

Let us Keep the Faith

- Studies in 2 Timothy -

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1. The Making of Timothy

2 Timothy 1:1-18

To Begin : Name 3 people who have had a big impact on you and on the direction your life has taken (Has it been a parent, a teacher, a counsellor, a doctor, a colleague, a friend or ...?).

Introduction

2 Timothy is written by Paul as he nears the end of his life. It is around AD 66-67. He is chained up in a Roman prison (1:16-17), deserted by many (1:15, 4:16) and is not expecting to live much longer (4:6-7). Facing all this, he writes a last message to his friend Timothy, the pastor of the church at Ephesus. His last words are not only for Timothy, but for all followers of Jesus Christ.

Read chapter 1:1-8

1. Even though death stares Paul in the face, notice the tone and focus of his opening words (vs 1-2). How does he summarise the message he has been given to proclaim? (v1)
2. From this passage, what can you deduce about the relationship between Paul and Timothy? (What do you find most striking?)
3. Timothy was influenced spiritually by his grandmother, his mother and Paul. Who has influenced you in your journey of faith? In what ways did they do it?

4. Paul was deeply involved in Timothy's life through prayer, friendship, and partnership in sharing the gospel.

Consider how you can impact, or contribute something to, the lives of other believers :-

- Who can you can come alongside to guide, support or encourage?
- Who can you can regularly pray for?
- Do you know a "Paul" figure (a more mature believer, a spiritual parent..), who nevertheless has struggles and whom you can encourage? [See 1:16-18 – what would it mean for you to be an "Onesiphorus" to them ?]

"The first seven verses of this letter tell us about Paul and Timothy and their making.

Paul claimed to be Jesus Christ's apostle "by the will of God". Previously he had said it was "by the grace of God" that he was what he was (1 Cor 15:10). He was also shaped by his ancestry (v3).

And a whole complex of factors had made **Timothy** what he was – a godly upbringing, Paul's friendship and training, God's gift to him, and his own self-discipline in stirring it up.

In principle, it is the same with all God's people. "

(Guard the Gospel, John Stott, p31)

5. Paul speaks about a particular gift given to Timothy (v6) but also of the gift of the Spirit given to all (v7), and the implications for us (v8).

- Discuss what it means to have a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.
- How does this indwelling gift help us to tell others about the gospel and guard against being ashamed of it? (vs 8,12,16)
- Do you recognise gifts in each other that need to be fanned into flame?

***God sends the right gifts when we respond to the right tasks.
These tasks often change through the various seasons of life.***

- Michael Baughen, 2 Timothy, p8-9

Do not be ashamed

6. **Read** carefully through the whole of this first chapter, noting down all the verses that indicate God is actively helping both Paul and Timothy to live for Him.

7. God does not change. How does realising that God actively helps you (as He did Paul and Timothy) change how you view each day before you? (How does it comfort, encourage, challenge, or strengthen you?)

8. We all take care to fiercely protect what is precious to us – whether it is people, or reputation, or possessions. For Paul, it is the gospel message that is most precious, and in verses 13-14 he gives Timothy (and us) two commands:

- **to keep/follow** [the central truths of the faith], and
- **to guard** the gospel [from those who would seek to subtract from it, add to it, or alter it].

Discuss : what does it mean for us to ‘keep’ and to ‘guard’ the gospel, both individually and corporately?

***9. Look back over this chapter. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Respond : Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.

- Paul is full of concern for Timothy and prays consistently for him. Every church is full of people who need encouragement. Who is on your prayer list? How are you seeking to encourage them?
- Think about the legacy you are leaving to other believers. When they watch your life, will they be encouraged by your loyalty to God? Will they see gospel values lived out?
- Are you prepared to “Keep the Faith” no matter what the cost, and not to be ashamed of Jesus and His message?

NB. The Baptismal declaration : ***Do not be ashamed*** to confess the faith of Christ crucified. Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ against sin, the world and the devil, and continue his faithful soldier and servant to the end of your life.

Summary : We did not have time to look in detail at 1:8-14. John Stott helpfully summarises it in this way:-

“The gospel is the good news of salvation, promised from eternity, secured by Christ in time, offered to faith. Our first duty is to ***communicate*** this gospel, to use old ways and seek fresh ways of making it known throughout the whole world. If we do so, we shall undoubtedly ***suffer*** for it, for the authentic gospel has never been popular. It humbles the sinner too much. And when we are called to suffer for the gospel we are tempted to trim it, to eliminate those elements which give offense and cause opposition, to mute the notes which jar sensitive contemporary ears.

But we must resist the temptation. For about all, we are called to ***guard*** the gospel, keeping it pure whatever the cost, and preserving it against every corruption.

Guard it faithfully. Spread it actively. Suffer for it bravely. This is our threefold duty in relation to the gospel.” (*Standing firm in Truth, IVP p19*)

2. Endure Hardship

2 Timothy 2:1-13

To begin : What is your reaction to slogans like “No pain, no gain”? and “Nothing that is worthwhile is ever easy”?

Introduction

In chapter 1 :13-14, Paul’s emphasis was on the value of the gospel and the need for it to be safeguarded. He has exhorted Timothy both to hold onto the faith and to guard the deposit of the gospel. The question now is “How?” This is what Paul explains in this chapter.

Read chapter 2:1-7

1. Paul wants Timothy to do more than just hold on to faith. What 2 things does he ask Timothy to do in verses 1-2?
2. Why does Paul tell Timothy to be strong “in grace” rather than strong in some other way? (*“be strong” in the Greek also has the sense of “be strengthened” and “strengthen yourself”*)
3. How would you express Paul’s instructions in verse 2 in your own words?

What would be the result if we as a church community, were to totally grasp, and consistently follow, this advice?

4. Paul uses the pictures of a soldier, an athlete and a farmer to illustrate the qualities he wants Timothy to have.
- What qualities characterise each of these people?
 - What connections do you see between these 3 pictures?
5. In what ways is Paul himself a model of the things he has mentioned in verses 3-6?
6. In verse 7, Paul tells Timothy to “reflect” (consider, think over) God’s word spoken through him.
- When, and how, do you make time to ponder and reflect on God’s truth?
 - Have you then “seen” what you previously didn’t understand? Share examples.
 - From having reflected on these 7 verses, what is God highlighting to you about your life right now?

***“We must do the considering,
and the Lord will do the giving of understanding.”***

Guard the Gospel, John Stott, p60

Read chapter 2:8-13

7. What are the reasons for Paul’s confidence despite his imprisonment?
(vs 8-10)

8. Verses 11-13 are probably from an early hymn, highlighting the fact that there are great things to look forward to as Christians, even if hardship is our present experience.

What do we have to look forward to?

Note: v12b-13

Paul is underlining the faithfulness of God to his promises *and* to his warnings - i.e. God's faithfulness makes it impossible for Him to acknowledge those who deny Him. Faithfulness on His part means carrying out His warnings. (see Matt 10:33)

***9. Look back over this passage. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Summary

This section has focussed on the idea of "endurance" (the Greek word is '*hupomeno*' = patience; "stickability"; keeping on keeping on) , drawing from the pictures of soldiers, athletes and farmers; as well as on the examples of Jesus and of Paul. (see vs 3,10,12). Good soldiers, law-abiding athletes and hard-working farmers are utterly wholehearted and dedicated to their work. Paul urges Timothy, and us, to be like them.

Respond: *Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.*

- It is not “feel strong” but “**be strong**” - drawing on the deep grace of Jesus Christ. *“Take strength from the grace of God which is ours in Christ Jesus” (NEB)* (see Phil 4:13 Eph 6:10, 2 Cor 12:9)
- We “**guard the good deposit**” by remaining loyal to it (v1) and by passing it on to other reliable people who will in turn teach others (v2) . How well are we doing these in our church?
Who are you training? – your children, grandchildren, a younger person at church, a work colleague, a fellow small group member?
Ask God to show you opportunities to pass on the baton of faith.
- “**God’s word is not chained**” (v9b) – It will do it’s work in antagonistic offices; atheistic universities, secular societies; Islamic countries; and among uninterested friends and families.
Praise God for this truth. Claim this as a promise for your situation.
- Look at the exhortations in this section:-
Be strong;
Entrust to others;
Endure;
Reflect;
Remember.
Which do you most need to heed?

3. Be useful to God

2 Timothy 2:14-26

To Begin: In your kitchen, what are some items you use daily? Which do you hardly ever use?

Introduction

In the previous section, Paul has used 3 images (a soldier, an athlete, a farmer) to illustrate the need to persevere in the gospel. He now uses 3 more images – that of a worker, a household utensil and a servant, to explain what it means to pass on the gospel effectively.

Read 2 Tim 2:14-26

1. Paul describes two kinds of workers:

- Philetus and Hymenaeus (v17) are examples of poor workers. Where have they gone wrong and with what effect?

- In contrast, what kind of worker does he encourage Timothy to be?

(The verb in verse 15 translated “correctly handle” means to “cut straight”. For example, like a railway line that is cut straight across the country.)

2. The difference in the workers hinges upon how they understand and communicate the word of truth, the “good deposit” (see also 1:13-14).

- What is actually involved in correctly handling the word of truth ?
- What are some ways that we can equip ourselves for this task?

Note on 2:19a

Paul uses Moses' quote (from Numbers 16:5) to tell his readers not to be upset by godless chatter and false teaching, even of leading churchmen. Instead he says, be strong in your own faith and focus on God's promises. The church's future and security are protected by God. He knows each one who is His.

Michael Baughen. 2 Timothy, p51

3. Paul's second image is of a vessel, or household utensil. (vs20-21) How does someone become a container that God can use?

4. Look at the instructions that Paul gives to Timothy (and to us) in verses 22-23. Discuss what heeding this advice might look like in your daily life.

5. Do you think the "evil desires of youth" are any different from the evil desires of middle age, or even old age?

6. The Lord's servant is the third image (v24-26). What qualities should characterise God's servant?

7. Which aspect of this description do you struggle with most? What help might you need to change?

8. List all the instructions and warnings concerning our speech that are mentioned in this passage. What do you need to remember from this list?

***9. Look back over this passage. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Summary

Paul's exhortations in this passage have been expressed well by John Stott in the following way :

“ As unashamed workers,
we must be accurate and clear in our exposition.
As vessels for noble use,
we must be righteous in our character and conduct.
And as the Lord's servants,
we must be courteous and gentle in our manner.”

Respond: *Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.*

- Think of godly teachers who have gently instructed you in God’s Word. Spend some time thanking God for them.
- Pray for God’s help in reading and studying His word, so that you will be increasingly in line with His truth.
- This is not a solo race – many others are running alongside you (v22). How can you spur each other on? How can you help a fellow believer to ‘pursue righteousness...’?
- Pray for grace, in the face of opposition or apathy, to respond in the right way – to win people over to God’s truth by patiently teaching, nursing and loving them.

“Run away from infantile indulgence. Run after mature righteousness – faith, love, peace – joining those who are in honest and serious prayer before God. Refuse to get involved in inane discussions; they always end up in fights. God’s servant must not be argumentative, but a gentle listener and a teacher who keeps cool, working firmly but patiently with those who refuse to obey.” (2:22ff The Message)

4. Dangerous Days

2 Timothy 3:1-9

To Begin : Think of 5 adjectives that would describe our society today.

Introduction

As Paul languishes in prison, he is very aware of the evil of the times. He warns Timothy that this will be an ongoing reality of life, and reminds him, in view of this, to continue to be faithful to the gospel message.

‘The last days’ that Paul refers to (v1) are not some time in the distant future; rather it is the time between Jesus’ ascension and His coming again. When Jesus came to earth, He inaugurated a new age. With His coming, the old age had begun to pass away and the last days had dawned. Paul was describing his time; yet this passage also describes the times in which **we** live.

Read chapter 3:1-9

1. We live in a fallen world which loves to love the wrong things in life. What wrong loves are mentioned in verses 2-4?
2. What is the basic problem of those described here?
3. Paul warns Timothy about people who have “a form of godliness but deny its power”.
 - Why is this a dangerous combination?
 - Does it surprise you that Paul seems to be telling Timothy to stay away from such people, not help them?
 - What did Paul mean by telling Timothy to “have nothing to do with” such people?
 - How can we know when to correct an erring Christian (2:25-26) and when to avoid him/her (3:5)?

4. How can anyone be duped into following someone who is hypocritical and corrupt? What explanations does Paul give? (vs 6-7)

5. Do you recognise the description of people who are “always learning and yet never able to grasp the truth” (v7) ?

6. How do the characteristics listed in verses 2-5 specifically express themselves in the actions of the teachers of verses 6-8?

In verse 8 Paul points to teachers in the church with corrupt minds and counterfeit faith. As examples of the kinds of false teachers he is describing, he mentions Jannes and Jambres, the names (according to Jewish tradition) of the 2 chief magicians in Pharaoh's court when Moses sought to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt (Exodus 7:10-13.) They are not named in the Old Testament text.

7. At the end of a dark picture of insidious evil, what encouragement does verse 9 bring?

8. Do you think Paul's warnings about false teachers to Timothy are still relevant today? Why, or why not?

***9. Look back over this passage. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Summary

Initially, we might have thought that Paul is here describing godless enemies of the faith who never darken the doors of church. But then it becomes clear that he is talking about some within the church – they can talk a good line, put on a good front, but in their motives and thought lives, and in their personal relationships, they are not godly people. They lack a genuine, growing relationship with God, who looks on the heart. They have ‘a form of godliness but deny its power’. Paul urges Timothy, and us, to have nothing to do with this kind of “Christianity” but rather to meet it with unswerving commitment to teaching and to living the truth (2 Tim 2:15).

Respond: *Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.*

- Ask God to show you any self-centred attitudes in your life. Confess them and pray that God will keep you from entertaining any false teaching that grows out of self-centredness.
- Personal soul- searching – could I be drifting into holding to a form of godliness, but be denying its power?
- Do I love myself, love money, love pleasure too much? Do I love God too little?
- are we tempted to be wrongly tolerant of error?

5. Continue in the Gospel

2 Timothy 3:10-17

To Begin: Describe the joys of returning home.

Introduction

Earlier in chapter 3, Paul has described the bleak godlessness of the last days, and how worldliness has entered the church. He now turns to describe the response he expects from Timothy, and the resources to combat this that can be found in Scripture.

Read chapter 3:10-17

1. Timothy has been able to observe Paul at close quarters over many years. What will he have noticed? (vs 10-12)
2. How is Paul's example different from that of the false teachers that we looked at in the last study (3:1-9)?
3. Paul urges Timothy to "continue" (v14). The word used here means "settling in permanently". *(It's the word used of when you finally arrive where you are going to live; where you are going to unpack and settle down for good.)*
 - What is Timothy to continue in?
 - Why?

Note v15 - holy Scriptures

“Scripture” here is the word “writings” (*graphe*) and in the New Testament is the word used of the Old Testament. We extend it to the New Testament writings as well, as they were already being considered part of the scriptures. (e.g. 2 Pet 3:16)

4. When all Scripture is described as “God-breathed” (Greek *theopneustos*), what picture does this evoke?

5. Look at the purposes of Scripture for our lives. (vs 16-17)

- What difference is there between teaching, rebuking, correcting and training?
- Spend some time sharing stories of how you have seen scripture doing these things, whether in your own life or in the life of a friend.

6. If the origin of Scripture is God, (“God-breathed”), what should be our attitude towards it?

How does this show in your life?

The heart of God is in the words of God

- Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, 604 AD -

7. What is your reaction to the claim in verse 17 that the Scriptures will fully equip you for daily life ?

***8. Look back over this passage. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Summary

In response to godlessness in the world and in the church (3:1-9), Paul says to us, as he said to Timothy, “Stand firm”. His message to us is this: continue in what you have come to believe. Don’t cut yourself off from God’s Word and God’s voice. Scripture is God-breathed and profitable – even in difficult circumstances it will make you complete, equip you for the work God has given you to do, and lead you on to Christian maturity.

Respond: *Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.*

- Thank God for the Bible - that it is a book that shows us the way of salvation; and also how to enjoy a full and meaningful life. “The commands of the LORD are clear, giving insight to life” (Psalm 19:8b)
- Pray for an increasing appetite for God’s word – for a desire to read it, study it, and apply it.
- Consider: Are there practical ways in which we can help to whet each others’ appetite for the scriptures?

6. Preach the Word; Stand Firm to the End

2 Timothy 4:1-22

To Begin: Imagine you are about to move away from Chester for good. What are some last words you would want to say to your closest friends in All Saints?

Introduction

This chapter contains some of the very last words that Paul spoke or wrote as shortly after this, he was martyred. These words are therefore Paul's legacy, not only to Timothy but also to the worldwide church. They challenge us to live in such a way that we won't have any regrets at the end of our lives.

Read chapter 4:1-8

1. What key facts about Jesus (v1) does Paul mention as the context for what he is about to say?
2. Paul's final charge to Timothy is "preach the Word". How does he then describe the way that Timothy is to do this? (vs 2, 5)
3. How is this command to "proclaim the message" relevant to us?
4. What sort of things might "itching ears want to hear" rather than listening to "sound doctrine"? (vs 3,4)

5. In verses 6-8 Paul describes what is about to happen to him. [see box below]. What is his confidence as he faces imminent death?

Note

v6 a **drink offering** was wine poured out on an altar as a sacrifice to God. a **'departure'** (setting free or loosing [*anagnosis*]). The word was used of a ship leaving harbour and looking forward to all that lies ahead.

v7 – the 3 pictures from chapter 2 : The retiring soldier – “I have fought the good fight.”; the retiring athlete – “I have finished the race.” The retiring farmer - “I have kept the faith”, which literally means “gone on”, like a farmer fulfilling a farming task. (Michael Baughen)

6. What is the promise for us in these verses?

Read chapter 4:9-22

This final section gives us a glimpse into the life and relationships in this Christian community. Then, as now, it was not always smooth sailing.

7. When those who hurt us are fellow Christians, it can be very difficult to stomach.

- What is Paul's experience of this?
- In his reactions, what example does he leave us to follow?

8. In the middle of hardships, what encouragements does Paul mention?

9. In the light of what he has said in this section, what do you think Paul means in verse 18 when he says “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack ...”?

***10. Look back over this passage. Which verse, or phrase, has most struck you? Write it down in the space below. Talk about this with one another and seek to live in the truth of these words.**

Respond: *Turn what you have discussed and learnt into prayer and action. Below are some suggestions for you to consider as applications of the truths of this chapter. You may have others.*

- Pray for grace to live out and share the gospel message at all times – when convenient, but also when it is inconvenient to do so.
- Praise God for the prospect of a ‘crown of righteousness’ in God’s presence.
- **“But the Lord stood at my side and give me strength”** (v17) Remember this reality. Pray to be aware of His strength in the days ahead.
- Quickly skim through this booklet and 2 Timothy. - **Look at all the verses you noted down in the questions marked with a ***
 - what has God been saying to you through this letter?
 - Have there been matters where the Lord has been correcting, rebuking, or encouraging you?
 - What one verse, or truth, will you continue to keep at the forefront of your mind?

In conclusion

As we come to the end of these studies in 2 Timothy, we are left with the inspiring picture of a man who has lived for the gospel and is focussed on passing the baton of faith on to Timothy and the next generation of believers.

Paul knows that he is about to die. He is not running the race anymore- he has finished the race. And what a way to finish! He keeps going full pelt to his finishing line – with a passion for Christ to be honoured; for the Word to be preached and the gospel to be guarded.