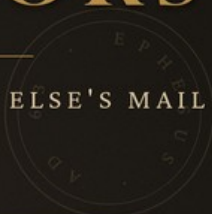

SECRET LETTER TO PASTORS

YOU ARE READING SOMEONE ELSE'S MAIL



TIMILEHIN IDOWU

The Kingdom Lifestyle

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Secret Letter to Pastors

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*To every Pastor doing the Father's work —
the ones standing firm on the call without wavering,
and the ones fighting quietly to find their way back to it.
Heaven sees the labour nobody claps for.
This letter is for you.*

Foreword

[This page is reserved for the Foreword.]

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Introduction: You Are Reading Someone Else's Mail

Somewhere around AD 63, an old preacher sat down and wrote a letter that was never meant for you.

It was not written to a congregation. It was not composed for a pulpit. There was no crowd in mind when the ink touched the parchment. It was one man writing to one man — Paul, the aged apostle who had planted churches across the known world, writing to Timothy, his son in the faith, the young man he had left behind in Ephesus to shepherd one of the most well-taught churches in history.

Private mail. Father to son. Mentor to protégé. Shepherd to shepherd.

And that is exactly why you must read it.

Because when Paul wrote to churches, he wrote knowing thousands would hear it. But when he wrote to Timothy, all the performance fell away. What remained was the raw, unfiltered truth about what this calling actually costs — the loneliness of it, the fights that come with it, the money temptations around it, the young man's timidity, the false teachers in the choir, the widows list, the elders who sin, the good fight that must be fought whether anybody is watching or not.

Pastor, this book is that letter, opened again for our generation.

And I must tell you something uncomfortable before we begin. Timothy pastored Ephesus — the church that received Paul's gentlest epistle, the church prayed over with the highest prayers in Scripture, the church Paul personally laboured in for three years with tears. If ever a church had every advantage, it was Ephesus. Yet one generation later, Jesus Himself stood among the lampstands and said to that same church: *"Thou hast left thy first love"* (Revelation 2:4, KJV).

They did not fall into scandal. They did not lose their doctrine. They were busy, correct, hardworking — and drifting. Distraction did not come dressed as sin. It came dressed as ministry.

If it could happen to Ephesus, it can happen to Festac. It can happen to Lagos, to London, to Houston, to Nairobi. It can happen to you and it can happen to me — and I write this as a pastor to pastors, not from above you but beside you.

Whether you carry the office of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor or Teacher; whether men address you as Bishop, Reverend, Chaplain, Vicar, Priest, Minister, Elder, Deacon, Catechist or Missionary; whether you have been forty years on the pulpit or you received the call last week and your legs are still shaking — this letter is now addressed to you. Read it the way Timothy read it: alone, honestly, with the door closed.

One housekeeping word before we begin. Throughout this book I will mostly say *pastor* — not because the other offices matter less, but because underneath every title the charge is one: *take heed... to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God* (Acts 20:28). The titles differ by tradition; the flock does not. If you tend any portion of His flock — a parish, a cathedral, a chapel, a barracks, a hospital ward, a prison, a campus fellowship, a house cell — then wherever this book says *pastor*, it means you. Nobody is exempted from this mail, because nobody is exempted from the charge.

The theme of everything you are about to read is love. Because the call was never the point. The One who called is.

Welcome to the secret letter.

PART ONE: THE CHARGE

Chapter One — The Church That Had Everything

Before we open Paul's letter, I need to show you the church behind it. Because if you don't know Ephesus, you will read 1 Timothy as ancient advice. But when you know Ephesus, you will read it as a warning addressed to you by name.

The Letter

“And when they were come to him, he said unto them... Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

— Acts 20:18, 28 (KJV)

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”

— Revelation 2:4 (KJV)

In plain language: *Watch your own life first, then watch the flock — God bought this church with His own blood. And a generation later: You are still working. But you no longer love Me the way you did at the beginning.*

Hold those two verses side by side. Everything in this book lives between them.

What Happened at Ephesus

No church in the New Testament was given more.

Paul did not visit Ephesus — he *lived* there. Three years (Acts 20:31). Daily teaching in the school of Tyrannus until, Scripture says, all Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9–10). Extraordinary miracles. A revival so real that former occultists burned their own books publicly — fifty thousand pieces of silver

going up in smoke because Jesus had become more valuable than their livelihood (Acts 19:19). Priscilla and Aquila taught there. Apollos, the eloquent one, passed through there. And when Paul finally left, he did not leave them guessing — he called their elders to Miletus, wept with them on the beach, warned them plainly that wolves were coming, *even from among themselves* (Acts 20:29–30), and then prayed over those pastors the prayer we will return to at the end of this book: “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up*” (Acts 20:32).

Then he wrote them the epistle to the Ephesians — the letter with almost no rebuke in it. The letter whose prayers you and I still pray today. *That the eyes of your understanding be enlightened. That you may know the hope of His calling. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love...*

And when the church needed a shepherd, Paul did not send a stranger. He left them Timothy — his own son in the faith, the one man he said had no equal in genuinely caring for people’s welfare (Philippians 2:20).

Three years of Paul. The best teachers alive. Advance warning about the wolves. The highest prayers in Scripture. A proven, tender shepherd. Brethren, if resources could keep a church burning, Ephesus should be burning today.

The Mirror

Now come home with me.

Some of us are pastoring churches that have everything Ephesus had. Sound teaching — we can quote it. Powerful conferences — we attend them. Prayers — we pray Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 3 over our members every year, sometimes with fire, sometimes with fasting attached. The programmes are running. The departments are functioning. The livestream is live.

But Jesus was not reviewing Ephesus's programmes when He walked among the lampstands in Revelation 2. Listen to what He commended first: *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience... thou hast borne, and hast not fainted* (Revelation 2:2–3). Hardworking. Doctrinally sharp — they had tested false apostles and caught them. Patient under pressure. **If Ephesus were in Lagos today, we would be doing their church profile on our platforms and inviting their pastor to speak at our conventions.**

And to that church — that correct, busy, enduring church — Jesus said: *thou hast left thy first love*.

Read it again slowly. He did not say they lost their doctrine. He did not say they lost their crowd. He said they left their *love* — and He was not primarily talking about love for church activity. The first love is the love that made you say yes to the call before there was any title attached to it. Before anybody called you Pastor, Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Teacher, Reverend, Bishop, Chaplain or Vicar. When it was just you and Jesus, and serving Him was not your job description — it was your joy.

Here is the uncomfortable truth this whole book stands on: **distraction did not come to Ephesus dressed as sin. It came dressed as ministry.** Nobody in that church woke up one morning and rejected Christ. They just kept working after the love had quietly gone home. The machinery kept running on momentum. And it can run for a long time, my brother, my sister. It can run for a generation. It can outlive the pastor.

If it happened to the church that had everything, then no anointing, no title, no track record and no crowd size exempts you and me. That is not condemnation — that is a smoke alarm. And a smoke alarm is an act of love.

The Distraction Check

Answer these alone, before God, not before your board:

1. When last did you spend time with Jesus that had nothing to do with sermon preparation, content, or a programme? Time that produced nothing you could post?
2. Would your love survive if you are no more a Pastor, Apostle, Prophet, Bishop, Reverend, Chaplain, Vicar or Priest — if all that remained was you and Jesus?
3. Ephesus was warned about the wolves and still drifted. Who in your life is permitted to warn *you* — and when last did you actually let them?

Back Online

Jesus did not only diagnose Ephesus — He prescribed. Three words in Revelation 2:5: *Remember. Repent. Do.* Remember from where you have fallen — go back in your mind to the day of your call, the first altar, the first tears. Repent — not the vague general repentance we lead others in, but a specific, private, pastoral repentance: *Lord, I have been serving You without walking with You.* And do the first works — this week, not this year, do one thing you did in your first-love season purely out of love for Him. No camera. No report.

A Word of Hope

Notice this, and let it settle your heart: Jesus did not write Ephesus off. He was *standing among the lampstands* — present, attentive, still holding their star in His right hand — when He corrected them. The rebuke itself was the proof of the relationship. He does not warn churches He has abandoned.

So if this chapter has read your mail, that is not evidence that you are finished. It is evidence that He is still standing in your church, still holding you, still calling you back to the beginning. The One who called you has not changed His mind about you (Romans 11:29). The fire can return. That is the entire reason this letter is in your hands.

Chapter Two — Guard the Message (1 Timothy 1)

The first thing Paul wrote in his private mail was not encouragement. It was an assignment.

The Letter

“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus... that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

— 1 Timothy 1:3 (KJV)

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy... that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience.”

— 1 Timothy 1:18–19 (KJV)

In plain language: *Timothy, I left you in Ephesus for one reason — stop the people teaching a different message. This is war, son. Fight it with faith and a clean conscience.*

What Paul Was Saying

Notice where the trouble was coming from. Not from the idol-makers of Acts 19 — the church had already survived Demetrius and his riot. The threat Paul named was *inside*: teachers within the fellowship drifting into fables, endless genealogies, arguments that generated questions instead of godliness (1 Timothy 1:4). Exactly what he had predicted on the beach at Miletus — *of your own selves shall men arise* (Acts 20:30). The wolves did not break the gate. They were ordained through it.

And watch what Paul does in the middle of this hard assignment — he suddenly turns the light on himself: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief* (1 Timothy 1:15). The man commanding Timothy to confront false teachers first confesses that he himself was once the church’s most violent

enemy, and mercy found him. That is not a detour. That is the posture. You cannot guard the message with pride; you guard it as a beggar who was fed, telling other beggars where the bread is.

The Mirror

Come home with me. The distorted doctrine of our day does not usually announce itself as heresy. It arrives as *emphasis* — a slow shift of the centre. Christ at the centre becomes breakthrough at the centre. The cross at the centre becomes the man of God at the centre. Scripture quoted becomes Scripture decorated — one verse, out of context, carrying a whole doctrine it never agreed to carry.

And much of it is not preached by wolves. It is preached by tired shepherds. A pastor who has stopped studying will eventually start recycling — and a recycling pastor will preach whatever is trending, because trend has replaced text as his source. The borrowed sermon, the downloaded fire, the message chosen because it will perform well on the platform rather than because God said it — brethren, that is how *other doctrine* enters through the front door with our own hands carrying it.

Distraction came dressed as ministry. It always does.

The Distraction Check

1. When you prepared your last three sermons, what was open in front of you first — the Scriptures, or another preacher's content?
2. Is there any doctrine you now preach mainly because your congregation responds to it, though your conscience is quietly uncomfortable?
3. Paul kept *faith and a good conscience* together and said some who separated them shipwrecked (1 Timothy 1:19). Is your conscience currently a passenger on your ship, or did it disembark some stations ago?

Back Online

This week, take one message you have preached in the last year that you know was more performance than conviction — and privately, before God alone, retire it. Then open the text it abused and study it properly, as a student, not as a content creator. Nobody will see this act. That is precisely why it will heal you.

A Word of Hope

If this chapter has exposed you, remember who is writing the original letter: the *chief of sinners*, saved by mercy, entrusted afterward with the gospel (1 Timothy 1:11–13). God’s pattern is not to disqualify the man who drifted — it is to show him mercy and then hand him the message again. Your past compromise does not cancel your future charge. It qualifies your testimony of grace.

Chapter Three — The Praying House and the Hard Verses (1 Timothy 2)

Before Paul touched the controversy, he gave the church its first assignment — and we usually skip it to rush to the argument.

The Letter

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority.”

— 1 Timothy 2:1–2 (KJV)

“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

— 1 Timothy 2:11–12 (KJV)

In plain language: *The first business of the gathered church is prayer — for everybody, including the government. And concerning the women in Ephesus: let them learn quietly and not seize authority over the men.*

What Paul Was Saying

First of all — prayer. Not first of all, announcements. Not first of all, offering. The Ephesian church’s opening assignment was intercession wide enough to cover kings — and remember who ruled when Paul wrote this: a hostile empire led by Nero, no friend of the church. Paul commanded prayer for a government that would later take his head. Selah.

And before you weigh the hard verses, you must see the city they were written into. Ephesus was not a neutral town — it was the world headquarters of the goddess Diana (Artemis), whose temple stood there as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The whole city once rioted for her, shouting “Great is Diana of the

Ephesians” for two solid hours (Acts 19:27, 34–35). And Diana’s religion was a temple system where women held religious prominence — a spiritual culture where female religious authority was the norm. So understand what was happening: women were coming out of Diana’s system into Christ’s church, carrying the assumption that spiritual authority is seized the way it was seized in the temple — and doing so before they had been taught. Add the false teachers already working the same room (1 Timothy 1:3), whom Paul elsewhere describes as creeping into houses and capturing untaught women (2 Timothy 3:6), and Paul’s instruction stops sounding like a muzzle and starts sounding like a mother’s guardrail: *let the woman learn* — itself a radical sentence in a generation that did not educate women — *and let no one, man or woman, seize what must be given*.

That generation was also deeply patriarchal — Jewish and Greco-Roman society alike kept women out of public instruction — and Paul was writing real mail into a real culture, not drafting a constitution in a vacuum. Any honest reading of these verses must hold both facts: the Diana culture pushing one extreme, the patriarchal culture pushing the other, and Paul steering a young church through the middle of both.

I will not pretend the Body of Christ agrees on these verses, because it does not. Let me set the main positions before you honestly.

The first position holds that Paul’s instruction is universal and permanent — women may learn, serve and minister in many capacities, but the teaching-governing office over the assembly is reserved for men, grounded in Paul’s appeal to creation order (1 Timothy 2:13).

The second position holds that Paul was addressing a specific Ephesian crisis — the goddess culture, the untaught women, the false teachers — and was not silencing women permanently. They point to Priscilla, who helped teach Apollos accurately in this same

city (Acts 18:26), to Philip's four prophesying daughters (Acts 21:9), and to the daughters on whom the Spirit fell at Pentecost (Acts 2:17).

The third position lands between: the principle of order and headship is permanent, but its expression is contextual — what it forbids is the *usurping*, the seizing of authority, not the exercise of genuine gifting under proper covering.

All three positions are held by Bible-believing, Christ-loving pastors. Whoever tells you his camp is the only one that loves Scripture has already broken the theme of this book.

Where I Stand

Let me tell you where I stand, and I stand here in love. I believe Paul was addressing the Ephesian church specifically — a church planted in the shadow of Diana's temple, where women-led religious authority had been the culture for generations, now colliding with a patriarchal society that had never educated its women in the Scriptures. Into that collision came untaught women, newly delivered from the goddess system, carrying its habits into Christ's house — and false teachers were already exploiting exactly that gap (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:6). Paul's instruction was a check against *usurping* — the King James word — the seizing of authority the way it was seized in Diana's temple. It was a guardrail for that church, in that city, in that generation. It was never a padlock on the mouths of all women for all time.

Notice what Paul actually opened with: *let the woman learn* (1 Timothy 2:11). In a generation that did not teach women, that sentence was not restriction — it was liberation. You do not educate people you intend to keep silent forever; you educate people you intend to release.

In our house, women teach. Women lead publicly. And they do it under covering, in order, with fruit that speaks for itself — because the same Spirit who fell on the sons fell on the daughters (Joel 2:28;

Acts 2:17). What remains permanent from this passage is not silence; it is order. Nobody — man or woman — seizes what must be given.

And to my brother pastor who reads these same verses and lands on the other side — I am not your opponent, and this book is not my argument against you. Bible-believing, Christ-loving shepherds sit on every side of this passage. Hold your conviction with study, hold it with humility, and let us both hold each other with love. That is the theme of this letter, and I will not break it over two verses.

On Adornment

While we are here, let me answer what verse 9 always raises in our churches. Paul's word in this chapter is about *adornment* — that a woman's worth is not announced by braided hair, gold, pearls or costly apparel (1 Timothy 2:9). In our house, whether a woman covers her hair is her choice; we do not police fabric, we pastor hearts. Because the true ornament Paul names is not what sits on the head but what flows from the life: *good works, which becometh women professing godliness* (1 Timothy 2:10). A woman clothed in good works is dressed correctly in any culture, in any century.

The Mirror

Here is my discomfort with how our generation handles this chapter: we have made verses 11–12 famous and verses 1–8 forgotten. Churches that will split over whether a woman may hold a microphone have no functioning intercessory meeting for their government. We debate more than we pray — and Paul's *first of all* has quietly become our *if time permits*.

Show me a church's prayer meeting attendance, and I will show you that church's true doctrine.

And on those in authority — hear me, because this matters in our nation more than most: Paul said pray *for* them, not *against* them. Supplications, intercessions, giving of thanks — for kings. Not

curses for kings. Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21), and a church that spends its prayer meeting cursing its leaders is firing its own artillery into its own future. Pray direction into them. Pray wisdom over them. Bless — because the mouth that blesses keeps its authority, and the mouth that curses loses its altar. We are not commentators; we are intercessors. The commentator analyses the king. The intercessor changes him.

The Distraction Check

1. Honestly — what comes *first of all* in your service order, and what does that reveal?
2. When did your church last pray for those in authority by name, without it being an election season?
3. On the hard verses: is your position on women a conviction you reached in study, or an inheritance you have never examined?

Back Online

Restore *first of all* literally for one month: let the first ten minutes of every service be intercession — for the nation, for leaders, for all men — before any other item. Watch what it does to the atmosphere and to you.

A Word of Hope

Paul anchors this whole chapter on one glorious sentence: *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). Remember what was above the church when he wrote it — a hostile empire led by Nero, the same empire that would later take Paul's head. Yet Paul's instruction was not "hide," and it was not "curse Rome." It was *pray*.

I write this from Nigeria, where the church knows what it means to gather under threat — where brethren in parts of this nation have buried worshippers, rebuilt burnt sanctuaries, and still opened the doors the next Sunday. If that is your story, this chapter is not

theory to you. So hear the hope: the church that prayed under a hostile empire led by Nero did not merely survive that empire — it outlived it. Rome fell; the church is still singing. Every empire, every persecution, every hostile power has an expiry date, and the gates of hell have a standing promise of defeat over this church (Matthew 16:18). Keep praying. Keep blessing. Keep the doors open. The Mediator is still on the throne, and He has never lost a church He was standing in.

Chapter Four — Who Qualifies to Lead (1 Timothy 3)

This is the chapter for every person who wants to become a pastor — and it will disappoint you beautifully, because almost nothing on Paul’s list is about gift.

The Letter

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

— 1 Timothy 3:1 (KJV)

“A bishop then must be blameless... not greedy of filthy lucre... One that ruleth well his own house... Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

— 1 Timothy 3:2–6 (KJV)

In plain language: *Wanting to lead God’s house is a noble desire. But here is the entry requirement — and it is character, family and reputation, not talent.*

What Paul Was Saying

Read the list slowly and count: blameless, one wife, vigilant, sober, hospitable, able to teach, not violent, not greedy, patient, ruling his own house well, of good report with outsiders. Out of the whole list, only one item — *apt to teach* — is a skill. Everything else is character. Paul’s qualification sheet for the pulpit is really a testimony sheet about the man’s private life.

And two items deserve underlining for our day. *Not greedy of filthy lucre* — money appears on both the bishop’s list and the deacon’s list, because Paul knew the pulpit and the purse would always be neighbours; we will meet this fully in the money chapter. And *not a novice* — the danger of the novice is not incompetence, it is *pride*.

Promotion before maturity does not destroy the ministry first; it destroys the minister.

Notice also what Paul tests before the office: the *house* (1 Timothy 3:4–5). His logic is devastatingly simple — if a man cannot shepherd the small congregation that eats at his table, why hand him the large one? The home is not an obstacle to ministry. The home is the first ministry, and the proving ground of every other one.

The Mirror

Come home. Our generation has quietly reversed Paul's list. We ordain gift and hope character will come later. A man can sing heaven down, so we give him a title — and then we act surprised when the title amplifies what was already in him, because **a platform does not change a man; it enlarges him**. Whatever was hidden in him at the bottom of the ladder will be broadcast from the top of it.

And the titles themselves — Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher, Bishop — hear me with love: Paul called the office *a good work*, not a good title. In Ephesus a bishop was a target for lions, not a candidate for a convoy. If your desire is for the honour of the office rather than the work of the office, this chapter is your mirror, not your ladder.

For the young minister reading this because you want to become a pastor: do not despise the list. Build your house. Guard your name with outsiders. Serve where nobody claps. The gift will make room for you (Proverbs 18:16) — but only character will let you *stay* in the room.

The Distraction Check

1. If your spouse and children wrote your ministry reference letter honestly, would you be ordained?

2. Which are you more anxious to protect right now — your character or your reputation? (They are not the same thing.)
3. Have you laid hands on, or promoted, a novice because his gift was undeniable — and have you gone back to father him?

Back Online

Take Paul's list in 1 Timothy 3:2–7 and do something few pastors ever do: score *yourself* against it in writing, alone before God — not as the day you were ordained, but as you are today. Ordination is not a certificate we earned once; it is a standard we keep answering to.

A Word of Hope

Paul ends the chapter by lifting his eyes from the qualification list to the wonder of it all: *great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh* (1 Timothy 3:16). The standard is high because the treasure is high — but the same Christ who set the standard is the one working in you both to will and to do (Philippians 2:13). He does not post the job description and abandon the applicant. He qualifies the ones He calls, daily, from the inside out.

Chapter Five — Guard Yourself First (1 Timothy 4)

Paul now turns from the church's order to the shepherd's soul — and gives Timothy the most dangerous assignment in the whole letter: himself.

The Letter

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

— 1 Timothy 4:1 (KJV)

“Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

— 1 Timothy 4:12 (KJV)

“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”

— 1 Timothy 4:16 (KJV)

In plain language: *Deception is coming — the Spirit said so plainly. Your defence is not an argument; it is your own life. Watch yourself first, then your teaching. Stay there, and you will rescue both yourself and your hearers.*

What Paul Was Saying

Look at the order in verse 16 and never forget it: *thyself*, then *the doctrine*. Not the ministry first. Not the members first. The minister first. Paul had already said it on the beach at Miletus — *take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock* (Acts 20:28) — and now he writes it into the private mail: Timothy, you are your own first congregation.

And his prescription for a young minister facing contempt was not a title upgrade. It was *example* — in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, purity. Six areas, and every one of them is lived, not announced. Then: *give attendance to reading... meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all* (1 Timothy 4:13–15). The answer to “let no man despise thy youth” is visible growth. People stop despising what they watch God developing.

The Mirror

Come home with me, and let me say the hard thing gently: **the most neglected member of many churches is the pastor’s own soul.**

We feed everybody and forget to eat. We prepare the word for Sunday and have no word for Tuesday. We take heed to the doctrine — our messages are sound — but the *thyself* part of verse 16 has been outsourced to momentum. And a shepherd running on empty does not usually crash immediately. He coasts. He performs. He recycles old anointing like leftover soup. Distraction came dressed as ministry — and its favourite costume is *busyness for God that leaves no time with God*.

Then the seducing spirits Paul warned about do not need to attack such a man’s doctrine. They only need to wait for his exhaustion. Almost every fallen minister we have wept over was not defeated by an argument; he was defeated by depletion. The devil rarely debates a full pastor. He schedules the empty one.

And to the young minister under pressure — the youth despised in our own day is not only age. It is the small church despised beside the mega one, the unknown name despised beside the platform names. Paul’s counsel has not expired: do not answer contempt with noise. Answer it with example. Your profiting will appear. God’s timing has never needed public relations.

The Distraction Check

1. Verse 16 order-check: this past month, did you take heed to yourself *first* — or did the doctrine, the programmes and the people consume the self entirely?
2. When you read the Bible this week, was any of it for *you alone* — not for a sermon, a post, or a counselling session?
3. If depletion, not doctrine, is the devil's entry point — how full are you, honestly, right now?

Back Online

Put your own soul back on the church timetable. One non-negotiable appointment per week — same day, same hour — where you sit before God as a *son*, not a staff member. No sermon prep allowed in that hour. Guard it the way you guard Sunday service, because verse 16 says your survival and your hearers' survival are tied to it.

A Word of Hope

Paul told Timothy that godliness *is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come* (1 Timothy 4:8). The private hours you invest in your own soul are not stolen from the ministry — they are the ministry's seed. And the God who said *thy profiting shall appear to all* is not slow. Feed yourself, and watch Him feed multitudes through what you become.

Chapter Six — Family, Not Corporation (1 Timothy 5)

This chapter reads like church administration — widows' lists, elders' wages, accusation procedures. But underneath the administration is one revelation: Paul saw the church as a *household*, and he expected its pastor to behave like family.

The Letter

“Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity.”

— 1 Timothy 5:1–2 (KJV)

“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.”

— 1 Timothy 5:17 (KJV)

“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.”

— 1 Timothy 5:22 (KJV)

In plain language: *Treat everyone in the church as blood relatives — fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters. Honour the elders who labour, and pay them. Investigate accusations properly. And do not rush ordination — whoever you promote, you co-sign.*

What Paul Was Saying

Every instruction in this chapter runs on family logic. The aged man is corrected as a *father*, not dressed down as an employee. The widows are honoured, provided for, enrolled — because a family does not abandon its mothers. The labouring elder receives *double honour* — and Paul makes plain that honour includes wages: *the labourer is worthy of his reward* (1 Timothy 5:18). Accusations

against elders require witnesses (5:19) — protecting shepherds from the arrows that always fly at them — yet elders who persist in sin are rebuked openly (5:20), because family covers weakness but never covers wickedness.

And then verse 22, the verse our generation needs framed on every ordination platform: *lay hands suddenly on no man*. Paul says rushed ordination makes you a *partaker of other men's sins* — when you promote a man before his time, his future failures carry your fingerprints.

And then, tucked between the ordination warning and the closing verses, one line our generation cannot read without arguing: *Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities* (1 Timothy 5:23). Read it plainly for what it is. Timothy was drinking *only* water — he was an abstainer, likely guarding his testimony as a young pastor in a city of Diana's feasts — and his health was suffering for it; ancient water was often unsafe, and Timothy carried a weak stomach and frequent infirmities. Paul's word here is a father's medical instruction to one son with one ailment: *a little*, for the *stomach's sake*. It is a prescription, not a promotion. Notice the dosage and the purpose are both written into the verse — the same letter that says *a little wine* for health also lists “not given to wine” among the qualifications of the very office Timothy held (1 Timothy 3:3). Paul did not contradict himself; he distinguished medicine from appetite.

Let me tell you where I stand, plainly. I do not take alcohol — that is my personal walk, and I hold it freely. And I do not condemn the brother or sister who does — because this verse will not let me, and love will not let me. But hear the guardrails, because they are not mine, they are wisdom's: everything permissible must live under moderation, and the moment moderation dies, permission dies with it. And to the one for whom it has become a chain rather than a choice — separation is the only honest test left. If you cannot put it down, it has already picked *you* up. **Anything you cannot walk**

away from has quietly become your god — and this whole letter has been about pulling little gods off the throne. The pastor's liberty ends where the pastor's mastery ends: *all things are lawful, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*

The Mirror

Come home. Somewhere along the way, some of us stopped pastoring a family and started managing a brand. **When the church becomes a corporation, the members become customers — and customers are retained, not fathered.** You can hear the shift in our vocabulary: *traffic* instead of souls, *content* instead of word, *followers* instead of children in the faith. The corporation asks, “how do we keep them coming?” The family asks, “how are they actually doing?”

Test yourself against Paul's family lines. The aged minister in your city whose crowd has thinned — is he honoured as a father in your mouth, or quietly mocked as yesterday's man? The widows — not the famous ones, the forgotten ones — does your church know their names? The associate who laboured with you for years — has honour reached his hands, or only his introduction? A church that cannot honour its fathers is training its children how to treat *you* when your own evening comes.

And the sudden laying on of hands — we have already seen that a platform does not change a man; it enlarges him. This verse adds the second half of that truth: it enlarges him *on your account*. Ordination is a co-signature. Sign slowly.

The Distraction Check

1. In your last leadership meeting, did the language sound more like a family discussing its members or a company reviewing its numbers?

2. Name one aged minister, one widow, and one labouring junior your church has *tangibly* honoured in the past year. If the list is empty, the mirror has spoken.
3. Is there anyone you elevated suddenly — for gift, for loyalty, for optics — whom you now need to go back and actually father?

Back Online

This month, do one act of double honour that costs you something: visit or call an aged minister — especially one who can add nothing to your platform — and honour him materially and publicly. Let your congregation watch you do it. You are not only blessing a father; you are discipling a culture.

A Word of Hope

Paul slipped a quiet promise into this chapter: *the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid* (1 Timothy 5:25). Pastor, the years you have spent fathering people no camera recorded — the widows helped quietly, the sons raised patiently, the honour given without hashtags — none of it is lost. It cannot be hid. The Father of the family keeps the family records Himself, and His reward has never once missed an address.

Chapter Seven — The Money Chapter (1 Timothy 6)

I told you from the beginning that this book would earn its title somewhere. It is here. Paul saved the money conversation for last — and wrote it with fire.

The Letter

“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare... For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

— 1 Timothy 6:9–10 (KJV)

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”

— 1 Timothy 6:6 (KJV)

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith.”

— 1 Timothy 6:11–12 (KJV)

In plain language: *The determination to be rich is a trap that has drowned men in destruction. Money itself is not the evil — the love of it is, and that love has already pierced some ministers through. But you, man of God — run from it. Godliness plus contentment is the real wealth.*

What Paul Was Saying

Be precise here, because imprecision on this verse has caused two opposite errors. Paul did not say money is the root of all evil — he said the *love* of money is. Money in the hand is a tool; money in the heart is a tyrant. And notice who Paul was warning: not sinners in the marketplace — *ministers in the church*. The whole chapter sits

inside a letter about false teachers, and Paul identifies their engine in verse 5: men *supposing that gain is godliness*. Merchandising the anointing is not a modern invention; it is the oldest counterfeit in the file.

Then the turn in verse 11 — *but thou, O man of God, flee*. Not “manage it carefully.” Not “pray about it.” *Flee*. The same apostle who told Timothy to stand and fight false doctrine told him to *run* from money-love. Some enemies you confront; this one you outrun. And to the genuinely rich, Paul’s word was not condemnation but assignment: be rich in good works, ready to distribute, laying up a true foundation (6:17–19). Wealth is not the sin. Trust misplaced onto wealth is.

The Mirror

Come home with me, and let us close the door, because this is private mail. **Money is a good servant in the house of God, but it is a terrible senior pastor.** And in some houses, quietly, without any announcement, it has been promoted.

You know money has taken the pulpit when the sermon calendar follows the income calendar. When the wealthy member’s sin is handled with diplomacy and the poor member’s sin is handled with discipline. When the offering exhortation is longer than the word. When a pastor’s lifestyle requires his congregation’s sacrifice to sustain — ₦ by ₦, dollar by dollar — while the widows’ list of 1 Timothy 5 does not exist. Paul said some have been *pierced through with many sorrows* — and brethren, we have watched the piercings in our generation: ministries that grew fat and gospels that grew thin, men who gained platforms and erred from the faith on live camera.

Hear me in love, because I am beside you, not above you: contentment is not the enemy of vision. Paul, the most visionary man of his century, wrote *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content* (Philippians 4:11) — and turned the world upside down from a rented house and a prison cell. Distraction

came dressed as ministry; in this chapter, it comes dressed as *blessing*. Not every open door is God — some are traps with good lighting.

The Distraction Check

1. If God audited the relationship between your preaching calendar and your church's income calendar, what would He find?
2. Is there any income stream in your ministry that your conscience has already flagged — and you have overruled your conscience because the money is good?
3. The demotion question from chapter one, now in currency: if the ministry stopped paying, would you still shepherd these people?

Back Online

Do a private money audit before God this week — not of the church's books, but of your *heart's* books. Write down every place ministry and money currently intersect in your life. Beside each one, write either *servant* or *master*. Whatever you mark *master*, begin dismantling it this month — quietly, without press release. And do one act of pure giving that cannot return to you: give secretly to a minister or a member who can never repay or promote you.

A Word of Hope

The chapter that contains Scripture's sternest money warning also contains one of its sweetest descriptions of God: He *giveth us richly all things to enjoy* (1 Timothy 6:17). Your Father is not stingy, and this chapter was never poverty's recruitment letter. It is a rescue operation — because He loves *you*, not your usefulness, and He refuses to lose you to a snare dressed as a blessing. Godliness with contentment is great gain, and that gain has no sorrow added to it (Proverbs 10:22). Fight the good fight. The real

treasure was never in the offering basket. It is on the throne — and
He already calls you His own.

Chapter Eight — The Prayer Over the Elders (Closing Part One)

We began this book on a beach at Miletus, and we will end Part One there — because the last thing Paul did with the pastors of Ephesus was not instruct them. He *prayed* over them.

The Letter

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

— Acts 20:32 (KJV)

In plain language: *I hand you over — to God Himself, and to the word of His grace. That word is able to keep building you, and there is an inheritance with your name on it among the sanctified.*

What Paul Was Saying

Read the address on this prayer again: it was not prayed over the congregation of Ephesus. It was prayed over the *elders* — the pastors (Acts 20:17). We have spent our ministries praying Pauline prayers over our members, and rightly so. But this one — this one is ours. Scripture’s model prayer for shepherds. Paul could not stay; the wolves were coming; the drift toward lost first love was already in the future of that room. So he did the only thing that could outlast his presence: he commended them to *God, and to the word of His grace* — the two guardians that never retire, never relocate, and never get distracted.

Which is able to build you up. Present tense, continuous. The word did not finish with you at ordination. It is still able — today, this evening, at whatever point of drift or weariness this book has found you — to build you back up.

The Return

So, pastor — Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Teacher, Bishop, Reverend, Chaplain, Vicar, Priest; forty years on the pulpit or forty days — before we open Part Two and read a dying father's last words, come to this altar first. Not the altar you built for others. The one before the throne, where it is just you and the One who called you, the way it was at the beginning.

Remember. Repent. Do the first works. Pray this aloud, alone:

Father, I remember. I remember the day You called me — before the title, before the platform, before anybody knew my name. I confess where the work replaced the walk, where distraction came to me dressed as ministry and I welcomed it. Wash me. Rekindle my first love. I take heed to myself first, then to the doctrine. I hand myself back to You and to the word of Your grace — build me up again. I am Yours before I am theirs. In Jesus' name. Amen.

And if you have read this far and the honest truth is that you carry the title but you have never truly known the One behind it — or you began with Him once and left, not just the first love but the faith — the door is not closed to you either. The chief of sinners found mercy and was put into ministry (1 Timothy 1:12–16). Tell Jesus plainly: *Lord, save me. I give You my life — not my ministry first, my life.* He has never once rejected that prayer. Not from a sinner. Not from a shepherd. Not from you.

Welcome back online.

— *End of Part One: The Charge* —

PART TWO: THE FAREWELL

Between the two letters, the world got darker. Rome burned in AD 64 and Nero blamed the Christians. Being a pastor stopped costing reputation and started costing blood. Paul was rearrested — not house arrest this time, but a cell — and he knew he was not coming out. So he wrote to Timothy one last time. No apostle writes small talk from a death cell. Every line in this letter is something a dying father refused to leave unsaid.

Chapter Nine — Stir Up the Gift (2 Timothy 1)

The first thing the dying man addressed was not Timothy's doctrine. It was Timothy's *fire* — because it was going out.

The Letter

“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.”

— 2 Timothy 1:6–7 (KJV)

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.”

— 2 Timothy 1:8 (KJV)

In plain language: *Timothy, the gift in you is a fire, and fires die when nobody tends them. Stir it back to flame. Fear is not from God — power, love and a sound mind are. And do not be ashamed of the gospel, or of me in these chains.*

What Paul Was Saying

Read verse 6 honestly and you will find something our conference posters never mention: *Timothy — Paul's best son, pastor of Ephesus, the man with no equal in caring for the flock — was going cold.* The gift was still in him; Paul says so. But it needed *stirring*, the way embers need raking. And verse 7 tells us what was smothering it: fear. Watch the timeline — Paul was in chains, believers were being executed, associates were deserting (1:15: *all they which are in Asia be turned away from me*). Timothy was watching his spiritual father head to the executioner and calculating what association would cost him. Fear had entered the pastor.

Paul's answer was not "be strong." It was ancestry and deposit: *the unfeigned faith... which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice* (1:5) — son, this faith survived two generations before you; it will survive Nero — and *that good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us* (1:14). The fire is guarded, but not by you alone.

And then Paul names names, which private mail permits. Phygellus and Hermogenes — deserters (1:15). Onesiphorus — the one who *oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain*, who searched Rome diligently until he found the prisoner (1:16–17). One man's loyalty recorded forever against a generation's desertion.

The Mirror

Come home with me. Nobody announces that their fire is going out. There is no letter of resignation from first love — we established that at Ephesus in chapter one, and here is Ephesus's own pastor proving it. **The gift does not leave; it sleeps. And a sleeping gift can still preach, still administrate, still trend.** That is the terror of it. Timothy could have pastored on reputation for another twenty years and nobody in Ephesus would have noticed the embers.

And the fear that smothers pastors today rarely arrives as persecution. It arrives as *what will they say* — the fear of the members' opinion, of the offering dropping if the truth is preached, of the senior colleagues' cabal, of being the one whose church stayed small. A pastor governed by *what will they say* has already changed gods, because whoever's opinion you fear is whoever you serve. The Spirit God gave you carries power, love and a *sound mind* — and a sound mind is a mind that fear no longer edits.

Then ask the Onesiphorus question. Every pastor reading this knows a Phygellus — someone who vanished when associating with you stopped paying. But be honest about the other direction: which chained, disgraced, out-of-season minister have *you* refreshed lately — searched out diligently, not been ashamed of?

We are quick to claim Onesiphorus's blessing and slow to do his errand.

The Distraction Check

1. Is your gift currently *burning* or *performing*? You know the difference even if nobody else does.
2. Finish this sentence honestly: "The opinion I fear most belongs to _____. " Now ask what that fear has already edited out of your preaching.
3. Name one minister in disgrace or obscurity you could refresh this month. What is actually stopping you — schedule, or shame of his chain?

Back Online

Stirring is an action, not a mood. Do the three raking motions this week: return physically or mentally to the place of your ordination and thank God there (*remembrance*, 1:6); fast one day purely to ask the Holy Ghost to re-fire the deposit (1:14); and preach one message this month that fear previously vetoed. Fire responds to fuel, oxygen and heat — word, prayer, obedience. It has never needed a committee.

A Word of Hope

The verse that steadied a fearful pastor still stands: *I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day* (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul wrote that in chains, certain of execution — and still called nothing lost. What you have committed to Jesus — your call, your family, your church, your unseen years — is in the safest custody in existence. Fear says everything is at risk. The gospel says everything is *kept*.

Chapter Ten — Faithful Men (2 Timothy 2)

Now the dying father talks succession — and hands Timothy the four-generation secret that built the church you pastor today.

The Letter

“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.”

— 2 Timothy 2:2 (KJV)

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

— 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use.”

— 2 Timothy 2:21 (KJV)

In plain language: What I gave you, give to faithful men who can give it to others — four generations in one verse. Study until God approves your workmanship. And keep the vessel clean; the Master only pours from clean vessels.

What Paul Was Saying

Count the generations in verse 2: Paul to Timothy, Timothy to faithful men, faithful men to others also. Paul, hours from the sword, was not thinking about his legacy — he was thinking about *transmission*. And mark his selection criterion, because it collides with ours: *faithful* men. Not gifted men. Not connected men. Not men with crowds. Faithful — the quality that only time can verify and no audition can fake.

Then three portraits of the ministry, each killing a modern fantasy: the *soldier*, who does not entangle himself with civilian affairs, because his commanding officer's pleasure outranks his comfort (2:3–4); the *athlete*, who is not crowned unless he competes *lawfully* — no shortcuts, no doping the anointing (2:5); the *farmer*, who labours *first* and partakes after (2:6). Soldier, athlete, farmer. Discipline, integrity, patience. Notice what is missing from all three pictures: celebrity.

And verse 15 — the verse every Sunday school child memorised and every pastor must re-learn: *study*. The word means *be diligent, give maximum effort*. The approval Paul names is *unto God* — an audience of One — and the skill named is *rightly dividing* the word, cutting it straight, the way a mason cuts a stone to fit. Crooked cutting is how false teachers enter: Hymenaeus and Philetus, who *concerning the truth have erred* and overthrew the faith of some (2:17–18). Careless handling of Scripture is not a small sin. It has casualties.

The Mirror

Come home. Succession is the conversation African ministry avoids until the burial — and then fights over in court. Some of us have built ministries that cannot survive our absence, and privately we are proud of that, because indispensability feels like significance. Paul calls it failure. **A ministry that dies with its founder was a platform, not a deposit.** The Ephesian church outlived Paul, outlived Timothy, outlived the generation — because the deposit kept moving through faithful hands. What is your verse-2 plan? Name the faithful men — not the loyal praise-singers, the *faithful* — into whom you are deliberately pouring what cost you decades. If no names come, the mirror has spoken.

And the entangled soldier — my brother, my sister, this one is delicate, so hear it in love. Business is not sin; Paul made tents. But there is a difference between a tentmaking pastor and an entangled one, and the difference is *which one is the interruption*. When the

ministry has become the thing you fit in around the contracts, the politics, the deals — when the civilian affairs now command and the Commander now waits — the soldier has changed armies without changing uniforms. Distraction came dressed as ministry in Part One; in this chapter, it comes dressed as *hustle*.

As for verse 15 — the recycling pastor meets his remedy here. The workman is approved for his workmanship, not his followership. Study is still the price. There is no anointing that substitutes for preparation; there is only anointing that *rewards* it.

The Distraction Check

1. Write the actual names of your “faithful men.” How many are being trained to carry the deposit, and how many are only being used to carry the equipment?
2. The soldier test: this past month, did civilian affairs interrupt the ministry, or did ministry interrupt the affairs? Which one apologised to the other?
3. When you last handled a difficult text, did you cut it straight or bend it toward the offering?

Back Online

Start the verse-2 pipeline formally this month: choose two or three *faithful* — tested, not just talented — and open a deliberate transmission table with them. Not delegation of tasks; transmission of deposit. Teach them what nobody taught you and what cost you the most to learn. The church you will not live to see is sitting at that table.

A Word of Hope

Buried in this chapter is one of the most merciful sentences in all Scripture: *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself* (2 Timothy 2:13). Your faithfulness matters — this whole chapter demands it — but the covenant was never resting on yours

alone. On the days your faith limps, His does not. Build the pipeline, cut the word straight, keep the vessel clean — and rest, because the foundation of God standeth sure, *having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are his* (2:19). He knows you. That seal does not wash off.

Chapter Eleven — Perilous Times, Permanent Word (2 Timothy 3)

The dying father now lifts his eyes from Timothy to the horizon — and describes our generation with a precision that should frighten us into focus.

The Letter

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”

— 2 Timothy 3:1–2, 4–5 (KJV)

“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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

— 2 Timothy 3:16–17 (KJV)

In plain language: *Hard times are coming, and their engine will be disordered love — self loved, money loved, pleasure loved, God demoted. Religion will keep its form and lose its power. Your anchor in all of it is the God-breathed Scripture, which equips the man of God completely.*

What Paul Was Saying

Read the vice list in verses 2–5 slowly and notice its skeleton: it opens with *lovers of their own selves*, passes through *covetous* (lovers of money), and closes with *lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*. The perilous times are not primarily about persecution — they are about *misdirected love*. Paul diagnosed the last days as a love crisis. And the most chilling line is not in the vice list; it is verse 5: *having a form of godliness, but denying the power*

thereof. The peril is not that religion disappears. It is that religion *continues* — services held, songs sung, titles conferred — with the power quietly unplugged. This is Ephesus’s “left thy first love” scaled up to a civilisation.

Against that horizon Paul plants two anchors. First, a witnessed life: *thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions* (3:10–11) — Timothy did not just hear Paul preach; he watched Paul *live*, and watched him suffer, and watched God deliver. Second, the Scriptures: *from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures* (3:15) — Lois and Eunice’s home Bible school, now revealed as national defence. And then the thunder of verse 16: *all scripture is given by inspiration of God* — literally God-breathed — profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction. Everything a man of God needs to be *thoroughly furnished* is already in the Book.

The Mirror

Come home, and let the mirror be honest even when it is unflattering: verses 2 to 5 are not only a description of the world outside the church. Some of it has membership inside. *Lovers of their own selves* — is that not the ministry that exists to enlarge one man’s name? *Covetous* — did we not sit with this in the money chapter? *Boasters, proud* — check our platform introductions, the titles stacked upon titles. *Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God* — and the form of godliness with the power denied: full programmes, empty altars; excellent production, absent presence.

The greatest peril of the perilous times is not the sinners outside the church. It is the form inside it. Because form is the perfect hiding place — nobody investigates a service that starts on time.

Yet Paul did not tell Timothy to panic, to trend-watch, or to rebrand for the times. He told him: *continue thou in the things which thou hast learned* (3:14). In perilous times the pastor’s assignment does not become innovation. It becomes *continuation* — holding the God-breathed word when everything else has a form and a filter.

And your people are watching your life the way Timothy watched Paul's. In an age of forms, a pastor whose private life carries the power is the loudest sermon left.

The Distraction Check

1. Run verses 2–5 as a private checklist over your own ministry — not your members'. Which item made you pause?
2. Form-versus-power audit: if the Holy Spirit withdrew from your church for a month, honestly — how much of the programme would continue unaffected?
3. Who is watching your *manner of life* the way Timothy watched Paul's — and would what they see furnish them or disillusion them?

Back Online

Reinstate the Scriptures to their throne in your preparation: for the next month, build every message from the text *outward* — text first, then illustration, then application — never from the trending topic backward to a proof text. And rebuild the Lois-and-Eunice altar in your own home: your children's knowledge of the holy Scriptures is a ministry no pulpit can replace, and Timothy is the eternal evidence of what it produces.

A Word of Hope

Paul told Timothy plainly that *all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (3:12) — and in the same breath testified: *but out of them all the Lord delivered me* (3:11). Perilous times are certain; so is the Deliverer. And the Book in your hands has already outlived every empire that banned it, every philosophy that buried it, and every generation that declared it expired. Heaven and earth shall pass away — His words will not (Matthew 24:35). Continue, pastor. You are anchored to the only thing in this age that cannot sink.

Chapter Twelve — I Have Fought a Good Fight (2 Timothy 4)

Now the handwriting shakes. This is the last chapter of the last letter of the greatest apostle — and he spends it giving one final charge, naming one final wound, and singing one final song.

The Letter

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ... Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. 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.”

— 2 Timothy 4:1–3 (KJV)

“For 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.”

— 2 Timothy 4:6–8 (KJV)

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world... Only Luke is with me.”

— 2 Timothy 4:10–11 (KJV)

In plain language: *Before God Himself I charge you: preach the word — when it is convenient and when it is not — because a time is coming when people will hire teachers to scratch their itching ears. As for me, I am already being poured out. I fought well. I finished. I kept the faith. The crown is waiting. And Demas... Demas left me. He loved this present world.*

What Paul Was Saying

Feel the weight of the courtroom language: *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead*. Paul summoned heaven as witness for his last instruction, and the instruction was two words: **preach the word**. Not preach your brand. Not preach the trend. The word — *in season, out of season* — when it is applauded and when it costs you members. Because Paul saw our era coming with terrible clarity: congregations with *itching ears*, assembling teachers the way a man assembles a playlist — heaped up, chosen by lust, judged by how good the scratch feels (4:3–4). In that market, the pastor who preaches the word will sometimes preach out of season. Do it anyway. That is the charge, witnessed in heaven’s court.

Then the testimony — three perfect tenses from a death cell: *I have fought... I have finished... I have kept*. Notice what Paul did not say. Not “I have built the biggest,” not “I have gathered the most,” not “I have trended.” Fought, finished, kept. The metrics of heaven are endurance metrics. And the crown he awaits is not for apostles only — read the end of verse 8 and take your name there: *and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*.

And then, because private mail hides nothing, the wound: *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*. Demas was no stranger — he appears in Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, a co-labourer, ministry inner circle. He did not deny Christ in a courtroom. He just... loved something else more, and left when association with Paul stopped paying. One misdirected love — the exact disease of the last chapter — took out a veteran. *Only Luke is with me*. Four words that every aged pastor who has watched his Sundays thin out understands without commentary.

Yet read the cell’s last requests and smile: *bring the cloke... and the books, but especially the parchments* (4:13). A coat and books. The man is days from the sword and he is still cold, still reading, still studying. The workman of 2 Timothy 2:15 studied to the very end. And when every man deserted him at his first defence —

notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me (4:16–17). The courtroom emptied of men and filled with God.

The Mirror

Come home one final time. The itching-ears economy Paul predicted is now our marketplace — and be honest enough to see both sides of the counter. Yes, congregations shop for scratchers. But ears cannot itch alone; **somebody must agree to be the fingernail**. Every time we soften the whole counsel of God because the full dose might reduce attendance, we take employment in the economy Paul warned about. The word *reprove*, *rebuke*, *exhort* is one charge, not a menu — and note the seasoning Paul attached: *with all longsuffering*. Truth without patience is cruelty; patience without truth is Demas in slow motion.

And Demas — let Demas be the last mirror of this book, because he is its whole thesis in one man. He did not fall into scandal. There is no recorded sin. He simply loved this present world, and love pulled him where love always pulls: toward its object. Distraction came dressed as ministry in Ephesus; it left dressed as Demas in Rome. The question this entire secret letter has been asking you from chapter one is Demas’s question in reverse: *what do you love?* Because you will inevitably follow it — through the fight, to the finish... or out the door marked “this present world.”

Pastor — senior with decades behind you, or young with your legs still shaking — one day your ministry will write its own verse 7. The tenses will be perfect and past. The only question still open today is what that verse will say. It is being drafted now, in this season, in the choices this book has been putting its finger on.

The Distraction Check

1. Which message did you last withhold or dilute because it was “out of season”? Heaven’s court has the transcript.

2. The Demas audit — complete it privately: “The thing in this present world most capable of pulling me off course is _____. ” Naming it is half the war.
3. Write your own verse 7 as it would honestly read if the departure were this year. Can you live with the draft?

Back Online

Preach one “out of season” message within the next month — the one the Spirit has been assigning and the calendar has been avoiding — and deliver it with all longsuffering, in love, without anger. Then do Paul’s cell habit: get the books out. Whatever your parchments are — the Scriptures you have not studied deeply in years — reopen them. Men who study in death cells have no successors among men who coast in comfortable offices.

A Word of Hope

The last recorded scene of Paul’s ministry is not the sword. It is this: *the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known* (4:17). Deserted by men, attended by God — and still preaching, in the courtroom, to the end. That same Lord has already promised you the same posture: *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee* (Hebrews 13:5). Churches may thin. Associates may Demas. Seasons may turn hostile. He stands. And for you also there is laid up a crown — not for the biggest, the loudest or the most followed, but for all them that love His appearing. Love His appearing, pastor. It is the one love no distraction can survive.

Chapter Thirteen — The Handover (Closing the Secret Letter)

Paul died. Scripture does not record the moment — tradition holds he was beheaded outside Rome under Nero — but 2 Timothy 4:6 records the certainty: he knew he was being poured out, and he was ready.

And here is the ending our conferences never preach: heaven did not send a replacement apostle to Ephesus. Heaven had already sent the letter — and the letter is still in circulation, which is why it is now in your hands. The mail Paul addressed to one young pastor has been forwarded across twenty centuries, and today the name on the envelope is yours. Every charge in it — guard the message, pray first of all, qualify by character, guard yourself first, treat the church as family, keep money a servant, stir up the gift, raise faithful men, continue in the word, preach in and out of season — the whole deposit is now in your custody — whatever title your tradition has placed on your shoulders — for your generation, until you write your own verse 7 and hand it on.

So close this book the way Timothy folded the original: alone, before God, with the door shut. Remember. Repent. Do the first works. Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine. And receive over your own head, one last time, the prayer that opened Part One and now seals Part Two — prayed first over the pastors of Ephesus, prayed today over you:

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

— Acts 20:32 (KJV)

Fight the good fight. Finish the course. Keep the faith.

The crown is not a metaphor.

— *End of Part Two: The Farewell* —

A Word from the Author

Thank you for reading over Timothy's shoulder with me. If this letter stirred anything in you — a return, a repentance, a rekindled fire — I would be honoured to hear from you, pastor to pastor.

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Jesus is the standard.