Paul. Onesiphorus and his household had refreshed Paul and were unashamed of his chains (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

Help the class notice that the Lord's church is built largely by such people. For every Paul, there are many Priscas and Aquilas, many households like that of Onesiphorus, ordinary saints who open their homes, refresh the weary, risk themselves for others, and stay useful. The kingdom advances through faithful members whose names most of the world will never know.

Notice too the realism of verse 20. Erastus simply stayed at Corinth; Trophimus was left behind sick. Not every story is dramatic; not every illness is healed. Faithful service includes ordinary limitations and unhealed sicknesses. This quiet honesty guards us against expecting that the Christian life will always be triumphant and miraculous.

Apply it personally. Ask students where they fit in this picture. Most of us are not called to be Paul, but every one of us can be a Prisca, an Aquila, an Onesiphorus, quietly faithful, hospitable, useful, refreshing others. Encourage them to embrace the dignity of ordinary, faithful service in the Lord's church.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord's church built largely by ordinary, faithful believers (vv. 19-20)
- The value of hospitality, refreshment, and risk-taking love (2 Timothy 1:16-18)
- The realism of unhealed sickness and ordinary limitations in faithful service
- The dignity and importance of quiet, named and unnamed faithfulness

Discussion Prompts

- What do these ordinary, named believers tell you about your place in the church?
- Where might God be calling you to be quietly faithful and useful?
- How does the example of Prisca, Aquila, and Onesiphorus encourage you?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul's confidence rests in this: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever" (v. 18). What does this passage teach about the Lord's faithfulness when people desert us, about the heavenly kingdom as the believer's true destination, and about how Demas's fall warns us against presuming that salvation cannot be lost?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point of the lesson, and a fitting climax to the whole study. Paul declares, "The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly

kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen” (v. 18). Three great truths converge here: the Lord’s faithfulness when people desert us, the heavenly kingdom as the believer’s destination, and the sober warning, seen in Demas, against presuming on salvation.

Consider first the Lord’s faithfulness. Paul has just recounted desertion and harm, yet his confidence is unshaken. The same Lord who stood by him at his trial will rescue him from every evil deed. Note carefully what Paul expects: not necessarily rescue from death, for he knows his departure has come (v. 6), but rescue into the heavenly kingdom. The Lord’s faithfulness is not a promise of an easy life but of safe arrival home. When everyone else fails, the Lord brings His own safely through.

Consider next the heavenly kingdom. Paul looks forward to being brought “safely into his heavenly kingdom.” This is the believer’s true destination, eternal life in the presence of the reigning Christ. It is crucial to handle this rightly: the kingdom Paul awaits is heavenly, not a future earthly thousand-year reign. The kingdom of Christ was established at Pentecost and Christ reigns now (Daniel 2:44; Colossians 1:13); what awaits the faithful is not an earthly millennial reign but rescue into the heavenly glory of that kingdom. Fix the class’s hope on this, the safe arrival into the heavenly kingdom of our Lord.

Now set Demas beside this hope as a solemn warning (v. 10). Demas was a co-worker who fell away through love of the world. His example stands directly against the notion that a Christian, once saved, can never be lost regardless of how he lives. Paul is brought safely into the heavenly kingdom because he kept the faith; Demas deserted because he loved the world. Salvation is preserved through ongoing faith and obedience, and it can be forfeited by falling away (Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 5:4). The same passage that gives us Paul’s glorious confidence gives us Demas’s sobering fall, and we are meant to feel both.

Finally, lead the class to worship. Paul’s response to all of this is doxology: “To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” Surrounded by loss, facing death, deserted by friends, Paul ends not in complaint but in praise, because his eyes are fixed on the faithful Lord and the heavenly kingdom. That is how a faithful life ends, and that is the note on which this whole study should rest: confident in the Lord, sobered by the danger of drifting, and glorifying the God who brings His own safely home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord’s faithfulness to rescue and bring His own safely home, even amid desertion (v. 18)
- Rescue understood as safe arrival into the heavenly kingdom, not necessarily escape from death
- The heavenly kingdom as the believer’s destination; Christ reigns now, no future earthly millennium (Daniel 2:44; Colossians 1:13)
- Demas’s fall as a warning against “once saved, always saved” (v. 10; Hebrews 3:12-14; Galatians 5:4)
- Salvation preserved through ongoing faith and obedience, forfeited by falling away

- Doxology and worship as the fitting response of a faithful life facing death

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the Lord will bring Paul “safely into his heavenly kingdom”?
- How does Demas’s fall, set beside Paul’s confidence, warn us against presuming salvation cannot be lost?
- Why is the believer’s hope the heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly reign, and how does that shape your longing?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back not only over these final verses but over the whole journey through First and Second Timothy. Name one specific way Jesus has been forming you through this study, and one concrete step you will take to remain faithful to the end, trusting the Lord who stands by you.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone closes not only the chapter but the entire study of First and Second Timothy. Paul’s final verses gather many threads: faithfulness to the end, the danger of loving the world, the grace that restores the fallen, the Lord who stands by us, and the heavenly kingdom that awaits. The benediction itself, “The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you” (v. 22), sends Timothy, and us, back into life with grace.

Invite students to look back over the whole journey. From guarding sound doctrine, to prayer and godly order, to qualifications for elders and deacons, to the mystery of godliness, to fighting the good fight of faith, to contentment, endurance, the God-breathed word, the charge to preach, and now faithfulness to the end, these letters have called us to a particular kind of life: faithful, sound, godly, enduring. Ask what God has most deeply formed in them across these thirteen lessons.

Then press for one concrete commitment to remain faithful to the end. Perhaps it is a guard against the love of the world that took Demas, a renewed usefulness like Mark’s, a deeper hunger for the word like Paul’s parchments, or a fixed hope on the heavenly kingdom. The goal is for each person to leave not merely informed but committed, trusting the Lord who stands by His own and brings them safely home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithfulness to the end as the great call of these letters
- The Lord’s sustaining presence and grace for the whole Christian journey
- The heavenly kingdom as the hope that anchors a faithful life
- Spiritual formation across the whole study aimed at a life of enduring faithfulness

Discussion Prompts

- What is the single most important thing God has formed in you across this whole study?
- What is one concrete step you will take to remain faithful to the end?
- How can this class continue to stand by one another, as the Lord stands by us?