

## Stay with the Word!

2 Timothy 4:1-8 (NLT)

I solemnly urge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who will someday judge the living and the dead when he comes to set up his Kingdom: 2 Preach the word of God. Be prepared, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching.

3 For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will reject the truth and chase after myths.

5 But you should keep a clear mind in every situation. Don't be afraid of suffering for the Lord. Work at telling others the Good News, and fully carry out the ministry God has given you.

6 As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. 8 And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing.

Verse 3 (KJV)

“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...”

### Six Last-Day Characteristics

1. They will not endure sound doctrine (2Tim. 4:3).
2. They will increase in lusts and sin (2Tim. 4:3).
3. They will add one teacher to another, or wander about from church to church to find those who will not insist on their getting rid of sins and sinful pleasures (2Tim. 4:3).
4. They will have itching ears, desire speakers who will tickle their ears and excuse their passions in the name of religion.
5. They will turn away their ears from truth which strips them of sin and demands their wholehearted consecration to Christ (2Tim. 4:4).
6. They will turn to fables and false religions that pamper the flesh and condone sin.

2 Timothy 3:10-17 (NLT)

But you, Timothy, certainly know what I teach, and how I live, and what my purpose in life is. You know my faith, my patience, my love, and my endurance. 11 You know how much persecution and suffering I have endured. You know all about how I was persecuted in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra—but the Lord rescued me from all of it. 12 Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil people and impostors will flourish. They will deceive others and will themselves be deceived.

14 But you must remain faithful to the things you have been taught. You know they are true, for you know you can trust those who taught you. 15 You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true

and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.

#### Psalms 138:1-4 (KJV)

I will praise thee with my whole heart:  
before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.  
2 I will worship toward thy holy temple,  
and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth:  
for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.  
3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me,  
and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.  
4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD,  
when they hear the words of thy mouth.

#### James 3:13-18 (NLT)

If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying. 15 For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. 18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.

#### Jeremiah 23 (NLT)

"What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for," says the LORD.  
2 Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: "Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. 3 But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. 4 Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the LORD, have spoken!  
5 "For the time is coming," says the LORD,  
"when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line.  
He will be a King who rules with wisdom.  
He will do what is just and right throughout the land.  
6 And this will be his name:  
'The LORD Is Our Righteousness.'  
In that day Judah will be saved,

and Israel will live in safety.

7 “In that day,” says the LORD, “when people are taking an oath, they will no longer say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who rescued the people of Israel from the land of Egypt.’ 8 Instead, they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people of Israel back to their own land from the land of the north and from all the countries to which he had exiled them.’ Then they will live in their own land.”

Judgment on False Prophets

9 My heart is broken because of the false prophets,  
and my bones tremble.

I stagger like a drunkard,  
like someone overcome by wine,  
because of the holy words  
the LORD has spoken against them.

10 For the land is full of adultery,  
and it lies under a curse.

The land itself is in mourning—  
its wilderness pastures are dried up.

For they all do evil  
and abuse what power they have.

11 “Even the priests and prophets  
are ungodly, wicked men.

I have seen their despicable acts  
right here in my own Temple,”  
says the LORD.

12 “Therefore, the paths they take  
will become slippery.

They will be chased through the dark,  
and there they will fall.

For I will bring disaster upon them  
at the time fixed for their punishment.

I, the LORD, have spoken!

13 “I saw that the prophets of Samaria were terribly evil,  
for they prophesied in the name of Baal  
and led my people of Israel into sin.

14 But now I see that the prophets of Jerusalem are even worse!  
They commit adultery and love dishonesty.

They encourage those who are doing evil  
so that no one turns away from their sins.

These prophets are as wicked  
as the people of Sodom and Gomorrah once were.”

15 Therefore, this is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says concerning the prophets:

“I will feed them with bitterness  
and give them poison to drink.

For it is because of Jerusalem’s prophets

that wickedness has filled this land.”

16 This is what the LORD of Heaven’s Armies says to his people:

“Do not listen to these prophets when they prophesy to you,  
filling you with futile hopes.

They are making up everything they say.

They do not speak for the LORD!

17 They keep saying to those who despise my word,

‘Don’t worry! The LORD says you will have peace!’

And to those who stubbornly follow their own desires,  
they say, ‘No harm will come your way!’

18 “Have any of these prophets been in the LORD’s presence  
to hear what he is really saying?

Has even one of them cared enough to listen?

19 Look! The LORD’s anger bursts out like a storm,  
a whirlwind that swirls down on the heads of the wicked.

20 The anger of the LORD will not diminish  
until it has finished all he has planned.

In the days to come

you will understand all this very clearly.

21 “I have not sent these prophets,  
yet they run around claiming to speak for me.

I have given them no message,  
yet they go on prophesying.

22 If they had stood before me and listened to me,  
they would have spoken my words,

and they would have turned my people  
from their evil ways and deeds.

23 Am I a God who is only close at hand?” says the LORD.

“No, I am far away at the same time.

24 Can anyone hide from me in a secret place?

Am I not everywhere in all the heavens and earth?”  
says the LORD.

25 “I have heard these prophets say, ‘Listen to the dream I had from God last night.’ And then  
they proceed to tell lies in my name. 26 How long will this go on? If they are prophets, they are

prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say. 27 By telling these false dreams, they are  
trying to get my people to forget me, just as their ancestors did by worshiping the idols of Baal.

28 “Let these false prophets tell their dreams,  
but let my true messengers faithfully proclaim my every word.

There is a difference between straw and grain!

29 Does not my word burn like fire?”

says the LORD.

“Is it not like a mighty hammer

that smashes a rock to pieces?

30 “Therefore,” says the LORD, “I am against these prophets who steal messages from each other and claim they are from me. 31 I am against these smooth-tongued prophets who say, ‘This prophecy is from the LORD!’ 32 I am against these false prophets. Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people. I, the LORD, have spoken!

#### False Prophecies and False Prophets

33 “Suppose one of the people or one of the prophets or priests asks you, ‘What prophecy has the LORD burdened you with now?’ You must reply, ‘You are the burden! The LORD says he will abandon you!’

34 “If any prophet, priest, or anyone else says, ‘I have a prophecy from the LORD,’ I will punish that person along with his entire family. 35 You should keep asking each other, ‘What is the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What is the LORD saying?’ 36 But stop using this phrase, ‘prophecy from the LORD.’ For people are using it to give authority to their own ideas, turning upside down the words of our God, the living God, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

37 “This is what you should say to the prophets: ‘What is the LORD’s answer?’ or ‘What is the LORD saying?’ 38 But suppose they respond, ‘This is a prophecy from the LORD!’ Then you should say, ‘This is what the LORD says: Because you have used this phrase, “prophecy from the LORD,” even though I warned you not to use it, 39 I will forget you completely. I will expel you from my presence, along with this city that I gave to you and your ancestors. 40 And I will make you an object of ridicule, and your name will be infamous throughout the ages.’”

#### Daniel 5 (NLT)

Many years later King Belshazzar gave a great feast for 1,000 of his nobles, and he drank wine with them. 2 While Belshazzar was drinking the wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver cups that his predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar, had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. He wanted to drink from them with his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. 3 So they brought these gold cups taken from the Temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 While they drank from them they praised their idols made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5 Suddenly, they saw the fingers of a human hand writing on the plaster wall of the king’s palace, near the lampstand. The king himself saw the hand as it wrote, 6 and his face turned pale with fright. His knees knocked together in fear and his legs gave way beneath him.

7 The king shouted for the enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers to be brought before him. He said to these wise men of Babylon, “Whoever can read this writing and tell me what it means will be dressed in purple robes of royal honor and will have a gold chain placed around his neck. He will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom!”

8 But when all the king’s wise men had come in, none of them could read the writing or tell him what it meant. 9 So the king grew even more alarmed, and his face turned pale. His nobles, too, were shaken.

10 But when the queen mother heard what was happening, she hurried to the banquet hall. She said to Belshazzar, “Long live the king! Don’t be so pale and frightened. 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king—your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all the

magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon. 12 This man Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

#### Daniel Explains the Writing

13 So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king asked him, “Are you Daniel, one of the exiles brought from Judah by my predecessor, King Nebuchadnezzar? 14 I have heard that you have the spirit of the gods within you and that you are filled with insight, understanding, and wisdom. 15 My wise men and enchanters have tried to read the words on the wall and tell me their meaning, but they cannot do it. 16 I am told that you can give interpretations and solve difficult problems. If you can read these words and tell me their meaning, you will be clothed in purple robes of royal honor, and you will have a gold chain placed around your neck. You will become the third highest ruler in the kingdom.”

17 Daniel answered the king, “Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means. 18 Your Majesty, the Most High God gave sovereignty, majesty, glory, and honor to your predecessor, Nebuchadnezzar. 19 He made him so great that people of all races and nations and languages trembled before him in fear. He killed those he wanted to kill and spared those he wanted to spare. He honored those he wanted to honor and disgraced those he wanted to disgrace. 20 But when his heart and mind were puffed up with arrogance, he was brought down from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was driven from human society. He was given the mind of a wild animal, and he lived among the wild donkeys. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he learned that the Most High God rules over the kingdoms of the world and appoints anyone he desires to rule over them.

22 “You are his successor, O Belshazzar, and you knew all this, yet you have not humbled yourself. 23 For you have proudly defied the Lord of heaven and have had these cups from his Temple brought before you. You and your nobles and your wives and concubines have been drinking wine from them while praising gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone—gods that neither see nor hear nor know anything at all. But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny! 24 So God has sent this hand to write this message.

25 “This is the message that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is what these words mean:

Mene means ‘numbered’—God has numbered the days of your reign and has brought it to an end.

27 Tekel means ‘weighed’—you have been weighed on the balances and have not measured up.

28 Parsin means ‘divided’—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then at Belshazzar’s command, Daniel was dressed in purple robes, a gold chain was hung around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, was killed.

31 And Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.