

“The Prophecies Which Led The Way”

“This charge I commit unto thee, my child Timothy, according to the prophecies which led the way to thee, that by them thou mayest war the good warfare; holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith ...” (1 Tim. 1:18f). The New King James Version reads, *“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may war the good warfare ...”*

Sometimes, in the days when the Holy Spirit inspired men to speak and write, prophecies were made not only regarding cities and nations, but certain historical characters, as well. Abraham was promised Sarah would bear a son, a reference to their son Isaac (Gen. 18:10). Isaiah prophesied of a Persian king who would be named “Cyrus,” who release Judah from Babylonian captivity (Isa. 44, 45). An old prophet in the temple said of Jesus, *“This child is set for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against ...”* (Lk. 3:34). Of John the Baptist it was spoken, *“... and thou child, shall be called the prophet of the most High: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways”* (Lk. 2:76). So, prophecies had been uttered that regarded Timothy. Just what those specific utterances were, we are not told. That it related to his life in serving Christ, there can be little doubt. When Paul met Timothy again on his second journey, Luke recorded that Timothy was *“well reported of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium”* (Acts 16:2). Paul took him with him (having circumcised him because, while his mother was Jewish, his father was Greek) and thus began a long, close relationship between these two men of God.

Apparently when Paul took Timothy to work with him, elders in Lystra laid hands on him to set him apart for such a work (much like brethren in Antioch had “laid hands” on Paul and Barnabas when the Holy Spirit had so instructed, years before when they embarked on their first journey in Acts 13). At the same time that elders laid hands on Timothy, Paul did also to impart to him some spiritual gift (1 Tim. 4:4; 2 Tim. 1:6). Timothy was a “child of destiny” as some might be wont to say. In light of the prophecies which related to him, he was to, by them, war the good warfare. He had a bright future -- he was not to blemish it by falling short of the things which were prophesied of him that he would do. Again Paul appeals that Timothy should hold *“faith and a good conscience”* reminding Timothy that because some did not hold these two things, but rather *“thrust them from them,”* they had made shipwreck concerning the faith (1 Tim. 1:19).

When one makes shipwreck the faith, he does so to his own destruction. When one casts off a good conscience, he invites disaster. Two such individuals who had done that very thing is cited by Paul when he mentions having delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander unto Satan "*that they might be taught not to blaspheme*" (1 Tim. 1:20). Later he wrote "*... their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some*" (2 Tim. 2:18). If the Hymenaeus of 1 Timothy is the same one as 2 Timothy, the blasphemy of Hymenaeus was that "*the resurrection was past already.*"

It is bad enough that one should make shipwreck of his own faith and life, but teachers who do that seldom confine their error to themselves. In the case of most, the fall of one brings about the fall of others. This was true in the case of Hymenaeus. By his error, he caused the faith of others also to be overthrown. Timothy, by not swerving from the path he had embarked upon, was a good example and encouragement to others to remain stable and steadfast. So should we also be.

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