



## PART 4

# EPILOGUE

## Chapter Twelve

# THE MEASURE OF A LEADER'S SUCCESS

Paul's first long imprisonment and trial before Nero apparently ended in the apostle's release sometime before **AD 64**, because he wrote the epistles of [1 Timothy](#) and [Titus](#) as a free man ([1 Timothy 3:14–15](#); [1 Timothy 4:13](#); [Titus 3:12](#)).

**1 Timothy 3:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup>“I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long;  
<sup>15</sup>but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.”

**1 Timothy 4:13 (NASB)**

<sup>13</sup>“Until I come, give attention to the *public reading of Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.”

**Titus 3:12 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup>“When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, make every effort to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.”

But that liberty was short-lived. **In July of the year 64, seven of Rome's fourteen districts burned.** When the original fire was nearly extinguished, another fire, fanned by fierce winds, broke out in another district. Rumors circulated that Nero himself had ordered the burning of the city in order to make room for some ambitious building projects, including a golden palace for himself.

Trying desperately to deflect suspicion, Nero blamed Christians for starting the fires. That began the first of several major, aggressive campaigns by the Roman government to destroy the church. Christians in Rome were rounded up and executed in unspeakably cruel ways. Some were sewn into animal skins and ripped to death by dogs. Others were impaled on stakes, covered with pitch, and burned as human torches to light Nero's garden parties. Many were beheaded, fed to lions, or otherwise disposed of at Nero's command in equally ruthless ways.



During that persecution, Paul was again taken prisoner by the Roman authorities, brought to Rome, subjected to persecution and torment ([2 Timothy 4:17](#)), and finally executed as a traitor because of his relentless devotion to the lordship of Christ.

**2 Timothy 4:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup>“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.”

Throughout his first imprisonment at Rome, Paul had been kept under house arrest ([Acts 28:16, 30](#)).

**Acts 28:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>“When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.”

**Acts 28:30 (NASB)**

<sup>30</sup>“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him.”

He was allowed freedom to preach and teach those who visited him ([v. 23](#)).

**Acts 28:23 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup>“When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.”

He was under the constant guard of a Roman soldier but was treated with respect. The influence of his ministry had therefore reached right into the household of Caesar ([Philippians 4:22](#)).

**Philippians 4:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup>“All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.”

Paul's second imprisonment, however, was markedly different. He was virtually cut off from all outside contact and kept chained in a dungeon ([2 Timothy 1:16](#)).

**2 Timothy 1:16 (NASB)**

<sup>16</sup>“The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains.”

He was probably held underground in the Mamertine Prison, adjacent to the Roman forum, in a small, dark, bare stone dungeon whose only entrance was a hole in the ceiling scarcely large enough for one person to pass through. The dungeon itself is not large; about half the size of a small one-car garage. Yet it was sometimes used to hold as many as forty prisoners. The discomfort, the dark, the stench, and the misery were almost unbearable.

That dungeon still exists, and I have been in it. The stifling, claustrophobic confines of that dark hole are eerie and depressing even today. It was there (or in a dungeon just like it) that Paul spent the final days of his life.

There is no reliable record of Paul's execution, but he obviously knew the end of his life was imminent when he wrote his second epistle to Timothy. Evidently he had already been tried, convicted, and condemned for preaching Christ, and perhaps the day of his execution was already scheduled. He wrote to Timothy, **"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come"** ([2 Timothy 4:6 NASB](#)).

Naturally, there are notes of profound sadness in Paul's final epistle. But its dominant theme is triumph, not defeat. Paul wrote that last letter to Timothy to encourage the young pastor to be bold and courageous and to continue following the example he had learned from his apostolic mentor. Far from writing a concession of failure, Paul sounds a clarion note of victory:

[2 Timothy 4:7-8 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup>**"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;**

<sup>8</sup>**in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."**

Facing his own imminent martyrdom, Paul had no fear, no despondency, and no desire to stay in this world. He longed to be with Christ and eagerly anticipated the reward He would receive in the next world. Therefore, as he reviewed the course of his life, he expressed no regret, no sense of unfulfillment, and no feeling of incompleteness. There was not the smallest duty left undone. He had finished the work the Lord gave him to do, just as in [Acts 20:24](#) he had hoped and prayed he would do: **"so that I may finish my race with joy."**

[Acts 20:24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup>**"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."**

Paul measured his own success as a leader, as an apostle, and as a Christian by a single criterion: He had **"kept the faith"**—meaning both that he had remained faithful to Christ and that he had kept the message of Christ's gospel intact, just as he had received it. He had proclaimed the Word of God faithfully and fearlessly. And now he was passing the baton to Timothy and to others, who would be **"able to teach others also"** ([2 Timothy 2:2](#)).

[2 Timothy 2:2 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup>**"The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."**

Therefore, Paul faced his own death with a triumphant spirit and with a deep sense of joy. He had seen the grace of God accomplish all that God designed in him and through him, and now he was ready to meet Christ face-to-face.

In the closing section of [2 Timothy](#), as Paul finished the last chapter of his final epistle—as he wrote what would literally stand as the concluding paragraph of his life—what filled the heart and mind of this great leader were the people he ministered to and worked alongside. He spoke of several individuals who had been part of his life.

## CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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### Lecture # 74



They were the most visible and immediate legacy of his leadership. Although he was left virtually friendless in prison, although he had been forsaken at his defense before a Roman tribunal, he was clearly *not* alone in life.

In fact, the true character of Paul's leadership is seen in this brief list of people he had poured his life into. They personified the team he built, the treachery he endured, the trials he suffered, and the triumph he ultimately obtained. This catalog of individuals is therefore instructive in assessing why Paul's leadership was not a failure. This is why his influence continues to be an example to millions of Christians even today.