

# **LET THE BIBLE SPEAK SERIES**

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## **Getting Ready For Winter**

Good morning and welcome to Let The Bible Speak. It is certainly good to have you with us today. I want to talk to you this morning about getting ready for winter. That may sound like a strange theme for a bible broadcast, yet in Second Timothy 4:21 we read "Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren. This terse plea came from Paul, the apostle. It was probably the last thing he ever wrote. It closed his parchment to Timothy, whom he longed to see before his death. Earlier he had requested his coat, the one left at Troas. He also wanted his books, but most of all he wanted to hear the voice of his beloved Timothy, his young son in the faith. Paul's writing board was a stone bench at the base of the Mamertine dungeon in Rome. It was in this hole that Rome threw its victims before crushing their lives from their bodies. Paul awaited execution by way of beheading, a rather painless way to die, since he was a Roman citizen. Other prisoners, not citizens, were burned alive, fed to the lions, or used as targets for the gladiators. Paul knew that before long, guards would come for him and lift him from the pit, taking him to the north of Rome along the Ostian Road. There, near a place called the Tres Fontain, Paul would lay his head on a block of wood. A sword would flash in the sun, and the great apostle would step into the glory-world he knew that awaited him. The conditions of Paul's imprisonment during the time he wrote this letter were vastly different from those of his previous incarceration. He no longer lived his own hired house. It was dangerous to even visit him during this time. Winter was coming, and in this land of Caesar the chill would be replaced by bitter, numbing cold. During those nights, prisoners would die in this horrible place. Guards would find their frozen bodies at dawn and toss them on refuse piles as just so much garbage. This was, no doubt the reason he wanted his coat. You can feel the urgency in his words. "Timothy, whatever you do, do it quickly. Don't wait until it is too late. Come before winter." Paul knew that with the coming winter, the navigation routes of the Mediterranean would be dangerous, if not impassable.

These words are lifted from the pages of Paul's sacred will, yet they are as current as tomorrow's headlines, and as meaningful as any message the apostle ever wrote. Some of you know that there is something you should be doing, but you put it off, hoping for another day...another time. When and if you ever attend to the matter, it may well be too late. Winter's winds may have already blown, the river turned to ice, the thoroughfare blocked by drifts too high to negotiate. Today I want to talk with you about how to get ready for winter. I would like to begin today by pointing out that **THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT NEED TO BE DONE IN GETTING READY FOR WINTER.**

### **I. We Need To Put First Things First.**

It's time to prioritize. Get things in proper order according to their importance.

(In Missouri where I live winter demands that we get ready for the cold dreary days ahead by checking the fuel supply, farmers get stock ready, have house in order, snow tires etc.)

In serving Christ, there are some things that should command our attention:

1. Seeking first the kingdom---Mt. 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. The kingdom should be first in our lives. That means before everything else.
2. First casting out the beam out of our own eye---Mt. 7:5 "Judge not that ye be not..."
3. Giving ourselves first to the Lord like the Macedonians 2Cor.8:5

## II. Settle That Dispute In Your Family, Before Winter.

Words have been spoken, that as water spilled on the ground, cannot be brought back. Wounds remain open and festered. Silence prevails where once laughter and love were evident. You haven't seen someone in years. You haven't even talked to them.

It may be your Mother who brought you into this world Or your Father who provided and cared for you. Perhaps your children that you brought into this world, but you have allowed them to slip away. Winter is coming. Look at the signs all around you: the changing colors, the grey skies, the preparation of others. As surely as the sunset you will one day stand before an open casket. You will look upon the one so long estranged. Hot tears will scald your cheeks, you will reach out too late to take the folded hand. In desperation you will ask for forgiveness, but the ears can no longer hear. Winter has already come. Story of Joseph--sold by brothers into Egypt. While there a mighty famine took place and his brothers were forced to come to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph recognizes them but does not reveal himself--but claims they are spies They in fear tell him that they are 12 brothers, one is no longer and the youngest is with their aged father. He could have washed his hands of them as they had of him. But he did not. He casts them into prison, but finally agrees to let them go, if they will leave one and return with their younger brother. "Then they said to one another, We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us." And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, Do not sin against the boy; and you would not listen? Therefore behold his blood is now required of us." Gen. 42:21-22

Maybe someone pleaded with you and you did not listen. They begged you not to go, but you were mad and left anyway. Maybe you were just stubborn. Whatever the reason, you need to fix it up, before winter. Later they return with Benjamin and are received by Joseph. After a series of events they are told that Benjamin cannot return home with them but must remain behind. Judah pleads in behalf of his younger brother and aged father. At that point Joseph could restrain himself no longer and made himself known to his brothers. "Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him." Gen.45:14-15. What a wonderful end to story that began in a tragic fashion.

### III. We Should Also Settle Disputes In The Family of God, Before Winter.

Too many churches are divided, and too many brethren are alienated. They don't speak, they don't work together, they don't pray together. Its time to bury the disputes and hard feelings of the past. Fences need to be mended. Harsh feelings forgotten. Ruined lives straightened out. Brethren souls are being lost in some places because we have allowed division and hard feelings to separate us from our brethren. Its time to get the family together. Winter is coming.

Love your brother-- 1Peter2:17 "Love the brotherhood.."

Forgive your brother-- Mt.18:35 "...forgive every brother his trespass"

Restore your brother--Gal. 6:1 "Brethren if any man be overtaken in a fault..."

Be reconciled to your brother-- Mt.5:23-24 "If thou therefore bring thy gift..."

Mt.18:15-17 "Moreover if your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault..."

### IV. Straighten Up The Past, Before Winter.

He was a great preacher, so goes the story. An outstanding evangelist. But he had a secret. Not earth shaking, but one that kept him awake many nights. Before, obeying the Lord, he had worked in a Mid-west factory. He was addicted to booze. One day needing some money to buy liquor, he stole a typewriter, pawned it and used the money to satisfy his habit. Shortly thereafter he was converted. He never repaid the money. Then he started studying with a desire to preach. And later began preaching. He still never made restitution. He became popular and successful as a preacher. "I can't go back and confess," he thought. His conscience still bothered him, until finally he decided he must go back. He went to the old factory. Everyone was glad to see him. Even his boss, he was received royally. Hard as it was he said to his boss "I've come here to make amends. Then he told the story of what he had done. I come to ask forgiveness and pay for the typewriter plus interest. As he spoke, his boss began to weep, and said "You know I never believed much in the Christ you preach, but if he would give you a heart like that, I would like to believe in Him also." This man made the tough journey---before winter. Today, if there is something in your life that you have not made right with God, now is the time. If you need to apologize to someone, for harsh, cutting, or unthoughtful words---why not now? If you need to repay a debt---start today---even though the creditor may have marked it off as a bad debt, the Lord has not. If you need to rectify a lie---do it. Straighten out your life, before winter. Mt.3:2 "...Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." v.8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. Acts 19:18-19 "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver."

### V. Obey The Gospel, Before Winter

The gospel calls you today---2Thess.2:14 "Whereunto he called you by our gospel..."

It is God's power to save---Rom.1:16

The call continues---Mt. 11:28

The call of the Gospel is an urgent one. Just like the one made by Paul to Timothy.

Note: Acts 2:38 The same day there "added unto them about 3000 souls"

Acts 8:37 Commanded the chariot to stand still---and he baptized him.

Acts 16:33 took "the same hour of the night" "immediately he and his house baptized"

Acts 22:16 "Why tarry?" Arise and be baptized.

Your life is like the seasons. You begin as a child...the spring of life...everything comes to life. Then the summer season. You are an adult. Marriage, family, vocation.

Then the fall, autumn. The hair begins to speck with white and the days grow shorter and faster. Then comes winter. Disease strikes the body, weakness, death.

Problem: NOT EVERYONE HAS FOUR SEASONS. Tragically, millions have said to themselves, "Just before I get to winter, I will make the change. I'll know when that time is." But winter comes early, unexpectedly. They wait too long. For you, winter has not yet come. There is still life in your body, strength in your limbs, light in your eyes. You know that things desperately need to be done, victories that can be won, Gordian knots to be untied. Come before winter. Come before the haze of Indian summer has faded from the fields. Come before the November wind strips the leaves from the trees and sends them whirling to the ground. Come before snow covers the countryside and the streams turn to ice. Come before the heart is cold and desire has failed. Come before life is over and you are called to meet God. Come today.