



Bible Study

2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1

Paul writes again to Timothy because he is concerned that Timothy should be encouraged and strengthened in the tasks that God wants him to do. The letter tackles the challenges of living in the last days, dealing with false teachers and those who can be destructive in the church, as well as those who can be relied upon to be supportive and loyal.

Opening Greetings

Paul emphasises that his ministry is a ministry of life. It is very important that our preaching, teaching and sharing of the word of God, results in vitality, growth and development. Sadly, some ministries can have the opposite effect. People can feel crushed, under pressure and with no hope. We thank God that was never true of Paul's ministry.

'My Dear Son'

The affection that Paul has for Timothy is clear, because Paul has such a close relationship with Timothy. He prays continually and regularly for Timothy. They were very close and when Paul left Timothy, we get the impression that many tears were shed. The bond that they had together was very strong. Paul recognises the grace of God in Timothy's family. His grandmother was obviously a godly woman, his mother was a godly woman and now Timothy is living a godly life, not because anything natural has been passed down to him but the prayers and faithful example of his family have brought him into his own relationship with God, which is now evident.

God's Call

Timothy was not only saved by the grace of God but it is evident that there was a call upon his life to serve God in Christian ministry. This call was to be expressed through working with the apostle, Paul. This was not simply Paul's idea but this was the voice of God, speaking to Timothy. One key moment in Timothy's life was the time when the elders gathered around Timothy with Paul to pray for him. This was a time when God spoke clearly about Timothy's gifts and that courage, power and the love of God would overcome Timothy's natural weaknesses and enable him to stand firm in the gospel. God's Holy Spirit was going to strengthen Timothy to be self-disciplined, bold about his faith and even to strengthen him to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

The Gospel which Paul and Timothy Preach

Jesus Christ has been revealed as our Saviour, He has destroyed death, he brings eternal life and he brings light in the darkness. This Gospel is so powerful that Paul and now Timothy, will proclaim it with courage to all who will hear it. Paul knows that the suffering he faces is

not because he has done anything wrong but, rather, his total commitment to the Christ he preaches, means that he suffers as Christ suffered. He is thoroughly confident that the Christ he lives for, will see him safely through to heaven itself. Paul urges Timothy to be one who proclaims Christ, never compromising, trusting in the work of the Holy Spirit and not in the flesh.

Examples of Disloyalty and Loyalty

Paul shares that many have deserted him and no longer walk with him. They have been disloyal, not appreciating the pressures that come to bear on true Gospel ministry. However, in contrast, Paul wants to highlight the household of Onesiphorus. His ministry refreshed Paul, he understood why Paul was handling adversity and he persevered in finding Paul, probably at the risk of his own life. Such friends are priceless!

Points to Consider:

1. Is our ministry producing life or death? How can we avoid unwittingly being destructive instead of constructive, about how we present Christ?
2. How do we maintain close and precious relationships but still be objective about God's call and work within those that we love?
3. Recall times when God has spoken through others, into your life and ministry. Do we regularly reflect upon words shared with us and always seek to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us now?
4. Do we always rigorously check the Gospel that we preach? Never be deflected from a message that is Christ-centred.
5. We will handle loyalty and disloyalty. How do we maintain godly appreciation of those who bless us, yet ensure that there is no bitterness towards those who reject us?

2 Timothy 2

In this chapter, Paul continues to encourage Timothy to be God's servant and to encourage the church to grow in truth. Paul uses the illustrations of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer to encourage good discipleship. Paul also emphasises the uniqueness of the person of Christ. He urges that false teaching be contended with and is aware of some in the church who have departed from the truth. He picks up the picture of a large house with a great deal of variety in it but all the parts have a purpose and he reminds Timothy that youthful flirtations need to be abandoned, in order to follow the path of righteousness. The pivotal verse in the chapter is verse 15, which I commend you to commit to memory.

Be Strong in the Grace of Christ and be Disciplined

Just as Paul has built good things into Timothy, so Timothy needs to build good things into the lives of others. A soldier is focused and committed to being ready for battle, an athlete is doing everything so that he can win the race and a farmer is working hard on the land to produce crops. We need to be like soldiers, like athletes, like farmers, in order to be good disciples and good disciple-makers.

Christ Raised from the Dead

Jesus Christ is God. He is Lord of lords and King of kings. He is attested to in the Old Testament and he is worth suffering for, even dying for. We are to fully identify with Christ. We identify with his death through baptism and we can identify with his future reign. We are grateful that he will never disown us or be unfaithful to us. God's people must keep clearly in their minds, who Jesus is. To honour and to love Jesus is our highest calling and we must not waste time with foolish arguments.

The Pivotal Verse (Verse 15)

We need to live our Christian lives and ministry with the consciousness that, one day, we will stand before God. On that day we desire His approval and His 'well done'. We do not want to be ashamed or embarrassed. We need to learn therefore, how to handle accurately and faithfully, the word of God. The Bible is a precious tool and how we share it, needs care. When we handle it with godly care, it will have a great impact on those who hear it.

The Ungodly and the Distracters

Unrighteousness is like an infectious disease. False teaching leads to weakness, even spiritual death. God will judge those who misuse His word. He knows who truly belongs to Him.

The Large House

The large house contains many different things. Some things are very precious and some things are very simple but everything in the house is there for a purpose. So it is with God's word. All Scripture is profitable and comes from the mouth of God. We must always handle Scripture with care, discerning the truth, whether it seems rich and obvious or in need of deeper spiritual insight and understanding.

Flee Youthful Desires and Temptations

God's servant must be humble and wise. We do not have to prove ourselves. There is no need for pride or an argumentative spirit. Let us win people by godly living and by sound teaching. By God's grace, this will overcome the devil's plans and bring people to a knowledge of the truth.

Points to Consider:

1. How do you draw strength from the grace of God in Christ?
2. In what ways do the pictures of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer help you in making disciples?
3. Discipline and focus are important. How accountable are you willing to be to others, so that your discipleship can be tested?
4. How much are you making sure that Christ is in the centre of your preaching?
5. How much does your lifestyle identify with the lifestyle of our Lord Jesus?
6. What checks can you make, to see that you are interpreting God's word accurately?
7. How vigilant are we to spot the enemy's work, so that we can keep on track with what God is calling us to do?

2 Timothy 3

Paul is continuing to encourage Timothy to be resolute about sharing the truth. He is conscious that the last days will be days of much deception and error and he knows that, when we live godly lives in Christ Jesus, we will suffer persecution. Verses 15-17 are outstanding comments on the significance and value of scripture.

The Last Days

Characteristics of the last days are selfishness, obsession with money, disregard of parents, no love, no forgiveness, a desire and longing for pleasure, rather than a love for God. The most telling comment in this section is when Paul says that people will have a form of godliness but deny its power. The outside may appear attractive but inside is death and corruption. How zealous we should be to avoid such a description of us!

The Gullible and the Vulnerable

Paul is aware that there are people who are particularly vulnerable and can be led in to all manner of sin. Those who lead them into that sin are as bad as those who fall into the sin. Some will do anything to create a following and to receive adulation. It is vital that the only thing that gives us a reputation, is our faithfulness to the word of God. Any trickery and deception will meet with strong judgement. We need to be people persuaded by the truth. We need to have tender hearts that are always willing to receive the truth and we need to pray that our ministry, even to the weak, gives everyone an opportunity to respond because of revelation, rather than pressure.

Paul's Commission to Timothy

Paul humbly illustrates what he has handled in his life, because he wants Timothy to recognise that he is seeking to set an example, rather than just issue commands. Paul has gone through the fire of trial because he has been so faithful to God's call upon his life. Timothy has had the advantage of knowing God's word from his youth. He needs to maintain his confidence in what he has known for many years. Sometimes, people who have grown up in a Christian home may be tempted to feel that their belief comes from their parents, rather than from God. That, of course, is a possibility but to be brought up in the ways of God and fed on the word of God is, in fact, a privilege for which we can be thankful!

Powerful Affirmation of Scripture

All Scripture, which for us is Genesis to Revelation, has been inspired by God Himself. It is literally God-breathed. He has used people to write scripture but it is His word, not theirs.

Scripture has the capacity to teach, to rebuke, to correct and to equip God's people for every good work of life in ministry.

Points to Consider:

1. How alert are we about the Last Days, which the Bible talks about?
2. Do we see clearly in our world, what we see in the opening verses of this chapter?
3. Are we aware of whether we are a lover of pleasure or a lover of God?
4. Do we heed the warning about having a god-like exterior but a godless interior?
5. How careful are we with the vulnerable? Do we endeavour to make sure that they are persuaded by God's word and not by us?
6. After, perhaps, many years of faith, do we still enjoy the simple truths of Scripture that we learnt in our early days?
7. Are we confident in our conviction that all of the Bible is inspired by God?
8. Are we willing to receive the rebukes of Scripture as well as its encouragements?

2 Timothy 4

This passage is particularly special to me because, in my teenage years, it appeared one morning in my regular quiet time and leapt out of the pages, calling me to full time Christian ministry! It was a long wait before the door fully opened but this was the beginning of what continues to be an exciting journey.

Preach the Word!

Paul has more advice for Timothy and clearly senses that his own race is coming to an end. He keeps expressing his confidence in God but is clearly disappointed at the behaviour of some towards him.

God's Call to Timothy

The background to the call

Paul expresses that his words come from a deep sense of God's presence. He is not being dramatic but he speaks of God, who is the judge. We obviously need to know God's love and mercy but He is a Holy God, who will hold all of us to be individually accountable for how we live and respond to Him. Christ will come again. He comes to judge and to see that we have been responsible and conscientious with the gifts that he has entrusted to us. Christ is king and the full manifestation of that kingdom is yet to be seen. Be ready!

The core of the call

Paul talks about giving Timothy a charge. This is a very serious challenge which Timothy needs to fulfil. Preach the word! Timothy's responsibility is to make God's word known. He is required to use God's word as a sharp, well-crafted tool. He is to share when it is convenient and when it is inconvenient. Whether he is well-received or facing opposition, he must still bring God's word. Whether it is expected of him or not expected of him, he must still, consistently bring God's word.

Careful instruction

Patient and accurate sharing of God's word will bring correction, keeping people on track with their walk with God and helping them to avoid going off-course. Where necessary, it will bring clear rebuke. Strong words, to warn us of the folly of departing from God's truth. It will always bring encouragement, because the heart of God is to bless us and all His words are for our benefit, however hard at times, they may be to receive. We are to unfold carefully and accurately, God's truth, aiming by His grace, to present it in a way that will feed and nourish the hearer in their relationship to God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

False teaching

The urgency of the call is because false teaching and distortion of God's truth will abound in the last days. People will look for preachers who please and do not disturb them, rather than those who plainly speak God's truth.

Ministry mentality

Paul says keep your head. The challenge to compromise and be overwhelmed by circumstances will be considerable. To be focused and committed will never be easy but Paul says that Timothy should hold on and not give up. Timothy is also exhorted to handle adversity, however it comes. There is an element of excitement in ministry but it is also hard work.

Do the work of an evangelist

We may well have a particular calling but sometimes we need to serve in areas which may not be our main calling. Timothy was not necessarily called to be an evangelist but the task of preaching the gospel and reaching out to the unsaved should be exercised, not just teaching the saints! The duties of ministry require thoroughness and discipline, not just choosing those aspects that we like best. That which is unseen is as important to God as that which catches the public eye.

Paul's own Circumstances

Paul senses that his work is almost done.

Drink offering - Paul has poured himself out. He has given everything for the gospel!

Good fight - Paul has indeed been a fighter. He has always fought within God's rules but he has been tenacious and dogged. He does not give up when he knows that he is in God's will.

Race - Paul has often used the picture of a runner in a race. He runs well and he is focused on the finishing line. For him, he believes that the end of the race is near. God determines the length of our race and our part is to run well, the race that He has laid out for us.

Faith - Most important to Paul is to keep the faith. He has not diverted from the gospel and his conviction regarding Jesus - the only Saviour from sin, the one who died for us, rose from the dead for us, ascended to heaven for us and who is coming back for us!

Crown of Righteousness - With humility, Paul anticipates receiving recognition for faithfully running the race set before him.

Those Who Disappoint and Those Who Bring Joy

Alexander had behaved badly towards Paul and he is clearly saddened by his behaviour. Paul is also disappointed that Demas has deserted him. He feels alone, because Crescens and Titus have also departed and he has sent Tychicus on a mission. Only Luke is still there with him. Paul lost confidence in John Mark, because he deserted them on a previous mission but he has a sense that John Mark has changed and wants to restore him to useful service. Although Paul feels deserted, he is conscious of the Lord's hand at this time, strengthening him when persecution has reached new heights of intensity. He is confident that the Lord will bring him safe home to His kingdom, despite all the attempts of the evil one to molest him.

Points to Consider:

1. We must value God's word. How well are we handling it and how careful are we in preaching and presenting it?
2. Are we consistent or inconsistent in our efforts to share scripture?
3. Compare the ministry mentality outlined in this study with our own mentality. Are we focused and resolute?
4. What sort of a fight are we making? How well are we running our race?
5. Do we have those who disappoint and those who bring joy? How well are we handling those issues?