

## FOR THE TIME WILL COME – An Updated Study of 2 Timothy 4:1-5 (Part Three of Four)

### The Challenge (2 Timothy 4:5)

The word “but” is used at the outset of v5 as a preposition indicating contrast. It also appears in v3 and is a different word in the Greek. It is difficult to determine why Paul uses two different words in v3 and v5, both translated as “but.” My best guess is that in v3, he wants to convey the idea of an *alternative* that this generation would pursue, instead of learning and living sound doctrine. But in v5, it seems that the contrast is different and stronger. He wants Timothy to *take a stand*, and even *push back* against the negative trend that Paul has just warned him about.

And in order to do that, Timothy must “be sober in all things.” That expression speaks of an awareness of what is going on around you. Peter uses it in 1 Peter 5:8, encouraging us to be sober and alert, because “*your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*” One of the devil’s tactics, within this particular generation of Christians, will be to lead them astray and away from God’s truth, and into a preoccupation with fables and myths.

Timothy will also need to “endure hardship.” Why? Taking a stand against the very popular trend described in vv3-4, would place him within a distinct minority. And opposing it would not be easy. It would be far simpler for him to “go along in order to get along.” Swimming upstream, against the current of the day, is never easy. But this is what Paul is requiring of Timothy. In addition, he must do the work of an evangelist, by maintaining a balance between discipling those who are saved (v2), while also seeking to evangelize the lost (v5). And if Timothy is willing to do all of the above, then he would fulfill the ministry to which God had called him.

Within this text of 2 Timothy 4:1-5, there is an *indication*, an *implication* and an *application*. The indication is clear and straightforward. There is only one way for Timothy or any of us to fulfill the ministry which God has given us. We need to be focused on the Great Commission; on making evangelism and discipleship our priority pursuit. The implication is just as obvious. If Paul’s charge and challenge to Timothy involves an emphasis on discipleship (vv1-2), balanced by evangelism (v5), in *contrast* to what will be going on in vv3-4; then what does that tell us about this popular but negative trend that would one day characterize the Christian faith? Within that movement, led by a group of radicalized Evangelicals, there will be a **de-emphasis** on evangelism and discipleship. Other issues will be stressed, at the expense of the Great Commission (Isaiah 30:1).

Finally, there is an application of this text that is just as significant. Paul warns Timothy at the beginning of v3 about a time that will come. That time is here. It is now! The generation that will be guilty of the spiritual failure spoken of by Paul is MY generation, also known as The Boomers. More precisely, the American Evangelical Boomers. We are the generation that has failed to live up to the challenge of learning and living sound doctrine. I am one of them. I was there when it happened. I know what I’m talking about. So, listen to what I am saying. It is MY generation that has accumulated ear-tickling teachers who, for the past forty years, have been telling us what we want to hear, rather than what we need to hear. These Evangelical Pied Pipers of my generation have successfully turned us aside into the pursuit of fables and myths, at the expense of God’s truth. We will specifically identify those fables and myths, in concluding this four-part study, next.